

SHORT TAKES

BJP SUBMITS PLEA TO SPEAKER TO SACK ROY AS MLA

RAJIB CHOWDHURI
Kolkata, June 18

The West Bengal BJP legislative party on Friday submitted its petition to Assembly Speaker Biman Banerjee seeking disqualification of its MLA Krishnanagar North Mukul Roy under the anti-defection law for his switch to the ruling Trinamul Congress recently. Signed by Nandigram BJP MLA and leader of the opposition Suvedu Adhikari under his letterhead, the plea urges Mr Banerjee, "Respected Sir, petition for disqualification of Sri Mukul Roy, member of legislative assembly from 83, Krishnanagar Uttar assembly constituency is enclosed herewith. I request you to dispose of the same as soon as possible. Please acknowledge receipt of the same." Mr Roy was not available for comments. His present party also remained silent. But the growing crack in the BJP since his return to the TMC came out in the open once again during the day. A poster calling BJP general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya as a "TMC Setting Master" over his proximity to Mr Roy earlier and asking him to "Go Back" was placed outside two main party offices, one at Muralidhar Sen Lane and another at Hastings, in the city. A similar one was found near the Kolkata Airport also. According to BJP insiders, a section of angry party workers on the instructions of their state leaders was behind the circulation of the poster.

WOMAN MAOIST GUNNED DOWN IN BASTAR GUNFIGHT

AGE CORRESPONDENT
Bhopal, June 18

A woman Naxal was on Friday gunned down in an encounter with security forces near Chandameta in the Bastar-Sukma inter-district border in Chhattisgarh. The encounter took place at around eight in the morning. Acting on specific inputs on the presence of Maoist cadres of Darbha division at the inter-district borders of Bastar and Sukma, a joint operation comprising personnel of district reserve group (DRG), district force and CRPF's 80 and 227 battalions was launched in the area, Bastar range inspector general of police Sunderraj P told this newspaper. An exchange of fire took place between a section of search party comprising DRG personnel and Maoists near Chandameta-Pyarbat jungles under Darbha police station in Bastar district that lasted nearly two hours. Later, the body of a woman Maoist cadre in Maoist uniform along with five weapons including an AK 47 assault rifle were recovered at the encounter site, he added.

Sibal: PM failed to stand with people needing medical help

Attacks govt for what he called ineptness to strategise Covid vaccination

New Delhi, June 18: Senior Congress leader Kapil Sibal on Friday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has "without doubt" lost the moral authority to rule for not standing with people in need of medical aid during the second wave of Covid-19 and for doing playing political one-upmanship in polls instead.

In an interview with PTI, the former Union minister launched a hard-hitting attack on the prime minister saying the lack of a credible political alternative did not mean that he should stop discharging his duties believing that his political fortunes are secure. Mr Sibal also attacked the government for what he called its

There may or may not be a credible alternative but does it mean that he should stop discharging his responsibilities believing that his political fortunes are secure

— Kabil Sibal,
Senior Congress leader

ineptness to strategise the Covid-19 vaccination, saying it borders on criminal negligence and its priorities in tackling the pandemic are "misplaced and faulty and lack sincerity". He also said that the toolkit issue is nothing but an attempt to "deploy forgery" to divert public attention from his government's failures.

"A Prime Minister who

should have stood with the people while they were languishing outside hospitals in need of medical aid during the pandemic, was busy playing political one-upmanship during Assembly elections in West Bengal, Assam etc, has, without doubt, lost the moral authority to rule.

"There may or may not be a credible alternative but does it mean that he

should stop discharging his responsibilities believing that his political fortunes are secure," Mr Sibal told PTI while blaming the Prime Minister for inaction in saving precious lives during the second wave of the pandemic.

Mr Sibal said he agreed that at present "there is definitely a void in terms of a strong political alternative" and that is why he has suggested reforms in his own party so that the country has strong and credible Opposition.

The senior Congress leader said when the whole world was doing its best to tide over the pandemic and save precious human lives, our PM was busy addressing election rallies.

— PTI

MUMBAI

4 arrested in vaccine scam, director also raises doubts

SHAHAB ANSARI
MUMBAI, JUNE 18

The Mumbai police has arrested four persons in the last two days for allegedly cheating over 300 members of an upscale housing society in Hiranandani in Kandivali by giving them doses of fake vaccine.

Meanwhile, Bollywood music producer Ramesh Taurani, who heads Tips Industries Limited, has also raised doubts over vaccination of his 365 employees, as they have not received certificates for the same.

According to Mr Taurani, he got his 365 employees vaccinated on May 30 and June 3, but they are yet to receive their vaccination certificates. The vaccination team charged ₹1200 per dose plus GST. But since no certificate has been issued even after several days, the recipients of the vaccines grew suspicious. He said that more than the money, now they are worried about what was administered to them. "Is it genuine Covishield or any saline water?" he said.

Mr Taurani has stated that when his office people contacted the person who had arranged the drive they were told that the certificates will come by June 12.

After Mr Taurani claimed that he might have been duped by vaccine scammers, the police said the suspects, who were held in connection with another similar case, are being questioned as well.



Children dive into the Arabian Sea during high tide in Mumbai on Friday.

— PTI

Tomar rules out repeal of 3 farm laws amid deadlock

Minister says govt ready to resume talks on provisions

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.

The government and unions have held 11 rounds of talks, the last being on January 22, to break the deadlock and end the farmers' protest. Talks have not resumed following widespread violence during a tractor rally by protesting farmers on January 26.

Thousands of farmers, mainly from Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh, have been camping at Delhi's borders for more than six months in protest against



the three laws that they say will end state procurement of crops at MSP.

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

"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 squarely rejected the Centre's proposal of putting the laws on suspension.

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

Farmer groups have alleged that these laws will end the mandi and MSP procurement systems and leave the farmers at the mercy of big corporates, even as the government has rejected these apprehensions as misplaced.

— PTI

■ Arun warns of action over violation of party discipline

BSY likely to stay K'taka CM, BJP leader ends 3-day visit

Bengaluru, June 18: BJP general secretary in-charge of Karnataka Arun Singh on Friday warned of action against violation of party discipline as rumblings within played out in the open during his three day visit to the state, amid speculation about replacing chief minister B.S. Yediyurappa.

Though Mr Singh, who had earlier ruled out leadership change, did not make any direct comments on the issue, he is said to have made it clear at the Karnataka BJP core committee meeting that Mr Yediyurappa will continue as the chief minister.

In a gesture signifying that things are in his favour, Mr Yediyurappa, who did not make any comments on what transpired at the meeting on the leadership issue, flashed the victory sign as he departed from the state BJP office.

"The leadership issue was not discussed... Yediyurappa is our leader, there is no change in that. Our in-charge Arun Singh has asked me to make it clear," revenue minister and core committee member R. Ashoka said. There was no question of replacing Mr Yediyurappa, he said.

"The government will

MLC Vishwanath alleges ₹21,473cr tender 'scam'

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 Mr 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," Mr Vishwanath alleged at a press conference.

He alleged that the intention was to take "kickbacks" from contractors.

— PTI

function under his (Yediyurappa) leadership. This is the clear stand," he said, adding that it has been decided to take strict action against those making open statements on the issue.

Mr Yediyurappa earlier in the day had downplayed the dissidence against him as he ruled out any political crisis in the state.

"There is no political crisis at all... what is happening is just because one or two people are saying

something in the media, it is creating misunderstanding... these one or two people speaking against me is not new, they have been doing it since the beginning and it is getting highlighted," he said, pointing out that Mr Singh did not even meet those involved in such activities. "There is no confusion or crisis, we are all together and united, and are focusing on the development work," he said.

— PTI

‘Choksi moved to Dominica jail, but to stay in hospital’

New Delhi, June 18: A magistrate court in Dominica on Thursday moved businessman Mehul Choksi from police custody to a state prison, his lawyer in India said, but added that he would continue to remain in hospital as his medical condition "deteriorated".

"Yes, (Choksi's) police custody has been changed to prison custody but he shall remain in hospital as his medical condition has deteriorated," lawyer Vijay Aggarwal said.

His legal team had submitted a medical certificate from doctors at the Dominica China Friendship Hospital, where Choksi is undergoing treatment, of "mental stress" and elevated blood pressure.

The change in custody is being seen as a ray of hope for India which has approached the Dominica High Court seeking to be implemented as a party in the case filed by lawyers of Choksi whose bail plea was earlier rejected.

Choksi is wanted in India in a case of loan fraud worth about ₹13,500 crore in the state-run



Punjab National Bank. The CBI and the ministry of external

affairs have sought to be implemented in the habeas corpus matter, which seeks return of Choksi to Antigua and Barbuda, by filing two affidavits in the Dominica high court, officials said.

The Central agency is likely to focus on establishing criminal culpability of Choksi, fugitive status, pending warrants against him, Red Notice and charge sheets while the ministry of external affairs will argue that Choksi continues to be an Indian citizen, they said.

The affidavits, if admitted by the high court, will pave the way for noted lawyer Harish Salve pleading India's case in Dominica, they said.

The fresh development seems to indicate that India stands a chance to be heard and make a legal attempt to bring the fugitive diamondaire back to the country and face a trial.

— PTI

Babu in MP who flagged 'graft' claims threat to life

RABINDRA NATH CHOUHDURY
Bhopal, June 18

The young IAS officer of Madhya Pradesh, Lokesh Kumar Jangid, who was served a show-cause notice by the state government over his leaked conversations with the higher-ups, on Friday, claimed that he had received an anonymous call on Signal app threatening him and his family.

The 2014 batch IAS officer of MP cadre has reported the matter to DGP Vivek Johri, seeking police protection for him and his family.

In a complaint to the DGP, he said that he had received the call at 11.50 pm asking him to go on leave for six months if he wanted his as well as his family's safety.

Mr Jangid, who was upset for being transferred nine times in 54 months, had a spat with a senior IAS officer in the private WhatsApp group of IAS officers' association — leading the state government to serve him a show-cause notice — had earlier requested a deputation to Maharashtra.

Covid rules' flouting to hasten 'third wave': HC

■ Continued from Page 1

Union health minister Harsh Vardhan.

Health ministry officials said that 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 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 Paul.

He also said that studies show that the chances of hospitalisation are 75-80 per cent less in vaccinated individuals. The possibility of such individuals needing oxygen support is around eight per cent and the risk of ICU admission is only six per cent for vaccinated persons.

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 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. He launched a customised crash course programme that aims to skill and upskill over one lakh "Covid warriors" across India. "In the second wave of coronavirus, we saw what kind of challenges the ever-changing form of this virus can bring before us. We have to further enhance the preparedness of the country to meet the challenges ahead," the Prime Minister said.

The "Customised Crash Course for Covid-19 Frontline Workers" aims to skill and upskill over one lakh "Covid warriors". Training will be given to them in six customised job roles: home care support, basic care support, advanced care support, emergency care support, sample collection support and medical equipment support.

The World Health Organisation, meanwhile, accepted Bharat Biotech's Expression of Interest (EoI) for Covid-19 vaccine Covaxin and scheduled a pre-submission meeting on June 23, a step that will take the vaccine maker closer to a WHO Emergency Use Listing (EUL).

Row over Cal HC judge

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Justice Kaushik Chanda has appeared for the Bharatiya Janata Party before the Calcutta high court. And now he has been assigned to hear the Nandigram election case. One big coincidence?

Before becoming a judge, Mr Chanda, sources said, was appointed by the BJP government at the Centre as its additional solicitor general in the state for his success as a lawyer in the cases against the TMC government over its allowance to imams and the cancellation of Union home minister Amit Shah's rally at Esplanade.

Later Sanjay Basu, one of the CM's lawyers, wrote to the acting high court chief justice, Justice Rajesh Bindal, seeking

transfer of the election petition from Justice Chanda's court to another judge. A group of lawyers wearing black badges also took out a protest rally at the high court premises in the afternoon.

"They sought no politicisation of the judiciary. The BJP was stumped by the sudden volley of attacks by the TMC till Mr Ghosh broke his silence and countered the ruling party's claims, but he could not deny his past association with the judge."

In Berhampore in Murshidabad, the Midnapore BJP MP said: "The TMC is playing dirty and politicking on the issue. It published my photos, which are three-four years old, with Mr Chanda."

TMC plans to challenge BJP narrow win in 4 Bengal seats

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Majumdar of the BJP over 2,004 votes at Bongaon South. At Goghat, Biswanath Karak of the BJP won by 4,147 votes over Manas Majumdar, a former MLA of the TMC.

At Moyna, former cricketer Ashok Dinda of the BJP defeated Sangram Kumar Dolui of TMC by 1,260 votes. Alleging malpractices in the counting of votes in the four key seats, the TMC on Friday filed its election petition under

the Representation of the People Act, which will come up for hearing on July 15. Justice Subhasis Dasgupta directed the preservation of all documents within this period.

While the ruling party's legal move is likely to leave the BJP cornered amid the threat of defection by its MLAs, it however did not complain of any foul play earlier in the counting of votes in the four seats, except in Nandigram.

4-time Assam Cong MLA quits

■ Continued from Page 1

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 polls in Assam, in which the BJP was reelected.

"Rahul'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... 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," Mr Kurmi 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.

3 activists to stay on bail

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UAPA could only be invoked in respect of activities impacting the defence of the country. Mr Mehta told the court that in last year's violence in northeast Delhi, 53 people had lost their lives and over 700 were injured.

He argued that if the protest in the northeast Delhi last year was on the "perceived belief" that the Citizenship (Amendment) Act was against a particular community, then "the lady who assassinated a former PM" also did it on the belief that injustice was done to a particular community.

In its bail order, the high court noted that the prosecution has only made inferences about the three activists, using "hyperbolic verbiage".

"Allegations relating to inflammatory speeches, organising of chakka jam, instigating women to protest and to stockpile various

articles and other similar allegations, in our view, at worst, are evidence that the appellant participated in organising protests, but we can discern no specific or particularised allegation, much less any material to bear out the allegation, that the appellant incited violence, what to talk of committing a terrorist act or a conspiracy or act preparatory to the commission of a terrorist act as understood in the UAPA," the high court said.

The solicitor general also took exception to a paragraph of the high court judgment which reads: "We are constrained to express, that it seems, that in its anxiety to suppress dissent, in the mind of the State, the line between the constitutionally guaranteed right to protest and terrorist activity seems to be getting somewhat blurred. If this mindset gains traction, democracy would be in peril."

Low turnout in Iranian polls

■ Continued from Page 1

save a tattered deal meant to limit Iran's nuclear programme at a time Tehran is enriching uranium at its highest levels ever, though still remains short of weapons-grade levels.

Tensions remain high with both the US and Israel, which is believed to have carried out a series of attacks targeting Iranian nuclear sites as well as assassinating the scientist who created its military atomic programme decades earlier.

— AP

SHORT TAKES

Drunk man climbs atop mobile tower

New Delhi: The Delhi police came to the rescue of a person who climbed a TV mobile tower in Pushp Vihar on Friday. According to the police, at around 11.23 am, a PCR call was received at the Saket police station that one person had climbed a TV mobile tower at the Asian Market, Sector 3, in Pushp Vihar. On reaching the spot, it was found that a 20-year-old man had climbed up the TV tower and was not coming down despite requests. Ambulance and fire brigade were called at the spot but he did not come down. In the meantime, his parents came there and he was identified as Satish Kumar, a resident of Sainik Farms, the police said. Satish's father said that he had left his house around 5 pm on Thursday and had not returned since then. Satish works as a private labourer and is an alcoholic. After about an hour, he came down and was found to be under the influence of alcohol. He has been sent for medical examination, the police said.

Man strangled to death, 2 arrested

New Delhi: A 32-year-old man, along with his associate, was arrested by the Delhi police for allegedly strangling a man to death over some monetary issue and later dumping his body in Kanjhawala. The accused persons have been identified as Deepak Dabas (32) and Vishal (24). The latter has been arrested for giving shelter to the accused just after the incident, the police said. According to the police, on Saturday, a PCR call was received at the Kanjhawala police station regarding a dead body found behind a temple in Garhi Rindhala. Following this, a team rushed to the spot where the deceased's body was found. Thereafter, a personal search of the deceased was carried out. The accused disclosed that he had some monetary issue with the deceased.

UG & PG exams to be online in Odisha

Bhubaneswar: The Odisha government on Friday announced that the final year or final semester examinations for both undergraduate (UG) and post graduate (PG) students will be conducted online. State higher education minister Arun Kumar Sahoo said that the examinations will be conducted by July-August this year. The concerned university and autonomous colleges have been asked to finalise the dates for the examinations. Speaking to reporters after meeting with vice chancellors (VCs) of different universities, Dr Sahoo informed that the decision to hold online examinations was taken following suggestions by the VCs. "The UG, PG final year or final semester examinations will be conducted online," Dr Sahoo said.

SC TO HC: POSTPONE HEARING IN NARADA CASE TRANSFER

PARMOD KUMAR
NEW DELHI, JUNE 18

The Supreme Court on Friday asked the Calcutta high court to defer hearing on June 22 and 23 by a 5-judge bench on a plea by the CBI to transfer the Narada scam case, allegedly involving several ruling Trinamul Congress (TMC) leaders, pending a hearing by it (the top court) on the appeals of the West Bengal government and its law minister Moloy Ghatak. The hearing by the top court will take place on June 22. Mr Ghatak has moved the top court against the high court order refusing to take their reply affidavits on record in the transfer plea filed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in the Narada case. A bench of Justice Hemant Gupta and Justice V. Ramasubramanian adjourned the hearing asking both Mr Ghatak and the West Bengal government to serve the copies of their petitions at the office of solicitor general Tushar Mehta, who had appeared for the CBI. The appeals are against the high court's June 9 order, refusing to take on record their affidavits.

Sonowal in Delhi amid talk of rejig in Modi's Cabinet

Ex-CM likely to meet few top BJP leaders

New Delhi, June 18: Former Assam chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal is in the national capital to meet senior BJP leaders, sources said Friday.

His arrival in New Delhi on Friday afternoon comes amid speculation of an impending reshuffle in the Union Cabinet and his possible induction into it. Mr Sonowal was chief minister of the BJP-led Assam government from 2016 till last month. Even though the BJP-led alliance returned to power, Mr Sonowal was not made chief minister and was replaced by Himanta Biswa Sarma.

Mr Sonowal is likely to meet a few top BJP leaders, the sources said. He met defence minister Rajnath Singh at a dinner hosted by Assam governor Jagdish Mukhi on Thursday night in Guwahati.

Mr Sarma was also present at the dinner held at the Assam Raj Bhavan.

There has been speculation that Mr Sonowal, who belongs to Assam's indigenous Sonowal-Kachari tribe, was called by the party leadership to the national capital for consultations ahead of a reshuffle of the Narendra Modi Cabinet.

There were reports that Mr Sonowal is one of the top contenders for a post in the Cabinet. Mr Sarma said recently that before he was given the state's top post, BJP president



J.P. Nadda had said that Mr Sonowal would be given a new responsibility, without specifying what that could be.

As Mr Sonowal ran a government successfully for five years and helped the party returned to power, there is a possibility of him being "suitably rehabilitated" by the party, the sources said.

Even Mr Modi had acknowledged his contribution to the party and the government.

"My valued colleague @sarbanandsonwal Ji was at the helm of a pro-people and pro-development administration over the last five years. His contribution towards Assam's progress and strengthening the party in the state is immense," Mr Modi tweeted on May 10, the day Mr Sarma was sworn in as the chief minister.

Among those who could be inducted into the Modi cabinet include Congress-turned BJP leader Jyotiraditya Scindia, former Bihar deputy chief minister Sushil Modi, representatives from BJP allies JD-U, Apna Dal (S), media reports said. —PTI

■ Net platform claim it follows own policy irks MPs

Indian law supreme, not your policy, Twitter told

New Delhi, June 18: Amid a tussle between the Union government and Twitter over the new IT 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 Centre 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.

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

Twitter India's public policy manager Shagufa 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 site had faced backlash when it briefly removed the "blue tick" verification badge from the personal account of vice-president M. Venkaiah Naidu. —PTI

Kejriwal, Bajjal discuss plan to check 3rd wave

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 18

Lieutenant-governor Anil Bajjal and chief minister Arvind Kejriwal held a meeting on Friday to discuss the roadmap and an action plan to tackle a possible third wave of Covid-19 infection in the national capital.

A state-level task force, more healthcare staff and a special task force for treatment of children are part of the Delhi government's action plan to deal with the third wave, the chief minister's office tweeted.

During the meeting, the

L-G and the CM also discussed bed and oxygen management, availability of drugs and Covid-19 vaccination. The Delhi government will train 5,000 youths to assist doctors and nurses as part of preparations for a possible third wave. The health assistants or community nursing assistants will be imparted a two-week basic training in nursing and lifecare that will start from June 28 in batches of 500 candidates.

In May, the Delhi government had set up a 13-member committee to prepare an action plan for a third wave of Covid-19.

165 new Covid cases in Delhi in 24 hours

New Delhi: As Delhi continues to unlock, the national capital on Friday reported 165 new cases of coronavirus in the last 24 hours. On Friday, the Delhi high court also took cognizance of the overcrowding of the market subsequently breaching the Covid-19 protocol.

According to the health bulletin, the positivity rate dipped to 0.22 per cent, with 14 deaths in the same period, the overall death count of the national capital has reached 24,900.

Top AstraZeneca official backs India's 12-16 week vaccine gap

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 18

AstraZeneca's chief investigator and director of Oxford Vaccine Group, Prof Andrew Pollard, has endorsed India's 12-16 week gap for Covishield vaccine. He, however, refuted claims that a single dose of the vaccine is likely soon.

In an interview to journalist Karan Thapar, Prof Pollard said a vaccination policy that aims to vaccinate the largest number of people in the quickest possible time with at least one dose makes sense in the present circumstances in India, where the vast majority of the popula-

tion is unvaccinated and, therefore, unprotected at a time when the Delta variant is a widely spreading and increasing threat. Prof Pollard also said that a simple and straightforward comparison between the vaccination policy in Britain and India does not make a sense because of the different circumstances in the two countries.

Prof Pollard said that in a situation of vaccine shortage it makes sense to ensure a measure of protection for the widest number of people rather than provide a better level of protection for a smaller number of people. He explained this by

saying that one dose of the AstraZeneca/Covishield provides above 70 per cent protection against serious illness and hospitalization which has to be the main concern. One should not be deterred or deflected by the fact that one dose provides only 30 per cent protection against symptomatic illness.

Prof Pollard also said that Britain reduced the gap between two doses of AstraZeneca at a time when a substantial proportion of the British population was already vaccinated. Therefore, the situation permitted a reduction in the gap. In India the converse is the case.

Owner of Baba Ka Dhaba in hospital after bid to end life

Bhaskar Hari Sharma
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, the police said on Friday.

Mr Prasad (81) attempted suicide on Thursday. The reason behind his extreme step is not yet known, it said.

Hospital sources said he is on ventilator support in the ICU. He is critical but stable.

"On Thursday, at around 11.15 pm, information was received from the Safdarjung Hospital that Prasad was admitted there. The police reached the hospital and collected the MLC (medico-legal case), which states intake of alcohol and sleeping pills as the cause of unconsciousness," DCP (South) Atul Kumar Thakur said. The statement of Mr Prasad's son Karan was recorded.

"He said his father consumed alcohol with sleeping pills," the police said, adding that further inquiry is underway.

Speaking to reporters, Mr Prasad's wife said she has "no idea" what her husband consumed.

"I am clueless about what happened to him. I was at the dhaba," she said.

Cong top brass in touch with Pilot, says Maken

Calls leader an asset, star campaigner

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 18

Congress general secretary in-charge of Rajasthan Ajay Maken on Friday dismissed reports that senior leaders of the party did not meet the party's Rajasthan strongman Sachin Pilot.

He called Mr Pilot, who was removed as the deputy chief minister and the 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 Mr Pilot demanding that the high powered committee made by the high command take a stand on his and his supporters' demands.

Mr Maken further added that Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, who Mr Pilot is in touch with, has been out of Delhi for the last 10 days. He added Mr 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." 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, adding 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 responded when asked about the expansion and other appointments. Mr Maken urged party legislators against going public with their grievances.

"Every legislator should understand the Congress was born out of sacrifice," he said. He added discipline will be considered whenever political appointments and cabinet expansion are done. He claimed that all is well in Rajasthan Congress.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

This is notified for the information of rail passengers that Railways have decided to change the timings of the following Special Trains effective from the dates shown as under:-

02462/02461 SHRI MATA VAISHNO DEVI KATRA - NEW DELHI - SHRI MATA VAISHNO DEVI KATRA AC SPECIAL					
Train No.: 02462	ARR.	DEP.	STATIONS	ARR.	DEP.
----	23:00		Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra	06:10	----
23:24	23:26		Udhampur	05:06	05:08
00:30	00:40		Jammu Tawi	03:47	03:55
02:15	02:20		Pathankot Cantt.	02:00	02:05
04:05	04:10		Jalandhar Cantt.	00:17	00:22
05:05	05:15		Ludhiana	23:20	23:30
07:00	07:10		Ambala Cantt.	21:40	21:50
09:45	----		New Delhi	----	19:05

DATE OF RUN: 02462 from Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra from 01.07.2021 & 02461 from New Delhi from 02.07.2021 to till further advice.

02029/02030 NEW DELHI - AMRITSAR JN. - NEW DELHI SHATABDI SPECIAL					
Train No.: 02029	ARR.	DEP.	STATIONS	ARR.	DEP.
----	07:20		New Delhi	22:50	----
09:41	09:43		Ambala Cantt.	20:28	20:30
10:02	10:04		Rajpura Jn.	19:52	19:54
11:08	11:11		Ludhiana	18:50	18:55
11:40	11:42		Phagwara	18:14	18:16
12:06	12:08		Jalandhar City	17:53	17:56
12:38	12:40		Beas	17:18	17:20
13:30	----		Amritsar Jn.	----	16:50

DATE OF RUN: 02029 from New Delhi & 02030 from Amritsar Jn. from 02.07.2021 to till further advice.

02265/02266 DELHI SARAI ROHILLA - JAMMU TAWI - DELHI SARAI ROHILLA DURGONTO EXPRESS SPECIAL					
Train No.: 02265	ARR.	DEP.	STATIONS	ARR.	DEP.
----	22:20		Delhi Sarai Rohilla	03:55	----
02:37	02:47		Ludhiana	23:20	23:30
07:15	----		Jammu Tawi	----	19:15

DATE OF RUN: 02265 from Delhi Sarai Rohilla from 02.07.2021 & 02266 from Jammu Tawi from 03.07.2021 to till further advice.

02005/02006 NEW DELHI - KALKA - NEW DELHI SHATABDI SPECIAL					
Train No.: 02005	ARR.	DEP.	STATIONS	ARR.	DEP.
----	17:15		New Delhi	10:15	----
18:18	18:20		Panipat	08:50	08:52
19:00	19:02		Kurukshetra	08:08	08:10
19:50	19:53		Ambala Cantt.	07:33	07:38
20:31	20:38		Chandigarh	06:45	06:53
21:15	----		Kalka	----	06:15

DATE OF RUN: 02005 from New Delhi from 21.06.2021 & 02006 Kalka from 22.06.2021 to till further advice.

02011/02012 NEW DELHI - KALKA - NEW DELHI SHATABDI SPECIAL					
Train No.: 02011	ARR.	DEP.	STATIONS	ARR.	DEP.
----	07:40		New Delhi	21:50	----
08:43	08:45		Panipat	20:22	20:24
09:25	09:27		Kurukshetra	19:38	19:40
10:20	10:22		Ambala Cantt.	19:03	19:08
10:57	11:05		Chandigarh	18:15	18:23
11:40	----		Kalka	----	17:45

DATE OF RUN: 02011 from New Delhi & 02012 Kalka from 21.06.2021 to till further advice.

All norms of the State and Central Government regarding COVID-19 including Social distancing, sanitization etc., may be followed in the trains and at the Railway stations. All other precautions associated with COVID-19 should also be ensured.

RailMadad Helpline No.

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SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

2 boys hurt after car-hit, accused arrested

New Delhi: Two minor boys were injured after they were allegedly hit by a car while they were playing in outer Delhi's Sultanpuri area, police said on Friday. The children, aged five

and three, were admitted at Safdarjung hospital. One of them has been discharged from hospital while the other is still under treatment. The accused, Sakir, has been arrested.

SEARCH FOR MISSING



Rani Kumari

General Public is hereby informed that one girl **Namely: Rani Kumari, D/o Parmanand Paswan, R/o: RZF-904/11, Lala Bahadur Shastri Marg, Raj Nagar-II, Palam Colony, New Delhi** has been missing since **11.05.2015** from her house from the area of P.S. Palam Village, New Delhi. In this regard a case **FIR No. 312/15 dated 19.06.2015** has been lodged at PS Palam Village, New Delhi. The description of the missing girl are as under:

Age: 13 years (on date of missing), **Sex:** Female, **Height:** 5'1", **Complexion:** Wheatish, **Face:** Round, **Hair:** Black, **Build:** Thin, **Wearing:** Light Green colour T-shirt and light red colour jeans. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the girl but no clue has come to light so far. Any person having any information or clue about this girl kindly inform to the following.

Website: http://cbi.nic.in
E-Mail ID - cbi@cbi.gov.in **SHO**
Fax No. 011-24368639 **P.S. Palam Village,**
Ph. Nos.: 011-24368638, 24368641 **New Delhi**
DP/681/SW/2021 **Ph.: 011-9818469302**

NORTHERN RAILWAY

OFFICE OF Principal Chief Materials Manager
Headquarters Office, Baroda House, New Delhi-110001
Mail ID: salenr365@gmail.com

No: 117/S/Auction Programme/Sale/2021-22 Date: 18.06.2021
Extra date in Auction Program of Northern Railway

Following extra dates of the auction program for the month of June 2021 will be as under:

SNo.	Depots/Depot	Extra date for e-auction	Timing
1	Alambagh/Lucknow 0522-2451257	30.06.2021	11.00
2	SRDMM/FZR 01632-244154	30.06.2021	12.00
3	SRDMM/UMB 0171-2611203	30.06.2021	10.00
4	SRDMM/MB 0591-2413141	30.06.2021	12.00
5	SRDMM/DLI 011-23365311	30.06.2021	14.00

All other auction dates advised earlier will remain same. For further details regarding e-auction please visit Railway website. **'www.irops.gov.in'**

(Prankur Gupta)
Dy. CMM/S&P
For Principal Chief Materials Manager
Serving Customers With A Smile



ग्रेटर नोएडा औद्योगिक विकास प्राधिकरण
लॉट नं.-1, नॉलेज पार्क-IV, ग्रेटर नोएडा सिटी, गौतमबुद्ध नगर - 201308, उपग्रह वेबसाइट : www.greaternoidaauthority.in, ई-मेल : authority@gnida.in

पत्रांक: जीएनए/ (अभियन्त्रण) /2021 / 236ए दिनांक : 16/06/2021

ई-निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना

महाप्रबंधक (अभियन्त्रण) ग्रेटर नोएडा औद्योगिक विकास प्राधिकरण द्वारा मुख्य कार्यपालक अधिकारी, ग्रेटर नोएडा की ओर से ई-निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना संख्या- जी0एनए/ (अभियन्त्रण) /2021 / 236 दिनांक 16/06/2021 के माध्यम से उल्लेखित क्रम संख्या-01 से 24 पर अंकित कार्य की ई-निविदाएं आमंत्रित की जाती हैं। समस्त नियम व शर्तें ग्रेटर नोएडा प्राधिकरण की वेबसाइट www.greaternoidaauthority.in पर ई-निविदा लिंक एवं ई-पोर्टल <https://etender.up.nic.in> पर उपलब्ध है किसी परिवर्तन, संशोधन व अतिरिक्त सूचनाओं के लिए उक्त वेबसाइट देखें रहें।

क्र.सं.	कार्य का नाम/वर्क संकिल	अनुमानित लागत
1.	नोएडा-ग्रेटर नोएडा एक्सप्रेसवे पर कैश बैरियर की रिपेयरिंग तथा सैक्टर चाई-4 में गेट का कार्य। (वर्क संकिल-4)	₹ 21.94 लाख
2.	ग्राम तुलारपुर (फेज-2) में 6% आबादी भूखण्डों का विद्युतीकरण एवं स्ट्रीट लाइट का कार्य। (वर्क संकिल-ई0एण्डएएम-2)	₹ 23.02 लाख
3.	सैक्टर के.पी.-5 में खेड़ा चौगानपुर रोडरी एवं 24 मी चौड़ी रोड के नजदीक सीवर सिस्टम का कार्य। (वर्क संकिल-सीवर)	₹ 45.30 लाख
4.	सैक्टर पी-3, पी-4 में लगे पेड़ पौधों एवं लॉन (पार्क एवं सैन्ट्रल वार्ड) के तथा हट, पाथवे बाउन्ड्रीवाल, ग्रीन बेल्ट की बारबेड वायर फेंसिंग का तीन वर्ष तक अनुखण कार्य। (वर्क संकिल-उद्यान)	₹ 153.24 लाख
5.	ग्राम मायवा में 10% आबादी भूखण्डों का विकास कार्य (अवशेष कार्य-2)। (वर्क संकिल-7)	₹ 220.41 लाख
6.	सैक्टर ईकोटेक-11 के साथ 60 मी चौड़ी पेरिफेरल रोड का अवशेष रिसरफेसिंग कार्य। (वर्क संकिल-7)	₹ 204.95 लाख
7.	ग्राम थापखेड़ा के 4%, 6%, 10% आबादी भूखण्डों का विकास कार्य। (वर्क संकिल-6)	₹ 264.29 लाख
8.	ऑटोमेशन बेस्ड वॉटर सप्लाई (जोन-1) में ट्यूब-वेल राइजिंग मेन एवं क्लोरिनेशन इत्यादि कार्य का 3 वर्ष तक अनुखण एवं संचालन। (वर्क संकिल-जल)	आईटम रेट
9.	ऑटोमेशन बेस्ड वॉटर सप्लाई (जोन-2) में ट्यूब-वेल राइजिंग मेन एवं क्लोरिनेशन इत्यादि कार्य का 3 वर्ष तक अनुखण एवं संचालन। (वर्क संकिल-जल)	आईटम रेट
10.	ऑटोमेशन बेस्ड वॉटर सप्लाई (जोन-3) में ट्यूब-वेल राइजिंग मेन एवं क्लोरिनेशन इत्यादि कार्य का 3 वर्ष तक अनुखण एवं संचालन। (वर्क संकिल-जल)	आईटम रेट
11.	सैक्टर-16 (औद्योगिक) की 45 मी0 चौड़ी रोड की स्ट्रीट लाईट का कार्य। (वर्क संकिल-ई0एण्डएएम-2)	₹ 38.95 लाख
12.	ग्राम साकीपुर में अवशेष विकास कार्य। (वर्क संकिल-7)	₹ 97.17 लाख
13.	ग्रेटर नोएडा में विभिन्न स्थानों पर इन्स्टीटुशनल डाइरेक्शन बोर्ड लगाने का कार्य। (वर्क संकिल-5)	₹ 103.98 लाख
14.	सैक्टर टैकजोन-4 में 80 मी, 45 मी एवं 30 मी चौड़ी रोड के साथ ड्रेन को ऊँचा उठाने का कार्य। (वर्क संकिल-3)	₹ 192.44 लाख
15.	ग्राम बियाथर में इण्टरलॉकिंग टाईल्स एवं नाली का अवशेष कार्य। (वर्क संकिल-8)	₹ 199.00 लाख
16.	पल्लव ग्रेटर नोएडा एवं देहरा (गाजियाबाद) में डब्ल्यू.टी.पी. की न्यू इन्टेक बाउन्ड्रीवाल का अवशेष कार्य। (वर्क संकिल-जल)	₹ 122.44 लाख
17.	ऑटोमेशन बेस्ड वाटर सप्लाई (जोन-4) में ट्यूब-वेल राइजिंग मेन एवं क्लोरिनेशन इत्यादि कार्य का 3 वर्ष तक अनुखण एवं संचालन। (वर्क संकिल-जल)	आईटम रेट
18.	ऑटोमेशन बेस्ड वाटर सप्लाई (जोन-5) में ट्यूब-वेल राइजिंग मेन एवं क्लोरिनेशन इत्यादि कार्य का 3 वर्ष तक अनुखण एवं संचालन। (वर्क संकिल-जल)	आईटम रेट
19.	ऑटोमेशन बेस्ड वाटर सप्लाई (जोन-6) में ट्यूब-वेल राइजिंग मेन एवं क्लोरिनेशन इत्यादि कार्य का 3 वर्ष तक अनुखण एवं संचालन। (वर्क संकिल-जल)	आईटम रेट
20.	ग्राम देवला में डी.एस.सी. रोड से फ़ी विहार तक सी.सी. रोड एवं आर.सी.सी. ड्रेन का निर्माण। (वर्क संकिल-7)	₹ 105.79 लाख
21.	ग्राम पतवारी में 8% आबादी भूखण्डों का अवशेष विकास कार्य। (वर्क संकिल-3)	₹ 679.91 लाख
22.	सैक्टर-3 के पॉकेट-बी, सी, डी के पार्क, 10 मी चौड़ी ग्रीन बेल्ट एवं 12 मी चौड़ी ग्रीन बेल्ट रोड साइड का उद्यानिक विकास तथा सिविल कार्य सहित तीन वर्ष के अनुखण का कार्य। (वर्क संकिल-उद्यान)	₹ 283.63 लाख
23.	ग्राम पतवारी के 8% आबादी भूखण्डों का अवशेष विकास कार्य। (वर्क संकिल-3)	₹ 905.56 लाख
24.	ऑटोमेशन बेस्ड वॉटर सप्लाई (अवशेष कार्य) में ट्यूब-वेल राइजिंग मेन एवं क्लोरिनेशन इत्यादि कार्य का 3 वर्ष तक अनुखण एवं संचालन। (वर्क संकिल-जल)	आईटम रेट

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 minuscule.

“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



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 500,000 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

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 percent 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 Kierkees College Springfield Sixth Form Centre in Dorkesbury, 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 displacement.

placement.

During the pandemic, “everything else has stopped, including the economies, but wars and conflict and violence and discrimination and persecution, all the factors that pushed these people to flee, have continued,” UNHCR chief Filippo Grandi said.

The UN agency found that by the end of 2020, a record 82.4 million people were living as refugees or asylum seekers, or in so-called internal displacement

within their own countries, up from some 40 million in 2011.

Nearly half under 18. A full 42 percent of the world’s displaced are girls and boys under the age of 18.

“The tragedy of so many children being born into exile should be reason enough to make far greater efforts to prevent and end conflict and violence,” Grandi said.

Some 26.4 million people were living as refugees at the end of 2020, including

5.7 million Palestinians.

Some 3.9 million Venezuelans were also displaced beyond their borders without being considered refugees, while 4.1 million people were registered worldwide as asylum seekers.

But while both refugee and asylum seeker numbers remained relatively flat from 2019, the number of people displaced within their own countries surged by more than two million to 48 million, the report said. — AFP

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

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,

● **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.

researchers figure pregnancy in the fish lasts about five years.

Coelacanths, which have been around for 400 million years, were thought

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



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

THE ASIAN AGE

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 rates in the country. It must show grace, instead.

THE ASIAN AGE

KAUSHIK MITTER

Editor

K. SUBHAKAR

Printer & Publisher

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Farrukh Dhondy
Cabbages & Kings



BoJo, Dombo & Carrie: The 'weird' trio at 10 Downing St

"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 *mamawaji'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!

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. Sylogistically, 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

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.

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

LETTERS

MAHANT A MAVERICK

The 2017 UP elections brought Yogi Adityanath into prominence. His saffron-clad clout prevailed over any ideas BJP might have had for anointing a regular party man CM. The larger-than-life image that that the Yogi managed to create for himself in these four years cannot be wished away. He was not a cultivated RSS cadre man either. He has been a MLA from 1998, more on his standing as a religious head. The pandemic nonplussed him as much as it did all other CMs. But then the Yogi stepped on many toes. The RSS and the BJP may well be uncomfortable with his style but any newer equation to the 2022 UP elections stays tied to the Mahant of Gorakhpur.

R. Narayanan
Navi Mumbai

SAY NO TO COLA

CRISTIANO RONALDO'S recent discarding of Coke at a press conference and opting for water instead sends the right message to football fans. In an era of indiscriminate endorsements and rampant financial covetousness, this is an important gesture that breaks the norm. Since the 1990s, Coca-Cola has been involved in multiple controversies connected to depletion of groundwater, ill-treatment of workers, racism and so on. Drinking high amounts of Coke can also damage your health. Cheers to Ronaldo for his spirit and independent mindset.

Chanchal Nandy
Durgapur

SAVE BUXWAHA

THE SHIFTING OF the economy from an agricultural to an industrial and commercial one has ruined the environment. The Buxwaha jungles in Madhya Pradesh is again under threat of being wiped out. The government has bid the land believed to be sitting on a diamond mine to the Aditya Birla Group. Over two lakh trees will be cut down. The race to becoming developed is not going to be won at the cost of mother nature. It's a shame that the government pays lip service to this cause but in reality sides with capitalists.

Aman Jaiswal
New Delhi

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

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.

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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 Rathi Commodities, Systematix Commodities, Way2Wealth Commodities, India Infoline Commodities and Progressive Comtrade.

Five brokerage firms with the maximum amount of receivables include Anand Rathi 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 Rathi 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 business. 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 MFIN 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.

SREI EQUIPMENT TO GET ₹2,200 CR FROM SINGAPORE FIRM

New Delhi, June 18: Srei Equipment Finance on Friday said Singapore-based Makara Capital Partners Pte Ltd has shown interest to invest up to Rs 2,200 crore by picking up equity and other securities in the company.

"This is to inform that the Strategic Coordination Committee has received a term sheet from Makara Capital Partners Pte Ltd (Makara), Singapore indicating interest for the investment of an aggregate amount of Rs 2,200 crore by way of subscription to equity shares and other securities of the company," Srei Equipment Finance, a fully owned subsidiary of Kolkata-based Srei Infrastructure Finance, said in a regulatory filing through its listed parent company. —PTI

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 Dhavar of NestAway and Delhivery's Mohit Tandon and Bhavesh Mangani also left their startups.

"There are several opportunities in the digital space and a co-founder leaving the start-up in search of new opportunity 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 pay-ments 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 Captan and Folpet, besides Thiocarbamate herbicide. It also manufactures Cymoxanil, fungicide to manufacture fungicides that control downy mildews.



SHORT TAKES

Milkha Singh's oxygen level dips

Chandigarh: Legendary Indian sprinter Milkha Singh as 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. Milkha had been "stable before this." "It's been a slightly rough day for Milkha Ji. But he is battling away," read a statement from his family. — PTI

England enforce follow-on on Day 3

Bristol: The Indian women's cricket team was 83 for one at tea 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. — PTI

Brief scores: England women 396/9 decl. vs India women 231 & 83/1 in 24.3 overs (Shafali Verma batting 55; Katherine Brunt 1/21).

Juventus legend Boniperti no more

Rome: Giampiero Boniperti, for decades Juventus' record goalscorer who went on to become president of the Turin giants, has died at the age of 92, the club announced on Friday. "This is the news we never wanted to give you. Today, June 18, 2021, we bid farewell to Giampiero Boniperti, who passed away in Turin at the age of 92," Juventus said. It described him as "an indelible figure", adding: "Thanks for everything. Rest in peace, Presidentissimo." Striker Boniperti joined Juventus in 1946, becoming the top scorer in Serie A in 1947/8 when he was barely 20, going on to win five Scudetti with his teammates in the black and white jerseys. With Welshman John Charles and Argentine-Italian Omar Sivori, Boniperti formed a formidable attacking "Magic Trio" at the club. — AFP

Hyderabad FC rope in D'Silva

Hyderabad: Indian Super League side Hyderabad FC have signed young striker Aaren D'Silva on a three-year deal ahead of the new season, the club announced on Friday. The deal will see the 23-year-old attacker stay at the club till the end of 2023-24 season. Hailing from a sporting family, Goa-born Aaren has been involved in professional football since a young age. He spent over four years learning his trade at the SESA Football Academy. The youngster also featured for Dempo SC in the under-19 I-League and Santa Cruz club of Cavelliosim in 2016-17 season of the Goa Pro League. "I am really excited to be a part of Hyderabad FC. I want to be a part of the squad, and work hard to make a name for myself at HFC," Aaren said. — PTI

Bucks ease past Nets in playoff

Los Angeles: Khris Middleton and Giannis Antetokounmpo combined for 68 points as the host Milwaukee Bucks led wire-to-wire on Thursday to beat the Brooklyn Nets 104-89 in game six of their NBA playoff series. Middleton had a playoff career high 38 points, 10 rebounds and five assists while Antetokounmpo scored 30 points and grabbed 17 rebounds for the Bucks. — AFP



India's Mohammed Shami (second from right) and Wriddhiman Saha (right) walk with members of the team support staff along the boundary after rain delayed start of the first day of the WTC final at the Ageas Bowl in Southampton on Friday.

— AP

RAIN RUINS PLAY

WTC final starts with washed out first day

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

● **With puddles forming throughout the outfield, even the best drainage system couldn't have possibly forced some action on the opening day of the World Test Championship final in Southampton.**

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.

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 men's Test matches and only as many as four have ended in draws which is an indication that even if rain plays spoilsport, the final will go the distance. — PTI

India should be simple and realistic playing NZ: Rohit

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 Word Test Championship final, the opening day of which has already been affected by a heavy downpour.

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 *Star Sports*.

The marquee game's opening session was rained out here on Friday.

"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,"

FINCH SAYS IPL RETURN WILL BE TRICKY FOR OZ PLAYERS

Sydney, June 18: "Surprised" to see some of his teammates withdraw from the country's upcoming white-ball tours, limited overs skipper Aaron Finch feels Australian players will have a hard time to justify their participation in the second half of the postponed IPL 2021, given the hectic national schedule.

The country's seven top cricketers including the likes of David Warner, Pat Cummins, Glenn Maxwell, Jhye Richardson, Kane Richardson, Marcus Stoinis and Daniel Sams have pulled out from the upcoming West Indies series for varied reasons and also said that they won't be visiting Bangladesh if that tour is confirmed.

While it had been a "long term plan" for Warner and Cummins to miss the winter tours of the West Indies and Bangladesh (if confirmed), Finch said he understands his teammates decision.

"The other guys - I was a little bit surprised," Finch told *cricket.Com.Au* on SEN Radio.

Asked about his teammates who requested not to be considered for the tours, Finch said: "I think they would find it hard to justify going back and playing that second half of the IPL." — PTI

said the senior opener.

A white ball superstar, Rohit loves the traditional format for the challenges that it poses for sustained periods of play. "You are challenged for

five days. Everyday brings a different challenge, a longer game that needs patience, you play in different conditions and it's not the easiest," he said. — PTI

BOXERS HEAD TO ITALY FOR TRAINING AHEAD OF GAMES

New Delhi, June 18: 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.

Five Olympic-bound men — Amit Panghal (52kg), Manish Kaushik (63kg), Vikas Krishan (69kg), Ashish Chaudhary (75kg), and Satish Kumar (+91kg) — will be joined by the likes of five-time Asian medalist Shiva Thapa (63kg) and Strandja Memorial silver-winner former Deepak Kumar (52kg) during the stint.

The team will be based in Assisi till July 10 before coming back to the country. — PTI

OSAKA PULLS OUT FROM WIMBLEDON

Los Angeles, June 18: Japanese star Naomi Osaka has withdrawn from Wimbledon, her agent confirmed 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."

On Wednesday, Wimbledon organisers said the 23-year-old four-time Grand Slam champion was expected to take part in the championships, which start on June 28.

"At this point in time she's entered into the championships and we haven't received confirmation that she won't compete," All England Club chief executive Sally Bolton said.

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. — AFP



Naomi Osaka

THIEM FOLLOWS NADAL IN TOKYO OLYMPIC SNUB

Paris, June 18: US Open champion Dominic Thiem on Thursday joined Spanish superstar Rafael Nadal in withdrawing from the Tokyo Olympics. World number five Thiem said he wanted to concentrate on Wimbledon and then defending his only Grand Slam title in New York.

"Hi everybody, I have some sad news to share with you all. After talking with my team and analysing the situation I have taken the very difficult decision to withdraw from competing in the Tokyo Olympics," the 27-year-old Austrian wrote on Twitter.

"For me, like all athletes, taking part in the Olympics and representing my country is a huge honour and that makes this decision even tougher. However, 2021 did not start as expected and I don't feel ready to play my best in Tokyo."

"My goal is to work hard the coming weeks, give my best at Wimbledon." — AFP

MEN'S HOCKEY

Ten to make Oly debut in Tokyo

Bengaluru, June 18: India on Friday named 10 Olympic debutants in its 16-member men's hockey squad, which also features seasoned performers like F.R. 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, Shamsheer 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.

These players were a part of the previous Olympic squad in Rio de Janeiro.

Veteran defender Birendra Lakra, who missed the 2016 Games due to a knee injury, has also been named in the side and is set to make his Olympic

INDIA SQUAD
Goalkeeper: PR Sreejesh.
Defenders: Harmanpreet Singh, Rupinder Pal Singh, Surender Kumar, Amit Rohidas, Birendra Lakra.
Midfielders: Hardik Singh, Manpreet Singh, Vivek Sagar Prasad, Nilakanta Sharma, Sumit.
Forwards: Shamsheer Singh, Dilpreet Singh, Gurjant Singh, Lalit Kumar Upadhyay, Mandeep Singh.

debut in Tokyo. The team has only one goalkeeper in Sreejesh, which means promising Krishan Bahadur Pathak missed out on an Olympic berth despite being an integral part of the team in the lead up to the Games.

The notable absentees in the squad are strikers Akashdeep Singh and Ramandeep Singh, who were a part of the Rio Games team.

Even though Manpreet has been the captain of the side for sometime now, Hockey India hasn't named the leader of the Tokyo-bound team but it is expected that the ace midfielder will be retained in the role. — PTI

ROMANIA BANNED FROM OLYMPIC WEIGHTLIFTING

Lausanne, June 18: Romania has 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.

One of those athletes, Gabriel Sincraian, also lost a medal from the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro for another failed drug test.

Romania becomes the fourth country barred from the Tokyo weightlifting competition after Egypt, Malaysia and Thailand, which were also excluded over doping-related issues. — AP

Tokyo volunteers, staff get vaccine

Tokyo, June 18: Thousands of Olympic volunteers and officials began receiving vaccines in Tokyo on Friday, five weeks before the Games, as experts warned it would be safest to hold the event without fans.

With just over a month until the July 23 opening ceremony, organisers are in the home stretch and scrambling to finalise virus rules and get participants vaccinated in time.

They also face a controversial and difficult decision over how many domestic fans, if any, will be in the stands for the pandemic-postponed Games.

Japanese Olympic athletes have already begun receiving vaccines, and the rollout expanded on Friday to Olympic staff, volunteers and others who will interact with overseas participants.

The International Olympic Committee has donated enough Pfizer/BioNTech doses for 40,000 people, including

● **The International Olympic Committee has donated enough Pfizer/ BioNTech doses for 40,000 people, including airport staff, local media and Olympic referees.**

airport staff, local media and Olympic referees.

Chika Hirai, director of doping control for Tokyo 2020, was among those being vaccinated on Friday and said she had some niggling concerns about virus risks before getting jabbed.

"Now that I will be vaccinated, I will feel a little more reassured doing my job," she told reporters.

"Many people from abroad, including inspectors from my field, are coming to Japan after having been vaccinated themselves. I feel more relieved that we also won't be the source of the virus spread." — AFP

IMPORTANT NOTICE

It is notified for the information of passengers that due to operational reason, Railways have decided to extend the cancellation/reduction in frequency of following Rajdhani Special Trains, as per the details given below :-

CANCELLATION OF TRAINS			
Train No. & Name	Date of Cancellation (From the originating station)		
02855 Bhubaneswar - New Delhi Rajdhani Special (Via Sambalpur City, Anara)	26.06.2021		
02856 New Delhi - Bhubaneswar Rajdhani Special (Via Sambalpur City, Anara)	27.06.2021		

REDUCTION IN FREQUENCY / CANCELLATION OF TRAINS				
Train No. & Name	Existing Frequency	Revised Frequency	Dates of Cancellation	Days of Cancellation
02823 Bhubaneswar - New Delhi Rajdhani Special (Via Tatanagar Jn.)	Mon, Tue, Thu, Fri	Tue, Thu	21.06, 25.06, 28.06.2021	Mon, Fri
02824 New Delhi - Bhubaneswar Rajdhani Special (Via Tatanagar Jn.)	Tue, Wed, Thu, Sat	Wed, Thu	22.06, 26.06, 29.06.2021	Tue, Sat

For any kind information such as timings, composition and stoppages enroute passengers are advised to contact RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or may visit Indian Railways website <https://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in> or NTES App.

All norms of the State and Central Government regarding COVID-19 including Social distancing, sanitization etc., may be followed in the trains and at the Railway stations. All other precautions associated with COVID-19 should also be ensured.

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