

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

CHENNAI | WEDNESDAY 14 | JULY 2021

WEATHER



Max: 35°C
Min: 27°C
Rainfall: 6%

ASTROGUIDE

Pilava: Aani 30
Tithi: Sathurthuy
Star: Pooram
Rahukalam:
12 noon to 1.30 pm
Yamagandam:
7.30 am to 9 am

PRAYERS

Fajar: 4.29 am
Luhar: 12.19 pm
Asar: 3.39 pm
Maghrib: 6.39 pm
Isha: 7.58 pm

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+30,012)	(+612)
3,09,44,746	4,11,428

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+2,505)	(48)
TN:25,23,943	33,502

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

18,84,04,506

DEATHS
40,59,220

COUNTRIES
AREAS WITH
CASES
219

worldometers.info

Roger Federer pulls out of Tokyo Olympics

Basel, Switzerland: Tennis icon Roger Federer on Tuesday announced that he is pulling out of the upcoming Tokyo Olympics owing to a knee injury. The Olympics, in which on-site spectators will not be allowed owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, are scheduled to be held in the Japanese capital from July 23 to August 8. In a statement, he said that he had 'suffered a setback' with his knee. Federer announced the news on Twitter saying that he is 'greatly disappointed' on missing out on an opportunity to represent Switzerland in the world's biggest sporting spectacle.

New HC bench to hear Mamata's poll plea today

New Delhi: A new bench will take up on Wednesday West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's election petition before the Calcutta high court challenging Bharatiya Janata Party leader Suwendu Adhikari's victory from the Nandigram constituency in the assembly elections. The case was reassigned to the bench of Justice Shampa Sarkar by Acting Chief Justice Rajesh Bindal after Justice Kausik Chandra recused from hearing the Trinamool Congress supreme's election petition.

COUNTER POINT



He used to stand up and salute us when we were in the Cabinet!

HC fines Vijay for plea seeking tax relief for car

J. STALIN | DC
CHENNAI, JULY 13

The Madras high court on Tuesday criticised actor Vijay for his attempts to avoid paying entry tax as per the statute for the luxury car he imported saying people who paid their taxes properly are the real heroes. The court dismissed the actor's petition with a cost of Rs 1 lakh and directed him to pay the tax in two weeks.

Vijay had approached the court seeking a restraint on the authorities from demanding entry tax on the new Rolls Royce Ghost car he imported in 2012. "In the absence of payment of entry tax by the petitioner within two weeks, the authorities are directed to initiate all further actions by following the procedures as contemplated under the statutes for recovery of the entry tax from the petitioner," the court said.



as well as the consequential liability if any, as per the provisions of the act and

rules,' Justice S.M. Subramaniam said in his order. The petitioner/actor has large scale fan groups and those fans are seeing him as real hero, the court noted. Cine heroes have become rulers in the state, the judge said, adding that they are not expected to behave like reel heroes. In his petition, Vijay had contended that he had paid import duty but the regional

transport officer, Chennai South, refused to register his vehicle without a certificate issued by the Customs saying no entry tax was payable. The Customs, however, took the stand that entry tax should be paid for the vehicle. Vijay contended that the Customs was imposing an extraordinary entry tax and that his vehicle was lying idle as it could not be operated on public roads without registration.

"Tax evasion is to be construed as an anti-national habit, attitude and mindset and unconstitutional," the court observed. "These actors are portraying themselves as champions of social justice. Their pictures are against corrupt activities. But, they are evading tax and acting in a manner which is not in consonance with the provisions of the statutes," the court observed.

Ma Subramanian to meet Union minister tomorrow for vaccine



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EPS demands free data card for students

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TN sailors out to make a splash in Tokyo

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PM elevates Irani, Scindia to powerful cabinet panels

■ 3 new mins find place in political affairs committee

New Delhi, July 13: Days after a major reshuffle of the Modi ministry, the government reconstituted the powerful cabinet committees, bringing in Union ministers Smriti Irani, Bhupender Yadav and Sarbananda Sonowal as the new members of the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs headed by the Prime Minister.

Union ministers Arjun Munda, Virendra Kumar, Kiren Rijiju and Anurag Thakur have been included in the rejigged Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs, according to a notification issued by the Cabinet Secretariat last night.

However, there has been no change in the composition of the country's highest decision-making body on security affairs - the Cabinet Committee on Security - and the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet, which takes call on all important government appointments in the rank of joint secretary and above.

The members of the Cabinet Committee on Security are Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Home Minister Amit Shah, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and External Affairs Minister S u b r a h m a n y a m

CABINET COMMITTEE ON POLITICAL AFFAIRS

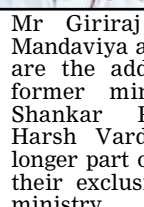
New entrants: Smriti Irani, Bhupender Yadav, Sarbananda Sonowal, Giriraj Singh, Mansukh Mandaviya.

(Others: Narendra Modi, Rajnath Singh, Amit Shah, Nitin Gadkari, Nirmala Sitharaman, Narendra Tomar, Piyush Goyal, Pralhad Joshi)

Jaishankar.

The two-member Appointments Committee of the Cabinet comprises the Prime Minister and the home minister.

The reconstituted Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs comprises the Prime Minister, and Union ministers Rajnath Singh, Amit Shah, Nitin Gadkari, Nirmala Sitharaman, Narendra Singh Tomar, Smriti Irani, Piyush Goyal, Pralhad Joshi, Sarbananda Sonowal, Giriraj Singh, Mansukh Mandaviya and Bhupender Yadav. Ms Irani, Mr Sonowal,



CABINET COMMITTEE ON INVESTMENT AND GROWTH

New entrants: Narayan Rane, Jyotiraditya Scindia, Ashwini Vaishnaw.



CABINET COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Narendra Modi, Rajnath Singh, Amit Shah, Nitin Gadkari, Nirmala Sitharaman, Narendra Tomar, S. Jaishankar, Piyush Goyal, Dharmendra Pradhan

Gowda and Ravi Shankar Prasad were also part of this committee.

The members of the Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs are: Rajnath Singh, Amit Shah, Nirmala Sitharaman, Narendra Singh Tomar, Arjun Munda, Pralhad Joshi, Virendra Kumar, Kiren Rijiju and Anurag Thakur.

Union ministers of state for parliamentary affairs Arjun Ram Meghwal and V. Muraliedharan are special invitees to the committee. Earlier, Ravi Shankar Prasad and Prakash Javadekar were also part of it. — PTI

1983 WORLD CUP HERO YASHPAL SHARMA 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.

According to sources, Yashpal collapsed at home after returning from his morning walk.

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. — PTI



BIG RELIEF TO GOVT

Rajan panel on Neet is not against SC order, rules HC

DC CORRESPONDENT
WITH AGENCY INPUTS
CHENNAI, JULY 13

In a big relief to the DMK government which has been opposing admissions to medical courses based on the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (Neet), the Madras High Court on Tuesday held that the government's constitution of a panel to study the implications of the Neet-based admissions system is not against the order of the Supreme Court's orders on the subject.

Dismissing a public interest litigation moved by BJP state general secretary K. Nagarajan, the first bench of Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilumar Ramamoorthy said there is nothing to prevent an elected government from studying the impact of Neet. By no stretch of imagination, the constitution of the commission can be seen as contrary to the orders of the Supreme Court or the powers vested with the central government, it said.

Can't do away with Neet this year: CM

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR,
D. SEKAR | DC
CHENNAI, JULY 13:

Students aspiring to join medical courses will have to appear for NEET this year as the announcement had been made even before the state government could take further steps to abolish it legally, Chief Minister M.K. Stalin said on Tuesday.

However, the government would continue its efforts to do away with the national entrance exam that had been playing

havoc with the aspirations of students in the state, Mr Stalin said, welcoming the Madras High Court judgment finding nothing wrong with the appointment of A.K. Rajan committee.

Mr Stalin said the court order was the starting point for the long fight against NEET, on which his government had embarked with a view to bringing succor to the students with dreams of becoming doctors, saying that the struggle would go on till the purpose was achieved. ■ P4

remedial measures to the government.

The PIL had sought quashing of the order, which constituted the commission, as unconstitutional, illegal, unfair and without legal justification. ■ P4



Prime Minister Narendra Modi's interaction with Indian athletes' contingent bound for Tokyo Olympics, via video conferencing in New Delhi, Tuesday. — PTI

India to send 228-member team for Tokyo Olympics

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

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

"The total Indian contingent for Tokyo Olympics will be 228. We are fighting in 85 medal events," Mr Batra said during 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," he said.

The sailing team of four athletes and coaches was the first from the Indian contingent to reach Tokyo on Tuesday. The sailors had arrived at the Japanese capital directly from their training bases in different countries across Europe.

Since they are coming from Europe, they will not be facing the stricter restrictions imposed on

the other athletes arriving in Tokyo from India in view of the Covid-19 situation in the country.

The boxing and shooting teams will also arrive at Tokyo from Italy and Croatia respectively. Star weightlifter Mirabai Chanu will reach Tokyo on July 15 or 16 from the United States.

Back stories of struggle, sacrifices and grit dominated the Prime Minister's interaction with India's Olympic-bound sportspersons during which he urged them to forget expectations and focus only on giving their best in Tokyo. — PTI

Rahul meets Kishor amid Punjab crisis

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 13

The internal strife in the Punjab Congress intensified as poll strategist Prashant Kishor met Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and AICC general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Tuesday. The meeting, which lasted for nearly two hours, was also attended by AICC general secretaries K.C. Venugopal and Harish Rawat. Mr Kishor is Punjab CM Amarinder Singh's political adviser. The crisis in Punjab was precipitated after the public utterances of disgruntled Congress legislator Navjot Singh Sidhu

against the state government and the chief minister. Sources said the meeting was to assess the position of the Congress in the state as assembly elections are due early next year.

The meeting assumes significance as the Congress is all set to announce a major decision on its Punjab crisis that will pave the way for the coming polls.

Mr Kishor has in the past also given "constructive suggestions" to the Congress. In the 2017 Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections, he was managing the campaign for the Congress-Samajwadi Party alliance.

SHORT TAKES

Young mom immolates herself after killing two children

M.ARULOLI | DC
TENKASI, JULY 13

A young mother committed suicide by setting herself ablaze after killing her two children near Kadayam in Tenkasi district on Tuesday.

The deceased, Kanaga @Gowri (27) got married with TSuresh (32) of Chekkadiyoor near Kadayam six years ago. The couple had a son, Keerthanu (5) and a daughter, Elakiya (3). Suresh working in Chennai recently returned home as he was rendered jobless due to the Covid lockdown. Suresh too suspecting his wife's fidelity, according to police often picked up quarrel with Kanaga.

After a similar fight with her wife on Tuesday morning, Suresh left the house to attend the funeral of one of his relatives, when Kanaga took the extreme step of killing her two young children by setting them ablaze and committed self immolation.

Kadayam police registered the case and are investigating.



Subramanian to meet Union minister tomorrow for vaccine

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JULY 13

The health minister has decided to meet the newly-appointed Union health minister to get more allocation of vaccine doses from the Centre.

Health minister Ma. Subramanian said on Tuesday that he would travel to Delhi on Thursday to call on recently appointed Union health minister Mansuk Mandavya. 'We will highlight the matter regarding the current vaccine shortage the state is facing during the meeting. The state actually required at least 11cr doses of vaccines to vaccinate the population. However, the Centre has provided only 1.67 crore doses. We have already administered 1.66 doses and have at least 4 lakh doses in the stock. The stock vaccine doses can be used for only a couple of days. So we require fresh consignment of vaccines so far. Whenever we receive the vaccines, we immediately distribute it to the districts without any lapses. We are now in the position to administer more doses than the Centre has provided. It was made possible because of a careful inoculation strategy adopted by the health department,' he added

CM requests Union finance minister 'Scrap taxes on drug import for spinal muscular atrophy'

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JULY 13

Chief Minister M. K. Stalin requested the Union finance minister Nirmala Sitaraman to give necessary instructions to her ministry to take necessary steps to exempt customs duty, integrated GST and any other such taxes on the import of life saving drugs for treatment of spinal muscular atrophy (SMA), as a policy.

In his letter to Nirmala, on Tuesday, Stalin pointed out that the Union govern-

ment had recently waived tax for import of medicine for a child who was suffering from SMA.

He said SMA was a rare disease, causing loss of nerve cells that carry electrical signals from the brain to muscles and that children affected by it should be given gene-therapy ideally given before they reached two years of age.

The cost of gene-therapy was over Rs 16 crore per person and since drugs for it were being imported, the Customs Duty and

Integrated GST levied on them, further increased the cost, he said.

'In Tamil Nadu, annually 90-100 such cases are being reported. A single dose treatment (Zolgensma) or multiple dose treatment (Spinraza) gene-therapy treatment or Risdipram oral syrup are expensive and the parents of the children who are affected by the rare disorder find it difficult to meet the cost of the treatment,' the Chief Minister said.

Meanwhile, BJP state president, K. Annamalai,

too wrote to Nirmala requesting her to waive the duties for Zolgensma that was being planned to be imported to treat a 23-month-old girl, K. S. Mithra, who is suffering from SMA.

Annamalai said girl's father K Satheesh Kumar hails from a middle class family but had mobilised the funds for the drug, costing ₹16 crore, through donations.

Since the import duties and GST came up to ₹6 crore, he wanted them to be waived.

SHIVASHANKAR BABA ARRESTED UNDER POCSO ACT

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JULY 13

Shivashankar Baba, arrested under POCO Act, was re-arrested by the CB-CID police under another POCO Act and remanded on Tuesday.

Shivashankar Baba, the founder of Sushil Hari International school in Kelambakkam, had allegedly sexually harassed minor students of his school.

Three cases have been registered against the self-styled Godman under various sections of the IPC, POCO Act and Tamil Nadu Prohibition of Harassment of Women Act at the Mahabalipuram all women police station following sexual abuse complaints from a few alumni of the school.

The complainants who were former students alleged that Shivashankar Baba had sexually harassed them a few years ago when they were studying in the school.

Based on complaints from the victims, three cases were registered in Manallapuram AWPS against him on the charges of harassing students. The cases were later transferred to the Crime Branch -CID, which arrested Shiva Sankar Baba in Delhi on June 16.

Apart from the godman, the investigators had arrested one of the female staff of the school in connection with the first POCO Act case.

Meanwhile, based on a complaint from another victim, the CB-CID sleuths arrested Shivashankar Baba on Tuesday. The Chengalpattu POCO court on Tuesday remanded him for 14 days of judicial custody.

Envoy's virtual meet

US Consul General in Chennai Judith Ravin on Tuesday "virtually" visited several prominent individuals and organisations in the capital city of Kerala. The virtual visit was organised to explore cooperation between the United States and Kerala on issues ranging from climate change mitigation to combatting Covid-19, a release issued by the US Consulate said.

Snack time



A squirrel eats foodgrain from a special container fixed on a tree on IMH premises at Kilpauk. —DC

Karnataka CM says work will begin on Mekedatu, protests in TN

Bengaluru/Chennai,

July 13: The Mekedatu dam row between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu continued on Tuesday with Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa asserting that work for the reservoir would start, while protests were staged in many parts of the Tamil state and Puducherry against the initiative.

Union Jalshakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat assured "justice" to Karnataka, vis-a-vis pending projects, while veteran CPI leader D Raja urged the Centre to not allow the dispute between the two neighbours to escalate into a conflict.

In several parts of the Cauvery delta region in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry, the Cauvery Rights Retrieval Committee staged protests, condemning efforts by Karnataka to build the dam and Yediyurappa's effigies were burnt in a number of locations amid a scuffle between protesters and police.

After discussing Karnataka related projects, including the Mekedatu, with Shekhawat in Bengaluru and seeking clearances from the Centre, Yediyurappa said Karnataka had every right on the reservoir matter. —PTI

Shopping time



Visitors look at handcrafted textiles and jewellery at an expo at Poompohar showroom on Anna Salai on Tuesday. —DC

Eleven women injured after van hits centre median

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JULY 13

Eleven women on their way to home after work in a van suffered severely after the vehicle in which they were travelling hit the center median on Pallavaram-Thoraipakkam radial road on Monday night, the police said.

Police said the 11 women, employees of a private textiles exporting company, were travelling in a van after work when the driver who was speeding lost control of the vehicle. The van proceeding from Nagalkeni towards Pallikaralai skidded and rammed into the median.

The van was completely mangled in the accident, the police said, adding that the driver, Kesavan (29), fled the



spot after causing the accident. Based on the alert by the residents, the local police, and paramedical staff in '108' ambulance rushed to the site and rescued the injured.

Eleven injured persons were admitted at the Government hospital in Chromepet. A

case has been registered by the Chromepet traffic investigation police. Further investigations are underway.

Meanwhile, the accident has caused traffic disruptions on Pallavaram-Thoraipakkam radial road for an hour on Monday night.

House sparrow population stable: Report

Chennai, July 13: Ever wondered where the familiar house sparrows had gone this summer?

Though the pandemic induced lockdown kept many of us indoors, the population of the house sparrows has become stable and it's pervasive presence throughout Tamil Nadu and Puducherry, appears to have gladdened the hearts of bird watchers.

Even in densely populated urban areas like Chennai, these small birds, especially the grey-headed, white cheeked male with conspicuous black bib and rufous neck, and the female with buff, black and brown backed, have been sighted in several places indicating their ability to survive away from rural areas.

Currently, the population of House Sparrow (Passer domesticus), one of the most widely distributed species, is stable across India and there is no cause for immediate conservation actions, claims a recent report by the Salem Ornithological Foundation (SOF).

The report, which aims to help people understand the distribution of House Sparrows in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry, is also

meant to spread awareness about the importance of citizen science initiatives like eBird.

The district-level distribution of house sparrow appears to be very uneven due to the lack of eBirders in some of the districts.

"So, there are plenty of data gaps to be filled in the eBird database. Thus, it is evident that our state requires more sampling and a lot of contribution to eBird by bird watchers and nature enthusiasts is really necessary," says Ganeshwar S V, founder-director of SOF.

Inspired by the Australian researchers approach of combining citizen science and big data analytics in estimating the number of wild birds in the world, the Salem Ornithological Foundation decided to create detailed distribution maps for this particular species for each of the 38 districts in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry.

"We decided to map the distribution of one of the most familiar and favourite species of many, the house sparrow. Similar to how researchers used eBird data to estimate the number of birds, we have also used the data from eBird to create the distribution



maps," the report says.

"We analysed the data obtained, mostly from our members and numerous birdwatchers from across the state and the union territory and mapped the distribution pattern," Venkatesh S, who helped to prepare the map on distribution of sparrows, told PTI.

The maps indicating the presence of the sparrows were depicted district-wise.

"These birds got their feed in urbanised cities like Chennai," he said when asked if the sparrows population in the metro had dwindled.

Coloured grids - violet, grey and white (blank) -

denoted the places where the sparrows were spotted and recorded, not recorded and absence of data, respectively.

"The absence of data was because there were no birders in those places," Venkatesh said and added that the grids were drawn using QGIS software.

With the eBird India data from the past 10 years (June 2011 to May 2021), the SOF created the interactive distribution maps (presence/absence) of House Sparrow for all the 38 districts in Tamil Nadu and for Puducherry.

The maps can be zoomed to see the presence or absence of house sparrows along with the names of the locations. The SOF had roped in the expertise of Ashwin Viswanathan, research associate of Nature Conservation Foundation for guidance on data analysis and P Jeganathan, wildlife biologist and part of Tamil e-Birders Network, of the Nature Conservation Foundation, to review the report. The SOF hopes to publish an updated report on the abundance and population trends of house sparrow in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry in future, says Ganeshwar who prepared the report. —PTI

HMK demands trifurcation of TN

M.ARULOLI | DC
TIRUNELVELI, JULY 13

Splitting Tamil Nadu into smaller states would help for a balanced growth, said Hindu Makkal Katchi president Arjun Sampath, who opined that demand for creating a new state should not be equated with the demand for a separate nationhood.

Reacting to the ongoing talks on social media for and against the creation of a new Kongu state bifurcating Tamil Nadu, the Hindu Makkal Katchi leader said that it was not against national integrity as has been propagated by some, as the constitution of India itself has given a provision for division of any bigger state to create smaller ones for the administrative reasons.

"I however personally want the trifurcation of the state with northern districts as Chennai as its headquarters, the Kongu state with Coimbatore as its capital and a third with the rest of the southern districts with Madurai as its state capital," said Arjun Sampath, who added that dividing Tamil Nadu into three smaller states would help achieve growth evenly.

Sampath too said that on behalf of his party he would soon submit a petition to the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and Prime Minister.

Arjun Sampath's suggestion for trifurcation of the state, however has been come under strong criticism from the Tamil Nationals like Viyan Arasu of Tamilar Kotram.

Young widow gets relief from Madras High Court

J.STALIN | DC
CHENNAI, JULY 13

Coming to the rescue of a young destitute widow, who was denied employment to the post of lab assistant in a government school in Nagapattinam district by the state government on the ground that she produced the destitute widow certificate belatedly after the last date for certificate verification, the Madras high court has directed the state government to accommodate her within four weeks in any of the vacancies in the schools close to her place of residence, so that it will not cause further hardship to her.

A division bench comprising Justices Pushpa Sathyanarayana and Krishnan Ramasamy gave the directive while dismissing an appeal filed by the state government, challenging an order of a single judge, which allowed the petition filed by Kanimozhi, against the order of the government, rejecting her candidature.

The bench said the sole respondent is a destitute

widow, having lost her husband at the young age of 22 years, left with two minor children. She had passed her SSLC in the year 2007 and could not continue her further studies and was given in marriage and has become a destitute widow as on date, the bench added.

The bench said pursuant to a notification issued by the government dated April 22, 2015, calling for applications for appointment to the post of Lab Assistants in Tamil Nadu Higher Secondary Schools, Kanimozhi had applied for the same under the category 'destitute widow'. After she emerged successful in the written examination, she was called for certificate verification on April 10, 2017 and she had produced all the necessary certificates excepting the certificate of destitute widow. She has categorically stated that she had applied for the said certificate in August 2016 before the Revenue Divisional Officer, Nagapattinam and the same was issued to her only on May 23, 2017, after almost a year. Therefore,

she could not produce the Destitute Widow Certificate on the date of verification. It was stated that the authorities assured that she could produce it in future, as the same has to be issued by the authorities and her appointment would be considered positively. After she received the said certificate, immediately she reached the same, to the Chief Educational Officer, Nagapattinam district, and requested him to consider her appointment. But the CEO had rejected her claim, by his order dated August 19, 2020, as the certificate was produced by her belatedly. For mere production of the certificate, which was to be issued by the government and which was not in her control, she cannot be thrown out by not being given an appointment. Therefore, the single judge had considered her plight and directed the government to issue the order of appointment as lab assistant, which was now assailed in the appeal, the bench added.

Woman killed in road accident

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JULY 13

A 57-year-old woman was on Monday killed in a road accident near Vandalur, officials said. They said the woman was hit and critically injured by a vehicle on Vandalur bypass road on Monday morning.

The deceased was identified as Maria Jennifer (57), resident of Varadharajapuram in Mudichur near Tambaram.

Police said Maria was riding on her bike towards Karasangal from Vandalur on Vandalur bypass road, when a speeding luxury car coming from Padappai rammed against her bike.

Maria was crushed to death on the spot. Based on the report, Manimangalam police rushed to the spot and sent the body to the Chromepet Government hospital for post-mortem.

Police arrested the driver of the car, Nithin (36) of Guduvancheri. An investigation is underway.



Hundreds of temple priests in Pallavaram constituency receive essentials distributed by the DMK in Chromepet on Tuesday. —DC

CBI books Madurai official for issuing Indian passports to foreign nationals

New Delhi, July 13: The CBI has registered an FIR against a senior superintendent in the Regional Passport Office in Madurai who was allegedly issuing Indian passports to foreign nationals, including Sri Lankans, brought by travel agents, officials said on Tuesday.

The central agency carried out searches at three locations in Madurai after booking

Veeraputhiran, Senior Superintendent, RPO, Madurai, and another person identified as Ramesh in connection with the case, they said. The agency has alleged that in 2019-20, Veeraputhiran entered into a criminal conspiracy with Ramesh and other travel agents operating in Madurai, the officials said. In pursuance of the conspiracy, Veeraputhiran, while posted as granti-

ng officer at Passport Seva Kendra, Tirunelveli, fraudulently issued Indian passports to Sri Lankans and other ineligible people in return for pecuniary benefits from the travel agents, the CBI FIR alleged. The agency has found that he had demanded and accepted an amount of Rs 45,000 from Ramesh which was deposited in Veeraputhiran's savings account, it added. —PTI

IN BRIEF

Setting up panel will not defy SC orders

From P1

Setting up of the panel does not amount to subverting the process of medical admissions and would not amount to defying the orders of the apex court or even the remotest challenge to the authority of the central government, the court pointed out. As long as the state government did not infringe upon the exclusive domain of Section 14 of the National Medical Commission Act, this court cannot interfere in the matter, it said.

"Courts cannot rush in and interdict notifications or the steps taken with regard to its policy or garnering public opinion or the like," the judges said and dismissed the PIL.

Among others, the petitioner contended the order was against the procedure encapsulated under the National Medical Commission Act, 2019. When the apex court had directed for the implementation of Neet by its order dated August 22, 2017, it was not open to the state government to suggest an alternative, he had contended. As per Article 261 of the Constitution, full faith and credit shall be given to the judicial proceedings of the top court, he said. The constitution of the panel itself was illegal since most of the members were opposed to Neet. The purpose of forming the committee itself was illegal since it virtually amounted to seeking the opinion of the public about the judgment of the Supreme Court, the petitioner added.

CM points out EPS too mocked at Rajan panel

From P1

Through the petition filed by BJP State Secretary K. Nagarajan, the BJP had only exposed its double talk, Mr Stalin said in a statement, pointing out that the BJP MLA Nainar Nagendran had said in the Assembly that his party had no objection to the elimination of Neet if it was through legal means.

Mr Stalin alleged that the AIADMK too was servile to the BJP, pointing out that the leader of the Opposition Edappadi K. Palaniswami had mocked at the formation of the Rajan committee saying that it was drama.

Not only the students' rights but also the rights of the state had been upheld by Tuesdays' verdict, Mr Stalin said. He hoped that more victories would follow leading to the abolition of NEET.

The government proposed to take steps one after the other legally and take the fight to its logical end and regretted that students would have to take the entrance examination for this year because it had been announced before the state could make the subsequent moves to get relief.

A day would come when the students would be relieved of the burden of Neet, the Chief Minister said.

Govt efforts make doses available to state: Stalin

From P1

Adding that the success of the state government's efforts to eliminate vaccine hesitancy and make the vaccination drive a mass movement now squarely rested on the doses made available to the State.

Tamil Nadu had not received vaccines proportionate to its population, resulting in the current acute shortage, he said. "The number of vaccine doses provided to our State is only 302 per thousand eligible population. This is very low when compared to the vaccine doses made available to comparable States like Gujarat, Karnataka and Rajasthan, which are at 533, 493 and 446 respectively," Mr Stalin said.

Pointing out that the Union ministry of health and family welfare, in its affidavit filed in the Supreme Court of India in suo moto W.P. (Civil) No.3 of 2021, had specifically submitted that the states had been allocated the available vaccine quantity in proportion to their population between 18-44 years of age to ensure equitable distribution of vaccine, he made it clear that Tamil Nadu has not received vaccines.



COMBAT TRAINING



Indian Army soldier trains youth aspiring to join armed forces near Line of Control (LOC) between India and Pakistan border, in Kausalian village of Poonch, Tuesday. — PTI

Eight Bengal BJP MLAs quit House panel posts

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 Palakata, 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.

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 Dhanekar 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. The governor is the constitutional custodian of the Assembly. We sought his interference about the deprivation to us by the ruling TMC in the House. We, as the main opposition party, should have got the PAC post as per the norms but we did not. This is also the first time the rule was broken."

He added, "We have enough evidence against Mr Roy for his present political status. From the video footages of his entry to the TMC to his tweets, everything proves that he is very much in the TMC. Besides, his name for the PAC post was proposed by a TMC MLA. Still the speaker found him in the BJP and gave the post to him. It shows that the ruling party does not want it's financial corruption to be revealed. Next week, we will submit the copies of deputations to President Ram Nath Kovind and Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla against the Assembly Speaker for his decision."

Lashing out at the Nandigram BJP MLA, three-time TMC MP Sougata Roy however alleged, "Mr Adhikari has no knowledge of the Assembly rules in the appointment of PAC chairman and is trying to mislead people. The post can go to any member of the House."

TMC TO ASK EC FOR EARLY ASSEMBLY BY-POLLS

RAJIB CHOWDHURI
KOLKATA, JULY 13

West Bengal's ruling Trinamul Congress has decided to raise its demand to the Election Commission (EC) for early Assembly by-polls in the seven seats of the state in wake of a significant drop in Covid-19 infection rate.

It is likely to send it's parliamentary delegation with the demand to the central poll panel in New Delhi on July 15. The demand may include a suggestion of a seven-day campaign period in between 10 am and 7 pm daily.

According to sources, the TMC, which suspects the EC of working under the influence of top BJP leadership, fears if there is a

delay in the Assembly by-polls in the event of a third wave of Covid-19 pandemic by October-November, the impact may bar it's supreme Mamata Banerjee to continue as the chief minister.

Ms Banerjee, who is a non-elected member of the House due to her defeat to Suwendu Adhikari of the BJP at Nandigram, needs to win a seat in the by-polls and become an MLA within six months of her defeat to retain her CM chair.

She is set to contest from her home turf, Bhowanipore, in the Assembly by-polls. The seat was recently vacated by state minister Sovandeb Chatterjee who is expected fight from Khardah in North 24 Parganas.

AAP always recognised my vision: Sidhu

Chandigarh, Jul 13: Amid attempts by the Congress high command to resolve the infighting in the party's Punjab unit, party leader Navjot Singh Sidhu on Tuesday said the opposition Aam Aadmi Party has always recognised his vision and work for Punjab.

His remarks came a day after AAP Punjab unit chief Bhagwant Mann took a dig at the cricketer-turned-politician and asked him to tweet about the "funds" allegedly accepted by the ruling Congress from private power companies in the state.

"Our opposition AAP has always recognised my vision & work for Punjab. Be it Before 2017- Beadbi, Drugs, Farmers Issues, Corruption & Power Crisis faced by People of Punjab 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.

He asked Sidhu to tweet on this issue. "@sherryontopp Saab, If not anything else, we hope you could bother to at least tweet on the issue as you are used to," he said in a tweet.

Sidhu, who has been raising power supply-related issues through social media, had demanded that a white paper on PPAs signed during the previous SAD-BJP regime be released to make the Badals "accountable" to the people for these "corrupt agreements". -PTI

PM, Shah are my leaders: Pankaja Munde; says not using any pressure tactics

Mumbai, July 13: With many office-bearers of BJP from Beed district in Maharashtra resigning in protest against local MP Pritam Munde not finding a place in the newly reshuffled Union cabinet, her sister and BJP national secretary Pankaja Munde on Tuesday dismissed reports that she was using any "pressure tactics" even as she hailed Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union home minister Amit Shah and BJP president J P Nadda as her leaders.

Addressing BJP workers who came to Mumbai from Munde's home turf Beed and other parts of the state, Pankaja invoked the epic Mahabharata saying the time is not ripe for a "dharmaayudha" and gave reference of the righteous demands made by the

Pandavas and how they were rejected by the Kauravas.

"...I will like to continue to work at a place as long as there is 'Ram' in it. If there is no Ram, I will see what to do," she said in Marathi.

The word "Ram" is loosely used in public communication denoting whether it is worth doing some work.

Pankaja, daughter of BJP stalwart from Vanjari community late Gopinath Munde, also said she would always protect her fortress and keep it strong.

Pankaja had served as Rural Development Minister during the BJP-led government from 2014 to 2019. She lost the 2019 Assembly polls from Parli seat to her estranged cousin and NCP leader Dhananjay Munde.

India's first Covid patient tests +ve again

Thrissur, July 13: A woman medic, 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 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.

After nearly three weeks of treatment at the Thrissur Medical College Hospital, she had tested negative twice for the virus, confirming her recovery, and was discharged on February 20, 2020.

Meanwhile, two more persons, including a woman, tested positive for Zika virus in Kerala on Tuesday, taking the total number of infec-



tions in the state to 21.

A 35-year-old man, hailing from nearby Poonthura and a 41-year-old woman, native of Sashtamangalam here, were found infected with the virus, state Health Minister Veena George said. She urged people to be vigilant as the number of those testing positive for Zika virus has increased in the state.

The samples were tested at the virology lab at the government medical college here and at the Coimbatore-based laboratory respectively.

The testing for Zika virus began at the government medical college here on Monday, the minister said, adding that a total of 15 samples had been tested on the initial day.

One of the persons, whose sample was tested, was found positive for dengue and all the other 13 samples tested negative for any virus, the minister said.

— PTI

People taking third wave casually: govt

FROM PG 1

"We talk about the third wave as casually as a weather update. This isn't like one plans that we should go somewhere before monsoon, it is virus versus human being and it is a continuous battle."

"More than the environment, it is our behaviour that can cause the third wave. What we fail to understand is that adherence to Covid-appropriate behaviour or the lack of it is what will prevent or cause any future waves," he said.

Referring to scenes in hill stations and markets

like Sadar Bazaar and Janpath market in Delhi, Ranganathan street in Chennai, Vilaripatti in Tamil Nadu, Sukhna Lake in Chandigarh and Bhushi Dam in Maharashtra, Lav Agarwal, joint secretary in the health ministry, said "gross violations" of Covid-appropriate behaviour are being seen "which can nullify the gains" made so far in the management of the pandemic.

Earlier, too, the government had warned from the same platform against thronging and crowding hill stations and markets, saying the second wave was not yet over.

MAOISTS | LINKS

Swamy arrested by NIA from Ranchi in October 2020

Mumbai, July 13: The Maharashtra government on Tuesday submitted to the Bombay High Court the medical records of Jesuit priest and activist Stan Swamy, an 84-year-old accused in the Elgar Parishad-Maoists links case who died in a hospital here while being in judicial custody last week awaiting a medical bail.

Chief public prosecutor Aruna Pai told a bench of Justices SS Shinde and NJ 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 under-

trial. Swamy was arrested by the National Investigating Agency (NIA) from Ranchi in October 2020. He was interrogated at the time of his arrest by the NIA but the central agency never sought his custody.

Suffering from Parkinson's disease and a host of other medical ailments, Swamy, who was then 83-year-old, was remanded to judicial custody following his arrest. He was then admitted to the Talaja prison hospital in Navi Mumbai.

After informing the high court about Swamy's death on July 5 this year,



senior counsel Mihir Desai, who had represented the tribal rights activist in the HC, had told the court that Swamy's death was a result of negligence on part of the NIA and the Maharashtra prison authorities who had failed to provide him timely and adequate medical aid. Desai had also urged the

Till Monday evening, 55 dengue cases have been reported in Bhubaneswar," said the health official, adding, there was no report of any casualty due to 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 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 dis-

tricts, 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 guidelines 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.

from the time Stan Swamy was brought to Talaja Jail till his postmortem report".

Besides the state government, the private Holy Family Hospital in Mumbai, where Swamy died during treatment, also submitted the late activist's medical records and the treatment provided to him.

The high court took all the documents on record.

The bench also said that since Swamy died in judicial custody, a magisterial inquiry into his death, as mandated by section 176 of the CrPC, will be conducted.

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 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



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

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 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. — 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. — 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 healthcare 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 came 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. — AP

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, "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.

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. — PTI

Pak schools' assn launches anti-Malala documentary

Lahore, Jul 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

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

● **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.

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compulsory for teachers. "Teachers and educators, by virtue of their choice of profession, have a very special responsibility 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. — AFP

NORTHERN RAILWAY CORRIGENDUM			
Ref : i) Tender Notice No - 16/2021-22 dt.04/06/2021 S.No-02 ii) Tender No-07203844A due dt.-22-07-2021			
In reference to above tender, the tender opening dt change from 01.07.2021 to 22.07.2021 and Change in description. The corrigendum has been published on website www.ireps.gov.in . 1566/21			
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE			
TAMIL NADU WATER SUPPLY AND DRAINAGE BOARD			
CHIT TENDER NOTICE - SINGLE COVER - PERCENTAGE TENDER SYSTEM			
CTN No	BEP 08 M of CWSS/2020/2021 Dt:5/07/2021 09:17:2021		
Eligible class	Cvt (Class II & above) and Mechanical Class I Contractors		
Tender invite	The Executive Engineer, TWAD Board, Maintenance Division (Sivurani), 15, Rajagopalapuram, 625 003, Erode District, Tamil Nadu		
Download	www.tenders.in.gov.in and www.bwbboard.tn.gov.in (Free of cost)		
Period of contract	08 months (01.08.2021 to 31.05.2022)		
Period of sale	From 12.07.2021 to 26.07.2021 upto 5.45 PM		
Cost of Tender Document	Rs 1500/- (Rs. 1500/- + GST 18%) and additional Rs 500/- by post		
Last date for submission of Bids & opening	26.07.2021 upto 3.00 PM and opening at 3.30 PM or the same day at the office of the Tender Invitee		
S. No	Name of work	Value of work put to tender	EMD (in Rupees)
1	Outsourcing for Operation and Maintenance of CWSS to: Coromandel VSSB with Sivurani as source in Coromandel District	Rs.31.60 Lakhs	Rs.21,700/-
2	CWSS to Kurich, Kuzhambalur and Kizhambalur TPs in Coromandel District	Rs.46.40 Lakhs	Rs.46,400/-
3	CWSS to Trappan Corp., 3 TPs and 38 VPs (2500 habitation) in Coromandel District	(Package II) Rs.26.20 Lakhs	Rs.26,200/-
4	CWSS to 38 Habitation Areas, 40000 Sq.ft. (10000 Sq.ft. and 40 habitation) in Kanyakumari District	(Package II) Rs.29.94 Lakhs	Rs.29,940/-
5	CWSS to 38 Habitation Areas, 40000 Sq.ft. (10000 Sq.ft. and 40 habitation) in Kanyakumari District	(Package II) Rs.30.38 Lakhs	Rs.30,400/-
DIPR / 2063 / TENDER / 2021 Executive Engineer, TWAD Board, Maintenance Division (Sivurani), Erode District, Tamil Nadu			

TAMIL NADU WATER SUPPLY AND DRAINAGE BOARD

INVITATIONS FOR BIDS - SINGLE COVER - PERCENTAGE TENDER SYSTEM			
IFB No.	IFB No.03 / F Tender / JDO / Erode / 2021 / Dated : 09.07.2021		
Eligible Class	Class III and above		
Tender invite	The Executive Engineer, TWAD Board, Maintenance Division, 71 Pongundran Street, Kaurangalpalayam - Erode - 638 003		
Sale of Bid & Place of Sale	13.07.2021 to 27.07.2021 upto 5.45 PM at the Executive Engineer, TWAD Board, Maintenance Division, Erode by cash or Demand Draft payable at the office of the Tender Invitee (100% + GST 18%) and additional Rs 500/- by post		
Download	www.bwbboard.tn.gov.in and www.tenders.in.gov.in (Free of Cost)		
Last date for submission of bid	26.07.2021 upto 3.00 PM at the office of the Tender Invitee		
Bid opening	26.07.2021 at 3.30 PM at the office of the Tender Invitee		
Sl. No	Name of work	Approximate value of work (Rs. in Lakhs)	Bid security (in Rupees)
1	Outsourcing for Operation and Maintenance of CWSS to Chevumalai, Karumanchellipalayam, Perundurai, Chithode, Nuzvidur, Town Panchayats and 68 wards Habitations in Erode, Perundurai and Chinnamalai unions in Erode District (Package - I) Eight months from 01.08.2021 to 31.03.2022 for the year 2021-2022	26.29	26,100/-
DIPR/2061/Tender/2021 Executive Engineer, TWAD Board (a/c), Maintenance Division, Erode.			

GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU PATTUKKOTTAI MUNICIPALITY

TENDER NOTICE (Two Cover System)		Date: 12.07.2021
Bids are invited by the Commissioner, Pattukkottai for the Construction of Special Shelter Building for Urban homeless at Government Hospital Campus under National Urban Livelihood Mission (Day NULM-2020-21) in Pattukkottai Municipality (Two Cover System).		
1. Work Value - Rs.70.00 Lakhs 2. Earnest Money Deposit Amount - Rs. 70,000 3. Bid document can be downloaded from the Website (http://tenders.gov.in) at free of cost and the full details of the tenders can be had from the above website.		
4. Common dates & time		
1. Date and time of Pre bid meeting	20.07.2021 - 11.00 AM	
2. Last date and time for downloading bid documents	29.07.2021 - upto 3.00 PM	
3. Last date and time for submission of bid document, including online submission	29.07.2021 - upto 3.00 PM	
4. Date and time of opening of the Tender	29.07.2021 - at 3.30 PM	
5. In the Event of Specified date for Submission of bids is declared as holiday, bids will be received and opened on the next working day at the same time and venue. Any Changes Modification in this Tender will be only Published in the website mentioned in para (3) above.		
Commissioner, Pattukkottai Municipality.		
DIPR/2041/TENDER/2021		

भारत सरकार / Government of India		परमाणु ऊर्जा विभाग / Department of Atomic Energy	
नाभिकीय ईंधन समिधि / Nuclear Fuel Complex		बहिःस्राव प्रबंधन अनुभाग / Effluent Management Section	
जन निविदा नोटिस / PUBLIC TENDER NOTICE			
निम्नलिखित कार्य के लिए निविदाएं एलटेंडर आमंत्रित की जाती हैं - Tenders are hereby invited for the following work:-			
क्र. सं. / Tender Notice No.	कार्य का विवरण / Description of work	अनुमानित लागत / Estimated Cost (Rs.)	निविदा दस्तावेज का मूल्य / Cost of the tender/transaction fee (Rs.)
1	NFC/EMTSS/2021/01 Segregation & repacking of assorted waste at TSS in NFC	15,00,000/-	885/-
निविदा की जानकारी के लिए पर देखने एवं आवेदन के लिए - Tender Document available on website for view & download - www.tenderwizard.com/DAE		From: 15.07.2021 To: 30.07.2021	
निविदा प्रस्तुत करने की अंतिम तिथि / Last Date of Submission of bids		07.08.2021 at 21.00 hrs	
निविदा प्रस्तुत करने की अंतिम तिथि / Last Date of Submission of bids		12.08.2021 at 14.00 hrs	
Detailed NIT indicating eligibility criteria, method of participation, fees payable and other details is available on the website www.nfc.gov.in . e-Tender will be opened on the same day of date of submission of hard copies at 14:30 hrs.			
सहायक महानिरीक्षक, बहिःस्राव प्रबंधन अनुभाग / AGM, EM Section भारत के राष्ट्रपति के लिए दया उनकी ओर से / For and on behalf of the President of India			

DECCAN Chronicle

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.

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 embarrassing 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.

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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 “namasudras” 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 Khari 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 Kemptly 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.

Shikha Mukerjee is a senior journalist in Kolkata

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

LETTERS

IS RAJINI’S WORD FINAL?

Dissolving the Rajini Makkal Mandram (Rajini People’s Association), actor Rajinikanth has presented a picture of his decision to not enter politics in future. Although the star has said ‘no’ for now, where’s the guarantee that he will not change his mind later saying that people have ‘pressurised’ him to enter electoral politics? After all, the next Assembly election is far away. Nearer the time, he can easily float a party, for which purpose the existence of a Mandram is not necessary. Film celebrities in the south never miss an opportunity to convert the huge fan-following into a vote bank.

P.G. Menon, Chennai

CUBAN PROTESTS

Freedom, they say, is the oxygen of the soul. The totalitarian regime in Cuba is totally unacceptable, albeit it’s an internal affair of the country. Developed countries such as the United States of America and other powerful democratic countries across the world should extend strong support to Cubans, who are resolute in getting freedom in the Communist-ruled state.

S.Ramakrishnasayee, Chennai

LANDMARK JUDGEMENT

The accused in this case had preferred an appeal at the Hon’ble High Court of Madras as against the trial court order in a case relates to the kidnapping of a disabled person and put her into sexual torture. While challenging the trial court order awarding the seven year imprisonment, the accused was opposing the same by bringing the blindness of the victim as a defence and tried to impress by arguing that the evidence of the victim can’t be relied upon due to her blindness. Not only did the High Court uphold the order of the trial court but also drove home the point that the accused lacks vision and though the victim happens to be blind but she had the vision to exercise her right to punish the culprit in this case. By taking into account the gravity of the offence, the judge was so furious that he stated his opinion that the sentence can’t be reduced, not even for a single day, for this kind of heinous crime.

A.P. Thiruvadi, Chennai

Rod Liddle



How language gets mangled: ‘Myselfitis’ on the rampage?

I thought that this week I would share with you a bunch of words and phrases which are currently overused and I find thoroughly annoying. The idea came to me after hearing a woman with the IQ of a soap dispenser speaking on Radio 4 about the programme Love Island. In the course of her peroration she continually referred to myself. Not to me, but to herself as “myself”. Such as: “I would say so far as myself is concerned...” No, dear. The word is “I’m”.

She is far from the only culprit. “Myselfitis” is spreading rather more rapidly than the Delta variant. So too is its kind of antithesis. Twice recently I have been asked by phone-callers if “yourself” is happy with the service being provided, etc. Why do they do this? Do they think that addressing me as “you” is too blunt? Or is an attempt to make their grammar more pretentious so that I might afford them greater respect? I have to say, if this is the case, it doesn’t work. It makes me want to smash their spectacles and spit on their shoes.

One suggestion I’ve heard is that

“myself” gets misused (it’s a reflexive pronoun) because the speaker is worried about the egotism inherent in the word “me”. So it’s a kind of false modesty. Whatever, it gets my goat. So does the wholly unnecessary use of the word “today” – again, usually deployed by people in the service sector. Such as “How can I help you today?” or, upon my entering a restaurant – one I’ve never been in – “And where would you like to sit today?”

I can’t for the life of me work out what “today” in this context signifies. Is it something taught at some hospitality finishing school? “Always add the word ‘today’ when talking to a customer. It will let them know how alert you are.” Or do they think that I am not wholly aware that it is today – that it might, instead, be yesterday, or several weeks ago, or tomorrow?

These infractions are not politically offensive, of course, and not really something to get worked up about. They are just another tiny little reason why I will not necessarily rage against the dying of the light, when the dying of the light finally arrives,

but instead greet it warmly, shaking it by the hand.

Equally minor is the verbal tic I hear more and more often when people are about to state an opinion. The ubiquitous prefix: “You know what...?” One supposes that this is intended to let the listener know he or she is about to be granted an audience to a hidden truth of great meaning and import. Whereas in fact the speaker is just about to tell you that he intends to wear a face mask after July 19, or something similarly humdrum and boring and stupid. These words and phrases are kind of prosthetic limbs for the intellectually amputated. But sure, they are not something about which one should get too overwrought.

The remaining annoyances, though, all have political or cultural baggage draped over their shoulders. The word “vile”, for example, is overused to such an extent that it has almost lost its meaning. It is always deployed when a charge of racism has been made, as if the writer or speaker is bound by law not merely to distance themselves from whatever transgression had been made, but

to viscerate that transgression with the most severe word they can find in their stunted lexicon. The various “racist” social media posts made by the “disgraced” cricketer Ollie Robinson were described across the national press as being “vile”. They were nothing of the sort. They were daft, at the very most. And this mangling of language matters, because I will bet that very few people bothered to check exactly what Robinson had said. They will have been content to believe simply that they were “vile”.

Likewise, the word “toxic”. In my world, no words are toxic. Stuff which is toxic includes Strontium-90, blue asbestos and nerve gas: not words. But “toxic” these days is used simply to describe comments which run counter to the opinion of the person passing comment, or perhaps counter to the prevailing orthodoxy. This may make those words problematic or controversial, but it does not make them “toxic”.

Which brings me to “survivor”. I speak as a survivor of measles, chickenpox, pneumonia and, following a riotous holiday in Thailand many years ago, peculiarly resilient public

lice. But me? I’m OK. I’ll get by. I survived. Whereas once you were a survivor if you had managed to get into one of the Titanic’s lifeboats or had fought and been wounded on the Somme, it is now used to describe people – usually women – who were touched inappropriately on the top of the leg by an unpleasantly sweating middle-aged bloke. They are “survivors”. The word is deployed (by the Left) because to use the word “victim” is disempowering. And yet “survivor” is in a sense even more disempowering because it implies that their entire lives have been defined by that rogue accosting. Never has a word been more devalued than “survivor”.

Then there are the phrases used by the Left to deny reality. Such as “lived experience” and “my truth”, which these days easily trump objective fact: if you think you experienced it, you must be right, despite all the evidence to the contrary. And best of all — social justice. There is no such thing as social justice.

By arrangement with the Spectator

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

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

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

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-

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

Temple food, prasad to get FSSAI certification



New Delhi, July 13: Religious places in Delhi are being encouraged to go for 'Bhog' certification of their 'prasad' and 'langar' by the food safety department, which guides them and tests for quality and hygiene, especially in light of the Covid-19 pandemic, officials said.

The department recently issued Bhog certificates to Akshardham temple and Sai Baba temple after a training and audit exercise, Delhi's food safety commissioner Neha Bansal said.

Project BHOG (Blissful Hygienic Offering to God) is an initiative by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) to encourage religious places to maintain and adopt best practices in the manufacturing and handling of 'prasad' and other food items.

"We are in touch with several religious places like temples and gurdwaras in the city, including Iskcon temple, for their participation in the project and to ensure the best quality of prasad and hygiene practices are there," she said.

The department officials have been approach-

ing office bearers and managers of the religious places to encourage them to obtain Bhog certificate and get the food safety registration and licence.

"It's basically an awareness initiative in which we encourage management of religious places to adopt best practices of preparing prasad and food and its handling by the cooks and workers."

"The food safety registration and licence serve as a mark of quality," said Saurabh Sharma, the designated officer of the department.

The department identifies religious places and, after discussion with its management, undertakes the Bhog certification process, he said.

The cooks and food handlers at the identified religious places are imparted a one-day training about various aspects of hygienic practices of manufacturing and handling of food items including 'prasad' through FSSAI-empowered trainers.

The training module includes instructions in general cleanliness, the use of aprons and gloves by cooks and food handlers, and regular medical examination of the workers, he said.

— PTI

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 underage 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

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 Pharmacexil.

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. India 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.



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

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

OLYMPICS QUIZ

1. Which is the only city to have hosted the Games three times?
2. Who was the first member of the British Royal Family to compete in the Olympics?
3. In which edition did boxing legend Muhammad Ali light the Olympic cauldron?
4. In which event did Ethiopian legend Haile Gebrselassie win consecutive gold medals?
5. Which Czechoslovakia runner won the 5,000m, 10,000m and marathon events in the same edition of the Olympics?

Answers: 1. London; 2. Princess Anne (equestrian); 3. 1996 Atlanta; 4. 10,000metres; 5. Emil Zátopek.

SHORT TAKE

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

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. David Goffin, the Belgian number one, also announced that he would not play. — AFP

Sailors out to make a splash

Varun, Ganapathy realistic about medal chances in competitive field

NEHA SURANA | DC
CHENNAI, JULY 13

The Indian sailing contingent comprising three members from Tamil Nadu — Varun Thakkar, KC Ganapathy, Nethra Kumanan — and one from Mumbai (Vishnu Saravanan) touched down in Tokyo on Tuesday as the final countdown began for the Olympic Games.

The duo of Varun and Ganapathy will be competing in the 49er, a two-handed skiff-type sailing dinghy. While Varun's responsibility is to steer the boat tactically, Ganapathy controls the sail as per the wind or movement of the boat.

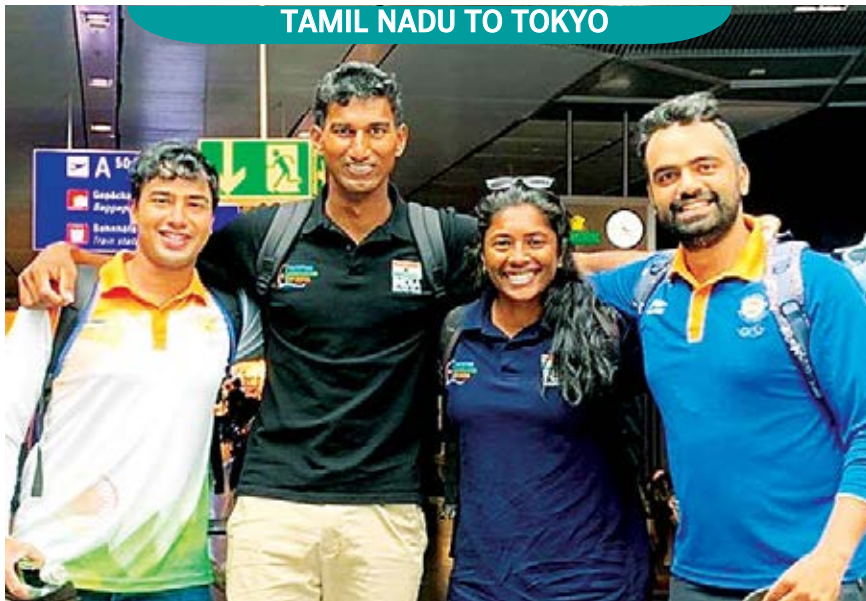
The sailors are high on confidence after a fruitful training in Portugal under the guidance of their Aussie coach Ian Stuart Warren. Under Warren's tutelage, Varun and Ganapathy won a bronze medal at the 2018 Asian Games in Indonesia.

Varun (26) and Ganapathy (25) spoke about their Olympic preparations.

Excerpts On their training stint in Portugal:

Varun: We had a month-long training in Cascais, a coastal resort town in Portugal. Our focus was on the boat handling. I felt our consistency of our manoeuvres has improved. Sailing is a wind-driven sport so it's not easy to schedule the training in advance. Some days we go out in the water around 10am and have a two-three hour session but the plan keeps changing depending on the winds.

Ganapathy: Cascais is a beautiful place with amazing conditions for sailing. We went there because the winds and the pattern of



Sailors KC Ganapathy, Vishnu Saravanan, Nethra Kumanan and Varun Thakkar.

waves are sometimes similar to what we can expect in Tokyo. Apart from that, we had good training partners. After Oman where we achieved our Olympic qualification, we knew that we hadn't done much preparations. So we tried to intensify our training in Portugal.

On dealing with the expectations:

Varun: As a sailor, I enjoy uncertainty. For me, Tokyo is just another big event and we need to perform. I have the same mindset for every event. Just because it's the Olympics and people are going to be watching, it doesn't really matter. You can't change the process that we believe in just because it's a bigger stage. When you change something and you try it for the first time at a big event, you are going to go back ten steps. When we are going out there, we have

our pride for our country.

Ganapathy: We dreamt of this moment while growing up and now we are actually living it. I don't want to be anxious and I don't feel anything different. Since our childhood, we were pretty focused on our dream to get into the Olympics and win a medal. Now, it is just a stepping stone. I just worry about what is in my hands and what I can control. In the end, we just have to go there and give everything and see what happens.

On their chances of winning a medal: **Varun:** I knew we had a very good chance of qualifying for the Olympics but winning a medal here is out of the question. We are realistic as a team and as athletes. So, if we manage to break into the top-10, I think that would be an amazing result for us. We are young, so in the next Olympics, we can

hope for a medal.

Ganapathy: There are 19 teams in the fray. And, all of the team are phenomenally good. But if you go by the past result, the New Zealanders have won the last five World Championships and they are training Olympic champions so they are the odds-on favourites. I am being brutally honest that winning a medal this time is hard but there's always a possibility, you never know what will happen.

On their friendship: **Varun:** Ganapathy and I have been working together as a team for a while. When you work as a team, you take responsibility for each other as if you are committed to each other. I think we both are not result-oriented people. We love to go sailing, it's a passion for us, and we enjoy it more than the results. If you give us an off-day, we'll be like... let's go out sailing. Anything to do on the water is exciting for us. We don't lack moti-

NETHRA IN UNCHARTED WATERS

When Chennai's Nethra Kumanan booked her Olympic berth, she sailed into uncharted waters. Nethra is the first Indian woman sailor to qualify for the Games. She will be competing in the Laser Radial class, a small and dinghy-style boat used single-handedly. The 23-year-old has represented India in the Asian Games (2014 & 2018) and in 2020 World Cup, where she also became the first Indian woman to win a medal.

vation; because we are hungry and we want to get somewhere.

Ganapathy: We are like brothers; we have known each other since we were kids. We have worked for 11 years and our coordination is on the point. We are equal partners and there is tremendous respect between us. There are times where we still argue, but even then, it is only for the greater good and not to pull each other down.

On post-Olympics plan: **Varun:** I think we will be back to the waters to prepare for the 2022 Asian Games. We will have a lot of work to do. But I want to go to the UK to meet my sister and take some time off. Hopefully, I can do that.

Ganapathy: I am excited to get back to training for our next stop — the Asian Games, but it will be fun catching up with friends. We have been so concerned about our health and other issues, so it will be more relaxed.

KNOW YOUR SPORT — SAILING

POINT SYSTEM

- Points in each race are awarded according to position: the winner gets 1 point, the runner-up gets 2 and so on.
- Points are doubled in the final race.
- Team/sailor with the fewest total is declared the winner.

DID YOU KNOW?

Crew leans outside the boat to keep it from tipping over too far in strong winds. It's called 'hiking out.'



HISTORY

- Sailing has a long history in the Games. The sport made its debut in 1900 and, with the exception of 1904, it has appeared at every Olympic Games since then. The sport's name was changed from 'yachting' to 'sailing' at the Sydney 2000 Games.
- The Tokyo 2020 sailing competition will have six classes, four of them (Laser, RS:X, 470 and 49er) competed by men and women. Raced since Helsinki 1952, the Finn is the oldest class in the Olympic programme and is only for men. Two classes will make their second appearance on the Olympic programme. The 49er FX Skiff for women and the Nacra 17 — a catamaran and mixed event — made their debut in Rio 2016.

TECHNIQUE

- Sailing is not only a race against other boats but a battle with nature: the height of the waves, the pull of the tides, the strength of the wind and other climatic factors.
- It is not possible for boats to sail in a straight line along each leg of the course. When sailing with a headwind or beam wind, boats must catch the wind by moving in a zig-zag pattern.

TOP PERFORMERS

- Great Britain has won the most gold medals in sailing, which reflects its status as the country where the competitive sport developed. Close behind is the USA, while other perennial medal-winners include Norway, Spain and France. More recently, Australia and New Zealand have attracted attention for their efforts to break the European/USA dominance.

Cup 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.

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



Yashpal Sharma

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

In international career, Yashpal played 37 Tests, scoring 1606 runs, and 42 ODIs in which he made 883.

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. — PTI

SHARMA: AN EPITOME OF GUTS & GLORY

New Delhi, July 13: "I shared a strange relationship with Malcolm Marshall. The moment I would come in, he would at least hit me twice on the chest," the late Yashpal Sharma would narrate with a straight face while sipping tea at the Feroz Shah Kotla ground.

On Tuesday, as Indian cricket lost one of its gutsiest soldiers to a massive cardiac arrest, one couldn't help but remember what a nice easy-going person Yashpal was, someone who was great at having a laugh or two even if it was at his own expense.

Yashpal was like that bridge between India being a horrible ODI outfit (he was part of the 1979 World Cup where they even lost to Sri Lanka) to their transformation into world champions and the ODI revolution that happened after that in the country.

He didn't have Sunil Gavaskar's class, Dilip Vengsarkar's flair or Gundappa Viswanath's elegance but anyone who knew "Yash paaji" would vouch that he was guts personified.

Born in Ludhiana, Yashpal was one of those quintessential domestic workhorses who rose up the ranks right from his days as a school boy cricketer (National Schools) when he scored 260.

He was Punjab batting's superstar in 1970s, a wicket that Delhi or Mumbai were always desperate to get.

The 173 in the Duleep Trophy final for North Zone against South Zone, which had Erapalli Prasanna, B.S. Chadrasekhar and S. Venkataraghavan brought him into national reckoning.

A batting average of close to 34 in 37 Tests, with two hundreds, and less than 30 in 42 ODIs perhaps

won't give an idea about the impact he had between 1980 to 1983, his golden years as an automatic choice in middle order.

The World Cup belonged to Yashpal as much as it belonged to Kapil Dev, Mohinder Amarnath or Roger Binny, whose performances are often highlighted more.

Kapil's 175 not out at Tunbridge Wells is a part of sporting folklore, more so because the BBC didn't deem that game to be good enough to be covered live or even record highlights. Pakistan's encounter on that very day (June 18, 1983) was duly covered.

But very few people remember that it was Yashpal Sharma's 89 in India's opening World Cup game at Old Trafford against the West Indies, which the team won by 32 runs, that set the tone for things to come.

— PTI

WHAT THEY SAID



Shri Yashpal Sharma Ji was a much beloved member of the Indian cricket team, including the legendary 1983 squad. He was an inspiration for teammates, fans as well as budding cricketers. Anguished by his passing away.

— NARENDRA MODI
Prime Minister

Shocked and deeply pained by the demise of Yashpal Sharma ji. Have fond memories of watching him bat during the 1983 World Cup. His contribution to Indian cricket shall always be remembered. My sincere condolences to the entire Sharma family.

— SACHIN TENDULKAR
cricket legend

It is unbelievable. He was the fittest among all of us. He was a vegetarian, teetotaler, used to have soup for his dinner and very particular about his morning walks. I am just shocked.

— DILIP VENGSAKAR
former India captain

Shocking, this is the worst news that I have received. It is like ... 83 team is like a family, one of our family members is no more, it is so shocking.

— BALWINDER SINGH SANDHU
former India pacer

Saddened by the passing away of ace cricketer & 1983 World Cup winning member Sh Yashpal Sharma. His contribution won't be forgotten.

— ANURAG THAKUR
sports minister

I am deeply saddened by the demise of Yashpal Sharma. We have lost one of our cricketing heroes. His contribution to Indian cricket shall always be remembered. I extend my condolences to his family.

— SOURAV GANGULY
BCCI president

Never apologise for who I am: Rashford

London, July 13: England's Marcus Rashford said he will "never apologise for who I am" in an emotional statement after receiving racist abuse following the side's Euro 2020 final defeat. The Manchester United forward was one of three players, along with Jadon Sancho and Bukayo Saka, who were attacked by racist trolls after missing penalties in Sunday's 3-2 shoot-out defeat by Italy.

Rashford's England team-mate Tyrone Mings criticised British Home Secretary Priti Patel, saying she had "stoked the fire" by defending those who booed players taking the knee.

Rashford has become a hero to many outside football by lobbying the British government to provide free school meals for underprivileged children during the coronavirus pandemic.

"I'm Marcus Rashford, 23-year-old black man from Withington and Wythenshawe, South Manchester. If I have nothing else I have that," Rashford wrote in a statement on Twitter.

Rashford, who came on late in the second period of extra time, apologised for his penalty miss and said "something didn't feel quite right" when he came to take the kick.

"It's been playing in my head over and over since I struck the ball and there's probably not a word to quite describe how it feels. Final. 55 years. I penalty. History. All I can say is sorry. I wish it had gone differently," he wrote.



Street artist repairs the mural of Marcus Rashford in Withington, Manchester, on Tuesday. The mural was defaced with graffiti in the wake of England losing the Euro final to Italy. — AP

"I can take critique of my performance all day long, my penalty was not good enough, it should have gone in but I will never apologise for who I am and where I came from." Images on social media showed a mural honouring Rashford in his hometown of Withington had been defaced before locals covered the hateful language with messages of support.

"Seeing the response in Withington had me on the verge of tears," Rashford said. He added that he was proud to have worn the England jersey during his side's first major final appearance in 55 years, and grateful for the "brotherhood" that was created in the England camp. — AFP

Federer pulls out of Olympics

Geneva, July 13: Roger Federer announced on Tuesday he has withdrawn from the upcoming Tokyo Olympics after a "setback" in his recovery from a knee injury.

The 20-time Grand Slam champion was knocked out of Wimbledon in the quarter-finals by Hubert Hurkacz last week. The 39-year-old Federer, who has

never won an Olympic singles gold medal, underwent two surgeries on his right knee in 2020.

"During the grass court season, I unfortunately experienced a setback with my knee, and have accepted that I must withdraw from the Tokyo Olympic Games," Federer said in a statement on social media. The tennis competitions

in Japan are set to start on July 24, the day after the opening ceremony. Federer, who turns 40 next month, pulled out of the French Open after reaching the fourth round, hoping to get fit for Wimbledon.

He showed signs of his best during his run to the quarter-finals, but bowed out tamely, losing to Poland's Hurkacz. — AFP

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