

SHORT TAKES

NO2 pollution in city increased by 125% in 1 year: StudyAGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 7

Delhi recorded an increase of 125 per cent in NO2 (nitrogen dioxide) pollution between April 2020 and April 2021, according to a Greenpeace India study which analysed NO2 concentrations in India's eight most-populous state capitals. NO2 pollution has increased in all the eight capitals studied — Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Chennai, Kolkata, Jaipur and Lucknow — but Delhi has seen the “most dramatic increase” during the period, the report said. NO2 is a dangerous air pollutant that is released when fuel is burned, as in most motor vehicles, power generation, and industrial processes. Exposure to NO2 can severely impact people's health at all ages, affecting the respiratory and circulatory systems and the brain, leading to an increase in hospital admissions and mortality. “Satellite observations reveal NO2 pollution increased to 125 percent of April 2020 levels. The analysis suggests the increase would have been even greater (146 percent) had weather conditions been similar to 2020,” read the report, titled “Behind the Smokescreen: Satellite Data Reveal Air Pollution Increase in India's Eight Most Populous State Capitals”. Although relatively better than the capital, other Indian cities too recorded an equally worrying increase in NO2 levels. NO2 pollution increased by 52 per cent in Mumbai, 90 per cent in Bengaluru, 69 per cent in Hyderabad, 94 per cent in Chennai, 11 per cent in Kolkata, 47 per cent in Jaipur and 32 per cent in Lucknow in April 2021.

2 fake call centres busted in city, 90 arrested

New Delhi: The Delhi Police's Crime Branch has busted two fake call centres targeting US citizens and arrested over 90 people, officials said on Wednesday. The call centres were located in Kirti Nagar and Mangolpuri, they said. Police were informed that an illegal call centre operating from Kirti Nagar area was indulging in large-scale cyber cheating of US citizens on the pretext of revocation of social security number (SSN) in the garb of a travel agency called The Global Airfares, a senior police officer said. Around 8.30 pm on Tuesday, a police team raided the premises and found around 20-25 people engaged in communicating with the victims. “It was later found that they were impersonating Social Security Administration Department, USA and engaged in using illegal techniques, VOIP calling, bypassing the legal international long distance (ILD) gateways and cheating US citizens on the pretext of saving people from suspension of their SSN,” deputy commissioner of police (Crime) Manoj C said. A total of 30 people, including three women, were involved in the gang and were using high-end technical software for making calls appearing as genuine US numbers, they said. Amit Tyagi (25), a resident of Burari, introduced himself as owner of the call centre, police said. Amit further admitted that he runs a similar remote call centre at Mangolpuri by using cloud server. Thereafter, police raided that call centre and found 67 people, including 16 women and two juveniles.

2 arrested for duping people of ₹25 crore

New Delhi: Two men have been arrested by the Delhi Police in connection with an international cheating racket that induced people to invest online in wine and spice trade and for allegedly duping them of ₹25 crore. The accused have been identified as Nagaraju Karmanchi (31), a resident of Gurgaon, and Kondala Subash (31), a resident of Secunderabad, Telangana, the police said. Thirty mobile phones, seven laptops, fifty SIM cards, six debit cards, among others, have been from them, they added. Raids are carried out all over India to bust the gang, police said.

Wife of late Union minister found murdered, 2 arrested*Robbery motive behind killing, says police; 24-yr-old washerman, aide nabbed*BHASKAR HARI SHARMA
NEW DELHI, JULY 7

Kitty Kumaramangalam, wife of late Union minister P. Rangarajan Kumaramangalam, was allegedly smothered to death during an attempted robbery at her home in Vasant Vihar, police said on Wednesday.

She was 67 and a lawyer by profession. She was living alone after her husband died a few years ago. The police said they suspect robbery to be the motive behind the killing and have arrested a 24-year-old washerman of the area, identified as Raju and his 34-year-old associate Rakesh Raj, a resident of Munirka and driver by profession working in ministry of external affairs on contract basis.

The entry was friendly and since Raju has been visiting the house for over five years. He was aware that the victim had kept valuables including cash, jewelry and essential bank documents at

► **THE ENTRY** was friendly and since washerman Raju has been visiting the house for over five years. He was aware that the victim had kept valuables including cash, jewelry and essential bank documents at home. So, he hatched the conspiracy and roped in his two associates to execute the robbery, according to police.

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Based on preliminary investigation, it is suspected that the washerman had come to the house around 9 pm on Tuesday night, and when the house help opened the door, he overpowered her, dragged her to a room and restrained her. He also tried to loot her ring. During the process, she was also beaten up while trying to restrain and sustained bruises on her

neck, knees and face, they said. Rakesh and Suraj entered the house in the meantime and smothered the victim with a pillow, the police said.

The house help Mithila later managed to untie herself and raised an alarm. She immediately called her husband and brother-in-law Ajay and told them about the incident. They reached the spot and took Mithila to Safdarjung hospital for first aid as she got injured while being overpowered and dragged by Raju during the attempted robbery. Her brother-in-law then made a PCR call, a senior police officer said.

Police said they also found opened briefcases at the scene of the crime which suggest that the motive was attempted robbery. In her police statement, Mithila said that Raju, who has been working in the area for the last five years and has been a regular visitor at the house to collect clothes for pressing arrived at his

routine time at around 9 pm on Tuesday. She opened the door and informed the victim about him. When she went inside the room to take clothes for pressing, he soon overpowered her, dragged her to the next room and restrained her, a senior police officer said.

Meanwhile, Raju's associates smothered the victim with a pillow and due to suffocation, she died on the spot. After killing her, they ransacked the house and took along with them two-three bags containing valuables. One of the bags stuffed with clothes was handed over to Raju by his associates which was later recovered from him, the officer said. The second accused in the case, Rakesh has also been arrested.

The body has been handed over to the family after post-mortem, they said. P. Rangarajan Kumaramangalam served as a Union minister in Atal Bihari Vajpayee's government between 1998-2001.

Torn currency note leads to arrest of man who killed aunt, her sonAGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 7

A torn note led to the arrest of a 33-year-old man for allegedly killing his aunt and her son over monetary issue in south-west Delhi's Raj Nagar area, police said on Wednesday. The accused has been identified as Abhishek Verma, a resident of Darshan Vihar, Burari, they said.

On Tuesday evening, 27-year-old Gaurav and his mother 52-year-old mother Babita Verma were found dead inside their home in Raj Nagar area.

Police found that Abhishek was the relative of the deceased persons. He was present during the

post-mortem and other activities in order to divert the attention of the relatives and police, they said, adding that the accused was apprehended.

“Abhishek is the cousin brother of Gaurav and nephew, brother's son, of Babita. He alleged that his aunt used to mentally torture them to return the money they had taken from them in December for his sister's marriage,” DCP (southwest) Ingit Pratap Singh said.

On Tuesday he came with the plan of murder. Babita kept on pestering him and abusing him which enraged the accused and he killed her. Later, he killed his cousin

as he was the witness. When he was coming downstairs, he left open the almirah in order to divert the attention of police, they said, he took the DVR along with him while leaving the spot.

The accused took an e-rickshaw and got down near CCD, Dashrathpur metro station. The e-rickshaw driver also asked him about blood on his face, but he did not answer. When he was giving money to e-rickshaw driver, the note was torn and the driver refused to accept it. Later, Abhishek used UPI application to pay the fare, police said.

Abhishek has a cosmetic shop in Burari, police added.



Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal inaugurates the Covid genome sequencing facility at LNJP hospital to detect the new variants of coronavirus in New Delhi on Wednesday. Delhi reported 93 Covid-19 cases, 64 recoveries and four deaths in the last 24 hours. — PTI

HC grants 1 week to Juhi Chawla to deposit ₹20 lakhAGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 7

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday expressed shock at the conduct of Bollywood actress Juhi Chawla and two others, who are yet to deposit ₹20 lakh cost imposed on them for their lawsuit challenging 5G wireless network technology. Justice J.R. Midha said: “The court is shocked at the conduct of the plaintiffs, not willing to gracefully deposit the cost.”

The court made this observation while hearing three applications moved by the actor seeking court fee refund, waiver of costs imposed and replacing the word “dismissed” in the judgment with “rejected”. Chawla's counsel, senior advocate Meet Malhotra, after withdrawing the application for waiver of costs, submitted that the cost would either be deposited in a week or ten days, or legal remedies against it would be taken. The court told the counsel that it took a lenient view while imposing ₹20 lakh cost on the petitioners and did not initiate contempt proceedings.

“I was shocked... This court took a lenient view



Juhi Chawla

and did not issue contempt when the case was made out... I was totally inclined,” Justice Midha said. Taking a strong view on the application, the court added that it certainly has power to issue contempt. Chawla's counsel clarified it was not meant that cost won't be paid. “This is my instruction that nobody with the Congress leaders, including Priyanka Gandhi ahead of last Lok Sabha polls is said to be the reason for keeping her party out of the NDA government till now, also made it to Team Modi as an MoS. But her inclusion has left another ally from UP, Nishad Party, agitated. Another significant induction is that of Udupi-Chikmagalur MP, Shobha Karandlaje, who is considered close to Karnataka chief minister and Lingayat strongman B.S. Yeddiurappa. The Karnataka BJP is abuzz with rumours of a leader-

New Delhi, July 7: Petrol price on Wednesday crossed the ₹100-a-litre mark in Delhi after fuel prices were hiked again on the back of firming international oil prices.

Petrol price was increased by 35 paise per litre, while diesel rates were increased by 17 paise a litre, according to a price notification from state-owned fuel retailers.

In Delhi, the price of petrol soared to ₹100.21 per litre and diesel rates rose to ₹89.53 a litre.

The national capital is the last of the metro cities to see petrol rising above the ₹100-a-litre mark. Mumbai, Chennai, Hyderabad, Bengaluru and Pune already have prices above that mark.

Kolkata also saw petrol prices climbing over ₹100 per litre on Wednesday. The fuel now costs ₹100.23 a litre in the city.

Brent crude oil had surged to \$78 per barrel as OPEC+ proposal for a monthly output hike of 400,000 barrels per day from next month has been put on hold and lifting of US sanctions on Iran's exports no longer appears imminent.

OPEC+ led by Saudi Arabia linking output hike to extending OPEC+ deal up to December 2022, without any revision in production baselines demanded by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has led to a stalemate.

The International Energy Agency (IEA) estimates global oil demand to recover to a pre-COVID level of 100.6 million barrels per day only in the fourth quarter of the 2022 calendar

► **‘No relief since Centre has moved transfer plea in SC’**

IT Rules: No interim protection to digital media portals, says HCAGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 7

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday refused to grant protection from coercive action to digital media portals as it adjourned their challenge to the new IT Rules after being informed that a plea has been moved by the Centre to transfer them to the Supreme Court.

A bench of Chief Justice D. N. Patel and Justice Jyoti Singh asked Additional Solicitor General Vikramjit Banerjee if the transfer petition has been preferred, to which the latter replied, yes. The court then proceeded to adjourn the pleas by The Wire, Quint Digital Media Ltd and Pravda Media Foundation till August 20. According to amended Information Technology Rules, social media and streaming companies will be required to take down contentious content quicker, appoint grievance redressal officers and assist in investigations.

The petition by Quint Digital Media Ltd and its

► **THE PETITION** by Quint Digital Media Ltd and its director and co-founder Ritu Kapur has challenged the constitutional validity of the IT Rules under the provisions of Information Technology Act, 2000, inasmuch as they purport to apply to “publishers of news and current affairs content” as part of digital media, and consequently regulate these entities

director and co-founder Ritu Kapur has challenged the constitutional validity of the IT Rules under the provisions of Information Technology Act, 2000, inasmuch as they purport to apply to “publishers of news and current affairs content” as part of digital media, and consequently regulate these entities under the Rules by imposing government oversight and a Code of Ethics “which stipulates such vague conditions as good taste”, “decency” and “prohibition of half-truths”.

“Creating a differential classification by way of subordinate legislation,

when not contemplated by the parent IT Act is an overreach by itself and this has been done to specifically target digital news portals, by subjecting them to an unprecedented regulatory burden and State interference, which no other form of news publication is subject to,” it said.

It claimed that this overreach is aggravated by a virtual legislation by reference, inasmuch as the Rules incorporate the Journalistic Norms under the Press Council Act, the Programme Code under the Cable TV Act, and vest draconian powers and control in the State. The pleas sought striking down of the specific part of the IT Rules on the ground that it violates Article 19(1)(a) and 19(1)(g) of the Constitution creating a chilling effect on media freedom, Article 14 of the Constitution by creating an unreasonable classification and by setting up a parallel adjudicatory mechanism to be overseen by the officials of the executive and is ultra vires the IT Act.



Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee president Anil Chaudhary and party activists protest against hike in petrol price in New Delhi on Wednesday. — PTI

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year, while OPEC+ proposal is to unwind production cuts fully by September 2022.

The rally in international oil prices has reflected in rising retail prices in India, which is 85 per cent dependent on imports to meet its oil needs.

Fuel prices differ from state to state depending on the incidence of local taxes such as value-added

tax (VAT) and freight charges.

In Mumbai, petrol is priced at ₹106.25 a litre and it costs ₹101.06 in Chennai.

As much as 55 per cent of the retail selling price of petrol in Delhi is made up of taxes (₹32.90 a litre excise duty collected by the central government and Rs 22.80 VAT levied by the state government).

Half of the diesel price is made up of taxes (₹31.80 central excise and ₹13.04 state VAT).

Petrol has crossed the Rs 100-a-litre mark in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Jammu and Kashmir,

Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Bihar, Punjab, Ladakh, Sikkim and Pondicherry.

Diesel, the most used fuel in the country, is above that level in some places in Rajasthan, Odisha and Madhya Pradesh.

The hike on Wednesday is the 36th increase in the price of petrol since May 4, when state-owned oil firms ended an 18-day hiatus in rate revision they observed during assembly elections in states like West Bengal.

In 36 hikes, the price of petrol has risen by ₹9.81 per litre. During this period, diesel rates have soared by ₹8.80 a litre in 34 instances of price increase. — PTI

4 top ministers, 8 others dropped; many new faces in first big Modi 2.0 shakeup

► **Continued from Page 1** of office, from Uttar Pradesh — where the BJP is already in battle mode for coming Assembly polls — seven new members were inducted in Team Modi, while from West Bengal, where the Mamata Banerjee-led TMC retained power in the recently concluded Assembly polls, four new BJP leaders have been accommodated in the Council of Ministers.

Ally Apna Dal's Anupriya Patel, who was an MoS in the last government and whose meeting with the Congress leaders, including Priyanka Gandhi ahead of last Lok Sabha polls is said to be the reason for keeping her party out of the NDA government till now, also made it to Team Modi as an MoS. But her inclusion has left another ally from UP, Nishad Party, agitated. Another significant induction is that of Udupi-Chikmagalur MP, Shobha Karandlaje, who is considered close to Karnataka chief minister and Lingayat strongman B.S. Yeddiurappa. The Karnataka BJP is abuzz with rumours of a leader-

ship change as voices of dissent are growing against the 78-year-old CM.

With Nishank resigning, Uttarakhnd, another state that's going to have polls soon, has been represented by Naintal-Udhamsingh Nagar MP, Ajay Bhatt in Team Modi.

In the current Council of Ministers, defense minister Rajnath Singh and minority affairs minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi are the only two who had also served in the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government.

Five representatives from Northeast, including Sarbanand Sonowal from Assam, Kiren Rijiju from Arunachal Pradesh, Rameswar Teli from Assam, Pratima Bhoumik from Tripura and Rajkumar Ranjan Singh from Manipur are now part of the NDA government.

After the reshuffle and expansion, the NDA government has 27 OBC ministers, 12 SCs, eight STs, 11 women, five minorities and 21 belonging to other castes.

Ahead of the expansion, 12 ministers resigned from their portfolios,

including education minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank, who is recuperating from post-Covid complications, his deputy Sanjay Dhotre who is also unwell, health minister Dr Harsha Vardhan, law and IT minister Ravi Shankar Prasad, environment and information broadcasting minister Prakash Javadekar, Sadanand Gowda, Santosh Gangwar, Babul Supriyo, Rattan Lal Katariya, Pratap Sarangi and Debashree Chaudhuri.

While speculation is rife that non-performance was the reason why some of these ministers — excluding those who had asked to be kept out of the Union Council due to health reasons — were asked to resign, the ruling BJP was abuzz that some of the ministers including, Ravi Shankar Prasad and Prakash Javadekar, will now be the voice of the party and guide the party's spokespersons ahead of Assembly and Lok Sabha polls. Mr Prasad had been in the news lately for an escalating standoff between the Indian government and

Twitter.

From West Bengal, which earlier had two ministers — Debashree Chaudhuri and Babul Supriyo — now four members (Nishith Pramanik, Shantanu Thakur, John Barla and Subhash Sarkar) are part of the NDA government. While Shantanu Thakur is from the Matua community, Mr Pramanik is from the Rajbangshi community. Both influential communities in West Bengal had voted in favour of the BJP in the recently concluded Assembly polls. Though the BJP failed to dislodge TMC, increasing the representation of the state in Team Modi was seen as a message to the Mamata Banerjee led outfit that the BJP has not given up and will be more aggressive in its strategy in the state.

Ahead of the swearing-in ceremony at Rashtrapati Bhawan's Darbar Hall, PM Modi, Union ministers Rajnath Singh and Amit Shah and BJP president J.P. Nadda held a meeting with BJP leaders who were to be part of Team Modi at 7, Lok Kalyan Marg.

SHORT TAKES

6 Pak migrants get Indian citizenship

Bhopal: Six Pakistani migrants, who have been living in Madhya Pradesh for decades, were Wednesday granted Indian citizenship under Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), passed in the parliament in December, 2019. All the six people had migrated to India from Sindh province of Pakistan more than three decades back and have been living in Madhya Pradesh since then, an official spokesman of the state government said. While two of them, Nand Lal and Hemant Kumar, have settled in Bhopal, four others, Arjundas Manchandani, Jairam Das, Narayan Das and Saushalya Bai, have been living in Mandasaur in MP for decades. "The six Hindu migrants who fled Pakistan to India due to religious persecution in the neighbouring country were granted Indian citizenship. The MP government has completed the process and granted them Indian citizenship in MP under the CAA."

Army Chief begins 2-day visit to Italy

New Delhi: Chief of Army Staff Gen. M.M. Naravane on Wednesday began a two-day visit to Italy with an aim to further expand bilateral strategic cooperation. Gen. Naravane arrived in Italy from the UK on the second leg of his two-nation tour. "General MM Naravane #COAS arrived at Italy on a two-day visit. The visit aims to further strengthen strategic and defence cooperation between both the countries," the Army tweeted. Officials said the Army Chief will be holding important discussions with the Chief of Defence Staff and Chief of Staff of the Italian Army in Rome. He is also scheduled to inaugurate an Indian Army memorial in the famous town of Cassino. The memorial has been built to pay homage to Indian soldiers who lost their lives during World War II. — PTI

BJP MP quits Bengal BJYM post, withdraws later

Youth wing leader Saumitra Khan accuses Suvendu Adhikari of misleading Central leadership

RAJIB CHOWDHURI with agency inputs KOLKATA, JULY 7

Hours after resigning as BJP's Bengal youth wing chief and taking to Facebook to launch a blistering attack on the state party leadership, MP Saumitra Khan Wednesday decided to withdraw his resignation after senior party leaders, including Union home minister Amit Shah, intervened and assured to look into his grievances.

Earlier in the evening, the growing discord in the BJP's Bengal unit came to the fore as Mr Khan stepped down from the BJYM post and attacked Leader of Opposition Suvendu Adhikari, claiming that he tries to take credit for all the saffron camp achievements.

The BJYM president also accused Leader of the



Suvendu

► **SUVENDU ADHIKARI** however, said Saumitra is my brother. He is my fellow. When I visit Delhi, I have food at his residence. So I will not comment on what he has said. But the matter is not so serious. I do not look after the organisation of the party. Mr Ghosh can comment on BJYM.

Opposition Suvendu Adhikari of misleading the central leadership, saying the Nandigram MLA overnight became the eyes and ears of the by flying to New Delhi.

Mr Khan made the explosive claims in a video he posted on Facebook.

"I have taken a relief from the post of state president of Yuva Morcha. I was, am and will be in the BJP," Mr Khan said a few hours before the swearing-in of the new Union Cabinet at the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

In the video, the

Bishnupur MP alleged, "There are two leaders who are exercising their control on our party. One of them has just come. He is claiming that everything is happening under his leadership. He is the Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly. It was difficult for me to continue as the state BJYM chief because of the present state of affairs in the party under his leadership."

At around 9 pm, he again took to Facebook to inform that he had decided to withdraw his resignation. "I take an opportunity to

inform that under instruction of our BJP leaders BL Santhosh Ji, Amit Shah Ji and Tejasvi Surya Ji, I withdraw my resignation as a mark of respect," he said in another Facebook post.

Referring to Mr Adhikari's visits to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union home minister Amit Shah, he added, "The person is bragging about himself instead of the party. He is projecting himself as a bigshot by visiting New Delhi and filling the ears of the top leaders and misleading them."

"He brought 128 leaders to our party ahead of the Assembly polls. Many of them however lost. He earlier flaunted himself as a big leader in the Trinamul Congress also. I complained to state president Dilip Ghosh who however understands half of the matter only," he added.

16 days before Olympics, Anurag replaces Rijiju

New Delhi, July 7: Anurag Thakur on Wednesday replaced Kiren Rijiju as the country's sports minister with just over two weeks left for the Tokyo Olympics.

The 46-year-old former Cricket Board president was given charge of sports along with the information and broadcasting ministry after he took oath as a cabinet minister.

"I am honoured to serve the people of India as a Union Cabinet minister and take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to Prime Minister Sh @narendramodi ji for entrusting me with this responsibility," he tweeted. — PTI

7 more women join PM Modi's Cabinet

New Delhi, July 7: Seven more women members, including Meenakashi Lekhi, Shobha Karandlaje and Anupriya Singh Patel, joined the council of ministers of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday, taking the overall female strength to 11 which is one of the highest.

As many as 15 new Cabinet ministers and 28 ministers of state were sworn in, taking the strength of the council of ministers to 78.

The seven women who took oath as ministers of state were Karandlaje, Darshana Vikram

Jardosh, Lekhi, Annpurna Devi, Pratima Bhoomik, Dr Bharati Pravin Pawar and Apna Dal's Anupriya Singh Patel. Among them, three

are first-time MPs while Patel is making a comeback to the council of ministers as she was the Union minister of state for health under Prime Minister Modi earlier.

Nirmala Sitharaman, Smriti Irani (both Cabinet ministers), Sadhvi Niranjan Jyoti and Renuka Singh Saruta are already part of the Union council of ministers.

Debashree Chaudhuri, minister of state for women and child development, resigned this morning. There were nine women in the first Modi government from 2014-19, including six in the Cabinet. Karandlaje, 54, is a Lok Sabha member from Udupi Chikmagalur in Karnataka and is serving her second term in the Lower House. — PTI

BJP a 'separatist power', says Didi

AGE CORRESPONDENT KOLKATA, JULY 7

West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday called the BJP a "separatist power" after she found that two North Bengal MPs — John Barla and Nishith Pramanik who recently demanded statehood for the region among the four from the state got Union cabinet berths.

Ms Banerjee sarcastically lamented that two Union ministers — Babul Supriyo and Debashree Chaudhuri — were dropped from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's new Cabinet as they became "bad" for the party.

Ms Banerjee alleged, "It is their internal matter who they will



induct and drop or lift and kick out. But the BJP itself is a separatist

power. It has been the same always, not only now. We have seen it. Now Babul has looked bad to them. I heard that the woman from the Rajbanshi community was asked to resign as she has become bad too."

"When people face a tough time and lose their sense in view of their disaster, they hunt for such powers. But such powers are neither suitable nor can work. This can satisfy BJP as a party but will not be helpful for the people," she said.

I am 'longest guest' of India, says Dalai

Hyderabad, July 7: Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama on Wednesday said he is the "longest guest" of India, who would never cause any trouble to his host.

In a virtual interactive session with G.V. Prasad, co-chairman and managing director of Dr Reddy's Laboratories and others, Dalai Lama said India which practices "Ahimsa and Karuna" (non violence and compassion) stands as a role model for other countries.

"As I always mentioned, India is my home. I was born in Tibet. But most of my life was spent in this country.. I really feel proud that I am a guest of the Indian government."

I think I am the longest guest of the Indian government. But at least that guest



Dalai Lama

will not create a problem," he said. He remarked that religious harmony in India was remarkable and there is "free media."

Describing India as a secular country, the Tibetan leader in exile said he has been promoting "Ahimsa and Compassion", which are intrinsic values of Indians that have been followed over thousands of years.

"With over a billion population, India is a perfect example of religious harmony. It is not because of any political reasons, but it is because of its people. Some of the countries need to follow Indian principles of religious harmony," he said. — PTI

NORTHERN RAILWAY
Invitation of Tenders through E-Procurement system

Principal Chief Materials Manager, Northern Railway, New Delhi-110001, for and on behalf of the President of India, invites e-tenders through e-procurement system for supply of the following items:-

S. No.	Tender No.	Brief Description	Qty.	Closing Date
01	19210507	DIAGNOSTIC TERMINAL DRIVER DISPLAY UNIT	60 NOS	03-08-21
02	14221202	REFRIGERATION GAS CHLORODIFLUORO	18251 KGS	04-08-21
03	16200071	INTER COOLER ASSLY	9 NOS	05-08-21
04	01211495	PINION (28 TEETH) FOR T/M BG AC EMU	316 NOS	06-08-21
05	16200665	HOUSING BEARING KIT FOR HHP LOCOS	36 SET	06-08-21
06	16210332	AIR FLOW INDICATOR	104 NOS	06-08-21
07	02212507	40 AH / 110 V LMLA BATTERY SET	117 SET	09-08-21
08	07210309	BRAKE CYLINDER WITH HAND BRAKE ARRANGEMENT	162 NOS.	13-08-21
09	07210999	THERMOPLASTIC POLYESTER ELASTOMER	22045 NOS	13-08-21
10	03212223	DECORATIVE THERMOSETTING SYNTHETIC RESIN	5866 NOS	16-08-21
11	19212712	ROLLER BEARING RB 5020	893 NOS	16-08-21
12	19221766	METALIZED CARBON STRIP	4010 NOS	16-08-21
13	19210968	IOH KIT FOR SINGLE BOTTLE VCB	53 SET	17-08-21
14	01211252	POH KIT FOR WSF MAKE E P	333 SET	19-08-21
15	14212216	NATURAL & ARTIFICIAL FIBER THERMOSET COMPOSITE	2837 NOS	30-08-21
16	19210839	AOH/ TOH KIT FOR ELGI COMPRESSOR	156 SET	01-09-21
17	19212759	HYDRAULIC DAMPER (VERTICAL)	440 NOS	01-09-21
18	02212508	LOW MAINTENANCE LEAD ACID BATTERY 525 AH	941 NOS	07-09-21
19	02212514	MAINTENANCE FREE VALVE REGULATED LEAD ACID BATTERIES SET	417 SET	13-09-21

NOTE :- 1. Vendors may visit the IREPS website i.e. www.ireps.gov.in for details.
2. No Manual offer will be entertained.
Tender Notice No. 25/2021-22 Dated: 07.07.2021 1514/2021

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

हिमाचल प्रदेश सरकार ने पूरा किया अपना वादा घर द्वार पर दी सुविधाएं ज्यादा से ज्यादा।

अब बिजली कनेक्शन भी ऑनलाइन और अधिक सुविधाजनक

समय बचाएं और बिजली कनेक्शन कहीं भी आसानी से प्राप्त करें।
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कोरोना से बचने के लिए मास्क पहनें, अपने हाथ बार-बार धोएं, उचित दूरी बनाकर रखें।

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that one unidentified dead body of male **Namely: Unknown, S/o: Unknown, R/o: Unknown, Age: about 45 Years, Complexion: Shallow, Height: 5'5", Face: Long, Hair: Black, Wearing: Cream colour T-shirt and black colour lower, who was found Narela Railway Station Park, Delhi. In this regard a case DD No. 40A Dated 26.06.2021 has been registered at P.S. Narela, Delhi.**



Any person having any information or clue about the above deceased may kindly inform to the undersigned on the following address or telephone nos.

Sd/- SHO
P.S: Narela, Delhi
Tel.: 011-27280435

DP/1133/ON/2021

VIJAYAWADA MUNICIPAL CORPORATION (VMC)

e' Procurement Notice No.CE-03/VMC/AE/2021-22, Dt.07-07-2021.

S.No	Name of the work	No. of call	Estimate Amount Rs. in Lakhs
1	Construction of Bridge Connecting to Madhyakatta (Budamerukatta) to Madhura Nagar on Eluru Canal, Vijayawada. with Reverse Tendering Process.	2nd call	500.00
2	Renewal of BT road with Hot Mix process to cross roads and Drains connecting Bandar Road & Eluru Road Ali Baig street, Museum Road, Nakkala Road, Domakal Road, Goodavalli Street, Rajagopalachari Street and other Roads in Governor peta & Surya Rao peta area 21st Division.	1st Call	712.00
3	Providing BT Roads, Drains & Paver Blocks at Swathi Press Road, Karnataka Rammoohana Rao School Road, Gangaraju Kalyanamandapam Street, Purna Hospital Road, Boyapati vari Street Balaji Street, Vemuri Vari Street, Jadagam Vari Street and Govindarajulu Naidu Street in Suryarao Peta 19th division.	1st Call	250.00
4	Providing CC Pavement & Footing from Chittinagar junction to Ganapathi Rao road junction (Nehru Statue) in Division Nos 32, 34, 35, 37.	1st Call	350.00
Total (4 works)			1812.00

Contact:Superintending Engineer (W). VMC, Vijayawada - 99639 95283. Further details can be seen @ 'e' procurement market place @ www.appeprocurement.gov.in

Download of bid documents starts from (S.No.1) - 08-07-2021 from 03.30 P.M., Download of bid documents starts from (S.No.2 to 4) - 09-07-2021 from 03.30 P.M. Last date / time for receipt of tenders (S.No.1) - 22-07-2021 upto 4.00 P.M. Last date / time for receipt of tenders(S.No.2 to 4)- 23-07-2021 upto 4.00 P.M.

Sd/-
CHIEF ENGINEER

SPECIAL TRAINS

For the convenience of passengers, Railways have decided to run the following Special Trains as per schedule given below:-

TRAIN No. 06171/06172 ERNAKULAM - HAZRAT NIZAMUDDIN - ERNAKULAM SUPERFAST SPECIAL TRAIN (WEEKLY)					
Train No.: 06171	STATIONS				Train No.: 06172
ARR.	DEP.	ERNAKULAM	ARR.	DEP.	
----	19:00		03:10	----	
17:50	----	HAZRAT NIZAMUDDIN	----	05:10	

DAYS OF RUN: 06171 from Ernakulam on every Saturday from 17.07.2021 to till further advice and 06172 from Hazrat Nizamuddin on every Tuesday from 20.07.2021 to till further advice.

STOPPAGES: Aluva, Thrissur, Palakkad, Coimbatore, Tiruppur, Erode, Salem, Jolarpettai, Katpadi, Chittoor, Tirupati, Renigunta, Gudur, Ongole, Vijayawada, Warangal, Balharshah, Nagpur, Betul, Itarsi, Bhopal, Bina, Jhansi, Gwalior, Agra Cantt & Mathura Stations.

ACCOMMODATION: AC 3 Tier, Sleeper & Second Seating (Reserved).

TRAIN No. 09207/09208 BHAVNAGAR TERMINUS - UDHAMPUR - BHAVNAGAR TERMINUS SPECIAL TRAIN (WEEKLY)					
Train No.: 09207	STATIONS				Train No.: 09208
ARR.	DEP.	BHAVNAGAR TERMINUS	ARR.	DEP.	
----	04:45		09:25	----	
15:15	----	UDHAMPUR	----	22:05	

DAYS OF RUN: 09207 from Bhavnagar Terminus on every Sunday from 18.07.2021 to till further advice and 09208 from Udhampur on every Monday from 19.07.2021 to till further advice.

STOPPAGES: Sihar Jn., Dhola Jn., Botad Jn., Surendranagar Gate, Viramgam Jn., Ambli Road, Gandhinagar Capital, Mahesana Jn., Palanpur Jn., Abu Road, Jodhpur Jn., Phalodi Jn., Kolayat, Lalgarh Jn., Mahajan, Suratgarh Jn., Pili Bangan, Hanumangarh Jn., Mandi Dabwali, Bhatinda Jn., Faridkot, Firozpur Cantt Jn., Jalandhar City, Pathankot Cantt & Jammu Tawi Stations.

ACCOMMODATION: AC 2 Tier, AC 3 Tier, Sleeper & Second Seating (Reserved).

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

Note: For any kind of information passengers are requested to contact Railway Enquiry No. 139 or visit Indian Railways website: www.enquiry.indianrail.gov.in

Security Helpline No. 182 Integrated Helpline No. 139

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SHORT TAKES

Farmers' stir against fuel price hike today

New Delhi: Large contingents of farmers have started arriving at protest sites in preparation for their agitation Thursday against fuel price hike, the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) said. "At the call of Samyukt Kisan Morcha, protests will be organised across India tomorrow (July 8) from 10 am to 12 noon for two hours against the hike in diesel, petrol and cooking gas prices," the umbrella body of over 40 farm unions said. The protestors will reach designated public locations with any means of transport, including scooters, motorcycles, tractors, cars, buses, trucks and also with empty gas cylinders, it said. The SKM has demanded that the fuel prices be halved with immediate effect. It has also appealed to the protestors to keep the demonstration peaceful and on the roadside, without blocking any pathways. — PTI

Woman gang-raped in Kolkata flat

Kolkata: A 26-year-old woman was gangraped in her apartment in Kolkata's Garden Reach area, following which the flat was robbed of ₹15 lakh in cash, police said on Wednesday. The incident happened on Tuesday afternoon when the woman was alone in her home, they said. Medical tests have confirmed the rape, a senior police officer said. "It is not yet clear why the woman allowed two-three unknown men to enter her flat. We are trying to find out whether she knew them. They robbed ₹15 lakh in cash after raping her," he said. The woman lodged a complaint in the Garden Reach police station on Wednesday and the detective department of the police took over the probe. "Preliminary investigation revealed that the woman was tied up before being raped," the officer said. — PTI

Gangster out on bail shot dead in Punjab

Bathinda: A 39-year-old gangster was shot dead here on Wednesday allegedly by his former private gunman. The gangster, Kulbir Singh Naruana, was facing more than 15 cases and was currently out on bail. The accused has been identified as Mandeep Singh, alias Manna, they said. Singh had gone to meet Naruana at his home in Naruana village to sort out some differences between the tw. After some time, the accused called Naruana to his SUV and allegedly fired five shots at him, killing him on the spot. Singh also ran over an aide of Naruana, who was nearby, with his SUV while trying to flee. However, the accused was arrested by the police not far from the crime spot, the police said. — PTI

Dilip Kumar, Nehru's hero, is no more

■ **Continued from Page 1**

solemn milestone in the history of India. It marks the end of an idea that died on the celluloid and off it long ago, but whose aura and promise lingered in the life and works of Dilip Kumar, and in the hearts of many Indians. It was the idea of an India that was shaped on ground by Jawaharlal Nehru, Mahatma Gandhi and Ambedkar, but celebrated and reinforced on screen by India's film industry whose directors, writers and stars carried the sunshine and bounce of a newly-Independent India with the pledge of a secular, socialist state when they hummed, *Suhana safar aur ye mausam hasen*...

The first Khan of Bollywood was "discovered" at the age of 19 in Nainital by Devika Rani of Bombay Talkies while he was looking to buy fruits for his father's business.

Though he dreamt of being a Test cricketer, he went to meet her in Bombay and was presented with three names to pick from — Jehangir, Vasudev and Dilip Kumar. He learnt later, from the posters of his first film, *Jwar Bhata*, what had been chosen on his behalf.

The film didn't do well, but it launched a career that has served as the guiding spirit for the best and biggest stars since.

Kumar, who had impeccable Urdu and Hindi diction, remains a daunting, revered presence in the Indian film industry not just because of

Jaishankar halts in Iran for Af talks on way to Russia

Meets Iran's President-elect, hands over personal message of PM Modi

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI
NEW DELHI, JULY 7

External affairs minister S. Jaishankar discussed the Afghan situation with the Iranian leadership in Tehran while on a transit aircraft-refuelling halt en route to Moscow. The minister, who landed in Tehran Wednesday evening, met Iranian President-elect Ebrahim Raisi to whom he handed over a personal message from Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Sources said the Iranians extended Mr Jaishankar the honour of being the first foreign dignitary to meet Mr Raisi, who recently won the presidential election.

Mr Jaishankar is visit-



Jaishankar

■ **NEW DELHI** is worried over turmoil in the strife-torn nation following the pull-out of US troops and recent military gains by the Pakistan-backed Taliban which is expected to even threaten the Afghan capital soon. India has been a strong supporter of the Afghan government led by Ashraf Ghani.

ing Moscow on an official visit. On Wednesday, he held talks with Iranian foreign minister Javad Zarif and discussed at length the fluid situation in Afghanistan following the withdrawal of American troops.

Mr Jaishankar on Wednesday also held talks with his Iranian counterpart Javad Zarif and the fluid situation in Afghanistan is understood to have been discussed at

length. New Delhi is worried over turmoil in the strife-torn nation following the pullout of US troops and recent military gains by the Pakistan-backed Taliban which is expected to even threaten the Afghan Capital Kabul soon.

India has been a strong supporter of the increasingly embattled Afghan government led by President Ashraf Ghani. Iran, a neighbour of

Afghanistan, is also watching the events unfolding there with some concern.

Along with Russia, Iran has been playing a major role in the Afghan peace process that has witnessed a renewed momentum in the wake of the withdrawal of the US forces from Afghanistan by September 11.

Iranian media reported that the two foreign ministers stressed the need to strengthen intra-Afghan dialogue that could result in a comprehensive political partnership in Afghanistan.

"Always a warm welcome from FM @JZarif. Useful discussion on regional and global affairs," EAM Jaishankar tweeted.

Khadse's son-in-law held in money laundering case

BHAGWAN PARAB
MUMBAI, JULY 7

Enforcement Directorate (ED) Wednesday arrested Girish Chaudhary, son-in-law of former Maharashtra revenue minister Eknath Khadse, in connection with an alleged Pune land deal case. The central agency has also asked the NCP leader to appear before it on Thursday.

The ED called Mr Chaudhary for questioning on Tuesday and after several hours of questioning, they arrested him in the wee hours of Wednesday under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). A special court in Mumbai later granted Mr Chaudhary's custody to the ED till July 12.

The ED officials alleged that Mr Chaudhary was not cooperating in the probe as he refused to provide some crucial details.

According to the ED, the case pertains to alleged irregularities in connection with a land deal in Pune in 2016. The case was registered on allegations made by a realtor who had alleged that Mr Khadse had defrauded the exchequer in the Bhosari MIDC land deal case.

The ED has alleged Mr Chaudhary and Mr Khadse bought the land for ₹3.75 crore when its actual value was over ₹31 crore. The land was purchased in Mr Chaudhary's name and the money for the deal was allegedly routed through four shell companies, said an ED official.

In 2017, the Maharashtra Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) had registered an FIR against Mr Khadse, his wife Mandakini, son in law Girish Chaudhary, and original land-owner Abbas Aqani. However, in 2018, the ACB in a report had given a clean chit to Mr Khadse.

Last December, the ED had summoned Khadse in connection with the case. In January, he was questioned for about six hours by the agency in Mumbai.

Mr Khadse had quit the BJP and joined the NCP in October 2020. He had resigned from the Devendra Fadnavis-led government in 2016 after facing allegations that he misused his official powers to facilitate the purchase of the government land.

Covid 3rd wave may arrive early in Odisha, warns official

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO
BHUBANESWAR, JULY 7

The third wave of Covid-19 may arrive early in Odisha if people continue to not properly follow the guidelines stipulated by the state government to curb spread of the virus, cautioned state director of health and family welfare department Dr Bijay Mohapatra.

Briefing media persons here, Dr Mohapatra said many shops and markets had been sealed in past five to six days as huge crowd was witnessed at several places. "It was predicted that Covid-19

third wave will arrive in the state around September. But it may come before that if such a situation continues," he cautioned.

He further said the rate of infection has declined and will be under control soon, hopefully. However, it may increase again if people don't follow Covid appreciate behaviour.

Quoting a recent study, the official informed that infection rate of vaccinated people is .13 per cent and multiple studies are being done on this.

On Wednesday, 2,602 more persons tested positive for Covid-19 in Odisha.

After dip, sharp jump in Covid cases

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 7

Fresh Covid-19 cases in the country saw a jump of 26 per cent on Wednesday as compared to the figures of the previous day. As many as 43,733 people tested positive for the virus in the last 24 hours, taking the cumulative tally to 3,06,63,665. India on Tuesday had reported 34,703 Covid-19 cases.

The daily fatality count also saw an increase of nearly 400 in the same duration with 930 more people succumbing to the disease. The death toll due to coronavirus in India now stands at 4,04,211. The daily positivity rate

stands at 2.29 per cent. It has been less than three per cent for 16 consecutive days. Even the weekly positivity rate has declined to 2.39 per cent.

The new recoveries continued to outnumber daily new cases for the 55th consecutive day. According to the Union health ministry, the number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 2,97,99,534, while the case fatality rate stood at 1.32 per cent.

Of the 930 fresh fatalities, 395 were reported from Maharashtra, 142 from Kerala and 92 from Karnataka. A total of 4,04,211 deaths have been reported so far in the coun-

try. These include 1,23,531 from Maharashtra, 35,526 from Karnataka, 33,132 from Tamil Nadu, 22,656 from UP, 17,834 from West Bengal and 16,131 from Punjab.

India has also tested 42,33,32,097 samples for Covid-19 until now. Out of these, 19,07,216 samples were tested on Tuesday, as compared to 16,47,424 tests conducted in the previous 24-hour period. The country achieved another milestone in its inoculation drive as the total number of vaccines administered crossed the 36 crore mark on Tuesday.

So far, 36,13,23,548 people have been given the anti-Covid jabs. Among these,

36,05,998 doses were administered in the last 24 hours. Eight states — Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Gujarat, Karnataka and Maharashtra — have administered more than 50 lakh first doses of Covid-19 vaccine in the 18-44 years age group.

Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Haryana, Jharkhand, Kerala, Telangana, Himachal Pradesh, Odisha, Punjab, Uttarakhand and West Bengal have also given at least one dose of the vaccine to over 10 lakh beneficiaries in the age group 18-44 years.

Mamata fined ₹5L for defamation

■ **Continued from Page 1**

neutrally and dispassionately. I have, however, decided to recuse myself from this case for a different reason. The imbrogio stemmed from the inception of the litigation was due to the assignment of this case before this bench."

He elaborated: "Since the two persons involved in this case belong to the highest echelon of state politics, in the name of saving the judiciary, some opportunists have already emerged. These trouble-mongers will try to keep

the controversy alive and create newer controversies. The trial of the case before this bench will be a tool to aggrandise themselves. It would be contrary to the interest of justice if such unwarranted squabble continues along with the trial of the case, and such attempts should be thwarted at the threshold."

Before recusing himself, Justice Chanda said: "In this country, it is almost impossible not to get a person who may not have said to have some political views...

Like any other citizen of the country, a judge also exercises his voting rights in favour of a political party, but he lays aside his individual predilection while deciding a case... It is preposterous to suggest that a judge having a past association with a political party as a lawyer should not receive a case involving the said political party or any of its members. The past association of a judge with a political party by itself cannot form apprehension of bias."

Covid cost Vardhan his post

■ **Continued from Page 1**

guidelines, Mr Prasad had set out to discipline the social media, particularly Twitter. Following the farmers' movement and the alleged "misuse" of the so-called toolkit, the Indian government had virtually locked horns with Twitter. The situation with the micro-blogging platform led to Mr Prasad's account being temporarily blocked for a few hours, allegedly over complaints of a violation of the US Digital Millennium Copyright Act.

Speculations are rife that information and broadcasting minister Prakash Javadekar had to go as complaints from the film industry poured

in after he tried to regulate OTT platforms. Mr Javadekar had claimed that he received complaints that two Amazon Prime shows — *Tandav* and *Mirzapur* — had "hurt religious sentiments".

However, sources close to Mr Javadekar denied that this was the reason for his removal but did not give any further details.

As the Covid situation worsened in India, the health ministry kept getting embroiled in controversies one after another.

Dr Harsh Vardhan came under severe criticism from within the party and outside when he went after former Prime Minister Dr

Manmohan Singh. On April 18, the former PM had written a letter to PM Modi suggesting a few changes to the country's vaccination strategy. Dr Harsh Vardhan lost his cool, and not merely sent out a stinging response to the former Prime Minister but also tweeted saying that "History should be kinder to you Dr Manmohan Singh ji if your offer of 'constructive cooperation' and valuable advice was followed by your @INC leaders as well in such extraordinary times."

His response stunned even his colleagues within the party and government and did not sit well with the BJP leadership.

Accused in Elgar case protest in jail over Father Swamy's 'murder'

Mumbai, July 7: Ten accused in the Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case went on a one-day hungerstrike in the Talaja jail in neighbouring Navi Mumbai on Wednesday to protest against what they termed as an "institutional murder" of co-accused Jesuit priest Stan Swamy.

They also demanded action against officials of the NIA, which is conducting a probe into the Elgar Parishad case, and former superintendent of the Talaja jail.

Swamy, 84, was arrested by the NIA from Ranchi in October 2020 under the stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and lodged at the Talaja Central Jail in Navi Mumbai.

He suffered a cardiac arrest and died at a Mumbai hospital on Monday in the middle of his fight for bail on health grounds.

The Elgar Parishad case is related to inflammatory speeches made at a conclave held in Pune on December 31, 2017, which, the police claimed, triggered violence the next day near the Koregaon-Bhima war memorial located on the outskirts of the western Maharashtra city. — PTI



Actor Dharmendra mourns near the mortal remains of legendary actor Dilip Kumar in Mumbai. — PTI

emotional tribute to Kumar calling him as her elder brother. Shared an old photo where she is seen tying rakhi to Kumar.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Pakistani counterpart Imran Khan expressed condolences.

"Dilip Kumar Ji will be remembered as a cinematic legend. He was blessed with unparalleled brilliance, due to which audiences across generations were enthralled. His passing away is a loss to our cultural world. Condolences to his family, friends and innumerable admirers. RIP," tweets PM Narendra Modi.

"For my generation Dilip Kumar was the greatest and most versatile actor," tweeted Imran Khan.

President Kovind offered his condolences to Kumar's family and said his demise marks the end of an era of Indian cinema. "Dilip Kumar summarised in himself a history of emerging India. The thespian's charm transcended all boundaries, and he was loved across the subcontinent.

"With his demise, an era ends. Dilip Saab will live forever in the heart of India. Condolences to fam-

ily and countless fans," he tweeted.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said Kumar's contribution to the Indian cinema will be forever remembered. "My heartfelt condolences to the family, friends & fans of Dilip Kumar ji. His extraordinary contribution to Indian cinema will be remembered for generations to come," he tweeted.

Defence minister Rajnath Singh called Kumar's demise a "monumental loss to the Indian cinema".

Meanwhile, authorities in Peshawar in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa said they were planning to restore the actor's ancestral home in a narrow lane of the city.

A video on social media showed a poster paying tribute to Dilip Kumar has been displayed at his house in Peshawar while a notice, pasted by archaeological department, on the door read that that, "This house (Dilip Kumar House) has been acquired by the archaeological department Peshwar." It further said that anybody entering the house or causing any damage would result in jail for five years, ₹20 lakh fine or both.

THE ASIAN AGE

8 JULY 2021

Huge relief, reset by CBSE may help students reboot

Two heads are better than one is a common saying but it is moot whether it applies to examinations too. Using an opportunity of a pause in Board exams caused by the pandemic, the CBSE has used the reset button to come up with a revolutionary two-exam mode in different formats for Class 10 and 12 that seeks to change the basic concept of holding a single exam that used to determine everything, from the students' careers to shaping their lives. In a takeoff on the two-semester system that colleges use for engineering studies, the academic session will be bifurcated into two terms with the first term exams of 90 minutes' duration to be held in November-December 2021 and second term exams in March-April 2022 at exam centres.

The idea may be to distribute the stress of exams and to get the students accustomed to taking exams in their stride while also splitting the syllabus to bring down the burden. The continuous recording of internal assessment scores rather than just one annual score is likely to help students get over the vagaries of an academic year. Any number of unknown factors may crop up in a sweeping reform, particularly about the authenticity of exam results if they are to be held in online mode with students taking the exam at home in case the pandemic forces the postponement of operating exam centres. The semester system might also allow students some time to take on additional study for entrance tests to professional courses.

What the reform promises is a vision that will take everyone beyond last academic year's fiasco in which the exams could not be held at all and students suffered from the digital divide

The elimination of rote learning that used to dominate student methods in taking the single big exam as a determinant of their marks would be the greatest contribution to the Indian system of assessing student merits in exams. The system is burdened right now with ratifying the marks that schools will be giving their students for the previous academic year. Tackling the anomalies likely to crop up is going to be a challenge, as schools would certainly try to favour their students in internal assessment marks. What the reform promises is a vision that will take everyone beyond last academic year's fiasco in which the exams could not be held at all. All students have suffered from the inadequacies of online teaching and learning for a whole academic year now when the inequities of India's patchy Internet coverage were most evident across the urban-rural divide.

The uncertainty over how long the pandemic will last before the virus becomes just endemic. It would take a brave nation to declare the second wave has subsided and consider the situation to be safe enough to put students and teachers back in classroom mode. While learning outcomes will be far better, there is no knowing if such congregations of students will not help the virus spread more easily. The UK experience of putting all students classified as contacts to a stray positive case has been bitter with lakhs of students forced to spend time in cruel self-isolation. A lot depends on when schools can be reopened but the CBSE has used the time well to think of alternatives.

Bollywood's first Khan

Athespian, a legend, an actor par excellence... Dilip Kumar, the actor and the man, can only be described with adjectives and grand tags because his colossal impact and the overwhelming admiration he commands in the subcontinent remain unparalleled.

Born Mohammed Yusuf Khan in Peshawar, Dilip Saab was a devout Muslim, a steadfast secularist and a method actor who died in Mumbai on Wednesday after a prolonged illness.

Though his last film was released 23 years ago, in 1998, Dilip Kumar remains a daunting, revered presence in the Indian film industry not just because of the awards and accolades he received for his acting, but because with almost every role he played, he created a template for that character.

And because he embodied the idea of Nehru's secular India, both on screen and off it, he was also regularly called upon to assist in politics and fund raising and was recognised in his lifetime not just for his contribution to cinema, but also social causes in India and across the LoC.

At home he was awarded the Padma Vibhushan, given a Rajya Sabha nomination, and in Pakistan he was accorded a state welcome and graced with the highest civilian award, Nishan-e-Imtiaz, in 1998 that he accepted after consulting the then Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee.

Dilip Kumar's passing is truly the end of an era. It's a day to bid a mouthful goodbye to that black and white world of young men on bicycles, railway stations with tongas parked outside, a modern India under construction that held the pledge to remain secular, but also a world where a Muslim man was known by a Hindu name.

It was apt then, that on Wednesday, Mohammed Yusuf Khan was wrapped in the Tricolour and given a state send-off to the Santacruz Kabrastan. Dilip Kumar, 98, now lies there, with Nehru's idea of India that died before him.

THE ASIAN AGE

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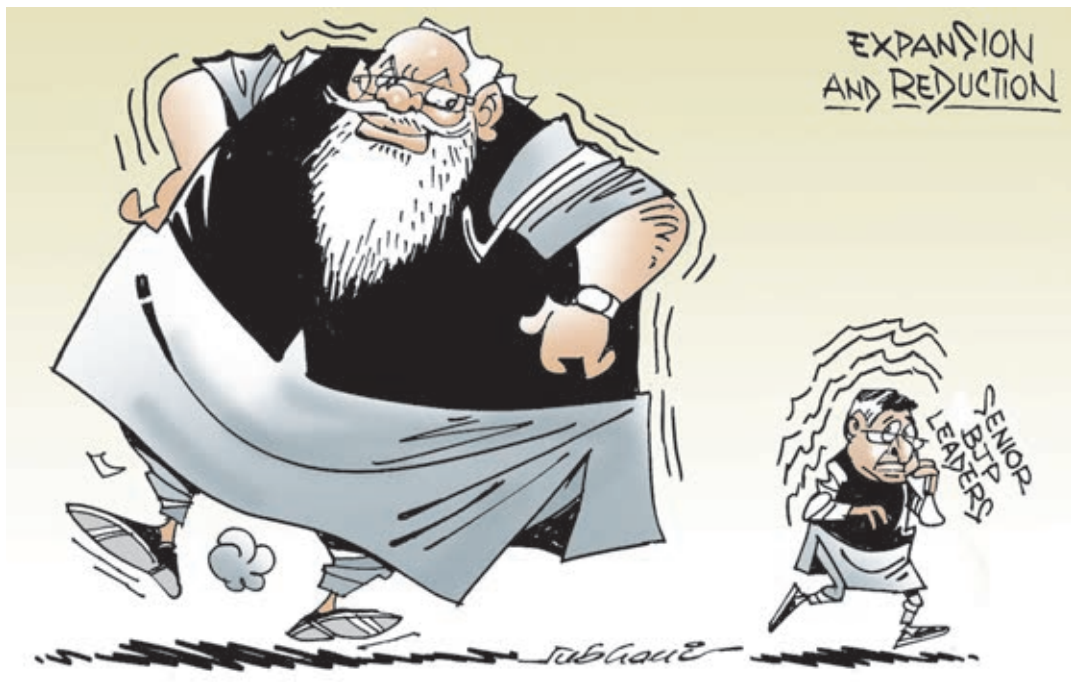
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Subhani



India-China peace: Who will take the first step?



Sunanda K. Datta-Ray

Reflections

The only reference amidst Beijing's centennial celebrations to Sino-Indian differences — posthumous awards for four Chinese soldiers out of more than 40 believed to have fallen in the Galwan Valley clash in June 2020 — gives no glimpse of the unsmiling President Xi Jinping's "dream" of "the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation". For that one must go back 228 years to Emperor Qianlong's haughty rebuff to England's King George III.

Official India is sometimes equally enigmatic. Indians were completely taken aback when Gen. V.K. Singh, who soldiers on in politician's garb, announced that "if China had transgressed (the Line of Actual Control) 10 times, we must have done it at least 50 times". Was it the eternal soldier's boast that no one can beat our jawans in deriding-do? Or flaunting loyalty to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who astonished everyone back in June 2020 by exonerating the Chinese of any incursion or encroachment?

Imitation being the best form of flattery, no one was surprised either when, while visiting Ladakh, defence minister Rajnath Singh would not even mention China. He spoke only about our "neighbours" and the "neighbourhood".

Reportedly, the Prime Minister had done so earlier, which was rather like the ancient Greeks, who were as superstitious as today's Hindu stalwarts, calling the Furies the Eumenides or good-humoured ladies to flatter them into being less furious.

China's disdain for verbal gymnastics recalls Deng Xiaoping's advice to hide your strength and bide your

time. Unlike Indian politicians, Deng abjured any hankering for superpower status. So do his successors. What they assert instead is that although they have suffered oppression and exploitation by European nations and their colonial lackeys (India?) for a century, they will overtake the United States economically in 10 years. Mr Xi called this "xiaokang", "basically well-off", the term Deng used in a display of humility that was as ostentatious as Mahatma Gandhi's poverty. China knows that the gun out of whose barrel power grows rests on a booming economy.

Although Deng was the unaggressive architect of China's modernisation, there really isn't much fundamental contradiction between his legacy and that of Mao Zedong. The difference is mainly of style. Deng ousted Mao's designated successor, Hua Guofeng, launched and guided the *Boluan Fanzheng* (literally "eliminating chaos and returning to normal") and the Four Modernisations movements, and suppressed the Democracy Wall and the Beijing Spring.

His only designation may have been "Most Honorary President of the Chinese Bridge Association", but his word was law. The quaintly named "June Fourth Incident" — when tanks and troops massacred thousands of unarmed young democracy supporters — bore his imprimatur. He could obfuscate his purpose with aphorisms like "A market economy is not necessarily capitalist, and a planned economy is not necessarily socialist".

Chairman Mao's singular ability was to draw on the past even while dismantling its legacy. Thus, he told his commanders on the eve

of the 1962 war that India and China had fought "one and a half" wars in ancient times. The first was during the Tang dynasty (618-907), when Chinese troops helped an Indian monarch suppress a pretender. The "half" was Timur's sacking of Delhi seven centuries later, which Mao included because the Mongol Yuan dynasty, founded by Kublai Khan, ruled China at the time. Had Mao known that Emperor Babur was Timur's great-great-great-grandson, he would undoubtedly have laid claim to the Delhi *masnad*; perhaps the ambition did stir in his subconscious as he ordered his commanders to be "restrained and principled", unlike Timur who massacred more than 100,000 Indian prisoners. Mao must have enjoyed the 2,893-word letter in which Qianlong projected himself as the Son of Heaven, the whole world his vassal. He regarded envoys as supplicants, gifts as tribute, politeness as submission, and diplomatic relations as a plea for protection. Asked for trading ties, he ordered King George III to "tremblingly obey and show no negligence!"

The Great Helmsman, who swam in the Yangtse river at 62 to demonstrate his fitness, was blamed for the miseries of the Great Leap Forward when millions of people died, the anarchic violence of the Cultural Revolution, and the depredations of the Gang of Four. But millions of Chinese truly believe that it was only because of Mao that they could stand up. All Under Heaven acknowledge that Deng could not have built what he did if the feared, reviled and worshipped Mao hadn't

As Mao rides again, his successor should not forget that the point of his tale about the one-and-a-half wars was that India and China are not doomed to perpetual enmity

laid the foundations. Even Deng admitted that Mao was seven parts good and only three parts bad.

On July 1 Mr Xi, whose own Mandate of Heaven will soon be renewed for yet another five-year term, announced from the same balcony where Mao had proclaimed the born-again Middle Kingdom in 1949 that 1.4 billion Chinese were "marching in confident strides" toward the "goal of building China into a 'great modern socialist country' in all respects". As Mao rides again, his successor should not forget that the point of his tale about the one-and-a-half wars was that India and China are not doomed to perpetual enmity.

It was a point that had been made eight years earlier during Mao's last conversation with Jawaharlal Nehru. Discussing their "differences", Mao referred to the old Chinese saying, "to seize somebody's pig-tail". He and Nehru agreed that India and China would not do that. "Sometimes we have differences, but we do not quarrel", Nehru responded. That is something for Mr Xi to remember, no matter how deeply he might resent the new map of the now downgraded Jammu and Kashmir state that New Delhi belatedly released last November.

Unless he does, India and China will stand like two goats with locked horns on a narrow bridge, as Liu Shuqing, a former Chinese vice-foreign minister, warned Bhutan's Dawa Tsering. Prime Minister Modi gave a new twist to the stalemate with the slogan "Inch towards Miles" on the eve of Mr Xi's first visit to India in 2014. If the Prime Minister has forgotten what he said, Beijing can jog his memory by reiterating the old Chinese saying: "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step".

Someone has to take that first step.

The writer is a senior journalist, columnist and author

LETTERS

SCAPEGOATED

How fair is the reshuffle? Seasoned and veteran ministers Harsh Vardhan, V. Sadananda Gowda, Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank, Santosh Gangwar, Thaawarchand Gehlot and Babul Supriyo resigned. Forty-three new ministers, including Jyotiraditya Scindia and Sarbananda Sonowal, took oath. Mr Gehlot, a political man, has been appointed governor of Karnataka. After struggling bravely through the pandemic, Mr Vardhan was asked to go. He was made the scapegoat for the second wave.

Priyanka Mathur
Noida

FR STAN'S LESSON

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, "Who has the credibility to probe Stan Swamy's death?" (July 7). It was not an assassination but a slow death in custody. Even the judiciary that failed to grant timely bail to Father Stan Swamy on medical grounds cannot escape. The conduct of the NIA and jail authorities, which denied him a sipper to drink, should be scrutinised to stop the misuse of the UAPA to deny bail to the accused. Fr Swamy's death should trigger a national debate on the denial of bail to undertrials. Let his suffering not go in vain.

Sankar Paul
Chakdaha, West Bengal

SPAIN EDGED OUT

ARGENTINA WILL lock horns with Brazil in Sunday's Copa America final. In an enthralling fixture that went the distance, Lionel Messi's brigade got past luckless Colombia 3-2 on penalties. Goal-keeper Emiliano did the star turn for the victors as he produced a hat-trick of diving saves. Argentina, who won the last of their 14 Copa America titles in 1993, have the best chance to upset the Selecao at the iconic Maracana Stadium on Saturday. Meanwhile, Spain narrowly lost to Italy in a penalty shoot-out in Uefa Euro 2020 and missed its berth in the final on Sunday.

N.J. Ravi Chander
Bengaluru

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

Dilip Cherian
Dilli Ka Babu



Groups of babus play smoke and mirrors ahead of 2022 polls in UP

Sensing the current popular mood against the UP government due to the Covid crisis, the party and the Narendra Modi sarkar are keen to ensure the party's success in the upcoming Assembly elections. A lot of that worry has to do with the perceptions about Yogi running the government with handpicked but clearly inadequate babu support.

When the trusted PMO aide Arvind Kumar Sharma was air-dropped in Lucknow, he was no regular Gujarat cadre babu or just another BJP vice-president in Uttar Pradesh (after taking voluntary retirement). He was reportedly sent to rein in Yogi who has caused considerable discontent within the state unit of the party, and he remains the PMO's eyes and ears within the Yogi Adityanath government.

Yogi too has gathered around his own trusted band of babus. It is this team that steered Yogi's Covid management. Hovering over these

exercises like Banquo's ghost is a familiar presence, Navneet Sehgal. This consistently powerful 1988-batch IAS officer is once again chief firefighter, in-charge of the state information department as additional chief secretary and leading the perception battle against Covid failure. His dominant presence in the state government, over the last six months has not enthused too many other babus in UP. Yet, it is this larger cohort of babus who will matter more, going ahead and how they manage their last lap briefs, that will be crucial in the months ahead.

CBDT APPOINTMENT RAISES MORE QUESTIONS

The spate of appointments in the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) seem to have raised more questions than answers among babu-watchers. After the end of CBDT chairman P.C. Mody's extended tenure, the finance min-

istry has given additional charge of the post to J.B. Mohapatra, a 1985-batch Indian Revenue Service (IRS) officer. With Mr Mohapatra as ad hoc chairman, the CBDT now has three 1985-batch board members, the other two being Anu J. Singh and Anuja Sarangi.

Sources say that there is also much speculation about why Mr Mohapatra was named the interim chairperson of CBDT and why the government chose to ignore the claim of K.M. Prasad, the senior-most board member. Mr Prasad who has about three months to go before retirement could easily have been given additional charge of interim chairman.

Besides his ad hoc position, Mr Mohapatra is the first regular member for investigation since 2019. The post of member, investigations, now seems to lead to the top post at CBDT, given that the current CEC Sushil Chandra held the same post before he was elevated to CBDT chairperson.

Interestingly, the CBDT board is likely to see more changes in the days ahead. Of the three new members, S.K. Gupta will complete his tenure in July while Anu Singh will retire in August this year as will K.M. Prasad. Will the government draft new members on the board or give extension to the current ones? Let's wait and watch.

CAUGHT BETWEEN CM AND HM, DGP WANTS OUT

Walking a tightrope can get tiresome after a while. Haryana's director general of police Manoj Yadava has sought repatriation to the Intelligence Bureau (IB) for "personal reasons", in a bid to end the war of words between chief minister Manohar Khattar and home minister Anil Vij over his tenure extension.

Mr Yadava was sent to Haryana on the recommendation by a UPSC committee for appointment as the state police chief. He had returned to his home state cadre after spend-

ing 15 years with the IB. The 1988-batch IPS officer has apparently written to additional chief secretary (home) Rajeev Arora seeking repatriation to IB and resume his old post of additional director.

While the move took some by surprise, those in the know believe that Mr Yadava's inability to get along with his boss, the state home minister Anil Vij, may have been the last straw for the top cop. Earlier this year when chief minister Manohar Khattar had given Mr Yadava a year's extension as DGP, the home minister had vehemently objected but Mr Khattar stuck to his guns and had his way.

It's no secret that Mr Khattar and his home minister do not see eye to eye on several issues. Mr Yadava may be about to pay the price of their political rivalry if his request for repatriation is accepted.

Share a babu experience! Follow [@dilipthecherian](https://twitter.com/dilipthecherian) on Twitter. Let's multiply the effect.

SHORT TAKES

ROCKETS TARGET
BASE HOSTING US
TROOPS IN IRAQ

Baghdad, July 7: Fourteen rockets were fired Wednesday at the Ain al-Assad air base which hosts American troops in western Iraq, a spokesman for the US-led coalition said.

The base was attacked by 14 rockets that “landed on the base & perimeter... At this time initial reports indicate 3 minor injuries. Damage is being assessed,” Colonel Wayne Marotto wrote on Twitter.

It was the latest in a spate of attacks targeting US military and diplomatic facilities in Iraq that have been blamed on pro-Iranian armed groups within a state-sponsored paramilitary force.

POPE HAD SEVERE
NARROWING OF
HIS COLON

Rome, July 7: Pope Francis’ recovery from intestinal surgery continues to be regular and satisfactory, the Vatican said Wednesday, as it revealed that final examinations showed he had a suffered a severe narrowing of his colon.

The Vatican spokesman, Matteo Bruni, said the 84-year-old Pope was continuing to eat regularly following his Sunday surgery to remove the left side of his colon, and that intravenous therapy had been suspended. Bruni said final examination of the affected tissue confirmed a severe diverticular stenosis with signs of sclerosing diverticulitis.

Francis underwent three hours of planned surgery Sunday. He is expected to stay in Rome’s Gemelli Polyclinic, which has a special suite reserved for popes.

27 KILLED IN
PROTESTS, SAYS
ESWATINI MIN

Johannesburg, July 7: Twenty-seven people died last week during pro-democracy protests in the southern African kingdom of Eswatini, a minister said on Wednesday.

“Unfortunately, yes, 27 people lost their lives,” Commerce Minister Mangoba Khumalo said in a phone interview, expressing regret that force had to be used to break up the protests. “It was not intended, but... the nature of the attacks that were happening was such that in some instances force had to be used, and in some instances gunfire had to be exchanged, and there were casualties,” he said.

“But in some cases people were trapped in buildings when those buildings were burned... This is very unfortunate.”

11 HARASSED TEEN
WHO DAMNED
ISLAM, CONVICTED

Paris, July 7: A French court on Wednesday convicted 11 of 13 people charged with harassing and threatening a teenager who harshly criticised Islam in online posts and ended up changing schools and receiving police protection to preserve her safety.

The verdict came in a trial in Paris that was the first of its kind since France created a new court in January to prosecute online crimes, including harassment and discrimination. The court sentenced the defendants to suspended prison terms of four to six months and fined them about \$1,770 each.

Social networks are the street. When you pass someone in the street, you don’t insult them, threaten them, make fun of them, the presiding judge, Michel Humbert, said.

DWARF COW IN
BANGLADESH A
BIG DRAW

Charigram, Bangladesh, July 7: Thousands of people are defying a nationwide Coronavirus lockdown in Bangladesh to see Rani, a 51-centimetre (20-inch) tall cow whose owners claim it is the world’s smallest. The 23-month-old dwarf cow has become a media star with scores of newspapers and television stations throwing the spotlight on the tiny bovine at a farm near Dhaka.

Pictures of Rani on social media platforms have set off a tourist frenzy.

Despite a nationwide transport shutdown because of record Coronavirus infections and deaths, people are flocking in rickshaws to the farm in Charigram, 30 kilometres southwest of Dhaka.

Rani weighs only 26 kilograms (57 pounds) but the owners say it is 10 centimetres shorter than the smallest cow in Guinness World Records.

Europe decries
Iran nuke move

Says Tehran violating commitments under the ’15 deal with world powers

Return to Vienna
for talks, says US

Berlin, July 7: Germany, France and Britain are voicing “grave concern” over a further move by Iran that they say is a serious violation of its commitments under the 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, warning that it threatens the outcome of talks aimed at bringing the US back into the agreement.

The three European powers’ foreign ministers issued a joint statement on Tuesday over a report by the International Atomic Energy Agency, the UN nuclear watchdog, “confirming that Iran has taken steps in the production of enriched uranium metal”.

Since then-president Donald Trump pulled out of the agreement in 2018, Iran has gradually been violating its restrictions to put pressures on the remaining parties — the three European nations, Russia and China — to come up with economic incentives to offset crippling American sanctions.

Among other things, Tehran has started enriching uranium to well above the purity allowed under the agreement. It has also been spinning advanced centrifuges, producing uranium metal and stockpiling more uranium than allowed. Uranium metal can also be used for a nuclear bomb, and research on its production is specifically prohibited under the nuclear deal. The IAEA already said in February that its inspectors had confirmed that Iran has begun the production of uranium metal.

The European foreign ministers said of Tehran’s latest step that “Iran has no credible civilian need for uranium metal (research and development) and production, which are a key step in the development of a nuclear weapon”.

Washington, July 7: The United States on Tuesday warned Iran to stop nuclear “brinksmanship,” saying the West Asian country’s latest efforts to enrich uranium could complicate its return to talks aimed at restarting the 2015 nuclear accord.

“We continue to urge Iran to stop this brinksmanship, to return to Vienna prepared for real talks, and to be in a position to be prepared to finish the work that jump-started in April,” State Department spokesman Ned Price told reporters.

— AFP

They said it was all the more concerning given that no date has been set for the resumption of negotiations in Vienna aimed at bringing the US back into the nuclear deal and Iran back into full compliance, and that Iran has “significantly curtailed” IAEA access.

“We have repeatedly stressed that time is on no one’s side, the statement said. “With its latest steps, Iran is threatening a successful outcome to the Vienna talks despite the progress achieved in six rounds of negotiations to date.

— AP

Afghan govt team meets
Taliban in Tehran: Iran

Tehr, July 7: An Afghan government delegation met with Taliban representatives in Tehran Wednesday, the Iranian foreign ministry said, as the Islamist militia pressed a lightning advance amid the pullout of US troops.

Opening the talks, Iran’s Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif welcomed the departure of its US foe from its eastern borders but warned: “Today the people and political leaders of Afghanistan must make difficult decisions for the future of their country.” Deputy chief negotiator Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai headed the Taliban delegation while former vice president Younus Qanooni represented the government, the Iranian ministry said.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid confirmed Stanikzai’s visit to Tehran to “discuss issues of mutual interest”.

But he made no refer-

Taliban attacks
provincial capital

Herat, July 7: The Taliban launched a major assault on a provincial capital in Afghanistan on Wednesday, the first since the United States military began its final drawdown of troops from the country, as insurgents press on with a blistering offensive.

Fierce fighting erupted in the western city of Qala-i-Naw, the capital of Badghis, with the militants seizing police headquarters and offices of the

country’s spy agency.

As news of the morning assault spread, social media was flooded with videos of clashes — with some showing armed Taliban fighters on motorbikes entering the city as onlookers cheered.

Afghanistan’s Defence Minister Bismillah Mohammadi said government forces were in a “very sensitive military situation”, adding that “the war is raging” with the Taliban.

— AFP

ence to any Afghan government delegation, saying only that Stanikzai was holding talks with “some Afghan personalities”. “They will discuss

and exchange opinions on the current situation of the country and finding a solution through talks,” Mujahid added.

— AFP

Lanka gold coin on
China party century

Colombo, July 7: Sri Lanka on Wednesday issued its most expensive gold coin ever to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Chinese Communist Party, underscoring the close ties between the countries. The commemorative 1,000-rupee (\$5) coin will be sold for 222,000 rupees from Monday, the Central Bank of Sri Lanka said.

“The coins have been issued at the request of the government of Sri Lanka as an accolade for long-standing friendship and mutual trust between the two countries,” the

bank said. Sri Lanka has increasingly turned to China for financing and diplomatic support in recent years, prompting India and the United States to express concern.

One side of the 12-gram (0.42 ounces) coin marks the Chinese party’s anniversary while the other celebrates 65 years of diplomatic ties between the two nations and depicts a Colombo theatre built with Chinese financing.

Sri Lanka released its last gold coin to mark 50 years of independence from Britain in 1998.

— AFP

Ever Given cruises Suez Canal



The Panama-flagged MV Ever Given container ship sails along Egypt’s Suez Canal near the canal’s central city of Ismailia. The 200,000-tonne container vessel was stuck in the Suez Canal during a sandstorm on March 23, causing major disruption to world shipping and the loss of millions in revenue for Egypt. The ship weighed anchor on Wednesday after Egyptian authorities and the Japanese owner agreed a compensation deal.

— AFP

Trump suit against FB, Twitter

Washington, July 7: Former US president Donald Trump on Wednesday unveiled a class-action lawsuit against Facebook, Twitter and Google, escalating his years-long free speech battle with tech giants who he argues have wrongfully censored him.

“I’m filing, as the lead class representative, a major class-action lawsuit against the big tech giants including Facebook, Google and Twitter as well as their CEOs, Mark Zuckerberg, Sundar Pichai and Jack Dorsey — three real nice guys,” Trump announced at his golf club in Bedminster, New Jersey.

The nation’s top tech firms have become the “enforcers of illegal, unconstitutional censorship,” added the 75-year-old Republican, who was banned from posting on Facebook and Twitter in the wake of the deadly January 6 siege of the US Capitol by his supporters.

Trump says he is being

joined in the suit by the America First Policy Institute and thousands of American citizens who have been “de-platformed” from social media sites.

“We are standing up for American democracy by standing up for free speech rights of every American — Democrat, Republican, independent, whoever it may be,” ex-President Trump said.

“This lawsuit is just the beginning,” Trump filed suit in US District Court in southern Florida, where he is seeking an immediate halt to censorship, blacklisting and what he called the “cancelling” of people who share his political views.

Trump stressed that he is not looking for any sort of a settlement. “We’re in a fight that we’re going to win,” he said.

The suit comes amid unprecedented action by Congress to try to curb the powers of big tech.

Late last month the

House of Representatives advanced sweeping reforms of antitrust laws aimed at the business practices of Google, Apple, Amazon and Facebook.

Facebook banned Trump indefinitely on January 7 over his incendiary comments that preceded the Capitol insurrection.

Twitter quickly followed, permanently suspending Trump’s account due to the “risk of further incitement of violence.” In June, following a review by Facebook’s independent oversight board, Facebook narrowed the ban to two years.

Trump said YouTube and its parent organisation Google have deleted “countless videos”, including many addressing the handling of the Coronavirus pandemic.

The billionaire, his allies and many supporters say the ban on Trump and others amount to censorship and abuse of their power.

“There is no better evidence that big tech is out of control than the fact that they banned the sitting president of the United States,” Trump said.

Legal experts give Trump’s case little chance of succeeding.

The US Constitution’s First Amendment “constrains only government actors, not private entities,” Eric Goldman, director of the High-Tech Law Institute at Santa Clara University, said, adding that dozens of other similar cases failed decisively.

In the complaint filed against Facebook, Trump argues that big tech’s cooperative work with federal authorities effectively shifts their status from private company to state actor.

“As such, Defendant is constrained by the First Amendment right to free speech in the censorship decisions it makes regarding its Users,” the complaint states.

— AFP

Study: Pfizer, Moderna
vax cut 91% virus riskCDC says Delta is
dominant variant

Washington, July 7: People who receive Covid-19 vaccines by Pfizer and Moderna are up to 91 per cent less likely to develop the disease, according to a US study which also suggests that the preventives reduce the severity of symptoms and duration in those who still get an infection. The research, published in the New England Journal of Medicine on June 30, is among the first to show the benefits of mRNA vaccines even among those who experience breakthrough infections — testing positive after immunisation.

The mRNA vaccines by Pfizer and Moderna contain genetic instructions for our cells to make the spike protein of the SARS-CoV-2, which the virus uses to infect and enter the human cells.

Our immune system then builds an immune response against the spike protein, and learns how to fight off the Coronavirus if we encounter it in future.

“One of the unique things about this study is that it measured the secondary benefits of the vaccines,” said study co-author Sarang Yoon, an assistant professor at the University of Utah, US. The study was

Houston, July 7: The highly contagious Delta variant has become the dominant Coronavirus strain in the US, accounting for more than 51 per cent of Covid infections in the country, according to new data released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The variant, also known as B.1.617.2, was first detected in India in December and is spreading quickly across the globe. In some parts of America, the Delta strain accounts for more than 80 per cent of new infections, including some Midwestern states like Missouri, Kansas and Iowa. It is already causing 74.3 per cent of infections in Western states, includ-

● **NEW COVID infections with the Delta variant now account for 51.7 per cent of the infections. The B.1.1.7 or Alpha variant makes up for 28.7 per cent cases.**

ing Utah and Colorado, and 58.8 per cent of infections in Southern states like Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas and Oklahoma, according to CDC estimates.

New Covid infections with the Delta variant now account for 51.7 per cent of the infections. The B.1.1.7 or Alpha variant makes up for 28.7 per cent cases after remaining a dominant variant for months, the data said.

— PTI

designed to measure the risks and rates of infection among those on the front lines of the pandemic — doctors, nurses, and first responders.

“These are the people who are getting exposure to the virus day in and day

out, and the vaccine protected them against getting the disease. Those who unfortunately got COVID-19 despite being vaccinated were still better off than those who didn’t,” he added.

— PTI

WIDESPREAD | CONDEMNATION

Attack on our values of democracy, says EU chief Charles Michel

Dutch scribe fighting for his life after shooting

Amsterdam, July 7: Prominent Dutch crime reporter Peter R. de Vries was fighting for his life in a Dutch hospital on Wednesday after being shot multiple times, including in the head, in what the EU chief described as “an attack on our values”.

Amsterdam police chief Frank Paauw said three people had been arrested, among them the suspected shooter, but gave no details on the possible reasons for the attack.

De Vries, who first won fame for his inside reporting on the kidnapping of millionaire Freddy Heineken in 1983, was shot up to five times in front of shocked bystanders as he left a television studio in a busy Amsterdam street on Tuesday.

The attack sparked widespread condemnations, with Europe’s top official Charles Michel calling it a “crime against journalism and an attack on our values of democracy and rule

of law.” De Vries — a celebrity journalist in the Netherlands known for speaking on behalf of crime victims — was “fighting for his life”, Amsterdam mayor Femke Halsetma told a news conference late on Tuesday.

Eyewitnesses told local media that the 64-year-old journalist and TV presenter was shot up to five times, including once in the head.

Dutch media reported Wednesday that De Vries,

known for his hard-hitting reporting, has been threatened several times in the past. Since last year, he has been acting as an advisor and confidante of the main prosecution witness in the case against Ridouan Taghi, described as the Netherlands’ most wanted criminal, whose organisation was described as a “well-oiled killing machine by prosecutors.”

Prime Minister Mark Rutte told a press conference in The Hague the

attack was “shocking and inconceivable”.

“It’s an attack on a courageous journalist and by extension an attack on the freedom of the press, which is so essential for our democracy and rule of law,” he said.

De Vries was shot at around 7:30 pm local time (1730 GMT) — still daylight at this time of year in Amsterdam — as he left a television studio after appearing on a talk show. Het Parool daily newspa-

per quoted a resident as saying she heard five shots and went out to see what had happened.

She said she saw de Vries lying on the ground with a lot of blood on his face.

She told the paper that he couldn’t speak but was still alive, and that she held his hand as they waited for emergency services.

At the scene of the shooting Thursday, shocked residents were laying flowers and lighting candles.

— AFP

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	53054.76	0.37
Nifty 50	15879.70	0.39
S&P 500*	4,353.03	0.22
Dollar (₹)	74.62	-0.08
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.04	0.16
Euro (₹)	88.26	0.002
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	46,903▼29	0.06
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	72.92	-2.16
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.164	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.331	-0.039

* As of 8:30 PM IST

RBI notifies retail inclusion in MSME category

The Reserve Bank notified the inclusion of retail and wholesale trade under the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) category. This will help retail and wholesale trade benefit from priority sector lending under the RBI guidelines. Earlier on July 2, the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises had decided to include retail and wholesale trade under MSMEs for the limited purpose of priority sector lending.

Chinese nationals step down from Paytm board



All Chinese nationals on the board of Paytm have been replaced by US and Indian citizens, the firm said. Alipay representative Jing Xiandong, Ant Financial's Guoming Cheng, and Alibaba representatives Michael Yuen Jen Yao (US citizen) and Ting Hong Kenny Ho have ceased to be directors. US citizen Douglas Feagin has joined the Paytm board on behalf of Ant Group. It now has no Chinese nationals on its board.

Piramal Capital's NCDs to offer 8-9% interest

Piramal Capital & Housing Finance, a wholly owned subsidiary of Piramal Enterprises, announced a Rs 1,000-crore public issue of secured non-convertible debentures (NCDs) opening on July 12. The NCDs of Rs 1,000 face value carry coupon rates of 8.10-9 per cent for 26 month to 10-year tenures. The public issue will allocate 40 per cent of the NCDs to HNIs, 40 per cent to retail investors and 10 per cent to QIBs.

Nucleus Software to hire over 500 engineers this yr

Nucleus Software, which provides lending and transaction banking solutions, said it is planning to hire 500 engineers by the end of the year. Nucleus has set a target to hire 500 fresh young engineers from non-metro cities and towns across India till December, a statement said. This will be undertaken through tie-ups with engineering colleges across various states and through direct hiring, it said.

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■Pre-quarterly updates cheer market Sensex closes above 53K pts

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, JULY 7

The Sensex closed above the 53000-mark for the first time in history on Wednesday. The benchmark index gained 193.58 points, or 0.37 per cent, to close at 53,054.76 after touching a high of 53,105.41, but below an all-time intra-day high of 53,129.37. Foreign portfolio investors turned net buyers after recent selling by Rs 532.94 crore, which seemed to have triggered buying, though domestic institutions remained net sellers by Rs 231.80 crore. "Sentiments were positive on account of receding fresh Covid cases, vaccination progress, strong May core sector data, improved traction in overall economic momentum in June indicating healthy

SENSEX TRENDS IN 2021	
Jan. 21	Touches 50000-mark intra-day
Feb. 3	Closes above 50000 points
Feb. 5	Crosses 51000-mark intra-day
Feb. 8	Ends above 51000 points
Feb. 15	Rallies above 52000-mark
May 24	M-cap of BSE-listed companies touches \$3 trillion
June 22	Touches 53000-mark in intra-day trade
July 7	Closes above the 53000-mark for the first time; M-cap of BSE-listed firms at record ₹ 2,32,21,148.16 crore (over \$3 trillion).
GAINS 5305.43 POINTS, OR 11.10 PER CENT, SO FAR THIS YEAR	

corporate earnings for Q1," said Siddhartha Khemka, head-retail research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services. "Robust pre-quarterly updates from Sobha, Titan, RBL Bank, Equitas among others also

cheered the market. Fresh buying was seen in metals...Realty stocks too surged led by signs of recovery for demand in residential real estate as unsold inventory declined further in Q2 of calendar year 2021," Khemka said.

Property sales, supply pick up in June

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JULY 7

Despite a slump in the April-June quarter (Q1 FY22), the real estate sector saw signs of recovery in June, with sales and supply rising. About half the sales in Q1 took place in the month of June, as states started opening up after the localised lockdowns, says a report by PropTiger.com. "Both demand and supply were hit during the first two months (of Q1)

when most states put in place various restrictions and lockdowns to curb the spread of the virus. However, some ground on both the numbers was covered during the month of June, when states started to open up," said Dhruv Agarwala, group CEO, Housing.com, Makaan.com and PropTiger.com. Anarock Property Consultants says residential sales, during the quarter, dropped by 58 per cent. Around 24,570 units across the top 7 cities were sold in

the June quarter against 58,290 units in the preceding quarter. "We anticipate residential demand to see steady growth in the upcoming quarter. The previously-noted structural shift in housing demand continues—many current homeowners seek to upgrade to larger homes and the previously purchase-averse millennials remain very active property buyers," said Anuj Puri, chairman, Anarock Property Consultants.

DEPT. OF PUBLIC ENTERPRISES MOVES TO FINANCE MINISTRY

FC BUREAU NEW DELHI, JULY 7

The government has merged the Department of Public Enterprises (DPE) with the Ministry of Finance to give it greater control over state-owned companies and facilitate the privatisation programme. With the DPE taken away from its fold, the Ministry of Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises will now be called the Ministry of Heavy Industries. The finance ministry will now have six departments. The Disinvestment Ministry, created under the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government, was earlier merged with the finance ministry and is made a department under it. Also, Foreign Investment Promotion Board (FIPB) was abolished and administration of foreign investments was given to the finance ministry. The shift of DPE to the finance ministry will help in efficient monitoring of the capital expenditure, asset monetisation and financial health of the Central Public Sector Enterprises, the government said. Hitherto, the finance ministry had, under it, the departments of: economic affairs; revenue; expenditure; investment and public asset management (Dipam) and financial services. With the addition, the ministry will get its sixth department.

Buyers seek full Saudi oil supply despite price hike

SHARON CHO JULY 7

Some Asian oil refiners are planning to ask for full contractual crude volumes from Saudi Arabia, despite the kingdom jacking up prices for August, as there are few cheaper alternative sources of supply. Saudi Aramco raised the official selling price for its key Arab Light crude to Asia next month by the most since January after the breakdown of Opec+ talks to boost output. Alternative grades from the US or the North Sea are currently more expensive, leaving refiners without many options to curb rising costs. At least five processors are requesting normal contractual volumes for August-loading cargoes, according to refinery officials who asked not to



be identified. One will seek more of the lighter Saudi grade to replace spot purchases from the Atlantic Basin, they said. Buyers are asked to submit so-called nominations by Wednesday, and will be informed of allocated amounts by early next week. The collapse of the Opec+ talks means that the group's output limits will remain in place for August, depriving buyers of extra barrels as the demand rebound from the pandemic acceler-

ates. The physical oil market is showing signs of strength, with the prompt Dubai timespread at the widest backwardation since January 2020. The premium of Oman crude to Dubai swaps has also widened, signalling a bullish outlook for Middle Eastern oil in the Asian spot market. Light-sweet crude from the US that can be delivered to Asia in October is now about \$2 a barrel more expensive than similar Middle Eastern cargoes, meaning the arbitrage trade is shut, according to traders. Other official selling prices from major Middle Eastern producers such as Kuwait, Qatar and Iraq will be released in the coming days. Those suppliers typically follow Saudi Arabia in their pricing strategy. —Bloomberg

Goyal pitches for Indo-Pacific services pact

New Delhi, July 7: Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Wednesday called for a services trade agreement among friendly nations of the Indo-Pacific region as it can help liberalise domestic regulations and build capacity in sectors like e-commerce and IT. Speaking at special plenary with the trade ministers of the Indo-Pacific region, Goyal said India's trade with select Indo-Pacific economies increased to \$262 billion in 2020 from \$33 billion in 2001.

However, he said, non-tariff measures act as m a j o r trade barriers in the region. "Given the prospects of services trade, an Indo-Pacific wide services trade agreement should also be considered amongst friendly nations. It can help liberalise domestic regulations and build capacity on e-commerce and IT-enabled services and other areas



such as artificial intelligence," he said. Indo-Pacific region countries include Sri Lanka, Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Fiji, India, Japan, Malaysia, Maldives, New Zealand and Singapore. Goyal also invited businesses of the region to avail incentives under India's production-linked investment schemes, which cover 13 sectors and aim at creating global manufacturing champions. He said trade facilitation can ease the cross-border movement of goods. —PTI

Covid claims 22 million jobs in major economies

LIBBY CHERRY JULY 7

Labour markets in developed nations have recovered only half of the loss of employment they suffered in the pandemic, with the young and low-skilled hurt the most. That's the conclusion of a 400-page study by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, which found that about 22 million jobs disap-

peared by the end of 2020 in industrial nations. The Paris-based institution said a full recovery to pre-pandemic levels of employment won't come until the end of next year. The findings indicate that the coronavirus crisis accelerated a number of trends that started over the past decade, including growing income inequality, a shift toward more technically demanding jobs and fewer secure employment

opportunities for lower-skilled workers. "Failing to address inequality and exclusion now is likely to result not only in deeper social divisions," said Stefano Scarpetta, the OECD's director for employment, labour and social affairs. The OECD found a "rapid buildup" of long-term unemployment, with each wave of pandemic restrictions making it increasingly difficult for people to

find their way back into the workforce. "There could be a growing mismatch between the skills and competence of the workers who have lost their jobs, and actually the skills which are in demand in the jobs which are being created," said Scarpetta at a press conference. It warned about a "particularly worrisome" increase in inactivity among young people in most countries. —Bloomberg

CAPITALAND EYES LOGISTICS PARKS, SETS ASIDE ₹2,250 CR

New Delhi, July 7: Singapore-based diversified real estate group CapitalLand on Wednesday announced a fund worth Rs 2,250 crore to develop logistics parks in India. CapitalLand is one of Asia's largest diversified real estate groups. Headquartered and listed in Singapore, it owns and manages a global portfolio worth about Singapore dollar (SGD) 137.7 billion as on March 31, 2021. "CapitalLand has launched its second logistics private fund of SGD 400 million (Rs 22.5 billion) to expand in India's logistics sector," it said. —PTI

UpGrad earmarks \$250 mn for deals

SARITHA RAI JULY 7

Online education provider UpGrad is allocating \$250 million for acquisitions in the coming months to speed up global expansion, one among a slew of India-born edtech startups setting their sights on international markets. The company will target digital learning providers with mentors and coaches as well as immersive short-form learning startups in markets like Indonesia and Vietnam and across Africa, it said on Wednesday in a release. Two acquisitions will be announced in the next 60 days. UpGrad, which specialises in higher education and upskilling courses, is near-

ing \$4 billion in valuation, Indian newspapers have reported. That would be a jump of nearly seven times from April, when it first got external funds, raising \$160 million from Singapore-based Temasek Holdings Pte and IFC Corp. UpGrad representatives declined to comment on its valuation or fundraising plans. India's edtech firms are expanding to new markets as the pandemic led to a boom in online learning from regular school classes to specialised professional courses. Mumbai-based UpGrad said it has over two-thirds of the online higher-education market in India for working professionals. UpGrad was founded in

2015 by serial entrepreneur Ronnie Screwvala, who pioneered cable television in India in the 1980s and then built a unicorn acquired by Walt Disney Company. Screwvala, 64, and his founding team own more than two-thirds of UpGrad. The startup is aiming for "an integrated, connected model in higher education across multiple geographies," Screwvala said in the release. The company said its target customers are the world's more than one billion knowledge workers and 250 million higher education enrollees. It offers more than 100 courses, including some in collaboration with foreign universities. —Bloomberg

DARK EDITIONS OF ALTROZ, NEXON LAUNCHED

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, JULY 7

Tata Motors on Wednesday launched the Dark Range of its popular Altroz, Nexon and Nexon EV range priced at Rs 8.71 lakh, Rs 10.40 lakh and Rs 15.99 lakh, respectively. Priced up to Rs 45,000 more than the standard versions, the Dark Edition models feature a blacked-out theme inside and out. The Dark Edition of Harrier, launched in 2019, was a popular choice amongst buyers. The new vehicles will get dark alloy wheels and the interiors will also be black.

EVER | RICH

Ex-spouse gets in a day more than the \$2.7 bn she gave away in a year

Jeff Bezos hits wealth record of \$211 bn

SCOTT CARPENTER & SOPHIE ALEXANDER JULY 7

Jeff Bezos is leaving the rest of the world behind when it comes to wealth accumulation. The world's richest man reached a record \$211 billion net worth on Tuesday after Amazon.com Inc shares rose 4.7 per cent after the Pentagon announced it was cancelling a cloud-computing contract with rival Microsoft Corp. The rally raised Bezos's fortune by \$8.4 billion, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index.

The last time anyone in the Bloomberg ranking neared this amount was in January, when Tesla Inc's Elon Musk briefly hit \$210 billion. The two men spent the first part of the year trading the top spot as the world's richest person, but Bezos has cemented his hold on No. 1 since mid-March as Amazon shares climbed almost 20 per cent during that time. Soaring stock prices in recent months have boosted the fortunes of a group of tech titans, including Musk. He remains in second place behind Bezos with a \$180.8 billion net



Jeff Bezos

worth even as Tesla shares fell on Tuesday. French luxury goods magnate Bernard Arnault is third at \$168.5

billion. Bezos's record haul is even greater than during a 2020 Amazon stock surge, when his net worth topped out at \$206.9 billion as the pandemic turbocharged the company's price. Bezos, 57, officially stepped down as Amazon's chief executive officer this week after a 27-year run. He still owns about 11 per cent of the company and serves as the firm's executive chairman. The Pentagon said on Tuesday it was scrapping a \$10 billion cloud-computing contract awarded in 2019 to Microsoft Corp

after several years of wrangling between the government and some of the biggest US tech companies over the deal. The decision indicates it planned to split the work between Microsoft and rival Amazon. MacKenzie Scott, Bezos's ex-wife and the 15th-richest person in the world, saw her wealth jump \$2.9 billion on Tuesday, eclipsing the \$2.7 billion she's given away so far this year. It's just a reminder that some billionaires can't give their money away faster than they make it. —Bloomberg

The National Company Law Appellate Tribunal has closed the insolvency case against Oyo's subsidiary. The inclusion of other parties, including hotels' body has not been permitted. The NCLAT closed proceedings for insolvency of Oyo's subsidiary Oyo Hotels and Homes Private Limited (OHHP) after the creditor Rakesh K. Yadav, who had dragged the hospitality chain to court, withdrew the case. Oyo has resolved the issue with the Gurugram-based hotelier in an out-of-court settlement. The Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) had sought intervention on behalf of its affected members in May. NCLAT had allowed the hotels' body to intervene in the insolvency case then. A few other individual hotel owners also had joined the insolvency case. However, after the withdrawal of the original case, NCLAT has not permitted intervention of FHRAI and others. "We welcome the decision of NCLAT and that the matter has finally been laid to rest. We had already settled with the original claimant but subsequent interveners with vested interests who were not a party to the case had delayed its closure," said Rohit Kapoor, CEO-Oyo Insea. The FHRAI said it will continue to find a resolution to the payment issue. According to the association, the insolvency case revealed that around Rs 150 crore worth payments are pending to various hotels. "We had intervened in the interest of our members. We will keep our efforts on," he said.



SHORT TAKES

Hockey icon Datt passes away at 95

New Delhi: A man of many talents but one passion. Keshav Datt was the last of connects to the golden era of Indian hockey which has attained mythical status over the years. A two-time Olympic gold-medallist (1948, London and 1952, Helsinki), the 95-year-old Datt died after battling age-related ailments in Kolkata on Wednesday, survived by his wife, two sons and a daughter, all of whom are based outside India. Aside from being excellent with a hockey stick in his hands, Datt was also a badminton player of credible ability and a professional tea taster in his time away from sports. Datt played alongside greats like the late trio of Balbir Singh Sr, Leslie Claudius, and Jaswant Singh Rajput among others. His demise marked the end of a glorious era in Indian hockey's history. — *PTI*

Shafali and Sneha in race for ICC award

Dubai: India's teen batting sensation Shafali Verma and all-rounder Sneha Rana were on Wednesday nominated for ICC women's 'Player of the Month' award for June following their standout performances in the ongoing series against England. Besides the Indian duo,

England's left-arm spinner Sophie Ecclestone has also been nominated for the honour in the women's category. The nominees among the men are New Zealand batsman Devon Conway and pacer Kyle Jamieson along with South Africa wicketkeeper Quinton de Kock. The 17-year-old Shafali, who had already impressed everyone in the shortest format of the game, made a stunning Test debut against England and was named Player of the Match in the Bristol match. — *PTI*

KL climbs to 6th position in ranking

Dubai: Indian skipper Virat Kohli retained his fifth position while wicketkeeper-batsman KL Rahul gained one spot to be in sixth place in the latest ICC T20I rankings. With 762 points, Kohli is behind England's David Malan (888 points), Australia white-ball skipper Aaron Finch (830), Pakistan captain Babar Azam (828) and New Zealand opener Devon Conway (774). Rahul, who has 743 points, and Australia all-rounder Glenn Maxwell have climbed a rung each to be placed sixth and seventh respectively. — *PTI*

Test Mace to go on tour in N. Zealand

Auckland: The victorious Black Caps squad will carry their ICC World Test Championship Mace on a week-long, nationwide tour of the country, starting July 26, New Zealand Cricket (NZC) said on Wednesday. Kane Williamson and company won the inaugural WTC final, beating India by eight wickets in Southampton in a thrilling contest last month. The tour is set to start in Whangarei on July 26 and will cover Auckland, Tauranga, Hamilton, New Plymouth, Palmerston North, Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin and Invercargill throughout the week. "It's quickly become apparent that Kiwis want an opportunity to be part of, and to share in this historic achievement," NZC chief executive David White said. — *PTI*

Paul powers Suns to lead in finals

Phoenix: Chris Paul waited 16 years to get to the NBA Finals, bringing with him a team starving for their first championship. The setting was entirely new. The performance was same old Chris Paul. "Just knew he's ready," Phoenix forward Mikal Bridges said. "He's prepared his whole life for this moment and it shows out there on the court." Paul had 32 points and nine assists in an NBA Finals debut that was well worth the wait, Devin Booker scored 27 points and the Suns beat the returning Giannis Antetokounmpo and his Milwaukee Bucks 118-105 on Tuesday night in Game 1. — *AFP*



Italian players celebrate after beating Spain on penalties in the Euro semifinal at Wembley Stadium on Tuesday.

— UEFA

THIS IS ITALY

Azzuri in final; slow Spain finally pay penalty

London, July 6: Italy beat Spain 4-2 on penalties after a 1-1 draw in a magnificent Euro 2020 semi-final at Wembley on Tuesday, as Jorginho converted the decisive kick to take the Azzurri through to the final where they will face either England or Denmark.

Italy were not always on top though, with Spain the better side for long spells of an epic contest before Federico Chiesa, the Juventus forward, gave Italy the lead with a fabulous finish an hour into a match watched by a crowd of almost 58,000.

The much-maligned Alvaro Morata, who was dropped from the starting line-up, came off the bench to equalise with 10 minutes of normal time

left. No further scoring in extra time meant penalties again for Spain, who had beaten Switzerland in a shoot-out in the quarter-finals.

They had also beaten Italy on penalties at Euro 2008, but this time misses from Dani Olmo and then Morata saw Spain give up the advantage they had been handed when Manuel Locatelli failed with the first kick in the shoot-out.

The Italians celebrated at the end with a large contingent of their UK-based supporters, and a team that has been rejuvenated under Roberto Mancini continues to dream of winning a first European Championship since 1968.

Italy	1
(Federico Chiesa 60)	
Spain	1
(Alvaro Morata 80)	
(Italy won 4-2 in shootout)	

Now unbeaten in 33 games, they go through to Sunday's final to face either England or Denmark, who meet in Wednesday's second last-four tie.

"I have to thank the players because they believed right from day one that we could do something incredible," said Mancini. "We haven't yet done everything we need to though, there is still one step to go."

It is nine years since

Spain mauled Italy 4-0 in the Euro 2012 final in Kiev to win a third consecutive major tournament, and this was the fourth successive Euro in which these powerhouses had met.

Spain won the first two of those meetings, but the last two have now gone to Italy.

"It is not a sad night for me by any means," said Spain coach Luis Enrique. "We can go home knowing we competed and were among the best teams."

WE'LL BE BACK, SAYS BUSQUETS

Spain captain Sergio Busquets said the team will return stronger after gaining vital experience during their run to the Euro 2020 semi-finals.

"It's a shame, we

would've have liked for our tournament not to end today but that's football," Busquets told Radio Marca.

"The team was very good, we were the better team for almost the whole match. We can be proud, I feel pride for my teammates. Everyone was making Italy favourites, but we showed we're better."

Alvaro Morata came off the bench to equalise late on for Spain at Wembley and cancel out Federico Chiesa's opening goal on the hour.

But Morata and Dani Olmo missed in the shoot-out after the match finished 1-1 following extra time, with Italy advancing to the final 4-2 on penalties.

— AFP

COPA AMERICA

Argentina set up Brazil showdown

Brasilia, July 7: Goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez was the hero as Argentina defeated Colombia on penalties on Tuesday to set up a dream Copa America final against Brazil.

Argentina stopper Martinez saved three penalties in the shoot-out after a bruising 1-1 draw in Brasilia.

Hosts Brazil beat Peru 1-0 in Monday's first semi-final meaning their star forward Neymar will line up against Lionel Messi's Argentina on Saturday at Rio de Janeiro's iconic Maracana stadium.

Two years ago a Brazil team missing the injured Neymar knocked out Argentina in the semi-finals before winning their ninth Copa title on home soil.

For Messi, 34, time is running out to win a first major international title with his national team, having previously lost in three Copa finals and the 2014 World Cup final.

For once he wasn't his country's main hero, although he did create the opening goal for Lautaro Martinez on seven minutes, before Luis Diaz equalized just after the hour mark.

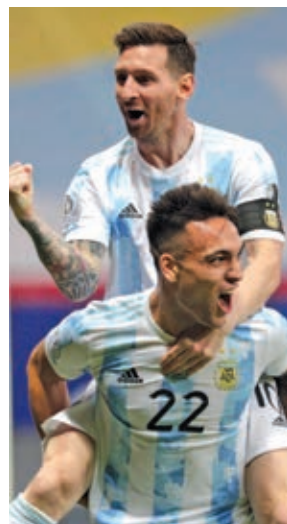
In the shoot-out, goalkeeper Martinez three times dived to his left to save penalties from center-backs Davinson Sanchez and Yerry Mina, as well as midfielder Edwin Cardona.

And although Rodrigo De Paul skied his penalty for Argentina, Messi — who finished with blood seeping visibly from his left ankle — was amongst the scorers to give them a 3-2 victory on spot-kicks.

Saving penalties "is a question of luck and today it was my turn to be the glorious one," said Martinez.

"We said it the first day, we want to play the final and what better than playing Brazil on their pitch."

Despite the defeat, Colombia coach Reinaldo



Argentina's Lionel Messi and Lautaro Martinez celebrate after defeating Colombia in the Copa America semifinal in Brasilia.

— Twitter

Argentina	1
(Lautaro Martinez 7)	
Colombia	1
(Luis Diaz 61)	
(Argentina won 3-2 in shootout)	

Rueda was feeling positive, saying their performance "invites us to dream, to think we're on the right path."

"We should lift our heads, look each other in the eyes and know we have nothing to reproach ourselves about," he added.

Messi produced some early magic to beat three players and cross for Martinez to head wide.

Colombia didn't heed the warning and on seven minutes, Giovanni Lo Celso found Messi in the box, the diminutive star held off the giant Mina and picked out Martinez to fire into the far corner.

After Argentina's fast start, Colombia started to dominate and Cuadrado sent a free-kick just over the bar.

— AFP

Olympic briefs

Keep politics out: IOC chief

Olympics chief Thomas Bach pleaded Wednesday for politics to be kept out of the Games, saying they would otherwise become as divisive as other areas of society. The Olympic movement needs to be kept neutral and cannot be expected to solve civil liberties issues that politics had failed to fix, Bach said. "The Olympic Games are the only event that unites the entire world in peaceful competition," the president of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) said.

Shooters get 2nd dose of vax

The Tokyo Olympic-bound Saurabh Chaudhary and Rahi Sarnobat on Wednesday received their second dose of Covid-19 vaccines in Zagreb, Croatia, where the Indian shooting contingent is undergoing a training camp. Besides the duo, Deepak Kumar and pistol coach Ronak Pandit were also inoculated on the same day. Earlier, 18 members of the contingent completed their second dose in the Croatia last month.

2 Russian rowers suspended

Two Russian rowers have been removed from the squad for the Tokyo Olympics after failing drug tests, Russian officials said on Wednesday. Russian Olympic Committee president Stanislav Pozdnyakov said that the two rowers had been provisionally suspended and replaced in the team before the final Olympic squad was announced. Russian federation president Alexei Svirin named the rowers as Nikita Morgachev and Pavel Sorin.

Japan to impose virus emergency

Tokyo, July 7: The Japanese government plans to impose a virus state of emergency in Tokyo during the Olympics, reports said on Wednesday, meaning spectators could be barred from venues.

The emergency measures — less strict than a blanket lockdown — will be in force until August 22, several Japanese media outlets reported, following a rise in cases less than three weeks before the Games begin.

"The government decided to declare the fourth state of emergency for Tokyo and communicated the decision to the ruling parties," public broadcaster NHK said. Kyodo News, citing a sen-

The pandemic-postponed 2020 Games will take place under strict anti-infection rules, with overseas fans already banned.

ior government official, said it was now likely the Olympics would be held behind closed doors.

The pandemic-postponed 2020 Games will take place under strict anti-infection rules, with overseas fans already banned.

Organisers set a limit last month of 10,000 fans, or half of each venue's capacity, but recently warned that a fully closed-door Games remained an option as the virus situation worsens. — *AFP*



R. Ashwin

ASHWIN MAY PLAY COUNTY FOR SURREY

London, July 7: Premier India spinner R Ashwin could play a first-class game for Surrey as early as July 11 ahead of next month's Test series against England if he is able to get his work visa in time.

Ashwin, who is on a break in the UK like the rest of his India teammates after the World Test Championship final, has played for Nottinghamshire and Worcestershire in the past.

If he is able to get the visa for Surrey's game against Somerset at The Oval, Ashwin will get valuable match practice before the five-Test series against India starting August 4.

A report in *ESPNcricinfo* claimed that "both parties (Ashwin and Surrey) are confident it will be done in time for the match starting July 11".

After losing the WTC final to New Zealand, India skipper Virat Kohli had said that the team had asked for a first-class match before the title clash but didn't get it for reasons not known to him.

India are hoping to get a warm up match before the England series. The England and Wales Cricket Board has already stated that plans are afoot to have a practice game for India against a combined counties team before the Test series. — *PTI*



Poland's Hubert Hurkacz celebrates after winning a game against Roger Federer in the Wimbledon quarterfinal on Wednesday.

— Wimbledon

with all my heart, body and soul and have been devoted to it since I was four," he said.

"Sometimes things do look surreal for me but I try to live in the moment and take every opportunity I have on the court."

"Going for history is a huge inspiration for me, let's keep it going."

Djokovic raced into a 5-0 lead in the first set before 29-year-old Fucsovics got on the board.

The world number 48, bidding to become the first Hungarian man since 1948 to make the semi-finals at Wimbledon, saved five set points. However, the rear-guard action was too late to prevent the champion edging ahead.

The top seed broke for the only time in the second set in the ninth game which was enough for a two sets lead.

Djokovic had spent three hours fewer than the muscular Fucsovics in getting to the last-eight and his freshness showed when he crucially broke in the first game of the third set and then fought off two break points in the sixth.

Shapovalov fired 17 aces and 59 winners past Russia's Khachanov to reach his first Grand Slam semi-final.

The Canadian will be a huge underdog against Djokovic having lost all six matches against the world number one.

SANIA-BOPANNA KNOCKED OUT

Rohan Bopanna stayed solid with his service games and net play but Sania Mirza's serve was consistently put under pressure as the Indian team was ousted from the Wimbledon following a

three-set defeat in the stop-start mixed doubles third round. The contest resumed with the 14th seed pair of Jean Julien-Roger and Andreja Klepac having a one-set lead and they finished on the right side of the result with a 6-3, 3-6, 11-9 scoreline.

Mirza has not played much competitive tennis post her comeback and is struggling to get her serve right. Serving to stay in the match at 5-6 in the decider, Mirza managed to hold after a few anxious moments.

— *Agencies*
Results: Men: Quarter-finals: Hubert Hurkacz (Pol x 14) bt Roger Federer (Sui, x6) 6-3, 7-6(7/4), 6-0; Novak Djokovic (SRB x1) bt Marton Fucsovics (HUN) 6-3, 6-4, 6-4; Denis Shapovalov (CAN x10) bt Karen Khachanov (RUS x25) 6-4, 3-6, 5-7, 6-1, 6-4.