

SHORT TAKES

35,000 students take DU online open-book exams

New Delhi: Nearly 35,000 undergraduate and post-graduate students took the online open-book exams of the Delhi University (DU) on Monday and no technical glitches were reported, officials said. Monday was the first day of the exams and the officials said all the 35,000 students uploaded their answersheets using the portal and there were no email submissions. D.S. Rawat, dean (examinations), said the process went off smoothly and there were no complaints of any technical glitches. Last year, when the OBE was held for the first time, students had complained about failure to submit answersheets, problems in downloading question papers and other issues. Some had also said they were grappling with Covid-19 in the family and would not be in the right frame of mind to appear for the exams, but Rawat said most of the students wanted to finish their academics. The exams were postponed twice. The exams were scheduled to start from May 15 but were deferred to June 1 owing to a spike in the number of coronavirus cases across the country. Later, the university released a new notification, saying the final semester or the annual exams will commence from June 7, instead of June 1. — PTI

2 Nandu gang members held for killing elderly man

New Delhi: Two members of infamous Nandu gang were arrested for allegedly killing an elderly man in order to rob his house in southwest Delhi's Najafgarh area, police said on Monday. The accused have been identified as Yogesh Sharma (28) and Rohit (22), both residents of Najafgarh, they said. The accused also tried to kill the wife of deceased person. On Wednesday around 2 pm, the accused persons entered the house of the victims at Durga Vihar, Najafgarh and killed Udayvir Singh by choking his neck, a senior police officer said. The accused also tried to kill his wife Vidhya Devi. Both the victims were senior citizens. "During investigation, police received secret information and a joint team of Chhawla police station and special staff arrested the accused persons on Thursday," deputy commissioner of police (Dwarka) Santosh Kumar Meena said.

Civil defence volunteer issues challans, held

New Delhi: A 31-year-old civil defence volunteer has been arrested for allegedly impersonating as a sub-inspector of Delhi Police and prosecuting people for Covid violations. The accused Suneel Kumar carried a fake identity card of Delhi Police and posed himself as the sub-inspector of Tigri police station. The accused was apprehended while he was checking public for mask violations at Bandh Road in South Delhi's Sangam Vihar, the police said. The matter came to light when a constable reached at the spot and checked Kumar's identity card which was found to be fake. The accused was also carrying his Aadhaar card, Disaster Management Duty Pass and id card of civil defence, the police said. A case has been registered at Tigri police station. The fake identity card, some documents and uniform which the accused wore at the time of incident have been seized.

■ Booth level officers to visit door-to-door for allocating slots to eligible persons

45+ people will get vaccine at polling booths: Kejriwal

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA
NEW DELHI, JUNE 7

Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday launched the government's plan of starting mass vaccination at booth level in a planned manner in the national capital.

Polling booths in Delhi will be turned into vaccination centres and booth-level officers (BLOs) will visit all the households to book slots for people in the 45 plus age group under the 'Jahan Vote, Wahan Vaccination' campaign, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Monday.

"We are starting a 'Jahan Vote, Wahan Vaccination' campaign from today. Under this campaign, we will tell people to visit their designated polling stations to get vaccinated. Door-to-door vaccination to be done soon," Mr Kejriwal announced in a press conference.

We have noticed that people in the 45 plus age group are not coming to vaccination centres set up by the Delhi government and vaccines are not being utilised," he said.

There are around 280 wards in Delhi. The BLOs will visit households in 72 wards from Tuesday to

identify and send eligible persons for vaccination at the polling booths, he said.

The chief minister said polling booths are close to the homes of the people so they will not have to travel long distances to get the vaccine. Also, the government has arranged e-rickshaws to ferry people to the vaccination centres.

The BLOs will give slots for vaccination to people in the 45 plus age group at the nearest polling centre. In a cycle of five days, all the eligible persons will be covered.

"After covering all the 280 wards in four weeks, the government will be able to say that all those eligible (45 years and above) have received the vaccines, Kejriwal said.

He said a similar drive will be conducted again for second dose vaccination after three months.

"When we will get vaccines for the 18-44 age group in the required quantity, we will start this programme for them too, he added.

The chief minister said that the government aims to vaccinate all above the age of 45 in the next 4 weeks.

The Delhi CM further said that out of 57 lakh people in the 45 plus age



We are starting a 'Jahan Vote, Wahan Vaccination' campaign from today. Under this campaign, we will tell people to visit their designated polling stations to get vaccinated. Door-to-door vaccination to be done soon

— Arvind Kejriwal, Delhi CM

group, 27 lakh have been vaccinated with the first dose. Now they will be given anti-Covid vaccines at polling booths.

The national capital reported 231 new instances of the Covid-19 infection, the lowest since March 2, with the positiv-

ity rate dipping to 0.36 per cent, according to the health bulletin released on Monday. Thirty-six more people succumbed to the disease in a day, pushing the death toll here to 24,627.

On Sunday, Delhi had recorded 34 fatalities, the lowest in around two months, and 381 cases with a positivity of 0.5 per cent.

On Saturday, the city registered 60 fatalities and 414 new cases of COVID-19 with a positivity rate of 0.53 per cent. The day before, it had recorded 50 deaths and 523 new cases with a positivity rate of 0.68 per cent.

Kejriwal had on Saturday said the coronavirus situation in Delhi was under control. "Bringing back the economy on track is crucial as the situation of coronavirus is improving," he had said.

The national capital started the unlocking process from Monday after remaining under lockdown since April 19 in view of a massive surge in Covid-19 cases in the second wave of the pandemic.

Since April 19, both daily cases and single-day death count had been spi-

ralling up. On April 20, the city had reported 28,395 cases, the highest in the city since the beginning of the pandemic. On April 22 the case positivity rate was 36.2 per cent, the highest so far. The highest number of 448 deaths was reported on May 3.

However, the number of cases has shown a downward trend of late. The positivity rate too has been shrinking in the last several days.

The national capital had recorded 623 cases and 62 deaths last Tuesday, 576 cases and 103 fatalities on Wednesday, and 487 cases and 45 deaths on Thursday.

A total of 63,610 tests, including 50,139 RT-PCR ones, were conducted a day ago, according to the health bulletin on Monday.

The total number of cases reported in the city so far stood at 14,29,475, while over 13.9 lakh patients have recovered from the virus.

The city now has 5,208 active cases, down from 5,889 a day before, the bulletin said.

The number of people under home isolation dipped to 1,932 from 2,327 on Sunday, it added.

Cong workers protest outside drive-through vaccine centre

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 7

Congress workers held a protest outside a drive-through coronavirus vaccination centre in Akshardham here on Monday, demanding free jabs for all and criticising the Delhi government's inoculation policy.

According to a Congress statement, the protest led by Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee (DPCC) president Anil Chaudhary was held when Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia went to inaugurate the centre at the Commonwealth Games Village in Akshardham.

Following the protest, several Congress workers, including DPCC vice-presidents Abhishek Dutt, Ali Mehndi, Mudrit Agarwal and Jaikishan, Alka Lamba, Amrita Dhawan, Satbir Sharma, Vishnu Agarwal, Rajesh Chauhan and Mohd Usman, were detained by the Delhi Police.

A senior police officer said, "A case under section 188 (Disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant) of Indian Penal Code has been registered in the matter against them since they grouped in large numbers in violation of Covid-19 guidelines."

According to the DPCC, the protest was against the Delhi government's policy of "encouraging costly private vaccination centres, instead of ensuring free vaccination to all".

"Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal has been fooling the people of Delhi and telling them lies by promising them free vaccination against the accused and that he is absconding from his house and deliberately evading the arrest."

He further submitted that his custodial interrogation is must to unearth the whole conspiracy behind the paper leak and to identify and arrest the mastermind behind the entire conspiracy. Advocate Mahavir Sharma, appearing for Amit, contended that he was being made a scapegoat and does not deal in any type of electronic device, including bluetooth. He submitted that the alleged bluetooth device has already been recovered from the main accused.

Screening of 2-18 age group for Covaxin trial begins at AIIMS

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 7

The screening of children for trial of Covaxin, India's first indigenously developed Covid-19 vaccine, among those aged between 2 and 18 started at the AIIMS here on Monday.

The trial on children has already started at AIIMS Patna to see if the Bharat Biotech jab is suitable for children. India currently has three vaccines approved for adults "Covaxin, Serum Institute of India's Covishield and Russia's Sputnik V, but there are none for children."

If the phase 2/3 trials on children are successful, Covaxin will be used to inoculate India's children. The trials also assume significance as they are being held at a time when the Centre cautioned that though the virus has not affected children seriously till now, its impact can increase among them if there is a change in virus behaviour or epidemiology dynamics.

Moreover, Karnataka and Maharashtra have recently seen a spike in paediatric COVID cases, making the trials the need of the hour.

Participants will be given the vaccine after their screening report comes. The trial is to be conducted on 525 healthy volunteers. In the trial, the vaccine will be given by intramuscular route in two

doses at day 0 and day 28. "The screening of children for conducting trials of Covaxin has started. Participants will be given the vaccine after their screening reports come," Dr Sanjay Rai, Professor at the Centre for Community Medicine at AIIMS, said.

India's drug regulator had granted permission for conducting the phase 2/3 clinical trial of Covaxin in the age group 2 to 18 years on May 12. Covaxin is being used on adults in India's ongoing COVID-19 vaccination drive.

The government last week cautioned that even though COVID-19 has not taken a serious shape among children till now, its impact can increase among them if there is a change in virus behaviour or epidemiology dynamics, and said preparations are being strengthened to deal with any such situation.

A national expert group has been formed to review COVID-19 infections in children and approach the pandemic in a renewed way to strengthen the nation's preparedness, NITI Aayog Member (Health) V K Paul had said at a press conference.

The group has examined signs which were not available four-five months before, he said.

It has also considered available data, clinical profile, the country's experi-

ence, disease dynamics, nature of the virus and the pandemic and has come up with guidelines, which will be publicly released soon.

While we have been systematically reviewing scientific developments in this area, the group has been formed to take an updated view of the situation," Paul said.

Asked if the Pfizer vaccine, if it comes to India, will be considered for children between the age of 12 and 15 years as being approved by the UK, Paul had said that the country has its own vaccines which are being readied for children.

"Child cohort is not a small cohort. My rough guess is that if it is between 12 to 18 years, this itself is about 13 to 14 crore population and for which we will need about 25-26 crore doses.

"We cannot have some people getting and others not getting. So we will have to take this into account when we strategise and make a decision based on how many doses of which vaccines are available. he said.

He further shared that Zydus Cadila's vaccine is already being tested in children. "So when Zydus comes for licensure, hopefully in the next two weeks, maybe we have enough data to take a view on whether the vaccine can be given to children," he said.



Commuters walk through Connaught Place as shops partially reopened after lockdown in New Delhi on Monday.

— G.N. JHA

Teen suffers cardiac arrest during post-Covid recovery

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 7

Doctors at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital here on Monday said Covid-19 led to inflammation of cardiac muscles in an 18-year-old youth, a rare and potentially life-threatening complication.

Family members of Abdullah, a resident of Chandni Chowk in Old Delhi, rushed him to the hospital when he fell unconscious.

Tests revealed he had a weak, poorly functioning and enlarged heart.

"His heart had started to fail with reduced pumping leading to build up of fluids in the lungs which kept him out of breath," the hospital said in a statement issued on Monday.

Abdullah was diagnosed with myocarditis, which many times is the result of a viral infection. He recalled an episode of fever, giving a clue that it may be post-Covid infection cardiac complication, the hospital said.

"We conducted an antibody test for Covid-19 on him. The antibody levels were unusually high confirming the suspicion of post-Covid cardiac involvement," the statement read.

Abdullah was treated with antiarrhythmic agents along with heart failure drugs and was discharged after a few days of treatment. He is recovering at home.

"Many times, patients suffer from what doctors describe as unexplained tachycardia (fast heart-

beat) and postural hypotension (fall in blood pressure), but occurrence of myocarditis and heart failure post-Covid is rare. It is a life-threatening complication needing urgent attention," Ashwani Mehta, senior consultant, Department of Cardiology, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital said.

The inflammation of cardiac tissues can lead to congestive heart failure, a term used to describe the failing heart pump, symptoms of which are breathlessness, swollen face and feet.

It can also cause abnormalities of cardiac rhythm which, if not treated appropriately in time, can even lead to cardiac arrest, Mehta added.

Court recruitment paper leak: Pre-arrest bail denied to man

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 7

A Delhi court has denied pre-arrest bail to a man in connection with the alleged leak of examination paper for the recruitment of district courts, noting that the offence is grave in nature and that he seems to be aware of those behind the whole racket for which his custodial interrogation is required.

In February, several candidates appearing for the examination for the post of peon, guard, sweeper and others in Delhi District Courts were allegedly

caught cheating using unfair means such as Bluetooth devices.

Additional Sessions Judge Shivaji Anand rejected the anticipatory bail plea of accused Amit in the case, keeping in view the fact that the role of the applicant is of very grave nature and he seems to be well aware about the people who are behind the whole racket of paper leak.

In an order dated June 5, the judge further emphasised on the seriousness of the offence since the matter pertained to the recruitment conducted by District and Sessions Judge office and

■ **DELHI POLICE** Crime Branch is investigating the case and has registered an FIR under 419 (cheating by personation), 420 (cheating and dishonestly inducing delivery of property), 468 (forgery), 471 (using forged document for cheating), 120-B (criminal conspiracy) and 34 (common intention) of the Indian Penal Code.

said that Amit's custodial interrogation is required to be done by the investigating agency.

Delhi Police Crime Branch is investigating the case and had registered an FIR under

419 (cheating by personation), 420 (cheating and dishonestly inducing delivery of property), 468 (forgery), 471 (using forged document for cheating), 120-B (criminal conspiracy) and 34 (common intention) of the Indian Penal Code. During the course of proceedings, Additional Public Prosecutor Sanjay Jindal, representing the Delhi Police, told the court that Amit had helped in arranging the bluetooth device through some other person to co-accused Hardeep.

The prosecutor further submitted that non-bailable warrant has been issued



A Metro train leaves from Anand Vihar station after the resumption of services in a graded manner in New Delhi on Monday.

— PTI

SHORT TAKES

Odia youth drowns while taking selfie

Bhubaneswar: Making a misadventure to take a selfie with a mobile phone at a dam in Odisha's Sundargarh district has cost dearly to a youth as he drowned in the water reservoir after his legs slipped, reports said on Monday. Another youth and friend of the deceased also fell into the dam and has been rescued in critical conditions. According to reports, Pramod Parida from Basanti Colony along with Sumant Dey from Brahmapur Basti and three others went to Kansbahal dam for a picnic on Sunday afternoon. An eyewitness said while taking a selfie with a mobile phone on the dam's embankment, Pramod and Sumant fell into the water reservoir. Some locals immediately swung into action and rescued Pramod. They then sent him to a local hospital where doctors declared him dead. After receiving information, the fire personnel reached the spot and launched an operation to trace Sumant.

J-K gets 9 medical O2 plants from Europe

Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir on Monday received nine medical oxygen plants from Europe which will be installed in various health facilities across the Union territory amid the Covid outbreak. The fresh consignment was received by divisional commissioner Kashmir Pandurang K. Pole, an official spokesman said. Sharing the details, Pole said out of the nine oxygen generation plants, five would be installed in Kashmir, while the rest would be installed in Jammu division. He said five oxygen plants with generation capacity of 4,000 LPM shall be installed at CHC Kupwara, District Hospital Pulwama, Children Hospital Bemina, with 1,000 capacity LPM each. He added that 500 LPM generation capacity shall be installed at CHC Chanapora and Trauma Hospital Bijbehara. — PTI

Dhruv copter makes emergency landing

New Delhi: A Dhruv helicopter of the Indian Air Force made an emergency landing at a forward helipad in eastern Ladakh on Monday, sources said. Two pilots and another personnel onboard the advanced light helicopter were safe, the sources said, adding they have already been evacuated. The incident took place around 9:30 am, they said, adding the three personnel sustained minor injuries. The reason for the emergency landing is not immediately known. Dhruv is an indigenously designed and developed multi-role and multi-mission helicopter. It is a twin-engine helicopter in the 5.5-ton weight category. — PTI

COVID: J&K TASK FORCE TO IDENTIFY ORPHANED KIDS

YUSUF JAMEEL
SRINAGAR JUNE 7

The Jammu and Kashmir government on Monday decided to constitute a special task force which will work on district levels to provide care and protection to children infected by Covid and also identify those whose one or both parents have fallen victim to the deadly pandemic or have just contracted the virus in the Union Territory (UT). The task force to be headed by respective district magistrates and which will have on it the concerned chief medical officers, district police chiefs or their deputies, district social welfare and child protection officers and other important stakeholders has been tasked to compile details of all adults who have died due to Covid and find out any children orphaned or children in need of care and protection. "It would then produce such children before the Child Welfare Committee which shall decide their rehabilitation such as adoption, foster care, sponsorship, etc. and institutionalization as the last resort as per the provisions of Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015," an official spokesman said. Until such a permanent arrangement is made, these children would be put up in temporary shelters. The task force has been asked to ensure timely referral of children infected with Covid to treatment centers and also to provide them nutritional support during post treatment period.



People workout at a gym after unlocking process of coronavirus lockdown began in a phased manner in Thane on Monday. — PTI

Supreme Court asks for suggestions on live-streaming HCs, lower courts

PARMOD KUMAR
NEW DELHI, JUNE 7

The Supreme Court's e-Committee, headed by Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, on Monday, released the draft model rules for live streaming and recording of the proceedings of the high courts and the subordinate courts and tribunals falling under their respective jurisdiction inviting suggestions and inputs before June 30 from all stakeholders. Releasing the 20-page document, Justice Chandrachud said, "Right of access to justice includes right to access live court proceedings."

Justice Chandrachud has written to the Chief Justices of all HCs to share inputs and suggestions for the better implementation of the live-streaming of court proceedings across India. The SC has already started live-streaming of its proceedings for accredited journalists since last month. A press release issued by the e-Committee "envisages a judicial system which is more accessible, efficient, and equitable for every individual who engages with the justice delivery system" and that "the right of access to justice, guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution encompasses the right to access live court proceedings."

It said the project of streaming of court proceedings was undertaken on priority so that access to proceedings, including on matters of public interest to citizens, journalists, civil society, academicians, and law students on a real time basis is enabled.

The rules will come into force from the date notified by the concerned high court and the streaming, as per the draft rules, will be with a delay of 10 minutes. As regards the content of recordings, they will be vetted and posted, usually within three days on the conclusion of the proceedings on the court's website or made available on digital platforms.

The draft rules are based on the recommendations of a sub-committee comprising the judges of Delhi, Bombay, Madras, and Karnataka HCs set up to frame the rules. Nine kinds of proceedings will be excluded from live-streaming and these include matrimonial matters, cases concerning sexual offences or gender-based violence against women, matters concerning children, in-camera proceedings, cases

which in the court's opinion provoke enmity among the communities, recording of evidence including cross-examination, and privileged communications between the parties and their advocates. The recordings shall be made even when the proceedings are not live-streamed for use by the court and the appellate courts. Audio-video recording of proceedings by any other means, beyond the mandate of the rules, is expressly prohibited. So as to decongest the court rooms, dedicated rooms shall be made available for viewing the live-stream within the court premises, access to which shall be given to law researchers, staff, litigants, academicians, and media personnel authorised to enter the court premises and which will enable viewing of the live-stream from multiple benches.

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IMA had urged PM to ensure 'optimum milieu' for medics

'Formulating policy for security to health staff'

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 7

The home ministry is in the process of formulating "uniform guidelines for providing adequate security cover and a safe environment to all doctors, nurses, and other para-medical staff" who are not only involved in corona related duties but are providing other medical treatment as well. The move comes close on the heels of the Indian Medical Association (IMA), an umbrella organisation of doctors in India, writing to PM requesting him to ensure that doctors on duty be provided with proper security.

The IMA had written the letter after videos went viral on the social media of two doctors being brutally thrashed by relatives of patients in Assam. Even though the state police had

THE MOVE comes close on the heels of the IMA, an umbrella organisation of doctors in India, writing to PM Modi requesting him to ensure that doctors on duty be provided with proper security

taken a serious note of the incident, the IMA is now demanding that the Centre ensure adequate safety for doctors on duty.

Sources said home minister Amit Shah has given clear instructions that there would be no compromise on the safety of frontline warriors like doctors. The Centre is working on making stringent guidelines with provisions for strong legal and criminal action against those involved in attacks on doctors and para-medical staff.

Even during the first wave, the MHA had writ-

ten to the states in this regard but this time a more formal arrangement is being put in place which would be mandatory for the states to follow.

With corona's threat far from over as a third wave of the virus is being anticipated sometime in September, there is an urgent need to ensure the safety of doctors and other hospital staff as they have been on the frontline saving precious human lives.

"Doctors and other healthcare staff are our true corona warriors and heroes. No violence against them will be tolerated at any cost and strict instructions have been given in this regard by the home minister. We are in the process of making some strong guidelines in this regard, which will be shared with all the states," a senior official added.

Give succor to kids orphaned due to Covid: SC directs states

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 7

With over 3,621 children orphaned and 26,176 having lost one of the parents to Covid, the Supreme Court on Monday directed all the states and the Union Territories to immediately identify and extend relief of food and shelter to the children who lost either both the parents or one of them to Covid and produce them before the Child Welfare Committee (CEWC) within 24 hours of their being identified.

While the top court directed the States/UTs to expeditiously collect information on such children, the Centre informed the court that district magistrate has been made responsible to take care of orphaned or abandoned children during the pandemic. Of the 30,071 chil-

dren who have either lost both the parents or one of them, 15,620 are boys and 14, 447 are girls and four transgender. 274 children are abandoned with no trace of their parents.

A bench comprising Justice L. Nageswara Rao and Justice Aniruddha Bose noted with concern that in many cases, after the identification of the children who have lost either both the parents or one of them, they have not been produced before the child welfare committee (CWC). In an apparent dig at the Delhi government for not collecting data on children left orphaned or lost one of the parents, Justice Nageswara Rao reminded it is though a UTs it was not like Dadra & Nagar Havel and needs no direction of the court to take steps for the welfare and benefit of such kids.

Centre issues advisory for Remdesivir use

New Delhi, June 7: Centre on Monday issued an advisory for rational use of Remdesivir in Covid treatment, underlining that the anti-viral drug must be advised by senior faculty members directly involved in the patient's care.

The drug should be provided by the hospitals, and patient's relatives should not be asked to procure it from the retail.

To stop the misuse, the government recommended that if the drug is to be advised or ordered during odd hours, it should be done by the doctor after a telephonic consultation with a senior, specialist or unit in-charge, and that advise or order must be written and it should bear the name, signature, stamp of the doctor concerned. — PTI

Shivraj government moves towards unlocking cities

RABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY
BHOPAL, JUNE 7

With positivity rate declining drastically in Madhya Pradesh, the Shivraj government on Monday decided to unlock Bhopal on June 10.

The decision was taken at the district crisis management meeting, chaired by state medical education minister Vishwas Sarang here in the evening.

It has been decided in the meeting to unlock Bhopal on June 10, Mr Sarang told reporters here.

However, night curfew

in the capital will remain in force till further order, he added.

The state government has allowed the commercial establishments and businesses to resume operation from June 10 with a rider that they have to vaccinate all their staff.

"The commercial establishments and shops will be sealed if any of their employees are found not vaccinated", Mr Sarang said.

The positivity rate in Bhopal has come down to 1.9 per cent now.

Bhopal on Monday reported 131 fresh cases taking the tally of cases in the city to 1,22,082.

Centre may allow domestic air travel without Covid -ve report

New Delhi, June 7: The Centre is considering a mechanism to allow air passengers who have got both doses of the Covid-19 vaccine to travel without a negative test report, senior government officials said on Monday.

Central ministries, including the Ministry of Civil Aviation and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, are currently discussing the matter with various other stakeholders, they added.

Currently, a number of states, including Odisha, Meghalaya and Maharashtra, ask passen-

gers coming from outside to carry a Covid-negative report with them where in the test sample was taken not more than 72 hours before the journey.

Domestic airlines, which have already taken a major hit due to the Covid-19 pandemic, have told the civil aviation ministry that such state-level requirements are hampering the growth of air travel and the fully-vaccinated passengers should be allowed to travel without Covid-negative reports, the officials said.

Domestic air travel had reached around three lakh passengers per day by the end of February.

However, the second wave of the pandemic has reduced it to around 85,000 passengers per day.

To conserve cash and survive this tough time, all Indian airlines have taken measures such as cutting the employees' salaries, firing employees and renegotiating leases with aircraft lessors. Since health is a state subject, the Centre is discussing with the states a way through which domestic air passengers, who have got both doses of the Covid-19 vaccine, can be allowed to travel without the test reports, the officials said. — PTI

Govt extends free foodgrains scheme till Nov. for 80cr

New Delhi, June 7: In a major relief to the poor during the Covid pandemic, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday announced that the government has extended the scheme to distribute wheat and rice free of cost to around 80 crore people till November.

In April, the Centre had announced distribution of free foodgrains for the months of May and June under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) to help people during the second wave of coronavirus pandemic.

In his address to the nation, the Prime Minister said: "Last year when the lockdown was imposed due to corona, free ration was provided to more than 80 crore people for eight months under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana." This year too due to the second wave of the pandemic, the scheme was implemented for May and June, he added. — PTI

'Dilip Kumar stable, could be discharged from hospital soon'

Mumbai, June 7: Legendary actor Dilip Kumar, who was admitted to a hospital here after experiencing breathlessness, is stable and should be discharged soon, his wife and veteran actor Saira Banu said on Monday.

Kumar, 98, was taken to the suburban Khar-based Hinduja Hospital, a non-Covid-19 facility, on Sunday, where he was diagnosed with bilateral pleural effusion, which is the build-up of excess fluid between the layers of the pleura outside the lungs.

Earlier in the day, Kumar's family said in a tweet that the actor was on oxygen support and stable. In a note shared on the actor's official Twitter account in the evening, Banu thanked fans for their prayers and best wishes.

"My husband, my Kohinoor, our Dilip Kumar Sahab's health is stable and doctors have assured me that he should be discharged soon," the 76-year-old actor said.

Banu, who shared her picture with Kumar from his hospital bed,



Dilip Kumar

also appealed to the people to not fall prey to rumours.

"While I ask you to pray for Sahab I am praying that the Almighty keep all of you safe and healthy during this pandemic," she further said. Dr Jalil Parkar, the chest specialist treating the screen icon, said Kumar's health condition has improved and he is responding to the treatment. The oxygen saturation levels of the veteran star were also better, he further said.

"His health is much better. His oxygen saturation has improved and the fluid has reduced too with the medicines. His breathing difficulty has also reduced. We will now monitor his improvement, check if

the fluid reduces more," Parkar told PTI.

If the improvement continues, Kumar will be discharged soon, added Parkar.

"Dr Nitin Gokhale and I will review tomorrow once again and take a joint call," he said.

The actor was admitted to the same hospital last month for a regular health check-up.

Kumar, who made acting debut with "Jwar Bhata" in 1944, has appeared in several iconic films in his career spanning over five decades, including "Kohinoor", "Mughal-e-Azam", "Devdas", "Naya Daur", "Ram Aur Shyam", among others. He was last seen on the big screen in "Qila" in 1998. — PTI

NORTHERN RAILWAY

TENDER NOTICE

The Chief Administrative officer/Const.-II/Northern Railway, Kashmir Gate, for and on behalf of the President of India invites e-tender under Two Packet system for the under noted work:-

Mode of Tender	E-Tender (Two Packet)
Tender Notice No.	74-W/3/2/447/NA/LKO Dated 07.06.2021
Full name of work	Extension of minor bridges, earthwork, blanketing and ancillary protection works at Sirkoni, Jaunpur City, Bhadaiyay, Pakhrail, Adinpur, Trivediganj and Kunda Harnamganj stations and construction of LHS by air pushing methodology works at Trivediganj station including supply of ballast, Track linking & electrical (TRD & General) in connection with 'Provision of long loops of Lucknow Division on Northern Railway
Approx. cost	Rs. 33.92 crores
Completion period	24 (Twenty four) months
Availability of tender document on Rly. Website	Tender documents will be available on IREPS web site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in from 11.06.2021 to 02.07.2021 upto 11.30 hrs.
Last date/Time of upload of tenders	02.07.2021 upto 11.30 hours. Tender documents can be uploaded by the tenderer on IREPS website w.e.f. 18.06.2021 to 02.07.2021.
Date and time of opening of tender	02.07.2021 at 11.30 hours (immediately after close of uploading of tender (D2). In case of two packet system, Financial bids of the eligible tenderers would be opened subsequently on the date & time to be notified later on.

1237/2021

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CANCELLATION/REDUCTION IN FREQUENCY OF SPECIAL TRAINS

It is notified for the information of passengers that due to operational reasons, Railways have decided to cancel/reduce the 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 Special (Via Sambalpur & Anara)	12.06.2021 & 19.06.2021
02856 New Delhi - Bhubaneswar Special (Via Anara & Sambalpur)	13.06.2021 & 20.06.2021

REDUCTION IN FREQUENCY/CANCELLATION OF TRAINS			
Train No. & Name	Existing Frequency	Revised Frequency	Remarks
02823 Bhubaneswar - New Delhi Special (Via Tatanagar Jn.)	Monday, Tuesday, Thursday & Friday	Tuesday	Cancelled on 11.06, 14.06, 17.06 & 18.06.2021
02824 New Delhi - Bhubaneswar Special (Via Tatanagar Jn.)	Tuesday, Wednesday Thursday & Saturday	Wednesday	Cancelled on 12.06, 15.06, 17.06 & 19.06.2021
02825 Bhubaneswar - New Delhi Special (Via Adra)	Wednesday & Sunday	Sunday	Cancelled on 16.06.2021
02826 New Delhi - Bhubaneswar Special (Via Adra)	Monday & Friday	Monday	Cancelled on 18.06.2021

Note: 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.

For any kind of information such as detailed Time-Table and Stations enroute etc., passengers are requested to contact RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or may visit Indian Railways website <http://www.enquiry.indianrail.gov.in> or NTES App.

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SHORT TAKES

Maha Cong threatens stir over fuel prices

Mumbai: The Maharashtra Congress has threatened to hold a large scale agitation in the state against rising prices of petrol and diesel. The Narendra Modi-led central government is robbing the people by imposing heavy taxes on petrol and diesel, said state Congress chief Nana Patole. The Congress party leaders and activists protested simultaneously at 1000 petrol pumps across the state on Monday. Mr Patole and Vijay Wadettiwar, minister for relief and rehabilitation participated in the protests at Wadga in Gadchiroli district. Speaking on this occasion, Mr Patole said, "People's income has been hit badly due to the coronavirus pandemic for one and half years. Lakhs of people have lost their jobs due to the closure of several industries."



Himachal Pradesh CM Jairam Thakur with Union minister Dharmendra Pradhan in New Delhi on Monday.

Himachal CM thanks Centre for Covid help

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 7

Himachal Pradesh chief minister Jairam Thakur called on Union petroleum minister Dharmendra Pradhan at New Delhi on Monday and thanked him and the Union minister headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi for extending all possible help to the state to fight the Covid-19 pandemic.

Mr Thakur disclosed that the Union minister has assured to provide 1000 Dtype oxygen cylinders out of which 500 cylinders are on the way whereas 500 have already reached, 10 half ton capacity each cryogenic oxygen tanks to be installed in hospitals of the state and 300 oxygen concentrators to the state under the corporate social responsibility funds which will boost the oxygen capacity of the state. Efforts were also being made to procure Btype oxygen cylinders soon if need arises, he added.

He said that the Union minister also assured of sanctioning a state-of-art modern hospital in the state at an estimated cost of ₹60 crore.

Mr Thakur also informed that the Union minister also assured to set up an Ethanol plant through Hindustan Petroleum in the state which will produce ethenol of 200 kl capacity with investment of ₹200 crores.

Shops, markets, malls reopen in Delhi; Metro runs after 3 weeks

■ Continued from Page 1

today. But take all the precautions to prevent coronavirus completely — wear a mask, keep social distancing and keep washing hands, there should be no laxity at all," he said in a tweet in Hindi. "One has to stay away from the coronavirus infection and also bring the economy back on track," he added.

The shops in markets and malls reopened on an odd-even basis, but in some areas, like South Delhi's Krishna Markets, most of the shops still remained closed.

Atul Bhargav, president, New Delhi Traders Association, representing shopowners in Connaught Place, said all arrangements were in place to ensure Covid-appropriate behaviour. "However, the odd-even formula for opening retail shops is against our interests. We have enough space here in Connaught Place and most shopkeepers and their employees have already got jobs. The government should treat retail and wholesale sectors differently," he said.

Praveen Khandelwal, secretary-general, Confederation of All India Traders, said the "odd-even" was a "rejected formula" as far as the trade is concerned in Delhi, and rather staggered timings of different markets would have been a better option to not only reduce traffic of people in the markets, but also to

Heavy troops redeployment sets rumour mills agog in J&K

YUSUF JAMEEL
SRINAGAR, JUNE 7

Thousands of Central armed police forces personnel with weapons and other riot control gear were over the past few days moved into Jammu and parts of Kashmir Valley in sequential convoys of lorries, setting rumour mill agog in the Union Territory (UT).

Many people, continuously the third day Monday, took to social media platforms to speculate or ask each other what was in store for the erstwhile state and its people. Some, not knowing exactly what the influx of uniformed men was meant for, were yet unanimous in perceiving

■ RUMOURS purport the scenic Muslim majority Valley is being bifurcated and one part of it (volatile south Kashmir districts) may be merged with predominantly-Hindu Jammu region to 'weaken its political strength' and 'dilute its population's voting power'

that in Kashmir rumours "are never unfounded".

They argued that until a few hours of the Centre's stripping J&K of its special status and splitting it up into two UTs on August 5, 2019, the authorities would deny any such plan was in the pipeline and had termed rumours which purported precisely what

unfolded on that fateful day as "mischievous of trouble-mongers". The then governor of J&K, Satya Pal Malik, had publicly feigned ignorance of any such move being in the BJP government's kitty.

The rumours, which have been swirling from Jammu to Srinagar to Kargil and Leh but have taken over vast sections of population mainly in Kashmir, purport the scenic Muslim majority Valley is being bifurcated and one part of it (volatile south Kashmir districts) may be merged with predominantly-Hindu Jammu region to 'weaken its political strength' and "dilute its population's voting power".

Even some political leaders of the Valley have raised their concerns in the face of massive troops' build-up and said it might be a prelude to some major move on J&K by the Centre.

The authorities are maintaining a complete silence on these wild rumours but have confirmed the arrival of Central armed police and paramilitary forces in sizable numbers in the twin regions of the UT. At the same time, they are maintaining that these security personnel are those who were moved out of J&K in the Fall 2020 and early this year for election duties in West Bengal, Assam, Kerala and other states.



Night comes early in the noon as dark clouds blocked the sunlight over the skyline in Kolkata on Monday.

Moitra is distracting from poor law & order in WB: Dhankar Gov rejects nepotism claim by TMC MP

RAJIB CHOWDHURI
KOLKATA, JUNE 7

West Bengal governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on Monday refuted Krishnanagar Trinamul Congress MP Mahua Moitra's allegations a day before of his nepotism in the appointment of his family members, relatives and acquaintances as the officers on special duty (OSD) for six different roles at his office: Raj Bhavan.

Mr Dhankhar pointed out the OSDs' roots to "three states and four different castes" and slammed Ms Moitra's attack as a "distraction strategy" to divert his attention from the poor law and order situation in the state under chief minister Mamata Banerjee's rule.

He tweeted, "Assertion @MahuaMoitra in tweet & Media that six coterminous appointee OSDs in



Assertion @MahuaMoitra in tweet & Media that six coterminous appointee OSDs in personal staff are relatives is FACTUALLY WRONG. OSDs are from three states and belong to four different castes.

— Jagdeep Dhankhar

personal staff are relatives is FACTUALLY WRONG. OSDs are from three states and belong to four different castes. None of them is part of close family. Four of them are not from my caste or state."

On Sunday Ms Moitra tweeted the names of the six OSDs in a list alleging Abhduoy Singh Shekhawat, designated as OSD to Governor, as the "son" of Mr Dhankhar's brother-in-law while claiming Akhil Chowdhury, posted as the OSD Coordination, to have "Close family, relation with Governor."

The rest, the TMC MP argued, are Ruchi Dubey, the OSD Administration, is the "wife of Major Gorang Diksit, Ex ADC to Governor." Prashant Diksit, the OSD Protocol, is "brother" of Maj Diksit, Koustav S Valikar is the OSD IT, is the "brother-in-law of present ADC to Governor Srikant Janardan Rao" and Kishan Dhankhar, a "newly appointed OSD," is a "close relative of the Governor."

Mr Rao is a 2015-batch IPS officer of the West Bengal cadre in rank of a superintendent of police. Mr Dhankhar added,

"This is unfolding of "distraction strategy" to divert attention from alarming law and order scenario @MamataOfficial. Would continue undeterred and with zeal to serve the people of state and vindicate my oath of office under Article 159 of the Constitution."

Hitting back at Mr Dhankhar immediately Ms Moitra teased him as "Uncleji" again and sought him to reveal the "antecedents" of the six and how they were appointed as the OSDs to "come clean."

"Asking Uncleji to lay out right here what antecedents of the appointees are & how each one got into Raj Bhavan. Do it NOW. BJP IT Cell can't get you out of this one Uncleji..And I don't think Vice President of India also happening for you," she tweeted.

Didi nephew: TMC will 'go national', take on BJP

■ Continued from Page 1

before the country from all the states in the last one month."

Mr Banerjee elaborated: "I want to take Ms Banerjee's message to every nook and corner of the country. In the next two to three weeks or a maximum of one month, we will come out with a concrete plan—what the TMC wants to do, which are the states we want to start our units in and our

expansion plans. But make no mistake, let me put this on record, when we come out with a plan, this TMC attempt to go national is going to be very different from what the TMC attempted in the past."

Students...

■ Continued from Page 1

is sufficient and no other qualifying entries are required in the vaccine certificates. Covishield, produced by the Serum Institute of India and approved by DCGI, is one of the vaccines which have been approved by the WHO.

This special dispensation will be available only to students who have to undertake foreign travel for the purposes of education, persons who have to take up

He added: "If we go to any state irrespective of its size, we will not be there to fight the polls only, get one or two MLAs and increase voteshare. We will go there to win it. Wherever we will go, we will start to win the state. We want to be a platform of choice for the people of that particular state. We do not want to exist in the Opposition in the form of three or four or five MLAs. It can be a state in southern or northern or Northeast India. But we will take the BJP head on to win the state."

On the BJP's allegations of "dynasty politics" against him, Mr Banerjee said: "The BJP is rattled and bewildered by Abhishek Banerjee's

jobs in foreign countries and athletes, sportspersons and accompanying staff of the Indian contingent going to the Olympic Games to be held in Tokyo. The Centre asked the state and UT governments to designate a competent authority in each district for permission for such administration of the Covishield second dose. The competent authority shall check whether a period of 28 days has elapsed after the date of the first dose, and genuineness of the purpose of travel based

appointment.

On one hand they are saying there is no existence of the party outside Bengal, so why are they scared? I am advising the BJP to 'preach what you practice'. I am requesting Amit Malviya of the BJP to pass a bill to put a full stop to dynasty politics. Can Jay Shah, secretary of the Board of Control for Cricket of India, come out into the open and say: I do not want to be the BCCI president for the next 20 years? But I can clearly say I do not want to be in the state, or for that matter any ministerial berth, for the next 20 years... Sometimes, dynasty is better than being nasty. Take it that way."

on documents. People will need to furnish admission offers or formal communications of the foreign university. This will also be applicable for students already studying at a foreign educational institution who have to return to that institution to continue their education. Job seekers must show interview call letters for a job or offer letters for taking up jobs. Sportspersons will need to show nomination documents for the Tokyo Olympics for the early second dose.

Monsoon hits WB, 20 killed by lightning

AGE CORRESPONDENTS
KOLKATA/BERHAMPURE, JUNE 7

At least 20 people were killed while several others injured in a thunder-strike on Monday afternoon in three districts of West Bengal during a heavy rainfall as monsoon reached the state. Among the victims, while nine each were from Murshidabad and Hooghly while rest two were from East Midnapore.

In Kolkata, eight passengers were injured when a Mumbai-Kolkata Vistara flight was caught in an air turbulence for around 15 minutes amid a squall, gusting to 50 kmph, before it landed at the Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose International (NSCBI) Airport in the afternoon. Among them, Sudip Roy (36) suffered a cut on his head, Anita Agarwal (61) had a fracture on her arm while Timir Baran Das (77) complained of spinal tenderness.

NSCBI Airport director C Pattabhi said, "The three injured passengers were rushed to a private hospital in an ambulance as soon as the flight landed at the airport. The rest injured were discharged after being given first aid." Vistara stated that the turbulence left a few passengers injured who were treated later. In Murshidabad, out of the nine deceased six alone, being farmers, were killed at Mirzapur village in Raghunathanjan.

MP: BJP rules out leadership change, CM Shivraj to stay

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY
BHOPAL, JUNE 7



Shivraj Singh Chouhan

Amid speculations about change of leadership in Madhya Pradesh, triggered by a series of closed-door meetings held by some senior party leaders here in the past few days, BJP on Monday said that chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan would not be disturbed.

BJP national general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya whose 'courtesy visits' to senior BJP leaders here had sparked unease in a section of ruling BJP here, told reporters here that "There will be no change of leadership in MP. Chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan will continue in his post".

"My recent visits to some of my colleagues in the party have nothing to do with politics. It should not be given a political colour. There is nothing unusual about it since we consider it appropriate to spend some time with our friends during the pandemic period which has restricted our movements considerably", Mr Vijayvargiya said while explaining his 'closed-door' meetings with some senior party leaders.

Mr Vijayvargiya, considered a political rival of the chief minister, also made it clear that he was not in the race for the coveted post.

"I am busy with other assignments (given by the party)", he quipped.

State home minister Narottam Mishra also issued a statement that

"There will not be change of leadership in Madhya Pradesh". "The fake news on an imminent change of leadership in MP was spread in social media. It is absolutely baseless. Mr Chouhan is our chief minister and will remain our chief minister", Mr Mishra said.

Mr Mishra, who was an aspirant to the chief minister's post when Mr Chouhan was appointed to the post after BJP returned to power in MP following the fall of the 15-month-old Kamal Nath government in March, 2020, had held closed-door meetings with several senior BJP leaders such as Mr Vijayvargiya and Prabhat Jha giving rise to speculations on revival of dissidence in the party against Mr Chouhan.

State party president Vishnu Dutt Sharma had made several visits to Mr Mishra giving credence to the talks making the rounds in the political circle here that something was cooking up in the party.

Besides, Mr Vijayvargiya's recent meeting with Union tourism minister Pralhad Patel had also given grist to the rumour mill.

18 workers die in fire at chemical firm in Pune

Pune, June 7: At least 18 workers, mostly women, were charred to death in a devastating fire that broke out at a chemical firm in an industrial area in Pune district on Monday afternoon, officials said. One worker suffered burn injuries in the incident, they said.

According to the officials, the fire broke out at SVS Aqua Technologies, which manufactures chlorine dioxide among other chemicals and is located in the Pirangut MIDC area of Mulshi tehsil on the outskirts of Pune city.

"Sofar 18 bodies have been recovered from the firm's premises. We have stopped the search operation due to darkness and heat caused due to the blaze. "The search operation will resume on Tuesday morning to find out if any worker is still missing," said Sandesh Shirke, sub-divisional magistrate (SDM), Mulshi division.

He said as per company officials, there were around

17 employees, including 15 women, at the site where the blaze started. All the bodies, which were completely charred, were sent to the government-run Sassoon General Hospital for autopsy, Shirke said.

The bodies were burned beyond recognition and their identity will have to be ascertained by conducting DNA testing, he said.

A worker escaped with burn injuries and was admitted to the Sassoon General Hospital, where he is stated to be out of danger.

Fire brigade officials said the bodies were found in multiple groups with the victims clinging each other in a desperate attempt to stay together and escape the inferno.

Devendra Potphode, Chief Fire Officer, PMRDA (Pune Metropolitan Region Development Authority), Fire Services, said six to seven fire tenders were rushed to the chemical unit to douse the flames. —PTI

PM: Centre to give states free vaccines for 18+ from June 21

■ Continued from Page 1

was the worst calamity that India has faced in the last hundred years, the PM said the supply of vaccines would increase in the coming days.

In another major announcement, the PM said the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana has been extended till Diwali. The move is expected to benefit about 80 crore people.

Several states and the Opposition parties were complaining of a shortage of vaccines ever since the Centre opened up vaccinations for the 18-plus population during the intense second wave of Covid-19 in India. This had a sudden massive load on the vaccination programme as the 18-plus population rushed to take the jab. However, due to this, all those in the 45-plus category struggled to get their second dose while a huge number of 18-plus people could barely get their first dose. To meet the demand, some states had floated global tenders for vaccine procurement.

Recalling the unprecedented rise in demand for medical oxygen during the second wave in April and May, the Prime Minister said the challenge was met on a "war footing", deploying all the systems of the govern-

ment. "In the history of India, this level of demand for medical oxygen was never experienced," said Mr Modi.

The Prime Minister said the "Made in India" vaccines have come as a big saviour to the country. The PM noted that in the past, India used to get vaccines "decades after" they were developed abroad, due to which India could not start its vaccination programmes in time. Mr Modi said prior to 2014, when his government took office, the vaccination coverage was 60 per cent, which has been raised to 90 per cent in the past five to six years.

The PM also dwelt on the differing views from various quarters over the vaccination drive. "As the corona cases started declining, questions arose about the lack of choice for states and some people questioned why the Central government was deciding everything. Flexibility in lockdown and 'one-size-does-not-fit-all' type arguments were forwarded," the PM said. He added that from January 16 till the end of April, India's vaccination programme was run mostly under the Central government, with free vaccinations for all, and people were showing

discipline in getting vaccinated when their turn came. However, in the middle of this, there were demands for the decentralisation of the vaccination programme, and questions about why priority was given to certain age groups.

The Prime Minister's announcement was welcomed by several chief ministers. "The Prime Minister's declaration that Covid-19 vaccines will be supplied free of cost to the states from June 21 is the most appropriate response at this hour. I am happy that our request has been positively responded to by the PM," said Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan. Punjab CM Amarinder Singh thanked the PM for according to his government's plea for Central procurement and distribution of vaccines for all age groups.

"Free vaccination for all should have been implemented six months ago, but better late than never. The Central government should not have made any changes in its vaccine policy that was implemented in the first place," Chhattisgarh health minister T.S. Singh Deo said. He felt that the allotment of 25 per cent vaccine doses to private hospitals was too high.

THE ASIAN AGE

8 JUNE 2021

Ahead of polls, talk of change in Punjab and UP

Congress-run Punjab and BJP-ruled Uttar Pradesh have seen considerable political activity from within the ruling parties in recent weeks, leading to speculation of possible change in guard. That may appear somewhat far-fetched. Assembly polls in these states are just over six months away and changing the leader so near an election is hardly common. Even so, the changes that the Congress and the BJP may bring about in Punjab and UP respectively, if any, are likely to be a matter of considerable interest, not least because of the context. In UP the grapevine is abuzz with stories of dissonance between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Adityanath, both regarded as the heaviest weight Hindutva icons. In Punjab at the present juncture, Chief Minister Amrinder Singh is veritably the tallest politician cutting across parties. Even so, cricketer-turned politician Navjot Sidhu, who gave up his place in the cabinet, has become a thorn in the CM's side. His steps are meant to further his ambition to be the next CM, should the Congress return to power. He has succeeded in gathering a small group of MLAs around him.

In UP, speculation of change of guard remains rife. This is because the mismanagement of the fight against Covid has become too glaring to ignore, even within senior BJP circles. But the CM is fighting for his turf.

opposition party which has broken off with traditional ally BJP to back the months-long farmers' agitation against the Centre? The CM has evidently calculated it won't. If the Congress' inner-party discord is to be brought to a close for now, the former opening batsman might do well to accept an organisational position. At the Centre, the Gandhis may be well-advised not to lean in the direction of backing a bickering dissident who, for years, is somehow seen as having their ear.

In UP, speculation of change of guard remains rife. This is because the mismanagement of the fight against Covid has become too glaring to ignore, even within senior BJP circles, including legislators. But the CM is fighting for his turf. He is said to have ignored the PM on accommodating a new legislator, a retired Gujarat cadre IAS officer, as the deputy CM. Combined with evident popular dissatisfaction on the handling of Covid, this added dimension has caused a flurry of visits to Lucknow of senior RSS and BJP officials, and later confabulations at high levels in New Delhi. It is to be kept in view that while the CM is rabidly Hindutva-minded, he is not from the RSS but the Hindu Mahasabha. He may therefore be hard to persuade to step down. It is in this uncertain atmosphere that all concerned appear to have agreed to call a truce, even if it is uneasy? Electoral consequences, if any, are in the future. But UP is the gateway to Delhi for the BJP. That links the party's fate in the next Parliament poll with the upcoming UP election.

Rationing Delhi's powers

The Delhi government of Arvind Kejriwal has been trying to put in place the delivery of rations at the doorstep of about 17.8 lakh ration card holders with about 72 lakh beneficiaries. It is being manacled by the Centre which is putting spokes in the wheel of what appears to be a good scheme that may not only reduce the role of the 'ration mafia' in distorting the distribution chain for illegal gains but also lessen the chances of 2,000 PDS shops acting as spreaders of Covid-19. In a long running battle to launch the scheme, the Delhi government also offered to drop the "Mukhyamantri Ghar Ghar Ration Yojana" from the scheme's title, but to no avail.

The Centre, through the good offices of a pliant Lt. Governor, has arrogated even more powers than would devolve in governance of the capital territory with its security implications as the seat of the Union government.

but it was bound not to have a smooth passage because an elected Delhi government's powers have been eroded thus.

In a divided state of affairs stemming from a rancorous sharing of power, the government led by a chief minister and the Lt. Governor answerable to the Centre have always been at odds. But then all this is only part of a larger manifestation of the problems of political power play seen in territories from Delhi to Lakshwadeep and also Puducherry where a popular mandate is yet to lead to the formation of a Cabinet more than a month after the declaration of election results. At no time has the administration of the NCT and Union Territories been so fraught as now. This is so because the traditional sharing of power in a federal structure is being stretched by a lust for power for its own sake.

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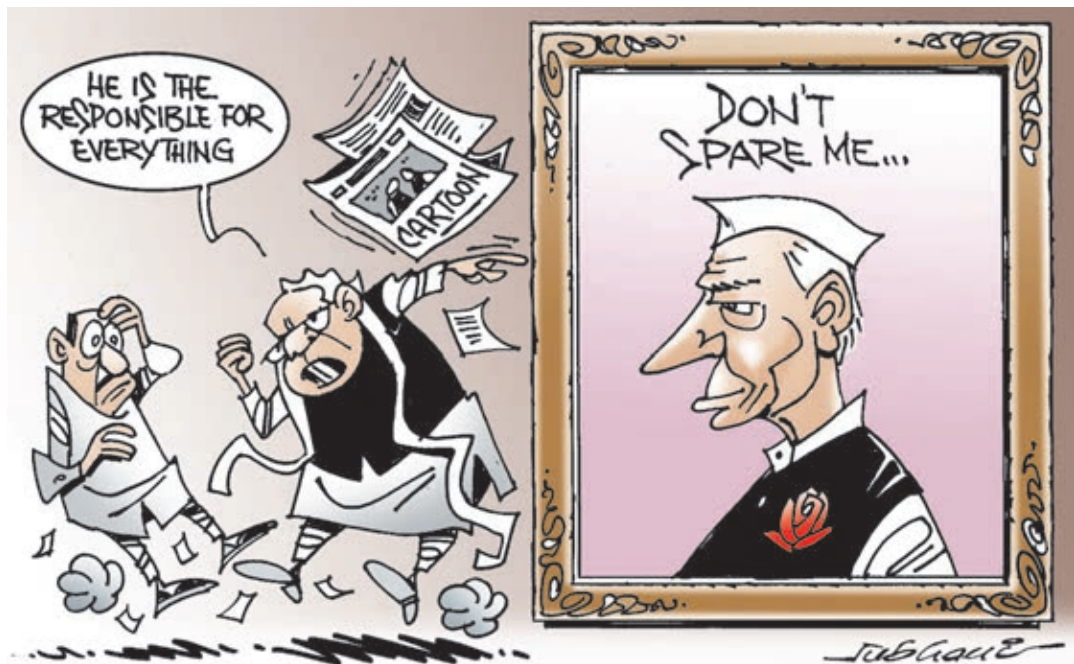
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Subhani



It's not for India to clean up the Afghanistan mess



Mohan Guruswamy

The American drawdown has begun in earnest, and it is only a matter of weeks before it becomes total. Till China's People's Liberation Army woke us up and Covid-19 knocked us down, Indian diplomats, both professional and self-styled, were arguing for an active Indian policy in Afghanistan, suggesting if problems in that historically uncontrollable country were not controlled these will spill over into India. This is nonsensical. India doesn't have a border with Afghanistan. India has Pakistan as its buffer. If the Afghan situation were to boil over it will spill out mostly into Pakistan, a country dedicated to our destruction.

No one country has played a more deleterious role in unleashing chaos in Afghanistan than Pakistan, and it is only Pakistan, because of its unique history and geography that can still play an active role in Afghanistan. We must never forget that half the Pashtun nation lives in Pakistan. And to understand what Afghanistan is today we only have to recall the words of a great Afghan poet, Khushal Khan Khattak:

"Son one word I have for thee./ Fear no one and no one you flee./ Pull out your sword and slay any one./ That says Pashtun and Afghan are not one./ Arabs know this and so do Romans./ Afghans are Pashtuns./ Pashtuns are Afghans."

Afghanistan only emerged as a country of sorts in the mid-18th century, when Ahmad Khan, later Ahmad Shah, leader of the Abdali contingent in the Persian army of Nadir Shah, carved out a buffer zone between Persia and a crumbling Mughal empire in the Indian subcontinent. This later evolved into a

buffer zone between Czarist Russia and British India. As a consequence of the May 1879 Treaty of Gandamak after the Second Afghan War, Britain had taken control of Afghanistan's foreign affairs. This treaty also gave Britain control over traditional Pashtun territory west of the Indus, including Peshawar and the Khyber Pass.

After the Panjdeh incident, a Anglo-Russian boundary commission, without Afghan participation, fixed the Afghan border with Turkmenistan, which was the whole of Russian Central Asia now — Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. Thus, as a consequence of the competition between Britain and Russia, a country, the Afghanistan that we know today, was created to serve as the buffer.

The US' National Intelligence Council's 2008 report "Global Trends 2025" has this to say about Pakistan's prospects: "The future of Pakistan is a wild card in considering the trajectory of neighbouring Afghanistan. Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province and tribal areas probably will continue to be poorly governed and the source or supporter of cross-border instability. In due course a broader coalescence of Pashtun tribes is likely to emerge and act together to erase the Durand Line, maximising Pashtun space at the expense of the Punjabis in Pakistan and the Tajiks and others in Afghanistan." If this comes to be, should it worry us too much?

Now let's take a reality check on the Afghan situation. With a population of about 39 million and growing at 2.33 per cent annually, it has a GDP of \$19 billion, placing it among the world's poorest countries. It ranks 173 out of 177 in the world

HDI rankings. But what this GDP is made up of should cause us sleepless nights. Almost 45 per cent of the GDP is due to grants from America and its allies, Saudi Arabia and some from even countries like India.

Since 2002, the United States has deployed about \$150 billion on non-military aid to Afghanistan, but in the same period it also spent about \$900 billion on military operations in Afghanistan, which really means mainly on itself. Afghanistan's own revenues are less than 10 per cent of its GDP. Quite clearly, without this continued burn rate of Western aid, Afghanistan's GDP will undergo a massive contraction, something few nations can emerge from without irrevocably and irretrievably changing. Just not to fall off the treadmill Afghanistan needs an annual grant-in-aid package of about \$15 billion. Military operations will cost a lot more.

The other numbers are equally distressing. In 2015, the country produced nearly 7,000 tons of opium and converted almost 670 tons of heroin. Afghanistan produces 87 per cent of the world's heroin. Other estimates suggest Afghanistan accounts for 92 per cent of the world's non-pharma grade opiates. In the Taliban period, the total area under opium cultivation was just 30 sq. km. During the ISAF occupation this rose to about 285 sq. km. The pressure to cultivate opium is huge. Opium earns about \$16,000 per hectare, while wheat just fetches about \$1600 per hectare.

The total value of 'legal' exports from Afghanistan are estimated to be about \$776 million, accounting for around 20 per cent of

It ranks 173 out of 177 in the world HDI rankings. What this GDP is made up of should cause sleepless nights. Almost 45% of the GDP is due to grants from the US and its allies, and countries like India.

GDP. The main Afghan exports are carpets and rugs (45%); dried fruits (31%) and medicinal plants (12%). Its main export partners are Pakistan (48%), India (19%) and Russia (9%). Afghanistan imports almost 10 times that, which leaves it with a trade deficit of \$5.8 billion. This underscores its dependence on grants-in-aid.

But this situation isn't entirely without hope. For a mountainous and mostly desert country, Afghanistan has a fairly large available arable acreage. It has eight million hectares of it, but right now exploits only 1.6 million. It also has sufficient water resources, but its rivers mostly flow into the Indus and Pakistan doesn't allow Afghanistan, either by direct pressure or more unorthodox means, to develop these resources for agriculture. Fruit and vegetable production was over \$800 million last year and contributes hugely to its exports. The scope to expand is great, but Pakistan's water aggressiveness must be curbed to benefit Afghanistan.

To be able to prosecute the war against the Taliban and grow at a useful rate to meet the demands of its fast-growing population, Afghanistan needs about \$2 billion a month. In 1992, after the Russians precipitously pulled out of Afghanistan, it took \$300 million from Russia to enable the Najibullah government to hold on. One month after it was stopped, the Najibullah government collapsed.

In 1841 William McNaughten sent a message to the Governor General in Calcutta that read: "What can you do with a kingdom whose revenues are only Rs 15 lakhs a year?" Now it has revenue of about \$2.6 billion, and grants help it to barely stay afloat. When the West pulls out and the money spigots run dry, what will happen to Pakistan?

The writer, a policy analyst studying economic and security issues, held senior positions in government and industry. He also specialises in the Chinese economy.

LETTERS

FALSE CHEER

This refers to your editorial on the Reserve Bank's decisions (June 7). The RBI is being unduly optimistic. It has slashed the growth rate forecast from 10.5 per cent to 9.5 per cent. For the last two months, most of the states have been under lockdown and economic activities have stopped completely. There is no telling as to when full-fledged business activities will start again. There is extremely little chance of a good recovery in the next quarter. The Covid-19 vaccination programme, too, is likely to pick up only in the last quarter.

D.B. Madan
New Delhi

PRINT MONEY NOW

THE RESERVE Bank of India has taken the right steps, but it should also go in for printing more currency without delay. To revive the economy, the country needs to print cash so that consumers can buy more goods, which can lead to a boost to demand. This should also be done for those at the bottom of the resources pyramid. They have been hit the hardest by the crashing economy and the Covid-19 pandemic. It is indeed time to expand the balance sheets of the government, which should spend more liberally. Direct cash transfers to the poor must also be initiated swiftly.

Bhagwan Thadani
Mumbai

SERENA'S DREAM

WHAT IS happening with the champions at Roland Garros? While some withdrew at the start, we were looking forward to seeing old warhorses like Roger Federer and Serena Williams make an impact. But both have disappointed. Federer's exit seems reasonable as he is unwilling to risk his knees and jeopardise his chances at Wimbledon. However, seeing Serena's form till the third round, one expected her to equal Margaret Court's record of 24 majors this time around, especially in the absence of her nemesis Naomi Osaka and also Simona Halep. Alas, she missed that golden opportunity.

Aruna Chandar
Chennai

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

Aakar Patel



Modi's 15-point Vikas Yatra: How far has his govt really delivered?

The NDA government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi marked its seventh anniversary at the end of last month. The celebrations were muted because of the sickness and death that the Covid-19 pandemic has brought to us. But the Prime Minister did put out a document on the achievements of the seven years. It was called "Vikas Yatra" and had 15 points.

The first point was "Ease of doing business". In the World Bank's report, India has risen from 142 to 63 in "doing business". This is commendable. What does it mean? It is a survey of limited firms of a particular size and how easily they are able to obtain permits in two cities (Mumbai and Delhi). The Vikas Yatra document does not refer to what the result of India climbing on the index was. Presumably making doing business easier would result in more businesses investing in this country. But India's investment rate has fallen from 38 per cent of GDP before Narendra Modi to 28 per cent now.

The second point is called "Ease of living". This is not an index that the

world measures and it is not quite clear what is meant by it, so I will leave it alone. The third one is "Eliminating corruption", and it says that "PM Narendra Modi has led a historic battle against corruption... Now, honesty is honoured, and transparency is the norm".

In Transparency International's Global Corruption Perceptions Index, India has fallen from a rank of 76 in the world in 2015 to 86 this year. The fourth point is called "Empowering youth opportunities". It says: "The last seven years of the Modi government have focused on clearing the path of India's youth as they navigate through opportunities across fields."

The latest Periodic Labour Force Survey conducted by the Narendra Modi government says that youth unemployment in urban India is 23 per cent. This means that one in four young people looking for work cannot find it. This is the highest rate that India has ever had.

The fifth point is "Health for all". Here we need not look beyond what is going on all around us at this very time. India's government is unique

in the world in several ways. First, because it has the highest cost of vaccination in the world. Second, because there are three different vaccination procurements — the Centre, states and private companies. And third, because India has defaulted on its commitments to vaccinate the world. We need not go into all the details of this today. So far as health for all is concerned, only a few days ago oxygen was being sold for ₹60,000 a cylinder lasting for a few hours in Delhi and there was (and there is) no national helpline for finding oxygen and essential drugs.

The sixth point is called "Infra for growth". India's GDP growth has been falling since January 2018, according to the government's own figures. It fell from eight per cent to seven per cent to six per cent to five per cent to four per cent to three per cent even before the pandemic. Last year the economy contracted in the biggest fall in its history.

The seventh point is called "Mobility for the middle class" and says that "no other government has done more for them as the Modi government". Last month a report by the

Azim Premji University showed that during the pandemic 27 crore Indians were pushed into poverty. This means that they were not poor according to the government's poverty line before but have become now.

The Vikas Yatra's eight point is called "Nari Shakti for New India" The participation of women in India's labour force is around 10 per cent today, the lowest in history. In a 2018 study by Thomson Reuters, India was found to be the most dangerous place for women in the world. In the 2020 Georgetown Institute's Women, Peace and Security Index, India ranked 133, having fallen two places since 2017.

Point 9 says "Prosperous farmers for prosperous India". It claims that "farmers' welfare is a top priority for the Modi government". The tens of thousands of farmers currently holding protests outside Delhi's borders, who have been sitting there for the past six months and who have been vilified as terrorists, Khalistanis and anti-nationals, will disagree.

Number 10 is "Putting India first". The claim here is on national security. We haven't been told yet what the

status of our patrolling in Dipsang is by the government, but if experts are to be believed we have given away considerable space to China.

Numbers 11, 12, 13 and 14 are called "Renewed focus on the Northeast", "Social empowerment", "Taking development to the poorest" and "Transformative economic growth". These are generic terms, but we can accept that work has been done on them. The final point is "India fights Corona". It would be interesting to see what the world thinks of that statement. Even with its under-reporting of numbers on infections and deaths, India has the second highest number of cases in the world and the third highest number of deaths. Estimates say that in reality it is the leader in both and that the number of deaths just in the second wave has been over a million across India.

This then is the state of the Government of India and of our country as we enter the eighth year of the Narendra Modi government.

The writer is a columnist and a senior journalist

SHORT TAKES

WOMAN FALLS IN CANYON IN PARK, DIES

Springdale (US): A 26-year-old woman has died after falling in a canyon at a US national park in Utah, officials said.

The woman's body was recovered Sunday evening from Mystery Canyon at Zion National Park, the National Park Service said in a news release. According to visitors, the woman was canyoneering alone and fell 50 to 80 feet (15 to 24 meters) on Saturday afternoon. Crews launched a search and rescue effort that closed various areas of the park.

A helicopter was sent to rescue the woman but was unable to pull her out "due to the steep, narrow canyon walls," the park service said in the release. Medics later reached the woman before she died a short time later. The woman had injuries consistent with a high-elevation fall, park officials said. Her name was not immediately released.

PROTESTS RISE IN MINNEAPOLIS OVER MAN'S KILLING

Minneapolis: Protesters took to the streets for a fourth consecutive night in Minneapolis over the shooting death of a man of colour by members of a U.S. Marshals task force.

Crowds marched on Sunday evening in response to Thursday's fatal shooting of 32-year-old Winston Boogie Smith Jr. in Minneapolis' Uptown neighbourhood. Officers stood watch during the demonstrations. There were no immediate reports of injuries or arrests stemming from Sunday's protests.

Authorities said on Friday that Smith was wanted in a weapons violation and fired a gun before two deputies shot him while he was inside a parked vehicle. Members of the US Marshals Fugitive Task Force were trying to arrest him on a warrant for allegedly being a felon in possession of a gun.

Family and friends described Smith as a father of three who was often harassed by police.

OLDEST MALE CHIMPANZEE DIES IN SAN FRANCISCO

San Francisco: The oldest male chimpanzee living in an accredited North American zoo died Saturday at the San Francisco Zoo & Gardens. He was 63.

The chimpanzee, named Cobby, had been a hand-reared performing chimpanzee before he was brought to the San Francisco zoo in the 1960s. Although the zoo said in a news release that the chimpanzee's cause of death had not been determined, the animal had recently been ill and zoo officials believe old age was a factor.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature lists chimpanzees as endangered, and they are considered among the most at-risk primates in Africa due to hunting, habitat loss and disease. The average life expectancy of the 100,000 to 200,000 chimpanzees living in the wild is 33 years.

2 HELD IN ROAD RAGE SHOOTING DEATH OF CHILD

Santa Ana (US): Two people were arrested Sunday in connection to a road rage shooting in Southern California that killed a 6-year-old boy, the California Highway Patrol said.

Eriz Marcus Anthony, 24, and Lee Wynne, 23, were taken into custody outside their home in Costa Mesa, the highway patrol said in a statement. Their relationship was not immediately known. Officials said the pair were expected to be charged with murder.

Aiden Leos, 6, was fatally shot in the abdomen on May 21 while seated in the back seat of a car driven by his mother, Joanna Cloonan, on State Route 55 in the city of Orange. Highway patrol officials said the road rage incident stemmed from "a perceived unsafe lane change."

According to accounts from the mother and witnesses who stopped to help her, another car cut her off, she responded with a hand gesture and the car slipped in behind her and someone inside fired a shot through the rear of her car. A \$500,000 reward had been offered for information leading to an arrest, Southern California News Group reported.

50 killed, 70 hurt in Pak passenger train smash

Karachi, June 7: Two passenger trains collided in Pakistan's southern Sindh Province early on Monday morning, killing at least 50 people and injuring 70 others, prompting authorities to call in the Army and paramilitary forces for the challenging task of rescue and relief operations.

The accident occurred when the Millat Express train from Karachi to Sargodha derailed and fell on the opposite track and collided with Sir Syed Express headed from Rawalpindi to Karachi, a spokesperson of Pakistan Railways said.

The collision, in which bogies of the Millat Express train overturned, took place near Dharki, a city located in the Ghotki district of upper Sindh.

An emergency has been declared at hospitals in Ghotki, Dharki, Obaro and Mirpur Mathelo where injured were rushed. At least 50 people have lost their lives and 70 others sustained injuries, ARY News quoted Ghotki Deputy Commissioner Usman Abdullah as saying.

The deceased included women and some railway officials.

Reacting to the train accident, Prime Minister Imran Khan said that he was "shocked by the horrific train accident".



Angela Merkel

MOMENTUM WITH MERKEL PARTY AHEAD OF ELECTIONS

Berlin, June 7: German Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservatives on Monday celebrated a thumping win over the far right in the last regional vote before a general election that also exposed the weaknesses of the Greens, their main rivals at the national level.

The Christian Democratic Union (CDU) under new party chief Armin Laschet won around 37 percent of the vote in Saxony-Anhalt on Sunday, preliminary results showed, well ahead of the second place anti-immigration, anti-Muslim AfD party on around 21 per cent.

"This is a good day for the CDU and for democracy in Germany," a beaming Laschet told reporters, calling his party a "bulwark against extremism" after polls had predicted a much stronger AfD score.

The Greens, who are running neck-and-neck nationally with the Union alliance between the CDU and its smaller Bavarian CSU sister party, scored a disappointing result of around six per cent.

The outcome in the economically depressed former East German state is a huge boost for would-be chancellor Laschet ahead of Germany's general vote on September 26.

— AFP



Security personnel carry out rescue operations at the site of a train accident in Daharki area of the northern Sindh province on Monday.

— AFP

Shocked by the horrific train accident at Ghotki early this morning leaving 30 passengers dead. Have asked the Railway Minister to reach the site & ensure medical assistance to injured & support for families of the dead. Ordering comprehensive investigation into railway safety faultlines, he said on Twitter.

Sir Syed Express train's driver Aijaz Shah said that he was rescued by locals after two hours of the collision.

He said that the train was running at its normal speed when he suddenly saw the derailed bogies of Millat Express train at the track. Due to the short distance, the train rammed into the derailed bogies of Millat Express, leading to the accident, it said.

Officials were facing difficulties in rescuing the people trapped inside the overturned bogies.

Speaking to *Geo News*, the Ghotki Deputy Commissioner said that 13 to 14 bogies have derailed

in the accident while six to eight were "completely destroyed".

Rescuing passengers who are still trapped is a "challenge" for the rescue officials, he said, adding that a relief train has departed from Rohri.

"This is a challenging task. It will take time to use heavy machinery to free citizens (still trapped). We are also establishing a medical camp to provide medical aid to citizens," he said.

— PTI

Sea at risk



The Marmara sea at the Caddebostan shore, on the Asian side of Istanbul on Monday, seen with a huge mass of marine mulch, a thick, slimy substance made up of compounds released by marine organisms. Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan promised on Saturday to rescue the sea from an outbreak of "sea snot" that is alarming marine biologists and environmentalists.

— AP

Russia pulls out of Open Skies deal

Moscow, June 7: Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday signed a bill to withdraw from an international treaty allowing surveillance flights over military facilities, following the US exit from the pact. The bill was endorsed by Russian lawmakers after US officials told Moscow last month that President Joe Biden's administration had decided not to reenter the Open Skies Treaty that the US left under President Donald Trump.

As a presidential candidate, Biden had criticised Trump's withdrawal as "short-sighted." Moscow had signalled its readiness to reverse the withdrawal

● **THE OPEN SKIES**
Treaty was intended to build trust between Russia and the West.

procedure and stay in the 1992 treaty if the United States returned to the agreement, but now Putin's signature seals the Russian withdrawal that would take effect in six months. Putin and Biden are to have a summit in Geneva on June 16, a meeting that comes amid soaring tensions in Russia-US ties that have hit post-Cold War lows after Russia's 2014 annexation of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula, accusations of Moscow's interference in

US elections, hacking attacks and other issues.

The Open Skies Treaty was intended to build trust between Russia and the West by allowing the accord's more than three dozen signatories to carry out surveillance flights over each other's territories to oversee troop deployments and other military activities. More than 1,500 flights have been conducted under the treaty since it took effect in 2002, helping foster transparency and monitor arms control agreements.

Trump pulled out of the pact last year, arguing that Russian violations made it untenable for Washington

to remain a party, and the United States completed its withdrawal in November. Russia has rejected any violations, arguing that a few restrictions on observation flights it imposed in the past were permissible under the treaty and noted that the US imposed more sweeping restrictions on observation flights over Alaska.

As a condition for staying in the pact after the US pullout, Moscow has successfully pushed for guarantees from NATO allies that they won't hand over the data collected during their observation flights over Russia to the US.

— AP

BORIS' PARTY REBELS SET TO CHALLENGE FOREIGN AID CUTS

London, June 7: Senior Lawmakers from Britain's governing Conservative Party are hoping to reverse the government's contentious cut in foreign aid spending — just days before Prime Minister Boris Johnson welcomes world leaders to the country for a Group of Seven summit.

The government dropped its long-standing commitment to spend 0.7 per cent of the UK's gross domestic product on international aid, citing the Coronavirus pandemic's blow to the economy. It says the cut — to 0.5 per cent — is temporary. But Johnson's predecessor Theresa May, along with former Cabinet ministers Andrew Mitchell and David Davis, are among the Conservatives pushing for a reversal. A vote on the issue could take place on Monday if the amendment is selected for a vote by House of Commons Speaker Lindsay Hoyle.

Mitchell, a former international development secretary who is leading the rebellion, said he has the support of more than 30 Conservative lawmakers and is confident of pushing that to 45. That would be enough to overturn Johnson's working majority of 85 in the House of Commons.

— AP

Writ against Oli reshuffle filed in Nepal

Plea tells SC caretaker PM plan is against Constitution

Kathmandu, June 7: A writ petition was filed at Nepal's Supreme Court on Monday demanding nullification of the Cabinet reshuffle by Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli, arguing that being a caretaker premier he did not have the executive power to reshuffle or induct new ministers.

The writ filed by senior advocate Dinesh Tripathi urged the apex court to rescind the caretaker prime minister's decision to induct new ministers as it goes against the spirit of the Constitution, *The Himalayan Times* reported. The writ argued that Oli is a caretaker prime minister for now — as the House of Representatives stands dissolved — and as such he does not have the executive power to reshuffle or induct new ministers. The writ demands that the court issue an order to rescind the June 4 Cabinet expansion and reshuffling and stop the prime minister from taking any decision that would increase the economic burden on the national exchequer.

Beleaguered Prime Minister Oli, 69, joined hands with the key Madhesi Janata Samajwadi Party after effecting a major Cabinet reshuffle on June 4. Oli, who has been facing strong opposition from within his own party against his move to dissolve the House of Representatives, retained only four old Cabinet members — Lilanath Shrestha, Basanta Kumar Nembang, Bishnu Paudel, and Krishna Gopal Shrestha in the Cabinet. He removed some key ministers, including his Deputy Prime Minister Ishwor Pokharel and Foreign Minister Pradeep Gyawali in the Cabinet rejig. He had inducted eight ministers and two state ministers from the Mahanta Thakur-Rajendra Mahato Faction of the Janata Samajbadi Party-Nepal.



K.P. Sharma Oli

OLI JOINS HANDS WITH JANATA SAMAJWADI PARTY

Kathmandu, June 7: Nepal's beleaguered Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli has joined hands with the key Madhesi Janata Samajwadi Party after effecting a major Cabinet reshuffle, a move regarded by many analysts as hitting two targets with one arrow as it involves consolidating his grip on power and boosting ties with neighbouring India.

Oli, who has been facing strong opposition from within his own party against his move to dissolve the House of Representatives, removed some key ministers, including his Deputy Prime Minister Ishwor Pokharel and Foreign Minister Pradeep Gyawali in the Cabinet rejig on Friday.

— PTI

The Mahantha Thakur-led faction of the JSP decided to join the Oli-led minority government after the prime minister agreed to meet some of their key demands, including the citizenship issue that has been on hold in the parliamentary State Affairs Committee for the last three years and withdrawal of cases filed against 120 leaders and cadres of the JSP. The Opposition and experts have flayed his move, saying it was against the constitutional norms.

— PTI

Seoul court rejects slave labour claim against Japan firms

Seoul, June 7: A South Korean court on Monday rejected a claim by dozens of World War II-era Korean factory workers and their relatives who sought compensation from 16 Japanese companies, including Nippon Steel, Nissan Chemical and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries. The court dismissed their civil lawsuit after concluding the 1965 treaty doesn't allow South Korean citizens to pursue legal action against the Japanese government or citizens over wartime grievances.

Accepting the plaintiffs' claim would violate international legal principles that countries cannot use domestic law as justification for failures to perform a treaty, the court said. Some plaintiffs told reporters outside the court they planned to appeal.

— AP

WAR | HERO Post World War II, Dushman trained Soviet Union's women national fencing team for 40 years

Last of Soviet soldiers who liberated Auschwitz dies at 98

Berlin, June 7: David Dushman, the last surviving Soviet soldier involved in the liberation of the Nazi death camp at Auschwitz, has died. He was 98.

The Jewish Community of Munich and Upper Bavaria said on Sunday that Dushman had died at a Munich hospital on Saturday. "Every witness to history who passes on is a loss, but saying farewell to David Dushman is particularly painful," said Charlotte Knobloch, a for-

mer head of Germany's Central Council of Jews. "Dushman was right on the front lines when the National Socialists' machinery of murder was destroyed."

As a young Red Army soldier, Dushman flattened the forbidding electric fence around the notorious Nazi death camp with his T-34 tank on Jan. 27, 1945. He admitted that he and his comrades didn't immediately realise the full magnitude of what had happened in

Auschwitz. "Skeletons everywhere," he recalled in a 2015 interview with Munich newspaper *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*. "They stumbled out of the barracks, they sat and lay among the dead. Terrible. We threw them all of our canned food and immediately drove on, to hunt fascists."

More than a million people, most of them Jews deported there from all over Europe, were murdered by the Nazis at Auschwitz-Birkenau

between 1940 and 1945. Dushman earlier took part in some of the bloodiest military encounters of World War II, including the battles of Stalingrad and Kursk. He was seriously wounded three times but survived the war, one of just 69 soldiers in his 12,000-strong division. His father — a former military doctor — was meanwhile imprisoned and later died in a Soviet punishment camp after falling victim to one of Josef Stalin's

purges. After the war, Dushman helped train the Soviet Union's women's national fencing team for four decades and witnessed the attack by eight Palestinian terrorists on the Israeli team at the 1972 Munich Olympics, which resulted in the deaths of 11 Israelis, five of the Palestinians and a German policeman. Later in life, Dushman visited schools to tell students about the war and the horrors of the Holocaust.

— AP



David Dushman

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	52,328.51	0.44
Nifty 50	15,751.70	0.52
S&P 500*	4,219.36	-0.25
Dollar (₹)	72.80	0.28
Pound Sterling (₹)	102.98	0.14
Euro (₹)	88.54	-0.11
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,107▼152	0.31
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	1.570	0.010
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.022	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	71.71	-0.25

* As of 8:30 PM IST

RBI slaps penalty on BoI, PNB totalling ₹6 crore

The RBI imposed penalty of Rs 6 crore on Bank of India and Punjab National Bank for contravention of norms, including one related to "Frauds Classification and Reporting". A penalty of Rs 4 crore has been imposed on BoI and Rs 2 crore on PNB. The RBI said its examination found non-compliance with/contravention of directions, viz., breach of transaction limits; delay in transfer of unclaimed balances at BoI.

Central Bank Q4 net loss narrows to ₹1,349 crore



Central Bank of India reported a narrowing of its net loss to Rs 1,349.21 crore on a standalone basis in the fourth quarter against a net loss of Rs 1,529.07 crore in the January-March 2020 quarter. Sequentially, there was a net profit of Rs 165.41 crore in the December quarter of FY21. Net profit (standalone) for FY21 was down by 20.84 per cent to Rs 887.58 crore against Rs 1,121.35 crore in FY20.

‘Firms struggling with rising cost of raw materials’

Businesses are struggling with rising cost of raw materials amid disruptions in supply chains, the PHDCCI said. In a survey, the industry body said going ahead, a substantial stimulus to push the economy would be crucial. "The survey, which was conducted across 34 sectors, revealed that 73 per cent of respondents were struggling with rising cost of raw materials... disruptions in supply chains and contraction in demand," it said.

Nissan launches subscription programme

Nissan Motor India said it has introduced its subscription programme for Nissan and Datsun models. Launched in partnership with ORIX India, the plan will be initially available in Delhi-NCR, Hyderabad and Chennai, followed by Bengaluru, Pune and Mumbai. After paying a nominal refundable security deposit, customers can choose to use a brand new car without actually owning it by paying a fixed monthly fee, Nissan said.

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■ 80% MNCs will cull ‘slow-to-transition suppliers’ by 2025 Big companies to remove suppliers over emissions

ALASTAIR MARSH JUNE 7

For the world's biggest companies, reducing emissions means cutting suppliers that aren't moving quickly enough to prepare for a low-carbon economy. Just short of 80 per cent of multinational companies will start culling "slow-to-transition suppliers" by 2025, and 15 per cent have already begun to do so, according to a report from Standard Chartered Plc based on a survey of corporate executives at 400 of the world's largest companies. Since more than 70 per cent of emissions for such businesses come from their supply chains, lowering those emissions is the first step in their climate-change strategies. With companies such as Apple Inc, Royal Dutch Shell Plc and Unilever Plc



all committing to reach net-zero emissions, the carbon contribution of global supply chains is under scrutiny like never before. While dropping suppliers may provide a quick win for a company's road to net zero, it also will disproportionately affect emerging economies that are likely to face the greatest social and economic toll from climate change. "This should be a wake-up call to suppliers," said

Amit Puri, global head of environmental and social risk management at Standard Chartered. "The net-zero debate has intensified the focus on carbon emissions, and companies are working to understand the sources of emissions and their impacts in a more meaningful way." Standard Chartered found 57 per cent of multinationals were willing to replace emerging-market suppliers with ones in developed markets that

are less reliant on fossil fuels if it would help them reach net zero. The 400 companies surveyed by the bank had at least one supplier based in either Bangladesh, China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Malaysia, Nigeria, South Africa, South Korea, Singapore or the United Arab Emirates. In those 12 countries, about a third of exports, or \$1.6 trillion, are "set to be subject to multinational corporation zero tolerance on carbon," according to the report. "For the net-zero trailblazers, outsized opportunities await," said Simon Connell, global head of sustainability strategy at London-based Standard Chartered. "Those that fail to take up the challenge, meanwhile, can expect to lose access to a significant slice of business in the near future."

— Bloomberg

World Bank okays \$500 mn support to MSMEs

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JUNE 7

The World Bank has approved a \$500 million programme to support India's Covid-hit micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). The programme targets improvement in the performance of 5.55 lakh MSMEs and is expected to mobilise financing of \$15.5 billion as part of the Indian government's \$3.4

billion MSME Competitive-ness-A Post-Covid Resilience and Recovery Programme (MCRPR). The \$500-million Raising and Accelerating MSME Performance (RAMP) programme is the World Bank's second intervention in this sector, the first being the \$750-million MSME Emergency Response Programme, approved in July 2020 to address the immediate liq-

uidity and credit needs of viable MSMEs. Till date, five million firms have accessed finance from the government programme, WB said in a release. The World Bank's financing towards the MSME sector amounts to \$1.25 billion over the past year. Having supported the immediate liquidity and credit needs of viable MSMEs in the first phase, the RAMP Program will

support the government's efforts to increase MSME productivity and financing in the economic recovery phase. The MSME sector is the backbone of the country's economy, contributing 30 per cent of India's GDP and 40 per cent of exports. Out of some 58 million MSMEs in India, more than 40 percent lack access to formal sources of finance, said the multilateral bank.

Google to change global ad practices after French fine

MATHIEU ROSEMAIN JUNE 7



Google said it would make changes to its global advertising business to ensure it did not abuse its dominance, bowing to antitrust pressure for the first time in a landmark settlement with French authorities.

The deal with the French competition watchdog could help rebalance the power over advertising in favour of publishers, which held sway over the business in the pre-internet era but lost control with the rapid rise of Google and Facebook.

The settlement, which was announced on Monday and also saw Google fined 220 million euros (\$268 million), is the first time the US tech giant has agreed to make changes to its huge advertising business, which brings in the bulk of its revenue.

"The decision to sanction Google is of particular significance because it's the first decision in the world focusing on the complex algorithmic auction processes on which the online ad business relies," said France's antitrust chief Isabelle de Silva. The watchdog found that Google's ad management platform for large publishers Google Ad Manager favoured the company's own online ad marketplace, Google AdX, where publishers sell space to advertisers in real-time. Ad Manager provided

AdX with strategic data such as the winning bidding prices, while AdX also enjoyed privileged access to requests made by advertisers via Google's ad services, the authority said. AdX, in turn, exchanged data more smoothly with Ad Manager than it did with other advertising management platforms, the watchdog added. Such platforms are crucial for publishers to manage and sell advertising space. Under the terms of the settlement, Google made commitments to improve the way Ad Manager services worked with rival ad servers and ad space sales platforms, the French watchdog said. Some changes would be implemented by the first quarter of 2022, it said, adding that Google would not appeal the decision.

—Reuters

NCLT approves Piramal's ₹37,250-cr bid for DHFL

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, JUNE 7

The Mumbai bench of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) has approved Piramal Capital & Housing Finance Ltd's resolution plan for debt-ridden Dewan Housing Finance Ltd (DHFL). The order is subject to the outcome of the appeal in the appellate tribunal and the Supreme Court.

Piramal Group has offered Rs 37,250 crore to DHFL's creditors. This includes Rs 12,700 crore in upfront cash, Rs 3,000 crore cash from the interest income earned on the existing cash on DHFL's books, another Rs 1,000 crore for the insurance stake, and Rs 1,000 additional cash for interest income after the NCLT approval. This takes the total cash for the creditors at Rs 17,700 crore. The remaining Rs 19,550 crore worth of non-convertible debentures will be repaid over 10 years. According to sources, shares of DHFL would be

delisted post-acquisition as per the IBC guidelines and Sebi delisting norms. Also, the Piramal company may merge itself with DHFL, for which a call would be taken after all legal and regulatory clearances are obtained, reports said. Piramal Capital's resolution plan for DHFL has received 94 per cent votes by the committee of creditors (CoC). The bid amount will enable lenders to recover around 40 per cent of their dues, out of the total admitted claims at Rs 87,082 crore. A statement from Piramal Group said, "The approval from NCLT is a significant milestone in DHFL's resolution and an affirmation of the sanctity of the IBC process in India." Former DHFL promoter Kapil Wadhawan has moved the Supreme Court to get a stay on the NCLAT order that stayed an earlier order of the NCLT asking the CoC to consider the settlement offer put forward by Wadhawan.

Unlock theme plays out; hotels, food chains rally



RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, JUNE 7

Stocks of power, auto, hotels, fast food chains and movie theatres' rose as unlock themes gained in the broader market rally on Monday, with several large states having started easing restrictions with fresh Covid cases hitting near two-month low. On Sunday, fresh Covid cases reported were 1,00,636, far less than the April-May period. Badly impacted Maharashtra state extended shop opening hours in Mumbai till 4 pm. Delhi has also seen a sharp fall in fresh Covid cases to 381 on Sunday. Stocks in the broader market rallied more than benchmark indices Nifty-50 and Sensex, relieved by the consistently falling fresh Covid cases. The BSE Mid-cap Index gained 0.78 per cent and the BSE Small-cap Index gained 1.38 per cent compared to Nifty-50 gaining 0.52 per cent and Sensex gaining 0.44 per cent. The Nifty-50 continues to make new closing highs as it closed at 15,751.65, up 81.40 points and the Sensex closed at 52,328.51, up 228.46 points. "The broader market displayed buoyancy across multiple diverse themes ranging from Unlock Themes, cement, sugar, defence, power & pathology, among others. As a matter of fact, it would not be unfair to say that the day clearly belonged to the broader market," S. Ranganathan, head of Research, LKP securities said. Auto stocks also gained as the BSE Auto Index gained 0.70 per cent.

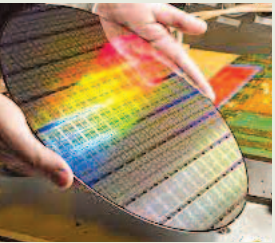
CHIPPING | IN Dresden plant will supply to customers worldwide

Bosch opens German chip factory

CHRISTOPH RAUWALD JUNE 7

Robert Bosch GmbH opened a 1 billion-euro (\$1.2 billion) factory that should gradually help alleviate supply constraints and herald broader efforts to make Europe less dependent on imports from Asia or the US. The first chips manufactured at the plant near the Germany city of Dresden will be used in electric tools next month, and output for auto parts has been accelerated by three months to September, Bosch said on Monday ahead of the site's opening ceremony. Chancellor Angela Merkel will attend remotely. "There is no quick fix as ramping up production takes time," Bosch board

member Harald Kroeger said in a phone interview. "But the new factory certainly helps free up other capacity - every chip is a good chip." Chip-supply bottlenecks had already started disrupting manufacturing across business sectors when a fire at a Japanese factory and winter storms in Texas exacerbated shortages early this year. The woes have affected producers of electronics, vehicles and other goods and exposed the fragility of global supply chains. The European Union is particularly vulnerable and has set a goal to produce at least 20 per cent of the world's supply on a value basis by the end of the decade. "If a big bloc like the EU is not in a position to pro-



duce microchips, I don't feel comfortable about that," Merkel said during a virtual speech last month to a conference hosted by German research organisations. "If you are a car nation, it is not really good if you cannot produce the main component." Germany's federal economy ministry provided about 140 million euros of support to Bosch's factory as part of the Important

Project of Common European Interest programme, or IPCEI. Bosch's Dresden factory will supply customers worldwide, Kroeger said. Adding capacity for chips or ramping up output of existing factories is complex and time consuming. Three years after a groundbreaking ceremony, Bosch's highly automated Dresden factory employs about 250 people and will eventually have 700 staff. The site covers about 14 soccer fields and can churn out 300-millimetre silicon substrate wafers with structural widths of up to 65 nanometers. Bosch already makes 150 and 200-millimetre wafers at a factory in Reutlingen, outside Stuttgart.

— Bloomberg

SHORT TAKES

BCCI may push IPL final to Oct. 15

New Delhi: The BCCI brass is exploring the option of using the full window of Indian Premier League by pushing the final back to October 15 in order to reduce the number of double headers in the UAE's searing September heat. As reported, the tournament will start on Sunday, September 19 and while the final was tentatively planned for October 10, the BCCI as well as the Emirates Cricket Board are mulling stretching the lucrative T20 event till October 15. "September 15 to October 15 is the window. Initially, BCCI was thinking of having 10 double headers. But, in third and fourth week of September, having 10 afternoon matches can be physically exhausting for player in such short window," a BCCI source said on the condition of anonymity. — *PTI*

Bhajji says sorry for intsa post

New Delhi: Veteran Indian off-spinner Harbhajan Singh on Monday unconditionally apologised for a social media post in which he shared a picture of Khalistani militant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale to pay homage to those who died in 'Operation Bluestar' of 1984. The 40-year-old off-spinner said he posted a WhatsApp forward on the 37th anniversary of the operation without realising that the man in the picture was Bhindranwale. "I just wish to clarify and apologise for an instagram post yesterday. It was a WhatsApp forward that I posted in a haste and without even realising the content used and what it signified and stood for," he said in an apology note posted on Twitter. "This is my unconditional apology for hurting the sentiments of my nation." — *PTI*

Half of Japan now favours Olympics

Tokyo: Half of Japan's public favours holding the Tokyo Olympics this summer, a new survey showed on Monday, suggesting support for the contentious Games is rising seven weeks before the opening ceremony. The latest poll by the *Yomiuri Shimbun* daily showed 50 per cent of respondents want the Games to be held this summer, with 48 per cent in favour of cancellation. Postponement was not given as an option. National polls have tended to show that a majority of respondents oppose holding the Games this summer, backing either a further postponement or cancellation. In early May the same paper found 59 per cent of respondents wanted the Games to be scrapped. — *AFP*

Record seventh title for Biles

Fort Worth, US: Simone Biles toned it down. A little anyway. And soared even higher. The 24-year-old gymnastics superstar claimed her record seventh U.S. title Sunday night, delivering another stunning and stunningly easy performance that served little doubt the pressure surrounding her bid to become the first woman to win back-to-back Olympic championships in more than 50 years is only pushing her to even greater heights. Shaking off a somewhat sloppy start Friday, at least by her impeccable standards, Biles put on a four-rotation showcase that highlighted why a GOAT emblem a nod to her status as the Greatest Of All Time has become a fixture on her competition leotard. — *AP*

Clippers eliminate Doncic and Mavs

Los Angeles: Kawhi Leonard finished with 28 points, 10 rebounds and nine assists as the Los Angeles Clippers won game seven at home with a 126-111 win over the Dallas Mavericks to punch their ticket to the second round of the NBA playoffs. The Clippers advanced to the second round to face the top-seeded Utah Jazz with game one on Tuesday in Salt Lake City. — *AFP*

Paris, June 7: Novak Djokovic battled back from two sets down to reach the French Open quarterfinals for the 15th time on Monday as 17-year-old Coco Gauff became the youngest woman to reach a Grand Slam last eight since 2006. World number one Djokovic stayed on course to become the first man in over 50 years to win all four Slams twice after surviving a rousing challenge from 19-year-old Lorenzo Musetti.

The Italian teenager, ranked 76 and making his Grand Slam debut, was poised to condemn Djokovic to his earliest exit in Paris in 12 years when he captured the first two sets, 6-7 (7/9), 6-7 (2/7).

But Djokovic levelled by taking the next two sets, 6-1, 6-0 before Musetti, who had taken a medical time-out, retired at 4-0 down in the decider suffering from a stomach injury.

It was the fifth time in his Grand Slam career that the 34-year-old Djokovic has come back from to sets down to win. Djokovic, the 2016 champion and chasing a 19th major, reeled off 53 of the last 61 points against the weary Italian as he made a quarter-final at the majors for the 49th time. Gauff, meanwhile, swept to an impressive 53-minute, 6-3, 6-1 win over Tunisia's Ons Jabeur.

'SUPER HAPPY'

Gauff is also the youngest American woman to book a place in the last eight in Paris since Jennifer Capriati in 1993. In a composed performance on Court Philippe Chatrier, the American teenager, seeded 24, broke her Tunisian opponent three times without facing a break point herself. "I am super happy to reach my first Grand Slam quarter-final. I played really well," said Gauff who has yet to drop a set and also learned she had claimed a place on

MEXICO MATCH HALTED FOR RACIST CHANTS

Denver, June 7: A match involving Mexico's national team was stopped for the second time in four nights because of discriminatory chants. Officials stopped the CONCACAF Nations League final against the United States at Empower Field for about three minutes during second-half stoppage time Sunday night under the regional governing body's anti-discrimination protocol. A similar stoppage occurred Thursday night late in Mexico's semifinal against Costa Rica, which El Tri went on to win on penalty kicks. CONCACAF said stadium security ejected several fans during the first half for discriminatory language following warnings on the public address system. Soccer officials repeatedly have attempted to stop homophobic chants at Mexican national team matches. — *AP*

SUNIL DOUBLE STRIKE BLANKS BANGLADESH

Doha, June 7: India recorded their first win in FIFA World Cup qualifiers in six years after talisman Sunil Chhetri struck twice for a 2-0 victory over Bangladesh in the joint preliminary round match here on Monday. Chhetri first found the back of the net in the 79th minute to keep his team on course for entry into the third qualifying round of the 2023 Asian Cup. The double strikes meant India registered their first win in what was turning out to be one of their worst World Cup qualifying campaigns in many years. It was also their first victory in World Cup qualifiers away from home in 20 years. A confident India found themselves pressing in the opposition half after Chhetri's 73rd goal in international football and the move worked for beleaguered coach Igor Stimac as the captain scored his and the team's second just before the final whistle. With his two goals, Chhetri, international football's second highest scorer among active players, more than made up for the fumble in the 63rd minute when the unmarked captain missed a free header after a fine ball from Brandon Fernandes. — *PTI*

NO GAFFE

Sublime Gauff youngest to reach Grand Slam last 8



Coco Gauff of the US en route to her 6-3, 6-1 win over Tunisia's Ons Jabeur in their French Open fourth round match in Paris on Monday. — *AFP*

the American team for the Tokyo Olympics. Gauff, who famously raced to the Wimbledon fourth round in 2019 as a 15-year-old qualifier, faces Barbora Krejickova for a place in the semi-finals. The 33rd-ranked Czech

also reached her first Grand Slam quarter-final with a 6-2, 6-0 win over 2018 runner-up Sloane Stephens. However, last year's runner-up Sofia Kenin, the fourth seed, was knocked out by Maria Sakkari 6-1,

6-3 as the Greek also made the quarter-finals of a Grand Slam for the first time. "I'm speechless. I love Paris. I'm having a great time and I don't want to leave anytime soon," said Sakkari. — *AFP*

OSAKA PULLS OUT OF BERLIN TOURNAMENT

Berlin, June 7: Naomi Osaka has pulled out of next week's Berlin WTA grasscourt tournament in the wake of her controversial exit from the French Open, organisers confirmed Monday.

"We have received notification that Naomi Osaka cannot start in Berlin. After consulting her management, she will take a break," said a spokesman for the Berlin tournament, which starts June 14.

Osaka has not said when she plans to play next, casting doubt on her participation at Wimbledon, which starts on June 28, and the Tokyo Olympics.

The 23-year-old four-time Grand Slam winner has been in the spotlight since withdrawing from Roland Garros after a dispute over her refusal to attend press conferences. As a result, French tennis officials fined Osaka \$15,000 and threatened to axe her from the tournament. — *AFP*

THE RESULTS

Men's singles fourth round: Novak Djokovic (SRB x1) bt Lorenzo Musetti (ITA) 6-7 (7/9), 6-7 (2/7), 6-1, 6-0, 4-0 (retired); Matteo Berrettini (ITA x9) bt Roger Federer (SUI x8) (walkover); Diego Schwartzman (ARG x10) bt Jan-Lennard Struff (GER) 7-6 (11/9), 6-4, 7-5.

Women's singles fourth round: Coco Gauff (USA x24) bt Ons Jabeur (TUN x25) 6-3, 6-1; Barbora Krejickova (CZE) bt Sloane Stephens (USA) 6-2, 6-0; Maria Sakkari (GRE x17) bt Sofia Kenin (USA x4) 6-1, 6-3.

USA first Nations League winners



The United States team celebrate winning the CONCACAF Nations League championship in Denver on Sunday. USA beat Mexico 3-2 after extra time. — *AP*

over Panamanian referee John Pitti as he checked the video on the tackle by Carlos Salcedo that brought down Pulisic in the box. The decision to grant the penalty prompted

Mexico fans to shower the pitch with debris. Mexico had been quick out of the blocks, seizing a 1-0 lead in the second minute through Jesus Corona. Gio Reyna answered for

the United States in the 27th — minutes after Mexico thought they had gone up 2-0 on a header by Hector Moreno that was disallowed upon VAR review because he was a hair offside. — *AFP*

Belgium, Netherlands win last pre-Euro friendly ties

THE RESULTS

Denmark (Braithwaite 18, Cornelius 73)	2
Bosnia and Herzegovina	0
England (Rashford 68-pen)	1
Romania	0
Luxembourg (Strandberg 64)	0
Scotland (Adams 27)	1
Netherlands (Depay 10-pen, Weghorst 55, Gravenberch 76)	3
Georgia	0
Norway (Strandberg 64)	1
Greece (Masouras 13, Androutsos 21)	2
Belgium (Lukaku 38)	1
Croatia	0

Paris, June 7: Belgium and the Netherlands completed their Euro 2020 preparations on Sunday with respective wins over Croatia and Georgia. Belgium, the world's top-ranked side, beat the 2018 World Cup runners up 1-0 thanks to a first half goal from in-form Romelu Lukaku. Roberto Martinez's side will be one of the favourites to win what would be their first ever major international trophy and line up in Group B alongside Denmark, Finland and Russia. In a tight match it was Lukaku, 28, who was the difference between the two sides in a cagey contest, and he was unlucky not to open the scoring in the 31st

minute with a wonder goal. The Dutch had an easier time of it with a 3-0 win over Georgia. Frank de Boer's team will be aiming to make a big impression at their first major tournament since the 2014 World Cup and play all their Group C matches with Ukraine, Austria and North Macedonia in Amsterdam. They took the lead in the 10th minute through a Memphis Depay penalty and the Lyon forward was unlucky not to double his tally six minutes later, with Giorgi Loria pulling off a marvellous save to deny him. Denmark also go into the tournament on a high after seeing off Bosnia and Herzegovina 2-0. — *AFP*

Ollie suspended for racist tweets



Ollie Robinson

ROBINSON BAN 'OVER THE TOP' FOR MINISTER

London, June 7: English cricket's ruling body has gone "over the top" by suspending paceman Ollie Robinson over historical racist and sexist tweets, culture and sports secretary Oliver Dowden said on Monday. He urged the England and Wales Cricket Board to "think again" over the sanction for the 27-year-old.

Robinson — who impressed with ball and bat in his debut Test against New Zealand, which finished in a draw on Sunday — has been suspended from all international cricket pending the outcome of an investigation following tweets he posted in 2012 and 2013. "Ollie Robinson's tweets were offensive and wrong," Dowden said.

"They are also a decade old and written by a teenager. The teenager is now a man and has rightly apologised. The ECB has gone over the top by suspending him and should think again," he said. Robinson, in a statement issued after play on Wednesday, said he was "embarrassed" and "ashamed" by the posts. — *AFP*

ROOT REVEALS OLLIE HAS SHOWN GENUINE REMORSE

London, June 7: England's new fast bowler Ollie Robinson's eight-year-old racist and sexist tweets were completely "unacceptable" but he has shown "genuine remorse", skipper Joe Root said while pushing for inclusivity in the country's cricket set-up, starting from the top.

Robinson, who made an impressive Test debut with a match-haul of 7 wickets against New Zealand at Lord's, has been suspended by the country's apex cricket body for some of his tweets dating back to 2012-13, for which he has already tendered an unconditional public apology.

"In regards to the stuff that's happened off the field, it's not acceptable within our game. We all know that. He addressed the dressing room straightaway. He obviously spoke to you guys and other media outlets straight away, fronted up to it," Root said after the drawn first Test.

"He showed a lot of remorse from that point onwards. You can see it's very genuine from how he's been around the group and the team."

The skipper said that he was shocked and didn't know initially how to react. — *PTI*

Ollie episode is lesson to young

New Delhi, June 7: Senior India spinner R. Ashwin feels sorry for England pacer Ollie Robinson, who has been suspended for racist and sexist tweets posted back in 2012, and has called his punishment "a strong indication of what the future holds in this social media generation."



R. Ashwin

Robinson, who made his England debut in the first Test against New Zealand which ended in a draw on Sunday, was suspended from international cricket pending an investigation after his tweets, posted when he was a teenager, resurfaced on the opening day of the match at Lord's in London.

"I can understand the negative sentiments towards what #OllieRobinson did years ago, but I do feel genuinely sorry for him being suspended after an impressive start to his test career," Ashwin said on his Twitter handle.

"This suspension is a strong indication of what the future holds in this social media Gen."

The 27-year-old issued an apology on Wednesday, admitting to posting "racist and sexist tweets" as a teenager. He had

expressed "deep regrets" about his actions while stating "I'm not racist and I'm not sexist." Former India Test opener Wasim Jaffer responded to Ashwin's tweet with a cheeky post. "I am just glad I found Twitter after I retired," Jaffer tweeted. Batting coach Graham Thorpe has said that going ahead, England could start reviewing the social media history of the players before their selection in the national team. Robinson's offensive tweets targetted Muslims and Asians and he has said he is "ashamed" of them. The screenshots of his posts resurfaced on numerous social media platforms after lunch interval on Day 1 of the first Test between England and New Zealand at Lord's. — *PTI*