

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

CHENNAI | SUNDAY 27 | JUNE 2021

WEATHER



Max: 34°C
Min: 21°C
Rainfall: Nill

ASTROGUIDE

Pilava: Aani 13
Tithi: Thrithiyai
Star: Thiruvonam
Rahukalam: 4.30 pm to 6 pm
Yamagandam: 12 noon to 1.30 pm

PRAYERS

Fajar: 4.25 am
Luhar: 12.16 pm
Asar: 3.37 pm
Maghrib: 6.38 pm
Isha: 7.57 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.48 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.02 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 8.37 PM
MOONSET TOMORROW 9.25 AM

CORONA CUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+46,008)	(+1,190)
3,02,28,627	3,95,715

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+5,145)	(148)
TN: 24,60,747	32,199

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

18,13,54,977

DEATHS

39,28,721

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES 219

worldometers.info

High Court relief for English lecturer

Chennai: The Madras high court has dismissed an appeal filed by the state government, challenging an order of a single judge, which allowed a petition filed by a lecturer in English department in the Nesamony Memorial Christian College in Kanyakumari district. ■ **P2**

Petrol crosses ₹100 in TN after steep hike in fuel rates

New Delhi, June 26: Petrol price soared past ₹100-a-litre mark in Tamil Nadu after fuel prices were hiked again on Saturday.

Petrol and diesel prices were hiked by 35 paise per litre each — the steepest in recent times, according to a price notification of state-owned fuel retailers.

■ **P2**

COUNTER POINT



Actually it was a profit wave!

Cop gets 22.5 years in jail for Floyd murder

Minneapolis (US), June 26: Former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin was sentenced to 22.5 years in prison for the murder of George Floyd, whose dying gasps under Chauvin's knee led to the biggest outcry against racial injustice in the US in generations.

The punishment — which fell short of the 30 years that prosecutors had requested — came after Chauvin broke

his more than yearlong silence in court to offer condolences to the Floyd family and say he hopes more information coming out will eventually give them “some peace of mind.”

With good behavior, Chauvin, 45, could be paroled after serving two-thirds of his sentence, or about 15 years, reports suggested.

■ **P5**

CITY | 2

EPS: should students in TN sit for Neet or not?



WORLD | 5

US won't dump Afghans: Biden

SPORT | 6

Sindhu carries flag and Indian hopes



deccanchronicle.com, facebook.com/deccannews, twitter.com/deccanchronicle, google.com/+deccanchronicle

Class X, XI marks to fix XII result

■ Practical marks also get weightage ■ Final results to be uploaded by July 31

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR, D SEKAR | DC
CHENNAI, JUNE 26

Chief Minister M.K. Stalin announced the formula to be followed by the education department in awarding marks for students of Class XII, which basically gave 50 per cent weightage for marks scored in Class X, 20 per cent to Class XI marks and 30 per cent to marks obtained in practical examinations and internals.

The marks awarded through the formula would be released in the website for the state government examinations by July 31, an official release said on Saturday, adding that the government had to come

up with a new form of tabulation since final examinations for Class XII were cancelled due to the surge in Coronavirus cases.

Those students who were not happy with the marks awarded through this new formula would be allowed to appear for an examination that would be held later on after the Coronavirus crisis subsided but the marks they scored in that examination would be final, the release said.

While taking the Class X public examination marks for tabulation, the average of the three subjects in which the students had scored highly would be considered and only written test marks of Class XI

MAKING OF SCORE CARD			
Those students who were not happy with the marks awarded through this new formula would be allowed to appear for an examination that would be held later on after the Coronavirus crisis subsided but the marks they scored in that examination would be final		HOW IS IT DONE	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 50% weightage to Class X marks 20% weightage to Class XI marks 30% weightage to practical, internals 	
		WHAT COUNTS?	MISSED AN EXAM?
		Class X: Average of best three marks	Failed or missed students to get 35 per cent mark
		Class XI: Only written test marks	Special exam for those who had no Class XI score
			Special exam for those want better marks after Covid Subsidies
			Final scores on July 31

would be taken into account, the release said.

For the 30 per cent from practicals/ internals, every mark scored in the practical examinations would be given a weightage of 20 and the internal marks would be given a weightage of 10

to make it a total of 30. In those subjects with no practical element, the internal marks for 10 would be extrapolated into 30.

If a student had missed the Class XII practical examinations for whatever

reason, Class XI practical scores would be taken into account and if a student had not appeared for Class XI practical then the marks taken for the written tests in Class X and XI would be considered for calculation.

Those who missed writing or failed in the Class XI examinations would be awarded 35 per cent mark in the subject and those who had no Class XI score or internal mark or practical score and Class XII internal and practical score to show would be allowed to take a special examination, along with those seeking to appear for the examination as they were not satisfied with the marks arrived at through the formula.

Keep up jabs' momentum: PM

New Delhi, June 26: Expressing satisfaction at an increased speed of Covid-19 vaccination this week, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said it is important to carry this momentum forward and also underlined a need to involve NGOs and other organisations in efforts to expand the drive.

Over 3.77 crore Covid vaccine doses have been administered in the last six days, the government said in a statement after a high-level review meeting held by Modi with top officials on the progress of the vaccination drive.

It was noted that 128 districts in the country have vaccinated more than 50 per cent of over 45 years of population and 16 districts have vaccinated more than 90 per cent of this age group.

“The PM was informed that 3.77 crore doses have been administered in the last 6 days which is more than the entire population of countries like Malaysia, Saudi Arabia and Canada,” the Prime Minister’s Office said.

Mr Modi directed officials to work with states to ensure that the pace of testing does not go down as testing remains a very important weapon to track and contain rising infections in any region.

Mr Modi underlined the need to involve NGOs and other organisations in the vaccination drive, with officials stating that they are in touch with state governments to explore and implement innovative methods to reach people for vaccination, the PMO said.

Mr Modi was informed about the rising interest in Cowin platform globally, his office noted, adding that he said that efforts should be made to help all countries, who have expressed interest, with India’s rich tech expertise. — **PTI**



Prime Minister Narendra Modi chairs a meeting on progress of COVID-19 vaccination drive, via video conferencing, in New Delhi on Saturday.

‘Not correct to say Delhi exaggerated oxygen demand’

DC CORRESPONDENT WITH AGENCY INPUTS
NEW DELHI, JUNE 26

A day after Delhi’s AAP government and the BJP were locked in a battle over the national capital’s oxygen crisis during the second wave of Coronavirus in April-May, three of the five members of the Supreme Court-appointed team have distanced themselves from the report, with director of All-India Institute of Medical Sciences Randeep Guleria saying it is not correct to say the Arvind Kejriwal government exaggerated requirement.

Dr Guleria, who heads the subgroup, said, “It would not be correct to say that. Delhi oxygen audit is an interim report. We should wait for the final report.” ■ **P3**

TN, 7 other states told to take steps to stop Delta Plus

DC CORRESPONDENT WITH AGENCY INPUTS
NEW DELHI, JUNE 26

The Union government has asked eight states—Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Gujarat and Haryana—to ramp up containment measures and to prevent large gatherings to ensure that the Delta plus variant of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19, does not spread.

The Union health secretary urged the states to take up immediate containment measures, including preventing crowds, conducting widespread testing as well as increasing vaccine coverage.

Trinamul MP who got fake vaccine takes ill; stable

DC CORRESPONDENT WITH AGENCY INPUTS
KOLKATA, JUNE 26

Trinamool Congress member of the Lok Sabha Mimi Chakraborty, who was one of the victims of the fake vaccine scam in West Bengal, fell ill on Saturday, days after she took the vaccine. Reports said thre Jadavpur MP is treated at home and is stable.

“Mimi Chakraborty’s condition is now stable and she is under treatment at her home. She is also suffering from hypertension. The doctor who attended to her said her illness cannot be immediately linked to the fake vaccine as she already had a liver problem,” reports said.

JUST SPAMMING

Is Emergency worth talking about even now

Exactly 46 years ago, on June 26, newspaper headlines screamed about the proclamation of Emergency by the then President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed.

■ **P2**

DESHMUKH SKIPS ED GRILL IN MONEY LAUNDERING CASE

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC
MUMBAI, JUNE 26

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has arrested former Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh’s personal secretary Sanjeev Palande and assistant secretary Kundan Shinde on Saturday in connection with the money laundering case related to charges of ₹100 crore bribery. The aides have been remanded in custody by the special PMLA court till June 1. Mr Deshmukh, a senior NCP leader, was also summoned by the central agency, but he didn’t turn up for questioning.

According to ED sources, Mr Deshmukh was asked to depose before the investigating officer at the agency office in Ballard Estate here by 11 am, but he has sought a fresh date for appearance. Mr Deshmukh’s lawyer Jaywant Patil said, “We have given the letter to ED and asked them to furnish documents based on which we are to be questioned as we don’t have any knowledge about the line of investigation. So we were unable to appear for questioning. Now ED has to take a call on it.”

DC CORRESPONDENT WITH AGENCY INPUTS
CHANDIGARH/NEW DELHI, JUNE 26

Marking the completion of seven months of agitation at Delhi’s borders against the three farm laws passed by the Union government, scores of farmers from Punjab and Haryana on Saturday took out protest marches while farmers camping at Delhi’s Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur observed July 26 as “Save Agriculture, Save Democracy Day”.

Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) leader Rakesh Tikait said at least four lakh tractors and 25 lakh farmers are ready to march towards Delhi. However, if talks with the government resume, then the march will not be taken forward, he said.

Mr Tikait announced two rallies in Delhi next month to intensify the protest against the three new farm laws. Mr Tikait, who held a meeting with farmers at Delhi’s Ghazipur border, said two

decisions were made at the meeting. First, a batch of farmers will leave on tractors for the Singhu border from Uttar Pradesh’s Shamli district on July 9. And another such rally will start from Bijnor on July 24 and will head towards Ghazipur border via Meerut, he said.

Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), an umbrella body of 40 farmer unions protesting at various Delhi border points, claimed that farmers were detained in states like Haryana, Punjab, Karnataka, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh and Telangana during the protests.

Even as farmers in several states tried to march to governors’ residence to submit a memorandum to mark the completion of seven months of their agitation, Union agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar on Saturday appealed to them to end their stir and offered to resume talks on the provisions of the three legislations. ■ **P3**

51.6 CRORE VACCINE DOSES BY JULY 31, CENTRE TELLS SC

New Delhi, June 26: The Centre Saturday told the Supreme Court that a total of 51.6 crore Covid vaccine doses would be made available by July 31 of which 35.6 crore have already been provided.

Giving the status of vaccine availability for children, the Centre said in an affidavit that the Drugs Controller General of India on May 12 permitted Bharat Biotech to conduct clinical trials of its vaccine Covaxin on volunteers between 2 to 18 years of age, and the enrolment process for this trial has also begun.

It informed the court that Zydus Cadila which is developing DNA vaccines has concluded its clinical trial for between the age group of 12 to 18 years of age and, subject to the statutory permissions, it may be available in near future for children of the age group of 12 to 18 years of age.

“It is humbly submitted

Digital divide hampers justice delivery: CJI

New Delhi, June 26: Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana has written to information technology minister Ravi Shankar Prasad seeking steps to resolve poor digital connectivity in rural, tribal and hilly areas, saying this is “adversely impacting the pace of justice delivery”.

In his letter to Mr Prasad, who is also the minister for law and communications, Justice Ramana also referred to the “digital divide” and said “a whole generation of lawyers is being pushed out of the system” due to technological inequality. The Chief Justice

informed about the letter, written on June 8, while speaking on Saturday at the virtual release of a book ‘anomalies in law and justice’ authored by former Supreme Court judge Justice R.V. Raveendran.

During the course of a panel discussion that followed the book launch, Chief Justice Ramana said that the issue of connectivity figured prominently at a two-day conference of chief justices of high courts that he had held recently.

“Poor connectivity in rural, tribal, remote and hilly areas is adversely impacting the pace of jus-

● Poor connectivity in rural, tribal, remote and hilly areas is adversely impacting the pace of justice delivery and is also depriving thousands of young lawyers across the country of their livelihood, Chief Justice Ramana wrote.

tice delivery and is also depriving thousands of young lawyers across the country of their livelihood. A whole generation of lawyers is being pushed out of the system due to digital divide,” the CJI said.

Chief Justice Ramana said he recently wrote to

the law, communications and IT minister, highlighting these issues, and requested him to initiate steps on priority to bridge the digital divide and evolve a mechanism to help advocates who have lost their livelihood due to the Covid pandemic and who are in dire need of financial assistance.

The letter stated that there is “a need to strengthen the network and connectivity beyond major urban centres, particularly in rural and tribal areas, as the digital divide is adversely impacting the functioning of the courts in the wake of Covid-19 pandemic”.

“The judicial infrastructure needs to be augmented with latest information and communication technology tools to facilitate ‘access to justice’ during and post pandemic time. Further, the judicial infrastructure needs to be streamlined and revamped to deal with the challenges of pendency,” the CJI said.

Chief Justice Ramana said “a blue print of the proposal to set up the National Judicial Infrastructure Corporation (NJIC) is in the final stages of preparation and will be shared with the Union government shortly”. — **PTI**

OTHER STORIES

300 commuters stage rail roko in Chengalpet station

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 26

Around 300 commuters staged a rail roko in Chengalpet railway station on Friday night after the train services between Chengalpet and Arakkonam railway were cancelled. Passengers who were waiting at the Chengalpet railway station held the rail roko.

On Friday night, at around 7:30 pm, the commuters got into the tracks in the station. They were irked by the sudden cancellation of the train, without any prior announcement. A train from Chengalpet was scheduled to leave Arakkonam at 6:15 pm, however, the railway officials announced the train will leave the station by 7:30 pm.

After waiting for more than an hour, the passengers were informed that the Chengalpet-Arakkonam train was cancelled, forcing the passengers to protest.

Railway Protection Force (RPF) and local police came to the spot on information and pacified the agitators. The authorities promised to operate the train on time from Sunday. The protest affected the train services for nearly one and a half hours.

Petrol crosses ₹100 in TN after steep hike in fuel rates

New Delhi, June 26: Petrol price soared past ₹100-a-litre mark in Tamil Nadu after fuel prices were hiked again on Saturday.

Petrol and diesel prices were hiked by 35 paise per litre each - the steepest in recent times, according to a price notification of state-owned fuel retailers. The increase took rates across the country to fresh highs with Tamil Nadu becoming the latest state to see petrol cross ₹100-a-litre mark.

In Delhi, petrol hit an all-time high of ₹98.11 a litre, while diesel is now priced at ₹88.65 per litre. Fuel prices differ from state to state depending on the incidence of local taxes such as value-added tax (VAT) and freight charges.

While petrol had crossed Rs 100-a-litre mark in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Jammu and Kashmir, Odisha, and Ladakh, several towns in Tamil Nadu including Salem, Vellore and Cuddalore saw that level after the steep price hike.

In Chennai, petrol is priced at ₹99.19 a litre while diesel comes for ₹93.23 per litre. Among metro cities, petrol is already above ₹100 in Mumbai, Hyderabad and Bengaluru.

— PTI



Government buses being sanitised at Krishna Nagar depot in Vellore as they will be operated from Monday.

— K. Senthil Nathan

Safety protocols



With religious places opening from Monday, temple staff undergo nasal swab test at Perambur on Saturday.

— DC

Teenage girl gang-raped near Chennai; one held

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 26

A 16-year-old girl was gang-raped by three men in Chengalpet's Perumperkandigai village.

According to the police, the incident happened three months back in the village, however, it came to light recently after the minor got pregnant.

The victim, a 16-year-old girl, from a tribal community in Perumbar Kandigai village was alone at her house, while her parents were away at work. Police said, two men identified as Suriya (25) and Chinnarasu (22) of the same village allegedly barged into the house and dragged her to an isolated place.

They reportedly sexually harassed her. The duo's friend, a driver, Vijayashankar (35), also joined them in abusing the minor girl.

ABDUCTED AND RAPED BY ROWDY

In another similar incident in Pazhavali in Chengalpet, a 17-year-old girl was abducted and sexually abused by a notorious rowdy.

The accused, identified by the police as Viki alias Vignesh (24), a History-sheeter, allegedly abducted the 17-year-old. After the girl went missing, her parents lodged a missing complaint with the Chengalpet Taluk police.

The police traced the accused to a house near the village where he kept the girl against her will. The girl was rescued by the police.

Vignesh was arrested and remanded to judicial custody, the police said.

Police said the offenders took a video of the incident and threatened her not to reveal the matter to anyone. They also continued to assault her on multiple occasions under the pretext of releasing the video on social media platforms.

Meanwhile, recently the matter came to light after the girl suffered severe stomach pain and was taken to the hospital, where the parents were

informed the girl was pregnant.

Following this, the girl disclosed the horrific crime to her parents.

Based on the complaint by the family at the Melmaruvathur All Women Police Station, a case was registered.

Vijayashankar was arrested in connection with the case, while the police have launched a search for the other two accused.

HC relief for English lecturer

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 26

The Madras high court has dismissed an appeal filed by the state government, challenging an order of a single judge, which allowed a petition filed by a lecturer in the English department in the Nesamony Memorial College in Kanyakumari district.

A division bench comprising Justices Pushpa Sathyanarayana and Krishnan Ramasamy dismissed the appeals filed by the higher education secretary, the Director of Collegiate Education and Joint Director of Collegiate Education, Tirunelveli region.

Originally, C.Jeyasekar was appointed as a lecturer in the department of English in the Nesamony Memorial Christian college in the year 1993. However his appointment was not approved by the



Director of Collegiate Education. Hence, he filed a petition and the high court directed the authorities to consider his case. Therefore, he was once again appointed in the new vacancy caused by the retirement of one A.John Ebenezer Chatterjee with effect from June 20, 2001 however, the approval was rejected by the authorities on March 12, 2003. Hence, he filed a petition again and the single judge allowed the same.

The bench said the single judge passed the order placing reliance on a

A division bench comprising Justices Pushpa Sathyanarayana and Krishnan Ramasamy dismissed the appeals filed by the higher education secretary, the Director of Collegiate Education and Joint Director of Collegiate Education, Tirunelveli region

Division Bench judgment, wherein Rule 11 (1) of the Tamil Nadu Private Colleges (Regulation) Rules, 1976 was considered and the Division Bench had given a finding that there was no requirement under the Tamil Nadu Private Colleges (Regulation) Act and the Tamil Nadu Private College (Regulation) Rules to seek prior permission to fill up any vacant post in an aided college, which has already been sanctioned for the academic year by the Director of Collegiate Education under Rule 11 (1) of the

Should students in TN sit for Neet or not?

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 26

Should medical college aspirants from Tamil Nadu sit for Neet or not? Posing this question to the Chief Minister, M. K. Stalin, directly, the Leader of Opposition in the State Assembly, Edappadi K. Palaniswami demanded a categorical reply from him to clear the doubts of students and parents.

The big question that was looming over students and parents now was whether Neet scores would be taken for the admission to the state medical colleges this year or not and that had created a lot of confusion among them.

Palaniswami alleged in a statement on Saturday

Urging Stalin to come clean on that and dispel

Urging Stalin to come clean on that and dispel the doubts of the students and parents, Palaniswami said the Chief Minister had not given a direct answer when he raised the straight question on the issue in the Assembly

the doubts of the students and parents, Palaniswami said the Chief Minister had not given a direct answer when he raised the straight question on the issue in the state Assembly.

Based on the recommendations of the A. K. Rajan committee, set up by the state government to go into the impact of Neet on the life of students, the government would take appropriate action, the Chief Minister had told him, Palaniswami said.

Now that the Medical

Council of India had announced that Neet would be conducted as usual this year, too, Palaniswami asked Stalin if students from Tamil Nadu should sit for the entrance examination or not before the A K Rajan committee came out with its recommendations.

He pointed out that the DMK had, during the elections, repeatedly promised to do away with Neet if it came to power and was not saying if it would be held this year or not now, other than giving evasive answers.

The AIADMK leader listed the steps taken by his government to stop the implementation of Neet in the state and said that once it was decided that it would be held it brought in the 7.5 per cent reservation of students of govern-

ment schools in medical admission.

Through that reservation 435 students gained admission in medical and dental courses and the government agreed to bear their entire education expense for the next five years, he said.

He also alleged that Neet was introduced in 2010 when the UPA government, in which the DMK was a part, was in power. Since then the AIADMK had been fighting against the imposition of NEET in all forums and went up to the Supreme Court.

Since Neet impeded government school students from realizing their medical college dreams, the exam should not be conducted in Tamil Nadu and that was the stated principle, Palaniswami made it clear.

Kamal keeps prez and GS posts

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 26

Makkal Needhi Maiam (MNM) president Kamal Haasan took over additional charge as general secretary of the party even as he revamped the organizational structure, making some additions to the key posts.

Addressing his cadre through video conference on Saturday, the new appointments were being made to strengthen the party and also to take its principles and policies to the people.

Now, there are two political advisors in Pazha Karupiah and Ponraj Vellachamy, Vice Presidents in A G Mourya and Thangavelu, State Secretaries in Senthil Arumugham, Siva Ilango and Sarthbabu, an additional executive committee member in Sripriya Sethupathy and welfare club coordinator in G Nagarajan.

NCPCR seeks action against cop in sexual harassment case

R. VALAYAPATHY | DC
TIRUCHY, JUNE 26

The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) has taken a serious view of the sexual harassment of a 15-year-old girl by a police sub-inspector in Madhavaram near Chennai on Friday.

Sub-inspector Sathishkumar (32) of Tiruvallur district, attached to the special police team of the Kasimedu police station, was posted for special duty at Madhavaram milk depot area where he developed an illegal intimacy with the victim's mother who worked in a ration shop.

When the victim object-

Sub-inspector Sathishkumar (32) of Tiruvallur district, attached to the special police team of the Kasimedu police station, was posted for special duty at Madhavaram milk depot area where he developed an illegal intimacy with the victim's mother who worked in a ration shop

ed to this, the police officer threatened her with his service gun and said he would kill her father and her brother if she disclosed his affair to anyone.

On Friday, police arrested Sathishkumar and the victim's mother under the Pocco Act.

In a letter to Director General of police J.K. Tripathi, NCPCR member R.G. Anand requested him to inquire into the matter

and take strict action against the police officer under relevant sections of Pocco Act and IPC.

Dr Anand also wanted counselling and psycho-social support to the girl as she will be under psychological trauma.

An action taken report along with the copies of the relevant information will be shared with the NCPCR within three days of receipt of this letter, Dr Anand added.

Up in arms



All India farmers association members protest against the three farm bills at Chinnamalai on Saturday.

— DC

Is Emergency worth talking about even now



G. Babu Jayakumar

Just spamming

Exactly 46 years ago, on June 26, newspaper headlines screamed about the proclamation of Emergency by the then President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed. I am now sure if the import of the news really sunk in immediately among the readers for no one would have known what it portended at that point of time. But today we know what it meant, what it did and what it felt like to be under a state of Emergency. For, much has been written about the dark phase of

Indian democracy between 1975 and 1977, mainly to point an accusing finger at the Congress and the then Prime Minister Mrs Indira Gandhi.

Poignant stories of sufferings by individuals, viewpoints on the suspension of human rights, flash backs on gagging of newspapers - there was no television or radio, other than the government owned Doordarshan and All India Radio - and several such narrations have been repeated and recycled.

Besides a slew of books that have been written over the years, many articles have been featured in newspapers and television channels. They are normally published during the anniversary of the proclamation of the Emergency, lest we forget about that onslaught on democracy.

One prominent byline that had recurred over the years, giving us diverse perspectives and unveiling several unknown truths has been that of my friend Mr M G Devasahayam, a retired top bureaucrat who had been in the thick of it all as District Magistrate of Chandigarh and has a lot to share about Emergency. He was the one who told us how the original letter of the Government requesting the President to go for the proclamation has gone missing. That letter, delivered at Rashtrapati Bhavan,

was subsequently taken back and the country's archives have only a copy of the request and not the original, Devasahayam had found out. Even in 2020 he recalled Emergency on the occasion of its 45th anniversary, as a persistent advocate of democracy.

This year's most striking byline was 'Amit Shah'. That article in an English daily argued that Mrs Gandhi had an 'authoritarian mindset' that impelled her to go for Emergency. But closer home, we have heard a lot of stories from those days on every government official being authoritarian and rude. Our present Chief Minister M K Stalin was one of the thousands of people detained under the Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA). He should have been just 22

years old then and there is also the story of another DMK functionary C Chittibabu who died while in custody because he took most of the thrashings that were aimed at Stalin by the police.

Yes, the police, whose brutality in general has not yet abated as evidenced by the recent killing of 47-year-old Murugesan of Vazhapadi village on the road near Pappinnaickenpatti check post, went on a rampage all over the country. Most of those who have seen such atrocities and highhandedness would have passed away since even I was only in school then. Our only grouse then, looking back, was that students' strikes were not happening and the occasional unexpected holiday that we would get once in a while when some college students, angry over

something like police entering a students' hostel in far-away Trichy and beating up the residents, would walk out of their classes and take out a procession through the town, liberating us from classrooms in the process.

Another chilling story that I remember vividly was the police cutting the long locks of boys and tearing their bell bottom trousers. Those were the days when bell bottoms were in vogue and long coiffure was maintained by the fashion conscious youth, overcoming constant opposition from parents, old relatives and school and college authorities. So policemen decided to pick up a pair of scissors as the nation was under Emergency.

There were also stories from the newspaper world on how freedom of speech was stifled. Senior col-

leagues have recalled visiting government censors' offices with final page proofs to get them cleared. When the officials objected to a story, the journalists would just remove it. But soon the authorities woke up and insisted on not leaving any blank space in the printed copy but placing some other acceptable story there. Giving names of people who were arrested under MISA - many politicians carried the acronym as a suffix to their names in later years - was a taboo for those censors.

So, the DMK organ, Murasoli, would carry a list of persons who missed a particular party event to drive home the point that they were in jail. But since Amit Shah quotes L. K. Advani saying, 'the media crawled when it was asked to bend', one wonders

as to how the Press took so much trouble then to write things that would ensure the defeat of the Congress and Indira Gandhi in the elections that followed the Emergency. They might have crawled but did not fall flat like most media channels and journalists have done of late.

Anyway, Amit Shah, who would have been 11 years old when Emergency was declared, is angry that 'media houses were subjected to shocking levels of censorship.' In the same article he says: 'The media has been enjoying complete freedom to carry out its work in the last seven years (ie since 2014). He is also sure that no party or leader will meddle with the country's democratic values and create another Emergency-like situation. Reassuring words. Aren't they?

SHORT TAKES

AYODHYA SHOULD
MANIFEST OUR
TRADITIONS: PM

New Delhi, June 26: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday reviewed the development plan for Ayodhya and asserted that the temple town in Uttar Pradesh should manifest the “the finest of our traditions and the best of our developmental transformations”.

Speaking at a virtual meeting, which was also attended by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Modi described Ayodhya as a city that is etched in the cultural consciousness of every Indian and said the human ethos of this city must be matched by futuristic infrastructure.

A Prime Minister's Office (PMO) statement on the meeting said Ayodhya's development is being envisaged as a spiritual centre, global tourism hub and a sustainable smart city.

At the meeting, Uttar Pradesh government officials made a presentation which encompassed various aspects of Ayodhya's development.

The prime minister was informed about various upcoming and proposed infrastructure projects to improve connectivity with Ayodhya and various projects like airport, expansion of railway station, bus station, roads and highways were discussed, the PMO said. An upcoming greenfield township was discussed which includes lodging facilities for devotees, space for ashrams, maths, hotels, bhavans of various states.

TRAIN
DETAILED ON
KONKAN ROUTE

DC CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, JUNE 26

A boulder caused the derailment of Goa-bound Rajdhani Express train inside a tunnel in Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra early on Saturday, but there was no report of injury to any passenger. “As many as 309 passengers were traveling in the train and they all are safe,” the Konkan Railway (KR) said in a statement.

The front wheel of the locomotive of the superfast special train - 02414 - that was going to Madgaon in Goa from Hazrat Nizamuddin derailed around 4.15 am in Karbude tunnel located between Ukshi and Bhoke stations in Ratnagiri region. The derailment led to disruption of railway traffic on the route, but it was restored within a few hours, the KR officials said.

The restoration work was started immediately and was completed by 8.18 am, following which the express train began its journey towards Madgaon at 9.14 am. Traffic on the Konkan Railway route was restored at 10.27 am, the statement added.

A rail maintenance vehicle (RMV) and an accident relief medical van (ARMV) with re-railing equipment were rushed to the spot for the restoration work, he said.

As many as 309 passengers were traveling in the train, the Konkan Railway said in a statement.

Traffic on the Konkan Railway route was restored at 10.27 am, the statement added.

The Konkan Railway operates 756 km-long route between Roha near Mumbai and Thokur near Mangalore. This route, which is spread across Maharashtra, Goa and Karnataka - is one of the challenging terrains.

Tikait announces 2 rallies if
Centre doesn't resume talks

Farmers mark seven months of their agitation at Delhi's borders

From P1

Terming Mr. Tomar's recent statements as “perplexing and contradictory”, it asserted that farmer leaders are not seeking some “meaningless amendments” in the central farm laws which have “fundamental flaws” and urged the people “to punish the BJP”.

Security was tightened in the national capital and other cities after the SKM said that representatives of farmers will submit memoranda of their demands, addressed to the President, to governors in various states.

Hundreds of farmers from interiors of Uttar Pradesh, many of them on tractors, reached Ghazipur on Delhi's borders to mark the completion of seven months of the protest.

Led by Bhartiya Kisan Union (BKU) leader Rakesh Tikait, a group of protesters submitted a memorandum of their demands at the office of DCP Northeast Delhi after a virtual meeting with Lieutenant Governor Anil Bajjal.

The farmers then called off their march to Delhi, BKU media incharge Dharmendra Malik said.

“The memorandum included our demands for the withdrawal of the three new farm laws and for enacting a new law to ensure guarantee for MSP,” he said.

Farmers from several parts of Haryana gathered at Gurdwara Nada Sahib in Haryana's Panchkula and headed towards Haryana Raj Bhavan, forcing their way through a layer of barricades, but were stopped at the Chandigarh-Panchkula border.



Farmers shout slogans during a protest against three farm reform laws, and over other issues at the Golden Gate in Amritsar, on Saturday. Farmers are observing June 26 as Save Agriculture, Save Democracy Day to mark seven months of their agitation.

— PTI

End 7-month long protest: Tomar

New Delhi, June 26: As farmers' protest against the new farm laws entered eighth month, Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar on Saturday appealed to protesting farmers to end their agitation while saying that the government is ready to resume talks on the provisions of three legislations.

The government and farmer unions have held 11 rounds of talks so far, the last being on January 22, to break the deadlock and end the farmers' protest. Talks have not resumed following widespread violence during a tractor rally by protesting

farmers on January 26.

Thousands of farmers, mainly from Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh, have been camping at Delhi's borders for seven months now in protest against the three laws that they say will end state procurement of crops at MSP.

The Supreme Court has put on hold the implementation of the three laws till further orders and has set up a committee to find solutions. The committee has submitted its report.

“I want to convey through your (media) that farmers should end their agitation.Many are in favour of these new laws

across the country. Still, some farmers have any issue with provisions of the laws, Government of India is ready to listen and discuss with them,” Tomar tweeted.

He said the government held 11 rounds of consultations with protesting farmer unions. The government has increased the minimum support price (MSP) and is procuring more quantity at MSP.

Farmers' protest had started on November 26 last year and has now completed seven months notwithstanding the coronavirus pandemic. Three union ministers, including Tomar and Food

Minister Piyush Goyal, have held 11 rounds of talks with the protesting farmer unions.

In the last meeting on January 22, the government's negotiations with 41 farmer groups hit a roadblock as the unions squarely rejected the Centre's proposal of putting the laws on suspension.

During the 10th round of talks held on January 20, the Centre had offered to suspend the laws for 1-1.5 years and form a joint committee to find solutions, in return for protesting farmers going back to their respective homes from Delhi's borders.

— PTI

Star TMC MP ill after
taking jab at fake camp

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, JUNE 26

Four days after taking a dose of what is purported to be Covishield at a fake vaccination camp, and getting the racket behind it busted with the help of the Kolkata police, Mimi Chakraborty, Tollywood actor and Trinamul Congress Jadavpur MP, fell ill at home early on Saturday.

Meanwhile, to mount pressure on the Mamata Banerjee government over the racket run by a bogus IAS officer, allegedly linked to several TMC leaders, Leader of the Opposition Suwendu Adhikari urged the Centre to order a probe by its agencies.

At around 4 am, the MP complained of illness which included severe dehydration, low blood pressure and acute stomach pain. A doctor treated her and advised her rest with medication but suspected the symptoms as panic syndrome over the fake Covishield dose she got on June 22 rather



Mimi Chakraborty

than its side-effects.

While the Kolkata Municipal Corporation and state health department have launched a drive to check the health of those who along with Mimi Chakraborty got the 'vaccine', the Kolkata Police slapped attempt to murder charge on three arrested accused including racketeer Debanjan Deb.

On Friday Adhikari wrote Union health minister Harsh Vardhan, “...several incriminating photos suggestive of the accused's influence in the ruling party of West Bengal have come to the fore. Kolkata Mayor Firhad Hakim, West Bengal minister Subrata Mukherjee, TMC MP

Santanu Sen, TMC MLAs Debasish Kumar and Lovely Maitra, KMC councillor Baiswanor Chatterjee and others are seen directly or indirectly endorsing the activities of Debanjan...”

He claimed Debanjan “has previously been seen posing with government of West Bengal files or hosting Duare Sarkar camps of West Bengal government in Ward 66 of KMC. In such a situation with so many influential ruling party leaders and government representatives being seen in close proximity to the accused, we have serious doubts about an impartial investigation from Kolkata Police that follows the instructions of the same government.”

Suwendu added, “Public health frauds like this in midst of a raging global pandemic are making common people skeptic to the authenticity of the vaccination process, thereby adding to vaccine hesitancy which is detrimental to the interests of the human race”.

51.6 vaccine doses by July 31: Centre

From P1

Giving the break-up of vaccines till the date of filing of the affidavit i.e. June 26, the Centre said a total of 35.6 crore doses were made available - 26.6 crore Covishield, 8.6 crore Covaxin, and additional 1 crore doses as commodity assistance under COVAX facility.

It also said that apart from these supplies, it is expected that around 16 crore doses will also be available during the period of May and July across the country.

The Centre further said that 31.5 lakh doses of first component and 60,000 doses of second component of Sputnik V has been received.

It said that two vaccines (Covishield and Covaxin) have been a part of the vaccination program since January 2021 and Sputnik V has received Emergency Use Authorization by the DCGI in April 2021 and is now being administered in the country.

The government said, “In addition, some other domestic vaccines such as those from Biological E and Zydus Cadila are in the late stages of clinical trials and subject to the regulatory approvals, will further increase the availability of vaccines.”

The government in its 380-page affidavit filed in the suo motu matter on Covid-19 management said that in order to further increase vaccine availability

and incentivising foreign manufacturers, the regulatory process for the use of foreign vaccines within India has been accelerated and simplified. It clarified that due to the initial assistance provided for developing Covaxin, it has ensured a price of Rs.150 per dose of Covaxin and it is not possible to reduce it any further. “This price is the lowest procurement price in the world.”

The government said that as per the projected mid-year population for 2020, the total population of the country aged 18 years and above is approximately 93-94 crore and as such, administering two doses to these beneficiaries would require an estimated 186 to 188 crore vaccine doses.

“Out of this requirement, 51.6 crore doses will be made available for administration by July 31, 2021, leaving a requirement of approximately 135 crore vaccine doses for complete vaccination to the eligible population,” it said.

Giving the breakup for vaccines quantity that may be receivable from all sources the Centre said that a total of 135 crore doses will be procured: Covishield (50 crore), Covaxin (40 crore), Bio E Subunit vaccine (30 crore), Zydus Cadila DNA vaccine (5 crore) and Sputnik V (10 crore).

It said that the procurement of Bio E Subunit vaccine and Zydus Cadila DNA vaccine will be subject to approval.

— PTI

Maharashtra BJP launches agitation
for political reservation for OBCs

SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC
MUMBAI, JUNE 26

The BJP on Saturday held state-wide protests over the political reservations for OBC in Maharashtra. Police detained several BJP leaders including Devendra Fadnis. OBCs lost reservations in the local body elections in the state after a Supreme Court order. The BJP has blamed Uddhav Thackeray government's inept handling for the SC decision. However, Mr Thackeray criticized BJP's protests citing Covid pandemic. Meanwhile, Congress also held protests blaming the Centre for OBCs losing political reservations.

The BJP leaders organised Chakka Jam protests in Mumbai for OBCs reservation. But just before they could start their march toward the Mantralaya, Mumbai police detained several protestors including former Maharashtra minister Girish Mahajan, Mumbai BJP President Mangal Prabhat Lodha, and MLC Rahul Narvekar.

The leader of opposition in Maharashtra Assembly Devendra Fadnis has led a protest in Nagpur.

Mr. Fadnis said that despite the OBC reservation being valid in all the parts of the country, the OBC lost

reservation in Maharashtra owing to the inept handling by Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government. He also demanded that the MVA government either provide reservation to OBC or quit from the government.

“The fact is that this issue can be resolved at the state level. The state government can restore the reservation by formulating a law. There is no need for any act of the Central government. That is why OBC reservation is prevalent in other states except in Maharashtra,” Mr. Fadnis said.

The Supreme Court had passed an order in March this year; in which it had said that the quota in favour of OBCs in local bodies shouldn't result in breaching the overall 50 per cent ceiling on the reservation. It had also directed the Maharashtra government to set up a commission to gather empirical data for fixing the reservation percentage. The top court had observed that the reservation, if fixed, shall not exceed the aggregate of 50 per cent of the total seats reserved for SCs, STs and OBCs.

The Maharashtra State Election Commission

(SEC) has decided to hold elections to five Zilla Parishads and bypolls to the seats in 33 panchayat samitis that were rendered vacant and converted into general category following the Supreme Court's verdict of quashing OBC reservation in local bodies on July 19.

“The SEC's decision to announce elections in five ZPs and panchayat samitis is nothing but adding insult to the injury of the OBCs. We will not let these elections take place until the OBC quota is restored,” state BJP president Chandrakant Patil said.

BREATHELESS | ROW | Kejriwal urges end to fight over oxygen demand

‘Delhi O2 claim not exaggerated’

DC CORRESPONDENT WITH
AGENCY INPUTS
NEW DELHI, JUNE 26

A day after Delhi's AAP government and the BJP were locked in a battle over the national capital's oxygen crisis during the second wave of Coronavirus in April-May, three of the five members of the Supreme Court appointed team have distanced themselves from the report, with AIIMS director Randeep Guleria saying that it's not correct to say the Arvind Kejriwal government exaggerated the city's requirement.

Dr Guleria, who heads the subgroup, said, “It would not be correct to say that Delhi oxygen audit is an interim report. We should wait for the final report.” Two other members, B.S. Bhalla, Delhi

government's principal home secretary, home, and Max Healthcare's Sandeep Budhiraja, have also questioned the reported conclusions of the report and said that they had raised objections against several claims that are being made.

“The manner in which the proceedings of the subgroup were conducted suggested that the purpose of proceedings was to satisfy a preconceived and predetermined conclusion and narrative to recommend a lower quantity of oxygen to Delhi. It was also aimed at further portraying an impression that the assessment by the GNCTD (Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi) before the high court and the Supreme Court was exaggerated or not genuine,” Mr Bhalla had

noted in a communication sent to the panel on May 31.

Max Hospital's director Sandeep Budhiraja said in his comments, included in annexure of the report, that a decision was taken in the panel's first meeting itself to get actual details of oxygen consumption from all the hospitals of NCT Delhi.

“After repeated corrections (as hospital medical superintendent used a different format), the total calculation of oxygen consumption (based on actual consumption data of 214 hospitals) came to around 490 MT. This did not take into account oxygen cylinder refilling and non-Covid requirements of hospitals,” Mr Budhiraja said.

Relieved at the clarifications, chief minister Arvind Kejriwal said the acute

shortage of oxygen during Covid's second wave was real and appealed for an end to political bickering and for everyone to work together so that no one suffers in the third wave. “May we work now if your fight over oxygen is finished? Let us together make a system so no one faces shortage of oxygen in the third wave. There was an acute shortage of oxygen in the second wave. It should not be so in the third wave. Corona will win if we fight with each other. The nation will win if we fight together,” Mr Kejriwal tweeted.

On Friday, several BJP leaders circulated a report in the media, claiming that the Delhi government had “exaggerated” the city's medical oxygen needs at the peak of the second wave of the pandemic.

Dr. NTR UNIVERSITY OF HEALTH SCIENCES: A.P VIJAYAWADA - 520 003		
TENDER NOTICE		
No. 1/W&TS/DM/2/1	Date: 25.06.2021	
Sealed Tenders are invited for following work at Dr. NTR University of Health Sciences, Vijayawada.		
Sl.No.	Name of the work	
1	Hosting of On-line application form and to conduct web based counselling for various courses of Dr. NTR UHS, Vijayawada for the academic years 2021 & 2022	
Note: For further details visit www.approcurement.gov.in		
K. Sankar, M.D., D.T.C.D., Registrar		

GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND PANCHAYAT RAJ DEPARTMENT		
Roc. No. B7/0383/2021.	Kallakurichi District.	Dated : 26.06.2021
Notice Inviting Tender		
Upgradation / Strengthening of Panchayat Union / Village Panchayat Roads		
1. For full details, visit www.tntenders.gov.in e-Bids are invited by the Project Director, DRDA, Kallakurichi District for the Upgradation / Strengthening of 5 No. of Panchayat / Panchayat Union Roads package wise under Two Cover System.		
2. The package wise bid documents can also be downloaded free of cost in the website www.tntenders.gov.in from 30.06.2021 to 15.07.2021		
3. Common date and time for downloading of Bid document, submission and opening		
1) Last Date and Time for downloading and submission of e-Bid Documents	15.07.2021 upto 3.00 PM	
2) Date and Time of online opening of e-Bid Documents	15.07.2021 4.00 PM onwards	
Project Director, DRDA, Kallakurichi		
DIPRI/1864 /TENDER/2021		

DECCAN Chronicle

27 JUNE 2021



Shreya Sen-Handley
Off the beaten track

The wonder years start at dauntless 50

Watching The Masked Dancer UK with my children last weekend, I was struck by the age, élan, and agility of two of the three finalists, both in their mid-fifties. When I grow up, I said to myself, that's how I want to be. But if growing up is getting to fifty then it isn't miles away, and with my two left feet, dancing's not on my bucket list.

Of course it's not about dancing at all, which is clearly just an extension of these fifty-somethings' love for life and who-gives-an-eff-about-convention stance. It's a metaphor for the verve with which they've waltzed into aging.

Convention, you see, would want us to age in a particular way. When they talk about aging gracefully, they don't mean you should enter a televised dance contest with competitors half your age. Or wear body-hugging outfits, or get in society's face. They mean you should disappear.

Disappear in a manner however, that suits society; hovering obsequiously on its periphery. You still need to turn up and be counted at funerals. At family functions that are any fun, you are lumped with children to look after; eliminating you from the action. In fact, wherever there's a thankless job, without recognition or reward, you're the one it's pegged for. Because, after all, as the scriptures confirm, you're at that stage of life — Sanyas — when you must renounce it all. Even far-sighted Shakespeare wrote about the "spectacles on nose and pouch on side (colostomy bag?), shrunk shank, and childish treble" of the post-fifty brigade. But he died at 52, without ever having experienced this stage, so what did he know?

I know that if I'm to toddle back to my childhood again, I will cherry pick, like a child might, the bits I want to swallow, spitting the rest out like unpalatable pips. Like the youngest kids, we are undoubtedly more vulnerable to diseases (as this pandemic has proved). Like them as well, we are not at the peak of our physical strength; not as robust as folks in their teens, twenties, or early thirties. We've been there, got the t-shirt, fallen over inelegantly onto the other, twilit side, and got it badly besmirched. But there are oh-so-many advantages to being weather-beaten and worldly-wise.

I know this *before* I've got to fifty because this locked-down pandemic has been an enforced aging. My stay-at-home-cooking-baking-pottering-in-the-garden avatar has descended on me ten years ahead of time. So have the array of diseases it has accelerated, which, had I been allowed to remain active and less anxiety-ridden, I may have sidestepped nimbly for another decade. But you could also look at this imposed maturation as early acquisition of wisdom; a bringing into sharp focus of all that really matters in life.

Yet, because growing old is so reviled by popular culture, and strikes such terror in the human heart, I too was a bit iffy about entering my thirties, but it turned out infinitely better than the decade before that. Arguably, my forties have been even more rewarding (though it does help to have a failing memory; lifting each decade I'm living through to the top). The fifties might be the best yet. Limbering up for it as I have been through this speed-aging pandemic, I feel ready. I feel almost Zen.

Isn't that a lot like Sanyas? Disappearing with 'dignity' aka. not making a fuss? No, because vanishing only as much as *we* want to, from society's bleeping radar, is a whole other trip called freedom.

I've never known more liberty than now; a couple of years, plus a couple of months, away from my half-century. As we grow, conventions bind us and social expectations pin us down, till one day we discover we've been put out to pasture. With society's gaze irrevocably averted in this so-called second childhood, we can be ourselves again like carefree kids.

For example: Not one for superficial chatter, lockdown's one boon has been its cessation, and I'll never again feel compelled. Yet, I'm deeply interested in the welfare of those I love, as well as the world at large. But both these concerns require in-depth conversation and not trivial natter.

Nor will I wear anything ever again that makes me squirm. Not high heels, except when in the mood. And even less often — bras! Both socially imposed, they're uncomfortable, if not injurious to health. And do they really make us more presentable? To whom exactly? Those who care will want us to be comfy, and to everyone else I have this to say: go find something sensible to rant about instead!

Strenuously discouraged from dyeing my hair purple recently, on the grounds that it was unbecoming for my age, I went ahead. It caused a few jaws to drop undoubtedly, but well-wishers and my mirror loved it.

So, come and see me by all means, wild-haired in my flats and ganjee, looking more like my Dadu than ever, and as unwilling to indulge in frivolities.

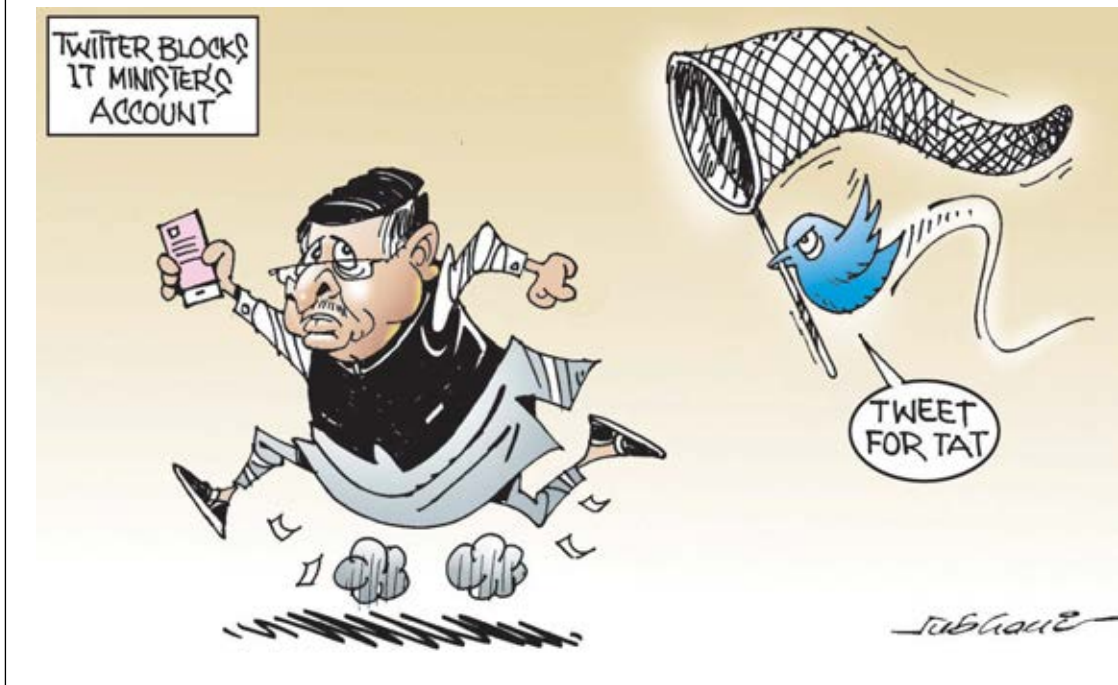
This freedom goes way beyond the trappings of course, though not having to toe the line with even these are considerable victories. Age is then an invisibility cloak, but one that confers a powerful forcefield, allowing us to be ourselves, even as it embargoes the narrow-minded and the nasty.

Growing older and less decorous, like children but in reverse, because we know better now and our bodies won't conform anymore anyhow; society begins to give us a wide berth, not just from disinterest but fear! No longer hounded to deliver on this hide-bound expectation or that, there's peace at last.

Age is indeed more than just a number; it's a wondrous new world.

Shreya Sen-Handley is the author of the recently published *Strange: Stories, the award-winning Memoirs of My Body, and a forthcoming book of travel misadventures*. Her Twitter and Insta handle is @shreyasenh.

Subhani



With trust as weapon, forge a Naya Kashmir



Pavan K. Varma

Chanakya's View

Chanakya had a basic dictum: you cannot rule a people against their will. Perpetual intimidation of an unwilling populace is a tempting but unworkable solution. You have to win the trust of those you govern. It is good that this principle is at last being followed by the BJP government at the Centre where Kashmir is concerned. The importance of Prime Minister Modi's meeting with 14 leaders from Kashmir on June 24 has to be understood in this context.

Since August 5, 2019, when Article 370 was revoked, the people of Kashmir have literally been incarcerated in their own homes. Landline, mobile and Internet connections were cut; as many as 3,800 political leaders and activists were jailed or put under house arrest; curfews and lockdowns were imposed; and an army of troops and police personnel converted the Valley into occupied barracks.

The time to break through this impasse was long overdue. The PM himself acknowledged that he would have had the meeting earlier, where he could meet leaders face to face instead of virtually, but for Covid.

The most important takeaway from the meeting was that the principal Opposition parties in Kashmir, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the National Conference (NC), attended. Both Farooq Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti were present. The second takeaway was that, in spite of the strong feelings in both these parties against the abrogation of Article 370 — on which the Centre would not yield — there was no veto on discussions, and other

issues of great import could be discussed.

The discussion on Article 370 was deflected by the simple fact that the question of its constitutionality was before the Supreme Court (SC) and, therefore, sub judice. There is, indeed, a good case for the reservations of the Kashmiri parties on the manner in which Article was revoked. According to the Constitution, while 370 is a temporary measure and can be done away with, this step requires a recommendation from the J&K Assembly. This was not obtained. The Assembly had been suspended. There was President's rule. The powers of the Assembly were being exercised by the Centre directly through the governor. The government thus obtained the recommendation from the governor, their own nominee. That was tantamount to seeking concurrence from itself. The decision is under challenge, and rightly so, in the SC, and we would respectfully urge the highest court to expedite a decision.

Two other issues were on the table: the restoration of full statehood to J&K, and the holding of democratic elections. There is understandable resentment in Kashmir that their state has been converted into a Union Territory (UT). The Centre wisely gave in to this demand. The PM reiterated his resolve to restore statehood, and Amit Shah said that he had given this assurance on the floor of the House. The holding of democratic elections were made conditional on the completion of the delimitation exercise in J&K.

Delimitation is the act of redrawing boundaries of the Assembly seats to represent changes in the popula-

tion over time. Although delimitation for the rest of India is scheduled for 2026, there is no doubt that delimitation is overdue in J&K. Earlier, delimitation exercises were done in 1963, 1975 and 1995. Since no census was carried out in the state in 1991, there has been no delimitation since 2001. Delimitation will have an impact on the number of seats currently divided between Jammu and Kashmir. Currently, Kashmir has 46 seats, and Jammu 37. It is expected that after delimitation the number of seats in Jammu would go up, thereby upsetting the current numerical domination of Kashmir representatives.

The Delimitation Commission for J&K was set up on March 6, 2020, under the chairpersonship of retired SC judge, Ranjana Prakash Desai, with the mandate to finish the exercise in one year. The other members of the Commission were Union minister Jitendra Singh, Jugal Kishore Sharma of the BJP, and Farooq Abdullah, Akbar Lone and Hasmain Masoodi of the NC. The Commission did not hold a single meeting until February 2021, ostensibly due to the pandemic. In the first meeting, only the BJP representatives attended. The NC leaders boycotted the meeting to protest against the J&K Reorganisation Act, 2019.

The key question is whether the representatives of the NC, and, indeed, other key Opposition parties like the PDP, will now cooperate with the delimitation process. Not having com-

pleted its work in the one-year deadline, the Commission has been given a year's extension that lapses in March 2022. It is very important to keep to this deadline since the holding of democratic elections is conditional on it. Ultimately, the return of democracy in the troubled state is the best antidote to the existing resentment and anger. Democracy — if genuine — gives people the ventilation valve to express their feelings, and feel that they are stakeholders in unfolding events.

The way forward will be hugely dependent on the creation of trust, ending the *dil ki doori*. The Centre will have to walk the extra mile to ensure this. Its past actions have militated directly against it. Apart from incarcerating an entire state, BJP leaders have till recently reviled the grouping of the Opposition parties in Kashmir as the Gupkar gang. The Centre must take necessary steps to rectify the memories of the past, release political detainees wherever feasible, and carry out the delimitation exercise with utmost transparency and sincerity. An onus also rests on political parties in Kashmir. They must desist from taking extreme positions dictated by a sense of catering to the anger among the Kashmiris. They must work, as Ghulam Nabi Azad said, for the rehabilitation of the Kashmiri Pandits. And, they must desist from making — as Mehbooba Mufti seemed to suggest — Pakistan a stakeholder in what is entirely an internal matter of India. The Central government would also have to retain its full vigilance against terrorism emanating from Pakistan, which would do its best to derail a peace and reconciliation process. With trust as a weapon, the entire country hopes that normalcy would soon be restored, and we would have a *Naya Kashmir*.

The writer, an author and a former diplomat, is in politics

The Centre must take necessary steps to rectify the memories of the past, release political detainees wherever feasible, and carry out the delimitation exercise with utmost transparency and sincerity

LETTERS GRUESOME MURDER

It is really shocking that a small-time trader was mercilessly beaten to death by a sub-inspector of police in full public view in a check post in Salem. The way this beast-cop was seen hitting the hapless victim with his lathi appeared very cruel and blood-chilling. As the entire cruel episode was witnessed by many at the scene of the crime and the video clipping clearly identifies the attacker, the government and the courts should not take much time to award the maximum punishment to the rogue policeman. If a policeman behaves like a beast, we can imagine how they will treat the accused in their custody. The cops of his ilk continue to engage in such gruesome acts and murders only because our judicial system is very slow and with the efflux of time, the seriousness of such cases gets diluted and the criminals mostly escape deserving punishment.

Tharcus S. Fernando, Chennai

GOLDEN TRUTH

Sasikala has at last spoken a golden truth. She said that the failure on the part of AIADMK in highlighting the achievements of Jaya/MGR rule was a major cause for its astonishing and unexpected defeat in the elections. Both the heroic personalities of the AIADMK are still living in the minds of millions of the party's cadre and many still worship them virtually as Gods. Hero worship has become a part of our political and social culture ever since the freedom struggle period. It appears true that EPS could have won at least 30 to 40 additional seats from places where defeat was least expected. Even if he could not have formed a Cabinet he would have emerged as the leader of a strong opposition and a tactical mistake of the EPS-OPS combine had made an unexpected swing in favour of Stalin and his partners it is the wish of many admirers of EPS to recast his strategy at least in the ensuing local body elections.

Kooduthuraiyan, Coimbatore

PAWAR ON POWER

With reference to the report, Pawar says Congress will have to come on board, at last wisdom seems to have dawned on the NCP chief Sharad Pawar who has said that INC will have to be included in the national alliance to fight the BJP in the ensuing Lok Sabha elections. It is understandable that the eight-party non-Congress opposition alliance meeting convened in his residence was a damp squib and this must have convinced Pawar that any opposition alliance without the Congress party would be a failure in fighting the BJP. Pawar should negotiate with the Congress party on these lines and firm up the national alliance with it accordingly. The main goal of the alliance is to ensure that BJP does not win the election for the third time in a row and arrest the continued suffering of the people of the country.

Manoharan Muthuswamy, Chennai

Anita Katyal
Political Gup-Shup



Ayodhya leak radar on Yogi; Cong ready to forgive senior

The recent charges of corruption in the purchase of land for the construction of the Ram Temple complex at Ayodhya has led to animated discussions in Lucknow about how Opposition leader, AAP's Uttar Pradesh in-charge Sanjay Singh, managed to lay his hands on the documents about the deals. People in Uttar Pradesh were surprised how the Opposition managed to get hold of these papers because chief minister Yogi Adityanath has a vice-like grip on the administration and anyone suspected of leaking such information or even talking about it publicly would normally be handed out stringent punishment. There is also all-round agreement that the Opposition in Uttar Pradesh is incapable of unearthing such exposes as it is virtually defunct. It is, therefore, surmised that the documents were leaked with Yogi Adityanath's permission. According to the grapevine, the chief minister wanted to get back at the BJP leadership after he was pulled up by the party top brass for flying solo and marginalising his party colleagues. The temple construction committee of the

Ram Janmabhoomi Trust is headed by Nripendra Misra, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's former principal secretary, while Champat Rai, also known to be close to Modi, is the Trust general secretary. It is for the Trust office-bearers to defend these allegations while Yogi is out of the picture.

When he was replaced as leader of Opposition in the Kerala Assembly last month, senior Congress leader Ramesh Chennithala shot off a letter to party president Sonia Gandhi to complain about the insulting manner in which he had been eased out. He has since been making amends by posting his old photographs with Indira and Rajiv Gandhi on his Twitter handle to underline his special bond with the Congress and the Gandhi family. For instance, one post shows a photograph of Indira Gandhi campaigning in Chennithala's constituency while another tweet mentions how she signed a letter appointing him as NSUI president chief at the airport before boarding a flight to Russia. Similarly, there are several pictures of Chennithala with

Rajiv Gandhi while on tour and one of Gandhi attending the Kerala leader's wedding reception where he told him about his appointment as Youth Congress president. Chennithala's efforts in getting back into the good books of the Gandhis may well pay off, as there are reports he has been promised a slot as Congress general secretary in Delhi.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's assurance at an all-party meeting last week that holding elections in Jammu and Kashmir is a priority, is in line with the BJP's eagerness to test the electoral waters in the newly-carved Union territory. Though the BJP did not fare well in last year's local elections, the party has not given up on its ambition to install a Hindu chief minister in Jammu and Kashmir as it believes the redrawing of the constituencies by the Delimitation Commission will work to its advantage. Failing this, the BJP is also extending an olive branch to National Conference leader Farooq Abdullah in the belief he will be amenable to an understanding

with the saffron camp. The National Conference has aligned with the BJP in the past and it could well do so in the future. There are unconfirmed reports that back-channel discussions with Abdullah have already been initiated.

The Congress leadership has reason to worry as its party units in several poll-bound states are in turmoil. While the never-ending battle between Punjab chief minister Amarinder Singh and his bete noire Navjot Singh Sidhu can only be described as a soap opera, the situation is no better in Uttarakhand. The post of legislative party leader in Uttarakhand fell vacant recently after senior leader Indira Hridayesh's death but the party is struggling to find her replacement. State unit president Pritam Singh is being persuaded to take over this post but he has declined and threatened to resign if the Central leadership insists on giving him Hridayesh's job. Former chief minister Harish Rawat is keen that his rival Pritam Singh accept this post because then the latter will not be directly involved in the distribution of

tickets for the Assembly polls, giving the former chief minister a free hand in picking his own candidates.

There is a strong buzz in Madhya Pradesh political circles that newly-minted BJP member Jyotiraditya Scindia is eyeing Indore as his next Lok Sabha constituency. This speculation has gathered momentum as the frequency of Mr Scindia's trips to Indore has increased in recent months. Ideally, Mr Scindia would like to return to the Gwalior Parliamentary seat. But he is being given a hard time in his old pocket boroughs of Gwalior and Guna by the sitting MPs Vivek Narayan Shejwalkar and Krishna Pal Singh Yadav. Both the BJP leaders have the distinction of defeating Mr Scindia in his stronghold and they are clearly in no hurry to cede ground to him again. Meanwhile, there is no end to their turf war as all three are quick to take credit for any development work undertaken in the region.

Anita Katyal is a Delhi-based journalist

SHORT TAKES

UAE's GOLDEN VISA TO 2 INDIAN AYURVEDIC DOCS

Dubai, June 26: Two Indian Ayurvedic doctors have received the UAE's coveted Golden Visa, according to a media report on Saturday. Dr Shyam Vishwanathan Pillai and Dr Jasna Jamal, both from Kerala, were granted Golden Visas by the UAE's Federal Authority for Identity and Citizenship.

Pillai, CEO of Vaidyashala at the Burjeel Day Surgery Centre in Abu Dhabi, was granted the Golden Visa under the medical professionals and doctors category on June 17. A resident of Al Mamzar in Dubai, Dr Jasna Jamal was given the Golden Visa on June 24.

AQUINO, WHO CHALLENGED CHINA, BURIED

Manila, June 26: Former Philippine President Benigno Aquino III was buried in austere state rites during the pandemic Saturday with many remembering him for standing up to China over territorial disputes, striking a peace deal with Muslim guerrillas and defending democracy in a nation where his parents helped topple a dictator. Aquino died Thursday at age 61 of kidney disease arising from diabetes following a long public absence, after his single, six-year term ended in 2016. Family and friends sang a patriotic song after a silver urn with Aquino's remains was placed beside the tomb of his mother.

COLOMBIA PREZ SAYS COPTER HIT NEAR BORDER

Bogota, June 26: Colombian President Ivan Duque said Friday the helicopter he was flying in near the border with Venezuela was hit by gunfire.

"It is a cowardly attack, where you can see bullet holes in the presidential aircraft," Duque said in a statement. Duque said he was flying with the defence and interior ministers and the governor of Norte de Santander province, which borders Venezuela, when the helicopter was attacked.

They had left Sardinata and were headed to Cucuta. "We are not frightened by violence or acts of terrorism," he said.

MEXICO CARTEL SHOOTOUT LEAVES 18 DEAD

Mexico City, June 26: A shootout between suspected drug cartels left 18 people dead Friday in Mexico.

The gunfight happened in a remote area of Zacatecas state in the country's north, said Rocio Aguilar, a spokeswoman for the state government.

Drug-related violence has claimed more than 300,000 lives in Mexico since 2006, when the government started deploying federal troops to fight the cartels. "There were 18 dead, and the confrontation occurred in the community of San Juan Capistrano, in the municipality of Valparaiso," he added.

REPORT SHOWS DAMAGE BEFORE CONDO COLLAPSE

Surfside (US), June 26: The oceanfront condominium building that collapsed near Miami had "major structural damage" to a concrete structural slab below its pool deck that needed to be extensively repaired, according to a 2018 engineering report on the building.

The report was among a series of documents released by the city of Surfside as rescuers continued to dig Saturday through the rubble of the building in an effort to find any of the 159 people who remain unaccounted for after its collapse. At least four people were killed.

PAK IDENTIFIES BLAST KEY MAN, NABS 3 MORE

Lahore, June 26: Pakistani security agencies have identified the key person behind the car bomb blast outside the house of the 2008 Mumbai terror attack mastermind and chief of the banned Jamat-ud-Dawa (JuD) Hafiz Saeed here and arrested three more persons in connection with the case, officials said on Saturday.

Three teams of the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) have been sent to Karachi, Peshawar and Sheikhupura for gleaned more information about those involved in the blast, an official said.

According to Punjab Law Minister Basharat Raja, so far eight suspects have been taken into custody.



Patrons dine at City Winery in New York. Customers wanting to wine, dine and unwind to live music at the City Winery's flagship restaurant in New York must show proof of a Covid-19 vaccination to get in. But that's not required at most other dining establishments in the city. And it's not necessary at other City Winery sites around the United States. — AP

B'desh shuts over virus spike

Only medical-related transport will be allowed, says govt

Dhaka, June 26: Bangladesh has announced it will impose a tough new lockdown starting Monday, after a "dangerous and alarming" surge in Delta variant cases of Coronavirus.

All government and private offices will be shut for a week and only medical-related transport will be allowed, the government said late Friday.

"No one can step out of their homes except in emergency cases," a statement added.

Health department spokesman Robed Amin said police and border guards would be deployed to enforce the lockdown and the army may be involved if needed.

"It is a dangerous and alarming situation. If we don't contain it now, we will face an India-like situation," Amin said, referring to a surge in cases in neighbouring India in April and May.

Infection rates have been rising sharply since mid-

NZ suspends travel bubble with Oz

Wellington, June 26: New Zealand announced a three-day suspension of its quarantine-free travel arrangement with Australia on Saturday, with Wellington citing "multiple" outbreaks of Covid-19 in the neighbouring country.

The announcement comes as a two-week lockdown begins in Sydney to contain a rapidly spreading outbreak of the Delta Coronavirus variant.

More than 80 cases have been reported in Australia's largest city, while a handful of community cases have also been recorded in the Northern Territory, Victoria and Queensland in recent days. "But given the high level of transmissibility of what appears to be the Delta variant, and the fact that there are now multiple community clusters (in Australia), it is the right thing to keep Covid-19 out of New Zealand," said NZ's Covid-19 Response Minister Chris Hipkins. — AFP

May in Bangladesh, home to around 170 million people. On Friday the government recorded almost 6,000 new cases and 108 fatalities, the second-highest death toll yet in the

pandemic. Authorities say the situation in districts near the Indian border is catastrophic, with hospitals in the cities of Khulna and Rajshahi overwhelmed. — AFP

GERMANY BANS ARRIVALS FROM PORTUGAL, RUSSIA

Berlin, June 26: Germany on Friday classed Portugal and Russia as so-called Coronavirus variant countries, banning most arrivals from both nations. From Tuesday, only citizens and residents of Germany will be allowed in from the two countries, with air, rail and bus companies prohibited from transporting other passengers. Those allowed to enter from Russia and Portugal will be subject to a two-week quarantine, regardless of whether they can provide a negative Covid-19 test.

Both are reporting a surge in cases over the Delta variant. Fourteen others have been placed in Germany's highest-risk "virus variant" category. — AFP

Down with drugs



A member of security forces loyal to Yemen's Huthi rebels stands near a bonfire incinerating seized narcotic substances, in the Huthi-held capital on Saturday, the United Nations designated "International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking". — AFP

Pak for 'even-handed' ties with US

Islamabad, June 26: Pakistan is seeking a "civilised" and "even-handed" relationship with Washington like the one that existed between the US and the UK or with India "right now", Prime Minister Imran Khan has said, underlining the role Islamabad could play in the region, including in Afghanistan after America leaves the war-torn country.

Khan made the comments during an interview with *The New York Times* in which he also expressed his disappointment that his bid to normalise ties with India did not make any progress though he approached Prime Minister Narendra Modi soon after assuming office in August 2018.

In the interview that comes as US President Joe Biden had his first face-to-face meeting with his Af-

ghan counterpart Ashraf Ghan on Friday, Khan recalled the 27 points of the action handed out by the global body against money laundering and terror financing. Qureshi's comments came a day after the Financial Action Task

'NO ROOM' TO KEEP PAK ON FATF GREY LIST, SAYS SMQ

Islamabad, June 26: Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi on Saturday said there was "no room" to keep Pakistan on the FATF's 'grey list' since it has implemented 26 out

of the 27 points of the action handed out by the global body against money laundering and terror financing. Qureshi's comments came a day after the Financial Action Task

22 1/2 years in jail for Chauvin

Ex-cop sentenced for George Floyd murder

Minneapolis, June 26: Former Minneapolis police Officer Derek Chauvin was sentenced Friday to 22 1/2 years in prison for the murder of George Floyd, whose dying gasps under Chauvin's knee led to the biggest outcry against racial injustice in the US in generations.

The punishment — which came after Chauvin broke his yearlong silence to offer condolences to the Floyd family and express hope that they eventually have "some peace of mind" — is one of the longest prison terms ever imposed on a US police officer in the killing of a Black person.

Still, Floyd family members and others were disappointed. The sentence fell short of the 30 years prosecutors had requested. And with good behavior, Chauvin, 45, could get out on parole after serving two-thirds of his sentence, or about 15 years. "Just because it's the most time doesn't mean it's enough time," said Nekima Levy Armstrong, a Minneapolis protest leader.

Judge Peter Cahill went beyond the 12 1/2-year se-



Derek Chauvin

ntence prescribed under state guidelines, citing Chauvin's "abuse of a position of trust and authority and also the particular cruelty" shown to Floyd. Floyd family attorney Ben Crump said the family had gotten "some measure of accountability" but is hoping Chauvin gets the maximum at his upcoming federal civil rights trial.

Crump said this was the longest sentence a police officer has ever received in Minnesota. But he added: "Real justice in America will be PoC men and PoC women and people of colour who will not have to fear being killed by the police just because the colour of their skin. That

would be real justice."

Outside the courthouse, a crowd of about 50 people clasped hands or placed them on each other's shoulders. The reaction was subdued as people debated whether the sentence was long enough.

Some cursed in disgust. At George Floyd Square, as the intersection where Floyd was pinned to the pavement is now known, members of the crowd broke into applause, and several said, "We'll take it."

Chauvin was immediately led back to prison. He showed little emotion when the judge pronounced the sentence. His eyes moved rapidly around the courtroom, his Covid-19 mask obscuring much of his face.

The fired white officer was convicted in April of second-degree unintentional murder, third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter for pressing his knee against Floyd's neck for up to 9 1/2 minutes as the 46-year-old man gasped that he couldn't breathe and went limp on May 25, 2020. — AP

US won't dump Afghans: Biden

THOUSANDS FLEE KUNDUZ OVER FIGHTING

Washington, June 26: President Joe Biden has told his Afghan counterpart Ashraf Ghani that the people of Afghanistan "are going to have to decide their future" but assured him that the US is going to "stick with you" even after the American troops leave the war-torn nation by September. Biden, who had his first face-to-face meeting with Ashraf Ghani at the White House on Friday said America's partnership with the South Asian nation is going to be sustained.

The partnership between Afghanistan and the United States is not ending. It's going to be sustained, Biden told reporters in the Oval Office of the White House in a joint media appearance with President Ghani and the CEO Abdullah Abdullah.

American troops may be leaving, but support for Afghanistan is not ending in terms of helping maintain their military as well as economic and political support, Biden said.

"Afghans are going to have to decide their future of what they want. What they want. But it won't be for lack of us being a help."

"But we're going to stick with you. And we're going to do our best to see to it you have the tools you need," the US president assured the top Afghan leaders ahead of the US troop withdrawal before September 11.

Ghani, sitting alongside Biden, said Afghanistan was grateful for the blood and treasure America had spilled during the past two decades to defend his country, which now finds itself facing direct battle against the Taliban militants. — PTI

Kunduz, Afghanistan, June 26: About 5,000 Afghan families have fled their homes in Kunduz after days of fighting between the Taliban and government forces, officials said Saturday, with the insurgents continuing to surround the key northern city.

The Taliban briefly seized the city twice in recent years but have now captured the surrounding districts and a nearby border crossing with Tajikistan. — AFP

ng to do our best to see to it you have the tools you need," the US president assured the top Afghan leaders ahead of the US troop withdrawal before September 11.

Ghani, sitting alongside Biden, said Afghanistan was grateful for the blood and treasure America had spilled during the past two decades to defend his country, which now finds itself facing direct battle against the Taliban militants. — PTI

"But we're going to stick with you. And we're going to do our best to see to it you have the tools you need," the US president assured the top Afghan leaders ahead of the US troop withdrawal before September 11.

Ghani, sitting alongside Biden, said Afghanistan was grateful for the blood and treasure America had spilled during the past two decades to defend his country, which now finds itself facing direct battle against the Taliban militants. — PTI

TESLA TO RECALL 2.85L CARS OVER FAULTY SOFTWARE

Beijing, June 26: Electric car giant Tesla will "recall" over 285,000 cars from the Chinese market after an investigation found issues with its assisted driving software that could cause road collisions, a government regulator announced late Friday. Tesla would contact affected users to upgrade their vehicle's software remotely for free, a State Administration of Market Regulation (SAMR) notice said, adding that it affects some imported and domestically manufactured Model 3 and Model Y vehicles.

"The recall plan was filed with the State Administration of Market Regulation, and it was decided to recall the following vehicles from today," SAMR said.

The order is the latest blow to the American self-driving car pioneer, which has come under growing regulatory scrutiny in China due to several deadly collisions involving Tesla vehicles in recent months.

"Due to issues with the cruise control system... the driver can easily activate the cruise control function by mistake," the Chinese government agency said in the notice.

"A sudden increase in vehicle speed will occur, which could... in extreme cases, cause a collision, posing safety hazards." The carmaker has also been targeted by numerous social media complaints from Chinese users regarding quality and service issues, culminating in a high-profile customer protest at the Shanghai Auto Show in April.

The cruise control function, which "matches the speed of your car to that of the surrounding traffic" is a key part of Tesla's Autopilot assisted driving function, according to the manufacturer's website. — AFP

UNUSUAL MOVEMENT

Officials say there were no clear indications that sightings can be linked to alien life

US govt's intelligence report inconclusive about UFOs

Washington, June 26: A long-awaited US government report on UFOs released Friday makes at least one thing clear: The truth is still out there.

Investigators did not find extraterrestrial links in reviewing 144 sightings of aircraft or other devices apparently flying at mysterious speeds or trajectories. But they drew few other conclusions and instead highlighted the need for better data collection about what's increasingly seen by Democrats and Republicans as a national

security concern.

In all but one of the sightings investigated, there was too little information for investigators to even broadly characterise the nature of the incident.

There were 18 cases in which witnesses saw unusual patterns of movement or flight characteristics, the report said, adding that more analysis was needed to determine if those sightings represented breakthrough technology.

Long the domain of science fiction and so-called ufologists, the subject of

UFOs has in recent years drawn serious study from the Pentagon and intelligence agencies. The prospect of an adversary spying with unknown technology has alarmed lawmakers in both parties.

Congress last year required the creation of the report delivered Friday. While its lack of conclusions has already been made public, the report still represents a milestone in the study of the issue.

US officials who briefed reporters on condition of anonymity said there were

no clear indications that the sightings could be linked to alien life. There is also no definitive linkage of sightings to potentially unknown technology of an adversary like Russia or China. It's clear that we need to improve our capacity to further analyse remaining UAP observations, even as we accept that there are some limits to our capacity to characterise and understand some of the observations that we have," one official said.

The report was published online and delivered to

the House and Senate intelligence committees with a classified annex. Lawmakers were given a briefing last week on the investigation. One person who attended the classified briefing and spoke on condition of anonymity said lawmakers were given little information beyond what's publicly available and that the only videos shown had already been made public.

The report lists five potential categories of what the government calls unidentified aerial phenomena, including the possi-

bility of foreign adversaries flying unknown technology to events occurring naturally in the atmosphere.

But only one was categorised as airborne clutter and believed to be a large, deflating balloon. The rest are uncategorised due to lack of information. That includes three instances of potential sightings captured on videos that were declassified and released in recent years.

The Department of Defense will over the next three months develop a new strategy for collecting

and tracking information on potential sightings. Part of the data collection effort is destigmatising UAPs and pushing pilots to report what they see, even when what they see is implausible.

"A big problem around UAPs has been the cultural stigma," said US Rep. Andre Carson, an Indiana Democrat and member of the House intelligence committee, in an interview last week. "It has largely been relegated to science fiction." — AP

SHORT TAKES

Injury scare for sprinter Hima

Patiala: Star sprinter Hima Das on Saturday suffered a hamstring injury during the 100m heats at the ongoing National Inter-State Athletics Championships here, leaving her on the verge of missing out on the upcoming Tokyo Olympics. Hima, who has had a lower back injury problem for a long time, did not start in the 100m final due to the injury though she qualified for it. She did complete her heat race and finished third with a timing of 12.01 seconds during the morning session. It is learnt that the Assam athlete is highly unlikely to run the 200m race scheduled on Sunday as well as the women's 4x100m relay final on June 29. — PTI

Verstappen takes Styrian GP pole

Spielberg: World Championship leader Max Verstappen of Red Bull produced the quickest lap in qualifying on Saturday to claim pole position for the Styrian Grand Prix. Mercedes' Valtteri Bottas was second quickest but drops to fifth on the grid because of a three-place penalty imposed on Friday, leaving teammate Lewis Hamilton to start on the front row with Verstappen. McLaren's Lando Norris produced the performance of the day, pushing the front runners all the way and finishing fourth, meaning he will start from third. — AFP

Saurabh and Manu clinch silver medal

Osijek (Croatia): Continuing their impressive run, the Indian duo of Saurabh Chaudhary and Manu Bhaker clinched the silver medal in the 10m air pistol mixed team event at the ISSF Shooting World Cup here on Saturday. Already assured of a silver, the Indian duo was on par with Russia's Vitalina Batsarashkina and Artem Chernousov at 12-12 before losing the last two series to go down 12-16. Representing the other Indian team, Yashaswini Singh Deswal and Abhishek Verma missed out on a bronze medal. Deswal and Verma, who qualified in the third place, were completely outplayed by Iran's Golnoush Sebgatollahi and Javad Foroughi. — PTI

Champ Farah fails to qualify for Tokyo

London: Four-time Olympic champion Mo Farah's hopes of ending his track career at the Tokyo Games ended as he fell short of the qualifying mark for the 10,000 metres in Manchester on Friday. The 38-year-old won a specially-arranged race to give him a final chance to qualify at the British Championships, but his time of 27 minutes 47 seconds was nearly 20 seconds off the time required to qualify. Farah won the 5,000m-10,000m double at the London Olympics in 2012 and repeated the feat four years later in Rio de Janeiro. — AFP

Archer Verma wins gold in World Cup

Paris: Star compound archer Abhishek Verma stunned American heavyweight Kris Schaff in a shoot-off to bag a gold medal at the Archery World Cup Stage 3 here on Saturday. Verma's effort has come two months after he along with the Indian team was stopped from board the flight for the first stage of the meet in Guatemala City following their coach's false positive Covid-19 test report. India archers are also in the fray for three more medals in the women's recurve individual, team and mixed pair. — PTI

Live on TV

EURO
Round of 16: Netherlands vs Czech Republic from 9.30 pm
Belgium vs Portugal from 12.30 am (Monday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

COPA AMERICA
Brazil vs Ecuador from 2:30am on Sony Ten 1, HD
Venezuela vs Peru from 2:30am on Sony Ten 2, HD

Regd. No. TNENG/2010/35692

Printed & Published by **K. Sudhakar** on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited and Printed at Deccan Chronicle Presses situated at SP 3, Developed Plot, Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai - 600 032.
RNI Registration No: TN ENR/2005/14987
Ph Nos: 22254747, 22254748, 22254750, 22254751
Editor: **KAUSHIK MITTER**

DANES PARTY

Denmark decimate Wales to enter Euro quarters

Denmark 4

(Kasper Dolberg 27, 48, Joakim Maehle 88, Martin Braithwaite 90+4)

Wales 0

Amsterdam, June 26: Denmark marked the 29th anniversary of their greatest triumph by marching on to the quarter-finals of Euro 2020 on Saturday as Kasper Dolberg scored twice in an emphatic 4-0 win over Wales before an exultant travelling support in Amsterdam.

In the city where Christian Eriksen made his name, it was Dolberg — another former Ajax player — who opened the scoring with a fizzing strike in the 27th minute.

That came after Wales had started so well but Denmark never looked back and Dolberg struck again just after the restart before Joakim Maehle and Martin Braithwaite added more goals late on.

Carried by a wave of emotion, Danish dreams are still intact in a tournament that began in such traumatic circumstances for them with Eriksen's collapse in their opening match against Finland in Copenhagen.

They now go on to a last-eight tie in Baku against the Netherlands or the Czech Republic.

Eriksen, still recovering at home after his cardiac arrest, was present in



Denmark's Kasper Dolberg celebrates after scoring his first goal against Wales in the Euro Round of 16 match in Amsterdam on Saturday. — UEFA

everyone's minds at the home of Ajax, and that combined with a vast Danish support inside the one-third full Johan Cruyff Arena made this occasion really like a home game for them.

European champions against all odds when they beat Germany in the final on this day in 1992, Denmark finally have their first win in the knockout phase of a Euro since then and it would be a truly extraordinary story if they could repeat the feat this time.

Nobody in Denmark will want to get ahead of themselves but Wales — who fin-

ished with 10 men after Harry Wilson's late red card — could certainly have no complaints about the outcome and there will be no repeat of their run to the semi-finals at Euro 2016.

They needed a moment of magic from captain Gareth Bale or Aaron Ramsey which never came, but in truth they were up against it from the outset.

Aside from the universal goodwill towards Eriksen's collapse, a ban on travellers from the United Kingdom entering the Netherlands meant

there were very few Welsh supporters inside the stadium.

Danes, in contrast, descended in their droves on Amsterdam, creating an atmosphere not far off that seen at the Parken Stadium in Copenhagen when they beat Russia to qualify for the last 16 — even the Danish Prime Minister, Mette Frederiksen, was in attendance. To their credit Wales started well, with the probing Bale leading by example in the early stages. He crashed a shot just wide in the 10th minute. — AFP

WELSH PRINT 'ERIKSEN' ON THEIR JERSEY

Amsterdam, June 26: A framed Wales national team shirt with Christian Eriksen's name on it was given to Denmark captain Simon Kjær before the teams played in the Round of 16 at the European Championship.

Eriksen collapsed on the field during Denmark's opening match at Euro 2002 and had to be resuscitated with a defibrillator.

The Wales jersey had "CHRISTIAN" written on top of Eriksen's No. 10 and BRYSSIA WELLA underneath. Bryssia wella means get well soon in Welsh.

Kjær, Wales captain Gareth Bale and the three match officials in Amsterdam then posed for a photo with the framed jersey moments before kickoff.

The vast majority of fans at the Johan Cruyff Arena were supporting Denmark in the team's European Championship match against Wales.

Only a handful of Welsh dragon flags were visible among a sea of Danish flags. Wales fans were warned not to travel to the Netherlands because of Coronavirus restrictions in that country. — AP

Belgium & Portugal in clash of heavyweights



Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo arrives in Seville, Spain, for the Euro Last 16 match against Belgium. — Twitter



Belgian footballer Eden Hazard during a training session. — Twitter

Madrid, June 26: Portugal felt the full range of emotions during the Euro 2020 group stage and with Cristiano Ronaldo in the groove again, they can really begin to believe.

After scoring three late goals to beat Hungary, Portugal were shaken by a 4-2 loss to Germany, only for a 2-2 draw against France to restore morale and ensure they snuck out of Group F in third place.

The result is a last-16 clash with Belgium in Seville on Sunday, when one of the tournament favourites will bow out in what is surely the blockbuster tie of the round.

One of the frontrunners for the Golden Boot will fall too, with Ronaldo and Belgium's Romelu Lukaku both in contention. Ronaldo leads the scoring charts on five goals with Lukaku not far behind on three.

Portugal may have taken only a point from a sweaty contest with France at the Puskas Arena in Budapest but the belief and confidence gained from going toe-to-toe with the world champions could be pivotal for the rest of their tournament.

After chaos against Germany came concentration against the French, a committed, organised and aggressive performance which was a reminder of what carried Portugal to success at Euro 2016 and in the Nations League three years later.

"We were strong and consistent. The players helped each other, we had posses-

sion, we attacked well. We improved a lot from the game against Germany," said Portugal's coach Fernando Santos afterwards.

Santos had responded too, reacting to criticism by reverting to his traditional 4-3-3 system of the past two years and making some bold changes to his starting line-up.

CZECH FAVOURITES AGAINST DUTCH

The Czech Republic will enter Sunday's last-16 game against the Netherlands at Euro 2020 as the odds-on favourites, at least when it comes to the history of their head-to-head encounters.

Since the Czech Republic

emerged as an independent state in 1993, their national team have won five games and lost three against the Dutch, on top of three draws.

Before that, Czechoslovakia memorably beat the Netherlands on the way to their only European Championship title in Belgrade in 1976, having edged Johan Cruyff and company 3-1 after extra time in the semi-final.

Czechoslovakia were not there to stop the Dutch when they won the 1988 title in West Germany.

But Czech fans cherish above all the memory of an epic battle at Euro 2004 in Portugal, won by the Czechs 3-2.

— AFP

TOKYO | OLYMPICS



A file photo of P.V. Sindhu carrying the Indian flag at the 2018 Commonwealth Games in Gold Coast, Australia.

Sindhu carries flag and hopes

MOSES KONDETY | DC

HYDERABAD, JUNE 26

P. V. Sindhu can't wait for the Olympics to begin. The badminton ace will have the rare honour of leading the country at the world's biggest sporting spectacle when the Games begin in Tokyo next month. The Hyderabad girl will carry the tri-colour as she heads the Indian contingent at the Opening Ceremony.

"Being the flag-bearer is such a proud moment altogether," a chuffed Sindhu said.

"To think that you would be carrying the national flag and leading the Indian contingent at the opening ceremony is staggering. I am thrilled and excited because that sort of opportunity is rare... it's a huge honour," the 25-year-old said during an interaction post her talk at TEDxYouth@SuchitraAcademy organised by Suchitra Academy International School in Hyderabad on Saturday.

The Covid pandemic may have pulled everyone back a bit but the gritty girl is gung-ho. "I am emotionally attached since the entire country is showing support and wanting me to get the medal. I am really looking forward to doing that," the Khel Ratna awardee said.

Preparations are in full swing. "Since February I have been practicing at the Gachibowli Stadium, which is the same as the

one in Tokyo where the badminton events will be held. The venue has come in handy to get myself used to the air-conditioning and flight of the shuttle. I am thankful to the government, the Sports Authority and the badminton association for the facility. Whenever I asked for permission to practice, they readily granted my request," Sindhu said.

"In the evenings, I go to the Suchitra Academy, which is like a second home to me, for my recovery sessions — pool, ice-bath, gym and running — that are very much needed as there is not much time left for the Games," Sindhu added.

Suchitra Academy also provides her with sparring partners of different styles and skills — left, right-handed, aggressive, defensive, et al. Everyday there are different players and Sindhu has been up against two, sometimes three, opponents at a time as she gears up to take on the world.

The pressure is intense though. "This Olympics will definitely be different compared to Rio 2016 (where she won silver). Now, everyone wants me to get a medal wherever I play, so yes, there is pressure and we have to deal with it. At the end of the day, Olympics are Olympics — right up there. We have to be prepared for everything and anything," Sindhu said.

SAJAN CREATES HISTORY, MAKES OLYMPIC 'A' CUT

New Delhi, June 26: Sajjan Prakash on Saturday became the first-ever Indian swimmer to qualify for the Olympic Games by breaching the 'A' standard time, clocking 1:56:38 seconds in the men's 200m butterfly event at the Sette Colli Trophy in Rome, Italy. The Games 'A' standard was set at 1:56.48 seconds and the 27-year-old Prakash completed the run 0.10 seconds faster at the Fina-accredited Olympic qualifier.

Prakash also rewrote his own national record



Sajan Prakash

of 1:56.96s that he had set last week at the Belgrade Trophy swimming competition. This will be Prakash's second successive Olympics, having represented India in the 2016 Rio Games. — PTI

Sachin bills Jamieson as top all-rounder

New Delhi, June 26: Kyle Jamieson has the ability to become one of the leading all-rounders in world cricket in days to come, reckons legendary Sachin Tendulkar after watching the giant Black Cap torment India's best batsmen in the recently concluded World Test Championship Final.

In New Zealand's emphatic title triumph, Jamieson played a major role with match figures of 7 for 61 in 44 overs along with 21 valuable runs in his team's first essay.

"Kyle Jamieson is a fantastic all-rounder. He is going to go on and become one of the leading all-



rounders in world cricket," Tendulkar said on his YouTube channel.

"When I had seen him last year in NZ, he impressed me," the maestro said.

He then elaborated on why playing Jamieson in

English conditions made him even more lethal.

"If you see his bowling, he is very tall and more than swinging, he likes to bowl seaming deliveries. He is a different bowler compared to Tim Southee, Trent Boult and Neil

Wagner.

"Jamieson hits the deck hard and whatever he does, is off the seam. There were variations which he used where he angled is wrists and bowled big inswingers. There was reasonable variation in his bowling and what I liked was consistency," Tendulkar said.

Tendulkar also liked how Jamieson used his height to play the big shots.

front-foot and makes a big statement.

"That kind of unsettles bowler and they have to pull back their lengths because batter is using his height. When the ball has to come chin high, then length has to be short and that gives batter chance to play horizontal bat shots and that's what Jamieson exactly did. Anything off length, he used his height beautifully, stood tall and played most of them."

On the Indian front, Tendulkar felt that Virat Kohli and Cheteshwar Pujara's dismissal in the first hour on sixth day became decisive.

— PTI