

SHORT TAKES

45-yr-old man dies during firing at Dwarka court

New Delhi: A 45-year-old man died during a firing incident which took place at Dwarka court in southwest Delhi, police said on Tuesday. The deceased has been identified as Swikar Luthra, they said. According to police, the incident took place on Monday around 8.30 pm. A senior police officer said they received secret information around 11.30 pm that a person who died due to bullet injury was taken to hospital. Police rushed to Mata Roop Rani Maggo Hospital and received the MLC of the deceased. During enquiry, it was found that five persons were drinking alcohol inside chamber number 444 in the court which was allotted to an advocate Arun Sharma, the officer said. The deceased received bullet injury on his back. He was taken to hospital by other persons who were present at the spot, police said. Out of five, one person has died and three others have joined the investigation, while the fifth person, who was the associate of the deceased, is absconding, police said, adding that the questioning is underway. Deputy commissioner of police (Dwarka) Santosh Kumar Meena said that a case under sections has been registered and investigation is underway. The deceased has criminal background, police said. Further details are awaited.

34-year-old man from UP arrested for cyber fraud

New Delhi: A 34-year-old man from Uttar Pradesh was arrested for allegedly duping people on the pretext of buying furniture from them through an online goods exchange platform and later getting money deducted from their bank accounts using fraudulent ways, police said on Tuesday. Accused Pankaj Verma, a resident of Uttar Pradesh's Aligarh, used to call sellers on OLX to purchase their products and upon finalisation of a deal, he sent them malicious links on their Paytm-linked accounts, they said. The matter came to light in November 2019 after a complaint was received at Keshav Puram police station from Mayank Sinha who alleged that his colleague Rajiv Bodwade wanted to sell his furniture and posted an advertisement on OLX, police said. In his complaint, Sinha alleged that his colleague received a call based on the advertisement from an unknown person who showed interest in buying the furniture and sent a link on Whatsapp for online payment. As Bodwade did not have a Paytm account, Sinha clicked on the link through his Paytm account, due to which ₹19,358 got deducted from his SBI bank account which was linked to Paytm. Deputy commissioner of police (Northwest) Usha Rangnani said that during the course of investigation through specific cyber analysis and local intelligence, the user of the alleged mobile number, Pankaj Verma was apprehended from his hometown in Aligarh, UP. On his inputs, a USB pen drive was recovered from him in which 50 fake Aadhaar cards were found.

Fake call centre busted in Delhi, 26 arrested

New Delhi: The Delhi Police has busted a fake call centre and arrested 26 employees, including five women, for allegedly duping people based in the US by impersonating Amazon customer service providers, officials said on Tuesday. Based on a tip-off, a police team late Monday night raided the illegal call centre which was being operated from south Delhi's Sultanpur area, they said. Police said the accused were extorting money from customers based in the US by claiming that their Amazon ID had been hacked. Preliminary investigation has revealed that the illegal call centre has been running for the last seven months and on an average at least six US citizens were cheated daily. Over 1,250 such citizens have been found to be cheated so far, according to police.

Monsoon reaches Delhi, most delayed in 19 yrs

■ *Heavy showers bring respite from heat but cause waterlogging, traffic snarls*

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 13

Since 1960, monsoon hit city 33 times in July

New Delhi, July 13: Delhi received its first monsoonal showers 33 times in July in the last 62 years, according to the India Meteorological Department.

The rest of the time it reached the capital in June.

Last year, the IMD had revised the date of monsoon arrival in Delhi from June 29 to July 27.

This year, the Southwest Monsoon reached Delhi 16 days behind schedule, making it the most-delayed onset in 19 years.

According to IMD data, the monsoon covered

Delhi 29 times in June and 33 times in July.

The city had recorded the most-delayed monsoon arrival on July 26 in 1987.

The earliest it arrived in Delhi was on June 9, 1961.

On 20 occasions, the monsoon embraced the city on or before July 27.

Only four times since 1960 it has covered Delhi after July 13.

In 2002, the monsoon arrived in Delhi on July 19. In 1982 and 1991, the wind system made an onset over Delhi on July 14, according to IMD data.

— PTI

putting it in the category of "large deficient" states.

"The southwest monsoon has further advanced into remaining parts of the country, including Delhi, remaining parts of Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan.

Thus, the monsoon has covered entire country on July 13, against the normal date of July 8," the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said in a statement.

The IMD had on June 13 forecast that monsoon will hit nearly two weeks before its normal date of

June 15. However, in reality, the monsoon reached Delhi nearly two weeks after its normal date. The monsoon had entered a "break" phase and there was virtually no progress from June 20 to July 8.

Over the last one month, the weather department struggled to accurately predict when the monsoon will reach the capital and came under sharp criticism when the wind system repetitively gave Delhi a miss despite favourable conditions.

After several wayward forecasts, the IMD on Monday acknowledged that "such type of failure by numerical models in the prediction of monsoon over the capital is rare and uncommon".

It had earlier said monsoon would hit Delhi on June 15, which would have been 12 days early, but the wind system entered a "break" phase.

In early June, the MeT office said the conditions will become favourable for the monsoon to advance to Delhi and other parts of northwest India by July 7. Later, it said Delhi will get its first monsoon rains around July 10.

The weather department revised the forecast yet again on Saturday, saying the monsoon may reach the capital in the next 24 hours. But it kept the city waiting on Sunday and there was hardly any rainfall on Monday too.



Commuters waded through waterlogged Prahladpur underpass during rain in New Delhi on Tuesday. (below) Bikers take shelter at a police booth on DND flyway. Pigeons fly above a pavement as vehicles ply during rains. — PTI

Haryana releases 16K cusecs water into Yamuna; Delhi's crisis to end soon: DJB

New Delhi, July 13: The Haryana government has released 16,000 cusecs of water in the Yamuna from the Hathnikund Barrage in Yamuna Nagar district and the crisis in the national capital will be resolved now, Delhi Jal Board (DJB) vice chairman Raghav Chadha said on Tuesday.

He said Haryana released Delhi's legitimate share of water after the DJB moved the Supreme Court and held several rounds of talks with the officials of the neighbouring state.

In 1996, the apex court had told the Haryana government and other states to share Yamuna's water to ensure that there was no shortage of drinking water in Delhi.

The water utility had, on Sunday, moved the Supreme Court seeking directions to the Haryana government to release Delhi's share of



A view of Yamuna during rain in New Delhi on Tuesday. The water level of the river is the lowest at Wazirabad barrage since 1965.

— PTI

water.

"The Haryana government, on Tuesday, released 16,000 cusecs of water which will reach Delhi in three to four days. After this, the water crisis in the national capital will resolve and people will get clean drinking water," Mr Chadha said.

Cusec is a unit of flow (especially of water) equal to one cubic foot per second.

"We tried to build pressure on the Haryana government. We even filed a petition in the SC and held several rounds of talks with the officials of the neighbouring state," he added.

Mr Chadha had earlier said that Haryana had been withholding 120 MGD (million gallons per day) water belonging to Delhi, which led to a water crisis in the Union Territory.

He had said the water level at the Wazirabad pond had hit the lowest mark since 1965 and the river had dried up because of Haryana not releasing water.

DJB officials said the level at Wazirabad pond had come down from a normal level of 674.5 feet to 667 feet.

The water from Wazirabad pond is drawn for treatment at Wazirabad, Okhla, and Chandrawal treatment plants. The treated water is then supplied to Central, South, and West Delhi. The DJB supplies 935 MGD of water to city residents against the demand of 1,150 MGD.

— PTI

Covered, gated toilets needed for Tihar women prisoners: DCW

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 13

A day after the Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) chairperson Swati Maliwal conducted an inspection of Tihar's women jail on Monday to check the living conditions of prisoners, the team sent recommendations to the jail authorities and government after their visit to the prison to have covered and gated toilets inside cells.

The recommendations also include increase in number of lawyers and restarting of the 'Mulakaat' programme till Covid cases are under control are some of the recommendations made by Delhi Commission for Women chief Swati Maliwal for women lodged in Tihar Jail.

As many as 276 women are lodged in Tihar out of which 240 are undertrials and 35 have been convicted by court, a statement from the DCW said.

When the team entered the prison complex, the first thing they noticed was that three women were kept in one congested cell and there was no gated separation from the toilet in the room, it said. The Commission has recommended that toilets built inside the cell should be covered and gated.

HC directs activist to remove tweets against ex-diplomat

Union minister's wife Lakshmi Puri purchased land in Switzerland, wrote activist Saket Gokhale

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 13

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday found activist Saket Gokhale's tweets against former Indian Assistant Secretary-General to the United Nations, Lakshmi Puri with regards to the disproportionate assets allegation to be prima facie defamatory.

The court has ordered Gokhale to immediately delete the defamatory tweets posted against former Indian diplomat. It also restrained him from posting "defamatory or scandalous or factually incorrect tweets" against her or her husband Union minister Hardeep Singh Puri.

The judgement pronounced by a single judge bench of Justice C Hari Shankar also directed Twitter to take down the tweets in case Gokhale fails to do so himself.

Additionally, the court has asked Twitter to file a compliance report before the next date of hearing. The court passed the order in a suit filed by Puri for deletion of the tweets and seeking damages to the tune of ₹5 crore.

Earlier, the High Court had come down heavily



Saket Gokhale



Lakshmi Puri

on Gokhale for putting out allegedly defamatory tweets against former diplomat Puri without due diligence. The court had said, "How can you be vilifying people like this. Knock off these things from the website," said Justice C Hari Shankar has said last week at the outset of hearing. "If you have a problem with the public functionaries, you must go to them first."

Gokhale, in his tweets On June 13 and 26, made reference to certain property purchased by Puri in Switzerland and also referred to her husband. The court passed the order on a defamation suit filed by Lakshmi Puri seeking ₹5 crore damages from Gokhale and a direction that he delete the tweets.

In her suit, filed through Karanjawala and Company, she

alleged that in the tweets, Gokhale had made false and factually incorrect, per-se defamatory, slanderous and libelous statements/imputations against her and her family. Advocate Sarim Naved, representing Gokhale, had said as a citizen, he has the right to go into the assets of public functionaries. He had also said that Puri's husband is a Union minister and that assets of such persons, along with those of spouses, should be in public domain, but in this case, the money received from their daughter is not in public domain.

The court also issued summons to Gokhale on the main suit and directed him to file his written statement within four weeks and listed the case before the Joint Registrar on September 10.

TEMPORARY CANCELLATION / PARTIAL CANCELLATION / DIVERSION / RE-SCHEDULING & REGULATION OF TRAINS

In order to further strengthen the infrastructure and to enhance safety standards, Delhi Division of Northern Railway will undertake the work for provision of 3rd Foot Over Bridge at Ghaziabad Railway station. To execute this work Delhi Division will take suitable traffic & power blocks of different durations from 15.07.2021 to 17.07.2021. During this period following trains will be cancelled / partially cancelled / diverted / re-scheduled & regulated on dates shown against each:-

CANCELLATION OF TRAINS		
Train No.	Train Name	Date of Cancellation (from originating station)
04183/04184	Tundia Jn - Delhi Jn - Tundia Jn MEMU Special Express	on 15, 16 & 17.07.2021
04444/04443	New Delhi - Ghaziabad - New Delhi Special Express	on 15, 16 & 17.07.2021
04335/04336	Moradabad - Ghaziabad - Moradabad Special Express	on 15, 16 & 17.07.2021
02419/02420	Lucknow - New Delhi - Lucknow Special Express	on 16 & 17.07.2021
04212/04211	New Delhi - Agra Cantt - New Delhi Special Express	on 16 & 17.07.2021
04439	Palwal - Ghaziabad Special Express	on 15, 16 & 17.07.2021

PARTIAL CANCELLATION OF TRAINS			
Train No. & Name	Short Terminate at/ Short Originate from	Partially Cancelled between Station	Date of partially cancellation (from the Originating Station)
04407 Palwal - Ghaziabad EMU Special Express	at Sahibabad	Sahibabad - Ghaziabad	on 15, 16 & 17.07.2021
04409 Ghaziabad - Shakurbasti EMU Special	from Sahibabad	Ghaziabad - Sahibabad	on 15, 16 & 17.07.2021
04419 Mathura Jn - Ghaziabad EMU Special	at Sahibabad	Sahibabad - Ghaziabad	on 15, 16 & 17.07.2021
04420 Ghaziabad - Mathura Jn EMU Special	from Sahibabad	Ghaziabad - Sahibabad	on 15, 16 & 17.07.2021

DIVERSION OF TRAINS		
Train No. & Train Name	Diversion Route	Date of passing
04522/04521 Ambala Cant Jn - Delhi Jn - Ambala Cant Jn Special Express	Diverted via Tapri Jn - Shamli - Delhi Shahdara - Delhi Jn	on 16.07.2021
05128 New Delhi - Manduadih Special	Diverted via New Delhi - Tilak Bridge - Noli - Shamli - Tapri Jn	on 16 & 17.07.2021
03392 New Delhi - Rajgir (Clone) Special Express	Diverted via New Delhi - Tilak Bridge - Noli - Shamli - Tapri Jn	on 16.07.2021
02392 New Delhi - Rajgir Special Express	Diverted via New Delhi - Tilak Bridge - Noli - Shamli - Tapri Jn	on 16.07.2021
02570 New Delhi - Darbhanga Jn (Clone) Special Express	Diverted via New Delhi - Palwal - Agra Cantt - Mitawali - Kanpur Central	on 16 & 17.07.2021
04682 Jalandhar City - New Delhi Special Express	Diverted via Tapri Jn - Shamli - Tilak Bridge - New Delhi	on 16 & 17.07.2021
09325 Indore Jn - Amritsar Jn Special Express	Diverted via Hazrat Nizamuddin - Noli - Shamli - Tapri Jn - Saharanpur	on 16.07.2021
02268 New Delhi - Howrah Jn Special Express	Diverted via New Delhi - Palwal - Agra Cantt - Mitawali - Kanpur Central	on 17.07.2021

RESCHEDULING OF TRAINS	
Train No. & Name	Rescheduled of Trains
02504 New Delhi - Darbhanga Jn. Rajdhani Special Express	Train will be Rescheduled to depart from New Delhi at 14:10 hrs. instead of 11:25 hrs. (165 minutes late) on 16.07.2021 & 13:55 hrs. instead of 11:25 hrs. (150 minutes late) on 17.07.2021
02398 New Delhi - Gaya Special Express	Train will be Rescheduled to depart from New Delhi at 14:20 hrs. instead of 12:50 hrs. (90 minutes late) on 16.07.2021 & 13:55 hrs. instead of 12:50 hrs. (65 minutes late) on 17.07.2021
02368 Anand Vihar (T) - Bhagalpur Vikramshila Special Express	Train will be Rescheduled to depart from Anand Vihar (T) at 14:10 hrs. instead of 13:15 hrs. (55 minutes late) on 16.07.2021 & 14:00 hrs. instead of 13:15 hrs. (45 minutes late) on 17.07.2021
02566 New Delhi - Darbhanga Jn. Bihar Sampark Kranti Spl. Express	Train will be Rescheduled to depart from Anand Vihar (T) at 14:30 hrs. instead of 13:00 hrs. (90 minutes late) on 16.07.2021 & 14:05 hrs. instead of 13:00 hrs. (65 minutes late) on 17.07.2021
03258 Anand Vihar (T) - Danapur Festival Special Express	Train will be Rescheduled to depart from New Delhi at 14:00 hrs. instead of 13:35 hrs. (25 minutes late) on 16.07.2021 & 13:55 hrs. instead of 13:35 hrs. (20 minutes late) on 17.07.2021

REGULATION OF TRAINS	
Train No. & Name	Regulation of Trains at Station
08477 Puri - Yog Nagari Rishikesh Special Express	Train will be Regulated for 30 minutes on 14.07.2021 at Shakurbasti & 15 minutes on 15.07.2021 at Shakurbasti Station
04459 Delhi - Saharanpur MEMU Special Express	Train will be Regulated for 30 minutes on 16.07.2021 at Delhi Shahdara/ Shakurbasti & 20 minutes on 17.07.2021 at Delhi Station
05026 Anand Vihar (T) - Mau Jn Special Express	Train will be Regulated for 50 minutes on 16.07.2021 at Anand Vihar (T) Station
02392 New Delhi - Rajgir Shramjeevi Special Express	Train will be Regulated for 25 minutes on 17.07.2021 at New Delhi Station
04521 Delhi Jn. - Ambala Special Express	Train will be Regulated for 30 minutes on 17.07.2021 at Delhi Junction Station

For any other information passengers are requested to contact RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or may visit Indian Railways website <https://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in> or NTES App.

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"SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE"

SHORT TAKES

3 held over communal clash in Gir-Somnath

Somnath, Jul 13 (PTI) Three persons were arrested on Tuesday over a clash that erupted between members of two communities, in which two people were injured and a shop and some vehicles were damaged in Gujarat's Gir Somanath district, police said.

Dozens of people from the two communities, armed with sticks, clashed with each other late on Monday night, leaving two persons injured and two motorcycles and a shop damaged at Prabhas Patan, inspector N.M. Ahir said. Some persons had entered into an argument after two motorcycles hit each other at a marketplace in Prabhas Patan earlier on Monday. The matter was resolved at the time. However, later, two groups attacked each other over the issue, the official said. The police have arrested three persons of the 25 accused against whom an FIR was registered after the clash, he said. — PTI

NEET-Postgraduate exam on Sept. 11

New Delhi: The NEET post-graduate exam will be held on September 11, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya announced on Tuesday, in view of a spike in Covid cases, the National Eligibility Cum Entrance Test-Post Graduate (NEET-PG) which was scheduled to be held on April 18 was postponed. "We have decided to conduct NEET Postgraduate exam on 11th September, 2021. My best wishes to young medical aspirants!" the minister tweeted.

On Monday, the Centre announced that the NEET-Under Graduate (UG) 2021 will be held on September 12 across the country while following Covid protocols. The National Board of Examinations in Medical Sciences (NBEMS) in a notice said according to the announcement made today by the Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare, "the NEET-PG 2021 has been rescheduled to be held on 11th September 2021." — PTI

AMARAVATI LAND SCAM: SC TO HEAR AP APPEAL

PARMOD KUMAR
NEW DELHI, JULY 13

The Supreme Court, on Tuesday, said that it will hold the final hearing on July 22 on Andhra Pradesh government's plea against the September 15, 2020, state high court's order directing no coercive action against former advocate general Dammalapati Srinivas, stalling investigation, and gagging media from reporting the FIR as it cold shouldered the state government's plea to remand the matter back to the high court. The SC had, on September 25, 2020, lifted the order gagging media from reporting the FIR in the Amaravati land case allegedly involving Dammalapati Srinivas. Senior counsel Rajeev Dhavan said that no coercive steps will be taken against the advocate general but the investigations may be allowed to proceed. Reiterating his earlier argument of an act of "regime revenge" against Dammalapati Srinivas, senior lawyer Harish Salve said that the matter could be sent back to the high court provided the plea by the state government against the interim order of the high court is dismissed. During the September hearing of the matter, Mr Salve had told the court that the entire action of the Andhra Pradesh government against the former advocate general was mala fide and was a case of "regime revenge" as the former advocate general had appeared against CM Nara Chandrababu Naidu in a number of criminal matters.

Sarpanch sets technical assistant ablaze

Hyderabad, July 13: A technical assistant of MGNREGA in Birmal district suffered burn injuries on Tuesday after a sarpanch allegedly set him ablaze over the issue of pending bills, police said.

The incident happened in the office premises of Mahatma Gandhi National Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in Kuber Mandal at around 4.30 pm, they said.

The sarpanch went inside the office and it seems there was an argument

between him and the technical assistant after which the sarpanch allegedly poured petrol on the table and on the technical assistant and lit them using match sticks, a senior police official told PTI over phone based on preliminary investigation.

The technical assistant has been shifted to hospital and doctors said he suffered around 25 per cent burn injuries, the official said, adding the sarpanch has been taken into custody and was being ques-

THE SARPANCH went inside the office and it seems there was an argument between him and the technical assistant after which the sarpanch allegedly poured petrol on the table and on the technical assistant and lit them using match sticks

tioned. As per available information, an altercation took place between the sarpanch and the Technical Assistant over the issue of "long

pending" bills regarding works taken up under MGNREGA, the official added. On June 29, a man allegedly poured diesel on a Tahsildar during a protest held by a group of farmers and others in Telangana's Medak district after dousing himself with the fuel.

In November 2019, a man allegedly brutally murdered a woman Tahsildar by setting her ablaze in her office at Abdullapurmet near here over some land dispute. — PTI

■ 'We hold Centre under leadership of PM directly responsible for high inflation'

Cong to raise price rise issue in Parl

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 13

The Congress, on Tuesday, launched a scathing attack on the Centre over rising inflation in the country. The party is all set to raise the issue in the upcoming Monsoon Session of Parliament starting next week. Addressing a press conference, former finance minister P. Chidambaram demanded that the price of petrol, diesel, and LPG be immediately reduced and import duties reviewed.

He said, "We hold the Central government under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi directly responsible for the

high inflation. It is not being caused by rising demand, rather the wrong policies of the government and its inept management of the economy."

Mr Chidambaram said, "Despite stout opposition, the government has continually increased the prices of petrol, diesel, and LPG." He further said that the price of petrol has reached over ₹100 in Mumbai and Delhi while the price of LPG is at ₹835 per cylinder in Delhi and ₹933 per cylinder in Patna.

"None of these prices is justified by the price of crude oil which is around \$75 a barrel. When crude oil price was \$125, the UPA



Congress Seva Dal activists during a protest rally against hike in fuel prices in Jaipur on Tuesday. — PTI

government was able to provide petrol at ₹65 per litre and diesel at ₹44 per litre," Mr Chidambaram said.

He blamed the cesses

money to itself."

He also quoted the National Statistical Office's (NSO) press release that pegged the country's consumer price inflation at 6.26 per cent and said that this level of inflation amid the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has broken the back of the people.

He further added, "Will the government please tell the people what they should eat, how they should light their homes, and how they should go to work? Inflation even in a normal time would be intolerable. The present is not a normal time. A pandemic is raging in the country."

Kerala gov to participate in anti-dowry fast

Thiruvananthapuram, July 13: Kerala governor Arif M o h a m m a d Khan will take part in an anti-dowry fast here on Wednesday to create awareness about the social evil.

The dawn-to-dusk fast will be organised at Gandhi Bhavan here by the Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi and other such outfits, to create social awareness against the practice of giving and taking dowry as part of marriages.

The governor, in a response to the call made by the Gandhian organizations, decided to join the fast and would attend the programme from 4.30 pm till the end, Raj Bhavan sources here said. — PTI



A.M. Khan

Cong leader Sidhu hints at crossing over to AAP

Says Kejri always recognised my vision, work for Punjab



AAP has always recognised my for Punjab. Be it Before 2017- Beadbi, Drugs, Farmers Issues, Corruption & Power Crisis faced by Punjab raised by me, it is clear they know - who is really fighting for Punjab.

— Navjot Singh Sidhu, Cong

raised by me or today as I present 'Punjab Model', it is clear they know - who is really fighting for Punjab," Sidhu said in a series of tweets. He said, "If the Opposition dares to question me, yet they can't escape my Pro-People Agenda... This means they have resigned to their fate!" Sidhu also shared old videos of AAP leaders praising him for raising his voice on several issues

including the drug mafia and corruption during the previous SAD-BJP regime.

On Monday, AAP leader Mann had alleged that the Punjab government was not scrapping the power purchase agreements (PPAs) signed by the erstwhile SAD-BJP government as the ruling Congress had accepted "funds" from the three private companies that have set up thermal plants in the state. — PTI

8 BJP MLAs quit House panel heads

Saffron leaders meet gov, protest Mukul Roy's appointment as PAC chief

RAJIB CHOWDHURI
KOLKATA, JULY 13

Eight West Bengal BJP MLAs jointly resigned as chairmen of various Assembly standing committees on Tuesday in protest of Krishnanagar North MLA Mukul Roy's appointment as the public accounts committee (PAC) chairman even after his defection to the ruling Trinamul Congress from their party.

They are Manoj Tigga, BJP legislative party chief

whip from Madarihat, Anandamoy Burman of Matigara-Naxalbari, Ashok Kirtaniya of Bongaon North, Nikhil Ranjan Dey of Coochbehar South, Bishnupada Sharma of Kurseong, Dipak Burman of Falakata, Mihir Goswami of Natabari and Krishna Kalyani of Raiganj.

They tendered their resignations to Assembly Speaker Biman Banerjee who appointed Mr Roy as the PAC head last week.



Mukul Roy

Their move is bound to affect the legislative work of the panels.

Led by leader of the opposition Suwendu

Adhikari, the BJP MLAs later met governor Jagdeep Dhankhar at Raj Bhavan and complained to him against Mr Banerjee's role in awarding the post of PAC head to Mr Roy against whom they already moved a disqualification petition under the anti-defection law.

Mr Adhikari said, "Eight of our party MLAs resigned from their posts as chairmen of the Assembly standing committees for the politicisation of the PAC post."

'Anti-terror laws should not be misused to quell dissent'

New Delhi, July 13: The criminal law including the anti-terror legislation should not be misused for quelling dissent or harassment of citizens, Supreme Court judge Justice D.Y. Chandrachud has said while underlining the role of the apex court in protecting fundamental rights in challenging times.



Justice D.Y. Chandrachud

Observing that the Indian Supreme Court plays the role of a counter-majoritarian institution, Justice Chandrachud said it is the duty of the top court to protect the rights of socio-economic minorities.

The Supreme Court has to act in furtherance of its role as sentinel on the qui vive (watchful guardian) and respond to the call of Constitutional conscience and it is this

role that prompts it to address the challenges of the 21st century, ranging from the pandemic to the rise of intolerance, features which we find across the world, he said, adding that some termed interventions as judicial activism or judicial overreach.

Justice Chandrachud made these comments on Monday while speaking on the "Role of the Supreme Court in protecting fundamental rights in challenging

times at a conference hosted by the American Bar Association with the Society of Indian Law Firms and Chartered Institute of Arbitrators.

He referred to the apex court's orders on decongestion of jails during the Covid pandemic and said that while it is important that prisons are de-congested because they are highly susceptible to becoming hotspots for the virus, but it is equally important to examine why they are congested in the first place.

Referring to his judgement in the Arnab Goswami case, Justice Chandrachud said: The criminal law, including anti-terror legislation should not be misused for quelling dissent or for the harassment of citizens.

— PTI

Cong neta writes to Sonia, asks her to control Diggy

Accuses him of angering Hindu voters

SONU SHRIVASTAVA
MUMBAI, JULY 13

All India Congress Committee (AICC) member Vishwabandhu Rai has written to Congress president Sonia Gandhi asking her to control Digvijaya Singh as he is angering the Hindu voters in order to please "a particular community's voters". In his letter addressed to Mrs Gandhi, the AICC member said that Digvijaya Singh has angered the Hindu voters by raising the issue of reimposition of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir.

Mr Rai also sent a cartoon along with the letter. In the Cartoon, Mr Singh was portrayed as burying a coffin of the Congress party. With the Subject line, "There is a dire need to rein in Digvijaya Singh's tongue", Mr Rai, who was former Mumbai General Secretary and close aide of Sanjay Nirupam, said, "Digvijaya Singh has been continuously angering the Hindu voters of the party since 2003 when he was ousted from power in Madhya Pradesh. He is constantly trying to hurt the sentiments of Hindus to please only a particular section of the country's voters."

The letter has also gone viral and is being retweeted by the BJP leaders including Madhya Pradesh Home Minister Dr. Narottam Mishra. "...Now it needs to be seen whether Mrs Gandhi takes action against Mr. Singh or supports his anti-Hindu statements," the senior



Sonia Gandhi



Digvijaya Singh

BJP leader tweeted in Hindi. Mr Rai also claimed that the country's majority Hindu population considers the irresponsible statement of Digvijaya Singh as the official thinking of the Congress party. Due to this, the Hindu voter is continuously moving away from the party. On the other hand, even his appeasement politics is not increasing his follower base. The former Mumbai Congress General Secretary claimed that Mr. Singh's rhetoric is also one of the reasons for the defeat of the Congress party in the assembly elections in Delhi after he termed the Batla House encounter as fake.

He also alleged that it was a well-thought-out strategy of Mr. Singh to name the world's deadliest terrorist Osama bin Laden with respectful words as 'Osama Ji'. The party has also suffered a lot due to this statement.

Cautioning the party high command about Mr. Singh's role in upcoming assembly elections, Mr. Rai said, "His role (Digvijaya Singh's role) in the politics of Uttar Pradesh should be reviewed. The beginning of the disintegration of the Congress party in UP has started due to his unchecked statements from time to time."

Bengal board's Class 12 exam results to be out on July 22

Kolkata, July 13: The Class 12 examination result of the Bengal board will be published on July 22, the body that conducts the test said on Tuesday. The Higher Secondary examination was not held this year due to the Covid-19 pandemic situation and an evaluation method has been worked out based

on marks obtained by an examinee in the Madhyamik (class 10 board exam) and class 11 annual test.

The Bengal Council of Higher Secondary said, "Results of Higher Secondary Examination 2021 will be published on 22/07/2021, Thursday at 3 pm" at its office. — PTI

NORTHERN RAILWAY

E-TENDER NOTICE

Name of work with its location	Interlocking of LC No. 18, 25, 49, 79 having TVUs more than 50,000 on DSA-TP2 section of Delhi Division.
App. Cost of the work (₹)	₹ 55,29,648/- only
Address of the office	Senior Divisional Signal & Telecom Engineer-C, Northern Railway, 3rd Floor, Annex-1, DIRM Office, New Delhi-110055
Date & Time for upload the tender / closing of tender	Tender uploading / closing date & time- 04.08.2021 upto 15.00 hrs.
Website particular & notice board location where complete details of the tender can be seen etc.	See the Northern Railway website www.nreps.gov.in & Notice board at S&T branch, 3rd Floor, DIRM office, State Entry Road, New Delhi-110055.
Tender No. 558-Sig-16-M-TENDER-1363 Dated: 13.07.2021	1568/2021
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE	

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED



General Public is hereby informed that one girl namely **Chahat D/o Sudhanshu Jha R/o H.No. C-93, Gali No.4, Mukundpur Part-I, Delhi** has been missing/kidnapped since 22.06.2021 from the area of P.S. Bhalswa Dairy, Delhi. In this regard a case vide FIR No. 380/21 U/s 363 IPC Dated 22.06.2021 has been registered at P.S. Bhalswa, Dairy, Delhi. The description of missing/kidnapped girl is as under:

Name : Chahat, **Father's Name :** Sudhanshu Jha, **Age :** 16 years, **Height :** 5'0", **Built:** Thin, **Face :** Round, **Complexion :** Wheatish, **Wearing :** Red Colour Top & Blue Plajo & red chappal in her feet. If anyone having any clue/information, kindly inform the undersigned.

SHO
P.S., Bhalswa Dairy, Delhi
Ph.: 011-27811933
27811934

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that one unidentified dead body of male **Namely:** Unknown, **S/o:** Unknown, **R/o:** Unknown, **Age:** about 30-25 Years, **Complexion:** Wheatish, **Height:** 5' 7", **Face:** Round, **Built:** Medium, **Wearing:** White colour inner and black colour lower, who was found in front of Palam Greens Resort, Service Road, Alipur, New Delhi. In this regard a case **DD No. 65 Dated 07.07.2021** has been registered at P.S. Alipur, Delhi.

Any person having any information or clue about the above deceased may kindly inform to the undersigned on the following address or telephone nos.

Sd/- SHO
P.S: Alipur, Delhi
Tel.: 011-27280435

DP/1148/ON/2021

SHORT TAKES

Tribal in C'garh
beheads neighbour

Raipur: A youth beheaded an elderly man in the village of Chura in Chhattisgarh's Gariaband district suspecting him to be a black magician and walked 30 km holding the head, police said on Tuesday. The gory incident took place on Monday night. According to the police, 25-year-old accused Madhav Gond barged into the house of Karan Singh (68) on Monday night and attacked him with an axe. He later severed the victim's head. The youth then walked around 30 km holding the head taking pride that he killed the alleged black magician. The local villagers and passersby took videos of the horrific sight of the youth walking with a severed head in his hand in their mobile phone cameras and uploaded them in their WhatsApp groups. Police later learnt about the incident from social media and arrested the youth.

Pension hike for
MP gas windows

Bhopal: The Madhya Pradesh Cabinet approved the proposal to release an additional ₹1,000 pension per month each to the widows of Bhopal gas tragedy victims. The monetary relief would be in addition to the social security pension for the surviving widows of the victims of Bhopal gas tragedy, caused by leakage of deadly methyl isocyanate (MIC) in the pesticide plant of Union Carbide here in the intervening night of December two-three, 1984, state home minister Narottam Mishra told reporters here in his post cabinet meeting briefing. He said the state Cabinet gave nod to the proposal despite resistance from the state finance department. He said the pension was suspended during the Kamal Nath government in 2019 and the state government has now decided to resume the scheme.

IMD issues red alert
for 5 Maha districts

Mumbai: The met department issued an orange alert for Mumbai and neighbouring Thane, indicating heavy to very heavy rainfall at isolated places, and a red alert for Pune, Raigad, Ratnagiri, Kolhapur and Satara districts for Wednesday. The India meteorological department (IMD) said red alert indicates that extremely heavy rainfall is likely at isolated places in ghat areas. Extremely heavy rainfall means more than 204.4 mm precipitation in 24 hours, it said. The intensity of rains is expected to reduce from Thursday onwards, the IMD said. The rest of the state is expected to receive heavy rains at isolated places and also light to moderate showers, it said. Mumbai city on Tuesday received 51.5 mm rainfall. — PTI

JAISHANKAR
MEETS AFGHAN
COUNTERPART

New Delhi: Ahead of the crucial Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Contact Group meeting Wednesday in the Tajik capital Dushanbe on Afghanistan, external affairs minister S. Jaishankar met Afghan foreign minister Haneeef Atmar there who briefed him on the current situation in the strife-torn nation which is witnessing a dramatic military advance by the Pakistan-backed Taliban. Jaishankar arrived in the Tajik capital on Tuesday for a two-day visit to attend the meetings of the SCO Council of Foreign Ministers and the SCO Contact Group on Afghanistan which will discuss the deteriorating security situation, arising out of speedy withdrawal of the US forces. While there was no official readout of Jaishankar-Atmar meeting from the Indian side, an official release from the Afghan side said they met to "discuss the political and security situation, peace process, and India's cooperation with Afghanistan in various fields, including the joint fight against terrorism and the establishment of lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan and the region". EAM Jaishankar tweeted, "Began my Dushanbe visit by meeting with Afghan FM @MHaneefAtmar. Appreciate his update on recent developments. Looking forward to the meeting of the SCO Contact Group on Afghanistan tomorrow."

■ RSS session reviews preparations for possible 3rd wave

Temple land row fallout? RSS
deputes Bhaiyyaji Joshi to VHP

**RABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY**
BHOPAL, JULY 13

In a significant development, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) has appointed veteran leader Suresh Bhaiyyaji Joshi as "Sampark Adhikari" (coordination officer) of Vishwa Hindu Parishad paving the way for him to directly oversee the construction of Ram Temple in Ayodhya.

The decision was taken at the four-day brainstorming session of RSS at Chitrakoot in Satna district of Madhya Pradesh, which ended on July 12.

The development comes in the wake of Ram Mandir Trust secretary Champat Rai embroiling in a controversy recently



Bhaiyyaji Joshi

▶ **THE DECISION** to depute Mr Joshi to VHP was taken at the 4-day brainstorming session of RSS at Chitrakoot

▶ **THE RSS** also discussed the new population policy mulled by the UP government. The RSS leaders were of the view that the legislation should come before the Assembly elections

over the purchase of additional land by the body for the construction of the temple.

Mr Joshi, who was replaced by Dattatreya Hosabale as RSS general secretary at the Sangh's Bengaluru meet in March this year, has been associated with the construction of the Ram temple for a long. He, however, would now be able to oversee construction of Ram Temple directly following

his appointment as VHP 'Sampark Adhikari', a senior RSS leader who attended the RSS's Chitrakoot meet told this newspaper on Tuesday on condition of anonymity.

Sources said Mr Rai who met the RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat at Chitrakoot on July eight, was reportedly asked to "maintain transparency" in the construction of Ram Temple to prevent recurrence of such unsavoury controversy in

future.

The four-day brainstorming session of RSS discussed the response to coronavirus pandemic and preparations for a possible third wave, construction of Ram Temple and the upcoming assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh, a press release issued by RSS said.

"Extensive arrangements should be made in the country to minimise the impact of the third wave", the release said.

Sources said the RSS also discussed the new population policy mulled by the Uttar Pradesh government.

The RSS leaders were of the view that the legislation should come before the Assembly elections in UP.

8 days after
death, Swamy's
medical records
submitted in HC

SHAHAB ANSARI
MUMBAI, JULY 13

The Maharashtra government on Tuesday submitted the medical records of late Fr Stan Swamy who was arrested in the Elgar Parishad hate speech case. The medical record was submitted in connection with Swamy's bail plea on health grounds which the court had sought despite his death. In another petition in the same case, which is challenging the transfer of Elgar Parishad case to NIA from Pune police, the NIA opposed the petition saying the petition has been filed to cause obstacles in the investigation.

Chief public prosecutor Aruna Pai told the division bench of Justices S.S. Shinde and N.J. Jamadar that the state had submitted a compilation of Swamy's complete medical records since the time he was lodged in the Talaja prison as an undertrial. The HC was informed about Swamy's death on July 5. At that time Swamy's lawyer senior counsel Mihir Desai had requested the court to keep his plea for medical bail and his plea challenging the bar on grant of bail under the UAPA pending. He had also urged the court to call for Stan Swamy's medical records.



Stan Swamy

After Covid, dengue
cases jump in Odisha

State reports highest toll of 68 deaths due to coronavirus

**AKSHAYA KUMAR
SAHOO**
BHUBANESWAR, JULY 13

After the Covid-19, Odisha now faces another health crisis — an outbreak of dengue. As many as 55 dengue cases have been detected in the state capital Bhubaneswar in the past few days, director of state health directorate, Dr Bijay Mohapatra, said on Tuesday.

"The number of dengue cases has slightly increased in the state. But there is nothing to panic about. The situation is not that much concern. Till Monday evening, 55 dengue cases have been reported in Bhubaneswar," said the health official, adding, there was no report of any casualty in the mosquito-borne viral infection.

He informed that in view of the dengue outbreak drains in the city will be cleaned followed by a chemical spray. Besides, bushes will be cleared to avoid a further rise in the cases.

On the Covid -19 situation, the director of health said the infection rate had declined overall in the state. In some districts, the infection was gradually decreasing.

"The state government will take a call on unlock process after reviewing the Test Positivity Rate (TPR), caseload and adherence to safety guide-

India's first Covif patient tests
positive again for coronavirus

Thrissur (Kerala), July 13: A woman medico, who was India's first Covid-19 case, has tested positive again for the virus, health authorities said here on Tuesday.

"She is reinfected with Covid-19. Her RT-PCR is positive, antigen is negative. She is asymptomatic," Thrissur DMO Dr K.J. Reena said.

Her samples were tested as she was prepared to go to New Delhi for study

Doc, 3 others test positive for Zika

Thiruvananthapuram, July 13: A fourth case of Zika virus was reported from Kerala on Tuesday taking the infection count in the state to 23, the health department said.

"A 16-year-old Thiruvananthapuram native girl was found

lines by the public.

The infection will again rise, if people do not properly follow Covid-appropriate behaviour, he cautioned.

On Tuesday, Odisha reported its highest toll of 68 deaths due to Covid infection taking the overall number of fatalities to 4,730 in the pandemic. The maximum number

purposes. Then the RT-PCR result turned out to be positive, she said.

The woman is presently at home and "she is OK," the doctor said.

It was on January 30, 2020 that the third year medical student from Wuhan university tested positive for coronavirus, becoming the country's first Covid-19 patient, days after she had returned home following semester holidays. — PTI

Doc, 3 others test positive for Zika

Thiruvananthapuram, July 13: A fourth case of Zika virus was reported from Kerala on Tuesday taking the infection count in the state to 23, the health department said.

"A 16-year-old Thiruvananthapuram native girl was found

of 17 fatalities was reported from Khurda district, seven from Ganjam, six each from Bargarh and Mayurbhanj, five from Sundargarh, four from Puri, three each from Angul and Jajpur, two each from Bolangir, Cuttack and Dhenkanal and one each from Balasore, Kandhamal and Nuapada.

Cinemas can open
with 50% capacity

**RABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY**
BHOPAL, JULY 13

The Madhya Pradesh government on Tuesday further eased Covid curbs by allowing cinema halls to reopen with 50 per cent capacity. However, the movie theatre association was not keen to open the multiplexes, saying that they would wait for the release of new films to open them.

"It will not be financially viable for us to run a cinema hall or a multiplex with 50 percent capacity by screening old movies. Bollywood has not released any new film during the coronavirus pandemic. We will wait for the release of new films to open the cinema halls," movie theatre association president Aziz Uddin said. According to him, the cinema business has suffered a loss to the tune of ₹60 crore due to closure of theatres during the pandemic in the state.

There are around 1,500 cinema halls and multiplexes in MP. Cinema halls were reopened on October 16, 2020 after the lockdown and then closed down again on March 25, 2021 when the second wave hit the state. The state government has also allowed restaurants to reopen with cent percent capacity and eased curbs on the gatherings in the marriage functions and during the death rituals.

The fresh coronavirus cases have now dropped to 18 in Madhya Pradesh. Besides, the active cases have also come down to 296. Forty four out of total 52 districts have recorded no new cases in the last 24 hours.

Meanwhile, the state government has declared 1478 backlog deaths taking the death toll to 10,506.

MADHYA PRADESH

SII to produce
Sputnik vaccine
from September

New Delhi, July 13: Serum Institute of India (SII) will start production of Sputnik vaccine at the company's facilities in September, Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) said on Tuesday.

As per the agreement between RDIF and SII, the parties intend to produce over 300 million doses of the vaccine in India per year.

"The first batch of Sputnik vaccine is expected to be produced at SII's facilities in September," RDIF said in a statement.

As part of the technical transfer process, SII has already received cell and vector samples from the Gamaleya Centre. With their import approved by the Drug Controller General of India (DCGI), the cultivation process has begun, it added. India is the leading production hub for production of Sputnik vaccine, it added. — PTI

India open to maritime security
ties with African nations : MEA

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 13

India is "open to expanding cooperation in maritime safety and security" with African nations, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said. He added that the defence and security cooperation with Africa "is today being updated to meet more contemporary challenges". The EAM was addressing the 16th CII-EXIM Bank Conclave on India and Africa Project Partnership on the theme "Harnessing the Africa-India Opportunity: Connect, Create and Collaborate".

"India has a long history in defence and security cooperation with Africa. That is today being updated to meet more contemporary challenges. Our involvement in HADR (humanitarian assistance and disaster relief) operations has been notable, such as during cyclone Idai in Mozambique. We are open to expanding cooperation in maritime safety and security, given the increase in non-traditional threats faced by many African littoral states," he said.

"As we seek to come out of the Covid pandemic, this partnership assumes

an even greater salience," he said.

Noting that India's approach to development partnership with Africa is guided by the Kampala Principles enunciated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2018, Mr Jaishankar said India's activities and initiatives are designed to respond to the needs of Africa and the priorities of its people.

"It envisages co-capabilities and co-benefits, while promoting local ownership. As a result, we see a unique level of trust that is even more valuable as we contemplate the challenges ahead," he said.

Rahul, Priyanka meet Prashant Kishor;
trouble in Punjab Congress intensifies

■ **Continued from Page 1** assisting Ms Mamata Banerjee. Mr Kishor had publicly said he was looking for a future beyond "his present role".

Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra have met Navjot Singh Sidhu separately in recent weeks.

After that, Capt. Amarinder Singh met party president Sonia Gandhi earlier this month to resolve the crisis facing the Congress in the state ahead of the Assembly elections. Capt. Amarinder Singh said

after the meeting that they had discussed the development of Punjab and "internal matters of the party", and that he would follow any decision taken by Mrs Gandhi. The high command has been trying to resolve the Punjab crisis for over a month now. Things have become difficult as Mr Sidhu has been going hammer and tongs on Twitter.

Interestingly, Mr Sidhu's tirade against the members of his own party continued on Tuesday. In a series of tweets, he said that the Aam Aadmi Party

(AAP) had always "recognised" his work and "vision" for Punjab. He further tweeted in Hindi targeting "loyal Congressmen" and the "Opposition". His tweet said: "If you go to the Aam Aadmi Party, then there is no issue, but if you stay in the Congress there will be an issue."

Several leaders and former Union ministers have thrown their weight behind the Punjab CM in the tussle between him and Mr Sidhu. Last week Lok Sabha MP from Anandpur Sahib Manish

Tewari asked the Congress office-bearers to take note of the utterances of Mr Sidhu as Mr Sidhu has been speaking against the Congress' state government and the chief minister. Insiders claim that Mr Sidhu is insistent on becoming the state unit chief while Capt.

Amarinder Singh has demonstrated to the high command that he has the support and trust of a majority of party legislators but has left the final decision to Congress president Sonia Gandhi.

PM warning on mask-less crowds

■ **Continued from Page 1** wave", he said that it needs to be understood that the "third wave" will not come on its own. He said the main question in our minds should be how to prevent a "third wave". "Experts are repeatedly warning against carelessness and crowding as they can lead to a massive surge in cases," he said, strongly advocating for the prevention of avoidable crowding.

On Friday, July 16, Mr Modi will interact with the chief ministers of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka,

Odisha, Maharashtra and Kerala to discuss the Covid-19 situation in these states. These are among the states where the infection numbers have seen an increase in several districts or have not in general seen a dip, unlike in most other states.

Referring to the recent Cabinet approval of a ₹23,000 crore package for improving the infrastructure for testing and treatment, the PM said that it will help in strengthening the health infrastructure of the Northeast.

This package will expedite testing, diagnostics

and genome sequencing in the Northeast, he said.

Dr V.K. Paul, Niti Aayog's member (health), said, meanwhile: "The third wave is already here in the world as 3.9 lakh new confirmed cases are being reported from across the globe each day."

The Uttarakhand government announced its decision to cancel the Kanwar Yatra this year in view of the pandemic. In Odisha too the "Bol Bam" yatra has been cancelled. The Uttarakhand police is learnt to have sent back over 8,000 tourists from Mussoorie and Nainital to

avoid overcrowding after the visuals of a sea of people surfaced.

Meanwhile, the developers of Russia's Sputnik V coronavirus vaccine said a deal had been struck with the Serum Institute of India (SII) to produce 300 million doses annually. The SII is also trying to upscale the production of its Covishield vaccine, and 110 million doses have been produced by July. On the other hand, Dr Reddy's Laboratories has said it will strengthen the commercial rollout of Sputnik V vaccines in India in the coming weeks.

TMC for early bypolls

■ **Continued from Page 1** bypolls. The seat was recently vacated by state minister Sovande Chatterjee, who is expected to fight from Khardah in North 24 Parganas.

Along with Bhowanipore and Khardah, three more Assembly seats — Gosaba, Dinhata and Santipur — are due to hold bypolls, apart from two others — Shamshegunj and Jangipur in Murshidabad — where the EC earlier postponed the election due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Population row builds

■ **Continued from Page 1** the limited natural resources available, it will be difficult to meet the needs of every citizen if there is a population explosion." Karnataka law minister Basavaraj Bommai has said that a decision will be taken after discussion and deliberation.

A Public Interest Litigation case has been filed in the Supreme Court by BJP leader Ashwini Upadhyaya seeking the introduction of a two-child norm or framing a new law to control births.

THE ASIAN AGE

14 JULY 2021

Pushing two-child policy:
Can it ramp up growth?

Not since the dark days of the Emergency, when the late Sanjay Gandhi became an extra-constitutional authority and ordered a mass sterilisation drive in which the poor were mostly caught up, have we heard of coercive population control policies. The Himanta Biswa Sarma government in Assam kicked off with blatant public announcements last month, asking the Muslim minorities to be “decent” and adopt a two-child norm, the implication being that Muslim couples alone have more than two-children.

The Yogi Adityanath government in UP has hardly lagged behind and has made proposals of a similar nature. Fundamentally, in both Assam and UP, the idea is to deprive families with more than two children of government benefits and subsidies, and to accord benefits to families with no more than two offspring.

While this is not spelt out, the unspoken assumption seems to be to get at the minorities, although it is not yet clear how the issue would pan out in the case of non-Muslim families which have two children or more. So, there is turmoil on the horizon if the policies under consideration are sought to be implemented.

As far as the Hindu Right goes, the idea of population control for Muslims goes back a long way. It is interesting to recall that the Jana Sangh, the precursor of the BJP, tore into Indira Gandhi for the Emergency, but not Sanjay Gandhi — the architect of the sterilisation drive — whose widow afterward found a place of honour in the saffron party.

Before the Assam and UP government plans were put on the table in recent weeks, some BJP MPs had moved private member Bills in Parliament

Indeed, before the Assam and UP state government plans were put on the table in recent weeks, some BJP MPs had moved private member Bills in Parliament along similar lines. One of them, Ajay Bhatt of Uttarakhand, was recently made a minister. Rakesh Sinha, a nominated Member close to BJP,

moved a similar Bill, as did Ravi Kishan, a UP MP. Mr Sinha appears to be keen on reviving his Bill in the upcoming Monsoon Session of Parliament.

The idea that large populations dragged down economic growth, and hence practically wiped out prospects of rapid economic development in developing societies, once had a measure of acceptance even in academic literature. But the very fast rise of China has doused enthusiasm for that view. The forcibly implemented one-child policy has had to abandoned. It led to serious economic consequences with shrinking of the labour force and the rise of older people demanding state support.

Standard economic development theory shows that more children are associated with poor societies as more children translate to more earning members in conditions of poverty. According to the last population census (2011), the rate of growth of population among Muslims was higher than the Hindus. This is consistent with the official finding that Muslims in India are poorer than even the scheduled caste population on average, and have a literacy rate that is well below the national average.

However, it is important to note that, according to the National Family Health Survey-3, fertility is declining at a faster rate among Muslims than among Hindus. This aspect is wholly lost in popular — especially political — discourse as communal agendas are sharpened on the basis of faster (although declining) population growth data. The poverty angle is wholly discounted as higher populations are spuriously co-related to religious teachings, fuelling majoritarian anxieties.

When a comprehensive national effort is needed to fight the pandemic, the present dispensation is expected to have squelched population-related communalism. It has done no such thing.

Soccer’s race hurdle

It seems they were the best of times when the universal sport of football ruled the airwaves from Europe and South America. Poetry in motion, which flowing soccer is, may have come like a balm when the coronavirus pandemic raged in many parts of the world. But they also seemed like the worst of times as the game brought with it all its attendant evils like false nationalism, hooliganism and outright racism.

An absorbing final of the Euro 2020 competition in which the England team, which had whipped up overwhelming enthusiasm, came up short in the penalty shootout was followed by the worst kind of on-site as well as online behaviour. Thousands of brutes of fans had already invaded the Wembley Stadium in London before kick-off and created bedlam inside for paying spectators. Scenes of weekend drunkenness gave way to violence as English soccer hooligans began beating up Italian supporters as they were exiting the arena after Italy’s triumph.

In its excess, demonstrative loyalty to the national team can be an embarrassingly jingoistic phenomenon, with politicians themselves not loath to climbing the bandwagon and appropriating popular sentiment. The beautiful game is to be enjoyed, not to be used for berating its players like many did on the social media, particularly roasting the three hapless players of colour who missed penalty kicks for England in a nerve-shredding shootout.

The social media is a modern phenomenon that lends itself too easily to toxic content in hate mongering and several evils as common people use them as platforms to display their biases. Big Tech exacerbates the problem as it does little to filter out the obvious, even when there are giveaway symptoms as in the use of icons such as bananas, monkeys and gorillas to deride people of certain races.

The FA and UK government have stood up to the racism of Internet ruffians. But fans were also guilty of booing when teams “took the knee” to condemn just the kind of racism that gives football, with its historical hooliganism, such a bad name. There is much to be done towards stamping it out from public spheres like sport.

KAUSHIK MITTER
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Subhani



Managing expectations
after Modi’s big shuffle



Shikha Mukerjee

The bigger the organisation the more complex and stumble-prone the process of recalibrating it to deliver on the manifest destiny of being the unsailable champion is what the meticulous exercise in expansion, face-saving resignations and reappointments looks like from a distance.

Seen through the lens of a state that delivered an electoral verdict which was as much an evaluation of 10 years of Mamata Banerjee’s government in West Bengal as it was of the seven years of Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s rule at the Centre and the BJP’s communally divisive Hindutva agenda and plans for domination on the basis of “one nation-one party”, the 43 new additions (including seven promoted to the Cabinet from junior ministries) in the Union government have stirred up more trouble than cheer. The inclusions, ostensibly of the marginalised, but in fact of a section of problematic claimants, have compelled the BJP to issue orders that no one should violate the party line.

In plain terms, two new ministers of state, both political mavericks, John Barla from Alipurduar and Nishit Pramanik from Cooch Behar in North Bengal, have been clearly told that reiterating the demand for breaking up West Bengal by creating a new Union territory for the north districts is not the BJP’s officially approved objective and that they should watch what they say. The inclusion of Shantanu Thakur from Bongaon in North 24 Parganas as a representative of the politically divided refugee settlers from the Scheduled Caste Matua community and “namashudras” from across the border who ostensibly fled religious

persecution, the West Bengal BJP leadership, namely its chief Dilip Ghosh, felt it necessary to issue a caveat. The appointment of Subhash Sarkar is a nod to the fact that there were old-timers in the BJP before the wave of defectors arrived and seized the limelight.

Basically, the BJP, at least in West Bengal, has temporised. It has included and given representation to the marginalised, which in an electoral democracy is a big positive as it works as an inclusion mechanism for people who had not been given a share in power. It has boosted the image of never represented or seriously powerless communities as it seems to have done painstakingly and methodically across the Hindi speaking heartland and in its stronghold of Karnataka and in the other states from where it has drawn its new ministers.

Looked at from the BJP’s local leadership’s rush to douse expectations in West Bengal, it does seem that the party hasn’t worked out how the raised status in terms of a place in the Modi ministry is to be converted into substantive action or policy or legislated action. BJP state president Dilip Ghosh equivocated on a key political issue, the inclusion of Hindu refugees and identification and exclusion of illegal Muslim migrants from across the border, by saying it was all up to Mamata Banerjee to implement the Citizenship Amendment Act and the National Register of Citizens. Given her emphatic refusal to do any such thing, it seems that the BJP has pushed the CAA-NRC to the back of the list of deliverables. It’s equally significant that Assam’s chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has modified his initial position on the CAA-NRC and Muslims; he has declared that old Muslim

settlers were with him on identifying new illegals.

“Mainstreaming” the marginalised, converting one individual into an elite representative: is that enough? The question is fundamental to meeting expectations, where such expectations exist that the BJP is aware of and has a strategic position on. The question is equally important to policymaking over the next three years.

What, if anything, are the 27 new Other Backward Caste, 11 women, 12 new Scheduled Caste and eight new Scheduled Tribe ministers in the Modi Cabinet going to deliver for their specific constituencies? Having raised the status and stoked aspirations, the Modi government must have a plan to convert the newly bestowed prominence and the desires that go with it into something tangible that would then work to firmly bind the community’s loyalties to the BJP, in the state elections between now and 2024, and of course in 2024.

The Cabinet’s overhaul and its vast expansion is a tacit acknowledgment that the government was treading water and going nowhere in managing the crises that continue to overwhelm India’s population: containing the killer virus, providing health services, offering relief to the brutally affected poor as a consequence of the economy’s standstill or slowdown and cranking up the economy even as inflation threatens to spiral out of control.

The rejig focused on health, labour employment, education and petrol prices. The followup announcements on increased financial allocations for key problems, including farmers’ demands raised by the seven-month protest, the world’s longest ever such anti-gov-

ernment demonstration, was a concrete step at reassuring the sceptical and angry voter that the Narendra Modi government has shaken off its inertia.

The next step must be to revise the BJP’s narrative of being a civilising political force and protector of India’s glorious and ancient culture. The reality of political violence and the deliberate exercise of building up pressure that erupts in such violence is not limited to West Bengal, regardless of the BJP’s campaign that such violence had been tamed everywhere else.

The West Bengal election verdict was a clear sign that the voters in this state, and voters in Uttar Pradesh’s panchayat elections, that coincided with the West Bengal elections, was not well disposed towards the Modi government’s inaction. Voters in Uttar Pradesh, which goes for Assembly elections in 2022, will not be convinced that political violence is a West Bengal monopoly. In 12 districts of Yogi Adityanath’s state, scenes of murderous clashes unfolded as India watched, including a video that went viral of a woman leader from Lakhimpur Kheri whose sari was pulled off for which the entire contingent of a police station have been shunted out.

The gap between lived experience and rhetoric has caught up with the BJP after West Bengal and Kerala. The visuals of super-spreader crowds at Kempt Falls in BJP-ruled Uttarakhand is incontrovertible evidence of a failure of governance. The gaps must be closed with better governance and Prime Minister Modi has to do it, not with optics of meetings to manage oxygen supplies but by nudging Union ministries to effectively administer and certainly not by blaming state governments or specific individuals for their misdemeanours. The bottomline is that in a game of big stakes, the principal player has to know how to think big.

The visuals of super-spreader crowds at Kempt Falls in BJP-ruled Uttarakhand is incontrovertible evidence of a failure of governance

Shikha Mukerjee is a senior journalist in Kolkata

LETTERS

OLI WELL SERVED

The Nepal Supreme Court directing President Bidya Devi Bhandari to appoint Nepali Congress chief Sher Bahadur Deuba as Prime Minister and summon a new session of the House of Representatives on July 18 is a watershed moment. Bhandari had dissolved the lower house for the second time in five months on May 22 at the behest of Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli and announced snap elections. The development must come as a tight slap for Oli, who has resorted to various ploys to cling to the PM’s chair.

N.J. Ravi Chander
Bengaluru

BEEF WITH HIMANTA

AFTER SHIFTING allegiance to the BJP and winning two Assembly elections as member of the party, the incumbent chief minister of Assam, Himanta Biswa Sarma, is doing all he can to push the party’s core agenda. Population control is desirable, but the beef ban is bound to cause a lot of consternation in the northeastern state. This attempt to impose a majoritarian view of Hindu culture can undo much of the good he has done so far. This step would please hardcore supporters of the Hindutva ideology but is detrimental to the idea of India.

Anthony Henriques
Mumbai

GO MATTEO

IT IS MATTEO BERRETTINI’S first Grand Slam final but the manner in which he came back from behind to win the first set in a tie-breaker against none other than the reigning king and defending champion, Novak Djokovic, made the tennis world sit up and take note. Though Berrettini had some unbelievable winners to his credit, we saw him committing repeated errors, partly due to nervousness. Djokovic regained his momentum and the rest is history. However, Berrettini has fire in his belly. He needs just one major win to gain that much-needed confidence.

Anna Mary Yvonne
Chennai

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

SHORT TAKES

HERZOG,
ERDOGAN TALK IN
SIGN OF THAW

Jerusalem, July 13: Israel's newly inaugurated president spoke Monday with his Turkish counterpart, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, in a sign of a possible thaw after years of frosty relations between the two former allies.

President Isaac Herzog's office said in a statement that the two leaders emphasised "that Israel-Turkey relations are of great significance for security and stability in the eastern Mediterranean" and that cooperation had great potential for both countries. Israel and Turkey were once close regional partners, but relations between the two countries soured in the past decade. The Turkish government frequently criticises Israel's policies toward the Palestinians.

According to the Israeli President's Office statement, Herzog and Erdogan said that "ongoing dialogue despite all the differences of opinion" was important, particularly for advancing steps toward a two-state solution between Israel and the Palestinians.

Herzog took office last week after he was elected by the Knesset, Israel's parliament, in a June vote. He spoke Saturday with neighbouring Jordan's King Abdullah II after Israel and Jordan agreed to initiate negotiations for the sale of water to the Hashemite kingdom.

SCRIBE ATTACK:
GEORGIA OPPN
ASKS PM TO QUIT

Tbilisi, July 13: Opposition lawmakers in Georgia on Monday disrupted parliament to demand the prime minister's resignation after a TV cameraman died, blaming the ruling party for attacks on journalists. Alexander Lashkarava, who worked for independent TV news channel *Pirveli*, died on Sunday — days after he was beaten by far-right activists during a protest against an LGBTQ Pride march.

Lashkarava's death spurred demonstrations on Sunday outside parliament, drawing about 8,000 people.

On Monday, several opposition lawmakers occupied the parliament speaker's seat and demanded Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili stand down.

They claimed he and the ruling Georgian Dream party had allowed violence against media workers.

Footage aired by the independent Mtavari TV station showed chaotic scenes in the plenary chamber where opposition parliamentarians scuffled with ruling party MPs.

The session resumed after four MPs who had occupied the speaker's chair were forcibly removed from the room.

Later in the evening, some 2,000 people — including hundreds of journalists and rights activists — staged a protest outside parliament, vowing permanent demonstrations until Garibashvili resigns.

U.S. WILDFIRES
THREATEN HOMES
IN 10 STATES

Los Angeles, July 13: Wildfires that torched homes and forced thousands to evacuate burned across 10 parched Western states on Tuesday, and the largest, in Oregon, threatened California's power supply. Nearly 60 wildfires tore through bone-dry timber and brush from Alaska to Wyoming, according to the National Interagency Fire Center.

Arizona, Idaho and Montana accounted for more than half of the large active fires. The fires erupted as the West was in the grip of the second bout of dangerously high temperatures in just a few weeks. A climate change-fuelled megadrought also is contributing to conditions that make fires even more dangerous, scientists say.

The National Weather Service says the heat wave appeared to have peaked in many areas, and excessive-heat warnings were largely expected to expire by Tuesday. However, they continued into Tuesday night in some California deserts, and many areas were still expected to see high in the 80s and 90s.

In Northern California, a combined pair of lightning-ignited blazes dubbed the Beckwourth Complex was less than 25% surrounded after days of battling flames fuelled by winds, hot weather and low humidity that sapped the moisture from vegetation. Evacuation orders were in place for more than 3,000 residents of remote northern areas and neighbouring Nevada. There were reports of burned homes, but damage was still being tallied. The blaze had consumed 140 square miles (362 square kilometres) of land, including in Plumas National Forest.

92 Iraqi Covid patients die in fire

Blaze in the Nasiriyah's Al-Hussein Hospital was fuelled by explosion of oxygen canisters

Baghdad, July 13: The death toll from a fire that swept through a hospital Coronavirus ward in Iraq has climbed to at least 92, the Iraqi state news agency reported on Tuesday. The announcement came as anguished family members buried their loved ones and lashed out at the government over the tragedy. The blaze that erupted Monday in the city of Nasiriyah was the second catastrophic fire in less than three months to kill hospitalised Covid-19 patients in Iraq, where the health care system has been crippled by decades of war and sanctions.

Two health officials said more than 100 people were also injured in the fire that torched the Coronavirus ward of al-Hussein Teaching Hospital in the city of Nasiriyah on Monday. Anguished relatives were still looking for traces of their loved ones. Many cried openly, their tears tinged with anger, blaming both the provincial government of Dhi Qar, where Nasiriyah is located, and the federal government in Baghdad for years of mismanagement and neglect.

"The whole state system has collapsed, and who paid the price? The people inside here. These people have paid the price," said Haidar al-Askari, who was at the scene of the blaze. Overnight, firefighters and rescuers — many with just flashlights and using blankets to extinguish small fires still smoldering in places — had frantically worked searching through the ward in the darkness.

As dawn broke, bodies covered with sheets were laid on the ground outside the hospital. Earlier, officials had said the fire was caused by an electric short circuit, but provided no more details. Another official said the blaze erupted when an oxygen cylinder exploded. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to speak to journalists. The new ward, opened just three months ago, contained 70 beds. Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi chaired an emergency meeting in the wake of the fire and ordered the suspension and arrest of the health director in Dhi Qar, as well as the director of the hospital and the city's director of civil defence. A government investigation was also launched.

In the nearby Shiite holy city of Najaf, mourners prepared to bury some of the victims. It was the second time a large fire killed Coronavirus patients in an Iraqi hospital this year. At least 82 people died at Ibn al-Khateeb hospital in Baghdad in April, when an oxygen tank exploded, sparking the blaze. That incident brought to light widespread negligence and systemic mismanagement in Iraq's hospitals.

Doctors have decried lax safety rules, especially around the oxygen cylinders. On Monday, Ammar al-Zamil, spokesman for the Dhi Qar health department, said that there were at least 63 patients inside the ward when the fire began.

Maj. Gen. Khalid Bohan, head of Iraq's civil defence, said the building was constructed from flammable materials and prone to fire.

● **PRIME MINISTER Mustafa al-Kadhimi ordered the suspension and arrest of the health director in Dhi Qar, as well as the director of the hospital and the city's director of civil defence.**



Rescuers and civilians look for bodies after a catastrophic blaze erupted Monday at a Coronavirus hospital ward in the al-Hussein Teaching Hospital, in Nasiriyah, Iraq, on Tuesday. — AP

Macron orders all health workers to get vaccinated

Paris, July 13: French President Emmanuel Macron on Monday ordered all French health care workers to get virus vaccine shots by Sept. 15 and urged all of his compatriots to get vaccinated as soon as possible, to fight resurgent infections that are threatening the country's economic recovery. In a televised address, Macron also mandated special Covid-19 passes for anyone who wants to go to a restaurant, shopping mall or several other public places.

To get a pass, people must be fully vaccinated, have a fresh negative virus test or have proof they recently recovered from the

● **THE DELTA variant is driving France's virus infections back up again, just as the country kicked off summer vacation season after a long-awaited reopening process.**

virus. The Delta variant is driving France's virus infections back up again, just as the country kicked off summer vacation season after a long-awaited reopening process. Some 40 per cent of France's population is fully vaccinated.

"The country is facing a strong resumption of the epidemic touching all our territory," Macron said,

speaking against the backdrop of the Eiffel Tower. He stopped short of any new lockdown-like measures, saying "we have to live with the virus".

He said his centrist French government would declare a medical state of emergency Tuesday, which allows more freedom to impose curbs. Most European governments have shied away from mandating vaccinations. But after deaths in nursing homes, Macron said vaccination is essential for all health care workers, nursing home workers, and workers or volunteers who care for the elderly or ailing at home.

— AP

SYDNEY CURBS
ON, OZ VOWS
FINANCIAL AID

Canberra, July 13: Australian government officials on Tuesday announced added financial support for businesses and households as Sydney appeared increasingly likely to enter a fourth week of lockdown due to Coronavirus clusters. New South Wales state Premier Gladys Berejiklian said she would announce on Wednesday whether Sydney's five million residents would remain locked down beyond the three-week mark on Friday. She had said the 24-hour record of 122 new cases recorded on Sunday made lifting the lockdown on Friday "almost impossible". No one knew how long the lockdown would last, Berejiklian said.

"What we do know is that we have the financial support there so that individuals and families and businesses don't have to stress and they know that for the duration of the lockdown, the support will be there," she said.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison said the presence in Sydney of the Delta variant, which is thought to be more contagious, had escalated the pandemic danger.

"The New South Wales outbreak has proved to be more severe, more dangerous, and it's in the national interest that we now put in place an upgraded set of arrangements for cooperation with the states and territories," Morrison said of the disaster funding deal.

— AP

Merkel says jabs to remain voluntary

Berlin, July 13: Germany is not planning to follow France and other countries in introducing compulsory Covid-19 vaccinations for parts of the population, Chancellor Angela Merkel said Tuesday.

"We do not intend to go down this road," Merkel said in Berlin after visiting the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) public health agency.

"We are at the beginning of the phase in which we are still promoting (vaccination), where we have more vaccines than we have people who want to be vaccinated," she said.

After a slow start to its vaccination campaign earlier this year, Germany sped up its drive over the summer and had by Tuesday fully vaccinated 42.6 percent of adults, with 58.5 percent vaccinated at least once.

But demand has slowed over the past two weeks, with the number of jabs given on Monday at its lowest since February.

With the highly contagious Delta variant now dominant in Germany and the RKI saying at least 85 percent of adults will need to be vaccinated to achieve herd immunity, some have been calling for a new approach.

Wolfram Henn, a genetics specialist at Saarland University and a member of the German Ethics Council, which advises the government on its vaccination strategy, called on Tuesday for jabs to be made compulsory for teachers.

Teachers and educators, by virtue of their choice of profession, have a very special responsibility

● **AFTER A slow start to its vaccination campaign earlier this year, Germany sped up its drive over the summer and had by Tuesday fully vaccinated 42.6 percent of adults, with 58.5 percent vaccinated at least once.**

● **BUT DEMAND has slowed over the past two weeks, with the number of jabs given on Monday at its lowest since February.**

● **WITH THE highly contagious Delta variant now dominant in Germany and the RKI saying at least 85 percent of adults will need to be vaccinated to achieve herd immunity, some have been calling for a new approach.**

towards the people entrusted to them and their families," he told the *Bild* daily.

French President Emmanuel Macron had on Monday announced mandatory vaccinations for healthcare staff, retirement home workers and others working with vulnerable people from September, in line with similar moves in Greece, Italy and Britain.

But Merkel said she did not believe the German government could "gain trust" by following a similar path.

"I think we can gain trust by advertising vaccination and also by letting as many people as possible in the population (...) become ambassadors for the vaccine from their own experience," she said.

— AFP

Virus-hit Malaysia
vax centre closed

Kuala Lumpur, July 13: Malaysia shut down a mass vaccination centre Tuesday after more than 200 medical staff and volunteers tested positive for the Coronavirus.

Science Minister Khairy Jamaluddin said it was difficult to determine if the infections occurred at the centre, while stressing that swift government action had stopped the cluster. He urged people who were vaccinated at the centre from Friday onward to isolate themselves for 10 days in case they develop symptoms. Khairy, who is in charge of the national immunisation programme, said he ordered testing for all 453 workers at the centre in central Selangor state after two volunteers contracted the virus.

Khairy said the 204 whose results were positive

had low viral loads, meaning the amount of virus in their bodies was small. The centre was shut for deep sanitisation and all its workers were being isolated. Khairy said the center will reopen Wednesday with a new team of medical workers. Despite a strict lockdown since June 1, the pandemic had worsened with confirmed cases breaching 844,000 and 6,200 deaths. But vaccination has picked up pace, with nearly 11% of the population inoculated. — AP

Thailand defends Covid
mix-and-match vaccine

Bangkok, July 13: Thailand on Tuesday defended mixing two different Covid-19 vaccines to battle a surge in infections, after the WHO's top scientist warned it was a "dangerous trend" not backed by evidence.

The kingdom is struggling to contain its latest outbreak fuelled by the highly contagious Delta variant, with cases and deaths skyrocketing and the health-care system stretched thin. Authorities said they will mix a first dose of the

Chinese-made Sinovac jab with a second dose of AstraZeneca to try and achieve a "booster" effect in six weeks instead of 12.

Thailand's chief virologist Yong Poovorawan said this would be possible by combining an inactivated virus vaccine — Sinovac — with a viral vector vaccine such as AstraZeneca. "We can't wait 12 weeks (for a booster effect) in this outbreak where the disease is spreading fast," he said. "But in the future, if there are better, improved

vaccines... we will find a better way to manage the situation."

His comments come a day after the World Health Organisation's chief scientist Soumya Swaminathan called the strategy a "dangerous trend".

"We are in a bit of a data-free, evidence-free zone as far as 'mix-and-match'", she said.

Thailand has reported more than 353,700 coronavirus cases and 2,847 deaths.

— AFP

Booster shots possible, says US Surgeon General

Washington, July 13: The nation's top doctor says it's "certainly possible" that Americans eventually will be advised to get a booster shot of the Coronavirus vaccine.

Surgeon General Vivek Murthy said no decision had been made yet after a meeting with Pfizer to discuss its request for approval of a third shot of its Covid vaccine. He added as officials make their assessments,

● **VIVEK MURTHY said no decision had been made yet after a meeting with Pfizer to discuss its request for approval of a third shot of its Covid vaccine.**

"what we're really looking for is clear evidence that immunity is waning," such as breakthrough infections in the vaccinated population.

He says that may trigger a recommendation for booster shots. Murthy also says it's "certainly very possible" a third shot will be recommended for immunocompromised or vulnerable Americans, such as those on chemotherapy.

"We are looking closely at that population," he says, adding when the data suggests a booster dose is needed, it will be recommended.

— AP

J&J vax increases risk of rare nerve disorder, warns FDA

Washington, July 13: The US Food and Drug Administration updated its warning labels Monday for the Johnson & Johnson Covid-19 vaccine to include information about an observed "increased risk"

of a rare neurological disorder called Guillain-Barre Syndrome (GBS).

The news is a further blow for the company, which was granted an emergency use authorisation for its shot in February but

has played a minor role in America's Coronavirus immunisation campaign.

Officials have identified 100 preliminary reports of GBS after approximately 12.5 million doses administered.

— AFP

CONTROVERSIAL | VIEWS

Lectures, seminars are held to expose 2014 Nobel Prize winner's western agenda

Pak pvt schools' assn launches anti-Malala documentary

Lahore, July 12: Pakistan's private schools' association launched a documentary on Pakistani education activist Malala Yousafzai for her controversial views on Islam, marriage and her pursuit of the Western agenda.

Malala, who turned 24 on Monday, was the co-recipient of the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize for her struggle against the suppression of children and young people

and for the right of all children to education.

Having received the prize at the age of 17, Malala is the youngest Nobel laureate. She shared the prize with Kailash Satyarthi, a children's rights activist from India.

Addressing a press conference at his office in Gulberg here, the All-Pakistan Private Schools Federation president Kashif Mirza said:

"Through this documentary film — I am not Malala — we will tell 20 million students in 200,000 private schools across the country about her controversial views on Islam, marriage, pursuing of Western agenda."

"The idea behind this is we want to expose Malala among the youth as it does not get impressed by her so-called story of struggle for women rights," Mirza

said. He said Malala had advocated "partnership" that is adultery in Islam.

"Marriage is a sunnah of the Prophet (pbuh) and partnership is adultery," he said.

"I am not Malala's Day" is also observed on July 12 in private schools as lectures and seminars are held to expose her western agenda to students.

Mirza said Malala has categorically rejected the

institution of marriage and suggested that 'partnership' is better than getting married. "Malala has attacked the institution of marriage and family structure by advocating that people should live in sin... No one can justify Muslims living together without marriage as it is strongly condemned in Islam," he said.

Similarly, Mirza said in her book "I am Malala",

the Nobel Peace winner book has highly controversial material in it which is contrary to the teachings of Islam, Quranic injunctions, ideology of Islam and Pakistan's founder Mohammad Ali Jinnah and the Pakistan Army.

"This book is written at the behest of western forces that used Malala for their ulterior motives. Malala has declared Islam and Pak army as 'militant'

in her controversial book. She also criticised Quranic verses about two women's testimony to be equal to that of a man and also about the four witnesses in rape case," he said.

Mirza said a group photo with writer Tasleema Nasreen and strong ties with an Indian for Nobel award are enough to explain Malala's designs.

— PTT

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	52769.73	0.76
Nifty 50	15812.40	0.76
S&P 500*	4,388.57	0.09
Dollar (₹)	74.49	0.13
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.20	0.15
Euro (₹)	88.21	0.20
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	46,856▲90	0.19
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	76.38	1.62
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.103	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.356	-0.007

* As of 8:30 PM IST

S&P keeps India rating at BBB- for 14th year

S&P Global Ratings affirmed India's sovereign rating at the lowest investment grade of 'BBB-' for the 14th year in a row with a stable outlook, and said the country's strong external settings will act as a buffer against financial strains despite elevated government funding needs over the next 24 months. The ratings reflect the economy's above-average long-term real GDP growth and sound external profile, it said.

DGH cuts down paperwork in oilfield approval



In a major overhaul, the DGH has made it easier for firms to explore and produce oil and gas by limiting the requirement of statutory approvals to only extension of contracts, sale of stake and annual accounts while allowing self-certification and deemed approval for the rest. The Directorate General of Hydrocarbons said processes for oil and gas blocks awarded under nine bids round of NELP are being simplified.

Hotels' body approaches Niti Aayog for help

The Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Associations of India has submitted a representation to Niti Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant, alleging Oyo's business model has caused "irreparable damage" to the hospitality ecosystem. It urged the Aayog to devise a system or policy to safeguard the interests of hotel- and lodge-owners. "Oyo operates its business under a maze of more than a dozen subsidiary entities," it said.

Mahindra prices Bolero Neo at ₹8.48 lakh

Mahindra and Mahindra introduced the Bolero Neo SUV at an introductory price of Rs 8.48 lakh across India. The Mahindra Bolero Neo is a TUV300 repositioned as a more upmarket variant of the Bolero range, and gets a 100hp, 1.5-litre diesel engine. In an attempt to change the fortune of the slow selling TUV300, Mahindra has now repositioned the sub-four-meter SUV as the new Mahindra Bolero Neo.

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Shareholders to get equal share in NMDC Steel NMDC to spin off steel unit

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, JULY 13

The NMDC board has approved the demerger of its subsidiary, NMDC Steel, into a separate company after regulatory approvals. NMDC Steel owns a 3 million tonne per annum greenfield integrated steel plant coming up in Chhattisgarh State. Hyderabad-based NMDC Limited is a state-owned iron ore producer and exporter. "As a part of the demerger process fully paid-up equity shares of Rs 10 each of NMDC Steel will be issued and allotted to the equity shareholders of NMDC against over 293.06 crore fully paid up equity shares of Re 1 each held by them in NMDC," NMDC said in a disclosure to the stock exchanges. "The new shares of NMDC Steel to be issued



In October, the CCEA had approved strategic disinvestment of NMDC Steel by selling the entire Government of India stake

and allotted to the shareholders of NMDC as consideration under the scheme would be applied for listing on all the stock exchanges where the existing equity shares of NMDC are currently listed," marking the birth of a new PSU company. The NMDC stock gained 3.80 per cent on the BSE, closing at Rs 172.05. "The Board of Directors of NMDC at its meeting held today, July 13, 2021, has approved the Scheme

of Arrangement for Demerger between NMDC and NMDC Steel," NMDC said. NMDC is considering adding more value to the company's stakeholders by subsequently inviting an investor, it said. To this effect, in October 2020, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs gave its 'in-principle' approval to the demerger of NISP from NMDC and strategic disinvestment of NMDC Steel

by selling the entire Government of India stake in NMDC Steel to a strategic buyer. NMDC is engaged in the exploration and mining of a wide range of minerals including iron ore, copper, rock phosphate, limestone, dolomite, gypsum, bentonite, magnesite, diamond, tin, tungsten, graphite, and beach sands. "As part of expansion, value addition and forward integration programme, NMDC is setting up a 3 MTPA capacity greenfield integrated steel plant i.e. NISP (NMDC Iron & Steel Plant) at Nagamar, located 16 km from Jagdalpur in Chhattisgarh state," NMDC said. "The decision to construct the NISP was taken keeping in view the linkage with iron ore reserves and availability of investible surplus," NMDC said.

BoE sees threat to banks from cloud computing setup

HUW JONES & DAVID MILLIKEN LONDON, JULY 13

Cloud computing providers to the financial sector can be "secretive", and regulators need to act to avoid banks' reliance on a handful of outside firms becoming a threat to financial stability, the Bank of England said on Tuesday. Banks and other financial firms are outsourcing key services to cloud computing companies such as Amazon, Microsoft and Google to improve efficiency and cut costs, with the trend accelerating last

year as the Covid-19 pandemic unfolded. The BoE said cloud computing could sometimes be more reliable than banks hosting all their servers themselves. But big providers could dictate terms and conditions-- as well as prices--to key financial firms. "That concentrated power on terms can manifest itself in the form of secrecy, opacity, not providing customers with the sort of information they need to monitor the risk in the service," BoE governor Andrew Bailey told a news conference. "We have seen

some of that going on." Bailey did not name specific firms he had concerns about. Earlier the BoE's financial policy committee said additional policy measures were needed to mitigate financial stability risks in cloud computing. "In terms of the standards of resilience and the testing of those standards of resilience, frankly we will have to roll some of that back, that secrecy that goes with it. It's not consistent with our objectives," Bailey said. Bailey said the BoE understood cloud

providers' desire not to reveal too much publicly about their operations, in case it opened the door to cyber-attacks, but that the firms needed to give more information to regulators and customers. "We have got to strike a balance here," Bailey said. The BoE said it welcomed the engagement of the finance ministry and Financial Conduct Authority on how to tackle risks from cloud computing, but that a broader approach may be needed, including other regulators and overseas partners. —Reuters

France fines Google 500 mn euros over news copyright row

PARIS, July 13: France's antitrust watchdog slapped a 500 million euro (\$593 million) fine on Alphabet's Google on Tuesday for failing to comply with the regulator's orders on how to conduct talks with the country's news publishers in a row over copyright. The fine comes amid increasing international pressure on online platforms such as Google and Facebook to share more revenue with news outlets. The US tech group must now come up with proposals within the next two months on how it would compensate news agencies and other publishers for the use of their news. If it does not do that, the company would face additional fines of up to 900,000 euros per day. Google said it was very disappointed with the decision but would comply. "Our objective remains the same: we want to turn the page with a definitive agreement. We will take the French Competition Authority's feedback into

consideration and adapt our offers," the US tech giant said. A Google spokesperson added: "We have acted in good faith throughout the entire process. The fine ignores our efforts to reach an agreement, and the reality of how news works on our platforms." News publishers APIG, SEPM and AFP accuse the tech company of having failed to hold talks in good faith with them to find common ground for the remuneration of news content online, under a recent European Union directive that creates so-called "neighbouring rights". The case itself focused on whether Google breached temporary orders issued by the antitrust authority, which demanded such talks take place within three months with any news publishers that ask for them. "When the authority decrees an obligation for a company, it must comply scrupulously, the antitrust body's chief, Isabelle de Silva, said. —Reuters

RoC to examine Carlsberg accounts

SHRUTI SRIVASTAVA & THOMAS BUCKLEY JULY 13

The government is inspecting the account books of the local unit of Carlsberg A/S, according to people with knowledge of the matter, following allegations of potential fraud. The Registrar of Companies has issued a notice to Carlsberg India seeking its response and is preparing to summon the board of directors soon, the people said. Pricewaterhouse-

Coopers LLP—which quit as auditor of Carlsberg India in November after a boardroom dispute at the brewery spilled into its book-keeping—had subsequently complained to the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, the people said. Carlsberg's joint venture partner—Nepal-based Khetan Group—had in 2019 written to the Indian ministries of Corporate Affairs and Commerce alleging that Carlsberg India was offering illegal trade discounts and engaging in

potentially fraudulent practices for sales promotion, the people said. They added that the board hasn't resolved the dispute, prompting the PwC complaint and the government's examination. Divergent views among the Carlsberg India board are the main reason for disclaimers of opinion by the auditor, a representative for Carlsberg said by email. It added that complaints made in 2019 and 2020 by its joint venture partner were closed last year without

any sanctions against Carlsberg India. "We continue to be in a difficult dispute with the JV partner in India," Carlsberg said. "A dispute which is expected to escalate for some time, as the partner still owes Carlsberg \$43 million and still wants to sell his share of the business ahead of time and at a completely unreasonable price." A representative for Khetan Group declined to comment. Carlsberg in its Sustain-

ability Report 2020 disclosed that an investigation during 2019 and 2020 found evidence of potential unethical practices at the India unit but found no evidence of actions aimed at personal gain for Carlsberg staff. An internal probe in 2018 had identified under-age labourers in a warehouse operated by a third party. The contract was terminated, Carlsberg said. It added that a director nominated by the JV partner is unwilling to resign. —Bloomberg

Opec+ impasse means tight oil market: IEA

NOAH BROWNING LONDON, JULY 13

The oil market will see tighter supply for now amid a dispute inside Opec+ about how to ease production curbs but it still faces the risk of a dash for market share if disagreement persists, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said on Tuesday. The Paris-based agency said oil prices would be volatile until differences were resolved among members of Opec+, which

groups the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, Russia and other oil producers. "The Opec+ stalemate means that until a compromise can be reached, production quotas will remain at July's levels. In that case, oil markets will tighten significantly as demand rebounds from last year's Covid-induced plunge," an IEA report said. Opec+ has been slowly unwinding record output curbs agreed last year to cope with the pandemic. But a dispute over policy between Saudi Arabia and

United Arab Emirates this month meant plans to pump more oil by the end of 2021 were put on hold. If differences persist, analysts say the group could even abandon their pact, prompting them to open the taps in a race for market share, adding uncertainty to a market that has seen prices surge to two-and-a-half year highs and slide back again. "The possibility of a market share battle, even if remote, is hanging over markets, as is the potential for high fuel prices to stoke inflation and dam-

age a fragile economic recovery," the IEA said in its monthly report. "Oil markets are likely to remain volatile until there is clarity on Opec+ production policy. And volatility does not help ensure orderly and secure energy transitions nor is it in the interest of either producers or consumers," the IEA said. The IEA said in a report in May that investors should not fund new oil, gas or coal projects if the world wanted to reach net zero emissions by mid-century. —Reuters

MARGINS OF MED DEVICES CAPPED, VACCINE INPUTS MADE DUTY-FREE

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JULY 13

The government on Tuesday capped the trade margins of five critical medical devices, like oximeter and digital thermometer, used in the treatment and prevention of Covid-19, at 70 per cent to bring down prices. The National Pharmaceuticals Pricing Authority (NPPA) has invoked extraordinary powers to put a cap on trade margin of oximeter, glucometer, BP monitor, nebulizer and digital thermometer with effect from July 20. "Existing margins range from 3% to 709% across five categories," the NPPA tweeted. The government has also exempted six adjuvants and emulsifiers used in the production of Covid vaccines and black fungus drugs as well as raw materials used for Covid test kits from customs duty. The customs duty has been exempted for DMPC, DMPG, HSPC DSPG, egg lecithin, cholesterol HP and raw materials for manufacturing Covid test kits. "The exemption will be beneficial for the industry," said P.V. Appaji, former director general of Pharmexil.

SPACE | ECONOMY Moon to be integrated into Earth's economic sphere

Companies urge Japan to tap moon

PAVEL ALPEYEV JULY 13

Japan needs to take commercial development of the moon more seriously if the country is to remain competitive in the budding space economy. That's the message to the government from a group of Japanese companies ranging from Sony Corp to an instant noodle maker. The Lunar Industry Vision Council on Tuesday submitted a white paper to Shinji Inoue, Japan's minister in charge of space policy, urging closer cooperation between the state and the private sector. The docu-

ment calls for incentives to boost investment in space ventures, detailed regulations for exploitation of off-planet resources and greater access for companies to lunar missions. Japan is among a handful of countries along with the US, the UAE and Luxembourg that have established a legal framework for commercial activity in space. The Japanese parliament last month passed legislation allowing the nation's companies to extract and use space resources, given government's permission. It is also part of the Artemis Accords, an international agreement among the US



and its allies allowing countries and companies to establish exclusive zones on the moon. "There will be a paradigm shift in which the moon will be integrated into the Earth's sphere of economic activity, forming into one ecosystem for space activities," the council said in the report. The 33-page document titled "Lunar Industry

Vision" is the first public statement by the advocacy group since it was formed in April. The council comprises representatives from two top universities and about 30 companies, including Sony's research lab, advertising giant Dentsu Group and cup ramen brand Nissin. More than 50 years after the Apollo 11 mission, the moon is once again a subject of geopolitical ambitions. NASA is targeting a return this decade with the Artemis programme. Russia and China are also in the game. India plans another uncrewed moon landing after an attempt failed in 2019. —Bloomberg

Healthcare firms should explore Africa: Exim Bank

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JULY 13

The Exim Bank has identified healthcare as one of the most prospective sectors for investment in Africa and suggested Indian companies to explore opportunities to set up pharma units and hospitals in the continent. India is a leading drugs supplier and health services provider to Africa. Business opportunities in healthcare in Africa are estimated to reach \$259 billion in 2030, finds a study by Exim Bank. India was the largest exporter of pharma products to Africa between

2015 and 2019. India's exports stood at \$3.2 billion, or 19.1 per cent of Africa's pharma imports in 2019. Also, over 50,000 African patients come to India for treatment. "If a fund could be set up, like the India-Africa Health Fund, for financing tertiary hospitals across Africa in at least five regions with a capacity 100 beds each, these patients along with several others who are unable to bear the travel costs could be offered treatment," said the study. The global investment in Africa's healthcare sector during 2015-19 was \$1.1 billion.

SHORT TAKES

Kabra 1st Indian gym judge at Oly

New Delhi: Deepak Kabra has become the first Indian to be selected for judging the gymnastics competition of the Olympic Games, a life goal achieved for the man who knew he wouldn't have made it there as an active gymnast because of his not-so-strong fundamentals. Kabra will be seen officiating the men's artistic gymnasts at the Tokyo Games, which gets underway on July 23.

"I had got the invitation in March last year but then the Olympics got postponed and what followed was a nervous wait for more than a year," Kabra said.

"I got confirmation again in April but with the Covid-19 pandemic still raging there was still uncertainty whether Olympics will actually happen. But I am happy that at last, I will be able to live my Olympic dream."

— PTI

Andreescu to skip Tokyo Olympics

Los Angeles, US: Canadian world number five Bianca Andreescu said on Monday she will skip the Tokyo Olympics, citing concerns over the Covid-19 pandemic. The 21-year-old 2019 US Open champion announced her decision in a statement on social media.

"I would like to inform you that I have made the very difficult decision to not play in the Tokyo Olympics later this month," Andreescu said.

Meanwhile, David Goffin, the Belgian number one who is 20th in the ATP rankings, also announced that he would not play at the Olympics because he has not recovered from an ankle injury. — AFP

Mithali loses top spot to Taylor

Dubai: India captain and star batter Mithali Raj was on Tuesday dethroned from the top spot by West Indies skipper Stafanie Taylor in the latest ICC ODI rankings.

Taylor recaptured the number one position in batting as well as in the list of all-rounders after a superb effort in the first ODI in Coolidge that helped the West Indies win by five wickets against Pakistan.

Taylor's Player of the Match effort of three for 29 and an unbeaten 105 have helped her ascend all three lists. She has gained four positions and displaced Mithali from the top of the batters' list.

She also gained three places to reach 16th position among bowlers and is up two places to first among all-rounders, replacing Ellyse Perry of Australia. — PTI

India to host 2026 Badminton Worlds

New Delhi: India will host the World Badminton Championships in 2026, the sport's global governing body, BWF, said on Tuesday.

India were scheduled to organise the Sudirman Cup in 2023 but the Badminton World Federation decided to award the hosting rights of the world mixed team championships to China. The BWF was forced to shift this year's Sudirman Cup from Suzhou, China to Vantaa, Finland due to the Covid-19 situation in the Asian country.

"Suzhou will now stage the 2023 edition of the BWF World Mixed Team Championships, with original 2023 hosts India accepting the opportunity to host the BWF World Championships in 2026," the BWF said in a media release.

This will only be the second time that India will be hosting the world championship, with Hyderabad having played hosts to the prestigious event in 2009. — PTI

Pakistan's hockey ace Naved dies

Karachi: Pakistan's well-known hockey World Cup winner, Naved Alam, died on Tuesday in Lahore, barely few days after being diagnosed with blood cancer. He was 47.

Alam, a key member of the Pakistan team that last won the World Cup in 1994, was diagnosed with blood cancer only a few days back when he checked into a hospital after feeling unwell. — PTI

BIGGER, BETTER

India to send largest ever contingent of athletes at Olympics

New Delhi, July 13: India will be sending a 228-strong contingent to the Tokyo Olympics, including 119 athletes, IOA President Narinder Batra said on Tuesday.

Out of the 119 athletes, 67 are male and 52 female participants, Batra said during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's interaction with Olympic-bound athletes.

"The total Indian contingent for Tokyo Olympics will be 228. There will be 67 male athletes and 52 female athletes. We are fighting for 85 medal events," Batra said in the virtual interaction.

This will be India's largest ever contingent of athletes at the Olympics.

"The first contingent will leave for Tokyo on July 17. It will have 90 athletes and officials in total."

Back stories of struggle, sacrifices and grit dominated Modi's interaction with India's Olympic-bound sportspersons dur-



Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacts with the Olympic-bound athletes via video conferencing in New Delhi on Tuesday. — PTI

ing which he urged them to forget expectations and focus only on giving their best in Tokyo.

Among others, the PM spoke to iconic boxer M. C. Mary Kom, badminton ace P.V. Sindhu, talented shooters Saurabh Chaudhary, Elavenil Valarivan and veteran

table tennis player A Sharath Kamal during a virtual interactive session.

INDIAN SAILING TEAM LANDS IN TOKYO

The Indian sailing team on Tuesday became the first from the country's contingent to arrive here

for the Olympics.

The pictures of the Indian sailing team comprising Varun Thakkar, Ganapathy Chengappa, Vishnu Saravanan and Nethra Kumanan and their coaches arriving at the Haneda airport were put up by Sports Authority of India. — PTI

WC hero Yashpal no more

New Delhi, July 13: India's 1983 World Cup hero Yashpal Sharma, who was admired for being a gutsy middle-order batsman at the peak of his prowess, died on Tuesday after suffering a massive cardiac arrest here.

He was 66 and is survived by his wife, two daughters and a son.

"Yes, Yashpal is no more with us. We just received the information from his family," a former India teammate of Yashpal confirmed to PTI.

Yashpal collapsed at home after returning from his morning walk here. He was cremated at the Lodhi Road crematorium with his former teammate Kirti Azad among those in attendance.

In his international career, Yashpal played 37 Tests, scoring 1606 runs, and 42 ODIs in which he made 883. He also picked up one wicket each in the two formats to his credit.

He was known for his gutsy attitude and his stroke-filled half century in the semifinal against England in the 1983 campaign at the Old Trafford will forever be etched in the public memory.

Former India captain Dilip Vengsarkar expressed



shock at his teammate's demise. The 1983 squad had met on the sidelines of a book launch here couple of weeks ago.

"It is unbelievable. He was the fittest among all of us. I had asked him that day when we met how about his routine. He was a vegetarian, teetotaler, used to have soup for his dinner and very particular about his morning walks. I am just shocked," Vengsarkar said.

"As a player, he was a proper team man and a fighter. I fondly remember the 1979 Test against Pakistan in Delhi (where Vengsarkar scored unbeaten 146 and Yashpal 60). We both had a partnership which helped us save the game. I knew him since my university days. Still can't

believe it," he added.

He was also a national selector in early 2000s and was part of the panel which gave M S Dhoni his maiden India call-up in 2004.

Yashpal was also part of the selection panel that picked the triumphant 2011 World Cup squad under Dhoni's leadership. So, from being a part of a World Cup winning to picking one that also won the trophy, Yashpal had seen it all.

In between, he also witnessed closely a phase of immense turmoil in Indian cricket when the then captain Sourav Ganguly had a bitter fallout with the team's Australian coach Greg Chappell in 2006. As a selector, he had famously backed Ganguly at that time.

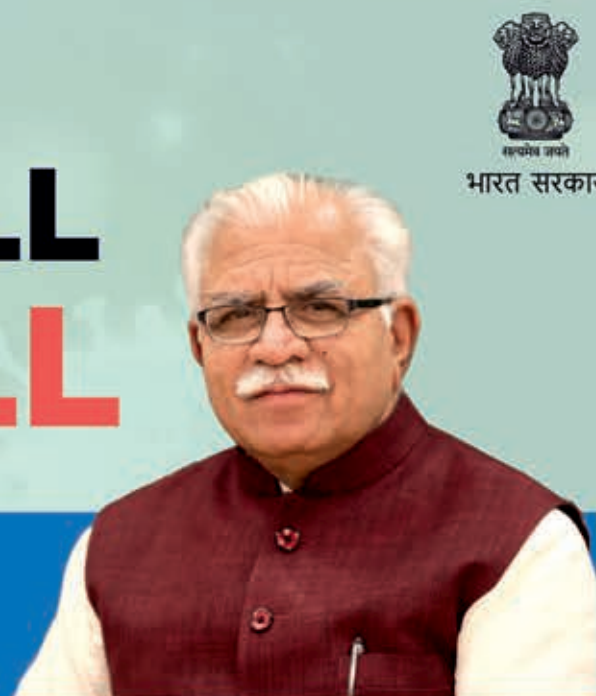
"He was very fair as a selector and of course he was a great player. My condolences to his family," said former BCCI president N Srinivasan.

In Ranji Trophy, where he represented three teams — Punjab, Haryana and Railways —, Yashpal played 160 matches amassing 8,933 runs which included 21 centuries with a highest score of 201 not out.

— PTI

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