





## IN BRIEF

**Man held for faking his own kidnapping**

**New Delhi:** The Delhi police traced a 23-year-old man in Jalandhar who hatched a plan to procure money from his father on the pretext of his fake kidnapping and made repeated calls, officials said on Thursday. On June 3, at around 1.37 pm, the Shahbad Dairy police station received information regarding the kidnapping of a man for a ransom of ₹3 lakh. The police reached the spot and recorded the statement of Veer Pal Singh, a resident of Prahladpur village, a senior police officer said. "During interrogation, it came to know that Aman wanted to sell his car and he discussed the matter with his friend Ankit, a resident of Jalandhar, who told him that he had a purchaser for the vehicle," DCP (Outer North) Rajiv Ranjan Singh said. The car was owned by one Ravi and he asked for cash. The buyer handed over ₹2 lakh to Aman and he kept them in a bag. Ravi snatched the bag and fled from the spot, the DCP said. Later, Aman hatched a plan to procure money from his father on the pretext of his fake kidnapping and made repeated calls to his father, the police said.

**4 held for raping, blackmailing man**

**Noida:** Four people have been arrested for allegedly sodomising a gay man and blackmailing him for money by threatening to share a video of the act online, Greater Noida police said on Thursday. The accused, in their early 20s, connected with the man through Grindr, a dating app for the LGBTQ community, officials said. The victim told police that the four men called him for a meeting and sodomised him. They later thrashed him and forced him to transfer ₹5,000 through PhonePe app to them," an official spokesperson said, adding they released him but threatened to post the video online if he didn't pay them ₹2 lakh. An FIR has been lodged in this regard. The arrested accused have been identified as Gaurav, Gautam, Sachin and Mohit natives of Bulandshahr district, police said.

**Man shot dead by bike-borne assailants**

**New Delhi:** A 57-year-old man was allegedly shot dead by three motorcycle-borne assailants in Usmanpur area, police said on Thursday. The victim, Satish Kumar, was a Delhi government employee. He is survived by his wife and three children, they said. Kumar was standing in the balcony of his house in Jagjivan Nagar area when the three accused came on a motorcycle and shot him on the intervening night of Wednesday and Thursday, the police said. It is suspected that the accused wanted to attack Kumar's son, Sunil, to take revenge for a case of sexual harassment filed against one of them on a complaint lodged by one of the family's relatives. However, they shot Kumar instead, a senior police officer said. Kumar was rushed to the JPC Hospital where he died, he said.

**IMD: DELHI MAY RECEIVE LIGHT RAIN TODAY**

**New Delhi:** The maximum temperature in the national capital settled at 39.8 degrees Celsius on Thursday, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said. The Safdarjung Observatory, which provides representative data for Delhi, recorded a minimum temperature of 29 degrees Celsius, a notch above normal, it said. The relative humidity was recorded at 47 per cent at 5.30 pm. Delhi's air quality index (AQI) stood at 214 at 7.05 pm, according to Central Pollution Control Board data. An AQI between zero and 50 is considered 'good', 51 and 100 'satisfactory', 101 and 200 'moderate', 201 and 300 'poor', 301 and 400 'very poor', and 401 and 500 'severe'. The weather department predicted generally cloudy skies with light rain or drizzle in the city on Friday. The minimum and maximum temperatures are expected to settle around 29 degrees Celsius and 39 degrees Celsius. — PTI

■ 'Students to be promoted on basis of mid-term exam scores'

**Sisodia says exams for Class 9 & 11 cancelled**

**BHASKAR HARI SHARMA**  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 10

Students of Classes 9 and 11, whose final exams could not be completed in view of the second wave of Covid-19 in Delhi, will be promoted on the basis of marks obtained in the mid-term examination, deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia announced on Thursday. "While students of Class 8 were promoted without any hassle due to the no-detention policy, roadblocks in the promotion of students of Classes 9 and 11 needed to be reduced. Annual examinations of Classes 9 and 11, which were supposed to be conducted from April 12 onwards, were cancelled by the Delhi government keeping in mind the safety and security of students," Mr Sisodia, who is also the education minister, said at a press conference. "Private schools that have already conducted their annual assessments can follow the



Students from a slum area attend an open-air tuition class at Panchsheel Shikshan Sansthan, Yamuna Khadar Mayur Vihar, in New Delhi on Thursday. — PTI

guidelines postulated by the Directorate of Education with regard to the promotion policy and declare their result," he said. In case schools did not conduct any mid-term examination or students were unable to take all the mid-term papers, results will be declared on the basis of the average marks obtained in the best two of five main subjects, he added. Mr Sisodia said the policy will have to be implemented by both the government and private

schools.

"The results for Classes 9 and 11 in all government schools will be declared on June 22. No student will be called to school, rather they will receive their results online or via a phone call or WhatsApp," he said. The minister also said that all such students who appeared for their mid-term exam in only one subject or were unable to take the exam in any subject and those who did not receive the minimum qualifying marks will be eligible for

re-assessment.

"These students will be assessed on the basis of assignments, projects, school-based tests, etc. for promotion to the next class. No additional physical or online assessment will be conducted for these students," Mr Sisodia said.

The minister also announced that the admission process in Delhi government schools for Classes 6 to 9 will begin from June 11. "Similar to the admission process conducted last year, admission to Delhi government schools will be conducted online. Parents or candidates can register their children or themselves online from June 11 onwards until June 30.

"Admissions will begin from July 5 onwards based on the registration of students. Students who are unable to register by the given date will be eligible to register for the second admission cycle that will begin from July 23 and go on till August 6," Mr Sisodia added.



Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal visits an oxygen storage center at Siraspur. A cryogenic tank of 57 metric tonnes of oxygen storage capacity is being installed here. — PTI

**Covid: 44 more deaths, 305 new cases; +vity rate 0.41%**

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 10

In order to combat the third wave of Covid-19, the Delhi government has started working on its plan to strengthen the health infrastructure and has started working to convert Covid care centres into child care centres.

The Covid-19 situation in the national capital has started improving with the Covid positivity rate dipping below 0.5 per cent with 4,511 active cases.

While the unlock process in the national capital is in full swing with few restrictions in

different areas, Delhi recorded 44 more Covid-19 deaths and 305 new cases on Thursday with a positivity rate of 0.41 per cent, according to the health bulletin.

The Delhi government has set up Covid care centres for the treatment of Covid-19 patients in all the 11 districts. But now, due to a smaller number of patients in these centres, the government has asked the district administration to gradually start converting Covid care centres into child care centres.

The health experts believe that the third wave of coronavirus can

be fatal for children and a large number of children can be infected. Hence, the Delhi government is arranging more and more child care facilities in its hospitals.

The Southwest district administration of Delhi government issued an order in this regard and informed the general public that six Covid care centres have now been converted into child care centres under the supervision of nodal officer IAS Sarjana Yadav.

The services at the child care centres will be free, according to the Delhi government.



A worker sanitizes a street in Noida on Thursday. — PTI

**'Centre should focus on ensuring coronavirus vaccines to states'**

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 10

Deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia on Thursday said the Centre should focus on ensuring the supply of enough Covid vaccines to all the states, rather than preventing them from sharing information regarding their vaccine stocks. The Delhi government shares information regarding its vaccine stocks and the doses administered through a vaccination bulletin every day.

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MLA Atishi, who presents the vaccination bulletin, said the people of the city have the right to know about the vaccine stocks and availability. The Centre has written to the states and Union territories, advising them not to share the data of the Electronic Vaccine Intelligence Network (eVIN) system on vaccine stocks and the temperature of vaccine storage at public forums, saying it is 'sensitive information and to be used only for programme improvement'.

Reacting to it, Mr Sisodia tweeted: 'Am amazed at the order of Central Govt that prevents states from sharing information regarding vaccine stocks! The Central Govt needs to focus on ensuring an adequate supply of vaccine to all, rather

**City gets 28,900 more Covaxin doses for 18-44 age group**

**New Delhi, June 10:** Delhi received 28,900 more doses of Covaxin on Wednesday for the 18-44 age group and the stock is enough to cover those eligible for the second dose in the next four days, AAP MLA Atishi said on Thursday.

At present, Delhi has more than 50,110 doses of Covaxin in stock for this category, she said.

There are 1.24 lakh doses of Covishield available for this age group and these can last up to eight days, Atishi said.

She said 47,978 doses of vaccine were administered

in Delhi on Wednesday. A total of 58,30,579 jabs have been given in the city so far since the inoculation exercise against coronavirus started on January 16. Of this, 13,63,193 people have received both the doses.

The capital has 28,620 doses of Covaxin and 5,20,860 doses of Covishield in stock for those aged above 45, frontline workers and healthcare workers, the AAP leader said.

These can last up to two days and 26 days respectively, she added. — PTI

than hiding the true position of vaccine availability, from the public.' Atishi said Delhi did not have vaccines for the 18-44 age group for 16 days. People faced problems and wanted to know whether vaccines were available, she said.

"The Centre is asking the states not to share information on the vaccine stocks. We appeal to it to focus on making enough vaccines available to the states rather than hiding information," the Kalkaji MLA said. If there are no vaccines, people will eventually get to

know about it, she added. The Centre, with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), has rolled out the eVIN system under UIP, which is used to track the vaccine stock status and the temperature at all levels of vaccine storage, from national to the sub-district level. In a letter to the states and Union territories, the health ministry said it is overwhelming to see that all the states are using the system to update the stock and transactions of Covid vaccines on a daily basis.

**AAP claims pvt builders in Model Town area occupying PWD land**

**New Delhi, June 10:** The AAP on Thursday claimed that private builders in north Delhi's Model Town are occupying PWD land in connivance with the BJP-ruled MCD, an allegation denied by the Delhi BJP.

Addressing a press conference, AAP spokesperson Saurabh Bhardwaj claimed that private builders are constructing PWD's roads, including drainage and footpath, by getting the map made in the form of a plot approved by the municipal corporations.

"Private builders in Model Town are occupying PWD land in connivance with the BJP-ruled MCD, hence proving their indulgence into abysmal corrupt practices," Bhardwaj said.

Akhilesh Pati Tripathi, MLA from Model Town Assembly, also claimed that

the MCD has passed the map and has given certificate to the private builder to take possession of the government land.

"AAP demands that action should be taken against those who have passed the map and FIR should be registered against the builders," said Tripathi.

Delhi BJP Spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor has said that North DMC has no involvement in sanctioning the building plan for the disputed plot which measures barely 60 metres.

"Some individual occupying the plot has got a building plan passed online under the 'saral' scheme. North DMC's local authorities have already started the procedure to cancel the builders online plan and police complaint has been sent," he said. — PTI

**HC rejects Sushant Singh Rajput father's plea seeking stay on 'Nyay: The Justice'**

**SANJAY KAW**  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 10

The Delhi high court, on Thursday, refused to stay the release of the movie, 'Nyay: The Justice,' which is purportedly based on the life of late Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput. The movie is scheduled to be released on Friday.

Justice Sanjeev Narula dismissed a suit by Sushant's father, Krishna Kishore Singh, seeking to restrain anyone from using his son's name or likeness in movies. The court, however, directed the producers to maintain accounts of the film and listed the suit for completion of pleading before the joint registrar.

Mr Singh had filed the suit before the court seeking to protect the "reputation, privacy, and rights of his deceased son," which he claimed stand to be violated by movies such as "Nyay: The Justice" and "Shashank,"



Sushant Singh Rajput

that are purportedly inspired by his son's life and events.

In the suit, Mr Singh had sought an injunction against the defendants from using his son's name, caricature, lifestyle, or likeness in forthcoming films and other ventures. He had contended that any such publication, production, or depiction would be an infringement of personality rights and the right to privacy which includes the right to publicity, amongst others, and can

not be undertaken without the prior approval of his legal heir. Sushant had died under suspicious circumstances on June 14 last year and the matter is being investigated by the CBI.

Mr Singh stated that the defendants, who include the producers, director, and outliner of the movie 'Nyay: The Justice,' were trying to "exploit the media frenzy and public curiosity surrounding his son's life and the circumstances surrounding

his death for their commercial gain."

Justice Sanjeev Narula clarified that 'publicity right,' 'celebrity right,' or 'personality right,' are not expressly recognised by any statute in India.

The court concluded that Sushant's status as a celebrity is not in dispute and observed that the law on the subject is still at a "nascent stage" and developing through case laws. The court said it was not convinced on the point of infringement of celebrity rights.

Mr Singh said that in September 2020, his counsel had made a widely circulated statement that "no movie(s), book(s), or series based on his son without obtaining the prior consent of his family" can be made.

Despite this, without approaching the family, the defendants have made a movie which is a self-proclaimed "tribute to Sushant Singh Rajput," he said.

**New Delhi, June 10:**

Environment minister Gopal Rai on Thursday said Delhi's first smog tower at Connaught Place will be ready by August 15.

The Delhi cabinet had approved the project in October last year. The 25-metre-tall structure, being set up to improve air quality in a radius of around 1 km, was supposed to be ready by June 15.

The Covid pandemic delayed the construction work of the smog tower, the first-of-its-kind in India, at Baba Kharak Singh Marg. The work is being expedited.

The ambitious project will be ready by August 15, Mr Rai told reporters here.

China also has such smog towers, but this one works on different technology.

The ones in China suck the polluted air from the bottom and release the clear air from the top, whereas this smog tower works in the opposite direction, he said.

The smog tower at Connaught Place will be able to purify 1000 cubic metres of air per second, the minister said.

He also said many experts have different views about the efficacy of smog tower.

This is a pilot project. Experts will study its outcomes and thereafter, the government will take a call on building more such structures, he said.

Tata Projects Limited (TPL) is implementing the ₹20-crore project on the ground with technical support from IIT-Bombay.

The National Building Construction Corporation India Ltd. has been appointed as project management consultant. — PTI

## RESTORATION OF TRAIN

For the convenience of rail passengers, Railways have decided to restore the following Special Train as per the schedule given below:-

05624/05623 Kamakhya - Bhagat Ki Kothi - Kamakhya Special Express (Weekly)					
TRAIN NO. 05624			STATIONS	TRAIN NO. 05623	
ARR.	DEP.	ARR.		DEP.	
—	17:15	Kamakhya		23:10	—
21:45	—	Bhagat Ki Kothi		—	16:10

**Days of Run :** 05624 Ex Kamakhya on Every Friday from 18.06.2021 and 05623 Ex Bhagat Ki Kothi on Every Tuesday from 22.06.2021.

**Accommodation :** AC 2 Tier, AC 3 Tier, Sleeper & Second Sitting.

**Stoppages:** Rangiya Jn., Barpeta Road, New Bongaigaon Jn., Kokrajhar Jn., New Alipurdwar, New Coochbehar, New Jalpaiguri, Kishanganj, Katihar Jn., Naugachia, Khagaria Jn., Begusarai, New Banarasi Jn., Patna Jn., Ara, Buxar, Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Jn., Varanasi, Shahganj Jn., Faizabad Jn., Lucknow, Bareilly, Moradabad, Ghaziabad, Delhi Jn., Delhi Cantt, Gurgaon, Rewari Jn., Mahendragarh, Satali, Loharu, Sadulpur Jn., Churu, Ratnagarh Jn., Sujargarh, Ladnun, Didwana, Chhotkhatu, Degana Jn., Mertra Road Jn. & Jodhpur Jn. stations.

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

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

RailMadad Helpline No.

139

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## SHORT TAKES

## SP leader's building razed down in UP

**Etah (UP):** A two-storeyed shopping complex built "illegally" by a local Samajwadi Party leader was demolished by the district administration on Thursday, officials said. District Magistrate Ankit Aggarwal said SP leader Jugendra Singh Yadav had built the structure on the gram sabha land using his influence and without getting the building plan passed from the authorities. It was demolished after it was found illegal after a probe, he said. District officials along with police arrived in large numbers to demolish the structure worth about ₹1 crore. The demolition work started after around 60 shops in the building were vacated. Describing the action as unjust, Jugendra Singh Yadav, a former president of the district panchayat, said his lawyer showed all documents to the officials but they did not listen to him. — PTI

## Pranab son holds tea party for TMC

**Berhampore:** Former President Pranab Mukherjee's son and former Jangipur Congress MP Abhijit Mukherjee on Wednesday held a tea party at his Jangipur residence for Trinamul Congress leaders, leading to speculation that he might leave the Congress and join the TMC. It may be noted Mr Mukherjee held the tea party for TMC MPs, MLAs and ministers on the same day that former Union minister and AICC observer Jitin Prasada left the Congress and joined the BJP. However, both Mr Mukherjee and TMC leaders claimed that it was purely a coincidence and that the tea party was merely a social function. Sources said that after the departure of TMC general secretary Abhishek Banerjee from Jangipur, Murshidabad district TMC chief and MP Abu Taher Khan called Abhijit Mukherjee and the party was planned then.

## Corruption: FIR filed against Arunachal CM

**New Delhi:** The CBI has registered a fresh FIR against former Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Nabam Tuki for alleged nepotism and corruption related to a contract for construction of a Kendriya Vidyalaya school boundary wall in Salt Lake area of Kolkata, officials said. The CBI, after doing a preliminary enquiry, has alleged that officials of the Public Works Department, Arunachal Pradesh awarded the tender to firms controlled by family members of Tuki, the then minister of PWD in the state, at his behest without inviting tenders, which caused wrongful loss to the state government and corresponding "wrongful" gain to the minister and relatives. — PTI

## ODISHA LAUNCHES SPECIAL CELL TO FIND MISSING KIDS

**AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO**  
BHUBANESWAR, JUNE 10

The Odisha police on Thursday launched a special cell in state capital Bhubaneswar to deal with cases related to missing and kidnapping of minor children. Currently, the cell headed by an Assistant Commissioner of police (ACP) rank officer is functioning on trial basis and will actively operate once the pandemic situation is over, said Bhubaneswar Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Umashankar Dash. Sources said around 800 cases related to missing of minor children are pending at different police stations under the Bhubaneswar-Cuttack Commissionerate police. "At a review meeting, 800 minor girl missing cases were found registered at different police stations. In view of this, we have launched a special cell headed by an ACP with an inspector and two sub-inspectors as members to deal with these cases. The cell has already rescued 30 minor girls from different areas in the state," he added. The opposition parties in Odisha and civil society organisations have been demanding since long for the constitution of a special cell to trace out the missing children. They contended that the special cell was a better mechanism than the special drives launched from time to time for rescue of the missing children.

## Modi to take part in G-7 outreach session

PM has been invited by British PM Boris Johnson to attend summit as special invitee

**SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI**  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 10

India on Thursday announced that Prime Minister Narendra Modi would participate in a Virtual format in the Outreach Sessions of the G-7 Summit that will be held at Cornwall, Britain, this Saturday and Sunday in a "hybrid mode". New Delhi had announced last month itself that PM Modi would not attend the G-7 Summit in-person due to the Covid situation in India. PM Modi had been invited by his British counterpart Boris Johnson in January this year to attend the summit as a special invitee.

The theme for the G-7 Summit is "Build Back Better" and the four priority areas decided by the host Britain pertain to the Covid pandemic, free and fair trade, tackling climate change and championing shared values and open



Narendra Modi

► **PRIME MINISTER** Narendra Modi will participate in the Outreach Sessions of the G7 Summit on 12 and 13 June in virtual format.

► **MODI HAD** earlier attended the G-7 Summit at Biarritz in France in August, 2019, after being invited by the French government

societies.

India is not a member of the G-7 grouping that comprises seven nations — Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States, termed as seven of the "largest" advanced economies in the world — and the European Union (EU) but the G-7 host nation can invite other nations as guests to the Summit. Apart from India, Britain has also invited Australia, South Korea and South Africa as Guest Countries for the Summit.

It may be recalled that PM Modi had earlier attended the G-7 Summit at

Biarritz in France in August, 2019, after being invited by the French government. PM Modi had also been invited last year by the then US President Donald Trump to attend the G-7 meeting that was to have been held in the United States in 2020 but was cancelled due to the pandemic.

In a statement on Thursday, the MEA said, "At the invitation of UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi will participate in the Outreach Sessions of the G7 Summit on 12 and 13 June in virtual format."

## MEA: Engaging with Afghans of all hues

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 10

India on Thursday said it is "engaging with Afghans across ethnicities" but avoided a direct question on whether it has been in touch with those factions of the Afghan Taliban that are not close to Pakistan.

At a briefing, MEA Spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said, "Our relations with Afghanistan are historical and multifaceted. We have been engaging with Afghans across ethnicities. As a friendly neighbour, we are concerned about peace and security in Afghanistan and the region. We support all peace initiatives and have been engaged with several stakeholders including regional countries."

## India lashes out at Pak for 'baseless nuke taunt'

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 10

India on Thursday lashed out at Pakistan and accused it of trying to malign the image of India, with New Delhi making it clear that material seized last week in Bokaro (Jharkhand) was not uranium and not radioactive.

New Delhi accused Islamabad of not caring to check its facts after Pakistan last week alleged "lax controls, poor regulatory and enforcement mechanisms, as well as possible existence of a black market for nuclear materials inside India".

In a statement, the ministry of external affairs (MEA), "The Department of Atomic Energy, government of India, after due evaluation and laboratory analysis of the material sample has stated that the material seized last week (at Bokaro) is not uranium and not radioactive."

The MEA added, "The gratuitous remarks about India by Pakistan's foreign ministry drawing upon a media report indicate their disposition to malign India without caring to check/verify facts."

## Indians not able to travel to China since November last year

## Open essential 2-way route: India to China

**SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI**  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 10

With Indians not able to travel to China since November last year due to Covid-related restrictions placed by that country, India on Thursday made it clear to China that "essential two way travel should be facilitated" since Chinese nationals are able to travel to India. Indian students studying in China as also Indian nationals who work there have been facing difficulties in return-

ing there as China had earlier suspended existing visas. New Delhi has now said it is in touch with Beijing "to seek an early resumption of travel by Indian citizens to China, especially for those who work or study there".

In a statement, the MEA said, "Currently, persons from China, including Chinese nationals, are able to travel to India despite the absence of direct connectivity. However, for Indian nationals, travel to China has not been possible since

last November as the Chinese side had suspended existing visas. In March this year, the Chinese Embassy issued a notification about facilitating visas for those taking Chinese-made vaccines. It is understood that several Indian nationals have applied for Chinese visas after getting vaccinated in that manner but are yet to be issued visas. Since these Indian nationals have apparently met the requirements laid down by the Chinese side, we hope that the Chinese

Embassy would be able to issue them visas soon."

The MEA added, "As conveyed earlier, we have been in touch with the Chinese side in order to seek an early resumption of travel by Indian citizens to China, especially for those who work or study there. While we recognize the need to ensure safety and strictly follow Covid related protocols, essential two way travel should be facilitated, especially keeping in view the fact that Chinese nationals are able to travel to India."

## UPSC viva exams to be held in Aug.

**New Delhi:** The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) has decided to commence interviews for civil services examination 2020, which were deferred due to a surge in Covid-19 cases, from August 2, according to an official statement.

The civil services examination is conducted annually by the UPSC in three stages — preliminary, main and personality test (interview) — to select officers of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Indian Foreign Service (IFS) and the Indian Police Service (IPS), among others.

It had in April this year deferred interviews for the prestigious examination due to increase in coronavirus cases. — PTI

## Jitin: Quit Cong as it has lost connect with people

**New Delhi, June 10:** A day after switching over to the BJP, Jitin Prasada Thursday said he left the Congress not because of any individual or for any post, but due to its shrinking vote base and the "rising disconnect" between the party and the people of Uttar Pradesh.

Mr Prasada, whose family had been associated with the party for three generations and who himself had served as a Union minister in the Congress-led UPA government, joined the BJP Wednesday, terming it the "only true national party" in the country.

Mr Prasada didn't put blame on any individual within the Congress for his departure.

"I left the Congress not due to any individual or for any post. The reason I left



Jitin Prasada

the Congress was because there is a rising disconnect between the party and the people. And that is the reason, its vote share is shrinking in Uttar Pradesh and there is no plan to revive the party," Prasada told PTI Thursday.

He was among the group of 23 Congress leaders who had written to party president Sonia Gandhi last October seeking an organisational overhaul, triggering a storm within the party.

Claiming that he could not protect his people's interests while being in the Congress, Prasada said, he will achieve this in the BJP, which he described as the only institutionalised national party in the country. "It (joining the BJP) was not a sudden decision," he said. "I have taken this decision after long discussions and deliberations. I want to serve people, work for them and in the BJP, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, I would be able to do that."

Talking about his future plans, Prasada said he will work to strengthen the BJP and for the welfare of his state.

"Whatever I do, wherever I will be, I will work for my people, for my state Uttar Pradesh and for my country," he said. — PTI

## Will contest future polls with Sena, Cong: Pawar

NCP chief clears the air after meeting between CM Thackeray and PM Modi

**SONU SHRIVASTAVA**  
MUMBAI, JUNE 10

Nationalist Congress Party chief Sharad Pawar on Thursday said that the Shiv Sena, NCP and Congress would contest the upcoming Lok Sabha and Maharashtra Assembly election in alliance.

Mr Pawar said that the Maharashtra government would complete its tenure of five years. His statement assumes political significance in view of the recent meeting between the Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray at New Delhi.

The NCP on Thursday celebrated its 22nd Foundation Day at its state office in South Mumbai.

While addressing the party leaders and office bearers on the occasion of the party's 22nd Foundation Day, the NCP chief said, "The Maharashtra government's delegation met the Prime Minister. After this meeting, the Prime Minister had held a separate meeting with the CM. Some people started spreading rumours over it. There is no reason to be afraid of it at all."

Earlier this week, Mr Thackeray along with deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar and public works

department minister Ashok Chavan had met Mr Modi in Delhi over a number of issues, including Maratha and other backward classes (OBC) reservation, goods and services tax (GST) com-

**This government will work for five years, and not just five years, but will work together in the Lok Sabha and Assembly elections with more enthusiasm.**

— **Sharad Pawar, NCP chief**

department minister Ashok Chavan had met Mr Modi in Delhi over a number of issues, including Maratha and other backward classes (OBC) reservation, goods and services tax (GST) com-

pensation. Post this meeting, the Prime Minister also held a separate one to one meeting with Mr Thackeray. The meeting between the duos had lasted for 30 minutes. After the meeting between the duos, eyebrows were raised over the stability of the MVA government in Maharashtra's political spectrum.

Mr Pawar said, "This government will work for five years, and not just five years, but will work together in the Lok Sabha and Assembly elections with more enthusiasm, unitedly representing the common man in the state and the country. I have no doubt about it."

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
1	16200030	Valve Assy HP	90 Nos.	30.06.2021
2	09212161A	Fabricated Hand Brake Wheel	4153 Nos.	05.07.2021
3	16200031	Valve Assy HP Discharge	107 Nos.	06.07.2021
4	16210664	Bearing Assy Roller	90 Set	07.07.2021
5	08215078	PVC Insulated Signaling Cable Size 30 Core X 1.5 Sq. MM	1643 K.M.	08.07.2021
6	08215090	PVC Insulated 1.1. KVA Grade Power Cable Size 2 Core x 25 Sq. MM	2520 K.M.	08.07.2021
7	08205220	PVC Insulated Signaling Cable Size 24 Core X 1.5 Sq. MM	513 K.M.	12.07.2021
8	08205294	PVC Insulated Signaling Cable Size 19 Core X 1.5 Sq. MM	2830 K.M.	12.07.2021
Note: 1. Vendors may visit the IREPS website i.e. <a href="http://www.ireps.gov.in">www.ireps.gov.in</a> for details.				
2. No Manual offer will be entertained.				
Tender Notice No.: 18/2021-2022 Dated : 10.06.2021			1266/21	
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE				

## Govt urges citizens to suggest names for Padma awards

**New Delhi, June 10:** The Centre Thursday said it was committed to transform the Padma awards into "People's Padma" and urged all citizens to make nominations and recommendations, including self-nomination, for the prestigious civilian honours. The Union home ministry said online nominations or recommendations for the awards, to be announced on the eve of Republic Day, 2022, are open, with the last date being September 15, 2021.

The ministry said in a

statement that such nominations and recommendations will be received online only on <https://padmaawards.gov.in>.

The Padma awards, namely, Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri, are amongst the highest civilian awards of the country. The government is committed to transform the Padma awards into "People's Padma" and all citizens are therefore requested to make nominations, recommendations including self-nomination,

► **The Union home ministry said online nominations or recommendations for the awards, to be announced on the eve of Republic Day, 2022, are open, with the last date being September 15, 2021.**

the statement said.

The nominations and recommendations should contain all relevant details specified in the format available on the portal, including a citation in narrative form (maximum 800

words), clearly bringing out the distinguished and exceptional achievements, and the services the person rendered in her or his respective field or discipline, it said. The Central government has already asked all states to set up a special search committee to find out prospective awardees who have so far been left out of consideration despite their exceptional services. Since 2014, the Modi government has been conferring the Padma awards on many "unsung heroes" who have

contributed to the society in different ways.

The home ministry has requested all central ministries, departments, states and UT governments, Bharat Ratna and Padma Vibhushan awardees and institutes of excellence that concerted efforts may be made to identify talented persons from amongst women, weaker sections of the society, SCs, STs, 'divyang' persons who are doing selfless service to society and who deserve to be recognised. — PTI



## SHORT TAKES

## Bengal govt doubles farmers' aid to `10K

**Kolkata:** The West Bengal Cabinet on Thursday gave its green signal to increase the assistance to farmer-beneficiaries from ₹5,000 per acre per year to ₹10,000 under the Krishak Bandhu scheme, an official said. Around 68.38 lakh small and marginal farmers will be benefitted from it. In its election manifesto, the Trinamul Congress had promised to increase the annual financial aid to farmers from ₹5,000 to ₹10,000 under the Krishak Bandhu scheme. "The Cabinet today agreed to increase the assistance to ₹10,000 for small and marginal farmers under the Krishak Bandhu scheme," the official in the secretariat said. The scheme, launched in 2018, used to provide farmers having one or more acres of landholding with an annual amount of ₹5,000 (minimum ₹2,000 per annum assistance on pro-rata basis). — PTI

## Stan Swamy's stay at hospital extended

**Mumbai:** The Bombay high court allowed a request made by the lawyer and extended Jesuit priest and activist Stan Swamy's stay in a private hospital in Mumbai till June 18, as he has been tested Covid positive. Swamy, 84, who has been arrested in the Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case, was on May 28 shifted from the Talaja prison in Navi Mumbai to the Holy Family Hospital here after he filed a petition seeking interim bail on medical grounds. After being shifted to the hospital, he tested Covid positive. On Thursday, his counsel Mihir Desai told a bench of Justices S.S. Shinde and N.J. Jamadar that Swamy had tested positive for Covid and, hence, his stay at the private hospital should be extended. Upon Desai's request the bench said Swamy shall remain admitted at the private hospital till June 18.

## Bhopal unlocks as Covid-19 cases dip

**Bhopal:** For the first time in the last three months, fresh coronavirus positive cases in Madhya Pradesh dipped to below 500 on Thursday. Madhya Pradesh reported 453 fresh cases on Thursday taking the tally of cases to 7,86,755. The state has recorded 36 deaths in the last 24 hours taking the death toll to 8441. "This was the first time during the second wave that hit the state in March this year, the positivity rate in Madhya Pradesh has dropped to 0.5 per cent", state home minister Narottam Mishra said. He said the active cases in the state have also come down to 7071. While 10 out of 52 districts in the state reported zero fresh cases on Thursday, 35 districts reported less than 10 cases.

## Bengali filmmaker Buddhadeb dies of cardiac arrest at 77

**Kolkata, June 10:** Eminent film director and poet Buddhadeb Dasgupta, who had been battling kidney ailments for quite some time, died at his residence here early on Thursday following a cardiac arrest, family members said. He was 77. The national award-winning director is survived by his wife, and two daughters from a previous marriage.

Dasgupta, hailed for his allegorical tales, often indulged in incisive examination of complex human characters, who brought to the fore poignant questions. His political ideologies were well reflected in his cinema.

He has also published several works of poetry over the years, including *Govir Araley*, *Chhaata Kahini*, *Roboter Gaan* and *Bhomboler Ascharya Kahini O Ananya Kabita*. Tributes have poured in from across the country for the ace director, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressing anguish over his death.

"Anguished by the demise of Shri Buddhadeb Dasgupta. His diverse works struck a chord with all sections of society. He was also an eminent thinker and poet. My thoughts are with his family and several admirers in this time of grief. Om Shanti," Modi tweeted.

Extending her condolences to Dasgupta's friends and family, Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee tweeted, "Saddened at the passing away of eminent filmmaker Buddhadeb Dasgupta. Through his works, he



Buddhadeb Dasgupta

infused lyricism into the language of cinema. His death comes as a great loss for the film fraternity."

Dasgupta was found motionless by his wife, Sohini, at his residence in Kalikapur area of the city at 6 am, according to the family members. He suffered cardiac arrest in his sleep, they added.

Mourning his demise, filmmaker Goutam Ghosh said, "Buddha da continued to make films, write articles and stay active, despite his failing health. He had directed *Tope* and *Urojahaj* even when he was unwell."

Ghosh, who played the role of an investigative reporter in Dasgupta's *Grihajuddha*, recalled that he had a "wonderful time" working with him.

Actor-director Aparna Sen said Dasgupta's films were "soaked in surrealism". With his poetry, he had created a new idiom in film-making, she said.

Born in 1944 in Purulia district, Dasgupta began his career as a lecturer in a college before taking a plunge into filmmaking in the 70s, after having enrolled his name as a member of the Calcutta Film Society.

He made his first feature film *Dooratwa* in 1978, leaving his mark as a poet-lyricist-director. — PTI

## Rath Yatra to be held only in Puri

**AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO**  
BHUBANESWAR, JUNE 10

The Odisha government on Thursday announced a ban on Lord Jagannath's much-awaited annual nine-day Rath Yatra festival at all places in the state except Puri.

Puri is the prime abode of Lord Jagannath. It is here Lord Jagannath and His two siblings – Lord Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra – are worshipped in a gigantic temple called Srimandir.

During the Rath Yatra, the deities of Srimandir visit Srigundicha Temple, located at a distance of 2 kilometres. Lakhs of devotees from across the country and abroad gather at Puri during this

time to see the wonderful spectacle of the deities riding the colourful chariots.

The decision to ban Rath Yatra was taken as the state is struggling hard to contain the coronavirus pandemic. Odisha development commissioner Pradeep Kumar Jena made the major announcement saying that the festival which begins from July 12 this year will be held in Puri with strict adherence to guidelines laid out by the Supreme Court.

In 2020, the Rath Yatra festival which is also known as Car Festival, was held sans devotees for the first time in its centuries-long history because of the Covid-19 situation.

## Bihar revises Covid deaths by 72%

Death toll was revised drastically after high court-ordered audit in all districts

**NAYEAR AZAD**  
PATNA, JUNE 10

The total number of Covid-19 deaths jumped to 9,429 after Bihar health department massively revised the Covid-19 death toll, adding about 72 per cent more fatalities. The actual figure provided by the health department till Monday was 5,424.

As Bihar revised the death toll by as many as 3,951 fatalities due to the virus, India on Thursday registered 6,148 deaths, the highest single-day spike the country has recorded

ever since the pandemic began.

Among the districts, Patna recorded 2,293 deaths, followed by Muzaffarpur with 609, Nalanda 463, Begusarai 454, East Champaran 425, Darbhanga 342 and Madhubani 317.

After recounting death figures the state health department has also revised the recovery rate which came down from 98.70 to 97.65 per cent.

The move came after the Patna high court flagged irregularities in the data and directed the state gov-

ernment to conduct an audit.

According to officials from the state health department here, the audit was carried out in all 38 districts by a team of experts. The revised figures also include those who died due to post Covid complications and who died on their way to the hospital.

"Most of the deaths occurred during the second wave of the pandemic. The increase in the figure was due to deaths which occurred during home isolation, post-Covid compli-

cations or at the private hospitals," additional secretary (health) Prataya Amrit told reporters.

When asked whether the state health department was planning to initiate action against officials who failed to register figures related to COVID deaths, he said that "the government would take stern action against those who showed laxity in registering these figures".

After the revised figures stoked a political controversy, state health minister Mangal Pandey said that the state government

had been working on revising the figures for the past few weeks and released it on Tuesday.

The revised death figures have triggered a political row in Bihar. Blaming chief minister Nitish Kumar for irregularities in Covid-19 death figures, Leader of the Opposition Tejashwi Yadav in a tweet said, "The death toll suddenly jumped to 4000 in a day. The government is still hiding the actual statistics. There have been 20 times more deaths than being claimed by the Nitish Kumar government."

## Covid vaccine unit to be set up in Kerala

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JUNE 10

The Kerala Cabinet on Thursday decided to establish a Covid 19 vaccine production unit in state capital.

The Cabinet meeting presided over by chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan decided to appoint IAS officer S. Chithra as the project director. The state also constituted a high-level working group of experts and senior government officials to hold discussions with major vaccine manufacturing companies soon to explore the possibilities of starting vaccine production at the earliest.

In another development, the chief minister has asked officials to take steps to ensure online education for tribal kids living in hamlets who have no access to Internet facility or gadgets like computers, smartphones and tablets.

## AICC panel for Punjab Cong revamp, a key post to Sidhu

**New Delhi, June 10:** A three-member AICC panel set up to end factionalism in the Punjab Congress submitted its report to party chief Sonia Gandhi on Thursday, suggesting a revamp of the state unit to accommodate all sections.

The panel chaired by Leader of the Opposition in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge and comprising AICC general secretary in-charge of Punjab affairs Harish Rawat and former MP J.P. Aggarwal has suggested that all castes, regions and religions be accommodated in the revamped party unit.

Mr Rawat said the report has been submitted to the Congress president, who would take a final call on the suggestions made. He did not divulge further details.

Though no major changes have been recommended at the top level in Punjab, sources said the panel has said that Navjot Singh Sidhu be "suitably accommodated" in the

revamped unit. Mr Sidhu's name is doing the rounds for inclusion in the state Cabinet and elevation as deputy CM, but chief minister Amarinder Singh is reportedly opposed to the move.

It is also learnt that Mr Sidhu wants the post of PCC chief, but Mr Singh is opposed to this idea as well. The CM has no objection to Mr Sidhu joining the Cabinet, however.

Mr Sidhu had quit the Amarinder Singh government last year after his local bodies portfolio was changed.

The decision on Mr Sidhu has been left to the Congress president, who will take the final call.

A change of party leadership in the state is also on the cards, but a final call on whether to relieve incumbent Sunil Jakhar will be taken by the party chief. Mr Jakhar had offered to quit last year but was asked to continue.

The panel held deliberations with a number of leaders from Punjab and heard the views of all including former PCC presidents and party MPs as the state prepares for the next year's assembly elections.

The three-member panel held discussions at the party headquarters over the last week and also met chief minister Singh and Mr Sidhu.

The CM is also learnt to have made some suggestions to the panel.

Most of the leaders which met the panel suggested changes in style of governance with greater accessibility, redressal of grievances of party cadres and delivery of poll promises including punishing the guilty in the sacrilege issue.

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## SC to hear PIL seeking fresh loan moratorium

**PARMOD KUMAR**  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 10

The Supreme Court will be hearing on Friday a public interest litigation (PIL) seeking a fresh six-month interest-free moratorium on the payment of bank loans. The plea also seeks to issue directions to the Centre for the redressal of the financial hardships faced by the borrowers across the country during the second wave of Covid pandemic and the consequent lockdowns.

A bench comprising Justices Ashok Bhushan and M.R. Shah will hear the PIL filed by advocate Vishal Tiwari seeking direction to all financial institutions not to take action for auctioning of any property of citizens of any party for a period of six months. No account should also be declared as non-performing for six months, the plea has sought.

Indicating its reluctance to entertain the plea, the top court in the last hearing of the matter on May 24 had said that the loan moratorium scheme was only for last year and can't spill over to this year.

However, the court in an observation had said that the petitioner advocate can make a representation to the government.

Mr Tiwari has sought six-month interest-free moratorium on the payment of loans/EMIs to banks in view of dislocation in economic and business activities during the second spell of the Covid pandemic.

The hearing through video-conferencing on May 24, 2021, had to be adjourned as petitioner advocate Tiwari could not get connected to the court.

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## Yogi in Delhi, talks to Shah

■ Continued from Page 1

especially in the Jat-dominated areas in the NCR region, preparedness for the Assembly polls and the UP government's efforts against Covid-19, especially during the second wave, will be part of the discussion in the CM's meetings with the PM, Mr Shah and Mr Nadda.

While the UP CM met Mr Shah for more than an hour on Thursday, the latter also held a meeting with Apna Dal chief Anurpriya Patel after his meeting with Yogi Adityanath. The BJP and ally Apna Dal had

fielded separate candidates in the recent panchayat polls, and the latter's performance, especially in and around Mr Modi's constituency Varanasi, was better than that of the BJP.

Amid reports of dissension, BJP general secretary (organisation) B.L. Santhosh had visited UP recently and had met ministers, MLAs, MPs and the CM, apparently to gauge the situation in the government and also the organisation. He had also reviewed the party's preparedness for the coming Assembly elections.

## 94,052 fresh Covid cases

■ Continued from Page 1

56 per cent. Further, the coverage in 18 states and Union territories, including Punjab, Maharashtra, Haryana, Tamil Nadu, Delhi and Assam is below the national average in this aspect.

For frontline workers (FLWs), the national average of first-dose coverage is 85 per

cent but for the second dose it is only 47 per cent. Nineteen states and Union territories, including Bihar, Haryana, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Puducherry, Telangana, Karnataka and Punjab have reported a second-dose coverage of frontline workers below the national average.

## 8 kids among 11 die as building falls; 9 victims from 1 family

■ Continued from Page 1

suspected to be trapped and a search operation is on to find them." Locals started removing the debris and rescuing people promptly after the incident. Officials of the Malwani police and the fire brigade reached the spot and started rescue operations.

The Malwani police has registered an FIR for culpable homicide not amounting to murder against Rafique Siddiqui, the owner of the structure. Rafique's brother

Shafique was staying on the third floor of this structure with his family. Shafique, his wife and the wife of owner Rafique, along with six children of this family, lost their lives in the incident. Rafique was saved as he had gone out of the house.

The disaster management cell said there were around nine other small incidents in the city Wednesday, in which parts of houses and buildings collapsed. During the rescue operation, the

BMC also had to evacuate people from a nearby ground-plus-three structure, as it was in a highly dilapidated condition. A single-storey structure next to this house was destroyed while around three more houses have been damaged due to the collapse of this structure. Some people had a miraculous escape in the incident.

The Maharashtra government has announced ₹5 lakhs compensation for the families of the deceased. Prime Minister

Narendra Modi directed the grant of ₹2 lakhs as compensation for the families of the victims.

Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray went to Shatabdi Hospital in Kandivali to meet the injured people, while Mumbai mayor Kishori Pednekar and state minister Aslam Shaikh visited the spot.

The BJP alleged that the callousness of the Shiv Sena-ruled BMC had led to the incident. "These murders. Illegal

structures were allowed to come up on public land. The BMC's negligence is responsible for this," BJP MLA Ram Kadam said.

Maharashtra minister Aslam Shaikh said the building collapsed because of the heavy rains the city has been facing for the last two days.

The India Meteorological Department has, meanwhile, issued a warning about heavy to very heavy rains in Mumbai in the next few days.

## Biden asks world leaders to join vax drive

■ Continued from Page 1

emerging as a model for how to successfully recover from more than 15 months of global crisis.

"In times of trouble, Americans reach out to offer help," Mr Biden said, saying the US doses would "supercharge" the global vaccination drive. "Our values call on us to do everything that we can to vaccinate the world against Covid-19."

He added the doses would be shared "with no strings attached" or "pressure for favours".

"We're doing this to save lives, to end this pandemic, and that's it," he said. The US commitment is to buy and donate 500 million Pfizer doses for distribution through the global Covax alliance to 92 lower-income countries and the African Union, bringing the first steady supply of mRNA vaccine to the countries that need it most. A price tag for the 500 million

doses was not released, but the US will now be Covax's largest vaccine donor in addition to its single largest funder with a \$4 billion commitment.

White House officials said the 500 million vaccines will be shipped starting in August, with the goal of distributing 200 million by the end of the year. The remaining 300 million doses would be shipped in the first half of 2022.

US officials hope the summit will end with a communique showing a commitment from the G-7 countries and nations invited to participate to do more to help vaccinate the world and support public health globally.

Earlier, at his first meeting with British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, the G-7 host, the two leaders were all smiles, highlighting their countries' famed "special relationship", but against a backdrop of differences. Mr

Biden and Mr Johnson immediately struck a tone of conviviality as the news media watched.

"I told the Prime Minister we have something in common. We both married way above our station," Mr Biden joked Thursday after a highly choreographed walk with their spouses. Mr Johnson laughed and said he



## THE ASIAN AGE

11 JUNE 2021

### FinMin signals need for urgency in vaccine drive

The Union finance ministry's suggestion that the government plan an accelerated vaccination drive against pandemic Covid-19 in August and September reflects the sense of urgency that appears to have gripped the corridors of power. That it has come close on the heels of two important announcements adds to its import: in the first, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in a reversal of earlier policy, announced that the government would procure and distribute doses for free to the state governments to inoculate people aged above 18; the second is the government's decision to purchase 44 crore doses of the Covishield and Covaxin. This contract, coupled with the last week's deal with Hyderabad-based Biological E for the procurement of 30 crore doses, will significantly augment vaccine availability in the country. The number could look inadequate, especially since warding off a third wave would call for inoculating the children, too. However, the government seems to have finally woken up to the challenge. That's good news.

The procurement of the required number of doses solves only part of the problem; administering them to ensure herd immunity is the real task. It is to this end that the Union finance ministry has come up with a series of suggestions. In its monthly economic report, the department of economic affairs of the ministry calls for vaccinating at least 70 crore people in August and September this year by launching an accelerated vaccination programme in mission mode.

Going by the specifics, the report is perhaps the first such comprehensive reports a Union ministry has produced on Covid containment. It has identified the real problem on hand and suggested an actionable programme considering the multiple factors that could play out while hitting the ground. The report says 92 lakh people must be vaccinated every day if we were to achieve the target. This is a formidable challenge given that the peak daily vaccination as of now is 42.65 lakh. However, this figure was attained by deploying people in shifts that spanned 8-9 hours a day; a 24 by 7 programme will take us to the target in time, the report argues.

The ministry estimates that 216 crore doses will be made available in the country between August and December. It advocates use of technology to circumvent logistical issues that could crop up. In a bold deviation from the vaccination policy till now, the report advocates for the government reaching out to the population by organising mass vaccination centres, integrating shopping areas and drive-ins with schools and primary health care centres.

While the ministry has said such steps are required to boost investor confidence, the primary beneficiary will be the people themselves who can resume their daily lives and return to their jobs once the pandemic is under control. The report also contains a grim warning about the speed with which the second wave has spread in the rural areas, suggesting how important it is to prevent a third wave. It is up to the government now to design an exhaustive plan with achievable milestones.

### Just good optics for BJP

Former Union minister Jitin Prasada has defected from the Congress to the BJP. This should make little difference to either party. Mr Prasada did not bring value to the Congress when he was there and is unlikely to be a harbinger of benefits to his new party, especially when preparations will soon be afoot for the Assembly election in UP early next year.

The lineage principle operates conspicuously in Congress (and now increasingly in other parties) and this appears to be the reason why Mr Prasada came into the Lok Sabha twice on the Congress ticket and was even made minister. Seeing that his party was in a state of disrepair in UP, his home state, he had tried to switch to BJP before the 2019 Lok Sabha poll but evidently negotiations did not work out. He pulled so little weight.

This factor has not gone away. If anything, even in the Congress Mr Prasada had slipped from being lightweight to featherweight. And yet, the BJP has taken him in. This is because the party is embattled chiefly on account of very poor Covid management.

In addition, the Adityan regime has sundered the caste coalition that gave the party a huge victory in 2017. The Brahmins, who form just a little less than 15 per cent of the vote, are reportedly badly alienated. Mr Prasada, being from that caste, has in recent times tried to project himself on a caste basis. While that by no means makes him a tall politician emerging from that caste, the BJP will accept any symbolic boost.

So, the defection makes for some good optics for the BJP and bad optics for the Congress, but that is about as far as it goes. Mr Prasada has badly lost parliament and Assembly polls in the recent past. He would hope BJP would field him in the upcoming state polls and that he will win on their ticket. That is the best his ambition can take him for now.

#### THE ASIAN AGE

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Subhani



## Sedition: Time for SC to enforce its own rulings



Karan Thapar

As I See It

It is time to define the limits of sedition", said Justice D.Y. Chandrachud of the Supreme Court on June 1, and his comment was received with considerable applause. I'm afraid it left me puzzled. The Supreme Court did that nearly 60 years ago in the 1962 Kedar Nath Singh case. What we need is meticulous and unfailing enforcement of what the court had laid down as the law of sedition, and not a fresh definition. Perhaps that's what Justice Chandrachud meant, but it's not what he said.

Let me explain. In the Kedar Nath Singh judgment, the Supreme Court read down Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code, which is the law of sedition. It first said the section would be limited to "such activities as would be intended, or have a tendency, to create disorder or disturbance to public peace by resort to violence". It then pointedly added: "We have no hesitation... to limit the application (of this section) to acts involving intention or tendency to create disorder, or disturbance of law and order or incitement to violence". Frankly, it couldn't have been clearer than that.

However, at least on four separate occasions thereafter, the Supreme Court reconfirmed this reading down of Section 124A. That first happened in 1995, in the Balwant Singh case, when the court ruled that the "Khalistan Zindabad" slogan is not seditious. Remember, this ruling referred to slogans raised in an open marketplace on the day Indira Gandhi was killed. Despite that the court's position was clear and forthright: "Raising some slogan only a couple of times ... which neither evoked

any response nor any reaction from anyone in the public cannot attract the provision of Section 124A". And then the court significantly added: "The police officers exhibited lack of maturity and, more, of sensitivity in arresting the appellants for raising the slogans... (the slogans) did not constitute any threat to the government as by law established nor could the same give rise to feelings of enmity or hatred among different communities or religions or other groups".

Thereafter, in the Bilal Ahmed Kaloo case and the Common Cause case, the Supreme Court restated the 1962 ruling. That happened again in 2016 when the court explicitly said: "We are of the considered opinion that the authorities while dealing with offences under Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code shall be guided by the principles laid down by the Constitution Bench in Kedar Nath Singh versus State of Bihar." Doesn't this mean there is no doubt or confusion about the Supreme Court's position?

Yet for those who still have doubts, the Supreme Court delivered a fifth reaffirmation, this time, ironically, three days after Justice Chandrachud's perplexing comment. A bench presided over by Justice U.U. Lalit in the Vinod Dua case said Section 124A is limited "only to such activities ... involving incitement to violence or intention or tendency to create public disorder or cause disturbance of public peace". This means, both before and after Justice Chandrachud's comment, the Supreme Court's position has been made crystal clear, and there's no need for further definitions of the

limits of sedition.

What is needed is enforcement of the law laid down by the court as far back as 1962. This is necessary because the court's ruling is continuously and deliberately flouted. We need the court to recognise this as contempt and act.

Let me give you a few facts. The website Article 14 claims 65 per cent of the sedition charges against 10,938 individuals since 2010 were brought after 2014. In that category, 96 per cent of sedition cases "for criticising politicians and governments over the last decade" were registered after 2014. According to Article 14, this amounts to "a 28 per cent increase in the number of sedition cases filed each year between 2014 and 2020 ... compared to the yearly average between 2010 and 2014". Finally, the National Crimes Records Bureau seems to confirm these figures with its own, which show a 165 per cent increase in cases of sedition between 2016 and 2019.

This means not only is the law of sedition repeatedly abused but the amount of abuse is steadily increasing. It also means that for 60 years the Supreme Court's ruling has been deliberately disregarded by all governments (both Central and state) and their police forces. This is nothing short of contempt. There is no other term for it.

Yet the court has watched in silence. It's swallowed this disrespect of its rulings. It's tolerated this defiance of the law. Not once has it objected. Or even commented.

**What is needed is enforcement of the law laid down by the court as far back as 1962. The court's ruling is continuously and deliberately flouted. We need the court to recognise this as contempt and act.**

It's not that the Supreme Court has been equally tolerant and forgiving of other instances of contempt. It took suo moto cognisance of the Prashant Bhushan case even though the attorney general advised against it. So, when elected governments and the police are in contempt — which has to be worse — why has it been unwilling to act or even speak out? That may sound like a rhetorical question but, actually, it's a finger pointing at the court.

So I say today to Justice Chandrachud, it's not definitions of sedition we need but the enforcement of a law that your predecessors had laid down several generations ago. And, if I'm honest, we need something else as well — an explanation from the court why it did not speak out and act earlier. Remember, by failing to do so, it allowed abuse of the law to continue and proliferate. It also accepted disrespect and disregard of its rulings. Simply put, that's defiance of the law.

But does the Supreme Court also owe us an apology? Since I'm being bold, let me also be precise — an apology for not defending the law laid down by its own judgments and also an apology for not standing up for its own authority.

The Supreme Court let the country down in 1975 with its ADM Jabalpur ruling. Justice Chandrachud had the moral strength to accept this even though his father was a Supreme Court judge at the time. Isn't the failure to enforce its definition of sedition for almost 60 years almost as bad? Think of the innocent people — cartoonists, students, journalists, historians, authors, actors, directors and, by some accounts, little children — who suffered because the Supreme Court kept silent while the law was blatantly defied. Yes, I think an apology is due.

*The writer is a television commentator and anchor*

#### LETTERS

#### FABULOUS FOUR

In a rare first in the Open era, the French Open semi-final will feature four women who have never got this far at the Slams. Greece's Maria Sakkari, who slew defending champion Iga Swiatek in the quarter-final, will lock horns with Barbora Krejčíková of the Czech Republic, who also figures in the women's doubles semi-finals. The other last four clash will witness Russian Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova take on Slovenian Tamara Zidansek. All four players have given their best shot so far, and it will be hard to pick out a winner. May the best Eve triumph!

**N.J. Ravi Chander**  
Bengaluru

#### TOO MANY DEATHS

**THE SEVERE** under-reporting of coronavirus deaths has brought the Bihar health department's data collection practices under scrutiny. The state department had set up two health committees to audit the Covid death toll after facing flak over media reports of discrepancy between government and municipal corporations' data. The resulting revision gave rise to a massive 72 per cent jump. Earlier, experts complained about similar data mismatches countrywide, apprehending the number of total deaths to be about five times higher than the stated figure of 3.5 lakhs. The government needs to mobilise its institutions to bridge this data gap.

**Bhagwan Thadani**  
Mumbai

#### THE LAST BOUT

**THE DEATH OF** Ngangom Dingko Singh, one of the most outstanding boxers Manipur has ever produced, who won the Asian Games gold in the 1998 edition in Bangkok, on Thursday after a long battle with liver cancer, at the age of 42, is shocking. A maverick, who inspired the likes of six-time world champion M.C. Mary Kom, Dingko was employed with the Indian Navy and also worked as a coach before ill-health confined him to his home. RIP Dingko.

**Sankar Paul**  
Chakdaha, West Bengal

Every Monday the best letter of the week wins ₹500. Email: [asianage.letters@gmail.com](mailto:asianage.letters@gmail.com).



## SHORT TAKES

POPE REJECTS  
CARDINAL'S  
RESIGNATION

**Rome, June 10:** Pope Francis refused Thursday to accept the resignation offered by German Cardinal Reinhard Marx over the sex abuse scandal in the church, but said a process of reform was necessary and that every bishop must take responsibility for the "catastrophe" of the crisis. Francis wrote a letter to Marx in response to the German's bombshell announcement last week that he had offered to resign as archbishop of Munich and Freising over the church's mishandling of abuse cases.

PAK TO HOLD PoK  
ASSEMBLY POLLS  
ON JULY 25

**Islamabad, Jun 10:** Pakistan-occupied Kashmir's top election official announced on Thursday to hold the general election for the legislative assembly on July 25, despite appeals to postpone the polls for two months due to the threat of resurgence of the Coronavirus. Last year, Pakistan conducted the legislative assembly election in Gilgit-Baltistan.

India had slammed Pakistan for its decision to hold elections in Gilgit-Baltistan and said any action to alter the status of the militarily-occupied region has no legal basis.

PAK CLERIC HELD  
FOR MALALA  
KILL THREAT

**Islamabad, June 10:** A Muslim cleric in northwest Pakistan has been arrested under the tough anti-terrorism act for threatening to kill Malala Yousafzai in a suicide attack and instigating people against the Nobel Laureate for her recent comments on marriage, police said. Mufti Sardar Ali Haqqani, a cleric, was arrested in Lakki Marwat district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province on Wednesday. In an interview to *Vogue* magazine, 23-year-old Malala revealed that she is not sure if she will ever marry.

MYANMAR  
MILITARY PLANE  
CRASH KILLS 12

**Bangkok, June 10:** A well-known senior Buddhist monk was among at least 12 people who died when a plane belonging to Myanmar's military crashed Thursday in the country's central Mandalay region, state media reported.

Army-run *Myawaddy TV* said a boy was one of two survivors on the flight from the capital, Naypyitaw, to Pyin Oo Lwin, also known as Maymyo. The other person taken to a hospital was reported to be a member of the military, but several other unconfirmed reports said he later died.

JUNTA HITS  
SUU KYI WITH  
GRAFT CHARGES

**Yangon, June 10:** The Myanmar junta has hit deposed civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi with corruption charges over claims she accepted illegal payments of gold and more than half a million dollars in cash, state media reported Thursday.

The country has been in turmoil since the generals ousted Suu Kyi on February 1, with more than 850 civilians killed in a brutal crackdown by security forces on near-daily protests against the coup.

The 75-year-old Nobel laureate, who has been in custody since the putsch, is facing a raft of wide-ranging criminal charges, including sedition and breaching a colonial-era secrecy law. The latest charges relate to allegations by the former Yangon region chief minister that Suu Kyi illegally accepted \$600,000 in cash from him along with around 11 kilograms of gold.

The Anti-Corruption Commission found evidence that Suu Kyi had committed "corruption using her rank", according to the *Global New Light of Myanmar*, a state-run newspaper. "So she was charged under Anti-Corruption Law section 55." She is also accused of abusing her authority when renting two areas of land for her charitable foundation.

After weeks of legal wrangling, two of Suu Kyi's trials are due to start in earnest next week, hearing evidence from witnesses.

In Naypyidaw, the remote capital purpose-built by the previous military regime, her trial on charges of violating restrictions during last year's election campaign and possessing unlicensed walkie-talkies will start on Monday.

A separate case is scheduled to start on June 15.

## Ring of fire



In this image taken from Arlington, Virginia, and released by Nasa, a partial solar eclipse rises behind the US Capitol on Thursday. Northeast states in the US saw a rare eclipsed sunrise, while in other parts of the Northern Hemisphere, this annular eclipse will be seen as a visible thin outer ring of the sun's disk that is not completely covered by the smaller dark disk of the moon, a so-called "ring of fire".

— AFP

US to buy 500m  
Pfizer vaccines

**Washington, June 10:** The US will buy 500 million more doses of the Pfizer Covid-19 vaccine to share through the global COVAX alliance for donation to 92 lower income countries and the African Union over the next year, a person familiar with the matter said Wednesday.

President Joe Biden was set to make the announcement Thursday in a speech before the start of the Group of Seven summit. Two hundred million doses — enough to fully protect 100 million people — would be shared this year, with the balance to be donated in the first half of 2022, the person said. National security adviser Jake Sullivan told reporters Wednesday that Biden was committed to sharing vaccines because it was in the public health and strategic interests of the US. As Biden embarks on his first foreign trip, he is aiming to show "that democracies are the countries that can best deliver solutions for people everywhere." "As he said in his joint session (address), we were the arsenal of democracy in World War

INDIA TO GET A  
SHARE OF 80M  
U.S. VACCINES

**Washington, June 10:** India will be receiving a share of the 80 million (8 crores) unused Covid-19 vaccines through the UN-backed COVAX global vaccine sharing programme that President Joe Biden has announced, according to a senior State Department official. On June 2, President Biden announced that the US will allocate 75 per cent — nearly 1.9 crores of the first tranche of 2.5 crore doses — of unused Covid-19 vaccines from its stockpile through the UN-backed COVAX global vaccine sharing programme to countries in South and Southeast Asia as well as Africa.

— PTI

II," Sullivan said. "We're going to be the arsenal of vaccines over this next period to help end the pandemic." — AP

Wastewater virus:  
Sensor developed

**London, June 10:** UK and Indian scientists have jointly developed a low-cost sensor that can detect fragments of the virus responsible for Covid-19 within wastewater, paving the way for health officials to get a better understanding of how prevalent the disease is in a larger area.

The technique, developed by researchers from the University of Strathclyde and the Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay, could be used to enable widespread monitoring of

Covid-19 prevalence in low- and middle-income nations which struggle to conduct mass testing.

The sensor can be used with portable equipment that uses the standard Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test to detect the SARS-CoV-2 virus, without the need for the expensive chemicals and lab infrastructure needed for real-time quantitative PCR tests, according to the research published in the journal *Sensors and Actuators B: Chemical*.

— PTI

## FINAL | FRONTIER

## Beijing avoids ISS due to US concerns over its programme's secrecy

## China ready to send first crew to space station

**Beijing, June 10:** The rocket that will send the first crew members to live on China's new orbiting space station has been moved onto the launch pad ahead of its planned blast-off next week. The three astronauts plan to spend three months on the space station, far exceeding the length of any previous Chinese mission. They will perform spacewalks, construction and maintenance work and carry out science experiments.

The main section of the

Tianhe, or Heavenly Harmony, station was launched into orbit on April 29. Cargo spacecraft sent up last month carried fuel, food and equipment to the station in preparation for the crewed mission.

The Long March-2F Y12 rocket carrying the Shenzhou-12 spacecraft was transferred to the launch pad at the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwest China on Wednesday, the China Manned Space Engineering Office said in a brief statement. Its tentative launch date is next Wednesday.

The space agency plans a total of 11 launches through the end of next year to deliver two laboratory modules to expand the 70-ton station, along with supplies and crew members. Next week's launch will be the third of those, and the first of the four crewed missions planned.

Another cargo mission is planned for September, shortly after which a replacement crew will be sent up, according to reports.

Allies to look beyond  
Covid at G-7 summit

## Before pandemic, Boris wanted it to be climate-dominated meet

**London, June 10:** There will be roundtable meetings, one-on-one chats and a group photo against a picturesque backdrop. When leaders of some of the world's richest nations meet Friday at the English seaside for a three-day Group of Seven summit, much of the choreography will be familiar.

But the world has changed dramatically. Since the G-7 last met two years ago, the Coronavirus pandemic has killed more than 3.7 million people and decimated economies with lockdowns and layoffs.

So when British Prime Minister Boris Johnson welcomes US President Joe Biden and the leaders of France, Germany, Italy, Japan and Canada to the cliff-ringed Carbis Bay beach resort in southwest England, pandemic recovery — "building back better" in a phrase both Biden and Johnson like — will top the agenda.

Johnson said the meeting would help move on from "a miserable period of competition and squabbling" that marked the early response to the pandemic. "This is the moment for the world's greatest and most technologically advanced democracies to shoulder their responsibilities and to vaccinate the world, because no one can be properly protected until everyone has been protected," he said in an article published Thursday, a day before the summit's official start.

Before the pandemic,

**Plymouth, June 10:** UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson is being criticised for flying to the Group of Seven summit meeting in Cornwall, rather than taking the train, as he presses world leaders to do more to fight global warming. Environmental activists bombarded Johnson's Twitter feed with suggestions that the prime minister should practice what he preaches after he posted a photo of himself climbing off the plane accompanied by a call to make the world "better, fairer and greener." "This is how serious Boris Johnson is about combating the climate em-

ergency: He flew to Cornwall," Zarah Sultana, a lawmaker from the opposition Labour Party, tweeted

● **ACCORDING TO figures posted on the UK government website, domestic flights generate about six times more greenhouse gases than rail travel.**

● **A TRAIN journey to Cornwall takes about five hours, compared with less than 90 minutes for a flight.**

Coronavirus tests for attending politicians, diplomats, staff and journalists. Biden made a vaccine pledge before the meeting got underway, announcing that the US will buy 500 million more doses of the Pfizer vaccine to share with poorer countries over the next year.

That upped the pressure on Johnson, who has not yet sent any of Britain's vaccine doses abroad. At most four-fifths of adults in the UK have had the first of two shots. Johnson said Thursday that Britain would donate "millions" of doses from surplus

stocks — though he didn't say when. Johnson also noted that the British government helped fund development at Oxford University of the AstraZeneca vaccine, which accounts for one in three doses around the world.

France said President Emmanuel Macron wanted to see "results and not just announcements" on vaccines. "We need a specific calendar — how many people worldwide and especially in Africa will be vaccinated" before a meeting of the G-20 in Rome in October.

— AP

JBS settles Muslim bias  
lawsuit for \$5.5 million

**Denver (US), June 10:** The second-largest producer of beef, pork and chicken in the US will pay up to \$5.5 million to settle a lawsuit that claimed the company discriminated against Muslim employees at a meat processing plant in northern Colorado.

The US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission filed the lawsuit in federal court in Denver in 2010, saying JBS Swift & Company discriminated against employees at its beef processing plant in Greeley by denying them bathroom breaks and disciplining them more harshly than other workers because they were Muslim, immigrants from Somalia, and PoC.

JBS USA LLC, doing business as JBS Swift & Company, must pay the \$5.5 million to about 300 employees who were included in the settlement, which was announced by the commission on Wednesday.

Nikki Richardson, a spokeswoman for JBS USA, said the company does not admit any liability in the settlement, prohibits all discrimination

Cyberattack: JBS  
paid \$11m ransom

**Denver (US), June 10:** The world's largest meat processing company says it paid the equivalent of \$11 million to hackers who broke into its computer system late last month. Brazil-based JBS SA said on May 31 that it was a victim of a ransomware attack, but Wednesday was the first time the company's US division confirmed that it had paid the ransom. "This was a very difficult decision to make for our company and for me personally," said Andre Nogueira, the CEO of JBS USA.

"However, we felt this decision had to be made to prevent any potential risk for our customers," JBS

said the vast majority of its facilities were operational at the time it made the payment, but it decided to pay in order to avoid any unforeseen issues and ensure no data was exfiltrated. The FBI has attributed the attack to REvil, a Russian-speaking gang that has made some of the largest ransomware demands on record in recent months.

The FBI said it will work to bring the group to justice and it urged anyone who is the victim of a cyberattack to contact the bureau immediately. It targeted servers supporting JBS's operations in North America and Australia. — AP

and harassment at its facilities and "is committed to diversity and inclusion in the workplace."

According to the lawsuit, JBS prevented Musl-

im employees from praying and harassed them when they tried to pray during scheduled breaks and bathroom breaks. — AP

## WIFE OF 'EL CHAPO' PLEADS GUILTY TO U.S. CHARGES

**Washington, June 10:** The wife of Mexican drug kingpin Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman pleaded guilty Thursday to charges in the US and admitted that she helped her husband run his criminal empire. Emma Coronel Aispuro, wearing a green jail uniform, appeared in federal

court in Washington and pleaded guilty to three federal offences as part of a plea deal with federal prosecutors. The charges include knowingly and willfully conspiring to distribute heroin, cocaine, marijuana and methamphetamine for several years. — AP



Emma Coronel Aispuro

OLI EXPANDS  
CABINET SECOND  
TIME IN A WEEK

**Kathmandu, June 10:** Nepal's embattled Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli on Thursday expanded his Cabinet for the second time in a week amid widespread criticism and the ongoing political crisis in the Himalayan nation.

Oli is heading a minority government after losing a trust vote in the House last month.

According to the Office of the President, the Cabinet now has a total of 25 members with the induction of seven new ministers and a minister of state. In the latest rejig, Khagraj Adhikari, a close confidante of Oli, has been given the portfolio of the Ministry of Home Affairs, *MyRepublica* news website reported. Adhikari had earlier served as the Health Minister in the Sushil Koirala-led Cabinet.

The home minister post was vacant after the Supreme Court on May 20 scrapped the appointment of seven ministers, including Ram Bahadur Thapa who was leading the Home Ministry, saying they were not lawmakers. Oli dissolved the House a day later. Thapa had joined the CPN-UML after the erstwhile Nepal Communist Party was dissolved. — PTI

LANKA PROBES  
OIL SLICK FROM  
SINKING SHIP

**Colombo, June 10:** Sri Lanka announced an investigation Thursday into a possible oil slick reported off its west coast where a container ship is submerged after burning for 13 days.

Coast Conservation Minister Nalaka Godahewa said local experts were asked to examine an oil patch of about 0.35 square kilometres where MV X-Press Pearl ran aground. "I visited the area by boat yesterday and what we noticed was a thin film of oil which looked like diesel," Godahewa said in Colombo. "It did not look like bunker oil, but we have asked our experts to examine." It reported an onboard acid leak and caught fire just as it was due to enter the Colombo harbour on May 20. — AFP



quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	52,300.47	0.69
Nifty 50	15,737.80	0.65
\$S&P 500*	4,243.03	0.56
Dollar (₹)	73.05	-0.09
Pound Sterling (₹)	102.96	0.46
Euro (₹)	88.86	0.10
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,127*259	0.53
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	72.40	0.25
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.019	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.487	-0.002

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

Creditors to vote on Suraksha, NBCC final offers

Jaypee Infratech's financial creditors decided to put the bids of NBCC and Suraksha Group to vote after both parties submitted final offers for the debt-laden company. The winning bidder will acquire Jaypee Infratech Ltd as well as complete more than 20,000 pending flats in the NCR region. The voting process is likely to start from Monday next week and continue till June 23.

Justice Sikri to head IMAI grievance board



The IMAI said former Supreme Court judge Justice Arjan Kumar Sikri will chair the Grievance Redressal Board of the recently formed Digital Publisher Content Grievances Council. The DPCGC has 14 publishers of online curated content as members, including Amazon Prime Video, Alt Balaji, Apple, BookMyShow Stream, Eros Now, Firework TV, Hoichoi, Hungama, Lionsgate Play, MX Player, Netflix, Reeldrama, Shemaroo and Ullu.

Tata Group spent ₹2,500 cr in Covid relief: Chandra

Tata Sons chairman N. Chandrasekaran said group companies have collectively extended a help of Rs 2,500 crore towards Covid-19 relief across both the waves of the pandemic that started in March 2020. Speaking at the TCS AGM, Chandrasekaran said more than the financial commitments, the work done on the ground by the group firms, like helping build hospitals and expanding O2 capacity, has been the focus area.

Skoda drives in all-new Octavia at ₹26 lakh

Skoda, the Czech car-maker, launched the fourth generation new Skoda Octavia sedan with a starting price of Rs 25.99 lakh for the Style variant and the Laurin and at Rs 28.99 lakh for the Klement variant. At present it rivals only the Hyundai Elantra as Honda Civic and Toyota Corolla have been discontinued in the Indian market. The new Skoda Octavia is powered by a 2.0-litre, four-cylinder TSI turbo-petrol engine.

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ONGC, OIL set to lose large oil, gas blocks Next auction is for major fields: Govt

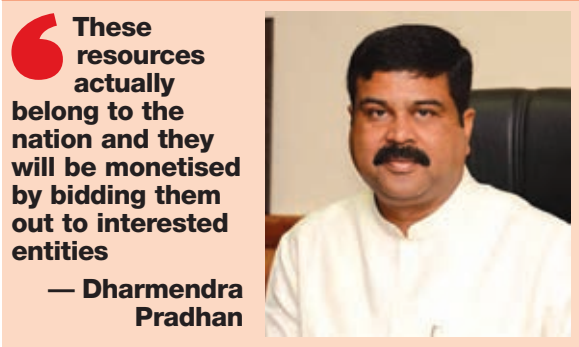
FC BUREAU NEW DELHI, JUNE 10

In a bid to maximise the country's hydrocarbon production, the government will auction non-monetised large oil and gas fields of state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) and Oil India Ltd (OIL), petroleum minister Dharmendra Pradhan said on Thursday. The statement comes weeks after his ministry asked India's largest oil and gas producer ONGC to sell a stake in producing oil fields such as Ratna R-Series in western offshore to private firms and get foreign partners in KG basin gas fields.

Speaking on the launch of the third round of auction of small, discovered fields, he said companies cannot indefinitely sit on resources they may have discovered. "These resources actually belong to the nation and they will be monetised by bidding them out to interested entities," he added.

As many as 32 oil and gas blocks with 75 discoveries have been offered in the Discovered Small Field (DSF) round-III. These small and marginal fields were discovered by both ONGC and OIL, but they were not economically viable to be developed due to the fiscal regime and their small size.

Under the DSF, liberal terms, including pricing and marketing freedom, are offered, to make them viable. "There will be no



These resources actually belong to the nation and they will be monetised by bidding them out to interested entities — Dharmendra Pradhan

DSF next time. Rather, for the next time, it will be a 'major' round (auction of large fields)," Pradhan said.

He said the Directorate General of Hydrocarbons (DGH), the oil ministry's technical arm, has the "full mandate" to identify unmonetised major fields that could be offered for bidding. "Resources don't belong to a company. They belong to the nation and the government. They cannot lie with a company indefinitely. If somebody cannot monetise them, we will have to bring a new regime," he added.

For a nation that imports 85 per cent of its oil needs, resources lying idle for a long time cannot be permitted, he said.

"Our objective to maximise production. So, we have to look at all options available. We cannot have a situation where fields are lying with some for a long time and are not being developed," he said.

This would be the third attempt by the ministry to

get ONGC to privatise its oil and gas fields.

In October 2017, the DGH had identified 15 producing fields with a collective reserve of 791.2 million tonnes of crude oil and 333.46 billion cubic metres of gas, for handing over to private companies in the hope that they would improve upon the baseline estimate and its extraction.

A year later, 149 small and marginal fields of ONGC were identified for private and foreign companies on the grounds that the state-owned enterprises should focus only on the bid ones.

According to reports, the first plan could not go through because of strong opposition from ONGC. The second plan went up to the Cabinet, which on February 19, 2019, decided to bid out 64 marginal fields of ONGC. But that tender got a tepid response.

ONGC was then allowed to retain 49 fields on condition that their performance will be strictly monitored for three years.

Nigeria courts India's Koo to take on Twitter

New Delhi, June 10: Koo on Thursday said the Government of Nigeria has set up an official account on the Indian microblogging platform, which is looking at making deeper inroads into the African nation. The development comes in the backdrop of a standoff between the Nigerian government and Twitter. Last week, the Nigerian government had announced an indefinite suspension of the US social media platform in that country.

Koo co-founder and CEO Aprameya Radhakrishna in a post on Koo said, The official handle of the government of Nigeria is now on Koo! Interestingly, he also shared the information on Twitter saying: A very warm welcome to the official handle of the Government of Nigeria on @kooindia! Spreading wings beyond India now.

Last week, the Nigerian government had said it was suspending Twitter indefinitely after the company removed a contentious tweet that President Muhammadu Buhari made about a secessionist movement.

Following this, Koo had said the platform is available in Nigeria and that it is keen on adding new local languages for users in that country.

Now that there is an opportunity for microblogging platforms in Nigeria... Koo is looking at introducing local Nigerian languages in the app, Radhakrishna had said. —PTI



BHARATPE TO TAKE OVER PAYBACK INDIA

New Delhi, June 10: Merchant payment and lending service provider BharatPe on Thursday said it has acquired Payback India from American Express and ICICI Investments Strategic Fund.

The firm did not disclose the financial details of the deal.

This is the first acquisition by BharatPe and will make Payback India a wholly owned subsidiary of BharatPe.

Payback India, launched in 2010, is a multi-brand loyalty programme with over 100 million members. It has a network of over 100 offline and online partners and allows its customers to earn and redeem points on transactions. —PTI

growth in the segment.

"The investment in IMG strengthens Tata's ability to provide superior customer experience and high quality healthcare products & services in the e-pharmacy and e-diag-

nostics space through a technology led platform," said Pratik Pal, CEO of Tata Digital.

Though the company did not divulge the financial details of the transaction, it had invested Rs 100 crore in IMG through debt a few months back.

It was later reported that Tata Digital was eyeing a 65 per cent stake in IMG, valuing the outfit at about Rs 1,200 crore, but no word on this has come from either companies.

Tata Group has been fast expanding its digital business both organically and inorganically. While it already has a presence in the horizontal space with Tata Cliq, Tata Digital has been acquiring key players in some of the fast-growing verticals. It had recently acquired a controlling stake in BigBasket. Reliance too is betting big in this segment with its JioMart.

The segment already has biggies like Walmart and Amazon expanding their footprint. The online grocery market has grown 30 times in the last eight years to reach \$3 billion. It is now expected to grow at a 59 per cent compound annual growth rate to \$18 billion by 2024, RedSeer estimates.

A few days back, Tata Digital announced its investment of \$75 million in Curefit. In fact, group patriarch Ratan Tata had realised the potential of digital business in its initial years and has been investing in digital start-ups. Curefit was one among them. He has even exited Lenskart with handsome returns.

SONA COMSTAR'S ₹5,550-CR IPO OPENS ON 14TH

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, JUNE 10

Auto components manufacturer Sona BLW Precision Forgings' (Sona Comstar) Rs 5,550-crore IPO opens on June 14 in the price band of Rs 285 to Rs 291 per share of Rs 10 face value.

Sona Comstar designs and manufactures automotive systems and components for electrified and non-electrified powertrain segments and supplies across the US, Europe, India and China.

The public issue is an offer for sale of shares worth Rs 5,250 crore by US-based private equity firm Blackstone, which holds 66.28 per cent stake in the company through the entity Singapore VII Topco III Pte. Ltd.

Also there is a fresh issue of shares worth Rs 300 crore by the company.

Sona Autocomp Holding owns the remaining 33.72 per cent stake.

The firm aims to use the proceeds from the fresh issue to repay over Rs 240 crore of its borrowings.

The issue has 10 per cent shares reserved for retail individual investors and 75 per cent for institutional investors.

RBI hikes ATM interchange fee

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, JUNE 10

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Thursday increased interchange fee for ATM transactions from Rs 15 to Rs 17 per financial transactions and from Rs 5 to Rs 6 for non-financial transactions, effective August 1, 2021.

The charges were last revised in August 2012.

To compensate the banks for the higher interchange fee, the RBI has increased the ATM charges per transaction for customers from Rs 20 to Rs 21 from January 1, 2022, over and above the free transactions permitted.

The interchange fee is a

Banks to increase the ATM transaction charges from ₹20 to ₹21 from January 1, 2022

fee paid by the card issuing bank to the operator/bank of the ATM when a customer makes a transaction at an ATM that does not belong to the card issuing bank. While the card-issuing bank is called the issuer, the latter is called an acquirer. This charge is divided between the acquirer and the company maintaining the ATM, a reason why banks discourages customers from using other banks' ATMs. Industry players wel-

comed the move. Rustom Irani, MD & CEO, Hitachi Payment Services, which provides ATM services, said, "We are grateful to the RBI and the government for this progressive step of increasing the interchange rate. This will help us...deploy additional ATMs which are particularly needed in semi urban and rural locations to provide financial access and enable financial inclusion."

Pranay Jhaveri, country manager-India & South Asia, Euronet Worldwide said, "This move will definitely give a fresh impetus to deployment of ATMs across India and help improve the penetration."

Credit to textiles drops to 3-year low

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JUNE 10

In line with the slower manufacturing activity and exports, credit availed of by the textiles and apparel sector declined 20 per cent in the December quarter, the lowest in three years.

As of December 2020, the quarterly credit availed of by the sector stood at Rs 1.62 lakh crore, which was 19.8 per cent lower than Rs

2.02 lakh crore received in the same quarter in 2019. This was the lowest quarterly credit in three years—lower than Rs 1.82 lakh crore in December 2017, as per Sidbi-CRIF High Mark data.

On a sequential basis, December quarter credit declined 12.37 per cent.

The number of active loans in the sector stood at 4.26 lakh as of December 2020 and 95 per cent of the overall credit by volume

went to MSME borrowers. Of this, 76.7 per cent of the credit volume was accounted for by the micro enterprises.

Apparel Export Promotion Council chairman A. Sakthivel said a Rs 16,000-crore special liquidity facility being provided by the RBI to the Sidbi at repo rate will support MSMEs for easier access to credit.

NPAs at 16.92 per cent was lower than 24.61 per cent in December 2019.

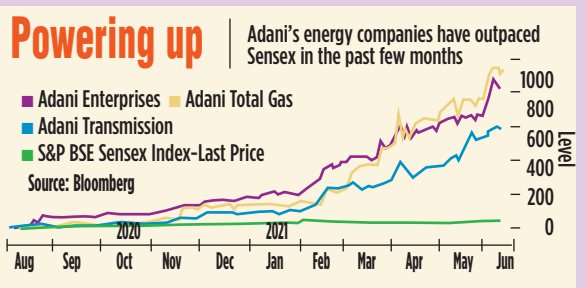
CONCENTRATED POSITIONS Asymmetric risk-reward as large investors avoid Adani

\$43-bn jump in Adani fortune fraught with risks

ANTO ANTONY JUNE 10

A rally in the stocks of companies controlled by Indian billionaire Gautam Adani has added almost \$43 billion to his wealth this year, catapulting him to the spot of the second-richest person in Asia. Some analysts say the gains are fraught with risk.

Adani's net worth of \$76.7 billion got a boost from a 330 per cent jump in Adani Total Gas Ltd, a 235 per cent rise in his conglomerate's flagship Adani Enterprises Ltd and a 263 per cent increase in Adani Transmission Ltd this



year. Adani Group stocks, especially these three, "look extended," Bloomberg Intelligence analysts Gaurav Patankar and Nitin Chanduka wrote in a June 10 note after analysing technical indicators.

"Among the biggest for-

eign investors are a few Mauritius-based funds holding over 95 per cent of assets in these companies," the analysts wrote. "Such concentrated positions, along with negligible onshore ownership, create asymmetric risk-reward as large investors conspicuously avoid

Adani."

The analysis underscores the vulnerability of the rapid wealth surge Adani has seen in 2021, beating the gains for Warren Buffett and his compatriot Mukesh Ambani. A representative for Adani Group declined to comment immediately.

The overseas funds hold a large chunk of shares, effectively reducing the public float and leaving the stocks prone to volatility, the analysts wrote. Elara India Opportunities Fund, Apms Investment Fund, Cresta Fund, Albula Investment Fund, Lts Investment and Asia Investment Corp have put more than 95 per cent of

their assets in Adani Group firms, according to data compiled by Bloomberg Intelligence.

The ports-to-power conglomerate also got a boost after MSCI Inc included three more Adani firms to its India benchmark index last month, taking the group's total footprint to five. This leads to mandated buying by investors that track this index.

"Adani stocks trade 150-200 per cent above 200-day moving averages, and statistically look extended," Bloomberg Intelligence analysts wrote. "Tesla was 126 per cent above the 200-day when it peaked this year."

—Bloomberg

LPC framework can strengthen banks balance sheets: Experts



MADHUSUDAN SAHOO NEW DELHI, JUNE 10

Financial experts have called for use of an 'LPC framework' to help banks and non-banking financial institutions (NBFCs) strengthen their balance sheet. Lenders would be better prepared to tackle the problem of increased non-performing assets (NPA) by adopting the LPC framework.

In the framework, 'L' stands for maintaining higher liquidity on the balance sheet, 'P' for having a higher provisioning cover and 'C' stands for higher capitalisation and lower leverage.

"Use of the LPC framework will help banks and NBFCs to fortify their balance sheet and enhance their resilience to the impact of the pandemic. It is expected that the ongoing pandemic may cause an increase of the NPA in banks," Krishnan Sitaraman, senior director & deputy chief ratings officer, Crisil Ratings said, while addressing a webinar.

Bankers also feel that the financial sector—especially banks and other lending institutions—is currently facing headwinds with the spread, intensity and duration of the pandemic and the accompanying lockdown measures taken by the government. "The LPC framework is a good concept to be followed by the banks, NBFCs and other lending institutions," said Dr M. Narendran, former CMD of India Overseas Bank and Adviser to Enque Collaboration.

Narendra also noted that, "During the last year and the current year, banks have maintained sufficient liquidity."



## SHORT TAKES

## Team India begin training in group

**Southampton:** India carried out their first group practice session at a ground adjacent to Ageas Bowl here on Thursday, five days after being allowed staggered training in the run-up to the World Test Championship final against New Zealand. The WTC final is scheduled to be held from Jun 18 to 22. It was the first time the players mixed with their teammates on the ground after being allowed to run in the gymnasium and the main playing field at different time slots on completion of the third day of their hard quarantine in the UK. "We have had our first group training session and the intensity was high. Fire. #Teamindia's preparations are on in full swing for the #WTC21 Final," the BCCI wrote in a tweet post along with a short video of the session. — *PTI*

## Harman to play for Manchester

**London:** India's T20I skipper Harmanpreet Kaur and teen batting sensation Shafali Verma will be representing the Manchester Originals and Birmingham Phoenix respectively in the inaugural edition of The Hundred in the UK starting on July 21. The duo will be joined by opener Smriti Mandhana, all-rounder Deepti Sharma and batswoman Jemimah Rodrigues in the 100-ball tournament involving eight men's and women's teams. While Verma, who is the No. 1 ranked T20 batter, joins Birmingham Phoenix as a replacement for New Zealand's Sophie Devine, Sharma will turn out for the London Spirit. Mandhana, the vice captain, is set to form a devastating opening partnership with England's Danni Wyatt at Southern Brave and Rodrigues will feature for Northern Superchargers. — *PTI*

## Enable spinners to bowl doosra: Ash

**Southampton:** Saqlain Mushtaq was the only spinner who bowled a "legal doosra" during his playing career, feels India's star spinner Ravichandran Ashwin, who wants game's governing body ICC to do away with the current elbow flexion of 15 degree to a permissible level. While Saqlain started the doosra revolution, the others who bowled the wrong 'un included Muttiah Muralitharan, Harbhajan Singh and Saeed Ajmal. "According to me, let's not do away with it (doosra) but enable spinners to bowl the doosra responsibly with an appropriate bend," Ashwin said in his YouTube show. — *PTI*

## Neymar to lead Brazil in Copa

**Sao Paulo:** The Copa America has been rocked by one surprise after another, but there were none Wednesday as Brazil coach Tite named his squad for the troubled tournament, led by superstar Neymar. The defending South American champions will keep a roster nearly identical to the one that beat both Ecuador and Paraguay 2-0 this month to extend the Selecao's win streak in World Cup qualifying to six matches. Paris Saint-Germain striker Neymar, who missed Brazil's 2019 Copa America win due to injury, will lead a squad with just one change: returning from injury, 36-year-old Chelsea defender Thiago Silva will replace Rodrigo Caio of Flamengo. — *AFP*

## Axed Robinson to take short break

**London:** Pace bowler Ollie Robinson has decided to take a short break from cricket. The 27-year-old missed England's second Test against New Zealand after being suspended from all international cricket pending the outcome of a disciplinary investigation into historical racist and sexist tweets. Robinson issued an apology for the posts he sent in 2012 and 2013, when he was in his late teens, which were unearthed and shared online on the day he made his Test debut against the Black Caps earlier this week. — *PTI*

## Continental gala

## Heavyweights gear up for top kick as Euro football begins

**London, June 10:** Euro 2020 finally kicks off on Friday as Cristiano Ronaldo's Portugal prepare to defend their title and world champions France seek a rare double a year after the tournament was delayed by the coronavirus pandemic.

France's fearsome forward line makes them favourites to win a third European crown at the pan-continental event, while top-ranked Belgium and a youthful England side will be a major threat. For the first time the tournament is taking place in 11 cities across Europe instead of one or two countries despite the lingering shadow cast by the Covid-19 crisis.

Dublin and Bilbao were dropped from the list of host cities after being unable to give guarantees they could meet UEFA's requirement of accommodating limited numbers of spectators, but Seville stepped in for Bilbao while Dublin's games went to London and Saint-Petersburg.

The action gets under way at Rome's Olympic Stadium on Friday, where Italy take on Turkey in front of 16,000 fans. Favourites France are not in action until Tuesday in the headline act of the first round of group matches when the world champions take on Germany in Munich.

"All the other countries envy us," said a recent front page of French sports daily *L'Equipe* underneath pictures of Kylian Mbappe, Karim Benzema and Antoine Griezmann.

All eyes will be on 33-year-old forward Benzema, who was recalled after an international exile of five-and-a-half years following a prolific season for Real Madrid. Holders Portugal and Hungary complete Group F. Ronaldo is now 36 but is still going strong and is supported by a better squad, which also boasts the outstanding talents of Joao Felix, Bruno Fernandes, Bernardo Silva and Ruben Dias.



Euro 2020 mascot 'Skillzy' poses with the winners' trophy.

— *Twitter*

## HEAD-TO-HEAD

● **Matches:** 11. Italy won 8. Turkey won 0. Draw: 3

## ● EURO MEETINGS

1962: Italy beat Turkey 6-0 in Bologna.

1963: Italy beat Turkey 1-0 in Mithat Pasa

2000: Italy beat Turkey 2-1 in Arnheim.

— **S. PERVEZ KAISER**

## CAN ENGLAND TRIUMPH AT HOME?

England have the carrot of knowing both semi-finals and the final will be played at Wembley, while Italy and the Netherlands are eager to impress after failing to qualify for recent tournaments.

Captain Harry Kane believes England will start their bid to win Euro 2020 in a "better place" than they were before reaching the 2018 World Cup semi-finals.

"I feel like now we've had a bit more experience, players in the biggest games for their club and obviously players who have played in that World Cup have had that experience as well," he said.

— *AFP*

## Azzurri set sights on Turkey dinner

**Rome, June 10:** Top Italy striker Ciro Immobile will be looking to shake off the demons of World Cup failure as the 'Azzurri' return to the big stage in Friday's European Championship opener against Turkey in Rome.

Roberto Mancini's resurgent four-time world champions are being touted as possible dark horses after failing to qualify for the 2018 World Cup.

But Italy lack the high-profile strike partnerships of rivals such as Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo and Joao Felix, France's Kylian Mbappe and Karim Benzema and England's Harry Kane and Marcus Rashford.

And despite a club-record 150 goals in five seasons for Lazio, Immobile has been unable to shake off the tag of being unable to score when it matters.

The 31-year-old bore the brunt of criticism for fail-

ing to find the net in the World Cup play-off defeat to Sweden in November 2017.

"I didn't want to play anymore, it was too much sadness to manage and negative thoughts," recalled Immobile.

Mancini has rebuilt Italy since, with the team on a 27-match unbeaten run.

Immobile won the European Golden Shoe in the 2019-2000 season for his 36 league goals, and scored 20 last campaign as Lazio finished sixth.

For the former Borussia Dortmund and Sevilla reject this could be his last chance to shine on the bigger stage.

"I have a strong personality," he insists.

"I'm not very gifted technically, but where I don't get there with the technique I get there with strength, tenacity and cunning."

— *AFP*

## Pellegrini joins Italy's injury list

Lorenzo Pellegrini on Thursday joined Italy's injury list on the eve of their Euro 2020 opener against Turkey, the Italian Football Federation (FIGC) confirmed. Italy have submitted a request to UEFA to bring in Fiorentina's Gaetano Castrovilli in their 26-man squad after Pellegrini pulled up with a muscular problem in training mid-week.

## Ukraine told to remove slogans

Ukraine must modify their team shirt for the Euro after UEFA upheld part of a Russian complaint about slogans and a map that included Crimea. The yellow-and-blue shirt design unveiled on Sunday angered Russian officials by including an outline of Ukraine's land territory with the Crimea region which Russia annexed in 2014. The fresh ruling allows the map to stay on the shirt.

## Pope blesses UEFA officials

Pope Francis met with UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin and other soccer officials on Thursday to offer his blessings before the Euro Championship kicks off in Rome. The Argentine-born Francis is an avid soccer fan and a noted supporter of Buenos Aires team San Lorenzo. Italian soccer federation president Gabriele Gravina also took part in the meeting inside the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican.

## DHAWAN TO LEAD INDIA ON SL TOUR

**New Delhi, June 10:** Shikhar Dhawan has been confirmed as captain, while pacer Bhuvneshwar Kumar will be his deputy as the BCCI named a 20-member squad to tour Sri Lanka in July. All matches will be played at the R Premadasa International Stadium in Colombo.

Among the youngsters to get a look in are Devdutt Padikkal, Ruturaj Gaikwad and Chetan Sakariya, all of who impressed in the domestic circuit and Indian Premier League recently. The experienced Karnataka all-rounder Krishnappa Gowtham also gets a call up, alongside experienced white-ball spinners Yuzvendra Chahal and Kuldeep Yadav. Tamil Nadu and Kolkata Knight Riders spinner Varun Chakravarthy gets another chance with the national squad after he missed out on the Australia tour due to injury after being originally named in the T20I squad. — *Agencies*

## SQUAD

**Shikhar** (Captain), **Prithvi Shaw**, **Devidutt** Padikkal, **Ruturaj** Gaikwad, **Suryakumar** Yadav, **Manish Pandey**, **Hardik Pandya**, **Nitish Rana**, **Ishan Kishan** (Wicket-keeper), **Sanju Samson** (Wicket-keeper), **Yuzvendra Chahal**, **Rahul Chahal**, **K Gowtham**, **Krunal Pandya**, **Kuldeep Yadav**, **Varun C**, **Bhuvneshwar Kumar** (Vice-captain), **Deepak Chahar**, **Navdeep Saini**, **Chetan Sakariya**  
**Net Bowlers:** Ishan Porel, **Sandeep** Warrier, **Arshdeep** Singh, **Sai Kishore**, **Simarjeet Singh**

## EURO FIXTURES

GROUP A	GROUP B	GROUP C
Turkey Italy Wales Switzerland	Denmark Finland Belgium Russia	Netherlands Ukraine Austria North Macedonia
GROUP D	GROUP E	GROUP F
England Croatia Scotland Czech Republic	Spain Sweden Poland Slovakia	Hungary Portugal France Germany

## GROUP STAGE

<b>June 12</b>	Turkey vs Italy Wales vs Switzerland Denmark vs Finland	Group A Group A Group B	12.30 am 6.30 pm 9.30 pm
<b>June 13</b>	Belgium vs Russia England vs Croatia Austria vs N. Macedonia	Group B Group D Group C	12.30 am 6.30 pm 9.30 pm
<b>June 14</b>	Netherlands vs Ukraine Scotland vs Czech Republic Poland vs Slovakia	Group C Group D Group E	12.30 am 6.30 pm 9.30 pm
<b>June 15</b>	Spain vs Sweden Hungary vs Portugal	Group E Group F	12.30 am 9.30 pm
<b>June 16</b>	France vs Germany Finland vs Russia Turkey vs Wales	Group F Group B Group A	12.30 am 6.30 pm 9.30 pm
<b>June 17</b>	Italy vs Switzerland Ukraine vs N. Macedonia Denmark vs Belgium	Group A Group C Group B	12.30 am 6.30 pm 9.30 pm
<b>June 18</b>	Netherlands vs Austria Sweden vs Slovakia Croatia vs Czech Republic	Group C Group E Group D	12.30 am 6.30 pm 9.30 pm
<b>June 19</b>	England vs Scotland Hungary vs France Portugal vs Germany	Group D Group F Group F	12.30 am 6.30 pm 9.30 pm
<b>June 20</b>	Spain vs Poland Italy vs Wales Switzerland vs Turkey	Group E Group A Group A	12.30 am 9.30 pm 9.30 pm
<b>June 21</b>	Ukraine vs Austria N. Macedonia vs Netherlands	Group C Group C	12.30 am 9.30 pm
<b>June 22</b>	Finland vs Belgium Russia vs Denmark	Group B Group B	12.30 am 12.30 am
<b>June 23</b>	Czech Republic vs England Croatia vs Scotland Sweden vs Poland Slovakia vs Spain	Group D Group D Group E Group E	12.30 am 12.30 am 9.30 pm 9.30 pm
<b>June 24</b>	Germany vs Hungary Portugal vs France	Group F Group F	12.30 am 12.30 am

## ROUND OF 16

<b>June 26</b>	2A vs 2B	Match 37	9.30 pm
<b>June 27</b>	1A vs 2C 1C vs 3D/E/F	Match 38 Match 39	12.30 am 9.30 pm
<b>June 28</b>	1B vs 3A/D/E/F 2D vs 2E	Match 40 Match 41	12.30 am 9.30 pm
<b>June 29</b>	1F vs 3A/B/C 1D vs 2F	Match 42 Match 43	12.30 am 9.30 pm
<b>June 30</b>	1E vs 3A/B/C/D	Match 44	12.30 am

## QUARTERFINALS

<b>July 2</b>	Winners of Matches 41 and 42	Quarterfinal 1	9.30 pm
<b>July 3</b>	Winners of Matches 38 and 40	Quarterfinal 2	12.30 am
	Winners of Matches 37 and 39	Quarterfinal 3	9.30 pm
<b>July 4</b>	Winners of Matches 43 and 44	Quarterfinal 4	12.30 am

## SEMIFINALS

<b>July 7</b>	Winners of Quarterfinal 1 and 2	12.30 am
<b>July 8</b>	Winners of Quarterfinal 3 and 4	12.30 am

## THE FINAL

<b>July 12</b>	Winners of Semifinals	12.30 am
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MATCHES LIVE ON SONY TEN 2, HD, SONY TEN 3, HD (HINDI), SONY SIX, HD (MALAYALAM & BENGALI), SONY TEN 4, HD (TAMIL & TELUGU)

## Anastasia in dream final

**Paris, June 10:** Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova beat Tamara Zidansek in straight sets to reach a first Grand Slam final at the French Open on Thursday at a record 52nd attempt.

The 29-year-old Russian defeated world number 85 Zidansek 7-5, 6-3 and will face Greek 17th seed Maria Sakkari or Barbora Krejickova of the Czech Republic for the title on Saturday, 14 years after her Grand Slam debut.

Pavlyuchenkova, a quarter-finalist in Paris a decade ago, became the first woman to play more than 50 majors before making her first final, breaking the previous mark of 44 set by 2015 US Open runner-up Roberta Vinci.

"I am so tired and so happy, it is very emotional," said Pavlyuchenkova. "It was difficult, I tried to fight very hard and to work on the tactical side. It is important to stay focused and in the right zone for the final on Saturday."

The 31st seed dropped serve in the opening game on a sun-drenched Court Philippe Chatrier.

## SALISBURY-KRAWCZYK WIN MIXED DOUBLES

Joe Salisbury became the first Briton to win the French Open mixed doubles in 39 years on Thursday as he and American partner Desirae Krawczyk beat Aslan Karatsev and Elena Vesnina 2-6, 6-4, 10-5 in the final. It is a second Grand Slam title for Salisbury, 29, who won the 2020 Australian Open men's doubles with Rajeev Ram.

The 27-year-old Krawczyk finished runner-up in last year's women's doubles at Roland Garros with Alexa Guarachi. — *AFP*



Russia's Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova serves to Slovenia's Tamara Zidansek during their semifinal in the French Open at the Roland Garros on Thursday.

— *AP*

## DJOKOVIC TO TAKE ON NADAL IN SEMIS

**Paris, June 10:** Novak Djokovic said facing Rafael Nadal for the 58th time on Friday, with a place in the French Open final on the line, will be "a great battle" against his "biggest ever rival".

Djokovic secured the eagerly-awaited clash when he reached his 40th Grand Slam semifinal with a 6-3, 6-2, 6-7 (5/7), 7-5 win over Italy's Matteo Berrettini.

It will be his 11th appearance in the last-four in Paris where he was champion in 2016.

Nadal, the 13-time winner, beat Argentina's Diego Schwartzman 6-3, 4-6, 6-4, 6-0 to make the semi-finals for the 14th time. He will be playing in his 35th Slam semi.

"I'll probably pick Rafa as the biggest rival I've ever had in my career," said world number one

Djokovic.

"The anticipation for the match against him, any match, any surface, any occasion, is always different from any other. Let's have a great battle."

Although Djokovic has the edge at 29-28 in their overall rivalry stretching back 15 years, Nadal enjoys a 7-1 record in their French Open meetings and is 19-7 overall on clay. — *ATP*

## Dingko dies after battle with cancer

**New Delhi, June 10:** Asian Games gold medal-winning former boxer Dingko Singh, who inspired a generation of Indian pugilists with his swashbuckling ring craft and flamboyant personality, died on Thursday after a long battle with liver cancer.

He was 42 and had been fighting the disease since 2017. He is survived by his wife Babai Ngangom, a son and a daughter.

During his battle with cancer, the former bantamweight (54kg) boxer's health woes were compounded by a bout of jaundice and Covid-19 last year. "We lost a legend," Olympic-bound boxer Vikas Krishan said summing up what he meant to Indian boxing.

Dingko's gold in the Bangkok Asiad was the



Dingko Singh

first in 16 years for Indian boxing after Kaur Singh's top finish at the regional showpiece's 1982 edition.

Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju offered condolences on his demise along with the national federation and a host of Indian boxers, some of whom have only heard tales of his dazzling persona. — *PTI*

## RORY BURNS BRIGHT, BUT HOSTS COLLAPSE ON DAY 1

**Birmingham, June 10:** Matt Henry struck twice on his return to international cricket as a much-changed New Zealand reduced England to 152-4 at tea on the first day of the second Test at Edgbaston on Thursday. England, who had been 72-0, lost three wickets for 13 runs shortly after lunch as they slumped to 85-3, with captain Joe Root out for just four. But opener Rory Burns, fresh from his hundred in the drawn first Test at Lord's last week, was still there on 73 not out.

Henry, one of six changes to New Zealand's side, deserved his interval figures of 2-36 in 13 overs.

The paceman, in for the veteran Tim Southee — one of three New Zealand players rested ahead of next week's inaugural World Test Championship final against India at Southampton — started the slump.

Dom Sibley tried to leave a Henry away-swing but was caught behind for 35. England's 72-1 became 73-2 when Zak Crawley's miserable run continued with a duck, the batsman caught in the slips after a loose shot off left-arm paceman Neil Wagner — the only surviving member of New Zealand's attack from Lord's.

— *AFP*

**Brief scores (Day 1, at Tea):** England 152/4 in 56 overs (Rory Burns 73 (batting), Dom Sibley 35, Matt Henry 2/36) vs New Zealand