

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | SATURDAY 19 | JUNE 2021

WEATHER



Max: 32°C
Min: 21°C
Rainfall: Nill

ASTROGUIDE

Pilava: Aani 5
Tithi: Navami
Star: Astham
Rahukalam: 9 am to 10.30 am
Yamagandam: 1.30 pm to 3 pm

PRAYERS

Fajar: 4.23 am
Luhar: 12.14 pm
Asar: 3.35 pm
Maghrib: 6.36 pm
Isha: 7.55 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.46 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.00 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 1.29 AM
MOONSET TOMORROW 2.33 AM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+60,388)	(+1,642)
2,99,22,411	3,85,164

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+8,633)	(287)
TN: 24,06,497	30,835

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

17,83,86,378

DEATHS

38,61,742

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES

219

worldometers.info

New Parl necessity, no MP objected to it: Speaker

New Delhi: Not a single MP in either Lok Sabha or Rajya Sabha had objected to the construction of a new parliament building when a request for it was made by both the Houses to the Centre, Speaker of the lower house Om Birla said on Friday. Describing the new Parliament building as a 'necessity', he said though the construction is running 16 days behind schedule, it will be completed by October 2022.

Guterres re-elected as UN secretary general

New York: The UN General Assembly on Friday appointed Antonio Guterres as the UN Secretary General for a second term beginning January 1, 2022, days after the powerful Security Council had unanimously recommended his name to the 193-member body for re-election. Bozkir then administered the oath of office to 72-year-old Guterres at the podium of the UN General Assembly hall.

COUNTER POINT



It's a game changer in the next polls... let's promise to remove the gap between two doses of vaccine!

NO REPEAL OF LAWS BUT READY FOR TALKS WITH FARMERS, SAYS TOMAR

New Delhi, June 18: Union agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar on Friday ruled out repealing the three new farm laws but said the government is ready to resume talks with protesting farmer unions on provisions of the legislations. "Government of India is ready for talks with farmers. Except for repeal, if any farmers' union wants to talk on provisions of the Act even at midnight, Narendra Singh Tomar

will welcome it," the agriculture minister said in a video posted on his Twitter account.

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 rejected the Centre's proposal of putting the laws on suspension. —PTI

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HC: Bar council can act against erring lawyers



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'Apple Daily' increases print run after arrests

SPORT | 8

Shafali Verma sparkles in Bristol Test



Rule of land is supreme, house panel tells Twitter

New Delhi, June 18: Amid a tussle between the Union government and Twitter over the new information technology rules, members of a parliamentary panel on Friday strongly objected to Twitter India officials' observations that they abide by their policy and categorically told them that the rule of land is supreme.

According to sources, members of the parliamentary panel on information technology also asked Twitter why it should not be fined as it has been found "violating" rules of the country.

Earlier this month, the Union government issued a notice to Twitter giving it one last chance to "immediately" comply with the new IT rules and warned that failure to adhere to the norms will lead to the platform losing exemption from liability under the IT Act.

UP POLICE SUMMONS TWITTER INDIA HEAD IN GHAZIABAD ASSAULT CASE

Ghaziabad, June 18: The Ghaziabad Police has sent a notice to Twitter India managing director Manish Maheshwari, asking him to join a probe in connection with the case involving an assault on a Muslim man, officials said on Friday.

He has been asked to appear at the Loni Border police station here within seven days to get his statement recorded.

The parliamentary standing committee on IT, chaired by Congress leader Shashi Tharoor, had last week summoned Twitter over issues related to misuse of the platform and protection of citizens' rights.

The police had on June 15 booked Twitter Inc, Twitter Communications India, news website *The Wire*, journalists Mohammed Zubair and Rana Ayyub, over the circulation of a video in which the elderly man, Abdul Shamad Saifi, claims he was allegedly thrashed by some young men who asked him to chant 'Jai Shri Ram' on June 5. The police claim the video was shared to cause communal unrest. —PTI

Twitter India's public policy manager Shagufta Kamran and legal counsel Ayushi Kapoor deposed before the panel on Friday. Members of the panel asked some tough and searching questions to Twitter India officials but

there answers lacked clarity and were ambiguous, sources said. They strongly objected to the observation of Twitter India officials that its policy is on par with the rule of land and categorically told them "rule of land is supreme, not your policy", sources said.

Twitter and the Centre have been at loggerheads over several issues for the last few months.

The microblogging site had faced backlash when it briefly removed the 'blue tick' verification badge from the personal account of Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu and of several senior RSS functionaries, including its chief Mohan Bhagwat.

Earlier, Delhi Police had sent a notice to Twitter, seeking an explanation of how it described an alleged "Congress toolkit" against the Union government as manipulated media. PTI

INDIA TO WORLD

Delta variant becoming globally dominant: WHO

The Delta variant of Covid-19, first identified in India, is becoming the globally dominant variant of the disease, the World Health Organisation's chief scientist said

■ REPORT ON PAGE 5

DC CORRESPONDENT
WITH AGENCY INPUTS
NEW DELHI, JUNE 18

The third wave of the pandemic Covid-19 could hit the world by October, according to a survey of healthcare specialists, doctors, scientists, virologists, epidemiologists and professors.

More than 85 per cent of the respondents of the survey, conducted by Reuters, said it would hit by October. Some others predicted the arrival between November and February next year. Most of them, however, said it can be controlled better than the second one.

Meanwhile, with the daily positivity rate dropping to 3.24 per cent nationally, and the weekly positivity rate at 3.80 per cent, Dr V.K. Paul, Niti Aayog's member (health), said the "pandemic is shrinking." However, with people taking social distancing and mask-wearing norms lightly ever since the unlocking began, there is a fear that the third wave may be just around the corner. "People started taking Covid appropriate behaviour lightly after the vaccine was rolled out. We

Third wave likely by Oct: Experts

Sero survey finds no specific threat to kids

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 18

Union health ministry officials said it is not necessary that children will be disproportionately affected in the third wave as a fresh serosurvey shows seropositivity was almost equal in all age groups.

The WHO-AIIMS survey shows seropositivity in persons below and above 18 years of age is almost equal. In persons above 18, the seropositivity rate is 67 per cent, while it is 59 per cent in persons below

have started the unlocking process, but we still need to remain cautious and follow all Covid protocols properly," said Union health minister Harsh Vardhan.

Dr Naveet Wig, chairman of the AIIMS Covid task force, warned that the virus has not been eradicated. "If the third wave of Covid comes, whom will

18. In urban areas, it is 78 per cent in persons below 18 and 79 per cent in those above 18.

In rural areas, the seropositivity rate is 56 per cent in persons below 18 and 63 per cent in persons above 18.

"The information shows children were infected but it was very mild. Only isolated cases of infection may occur in children during the third wave of Covid-19," said Dr V.K. Paul, member of NITI Aayog, and head of the experts panel on the pandemic.

we blame? We have to keep our strategy of test positivity rate of less than one per cent in each district and 50 per cent of Covid ICU beds should be vacant."

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday urged people to stay cautious, stressing the virus is "still amongst us" and the possibility of it mutating was also there.

4 ARRESTED FOR FRAUD COVID-19 CAMP IN MUMBAI

Mumbai, June 18: Mumbai police has arrested four persons for allegedly duping a housing society in suburban Kandivali by organising a Covid-19 vaccination camp fraudulently in the name of a private hospital, an official said on Friday.

In a complaint submitted to the police, the Hiranandani Heritage Residents Welfare Association (HHRWA) had said that a vaccination camp was arranged by the residential complex on May 30. But later it found that the Co-WIN portal had no record of the people who participated and they received certificates in the name of different hospitals. The members had also expressed fears that the vaccine administered could be spurious. "Police have arrested four persons, who were involved in organising the camp," additional commissioner Dilip Sawant said. —PTI

YouTuber 'Toxic Madan' picked up from hideout

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 18

YouTuber and a popular PUBG mobile game player Madan Kumar, wanted for his alleged obscene comments against women during live streaming of his games on the social media platform, was arrested by the cyber crime wing of the city police from a hideout in Dharmapuri on Friday.

According to the Chennai police sources, Mr Madan Kumar was arrested by the

special team of the cyber crime wing of CCB at 8 am on Friday. They said that he will be brought to Chennai where the police would conduct further inquiries.

Mr Madan Kumar's arrest comes a day after his wife and the administrator of the YouTube channel Kruthika was nabbed by the CCB from Salem. After interrogation, Kruthika was remanded in judicial custody till June 30. A laptop, desktop and mobile phone was seized from Kruthika.



According to the police, based on a complaint by a Vadapalani resident P.K. Abishek Rabi earlier this week, the CCB had registered a case under IT Act 67, 67a, IPC sections 294 b (use

► **MADAN KUMAR WAS wanted for his alleged obscene comments against women during live streaming of his games on the social media platform.**

of obscene language in public place, 509 (intent to insult the modesty of women) and the indecent representation of women (prohibition) act.

The complainant had said

that Madan Kumar in his YouTube channels - Madan, Toxic Madan 18+, PUBG Madan Girl Fan, Richie Gaming YT had portrayed women in a vulgar manner. He used Filthy language against women.

Mr Madan Kumar, who nearly had 7.76 lakh subscribers, mostly minors, live-streamed PUBG by camouflaging his IP address by using a virtual private network as the game is banned in India. His obscene commentary on

women while playing attracted minors towards his channel. Citing that many of the followers were minors, the complainant also sought a ban on the channel besides action against the YouTuber.

With his arrest, the Madras High Court dismissed the anticipatory bail plea that he had filed against his arrest. Justice M. Dhandapani disposed of his plea as infructuous as he was arrested on Friday morning.

SHORT TAKES

Apollo begins
vaccinating employees
with Sputnik V

Chennai, June 18: Health care major Apollo Hospitals has commenced the pilot launch of Sputnik V vaccine by administering it to its employees from Friday in its efforts to fight against the Covid-19 pandemic. In a press release, the hospital said it directly procures the vaccines from the Dr Reddy's Laboratories, Hyderabad, and would be available at Rs 1,145 per dose, including administrative charges at the vaccination centre.

The vaccine with an efficacy of 91.6 per cent is an 'adenoviral vector' vaccine given in two doses. The first dose was given as an 'intramuscular injection' in the upper arm and the second dose administered three weeks later. The soft launch of the vaccination drive was held at the hospital's Grems Road facility here, the release added. In 2020, Dr Reddys partnered with Russian Direct Investment Fund to conduct the clinical trials of Sputnik V and distribute the vaccine in India. —PTI

Hyundai launches
Alcazar in 3 variants

Chennai, June 18: Hyundai Motor India Ltd launched the much awaited Hyundai Alcazar on Friday. The Hyundai Alcazar is available in three variants offering both 6 and 7 seater SUVs. The Hyundai Alcazar SUV has been launched in India at a starting (introductory, ex showroom) price of ₹16.30 lakh and it is the first three-row SUV from Hyundai. Alcazar comes with petrol and diesel engine options, along with manual and automatic transmission. Commenting on the online launch of the vehicle, S S Kim, MD and CEO, Hyundai Motor India Ltd., said, "This year Hyundai has embarked on a new journey as we complete 25 years of excellence in India. Hyundai has entered a new segment and we aim to redefine premium travel experiences for our customers across the country."

Yamaha's first
neo-retro motorcycle
hits market

Chennai, June 18: Japanese two wheeler giant, India Yamaha Motor (IYM) Pvt Ltd. as a part of its brand campaign 'the Call of the Blue', launched its first neo-retro motorcycle, FZ-X on Friday. The FZ-X has been equipped with several new features offering comfortable riding for touring lovers. The FZ-X can be availed at a starting price of Rs 116,800 (ex-showroom, New Delhi). Speaking after the virtual launching of the two-wheeler, Mr. Motofumi Shitara, Chairman, Yamaha Motor India Group of Companies said, "We stay committed to offer the best of our products to the Indian two-wheeler audience and FZ-X is one step further in that direction."

Security guard killed
in robbery bid

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 18

A 60-year-old security guard was killed by two unidentified intruders around midnight in a robbery bid at a petrol bunk in Old Mambakkam, Chengalpattu district.

The deceased was identified as Pandidurai, a native of Mambakkam. He worked as a security guard at a petrol bunk located on Madurantakam – Soonambedu Salai in Old Mambakkam, the police said.

The incident that took place around 12.30 am was caught in CCTV cameras, police said.

According to the police, two men wearing helmet armed with lethal weapons approached the security guard and asked him to give cash. When Pandidurai said he had no cash, the men began attacking him. Pandidurai allegedly resisted and fought back, when the duo stabbed him with a knife on his back and fled the spot in a two-wheeler.

Pandidurai was taken to Madurantakam Government hospital for treatment, where he died on Friday morning.

Madurantakam police registered a case. They have launched a search for the murder accused.

● The deceased was identified as Pandidurai, a native of Mambakkam. The incident that took place around 12.30 am was caught in CCTV cameras, police said.



Members of Government Doctors Association protest violence against doctors and healthcare professionals at Stanley hospital on Friday. —DC

Violence against healthcare professionals:
Doctors join protest, wear black bagdes

Chennai, June 18: About 35,000 doctors of the Indian Medical Association Tamil Nadu branch joined the nationwide protest on Friday, demanding a central legislation to protect hospitals and healthcare professionals from violence.

The IMA had called for the protest against recent incidents of violence against healthcare professionals in different parts of the country.

The protest with the slogan 'Save the Saviors' was peaceful and it did not affect the services in the hospitals, according to Dr A. K. Ravikumar honorary state secretary of IMA.

No medical services were withdrawn or patient care interrupted during the protest, which strictly followed the Covid lockdown protocols.

"Our members wore

black badges as a sign of protest. Our medicare service to the patients remained unaffected," he told PTI.

Awareness banners and placards were displayed at various hospitals and clinics, which are members of the IMA.

Dr Ravikumar said compared to other states in the country, the state was better placed as it had enacted the 'Tamil Nadu Medicare Service Persons and Medicare Service Institutions Prevention of violence and damage or loss to Property Act 48, 2008', during the tenure of former Chief Minister, the late M Karunanidhi.

"Since the Act came into existence, violence against healthcare professionals has drastically declined in Tamil Nadu. But unfortunately, police in some of the districts are unaware

of this act. We have requested the state DGP to sensitise the Act among the subordinate officials," he said.

About 5,000 hospitals and clinics, which are members of the IMA, participated in the day-long protest on Friday.

Urging Chief Minister M. K. Stalin to support their cause for a central legislation similar to the Act 48 of 2008, IMA state president Dr P. Ramakrishnan and Dr Ravikumar pointed out that Tamil Nadu was the second state to come out with such an act to protect the medical professionals and hospitals from violence.

Acts of violence were happening at regular intervals in various states of India and even women were not spared, they said. —PTI

■ Ready to face third wave: Lieutenant Governor
No shortage of vaccines in Pondy

Puducherry, June 18: Lt Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan on Friday said Puducherry did not have a shortage or lack of vaccines to cover all the eligible people in the fight against COVID-19. Talking to reporters at Raj Nivas here after handing over medical equipment to the Health Department, she said when there were reports of people facing difficulty in getting the jabs for want of adequate stock of the vaccine in several parts, Puducherry had full stock to meet the requirements. The Prime Minister had also promised that more stocks would be distributed to states and union territories including Puducherry from June 21, she said.

"Hence, there is no shortage of medicines here," she said and asked the people to come forward and get vaccinated against coronavirus. A special vaccination festival was in progress in 100 centres since June 16. "I would only appeal to the people to get inoculated as vaccination alone is the most powerful weapon to combat the coronavirus," she said. Stating that the Puducherry Health department was "battle ready" in case a third wave of COVID occurred, she said, "We are particularly keen to ensure that necessary facilities including beds and drugs are ready for the children in case they contracted the virus." "Special beds for children were also being readied in hospitals as the requirements (of children) would be different from the elderly people," she added. Tamilisai Soundararajan said the Pradhan Mantri Health insurance scheme for those coming under the below poverty line category was also being implemented in Puducherry. There were an estimated 1.91 lakh people identified to be eligible for the health insurance scheme. Already 70,000 people have enrolled themselves for the scheme, she added. The Lt Governor earlier declared open a Covid Care Centre on the premises of the Pondicherry University in neighbouring Kalapet. She also handed over relief materials to economically backward families. PTI

Puducherry logs 353 fresh Covid
cases, overall tally rises to 1,14,301

Puducherry, June 18: The union territory of Puducherry added 353 new coronavirus cases during the last 24 hours raising the overall tally to 1,14,301, a senior official of the Department of Health and Family Welfare Services said on Friday. Four more people (two men and two women) succumbed to the virus as the death toll rose to 1,714, Director of Health and Family Welfare S Mohan Kumar said.

Three of the four victims had no comorbidities and all of them hailed from the Puducherry region, he added. The deceased were in the age group ranging between 45 and 75 years. The 353 fresh cases were identified at the end of the examination of 8,685

swabs with Puducherry reporting 280 of them followed by Karaikal (49), Mahe (13) and Yanam (11), Mohan Kumar said. He said that 12,08,489 samples have been tested so far and 10,38,858 of them were found to be negative. The number of active cases stood at 4,125 (635 in hospitals and remaining 3,490 in home isolation).

While 557 patients recovered during the last 24 hours, the overall recoveries stood at 1.08 lakh, he said. The test positivity rate was 4.06 per cent while fatality and recovery rates were 1.50 per cent and 94.89 per cent respectively. The Health department Director said that 36,771 healthcare workers and 22,730 frontline workers have been

HC: Bar council can act
against erring lawyers

Chennai, June 18: The Madras high court on Friday recommended to the Bar Council of Tamil Nadu and Puducherry to initiate proceedings on its own against lawyers who indulge in activities that are prejudicial and demeaning the interest of the legal fraternity as a whole.

The TN Bar Council can do this after consultation with the Bar Council of India in New Delhi, the statutory body governing the legal profession, in the larger interest of the legal fraternity, Justice M Dhandapani said.

The judge gave the suggestion while dismissing the advance bail application from advocate Tanuja Rajan @ Tanuja Kanthula, who feared arrest for her alleged misbehaviour with traffic police in the city recently.

"The power having been provided in Section 35 of the Advocates Act for initiating suo motu action, a duty is cast on the Bar Council to adhere to the said provision in letter and spirit," the judge said.

He hoped and trusted that the TN Bar Council would, in all earnestness, act in consonance with the provision by initiating such action against erring individuals for unprofessional conduct or other misconduct, which come to its knowledge through the digital/print media, so that the glory of the Bar is held aloft.

Earlier, a case was registered against the woman lawyer on a complaint from the affected policeman attached to Chetpet police station, who was reportedly abused by the



advocate and her daughter, for various offences under the provisions of the IPC and the Disaster Management Act.

The first petitioner (Tanuja Rajan) was said to have used abusive, unpatriotic and derogatory words against him.

"They will definitely hurt the ego, pride and self-respect of any person, be it a police official or a common man. Being a member of the coveted legal profession, she ought to have kept the interest of the profession in mind when speaking out in public," the judge said.

Further, it is to be pointed out she indulged in such an act in front of her daughter, the second petitioner, who is a fourth year law student.

"In such a backdrop, it is more expected of the mother/ petitioner to teach her daughter/2nd petitioner the ethics for following the rule of law, as otherwise, her act as in the present case, would engrave upon the mind of the second petitioner, which would not be a welcome sign to the legal profession."

"Not only as a mother, but also as a senior to her

Contempt proceedings
against advocate

The judge also recommended initiation of contempt proceedings against advocate R. Krishnamurthy for allegedly making derogatory statements against him (judge) on the social media.

The whole audio would speak volumes against him and his ulterior motive in castigating a judge for discharging his judicial functions.

The judge directed the registry to place the matter before the Chief Justice for listing the suo motu criminal contempt before the appropriate

bench, after issuing necessary notice to Krishnamurthy.

"If this court fails to take any action against Krishnamurthy, it would have a cascading effect of eroding the faith that the general public have on the justice delivery system and also push the judicial system into doldrums." "In such a backdrop, this court is of the opinion that this is a fit case where this court has to initiate criminal contempt as provided under Section 14 of the Contempt of Courts Act," the judge said. —PTI

daughter in the profession, she ought to have conducted herself in a manner befitting the status of an advocate and her failure to do so, not only tarnished the image of the legal fraternity in the eyes of the general public, but would also have a lingering effect on the mind of the 2nd petitioner..." the judge said.

The judge, however, granted anticipatory bail to the second petitioner, who also apprehended arrest on the same charges, on her surrendering before the police within 15 days and executing a personal bond for Rs 10,000.

Earlier, petitioners' counsel told the judge that due to her (Tanuja) motherly affinity towards her

child, the former had behaved in such a manner, which should be looked at only through the eyes of the mother and not that of the law.

The judge said this argument at the outset looks attractive on the face it and even tries to touch the conscience of the court.

However, on a much more deeper analysis of the material available on record, the same reveals a very sorry state of affairs in which the mother, using the garb of an advocate, not only tried to strong arm the uniformed force, but also tried to take the court for a ride by trying to shed crocodile tears for her acts, said to have been committed unwittingly by her, the judge said. —PTI

7 naval pilots awarded 'Wings'

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 18

After a majestic passing-out parade, seven Indian Navy pilots were on Friday awarded the prestigious 'Wings' by Vice-Admiral Ajendra Bahadur Singh, Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Eastern Naval Command, at the Naval Air Station Rajali, Arakkonam.

The event marked the graduation of the 96th helicopter conversion course (HCC), adhering to all Covid-19 safety norms.

The pilots underwent rigorous flying and ground training for 22 weeks at the Indian Naval Air Squadron 561, the Helicopter Training School (HTS).

After the ceremonial review, the chief guest awarded the Governor of Kerala Rolling Trophy to SLT K Pawan Raj who was adjudged the best all-round trainee pilot and the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief Eastern Naval Command Rolling Trophy to LT Dhananjay Prakash Jadhav for standing first in order of merit. A book prize was also awarded to K Pawan Raj for standing first in ground subjects.

The newly-qualified pilots will be appointed to various frontline operational units of the Indian Navy where they will take on varied missions such as reconnaissance, surveillance, SAR and anti-piracy patrols.

In five decades, HTS has trained more than 752



SLT K Pawan Raj receiving the Best All Round Trainee Pilot from the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief Eastern Naval Command Vice Admiral Ajendra Bahadur Singh, AVSM, VSM, at the 96th Helicopter Conversion Course (HCC) passing out parade, INS Rajali, on Friday.



Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief Eastern Naval Command Vice Admiral Ajendra Bahadur Singh, AVSM, VSM, inspects guard of honour at the Passing out Parade, INS Rajali on Friday.

pilots of the Indian Navy/Coast Guard as well as from friendly foreign nations.

Tamil Nadu gets
more doses
of Covishield

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 18

The health department on Friday received 4,80,380 doses of Covishield vaccine even as most districts in the state complained of shortage.

On Friday evening, 41 parcels with 4,80,380 doses of Covishield from Pune's Serum Institute arrived here at Chennai airport by an Indigo airlines flight. The doses were sent to the Directorate Of Medical And Rural Health Services in Teynampet in Chennai. The processing of the shipment at the Chennai airport was completed quickly and it was handed over to department officials, airport sources said.

About 4.36 lakh doses of Covid-19 vaccines were received by the state government on Thursday.

VACCINE READY



Greater Chennai Corporation Health department organised a Covid-19 vaccination special camp at a corporation school in Kolathur on Friday. —DC



People waiting to take their jab at a vaccination camp organised by the civic body at Government higher secondary School in Sholinganallur on Friday. —DC

Man jailed for raping
and impregnating minor

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 18

A minor girl got her 21-year-old lover locked up in a cell as the latter asked for a DNA test after allegedly raping and impregnating her.

The accused identified as, Dhanasekar, was booked under protection of children from Sexual Offence (Pocso) Act and lodged in Puzhal prison.

According to the police, Dhanasekar used to deliver chocolates to the grocery stores and petty shops in Perungulathur, when he met the 17-year-

old girl, who worked at a store in the area. The girl, a class 12 student, was working at the store to support her family during the lockdown.

Dhanasekar allegedly sexually exploited the minor girl on several occasions under the pretext of marriage and got her pregnant. Fearing castigation from her family, she did not tell anyone about her pregnancy.

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

the girl was four months pregnant.

However, when the girl asked Dhanasekar to marry him, he demanded a DNA examination of the to-be born baby as proof.

Furious over this, the minor girl approached the Tambaram all women police station and lodged a complaint against Dhanasekar. Based on her complaint, the police booked him under the protection of children from sexual Offence (POCSO) Act. He was produced in Tambaram court and lodged at Puzhal prison.

GO, BLACK WIDOW—
PLEASE—CALL ME **NATASHA**.

AND YOU CAN CALL ME **SPIDEY**.

WHEN **SIBERIA** THAWS OUT?

7PM
LARRY
LARKER
8-8

WERE YOU TRACKING THE **HOBGOBLIN**?

NO, I WAS ON A DIFFERENT MISSION—WHEN I SAW THAT YOUNG WOMAN STUMBLE OFF A ROOF.

AND THAT'S THE **LAST** SHE NOTICED ME—ONCE PETER SHOWED UP IN COSTUME!

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THE TOUGHEST JOB AT BRIDGE TABLES

What's the easiest job in the world? One answer at the end.

What's the toughest job at the bridge table? Right — being a defender. It is tough as you are unable to see all of your side's assets. But players do find good defenses — as in today's deal.

West led the heart two. Treating this card as an honest fourth-highest, South took East's jack with his king and immediately ran the spade

jack.

After winning many Easts with heart eight, said that they had their partner's lets the con Declarer wins ace and drives mond ace. The lects one spade and one diamond gets the rest.

However, or the best defe

After winning with the king, many Easts would return the heart eight, saying afterward that they had to lead back to their partner's suit. But this lets the contract make. Declarer wins with dummy's ace and drives out the diamond ace. The defense collects one spade, two hearts and one diamond, but South gets the rest.

IN BRIEF

DMK asks for withdrawal of laws passed by BJP

From P1

Apart from the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, which almost became a national issue just before the onset of the Coronavirus crisis in 2020, and the three agriculture laws, the DMK has asked for the withdrawal of a plethora of other laws that the BJP had passionately introduced in Parliament and passed despite opposition.

In a way, the memorandum was a message to the BJP that the DMK was prepared to confront it on all counts and the meetings with national leaders only went on to say that the rest of the parties could all come together to put up a united fight when the moment came.

Mr Stalin's Delhi trip is seen as a starting point to consolidate the opposition forces ahead of the Lok Sabha polls and also to send across the message to the NDA dispensation that the smaller parties would not keep quiet if it tries to run roughshod over the people's interest and the spirit of democracy.

Besides, Mr Stalin has, through his demands, addressed a plethora of local issues that have been dominating the political narrative of the State for quite some time. Though earlier regimes had not taken a kind view of popular demands like scrapping NEET, Mr Stalin has projected himself as a champion of the state's causes.

The message that the chief Minister sought to spread in Delhi has also endeared himself to the people back home as he voiced their collective sentiments against the BJP at the Centre and establishing the uniqueness of Tamil Nadu that seeks to stay out of the national mainstream on certain issues.

On Saturday, Mr Stalin is likely to resume his official duties by first consulting with experts on relaxing or not relaxing the existing lockdown norms.

'Yeddy's remark on dam will spoil TN, K'taka ties'

From P1

Mr Yediyurappa's unilateral statement that his government would build the dam at the time when the case was before the Supreme Court was not acceptable as it would only jeopardise the friendly relationship between the two neighbouring states, Mr Stalin said.

Since Cauvery is an inter-state river, the Mekedatu project goes against the final order of the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal, in which the Supreme Court had held that no state can claim exclusive ownership or assert rights to deprive other states of the water.

In fact, Karnataka has no right to construct any reservoir on the inter-state river without the consent of the lower riparian state of Tamil Nadu. Yet it has drawn the blueprint for the project and sought permission from the Centre.

Karnataka has also shown extraordinary determination in implementing the Rs 9,000 crore project that aims to store and supply water to Bengaluru city and also for irrigation, besides generating 400 MW of power though it is plagued with legal hurdles.

Since the plan is to draw 4,750 million cubic feet of water to meet the increasing drinking water needs of Bengaluru, the flow of water in the Cauvery to Tamil Nadu would be reduced mainly during the years when the monsoon fails.

Light of hope

A devotee lights earthen lamps during the annual festival of Kheer Bhawani Temple, amid partial relaxation in the ongoing lockdown, at Tulmula in Ganderbal district of Jammu and Kashmir on Friday. The annual mela was held after two years as last year it was a low-key affair with only the ritual pooja taking place at the abode of the deity due to the outbreak of Covid-19. This year, celebrations were held at the mela amidst chanting of religious hymns and sound of temple bells even as most of the devotees followed Covid protocols.

IIT study finds traces of Covid in Sabarmati river

Ahmedabad, June 18: A recent study by researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Gandhinagar has established the presence of Coronavirus in water samples from the Sabarmati river and two lakes in Ahmedabad city of Gujarat.

While the study, funded by the UNICEF, did not reveal if the genes of Coronavirus found in the water samples were dead or alive, Professor Manish Kumar, who led the research, has emphasised the need for further probe on the subject to avert any future tragedy.

Following the revelation, the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) has decided to send samples from these water bodies to the Gujarat Biotechnology Research Centre (GBRC).

"The GBRC is the authorised agency of the AMC for water analysis. We have been sending samples to them since the last one year and they submit their report to the state government. We have no idea about the IIT's research. However, we will now send samples of these water bodies to the

GBRC for a similar analysis," said Harpalsinh Zala, the AMC's city engineer for water resources.

The study was conducted between September and December 2020 and water samples were collected from Sabarmati river, Chandola and Kankaria lakes of the city.

"Our aim was to detect the presence of N, S and ORF lab genes of SARS-CoV-2, also called as Coronavirus, through RNA isolation. We found N-gene copies in the waters of the Sabarmati river, Chandola and Kankaria lakes. The ORF lab-gene was not found in Chandola, while S-gene copies were present in all the three water bodies," said Kumar, who teaches in the IIT's Earth Sciences department.

"Although genes of Coronavirus were detected, our methodology does not tell us if they were alive or dead. However, we can't just presume that they all were dead. Although virus transmission through water is not proven yet, institutions need to come together and conduct further research on this. Monitoring is needed," the professor said.

Cong. MLA in Assam quits party, to join BJP**Says Rahul Gandhi is unable to shoulder the responsibility****MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, JUNE 18**

In what may be called a major setback for the Congress party in Assam, four-time Congress MLA from Mariani in upper Assam on Friday resigned and declared that he would join BJP on Monday.

Kurmi who was the only legislator in the party from the tea-tribe community accused that the Congress had stopped listening to younger leaders and predicted the party's downfall if Rahul Gandhi continued to call the shots.

Kurmi also submitted his resignation to the Speaker of the state Assembly. Soon after, the Congress announced his expulsion.

The resignation came close on the heels of resignation and switch over of former union minister Jitin Prasada, one of its top faces in Uttar Pradesh, to the BJP.

Kurmi called it a difficult decision, given that he was born into a Congress family and his mother was a state minister.

The Congress has 29 MLAs in the state Assembly and will now be 28. "I was born into a Congress family, we grew up in Congress culture. I used to put up posters, I served tea in meetings. My mother was a minister...I have been a soldier of Congress. That is why it is a difficult decision," said Kurmi.

"Rahul Gandhi is unable to shoulder leadership. If he's at the helm, the party won't move forward," Kurmi told reporters soon after submitting his resignation to the speaker.

"My mother was a three-time MLA and also a minister. She died in 2004. I was denied the party ticket to contest the bypolls. The party gave me a ticket in 2006. I have been elected to the Assam Assembly from the

Maken: Pilot is an asset and a star campaigner**DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JUNE 18**

Congress general secretary incharge of Rajasthan Ajay Maken on Friday dismissed reports that senior leaders of the party met the party's Rajasthan strongman Sachin Pilot.

He called Pilot, who was removed as deputy chief minister and state party chief after he rebelled against chief minister Ashok Gehlot last year, an asset and a star campaigner.

In the last couple of days political activities have heated up in Rajasthan with Pilot demanding that the high powered committee made by the high command take a stand on his and his supporters' demands.

Maken added that Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, who Pilot is in touch with,

has been out of Delhi for the last 10 days.

He added Pilot is also in constant talks with him and another top leader K C Venugopal. "It is not possible that he (Pilot) has sought time for meetings and did not get it," he said.

Mr. Maken said the work is on to fill the vacant nine cabinet berths and to make political appointments. "I am speaking to the chief minister, state party chief, and other leaders for the appointments," he said.

He added they were talking to everyone.

"...after the political crisis last year, our effort is that every section, seniority, future of Congress, caste and regional equations are considered," he said when asked about the expansion and other appointments.

Mariani constituency since 2006. I have now realised that the party leadership doesn't hear the voice of the small community and party workers," said Kurmi while justifying his decision to switch over to BJP.

He said that the party also ignored his advice against any tie-up with the AIUDF and paid for it in the April-May election in Assam, in which the BJP was re-elected. "Rahul Gandhi's decision to ally with AIUDF was a blunder and I had opposed it tooth and nail. The Congress is governed by a few senior leaders and there is no chance for the youth in the party, neither at the Centre nor in state," he said.

"In these days I felt like

the Congress does not want the youth to grow. It does not want to promote young leaders from backward classes like tea garden workers or tribals, so I decided that I will quit the Congress," he said.

The Congress leader warned that a few more MLAs are planning to leave the Grand Old Party. "I was the only MLA representing the Congress in the tea community. My departure shall leave a huge void in the party as far as tea votes are concerned," he said, adding, "I did a lot for Congress, even slit my palms to draw the attention of the leadership but these things have no value in Congress," he said.

He lauded Chief Minis-

ter Himanta Biswa Sarma. "The way Himanta Biswa Sarma is leading the state is commendable. The way he has started cracking down on the drug menace etc has impressed me," he claimed that the Chief Minister's move from Congress to the BJP in 2015 contributed to his former party Congress's fall not just in Assam but in other north-eastern states as well.

Congress leader Debabrata Saikia, reacting to the development, said, "He was a very loyal party worker and had some issues regarding decisions of the party. We could not discuss those issues that he had flagged regarding policy of the party."

MAHA CONG. MLA WRITES TO GANDHI**SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC MUMBAI, JUNE 18**

Mumbai Congress' infighting is coming out in the open. In a recent development, Congress's 27-year-old MLA Zeeshan Siddique has written a letter to party president Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi against Mumbai Congress president Bhai Jagtap.

Siddique has made several serious allegations against Jagtap in his letter addressed to the party high command. In his letter, the Congress legislator said that the Mumbai Congress chief had 'rewarded' four Congress leaders with plum organisational posts even though they had worked with his rivals during the 2019 Assembly elections.

OWNER OF 'BABA KA DHABA' ATTEMPTS SUICIDE

New Delhi, June 18: The owner of south Delhi's '*Baba ka Dhaba*', Kanta Prasad, allegedly attempted suicide and has been admitted to the Safdarjung Hospital, police said on Friday. Prasad, 81, attempted suicide on Thursday. The reason behind his extreme step is not yet known, they said. "On Thursday at 11.15 pm, information was received from the Safdarjung Hospital that Prasad was admitted there. Police reached the hospital and collected MLC which mentions the intake of alcohol and sleeping pills as the cause of unconsciousness," police said.

TMC links Justice Kausik Chanda with saffron party**RAJIB CHOWDHURI AND PRANMOY BRAHMACHARI KOLKATA/BERHAMPORE, JUNE 18**

A major controversy has hit Justice Kausik Chanda of the Calcutta high court as West Bengal's ruling Trinamul Congress on Friday linked the judge to the BJP after he scheduled the chief minister Mamata Banerjee's election petition, challenging her Assembly poll defeat to Leader of the Opposition Suvendu Adhikari in Nandigram, for hearing after a week.

At around 11 am, the TMC supremo's plea under the Representation of the People Act was listed for mentioning before Justice Chanda. The judge said the petitioner's presence as mandatory during the hearing in such a case. He also sought to know from the CM's panel of lawyers led by Soumendra Nath Mukherjee whether she would attend the hearing.

Mr Mukherjee assured the judge of abiding by the law. Justice Chanda then fixed June 24 as the date of hearing. An hour later, TMC state general secretary Kunal Ghosh tweeted two photos of Mr Chanda, when he was a lawyer earlier, at a BJP legal cell meeting addressed by state chief

17 children die of Covid-19 in Meghalaya

Shillong, June 18: Over 5,000 children in the age group of 0-14 years have tested positive for Covid-19 in Meghalaya, 17 of which succumbed to the infection, state health minister A.L. Hek said on Friday.

He also stated that none of the newborns delivered by Covid-positive mothers were found to have got infected.

"So far, 5,101 children in the age group of 0-14 years were diagnosed with the disease. 17 children died of the infection since last year," the minister said.

Noting that the third wave of the pandemic, which is likely to strike later this year, may pose a greater threat

to the children, as suggested by experts, Hek said the state government is making necessary preparations in anticipation.

"As part of the preparations, the government has decided to build prefabricated paediatric hospitals in Shillong, at Tura town in West Garo Hills and Jowai in West Jaintia Hills," he said.

Meghalaya has inoculated 5.44 lakh people so far, with over 75,000 of them having received both the doses. The state has registered 762 deaths due to the disease.

Meanwhile, Meghalaya on Friday recorded nine fresh Covid-19 fatalities and 650 new cases pushing the death toll to 771 and the tally to 44,382, a senior health department official said. The state now has 4,819 active Covid-19 cases, while 38,792 people have recovered from the disease, including 431 on Friday, official said.

Meghalaya has so far tested over 6.38 lakh samples for Covid-19, he said.

Mother of jailed scribe Siddique Kappan dead

Vengara: Jailed Malayali journalist Siddique Kappan's ailing mother Khadeejakutty, 91, died at her residence near Vengara on Friday, his colleagues said. Kappan was arrested in October last year while he was on his way to Hathras in Uttar Pradesh where a young Dalit woman had died after being allegedly gang-raped.

He had visited his ailing mother in February after the Supreme Court granted him five-day bail.

Kappan was arrested on October 5, 2020 while he was on his way to Hathras, home to the 19-year-old Dalit woman who died after being allegedly gang-raped by four upper-caste men on September 14.

BLAME | GAME**Vishwanath accuses BSY's son of interfering in functioning of govt****BJP MLC alleges ₹21,473 cr 'scam' in K'taka**

Bengaluru, June 18: Disgruntled BJP legislator A.H. Vishwanath, who has been demanding that Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa be replaced, on Friday alleged the irrigation department has readied a ₹21,473 crore tender in a hurry and without financial approval, and termed it a "scam".

He accused Yediyurappa's son and BJP state unit vice-president B.Y. Vijayendra of interfering in the functioning of the government.

"The tender of over ₹20,000 crore is ready in the irrigation department, which pertains to Bhadra Upper canal project and

Cauvery irrigation project. No financial clearance (from the finance department) has been sought, no board meeting took place. It was done in a hurry," Vishwanath alleged at a press conference.

He alleged that the intention was to take "kickbacks" from contractors. Is this a contractor-oriented government?" he questioned.

The BJP MLC, who had switched his loyalty from JD(S) to BJP two years ago, alleged that the "entire state" including ministers, had been talking about Vijayendra's interference in the administration. "Which minister is con-

tent today? His (Vijayendra's) interference is in all the departments," Vishwanath charged.

Vishwanath's attack came in the midst of a three-day visit of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) national general secretary and Karnataka in charge Arun Singh to the state to hold discussions with MLAs in the backdrop of some legislators seeking Yediyurappa's replacement.

Singh is taking part in a meeting of the party's core committee on Friday before winding up his visit.

Vishwanath also recalled that the rural development and panchayat raj minister

K.S. Eshwarappa had earlier this year approached Governor Vajubhai Vala against the alleged interference by the Chief Minister in the affairs of his department.

The MLC said Yediyurappa had been to "jail in the past due to his family".

"Is it not true that Yediyurappa had been to jail because of his children? We are afraid that this time again he will land in jail," Vishwanath said.

After meeting Singh on Thursday, Vishwanath had demanded that the 78-year-old Yediyurappa be replaced, considering his

age and alleged interference by his son.

Reacting to the allegations made by Vishwanath on the "scam" in the irrigation department, JD(S) leader and former chief minister H.D. Kumaraswamy told reporters in Kolar that "this is a government which believes in loot".

"This is not restricted only to the Irrigation department. It's a government which believes in loot. I have stopped speaking about it because in 2008 also I had raised the matter with evidence but the case could not reach the logical end", Kumaraswamy said.

—PTI

SHORT TAKES

VERBAL TRUCE
BETWEEN FRANCE,
TURKEY: PARIS

Paris: A “verbal ceasefire” is in place between France and Turkey after months of rancorous exchanges that strained the relations of the NATO allies, the French foreign minister said on Friday.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron met on the sidelines of the NATO summit this week, following the rows on international crises such as Libya, Syria and Nagorno-Karabakh that led to bitter personal diatribes from the Turkish leader.

Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian told BFM television that he welcomed the change in tone but said it had to be matched by more concrete steps from Ankara.

“There is a kind of verbal ceasefire. That’s good but it’s not enough,” he said.

UK ‘ASHAMED’
AT POOR RAPE
CONVICTION RATES

London: Britain’s government has apologised to rape victims for declining conviction levels, with senior Cabinet ministers saying they’re “deeply ashamed” by the downward trend in bringing sexual offenders to justice.

The government’s Rape Review, published Thursday, said the situation was “totally unacceptable” and that authorities are determined to change it.

Figures from the Crown Prosecution Service showed that 1,439 suspects were convicted of rape or lesser sexual offenses in England and Wales in 2020 — the lowest level since records began — despite reports of rape to police almost doubling since 2015.

Of an estimated 128,000 reported cases of rape or attempted rape each year, just 1.6 per cent result in a charge. The review said it found no one specific cause for the overall drop in prosecutions.

“These are trends of which we are deeply ashamed. Victims of rape are being failed,” Justice Secretary Robert Buckland, Home Secretary Priti Patel and Attorney General Michael Ellis wrote.

INDIA NAVY DENIES
IT HAD ATTACKED
LANKA FISHERMEN

Colombo: India on Friday rejected as “blatantly false” the local media reports about the Indian Navy’s alleged assault on a group of Sri Lankan fishermen, saying no such incident has taken place.

A group of 13 local fishermen claimed that they had ventured into the sea on May 7 onboard trawlers “Thushan I” and “Thushan II” and were physically assaulted by the Indian Navy in the international waters around Diego Garcia on June 4.

“They demanded drugs from us even after we told them that we were only fishermen,” two fishermen said.

Responding to their claims, the Indian High Commission here denied that the fishermen had been assaulted by the Indian Navy. “Media reports on June 17 stating that a group of Sri Lankan fishermen was attacked physically by the Indian Navy are blatantly false. We deny any such incident having taken place,” the High Commission said.

CHINA IS ‘PACING
CHALLENGE’ FOR
U.S.: DEF SECY

Washington: China is a “pacing challenge” for America, Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin has said, asserting that it is “really important” for the US to focus more on creating opportunities to better partner with its allies and partners in the strategically vital Indo-Pacific region.

Austin told members of the Senate Appropriations Committee during a hearing on 2022 Budget Request for the Defense Department on Thursday that China was his “priority focus”.

“China is, in fact, our pacing challenge and it is my priority focus. You’ve seen that quite frankly through our actions. My first overseas trip along with Secretary Blinken was over to the Indo-Pacific region,” he said.

“You saw me stand up a China task force that has helped to focus the efforts of the department on making sure that we are doing the right things to create the capabilities and develop the operational concepts that we need to be successful. You’ve seen that through quite frankly our actions,” he said.

Delta variant becoming
globally dominant: WHO

Geneva, June 18: The Delta variant of Covid-19, first identified in India, is becoming the globally dominant variant of the disease, the World Health Organisation’s chief scientist said on Friday.

Soumya Swaminathan also voiced disappointment in the failure of CureVac’s vaccine candidate in a trial to meet the WHO’s efficacy standard, in particular as highly transmissible variants boost the need for new, effective shots.

Britain has reported a steep rise in infections with the Delta variant, while Germany’s top public health official predicted it would rapidly become the dominant variant there despite rising vaccination rates.

The Kremlin blamed a surge in Covid-19 cases on reluctance to have vaccinations and “nihilism” after record new infections in Moscow, mostly with the new Delta variant, fanned fears of a third wave.

“The Delta variant is well on its way to becoming the dominant variant globally because of its increased transmissibility,” Swaminathan told a news conference.

Coronavirus variants were cited by CureVac when the German compa-

COVID CASES IN
MOSCOW TRIPLE,
FAN ZONES SHUT

Moscow, June 18: New coronavirus infections hit a pandemic high in Moscow on Monday, tripling in just weeks and forcing Russia’s capital to close its Euro fan zone and extend other curbs.

Some 9,056 new cases were recorded in the megapolis of 12 million in the past 24 hours, up from 3,000 two weeks ago and a new daily record since the Covid-19 pandemic began in early 2020, according to official statistics.

Faced with the spike, Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin, who has been rolling out restrictions for nearly a week, said that the city would limit gatherings and close the Euro 2020 fan zone outside of the Luzhniki stadium.

— AFP

ny this week reported its vaccine proved only 47 per cent effective at preventing disease, shy of the WHO’s 50 per cent benchmark.

The company said it documented at least 13 variants circulating within its

study population.

Given that similar mRNA vaccines from Pfizer and BioNTech and Moderna posted efficacy rates topping 90 per cent, Swaminathan said the world had been expecting more from CureVac’s candidate.

“Just because it’s another mRNA vaccine, we cannot presume all mRNA vaccines are the same, because each one has a slightly different technology,” Swaminathan said, adding the surprise failure underscored the value of robust clinical trials to test new products.

WHO officials said Africa remains an area of concern, even though it accounts for only around 5 per cent of new global infections and 2 per cent of deaths. New cases in Namibia, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Rwanda have doubled in the last week, WHO emergencies programme head Mike Ryan said, while vaccine access remains miniscule.

“It’s a trajectory that is very, very concerning,” Ryan said. “The brutal reality is that in an era of multiple variants, with increased transmissibility, we have left vast swathes of the population, the vulnerable population of Africa, unprotected by vaccines.”

— Reuters

UK Conservatives lose
safe seat in major upset

London, June 18: Britain’s ruling Conservative party suffered a major upset in a by-election result announced on Friday, losing a safe seat it had held for nearly 50 years.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s party lost in the contest to elect an MP for Chesham and Amersham — prosperous commuter towns in Buckinghamshire, northwest of London.

The centrist Liberal Democrat candidate, Sarah Green, won more than 56 per cent in a constituency that had been held by the Tories since it was set up in its current form in 1974.

The Times newspaper said the defeat raised questions over the Conservative strategy of focusing efforts on seizing seats from the main opposition Labour party, rather than on defending traditional Tory seats, known as the “Blue Wall” due to the party’s logo colour.

Johnson’s party in May won a by-election in the traditional Labour-voting Hartlepool, adding another parliamentary seat in



Britain’s Prime Minister Boris Johnson assists in an engine repair at the Automotive shop during a visit to Kirkees College Springfield Sixth Form Centre in Dewsbury, northern England on Friday.

— AFP

northeast England to those they secured in the last general election in December 2019, when Brexit was the main issue. The pro-European Lib Dems campaigned actively in Chesham and Amersham, tapping into local opposition to controversial projects in the area, with leader Ed Davey visiting 16 times, The Times said.

The BBC said voters this time round focused on local issues: the controversial construction of a high-speed rail link through the constituency

and plans to build more houses in rural areas. Davey tweeted that the result “sent a shockwave through British politics” and proved the “blue wall can be smashed by @libdems”.

The contest was triggered by the death in April of former government minister Cheryl Gillan, who had held the seat for 29 years.

Peter Fleet, a former motor industry executive who was bidding to replace her, called the result “very disappointing”.

— AFP

War, crisis refugees double in decade: UN

Geneva, June 18: Despite the Coronavirus pandemic, the number of people fleeing war and persecution continued rising last year, with global displacement climbing to over 82 million — double the figure a decade ago, the UN said on Friday.

A fresh report from the UN refugee agency showed global displacement figures swelled by around three million in 2020 after an already record-breaking year in 2019, leaving a full one per-

cent of humanity uprooted and displaced.

The report highlighted how drawn-out crises like those in Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia and Yemen were continuing to force people to flee, while eruptions of violence in places like Ethiopia and Mozambique were causing surging displacement.

The fact that the numbers rose for the ninth straight year was all the more devastating because Covid-19 restrictions had been expected to limit dis-



The pro-democracy paper increased its print run to 500,000 copies on Friday, a day after police arrested five top editors and executives and froze \$2.3 million in assets linked to the media company.

— AP

‘Apple Daily’ increases
print run after arrests

Editors held on suspicion of foreign collusion

Hong Kong, June 18: Hong Kong pro-democracy newspaper *Apple Daily* on Friday increased its print run to 5,00,000 copies as residents showed support for the beleaguered press freedom a day after police arrested five top editors and executives and froze \$2.3 million worth of assets on national security charges.

The raid on the paper’s offices followed by the arrests on Thursday marked the first time the sweeping national security law, which Beijing imposed on Hong Kong last year, was used against the media, one of the symbols of civil liberties in the semi-autonomous city that don’t exist elsewhere in China.

Police said the editors were arrested on suspi-

● **FRONT PAGE** of Friday’s edition splashed images of the five editors and executives led away in handcuffs. Police also confiscated 44 hard drives worth of news material.

cion of foreign collusion to endanger national security, based on over 30 articles that authorities said had called for international sanctions against China and Hong Kong.

With anti-government protests silenced, most of the city’s prominent pro-democracy activists in jail and many others fleeing abroad, people snapped up copies at newsstands and in convenience stores.

“There are lots of injustices in Hong Kong already. I think there are a

lot of things we cannot do anymore,” said resident Lisa Cheung. “Buying a copy is all what we can do. When the law cannot protect Hong Kong people anymore, we are only left to do what we can.”

The front page of Friday’s edition splashed images of the five editors and executives led away in handcuffs. Police also confiscated 44 hard drives worth of news material. A quote from Cheung Kim-hung, the arrested CEO of *Apple Daily*’s publisher Next Digital, said “Hang in there, everyone.”

Another resident, William Chan, said he bought a copy of the paper as a show of support.

“It was such a groundless arrest and suppressed freedom of the press,” he

said.

State Department spokesman Ned Price said that the US strongly condemned the arrests and called for the immediate release of the five arrested. He also called for Hong Kong authorities to stop targeting independent and free media.

“We are deeply concerned by Hong Kong authorities’ selective use of the national security law to arbitrarily target independent media organizations,” Price said, adding that the suspected foreign collusion charges appear to be politically motivated.

“As we all know, exchanging views with foreigners in journalism should never be a crime,” he said.

— AP

NEPAL PREZ SAYS
SC CAN’T REVERSE
DISSOLUTION

Kathmandu, June 18: Asserting that the House of Representatives was dissolved as per the constitutional provisions, Nepal’s President Bidya Devi Bhandari has told the Supreme Court that it cannot overturn her decision on the matter or subject it to a judicial review.

President Bhandari, at the recommendation of Prime Minister K. P. Sharma Oli, dissolved the lower house for the second time in five months on May 22 and announced snap elections on November 12 and November 19.

Prime Minister Oli is currently heading a minority government after losing a trust vote in the House.

President Bhandari, Prime Minister Oli and Speaker Agni Sapkota separately presented their clarifications in writing to the apex court on the government’s May 21 decision.

The Khadmandu Post reported. The Constitutional Bench on June 9 had asked them to furnish their clarifications in writing.

— PTI

Ultraconservative cleric
Raisi leads Iran poll race

Tehran, June 18: Iranians voted on Friday in a presidential election in which ultraconservative cleric Ebrahim Raisi is seen as all but certain to coast to victory after all serious rivals were barred from running.

After a lacklustre campaign, turnout was expected to fall to a new low in a country exhausted by a punishing regime of US economic sanctions that has dashed the hopes of

many for a brighter future.

The supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, cast the first vote in Tehran and then urged Iran’s nearly 60 million eligible voters to follow suit before the scheduled close of polls at midnight (1930 GMT).

“The sooner you perform this task and duty, the better,” said the 81-year-old, stressing that voting “serves to build the

future” of the Iranian people. Pictures of often flag-waving voters dominated state TV coverage, but away from the polling stations some voiced anger at what they saw as a stage-managed election.

“Whether I vote or not, someone has already been elected,” scoffed Tehran shopkeeper Saeed Zareie about the pre-election vetting that barred all but seven of the more than 600 hopefuls.

— AFP

ENDANGERED | SPECIES

Coelacanths, which have been around for 400M years were thought extinct

Weird ‘living fossil’ fish lives 100 years

Washington, June 18: The coelacanth — a giant weird fish still around from dinosaur times — can live for 100 years, a new study found.

These slow-moving, people-sized fish of the deep, nicknamed a “living fossil,” are the opposite of the live fast, die young mantra. These nocturnal fish grow at an achingly slow pace.

Females don’t hit sexual maturity until their late 50s, the study said, while male coelacanths are sexually mature at 40 to 69 years. And maybe strangest of all,



A coelacanth in a museum in France. It is believed they can live for a 100 years.

— AFP

researchers figure pregnancy in the fish lasts about five years.

Coelacanths, which have been around for 400 mil-

lion years, were thought extinct until they were found alive in 1938 off South Africa. Scientists long believed coelacanths

● **SCIENTISTS CALCULATED** fish’s age by counting big lines on a specific coelacanth scale. But French scientists found they were missing smaller lines that could only be seen using polarised light — the technique used to figure out the age of commercial fish.

live about 20 years. But by applying a standard technique for dating commercial fish, French scientists calculated they actually live close to a century, according to a study in Thursday’s Current

Biology. Coelacanths are so endangered that scientists can only study specimens already caught and dead.

In the past, scientists calculated fish ages by counting big lines on a specific coelacanth scale. But the French scientists found they were missing smaller lines that could only be seen using polarized light — the technique used to figure out the age of commercial fish.

Study co-author Bruno Ernande, a marine evolutionary ecologist at France’s marine

research institute, said polarized light revealed five smaller lines for every big one. The researchers concluded the smaller lines better correlated to a year of coelacanth age — and that indicated their oldest specimen was 84 years old.

— AP

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CORRIGENDUM
A corrigendum to the Notification for hiring under Contract: Appointments Regulations (CAR)-2007 vide Advertisement No. ni-msme/vacancy notification/2021/01, dated 01.06.2021 is issued. For corrigendum details please visit www.nimse.org. All the applicants who submitted the applications against the notification to re-submit their application as per the corrigendum. **Sd/- DIRECTOR GENERAL**

DECCAN Chronicle

19 JUNE 2021

CBSE formula less than perfect, but does the job

The Supreme Court has accepted the 30:30:40 formula for assessing Class 12 students of CBSE and CISCE as recommended by education experts. Principally, there can be no such thing as an absolutely objective system to judge the academic work of young students. But, given the circumstances the country is in thanks to successive waves of the coronavirus pandemic, little else could have been done except find a reasonably acceptable formula that would take care of the assessment process.

There is one fundamental flaw in this 30 (Class 10 marks): 30 (Class 11 marks): 40 (Class 12 unit and term exams besides practicals) formula and that is equating Class 10, in which students take a public examination and Class11 in which students are known to be less than serious because they only take tests conducted by schools and would normally have no bearing on where they go on their scholastic route through university.

It is arguable whether 40:20:40 would have made for better criteria but then even the top court did not seem to take time to size up the formula offered and agreed straightaway to the criteria offered as assessment of students' performance over three years. So, for better or for worse, the evaluation will begin in the given format.

There are bound to be anomalies as cases emerge from among 15 lakh students who are in these streams of study. Numerous other state boards would have to decide soon too on how they will go about marking students' academic performance as many of them have abandoned thoughts of holding the exams. The top court has taken upon itself to decide on whether four states wishing to go ahead with Class 12 exams can be allowed to do so.

How objective the assessment will be is open to question though the system of evaluation is theoretically better because it is based on performances over three years. This is, however, bound to throw up riddles and local school committees proposed by CBSE will have their task cut out. They will also have the discretion to take all assessments or just the pre-boards tests or even a combination of them, making it all trickier.

The idea of a common entrance test being planned for entry to universities, as distinct from professional courses in engineering and medicine for which elite institutions hold their own entrance tests like JEE and NEET, may further complicate matters. The sheer diversity of curriculums among so many state boards competing with the all-India ones, like CBSE, makes it an onerous task to find an acceptable test format to judge young people facing their first big tests.

In these extraordinary, even desperate times, when the world has been dealt such a blow through the coronavirus pandemic, desperate remedies have to be sought. But there is no judging how much students from disadvantaged sections of society or the ones residing in remote areas have suffered in coping with online classes in the last year in which they may have had to do with unequal resources in terms of smartphones, devices and connectivity. Lakhs of students may be left dissatisfied with the way their work is assessed but the evaluation brooks no delay.

Grace needed in Lakshwadeep

The unilateral acts of the administration in Lakshadweep, an archipelago of 35 tiny islands of approximately 70,000 people, have been going on despite an appeal by the people residing on the island and outside. The latest in the series, initiated by administrator Praful Khoda Patel, is the move to acquire pieces of private land for development works even without giving notice to the owners under the draft Lakshadweep Development Authority Regulation 2021.

Mr Patel, a BJP politician who was appointed the administrator in December, has been introducing administrative measures that seek to upset and undermine the way the island has been run and the people have lived there. The draft of the three new regulations — the Prevention of Anti-Social Activities Regulation (PASA), the Animal Preservation Regulation, and the Panchayat Regulation — are under the consideration of the Union home ministry. It is ironic that the administration is going ahead with its plans based on these draft laws even as the Kerala high court, which has territorial jurisdiction on the island, has refused to entertain petitions against them saying they have not been finalised.

A group of retired senior civil servants, in a recent letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, reminded him of the need to be sensitive to the sentiments of the people while implementing projects there. There are no two opinions on the need for the Union government to show some extra care and attention on the island, which holds geostrategic importance for the country. It goes without saying that any such step must be taken in such a way that the islanders feel more confident and comfortable. Mr Patel's actions, unfortunately, are to the contrary. The government must realise that the mighty Indian state need not use the extra-strong arm of the law to deal with peace-loving people who have one of the lowest crime

Subhani



Twitter vs Govt: Free speech, interrupted...



Shashidhar Nanjundaiah

Twitter, the micro-blogging giant, is no longer the hubless network of global chatter that its model would appear to indicate. After it failed to appoint a full-time officer in charge of compliance in India, its country managing director will be criminally liable for inflammatory or hateful remarks on the platform. In real terms, this means that the social media platform will now be responsible for what the Twitterati say. Not complying with one of the rules mandated by the Indian government has cost Twitter dearly, as it lost the very legal cover that would have enabled it to be treated as an intermediary. Intervention itself could come in the way of intermediary status.

Social media platforms have claimed to be common carriers, or hands-off intermediaries. Section 79 of the Information Technology Act offers a legal shield so long as Twitter remains an intermediary — when it does not initiate message transmission, does not select the receiver, and does not modify the message. The loss of the “safe harbour” offered under Section 79 — perhaps the first such experience in the world — means that the essence of the business model of the social media has come crashing down. As with any house of cards, this crash was just waiting to happen. Arguably, a company's vulnerability is at its peak when a nation's political values are being rewritten.

A newspaper editor's job is to act as a “gatekeeper”, assigning various pages, positions, lengths and levels of prominence to news stories. Unlike a legacy edi-

tor, a social media platform does not edit the content of what we write. It is far more democratic in that way than a newspaper. The role of social media intermediaries in the current framework is not quite as simple, but whether they are completely hands-off is debatable. Whether in the way algorithms are written, or the level of engagement, or other protocols, there is a process of message prioritisation that essentially means one message can attain more visibility than another. Syllogistically, assigning prominence to some content over other content should be seen as a form of editorial intervention.

This form of editorialisation, however indirect and driven mainly by those who wrote the programmes, means that the social media business model that is fed to us — that the social media is truly a free marketplace of ideas — should be questioned. Users may assume that because of the sheer volumes, their posts have the same chance of visibility and impact as their neighbour's. Have social media platforms been transparent with us about how it all really works, and whether it is simply an organic process like Darwin's theory of natural selection?

But the concern for the billions of social media users is much larger. Regulation comes at the price of more, not less, intervention. Liberal policies in a democracy implicitly must assume one factor that really is debatable: “fairness”. If a government tangles with private players and creates a shield of opacity from regular folks, it is unfair to the spirit of democracy. In the same spirit, is it fair to hold a company responsible for what its users do? After

all, users are not employees of the company. Would the police charge the bicycle manufacturer for a rider who chooses to ride illegally on the wrong side of the road?

The difference is that in a social media model, the company and the user are bound by a trapeze-like relationship, bound to each other for a critical moment of *usage*. So, could the answer be an openly stated pre facto intervention? The problem with taking responsibility for content someone else creates is that any damage can only be mitigated after it is done. We may not have reached the stage of being able to prevent an impending message in time (although efforts in that direction could be ongoing). But if it were and Twitter did intervene before a tweet goes public, it would still lose its status as an intermediary. Perhaps as a first step in a precautionary method, Twitter could filter out the bots and fake profiles. Flagging posts for dubious content was always a great idea, but can it be pre facto and more transparent? If intervention is needed, should Twitter's editorial job then be limited to accepting or rejecting posts?

It will be naïve to assume that everything will go according to the *spirit* of the law. Twitter will now be an easier target for those who find a post inconvenient, and when users find that their legal responsibility is indirect at best, one wonders whether bad content will be prone to sink even further. In the Ghaziabad incident on the heels of the loss of Twitter's indemnity, the Uttar Pradesh police named the company and

some of its users in a First Information Report, accusing it of circulating a fake video. This means that the police has assumed a broader scope of culpability, holding both the platform *and* its users liable.

Twitter may therefore need a new operational model. Twitter's India experience also could fortify the brewing idea that after decades of enjoying the status of being the most unregulated and unfettered among modern media technologies, the social media's growth may be cooling off. A report predicted these trends from nearly three years ago: An Oxford University-Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism's Digital News Report had reported back in 2018 that for the first time since the phenomenon began, among users in 37 countries across continents (not including India, albeit), the dependence on social media for news consumption had showed a decline.

It is indeed “astounding”, as information technology minister Ravi Shankar Prasad pointed out, that an entity that projects itself as the flag-bearer of free speech should defy the law. That observation, however, should apply to governments and private corporations alike. Governments that promote nationalistic narratives, and the societies that are hegemonised into those narratives, prefer images, walls and controls. The new rule is a flag-bearer of that philosophy. Now we can expect less inconvenient chatter from the Twitterati. Free speech is illusory anyway, and if social media giants were to deny that any form of control exists, whether political or not, it would be a little rich. These platforms have been our public *dhobi ghats* for dirty linen. But it seems that is not how we prefer it.

The writer has headed private schools of media and communications, and is a proponent of media literacy at schools

Governments that promote nationalistic narratives, and the societies that are hegemonised into those narratives, prefer images, walls and controls. The new rule is a flag-bearer of that philosophy.

LETTERS

POWER FAILURE

It's disturbing to note after hearing the announcement that TANGEDCO is going to start the shutdown of power in many areas in the city on Saturday as a part of maintenance. This exercise will continue in different areas as we can notice from this move from the government. The unannounced power cuts experienced in very recent times seem to be gradually picking up pace and the public is keen to know the reason behind it. Is there any diversion that happens to any areas or industries? When the city has not experienced any power cuts during the previous government, the promise given by the change of government in power now is that “You can see the dawn when we come back to power”. The more often used word of the leaders during the campaign was that they will show the ‘Vidiyal’ (light) but can't be this way to public disappointment.

A.P. Thiruvadi, Chennai

WITHERING BJP

Contrary to their preaching and our expectations that the BJP will behave differently and prove to be a role model to other political entities, it is despicable that they stoop down to any level to topple legally elected opposition governments using unethical practices like hijacking MLAs and MPs from other parties and establishing their regime with hijacked feathers. That they succeeded to destabilise the Congress governments in Goa, Assam, MP, etc, using similar unethical practices, they tried their best to capture power in West Bengal and Kerala too. But sensing the sinister moves of the saffron party, the sensitive people of Bengal gave a fitting reply to them by bringing back TMC to power with a thumping majority. After the results were announced, it was a masterstroke by Mamata Banerjee who sent out a clarion call to those who had left her party just before the elections to return to her fold which has yielded good results with the return of the prodigals to the mother stable.

Tharcius S. Fernando, Chennai

KAUSHIK MITTER

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Farrukh Dhondy
Cabbages & Kings



“Tolerance is an annoying virtue; Generosity a difficult one Forgiveness can never hurt you Even makes you feel the superior one.”
— From **The Proverbs of Bachchoo**

In the neighbourhood in which I grew up in Pune, there was, at the end of Synagogue Street — you guessed it — a synagogue! Made entirely of red brick with a Gothic tower it was known locally as *Lal Deval*.

Our immediate neighbour was a Parsi gentleman who, among other things, published an anonymous rag sheet imaginatively called *Synagogue ni Searchlight* — that's Parsi Gujarati with two English words.

It was a gossip sheet with articles about which girls were seen cycling with boys of a different religion, which family was going bankrupt because the male breadwinner was earning no bread and still gambling on cotton figures, which couple had a foul shouting match over the wife's certain adultery... etc.

My grandfather, the head of our household, declared himself against

the *Searchlight* and against all gossip and, I suppose, instilled in me a suspicion of it and an inclination to shut my ears and mind to it.

But now, gentle reader, after decades of following *mamaaji's* banning principle, I am eagerly enjoying a very public, very significant political row based entirely on gossip. I excuse myself with the contention that this gossip holds the future of the government of the UK in suspense, if not in peril, and it embarrasses persons I regard as on the opposite side to myself in every ideological divide.

So, listen closely:

When Boris Johnson won the leadership of the Tory Party, or wrested it from Theresa May, he called upon one Dominic Cummings to prepare his election strategy. This Dombo is a weird character and was a leading ideologue and strategist of the 2016 campaign in favour of Brexit. He carried this strategic stance into BoJo's election campaign with the simple slogan “Get Brexit Done”. Among other factors, including the fumbblings of the Labour Opposition on the issue, this propelled BoJo to victory and into 10 Downing Street. Into this august

address the twice-divorced BoJo introduced his pregnant fiancé, Carrie Symonds. As PM now, he appointed Dominic as his chief adviser.

The Covid crisis came. BoJo, the government and his health secretary Matt Hancock faltered in several ways — lockdowns were introduced too late, the equipment for keeping hospital staff, including doctors and nurses, protected was not commissioned and distributed as it should have been, contracts for testing and tracing the plague were handed out to cronies of the government without adequate scrutiny or being subject to tender. The test and trace programme was an abject failure, if not a complete non-starter... and the bodies just piled up.

One assumed at the time that Dombo was part of all these plans and failures as he was BoJo's right-hand man. In this role he had, before and during the plague, exhibited his weirdo tendencies. He publicly said that he was recruiting advisers and operatives to the government who were, in his own words “weirdos and misfits”. (*So why didn't you apply?* — Ed . Sirji, *Kyon garib aadmi ki mazaak ouda rahen?* —fd)

It now transpires, or did a few months ago, that the two unelected adjuncts BoJo had imported into 10 Downing Street were — how to put it — incompatible! Carrie was whispering in one ear and Dombo in the other — and they were, one can now deduce, saying opposite things. Dombo introduced his own team into the fray and Carrie likewise prevailed on BoJo to import her friends into influential positions at the helm of the government. Dombo's team referred to Carrie as “Ms Nut Nuts”. Carrie's term for Cummings, if she has a derogatory one, remains undisclosed.

Matters, so to speak came to a head, or at least to the metaphoric decapitation of one or two. Dombo lost out to Ms Symonds, known to the press after her demand that the PM's flat be redecorated to the tune of over £200,000, as Carrie Antoinette.

Dombo packed his bags and left Downing Street. But he didn't just take his bags. He took his documents, his exchange of phone texts with the Prime Minister and others, his notes of meetings at the heart of the British government, his memories of what went on in committees into which he had intruded and a painful of vengeful bile and intent.

He told the press that BoJo had, against urgent advice, delayed the lockdown, using the phrase “let the bodies pile up!”

He was called then to give evidence to a parliamentary committee about his take on the preparations for Covid-19. He spoke to them for seven hours, repeatedly saying that BoJo was not fit for the job and that Matt Hancock had repeatedly lied to Parliament and ought to have been sacked for deceit, if not for total incompetence. Mr Hancock denied all of it and demanded written proof from Dombo.

This week Dombo released the content of several WhatsApp exchanges with BoJo, who replies to him calling Mr Hancock “totally f— ing hopeless!” In a later exchange, again fatally critical of Mr Hancock, BoJo says: “I can't think of anything except taking Hancock off and putting Gove on.” Mr Hancock remains.

There are 6,984 more words to Dombo's released text. He threatens more devastating revelations from his time at the heart of Britain's government. Please, can they be juicy, fatally about other ministers? Can't wait!

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	52,344.45	0.04
Nifty 50	15,683.40	-0.05
S&P 500*	4,185.22	-0.87
Dollar (₹)	73.87	0.28
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.18	0.31
Euro (₹)	88.36	0.19
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	46,460▲188	0.40
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	73.51	0.59
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.006	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.460	-0.051

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Shareholders of Videocon firms to get 'nil' money

Shareholders of two listed companies of Videocon Group will receive "nil" money at the time of delisting, as the liquidation values of the two firms are not even sufficient to cover outstanding debt. Videocon Industries Ltd and Values Industries Ltd will be delisted as part of the resolution plan. There will be no offers to any shareholders of the two companies at the time of delisting, the firms said in a public notice.

Forex reserves rise \$3.07 bn to record \$608.08 bn



The country's foreign exchange reserves surged by \$3.074 billion to reach a record high of \$608.081 billion in the week ended June 11, the latest RBI data shows. The reserves had increased by \$6.842 billion to \$605.008 billion in the previous week ended June 4. Foreign currency assets rose by \$2.567 billion to \$563.457 billion in the latest week. The gold reserves rose by \$496 million to \$38.101 billion.

Wipro to roll out salary hikes for Jr staff from Sept.

Wipro said it will give wage hikes to junior employees with effect from Sept. 1. "Wipro Limited will initiate merit salary increases (MSI) for all eligible employees up to Band B3 (Assistant Manager and below), effective September 1, 2021. In January 2021, the company had announced salary hikes for eligible employees in these bands, who form 80 per cent of the company's workforce," Wipro said in a statement.

IDBI Bank invites bids to divest stake in Arcil

IDBI Bank plans to divest its 19.18 per cent stake in Asset Reconstruction Company Ltd (Arcil) and has invited bids from interested parties. Arcil was incorporated in 2002 and is owned by banks like SBI, IDBI, ICICI, PNB and strategic foreign investors such as Avenue India Resurgence Pte Ltd. Since its inception, Arcil has resolved over Rs 78,000 crore worth of NPAs acquired from Indian banks and financial institutions.



100 commodity players get notice EOW summons brokers again

SANGEETHA G
with agency inputs
CHENNAI, JUNE 18

The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the Mumbai Police has served summons to directors of nearly 100 commodity brokerage firms who are alleged to have been involved in the 2013 payment default case of the National Spot Exchange Limited (NSEL).

These brokerage firms, which are accused of having indulged in financial irregularities and suspected forgery with their trading clients, have an estimated outstanding receivables of over Rs 4,200 crore in the case.

The brokerages include Motilal Oswal Commodities Brokers, Anand Rathii Commodities, Systematix Commodities, Way2Wealth Commodities, India Infoline Commodities and Progressive Comtrade.

Five brokerage firms with the maximum amount of receivables include Anand Rathii Commodities, India Infoline Commodities, Geojit Comtrade, Systematix Commodities and Motilal Oswal Commodities Brokers.

Others with significant receivable amounts include Philip Commodities India, Emkay Comtrade, JM Financial Comtrade, Ventura Commodities, Arihant Futures and Commodities, SPFL Commodities, RR Commodity Brokers,



Nirmal Bank Commodities, India Nivesh Commodities and Suresh Rathii Commodities. They have been asked to personally depose before the EOW with information on trade modification details of all their clients, broker and client ledger accounts, client settlement account details, banking details, brokerage earned, client PAN and KYC, visits to warehouses and a host of other functional details.

According to a director of one of the brokerage firms, there is nothing new in this case. "EOW teams keep changing, and whenever a new team takes charge, they come and ask us the same questions and ask for the same documents. We have submitted the same replies and proofs at least three times in the past," he told *Financial Chronicle*.

The brokerage firms have been denying any wrongdoing on their part from the beginning and claimed that the development will not affect their functioning.

In 2019, markets regulator Sebi had passed orders

against some of these brokers in the NSEL case, declaring they were "not fit and proper" to continue as a commodity broker following a report of EOW and NSEL complaint.

EOW's forensic report in 2015 accused many brokers of misguiding their trading clients, routing their money through benami accounts and indulging in various other wrongdoings, including under the pretext of loans against securities in violation of securities laws.

The brokers challenged Sebi orders before the Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT). The NSEL had also approached the SAT. Calling itself an affected party, the NSEL alleged that the regulator had failed to consider all the allegations and material in its complaint against brokers.

However, the tribunal refused to admit NSEL's plea, prompting the bourse to seek the intervention of the Supreme Court, pursuant to which the SAT was asked to allow the NSEL to present its case.

Assam set to offer ₹8,250 crore relief to microfinance customers

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, JUNE 18

The Assam government on Friday has decided on a Rs 8,250-crore package for the microfinance customers in the state. This will provide much-needed relief to the microfinance institutions (MFI), which had seen stressed assets touching new highs due to uncertainties around the state's Microfinance Bill and loan waiver promises.

The package will work at three levels. It envisages complete waiver of loans customers whose revenue sources have been hit by the pandemic. This apart, incentives will be provided to delinquent customers to bring them back to the credit cycle. Part of the package will also reward the prompt payers by providing additional credit of Rs 25,000.

"The cost of the package for the government can go up to Rs 8,250 crore. The state has a total microfinance portfolio of Rs 12,000 crore. Of this, Rs



3000 crore are non-performing assets as on March 2021," Manoj Nambiar, chairperson of MFIF told *Financial Chronicle* after meeting the state government officials.

The package was one of the election promises made by the ruling party in the recent elections. Along with the election promise, the uncertainties around the Microfinance Bill had shot up delinquencies in the states to new highs.

According to CRIF High Mark, delinquencies beyond six months have been rapidly increasing from 1.3 per cent in March 2020 to 6.5 per cent in

December 2020 and went up to 13.6 per cent by March 2021.

P. Satish, executive director of Sa-Dhan finds that microfinance collections in Assam have been getting affected for the past couple of years due to different developments.

In October 2019, protests against micro lenders in some districts had started affecting the asset quality of the entire state. Further, Citizen-ship Amendment Act and National Register of Citizens protests too had hit collections.

By March 2020, the country went into lockdown and then the moratorium was announced. In December, the state government came up with the Microfinance Bill, which stipulated micro lenders to collect dues only at gram panchayat offices or public places. Thereafter, during the elections, the political parties promised waiver of micro loans, which has taken the delinquencies higher.

Co-founder quits Grofers as Zomato circles it again

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, JUNE 18

While talks with Zomato on funding and acquisition are still on, Grofers co-founder Saurabh Kumar has quit the company.

"I have been reflecting on my life and personal ambitions for some time. And my decision to step away is the outcome of that. I want to wander again," Saurabh Kumar said in an e-mail sent to the employees of Grofers.

Co-founder and CEO of Grofers Albinder Dhindsa, in a blog post, confirmed that Kumar will no longer be involved in day-to-day responsibilities at Grofers. However, he will continue to be a board member and a shareholder at the company. "This is the end of an era for Grofers," he said.

"Over the last six months, SK had been yearning to invest in his

own personal evolution - to grow beyond a growth driver to become a designer, enabler and coach. And diving deeper has convinced him that this is another area he can have a huge impact on, if he can build on it from scratch," he added.

According to reports, food delivery app Zomato is once again in acquisition talks with Grofers. Talks had failed last year. This time Zomato may lead a \$100 million funding round in Grofers first. After BigBasket getting acquired by Tata Digital, another leading player in the online grocery business, Grofers, has become a hot property.

Kumar and Dhindsa had started Grofers in 2014. Along with BigBasket, Grofers developed the e-grocery business in India and helped the segment touch a turnover of \$3 billion. The segment is now expected to grow at a com-



Saurabh Kumar

pound annual growth rate of 59 per cent to \$18 billion by 2024 with the likes of Amazon, Flipkart, Tatas and Reliance getting into the segment. Around 130 million households are already using e-grocery platforms or are willing to try, and this has created an addressable market of a whopping \$293 billion. The pandemic saw the gross merchandise value of e-grocers growing multi-fold.

The phenomenon of co-founder leaving a startup is not new. In 2018, Pankaj

Chaddah, co-founder of Zomato, left the company. In 2019, Urban Ladder co-founder Rajiv Srivatsa stepped down from active leadership. Smruti Parida and Deepak Dhar of NestAway and Delhivery's Mohit Tandon and Bhavesh Manglani also left their startups.

"There are several opportunities in the digital space and a co-founder leaving the start-up in search of new opportunities is not a new thing. But then, there will be a dominant co-founder who would most probably be the face of the company. Investors too recommend that there should be a first among equals. Sometimes, the vision of the company also changes as it evolves over the time and new investors come in. Naturally, some of the co-founders would want to explore new things," said Arun Natarajan, founder of Venture Intelligence.

Hyundai to begin third production shift

MICHAEL GONSALVES
PUNE, JUNE 18

Hyundai, India's second biggest car maker, says the demand for cars in India is steadily rising, by about 75 per cent in June itself, as it plans to start three shift production at its factory in Chennai from the present two shifts to reduce waiting period of more than four months for its models.

The Korean automaker introduced the new Hyundai Alcazar SUV, with introductory prices for the 2.0-litre petrol version starting at Rs 16.30 lakh, and the 1.5-litre diesel version at Rs 16.53 lakh pan-India showroom.



Hyundai, also India's biggest SUV maker, is betting big on its Alcazar SUV, confirmed bookings of which crossed 4,000 in less than a month with down payment of Rs 25,000. The Hyundai Alcazar competes

with the three-row SUVs like the MG Hector Plus, Tata Safari and the Mahindra XUV500. This segment is set to become even more competitive with the arrival of the new Mahindra XUV700, which that replaces the current XUV500, later this year.

"We have already seen demand for cars rising by 75 per cent in June itself," Tarun Garg, director, sales at Hyundai Motor India told *Financial Chronicle*. He said this demand would continue in July and August as people preferred personal mobility to be safe from Covid pandemic. Garg said 45 per cent of the company's total sales now come from SUVs.

Centrum-Bharat Pe bid for PMC Bank gets RBI nod

FALAKNAAZ SYED
MUMBAI, JUNE 18

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday gave its in-principle approval to Centrum Financial Services for the takeover of scam-hit Punjab and Maharashtra Cooperative (PMC) Bank. The financial services company Centrum Financial will be allowed to set up a small finance bank (SFB) with the takeover of PMC Bank.

"The RBI has today decided to grant "in-principle" approval to Centrum Financial Services Limited (the applicant) to set up a small finance bank under general "Guidelines for 'on tap' Licensing of Small Finance Banks in the Private Sector" dated December 5, 2019," said the apex bank in a statement.

"This "in-principle" approval has been accorded in specific pursuance to the Centrum Financial Services Limited's offer dated February 1, 2021 in response to the Expression of Interest notification dated November 3, 2020 published by the Punjab & Maharashtra Co-operative



Bank Ltd., Mumbai," added the RBI.

"The RBI would consider granting a licence for commencement of banking business under Section 22 (1) of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949, on being satisfied that the applicant has complied with the requisite conditions laid down by RBI as part of "in-principle" approval," it said.

In December 2020, Bharat Pe and Centrum Group were among the four groups that had made submissions to the RBI for the acquisition. While Centrum Group is co-promoted by Jaspal Bindra, a former Standard Chart-ered banker, BharatPe is a third-party unified payments interface (UPI) player. Both

may own equal stakes in the venture, according to reports.

Asutosh Mishra, head of research at Ashika Stock Broking said, "The RBI has resolved the issue in the best possible way and protected the interest of all depositors. However, we will have to wait and see as to how Centrum recovers the dues of PMC from the defaulters, how it normalises the operations of the scam-hit bank and grows the business."

On September 23, 2019, the RBI had superseded the board of PMC and placed it under regulatory restrictions, including putting a cap on withdrawals by its customers, after detection of certain financial irregularities and hiding and mis-reporting of loans given to realtor HDIL.

Cash withdrawals were initially capped at Rs 1,000 per account initially but relaxed to Rs 100,000 by June last year. Depositors had held several protests demanding their money back. PMC's exposure to HDIL was over Rs 6,500 crore or 73 per cent of its total loan book size.

KIMS SUBSCRIBED 3.86 TIMES, DODLA DAIRY 45.61 TIMES

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, JUNE 18

Hyderabad-based Krishna Institute of Medical Sciences' (KIMS Hospitals) Rs 2,144-crore initial public offering (IPO) was fully subscribed on the final day of bidding on Friday.

The public issue was subscribed 3.86 times. The qualified institutional buyer (QIB) portion was subscribed 5.26 times, the non-institutional portion was subscribed 1.89 times and retail portion was subscribed 2.9 times, according to sources close to the merchant bankers.

Earlier the company had allotted shares worth Rs 955.69 crore to the anchor investors.

Another Hyderabad-based company Dodla Dairy's Rs 520 crore IPO was subscribed 45.61 times on the final day of bidding.

The QIB portion was subscribed 84.88 times, the non-institutional portion was subscribed 73.26 times and the retail portion was subscribed 11.34 times.

Earlier the company had allotted shares worth Rs 156.05 crore to the anchor investors.

INDIA PESTICIDES IPO FROM JUNE 23

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, JUNE 18

Lucknow-based India Pesticides, manufacturer of agrochemicals announced a Rs 800-crore initial public offering in the price band of Rs 290 to Rs 296 per equity share of Re 1 face value. The public offer opens on June 23 and closes on June 25.

The IPO consists of a fresh issue of equity shares worth Rs 100 crore and an offer for sale of equity shares worth Rs 700 crore, by the selling shareholders.

India Pesticides is the sole Indian agro-chemical manufacturer of fungicide technicals Captain and Folpet, besides Thiocarbamate herbicide. It also manufactures Cymoxanil, used to manufacture fungicides that control downy mildews.

COST OF SILENCE

Total price tag of menopause could be over \$810 bn a year

Millions of women quit over a physical reason

LIZZY BURDEN
JUNE 18

It's not every day that a FTSE 100 boss tells you about her nightly hot flashes.

But for 45-year-old Liv Garfield, the chief executive officer of British water utility Severn Trent Plc, it's a way to demystify a natural phenomenon affecting menopausal women—a growing cohort at companies around the world. With menopause driving scores of women out of the workforce each year, addressing it is essential, says Garfield.

"To not employ swathes of women from 45 to 60 has got to be a real issue — otherwise you're missing all the insight from that particular generational category," she said in an interview. Her company was among the pioneers of "menopause education" in 2018.

Symptoms of meno-pause start



in women between the ages of 45 and 55. Menopause—which begins when a woman has gone 12 months without a menstrual period—can bring hot flashes, night sweats, loss of sleep and mood swings. That can lead to embarrassing episodes in front of colleagues, reduced ability to concentrate and even erratic behaviour. Some women will have no issues or mild ones. For others, the effects can be debilitating.

Women in this age group account for 11 per cent of the workforce in the Group of Seven most-industrialised nations.

Globally, menopause-related productivity losses can amount to more than \$150 billion a year, according to Reenita Das, a partner and senior vice president for healthcare and life sciences at consulting firm Frost & Sullivan. Plug in the additional costs to the healthcare system and the total price tag of menopause could be higher than \$810 billion, she said. Das said those numbers will continue to rise, with about a quarter of the world's female population turning menopausal in 2030.

Some governments and companies are beginning to take note.

The UK is leading the way, with menopause landing on the Bank of England's radar. Governor Andrew Bailey said in April that menopause can no longer be ignored. On Wednesday, Labour lawmaker Carolyn Harris called for a "menopause revolution" with an all-party parliamentary

group set up to overhaul "menopause rights, entitlements and education."

The economic impact during the pandemic on this group of women was worse than in any major crisis period since the 1980s, a report by the Resolution Foundation think tank found. Even before the pandemic, menopause was driving some women out of the workforce. A 2019 survey—released in May—by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), a London-based association for human resource management professionals, reckoned almost 900,000 women in the UK left their jobs over an undefined period of time because of menopausal symptoms. Left unsupported, women will be leaving "at the peak of their experience" and will "impact productivity," said the CIPD.

— Bloomberg

SHORT TAKES

Legend Milkha's oxygen level dips

Chandigarh: Legendary Indian sprinter Milkha Singh has developed a fever and his oxygen saturation level has also dropped as he battles to regain his health, after a bout with Covid-19, in the Intensive Care Unit of the PGIMER hospital here on Friday. The 91-year-old, who tested negative for Covid-19 on Wednesday and was shifted to the general ICU, is being closely monitored by a team of doctors. "He suddenly developed a fever Thursday night and his oxygen saturation levels dipped. A team of doctors is monitoring him," PGIMER sources said on Friday. "It's been a slightly rough day for Milkha Ji. But he is battling away," read a statement from his family. — PTI

Ten new faces in India hockey team

Bengaluru: India on Friday named 10 Olympic debutants in its 16-member men's hockey squad, which also features seasoned performers like PR Sreejesh and Manpreet Singh, for the Tokyo Games to be held from July 23 to August 8. Amit Rohidas, Hardik Singh, Vivek Sagar Prasad, Nilakanta Sharma, Sumit, Shamsher Singh, Dilpreet Singh, Gurjant Singh and Lalit Kumar Upadhyay are the 10 players who will make their Olympic debut in Tokyo. Besides, the 16-member team also includes six seasoned campaigners like former skipper and goalkeeper Sreejesh, midfielder Manpreet, defenders Harmanpreet Singh, Rupinder Pal Singh and Surender Kumar and forward Mandeep Singh. — PTI

Boxers head to Italy for training

New Delhi: Eight of India's nine Olympic-bound boxers, along with a few sparring partners, will leave for Italy early Saturday morning for a training camp as they gear up for the Tokyo Games from July 23 to August 8. Six-time world champion M C Mary Kom (51kg), as reported by PTI earlier, has decided to base herself in Pune's Army Sports Institute till the Games. Five Olympic-bound men — Amit Panghal (52kg), Manish Kaushik (63kg), Vikas Krishan (69kg), Ashish Chaudhary (75kg), and Satish Kumar (+91kg) — will be joined by Asian medalist Shiva Thapa (63kg) and Strandja Memorial silver-winner former Deepak Kumar (52kg). — PTI

Bottas sets pace for French GP

Le Castellet: Valtteri Bottas overcame a poor start to top the first practice session ahead of Mercedes teammate Lewis Hamilton at the French Grand Prix on Friday. Bottas had some early trouble at the Paul Ricard circuit in southern France, bouncing over kerbs and appearing to damage the front wing on his car. But he recovered to post the best lap of 1 minute, 33.45 seconds, putting him .335 ahead of Hamilton and .432 clear of Red Bull's Max Verstappen. Soon after Bottas had his mishap, four-time champion Sebastian Vettel lost control of the rear of his Aston Martin and slid backward off the track into the barriers. — AP

Romania banned for Games 'lifting'

Lausanne: Romania have been banned from competing in weightlifting at the Tokyo Olympics over past doping cases, the International Weightlifting Federation ruled in a decision. The Romanian Weightlifting Federation was issued a one-year ban from competition over five doping cases. Those included disqualifications for all four of Romania's weightlifters from the 2012 Olympics after various banned substances were found in later retesting of their samples. — AP



Brazil's Richarlison (from left) celebrates with teammates Neymar, Everton Ribeiro, Fred and Renan Lodi after scoring a goal against Peru during the Copa America group match in Rio de Janeiro on Thursday. — AFP

SAMBA MAGIC

Brazil outwit Peru 4-0 to qualify for knockout stage

Rio De Janeiro, June 18: A tearful Neymar inspired hosts Brazil to become the first side to qualify for the Copa America knock-out stages following a 4-0 win over Peru in Rio de Janeiro on Thursday.

Goals from Alex Sandro, Neymar, Everton Ribeiro and Richarlison gave the holders a ninth straight win and a perfect six points from two games in Group B as Peru dropped to the bottom.

There was little between the two sides in the first half but Brazil's greater quality made the difference after the break as talisman Neymar inspired them to an ultimately comfortable victory.

"It's emotional for me because many things happened in these last two years that were difficult,

complicated," said Neymar as the tears flowed.

Two years ago he missed Brazil's Copa triumph on home soil through injury, although before the tournament began he was accused of rape, a case that was dismissed over a lack of evidence.

His 68th goal in 107 games for his country took him to within nine of the record set by Brazil great Pele.

"It's an honor for me to be part of the Brazilian national team history. To be honest, my dream was always to play for the Selecao, to wear this jersey. I never imagined achieving these numbers."

It took Brazil 10 minutes to get a shot on goal, and when they did it came from the unlikely boot of

through the second half, his second goal of the tournament.

DE BRUYNE FIRES BELGIUM INTO LAST 16

Kevin De Bruyne inspired Belgium to a 2-1 victory over Denmark in Copenhagen on Thursday, securing them a place in the Euro 2020 knockout stage as fans and players showed their support for Christian Eriksen.

Yussuf Poulsen gave the hosts a second-minute lead, but De Bruyne came off the bench at half-time to make his first appearance of the tournament

COPA RESULTS	
Brazil	4
(Sandro 12, Neymar 68, Ribeiro 89, Richarlison 93)	
Peru	0
Venezuela	0
Colombia	0

defensive midfielder Fred, who fired over.

After the break, Brazil continued to create the better chances as right-back Danilo got forward to lash a half-volley wide from the edge of the area.

Brazil thought they had a penalty on the hour mark when Neymar tumbled in the box under pressure from Renato Tapia, but as the Paris Saint-Germain star waited to take the spot kick, Argentine referee Patricio

Loustau went over to check the pitchside monitor and reversed his decision. Neymar didn't have to wait long for his chance to score, as Peru turned over possession in midfield on 68 minutes and Fred played the ball into the striker, who turned quickly to fire low past goalkeeper Pedro Gallese from 20 yards.

The hosts started to play with freedom and substitute Richarlison brought a fine save out of Gallese after he was set up by Neymar, who later shot wide.

Peru should have got back into it 12 minutes from time but Luis Abram and Alex Valera both contrived to miss an open goal from inside the six-yard box.

The third goal finally came a minute from time

as Richarlison teed up another substitute in Everton Ribeiro to tap home from six yards out.

VENEZUELA HOLD COLOMBIA

Venezuela held out under intense pressure in a fractious local derby against Colombia to secure their first point at the Copa America after a 0-0 draw in Goiania on Thursday. Goalkeeper Wuilker Farinez made a string of fine saves, particularly in the closing stages, to keep out the Colombians, who saw a late Miguel Borja goal ruled out for offside.

Venezuela were still severely depleted from a Covid outbreak in their camp that deprived the team of eight players in their 3-0 defeat to hosts Brazil on Sunday.

— AFP

EURO RESULTS

Denmark	1
(Yussuf 1)	
Belgium	2
(THazard 53, Bruyne 69)	
Netherlands	2
(Depay 11, Dumfries 67)	
Austria	0
Sweden	1
(Emil Forsberg 77-p)	
Slovakia	0

Live on TV

Group Stage: Hungary vs France from 6.30 pm; Portugal vs Germany from 9.30 pm; Spain vs Poland from 12.30 am (Sunday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

Dominant Dutch in last 16

Amsterdam, June 18: The Netherlands are through to the last 16 at Euro 2020 after Memphis Depay's penalty set up a 2-0 win over Austria on Thursday, their second straight victory securing top spot in Group C.

Depay made no mistake from the spot in the 11th minute in Amsterdam after David Alaba's foul on Denzel Dumfries was spotted by the Israeli referee only after he came across to review the images.

Dumfries, so impressive in the thrilling opening 3-2 win over Ukraine, added another midway

after injury and teed up Thorgan Hazard to equalise before scoring the winner with a fine strike.

SWEDEN ON BRINK OF ENTERING KNOCKOUTS

Emil Forsberg's second-half penalty sealed Sweden a 1-0 win over Slovakia in Saint Petersburg on Friday as the Scandinavians moved top of Euro 2020 Group E.

Janne Andersson's men, who played out a goalless draw with Spain in their opener, now look set to reach the knockout stage for the first time since 2004.

A point in their final game against Poland at the Krestovsky Stadium on Wednesday would be enough to be sure of a top-two finish in the group.

Slovakia could have qualified with a game to spare with a win, but still have their fate in their own hands ahead of their final match against Spain in Seville. On Friday, Sebastian Larsson had an early effort comfortably saved by Martin Dubravka, but Slovakia otherwise started brightly, with Juraj Kucka heading wide in the fifth minute.

— Agencies

WOMEN'S | ONE-OFF TEST

Shafali hits fifty, frustrates hosts

Bristol, June 18: The Indian women's cricket team were 83 for one at stumps after being forced to follow-on by England women on the third day of the one-off Test here on Friday. Debutant Shafali Verma (55 batting) once again looked in great touch but other opener Smriti Mandhana (8) departed early. Deepti Sharma (18 batting) was the other unbeaten batter at the crease.

Earlier, resuming at overnight score of 187 for 5, India were all out for 231 in their first innings, 165 runs short of England's first innings score of 396.

From 167 for no loss, India lost eight wickets for 30 runs with left-arm spinner Sophie Ecclestone getting 4 for 88.

SHADES OF SEHWAG

Indian men's fielding coach R. Sridhar was all praise for batting sensation Shafali Verma, who has impressed one and all with her twin half-centuries on Test debut. In fact, Sridhar said that the

BRIEF SCORES

England 396/9d vs India 231 in 81.2 overs (Shafali Verma 96, Smriti Mandhana 78, Deepti Sharma 29 not out; Sophie Ecclestone 4/88) & 83/1 in 24.3 overs (Shafali Verma 55 (batting))

whole Indian team whenever they had time off from training have been glued to the Test match and mighty impressed by the Haryana teenager's pyrotechnics.

"Shafali, so much reminds us of Viru, doesn't she? The way she plays and her mindset is so clear, so we are enjoying the innings from Shafali. I wish she had got a hundred in the first innings," Sridhar said.

"And well played to both Smriti (Mandhana) and Shafali, what a rollicking start they gave us in the first innings and unfortunately, we couldn't capitalise on that, but great test match going there," added Sridhar. — PTI



Officials walk in for ground inspection during day 1 of the WTC final in Southampton on Friday. — AP

First day's play washed out

Southampton, June 18: The eagerly-awaited opening day of the World Test Championship final between India and New Zealand was rained out here on Friday, which is set to bring the reserve day into the equation. As per ICC playing conditions guidelines for the WTC final, if required the reserve sixth day can now come into effect with six hours of play lost on Day 1 itself.

There was forecast of rain and thundershowers and the heavens opened up last evening with relentless downpour continuing till afternoon.

With puddles forming throughout the outfield, even the best drainage system couldn't have possibly forced some action on the opening day.

Umpires Michael Gough and Richard Illingworth, after multiple inspections, called off the game at 7:30 pm IST (3 pm local time). While there has been talk about Southampton being the preferred venue, it has been learnt that BCCI was taken into confidence by both the ICC and England and Wales Cricket Board before they finalised the venue which also has a five-star facility within the premises, helping create a tight bio-secure bubble.

Live on TV

World Test championship final (Day 2)
India vs New Zealand, from 3pm on Star Sports 1, HDI

The English weather is known to be fickle and in any case, there was no guarantee that the match being played at any other venue would have not led to a wash-out on the first day.

In the last five years, England has hosted 32

EURO | PREVIEW

Germany eye Portugal scalp

Munich (Germany), June 18: Germany coach Joachim Loew is under pressure to find a way for his side to create more chances when they host holders Portugal at Euro 2020 on Saturday, with their hopes of reaching the knock-out stage hanging in the balance.

A tense 1-0 defeat by France in their opening Group F game leaves the Germans needing a result at the Allianz Arena against Cristiano Ronaldo's Portugal.

Loew's efforts to strengthen Germany's defence meant only a Mats Hummels own goal was the difference against world champions France.

However, the hosts managed just one shot on target on Tuesday.

"If we can be more vigorous up front, we will be able to beat Portugal," said Loew.

Germany have won their last four meetings with Portugal over the last two decades, most recently with a 4-0 victory in the 2014 World Cup group stage as the Germans went on to win the title in Brazil.

However, much has changed in the last seven years.

FOCUS ON MORATA AS SPAIN MEET POLAND

Spain and Poland will have a common challenge when they meet on Saturday at the Euro. And, that is Goals.

Spain created chance after chance against Sweden but were still held to a 0-0 draw in their opening match. Poland lost to Slovakia 2-1 as Robert Lewandowski was held scoreless in yet another lacklustre performance at a major football tournament.

The focus on Spain at La Cartuja Stadium will be on Alvaro Morata, the striker singled out by fans and Spanish media for his misses against Sweden. He had also been ineffective in Spain's warm-up match against Portugal, which ended 0-0.

Spain coach Luis Enrique will have to choose whether to keep the Juventus striker in the starting lineup or make a change to try to boost the attack. — Agencies



Germany's Leroy Sane (left) and Ilkay Gundogan arrive for a training session in Herzogenaurach on Friday, on the eve of their Euro group match against Portugal. — AFP

OSAKA PULLS OUT OF BIG W, BUT READY FOR TOKYO GAMES

Los Angeles, June 18: Japanese star Naomi Osaka has withdrawn from Wimbledon, her agent confirmed on Thursday, weeks after the world number two pulled out of the French Open citing her struggle with depression and anxiety. "Naomi won't be playing Wimbledon this year," Osaka's agent Stuart Duguid said. "She is taking some personal time with friends and family."

"She will be ready for the Olympics and is excited to play in front of her home fans."

Osaka has been in the

spotlight since withdrawing from the French Open.

She was fined \$15,000 and threatened with disqualification from Roland Garros after she refused to honour mandatory media commitments.

French Open organisers protested that they had treated her with "care and respect" after they were accused of being heavy-handed. Osaka lost in the third round of Wimbledon in 2017 and 2018 and bowed out in the first round in 2019. Last year's tournament was cancelled due to coronavirus. — AFP

ROHIT WANTS THINGS TO BE SIMPLE & REAL

Southampton, June 18: Rohit Sharma believes that keeping things "simple and realistic" against a quality side like New Zealand should be the way to go for the Indian team in the World Test Championship final.

Rohit, who will be opening for the first time in England, is also confident of tackling the New Zealand attack, having faced it enough in the shorter formats.

"I have played those guys and know about their strengths and weaknesses. It will all boil down to what the conditions are, what sort of situation the team is in, whether we are batting first or second," Rohit told broadcasters *Star Sports*.

"All that will count and it's important not to overthink. Against a quality side, it is also very important to keep things simple, and realistic," said Rohit.

A white ball superstar, Rohit loves the traditional format for the challenges that it poses for sustained periods of play. — PTI