

SHORT TAKES

Godown fire at Delhi's Tikri Kalan doused after 10 hrs

New Delhi: It took over 10 hours for more than 200 fire-fighters to douse the blaze at an open godown in Tikri Kalan area where a major fire broke out on Sunday night, Delhi Fire Service (DFS) officials said. However, no casualty was reported, they added. PVC materials in huge quantities were stocked up at the open godown and the fire spread at a faster pace due to high wind speed last night, a senior fire official said on Monday. "The fire was brought under control by 7 am. Twenty fire-tenders are still working at the spot where the cooling process is underway but the process will continue for longer period because of the nature of materials that were stored at the open godown," he said.

Since, the godown did not have a boundary wall, the risk of fire spreading to other adjoining areas were high. The fire was, however, brought under control in the late night operation. DFS Director Atul Garg said a call about the fire in PVC market was received around 8.35 pm on Sunday. The fire that started from the open godown had spread over a large area. More than 200 personnel and over 40 fire tenders were deployed to contain the fire, he said, adding the cause of the fire is yet not known. This is not the first time that a major fire has occurred at PVC market in Tikri Kalan area. On May 24, a medium category fire took place at the market and a total of 32 fire tenders were used to contain the massive fire that started from a plastic waste spread in an open area of approximately three acres, the DFS officials said.

6 dupe labourers promising Covid -ve report, arrested

New Delhi: Six men have been arrested in central Delhi for allegedly robbing five labourers coming from the Gulf countries on the pretext of providing a Covid-19 negative report for their train travel, police said on Monday. The accused have been identified as Vijay Bhan Pandey (41), Deepak (40), Sanjeev Kumar (41), Harish Singh (35), Raju Shah (46) and Sunder (37), they said. The accused told the victims that to travel by train, they need a fresh Covid-19 negative report and the one provided by the Delhi airport was not valid, police said. The victims were taken to an office at Paharganj where they were informed that their reports will be ready by next day. They were also told that their train to Kolkata will depart at 12:30 pm and they can collect their reports by 11:30 am from the office. Night accommodation at a hotel in Paharganj was also arranged for them, police said. On Saturday at 11:30 am, the victims reached the office where six persons were present. They were shown their reports and asked to pay ₹87 Saudi Riyal. When they refused to pay, one of the accused took out a country-made pistol, while another person took out a knife. The complainants were made hostages and beaten up by the other four accused persons, the officer said. The accused frisked the victims and robbed them of their ₹3,500 Saudi Riyal and ₹17,970 along with other valuables.

16-year-old girl attacked with axe, no arrests so far

New Delhi: Day prior to her birthday, a 16-year-old girl was attacked with an axe near her eyebrow on Monday in southwest Delhi, police said. According to police, a PCR call was received at South Campus police station regarding the incident at 1.20 pm near south Moti Bagh jhuggi. Police found that a 16-year-old girl was hit near her eyebrow with an axe by one Praveen alias Pradeep, in his early 20's. He is also the resident of the same area, police said. The girl was rushed to Safdarjung hospital where she is undergoing treatment. Preliminary investigation revealed that the accused was harassing the girl for days. However, the call details record will be checked, police said, adding that the motive will be cleared after the arrest of the accused.



People crowd at Janpath market during Covid-19 lockdown relaxation in New Delhi, Monday. The national capital recorded 45 coronavirus cases, lowest single-day rise in over a year, and three deaths in last 24 hours. — PTI

Truant monsoon gives Delhi yet another miss

■ Rainfall in city's periphery ■ Very peculiar situation: IMD

New Delhi, July 12: The Southwest monsoon rains reached the desert district of Jaisalmer and Ganganagar, its last outposts, on Monday, but gave Delhi and parts of Haryana a miss.

It rained in the periphery of Delhi — Aligarh in Uttar Pradesh and Karnal in Haryana — but clouds hovered over the national capital without giving any relief from the heat.

In 2002, the monsoon reached Delhi on July 19. This is the most-delayed monsoon in the city since then.

IMD director general Mrutyunjay Mohapatra said the Southwest monsoon clouds have been

hovering over the national capital since Saturday and even the wind pattern has changed and the easterlies have brought moist winds.

"But it has not rained so far. This is a very peculiar situation," he said.

Mr Mohapatra said the arrival of monsoon over Delhi will be declared as soon as it rains since the other conditions have been fulfilled.

"Monsoon is a large-scale phenomenon. When the monsoon circulation prevails over a region, it does not mean that it will rain in all parts at a time. Widespread rainfall

occurs when there is a low-pressure system or a cyclonic circulation. You get rain everywhere. There is no low-pressure system near Delhi or Northwest India at present," he said.

The IMD had earlier said monsoon would hit Delhi on June 15, which would have been 12 days early, but the wind system entered a "break" phase.

In early June, the Met office said the conditions will become favourable for the monsoon to advance to Delhi and other parts of Northwest India by July 7. Later, it said Delhi will get its first monsoon rains around July 10. — PTI

Delhi's Janpath market shut for Covid-19 norms violation

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 12

The Delhi government on Monday ordered the closure of Janpath market here for the violation of Covid protocols and for not following the guidelines issued by the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), according to an order.

"The Janpath market is, hereby, closed till further orders for violation of DDMA order and for not following Covid appropriate behaviour norms. The Director (Enforcement), NDMC and SHO, Connaught Place are hereby directed to enforce the order with immediate effect and submit a compliance report," the order said.

Delhi was under a lockdown from April 19 to May 30 during the second wave of the Covid pandemic. Markets were allowed to open from June 7 under a phased reopening plan of the city government. Markets in Lajpat Nagar, Laxmi Nagar, Kamla Nagar, Sarojini Nagar and parts of Sadar Bazar and Karol Bagh were among those shut in recent weeks by the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) for violation of Covid-19 norms.

■ Cops use water cannons to disperse crowd

City BJP workers try to cut water supply to Jain's house

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 12

The police used water cannons to disperse Delhi BJP leaders and workers as they tried to cut the water connection to Delhi Jal Board chairman (DJB) Satyendar Jain's house on Monday to protest the alleged poor water supply in the city.

The protesters also threatened to cut off the water supply to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's residence if the issue is not resolved within the next two days.

The protest came a day after Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) workers allegedly damaged the water connection to Delhi BJP chief Adesh Gupta's residence in Patel Nagar during a protest against the Haryana government for allegedly not providing the capital its share of water.

BJP leaders and workers gathered outside the DJB's zonal office in Civil Lines area on Monday. They alleged that people in the city were facing a crisis due to the "poor" water supply.

Addressing the protesters, Gupta said, "People in Delhi are craving for each drop of water. The ministers of the Kejriwal government will realise the problems being faced by the people when their water supply is cut off."

Later, the protesters reached the residence of



BJP workers being hit by water cannon during a protest over water crisis and an alleged scam outside Delhi Jal Board chairman Satyendar Jain's residence in New Delhi on Monday. — PTI

Jain, who lives in the same area, and tried to cut the water connection.

"We used a JCB machine to remove the waterline outside Jain's residence. We will cut the water connection to Kejriwal's residence, too, if the Delhi government fails to resolve the water crisis being faced by the people in the next two days," said Delhi BJP media head Navin Kumar.

"The police used water cannons and detained our men during the protest," he said.

On Saturday, DJB vice chairman Raghav Chadha alleged that Haryana was withholding part of Delhi's share of water. He said the DJB had moved the Supreme Court seeking

directions to Haryana to release the capital's legitimate share of water.

The DJB has been supplying 945 million gallons of water a day (MGD) to city residents this summer against the demand of 1,150 MGD, he said.

BJP MLA Vijender Gupta on Monday wrote to lieutenant governor Anil Bajjal demanding a CBI inquiry into the alleged scam involving procurement of 1,000 low floor buses by the Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC).

A three-member committee that probed the matter has recommended scrapping the tender of the AMC (annual maintenance contract) of buses finding various "lapses", he said.

Delhi man found dead on rail tracks hours after joining police inquiry

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 12

A 48-year-old man from Delhi was allegedly found dead on the railway tracks at the Old Faridabad station, hours after he was reported missing by his family members following a police station visit.

The deceased was identified as Yogesh Gupta, police said, adding no suicide note was found at the spot. According to the police Gupta had come to the Ambedkar Nagar police station on Sunday night to join the inquiry in connection with a case lodged against him in February this year.

The case was filed against him based on a complaint from Neeraj Pahadia, a resident of Madangir, who alleged that Gupta did not return him ₹12.23 lakh that he

Cab driver kills lover by slitting her throat in Dwarka, arrested

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 12

A 22-year-old cab driver was arrested on Monday for allegedly killing his lover by slitting her throat in Delhi's Dwarka area as he suspected her of being in a relationship with someone else, police said. The 40-year-old woman was killed at her home in Ambrahi village in Dwarka Sector 19 on Saturday, they said.

The accused, Krishan, was in a relationship

with the woman for the last five years. He was friends with the woman's brother-in-law and came in contact with her through him, the police said. The woman started distancing herself from Krishan after her husband passed away in February this year. She also ignored his phone calls and text messages. Due to this, Krishan started suspecting that she was in a relationship with someone else, they said.

had invested into a committee run by him, the police said. According to the complainant, Gupta was running the commit-

tee and he later closed it without informing the members, they added. The police said that the complainant and Gupta

had agreed to settle the matter amicably and again joined the inquiry.

Deputy commissioner of police (South) Atul Kumar Thakur said the complainant joined the inquiry on Sunday and Gupta was also called to the police station. After inquiry, Gupta left the police station at about 8 pm, the DCP said.

However, around 10.30 pm, Gupta's son visited the police station and informed that his father had not reached home and accordingly his missing report was registered, he added.

"It came to notice from GRP Faridabad that Gupta had allegedly committed suicide by jumping in front of a train at Old Faridabad Railway station.

"An inquiry into the matter is going on," the DCP said.

Water levels in Yamuna at lowest point in 56 years: Chadha

New Delhi, July 12: Delhi Jal Board (DJB) vice-chairman Raghav Chadha on Monday said the water levels of the Yamuna river at the Wazirabad barrage have hit the lowest point in 56 years as Haryana has withheld Delhi's legitimate share of water.

Chadha, who reviewed the situation at the Wazirabad pond, said Haryana has not been releasing at least 120 MGD (million gallons per day) of water that belongs to Delhi and this has led to a water crisis in the national capital.

"The water treatment plants in Delhi are operating at a reduced capacity because of a less discharge of raw water from Haryana. "With Haryana withholding Delhi's share of water, the Yamuna has dried up...so much that it can be used as a cricket or a hockey field. The water levels at the Wazirabad barrage have not been so low since 1965," Chadha said.

"Delhi is a landlocked city and relies on its neighbouring states for water supply. Uttar Pradesh sup-

plies to us a share of the Ganga water, Haryana of the Yamuna water, we get some from Punjab through (the) Bhakra Nangal (dam). The biggest share of this is supposed to be supplied by Haryana," he added.

Even if the water level in the Yamuna goes down by a foot, it causes havoc in the capital, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader said, adding that it has gone down by 7.5 feet as Haryana has withheld Delhi's share of water and the BJP-led Haryana government must return to

Delhi its rightful share of 120 MGD water. "With folded hands, I plead with the Haryana government, please give the citizens of Delhi their rightful share of water. The Supreme Court had ordered you to supply this water on legal grounds. You have to supply it on humanitarian grounds as well," he added.

The DJB moved the Supreme Court on Sunday seeking directions to Haryana to release the capital's legitimate share of water.

Delhi Jal Board (DJB) vice chairman Raghav Chadha, on Sunday, had said that the water utility has moved the Supreme Court, seeking directions to Haryana to release the national capital's legitimate share of water.

He claimed that Haryana has been withholding 120 million gallons of water a day (MGD) meant for Delhi and that the raw water being discharged into the Yamuna River by the neighbouring state is at an "all-time low."

When asked about the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government's claims, Mr Vij told reporters that "Kejriwal (the Delhi chief minister) has done PhD in speaking lies." "First, they (AAP government) presented false figures during the second wave to procure oxygen, much above the requirement, and now Kejriwal is doing the same on the water issue to hide his own failures. They are levelling baseless allegations," he said.

Haryana is continuously



Anil Vij

providing 1,049 cuses of water at Munak through its canal system to Delhi, Mr Vij said, and accused the AAP dispensation of making baseless allegations against Haryana "by misleading the people of Delhi to cover up their own mismanagement."

He admitted that there is a water shortage due to delayed monsoon, but asserted that in spite of this, Haryana is giving Delhi its due share. "Even if there is water shortage, Haryana is taking the brunt, but giving Delhi its full share," Mr Vij said.

The Haryana government had said on Sunday that there is less water in Yamuna due to delay in monsoon and the AAP dispensation's mismanagement has led to water shortage in the national capital.

NGT raps DJB for bad odour from Kondli sewage treatment plant

New Delhi, July 12: The National Green Tribunal on Monday rapped the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) for shirking its responsibility to control the "bad odour" emanating from a sewage treatment plant (STP) in Kondli here. A bench headed by NGT chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel noted that though it was earlier stated by DJB that odour control systems

will be installed, no such steps have been taken.

"We do not understand why DJB is now shirking its responsibility and taking a contra stand. This stand is against public interest and noncompliance of order of this tribunal," the bench said and directed the DJB to pay cost of ₹5 lakh per month from June 1, 2021 till compliance. — PTI

Judge recuses from Juhi Chawla's plea hearing, matter adjourned

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 12

The Delhi high court on Monday deferred hearing on the plea by Bollywood actress Juhi Chawla in connection with the dismissal of her lawsuit against 5G wireless network technology.

Justice Sanjeev Narula recused from hearing Bollywood actress Juhi Chawla's plea and directed that it be listed before another bench on July 29. "Subject to the order of the Chief Justice, list before another bench on July 29," the judge said.

Last week, Justice J R Midha had directed that Chawla's application, which seeks that her lawsuit against 5G rollout be declared "dis-



Juhi Chawla

missed", be placed before Justice Narula after the deposit of previously imposed Rs. 20 lakh costs.

Chawla's counsel argued that the plaintiff, which "never went up to the level of suit", could only be rejected or returned in terms of the Civil Procedure Code, and not dismissed.

The court had also granted a week's time for deposit of costs after Chawla decided to not

press the application for its waiver. Application for refund of court fees was also withdrawn by Chawla.

In June, the court had described the lawsuit by Chawla and two others against 5G rollout as "defective", "abuse of process of law" and filed for "gaining publicity" and dismissed it with costs.

Justice Midha said the plaintiff in which questions have been raised about health hazards due to the 5G technology was "not maintainable" and was "stuffed with unnecessary scandalous, frivolous, and vexatious averments" which are liable to be struck down.

The court said the suit filed by actress-environmentalist and others was to gain publicity.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

This is notified for the information of rail passengers that Railways have decided to restore the stoppage of following special trains at Dimapur Railway station w.e.f. 17.07.2021, which was earlier suspended on advice of the State Government of Nagaland. The timings of the these special trains will be as under:-

| Train No. & Name | Stoppage Provided | Arrival | Departure |
|---|-------------------|---------|-----------|
| 05909 Dibrugarh - Lalgah Jn. Special Express | Dimapur | 15:55 | 16:00 |
| 05910 Lalgah Jn. - Dibrugarh Special Express | Dimapur | 08:30 | 08:35 |
| 05933 New Tinsukia Jn. - Amritsar Jn. Special Express | Dimapur | 13:52 | 14:02 |
| 05934 Amritsar Jn. - New Tinsukia Jn. Special Express | Dimapur | 20:48 | 20:58 |
| 02503 Dibrugarh - New Delhi Rajdhani Special Express | Dimapur | 00:20 | 00:27 |
| 02504 New Delhi - Dibrugarh Rajdhani Special Express | Dimapur | 00:08 | 00:15 |
| 02423 Dibrugarh - New Delhi Rajdhani Special Express | Dimapur | 01:54 | 02:01 |
| 02424 New Delhi - Dibrugarh Rajdhani Special Express | Dimapur | 00:55 | 01:02 |
| 05903 Dibrugarh - Chandigarh Special Express | Dimapur | 13:52 | 13:57 |
| 05904 Chandigarh - Dibrugarh Special Express | Dimapur | 01:22 | 01:27 |

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

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SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

SHORT TAKES

1 more tests +ve for Zika virus in Kerala

Thiruvananthapuram: A 73-year-old woman tested positive for Zika virus in Kerala on Monday, taking the total number of infections in the state to 19. State health minister Veena George said the virus was detected in a sample sent to a Coimbatore-based laboratory by a private hospital where the woman was being treated. At the same time, five samples sent to the National Institute of Virology unit at Alappuzha tested negative for the virus, she said in a release. On Sunday, three people were found infected with Zika, following which the government arranged 2,100 test kits for testing facilities at four medical colleges in the state. The testing facilities have been arranged at Thiruvananthapuram, Thrissur and Kozhikode medical colleges and at NIV, Alappuzha. The minister on Sunday had said that hospitals had been instructed to test those patients, especially pregnant women, with fever, rashes and body pain.

Assam: Kidney trade racket busted, 2 held

Morigaon, Assam: An alleged illegal kidney trade racket was unearthed and a mother-son duo arrested in this connection from Dakshin Dharamtul village in Assam's Morigaon district, the police said on Monday. The woman and her accomplices had been reportedly running the illegal kidney trade, luring local people with a promise of paying ₹6 lakh if they donate their kidney to an organisation, claimed to be run by the woman, Morigaon SP Aparna Natarajan said. The police received a written complaint against the woman on Sunday from a person, whose kidney was allegedly extracted last month but only ₹50,000 paid to him, though he was promised a much larger amount. Based on this complaint, the woman and her son have been arrested on Sunday, Ms Natarajan said. — PTI

US gifts 5L Moderna vaccines to Bhutan

New Delhi: The US on Monday gifted five lakh doses of the Covid vaccine Moderna to India's close friend Bhutan, with newly-appointed US Chargé d'Affaires (CdA) Atul Keshap declaring in New Delhi that the move "demonstrates the US' leadership in the Indo-Pacific region and around the world". This comes even as the US military withdrawal from Afghanistan is seen to have thrown that nation into chaos. The move by the Americans to gift lakhs of doses of vaccines to Bhutan is being seen as significant, given that India is now focused on vaccinating its own huge population and also in the backdrop of China wooing some of India's other neighbours with offers of supplying the Chinese vaccines.

INDIAN STAFF MAY BE TARGETED BY TALIBAN: RAW

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 12

Indian assets and personnel working in Afghanistan could be targeted by the Taliban in the coming days and thus need to be put on high alert "with strict security protocols." This specific advisory has been given by country's premiere external intelligence agency, Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), which is closely monitoring the "evolving" security situation in Afghanistan. Sources said there was considerable concern among New Delhi's security and intelligence top brass over increased Taliban activities as they feel this could adversely impact Indian assets there in the coming days. The RAW advisory specifically mentions that "Indians were at a high risk of kidnapping by terrorist groups, particularly Taliban, as they would use this to seek ransom as they are in desperate need to generate financial resources. So Indians should not travel out of safe zone." "With the US pulling out of Afghanistan, the Taliban will start looking for soft targets to foment further trouble and India along with some other nations could be potential targets.

No talks on C'garh CM rotation: Cong

'No informal or formal pact to share post between Baghel, state health minister for two-and-half yrs'

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY
RAIPUR, JULY 12

AICC general secretary in-charge of Chhattisgarh P.L. Puniya on Monday rubbished the talks of any "understanding on rotation of chief minister" in the state. Mr Puniya "made it clear" that there was never any "informal or formal agreement" to share the post of chief minister in Chhattisgarh between the incumbent CM Bhupesh Baghel and state

health minister T.S. Singhdeo for two-and-half years.

Mr Singhdeo's loyalists claimed that the Congress leadership had agreed to an arrangement of sharing of CM's post between the two leaders after the party stormed to power in Chhattisgarh in the 2018 Assembly polls.

"There was absolutely no such agreement. Such talks are baseless," Mr Puniya told this newspaper from Delhi on phone.

Mr Baghel, who returned to Raipur after his two-



Bhupesh Baghel



T.S. Singhdeo

day-visit to Himachal and Delhi on Sunday evening, also denied any such arrangement by the party leadership.

"I repeatedly tell you that there was no such arrangement. Such understandings are usu-

ally struck in a coalition government. Our government is in three-fourth majority here. Hence, there was no need for such agreement," he told reporters at the airport with Mr Singhdeo by his side listening.

Incidentally, this was the first time since the Congress formed the government in Chhattisgarh two-and-half years ago the two "rival" leaders were seen travelling in the same flight to return to Raipur from Delhi.

Mr Baghel met the

bereaved family members of former Himachal CM late Virabhadra Singh during his visit to the state on Saturday.

He later visited 10, Janpath in Delhi to meet Congress leaders Priyanka Gandhi and K.C. Venugopal on Sunday. He also visited Mr Puniya in Delhi on Saturday night.

Mr Baghel described the talks on understanding on rotation of CM as "rumours" being spread by the Opposition BJP to create instability in his government.

■ 'History suggest 3rd wave inevitable, imminent; pilgrimage, tourist travel can wait'

IMA urges states to check huge crowds

New Delhi, July 12: The IMA expressed concern on Monday over governments and people being complacent and engaging in mass gatherings without following Covid-19 protocols, saying these events are potential super spreaders for a third wave of the pandemic.

Stressing that tourist bonanza, pilgrimage travel, religious fervour are needed, but can wait for a few more months, the Indian Medical Association (IMA), in a statement, said global evidence and the history of any pandemic suggest that "the third wave is inevitable and imminent".

"However, it is painful to note that in this crucial time, when everyone needs to work for the mitigation of the third wave, in many parts of the country, both governments and the public are complacent and engaged in mass gatherings without following Covid protocols. Tourist bonanza, pilgrimage travel, religious fervour, all are needed, but can wait for a few more months."

"Opening up these rituals and enabling people without vaccination to go scot-free in these mass gatherings are potential super spreaders for the Covid third wave," the IMA said.

The statement by the doctors' comes on a day when the annual Rath Yatra began in Puri and amid talks of allowing the "Kanwar Yatra" in Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

The Indian Medical Association appealed to all the states to control mass gatherings. — PTI



Priests carry the idols of Lord Jagannath, Balabhadra and goddess Subhadra during the Rath Yatra festival in Kolkata on Monday. — PRITAM BANDYOPADHYAY

Rath Yatra starts in Puri sans devotees, priests pull chariots

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO
PURI, JULY 12

The sparkling spectacle of Lord Jagannath's annual nine-day Rath Yatra festival began on Monday on a colourful note, despite the absence of lakhs of devotees who throng the pilgrim city during this period every year to participate in the grand event.

As the devotees stayed away due to Covid-19 restrictions and watched the festival on television screens for the second year in a row, hundreds of servitors of Srimandir, the abode of Lord Jagannath, pulled the chariots of the deities.

All the servitors had

undergone strict Covid-19 tests to check infection in the city.

"We cannot express the pain in our heart as the Covid-19 situation keeps lakhs of devotees away from Lord Jagannath. The Rath Yatra is meant for devotees who gather here to see the deities on the chariots with a belief that such a darshan will pave the way for Moksha or liberation of soul from rebirth. It is also meant for people of other sects and faiths who on normal days do not have access to Srimandir for darshan. They come here to see the deities but also pull the chariots," said Pandit Suryanarayan Rath Sharma, a priest at

Srimandir and Jagannath cult researcher.

The process of the yatra began with the priests conducting all the morning rituals after which Lord Jagannath and two his siblings — elder brother Lord Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra — were led on a procession to the chariots amidst playing of drums cymbals.

Earlier in the morning, President Ram Nath Kovind, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Odisha chief minister Naveen Patnaik extended warm greetings to the people of the country, seeking blessings of the Holy Trinity for healthy and prosperous life to all.

Opp. targets UP over draft population bill

State govt should tell how many legitimate & illegitimate children its ministers have: Khurshid

Lucknow, July 12: Opposition parties have hit out at the Uttar Pradesh government over the proposed draft bill on population control, with the SP terming it as an "election propaganda" while a Congress leader asked the state government to tell how many "legitimate and illegitimate children" its ministers have. The remarks come a day after the UP Population Policy 2021-2030 was unveiled by CM Yogi Adityanath to steady the

growing population in the state and reduce maternal and infant deaths in a time-bound manner.

The 40-page policy document mentions that "attempts would be made to ensure there is a population balance among various communities in the state. Extensive campaigns would be run in communities, groups, and geographical areas where fertility rates were higher".

A draft of the UP population control bill has been uploaded on the

state law commission website. Terming the bill as a part of the BJP's "election propaganda" ahead of the Assembly polls, SP MP from Sambhal, Shaqfiqur Rahman Barq, said the state government should ban marriages if it wants to stabilise rising population.

"It (draft bill) is an electoral propaganda. They (BJP) look at everything from a political angle. They just want to win elections and don't take any decision in the inter-

est of the people. Since Assembly election is coming, they are concerned about it. By the grace of Allah, we will not let them win," Mr Barq said on Sunday evening.

In Farukhabad, Congress leader Salman Khurshid said, "Before making the law government should tell how many legitimate and illegitimate children its ministers have."

"Politicians should declare how many children they have. I will also

declare how many I have and then it should be discussed," he told reporters on Sunday.

When asked to elaborate on his statement on legitimate and illegitimate children, he said, "Those who consider it wrong should talk to me."

Leader of the Opposition in the state Assembly Ram Govind Chowdury charged that the state government had failed on all fronts be it law and order or providing employment. — PTI

Priyanka to visit Lucknow July 14, start 'Mission UP'

New Delhi, July 12: Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra will be on a visit to Lucknow from July 14 to hold meetings with party functionaries of the state aimed at energising the party cadre and preparing the organisation for a pitched electoral battle against the BJP, sources said on Monday.

Ahead of her visit to Lucknow, Ms Vadra on Monday brainstormed with senior Congress leaders from UP on the preparations for the next year's Assembly polls. During the meeting, the party resolved to hit the streets against the BJP government over issues such as unemployment. — PTI

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| Name of work with its location | A) Supply & maintenance of indoor well developed ornamental potted plants, ht. 2' to 5' on hire basis in HQ, Office Baroda House & DRM Office New Delhi in the s/o SSE/Hort./BH & NDLS under ADEN/Hort./NDLS. B) Supply & maintenance of indoor well developed ornamental potted plants, ht. 2' to 5' on hire basis in various flats/bungalows in the s/o JE/HORT./SOJ & SSE/HORT/SPM under ADEN/HORT./NDLS. Similar Nature of Work: Supply, Installation and maintenance of indoor/outdoor well developed ornamental potted plants. | | |
| Approx. Cost of work | A) 2548000.00 B) 5822880.00 | | |
| Completion period of work | A) 14 Months B) 24 Months | | |
| Date and time for Submission of tender and opening of tender | Upto 15.00 hrs on 03.08.2021 Opening of tender at 15.00 hrs. On 03.08.2021 | | |
| Website particulars notice board location complete details of tender can be seen and address of the office from where the tender form can be purchased etc. | Above tender available on IREPS site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in | | |
| 128-W/269/O.E.T.-21-22-WE-NIT-04 A & B Dated : 08.07.2021 | | 1546/2021 Serving Customers With A Smile | |

SPECIAL TRAIN

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

04737/04738 Bhiwani Jn. - Tilak Bridge - Bhiwani Jn. Express Special (Daily)

| TRAIN NO. 04737 | | STATIONS | TRAIN NO. 04738 | |
|-----------------|-------|--------------|-----------------|-------|
| ARR. | DEP. | | ARR. | DEP. |
| — | 05:00 | Bhiwani Jn. | 22:30 | — |
| 08:41 | — | Tilak Bridge | — | 18:35 |

Days of Run : 04737 Ex Bhiwani Jn. (Daily) from 16.07.2021 to till further advice and 04738 Tilak Bridge (Daily) from 16.07.2021 to till further advice

Stoppages: Bhiwani City, Bamla, Kharak, Kalanaur Kalan, Lahli, Rohtak Jn., Asthal Bohar Jn., Kharawar, Ismaila Haryana, Sampla, Rohad Nagar, Asaudah, Bahadur Garh, Ghevara, Mundka, Nangloi, Mangolpuri, Shakurbasti, Daya Basti, Vivekanand Puri Halt, Delhi Kishan Ganj, Delhi Sadar Bazar, New Delhi and Shivaji Bridge stations.

Note: The above Special Train will run with full reserved Accommodation

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 or NTES App.

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

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1552/2021

| NORTHERN RAILWAY | |
|--|---|
| AUCTION NOTICE | |
| Auction of Lot No. 1, KM.1298/18-20 TO 1320/18-20, 113 numbers dangerous trees under Assistant Divisional Engineer/Northern Railway Bareilly will be auctioned in the office of Assistant Divisional Engineer/Northern Railway Bareilly. All the interested bidders are invited to participate in this auction. Auction place:- Office of the Assistant Divisional Engineer/Northern Railway/ Bareilly on date :- 05.08.2021 at 11:00AM. | |
| 1 | All the bidders will deposit cash Rs 100/- in the office of Assistant Divisional Engineer/Northern Railway/Bareilly which will not be refunded and shall also deposit Rs. 8000/- in favor of Sr. Divisional Finance Manager Northern Railway Moradabad as a Demand Draft of SBI or Other Nationalized Bank. |
| 2 | All the bidders who will take part in the auction will also have proper knowledge of Auction rules and others allowances. |
| 3 | Successful bidders will deposit the Demand Draft of SBI or Other Nationalized Bank in favour of Sr. DFM/MB or station earning in cash on same day with following rate:- |
| a | 10% amount of selling price or minimum amount Rs. 25,000/- whichever is maximum on purchase of more than Rs. 1,00,000/- |
| b | Balance amount will be deposited within 10 days including the date of auction. |
| c | GST @ 18 % will be deposited on total cost within 10 days including the date of auction. |
| 4 | The work should be completed within 60 days including date of auction. |
| 5 | Railway has right to close the work any time. In this situation the balance amount will be returned without interest. |
| 6 | Complete Details of tree with locations will be available in the Divisional Office Moradabad. |
| 7 | Bidders are requested to quote their rates according to the tree locations. |
| 8 | Trees will be delivered and handed over in the presence of SSE/works ISA and RPF. |
| 9 | If the balance amount is not deposited within 10 days including the date of auction, then initial deposited amount will be forfeited. |
| 10 | Bidders will not make any Kutchra / Pakka construction in the land of Railway. |
| 11 | Bid will not be quoted below the base price. |
| 12 | Demand draft will be deposited in the office of Assistant Divisional Engineer/Northern Railway/ Bareilly from 09.00 am to 10.30 AM. After that no demand draft will be accepted. |
| No.LMC/TRE/BE/2020 Dt. 12.07.2021 1557/2021 | |
| SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE | |

EXTENSION OF PERIODICITY OF SPECIAL EXPRESS TRAINS

This is notified for the information of rail passengers that Railways have decided to extend the periodicity of the run of following Summer Special Express Trains as under:-

| Train No. & Name | Day of Run | Notified earlier up to | Extended Upto |
|---|------------|------------------------|---|
| 03435 Malda Town - Anand Vihar Terminal Special Express | Monday | 26.07.2021 | 02, 09, 16, 23, 30.08.2021, 06, 13, 20 & 27.09.2021 |
| 03436 Anand Vihar Terminal - Malda Town Special Express | Tuesday | 27.07.2021 | 03, 10, 17, 24, 31.08.2021, 07, 14, 21 & 28.09.2021 |

These Special Trains will be having fully Reserved Service.

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

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

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SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

SHORT TAKES

SC CANCELS BAIL TO ACCUSED IN HONOUR KILLING

PARMOD KUMAR
NEW DELHI, JULY 12

The Supreme Court on Monday cancelled the bail granted by the Rajasthan high court to an accused in an honour killing case where the accused had killed his brother-in-law in the presence of his (deceased) pregnant wife. A Kerala youth, Amit Nair was shot dead in 2017 for marrying one Mamta, a Jaipur-based woman of another caste. Mamta was six-month pregnant when her husband Amit Nair was killed by her own brother Mukesh Choudhary. A bench headed by Chief Justice N.V. Ramana also comprising Justice A.S. Bopanna, while setting aside the order of the Rajasthan high court which granted bail to the accused, directed him to surrender. "In the above background, the opinion passed by the high court is not sustainable and is accordingly set aside. The bail granted is cancelled. We direct the respondent to surrender before the district judge. Taking into nature of the offence, we allow the appeal" the court said in its order cancelling bail. Mamta Nair, wife of the deceased, had approached the SC challenging high court order of granting bail to her brother, who is accused of conspiring to murder her husband. Her brother was released on bail December 2020. Mamta said her brother Mukesh Choudhary after getting bail tried to intimidate her, directly and indirectly through relatives and others.

JAISHANKAR TO VISIT TAJIKISTAN FOR SCO MEET

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 12

With Afghanistan descending into chaos and anarchy following the withdrawal of US troops, India on Monday said external affairs minister S. Jaishankar would visit Tajikistan on July 13-14 to take part in the meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Council of Foreign Ministers and would also attend the SCO Contact Group on Afghanistan that will meet on July 14 with the participation of the Afghan government. As reported by this newspaper last week, the meeting is also expected to be attended by Pakistani foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi as well. Both neighbours along with Russia, China, and most of the Central Asian Republics are members of the SCO. The meetings in Dushanbe are expected to discuss the fluid situation in Afghanistan. In a statement, the MEA said, "The meeting will discuss the achievements of the organisation as it celebrates the 20th anniversary of its formation in this year."

VHP asks UP govt to remove 1-child norm

Continued from Page 1

punishing the child instead of the parents," Mr Kumar added. He also suggested to the UPSC to reconsider the objective of the bill that seeks to bring down the total fertility rate (TFR) in Uttar Pradesh to 1.7 within a certain time frame.

Placing the draft bill in the public domain recently, the UPSC has invited suggestions from people.

In his suggestions, the VHP working president said a two-child policy is considered desirable for achieving population stability.

The population in a society stabilises when the average number of children born to a woman in her reproductive life is marginally above two, he said.

"This happens when the TFR is 2.1. At this level of TFR, on an average, there are two children born to replace the two parents and the additional 0.1 child provides for the possibility of some children dying before reaching the reproductive age and similar other wastage," Mr Kumar added.

In a contracting population, he said the ratio between the working-age population and the dependent population gets disrupted.

In an extreme case, the one-

child policy would lead to a situation where there is only one working-age adult to look after two parents and four grandparents, he said.

China had adopted the one-child policy in 1980, but had to withdraw it within three decades to get over such a situation, the VHP leader said.

He added that the imbalance between different communities has been "growing" in several states.

"It is becoming alarming in states like Assam and Kerala, where the overall growth of population has declined. In both these states, the TFR of Hindus has declined far below the replacement rate of 2.1, but that of Muslims is 3.16 in Assam and 2.33 in Kerala," Mr Kumar said.

In these two states, one of the communities has thus entered the contraction phase while the other is "still expanding", he added.

"Uttar Pradesh should avoid getting into that situation," the VHP leader said, adding that the one-child policy in the state "is likely to lead to furthering of the imbalance between different communities because they are known to respond differently to the incentives and disincentives related to family planning and contraception".

— PTI

Assam CM imposes total ban on cow transportation outside state

Himanta tables Assam Cattle Preservation Bill ■ N-E states raise concern

MANOJ ANAND
GUWAHATI, JULY 12

Ignoring the concern of other Northeast states, Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday tabled the Assam Cattle Preservation Bill 2021 in the state Assembly which will be passed during the ensuing Budget Session.

The state Cabinet had approved the bill which "envisages imposition of complete ban on transport of cattle outside the state". The proposed bill of the Assam government is aimed at bringing an end to multi-crore rupees trade of illegal cattle smuggling to Bangladesh.

The proposed legislation in Assam will replace the Assam Cattle Preservation Act, 1950.

Under the current law, the consumption of beef



THE PROPOSED bill of the Assam government is aimed at bringing an end to multi-crore rupees trade of illegal cattle smuggling to

is not illegal and slaughter of cattle aged more than 14 years is allowed on the direction of the local veterinary officer.

However, the move of the Assam government to introduce the bill, which is also defined as "cow protection bill" by the BJP has raised concern in other Northeast states, where beef is consumed.

Meghalaya chief minister Conrad Sangma said that if the transport of cattle to his state is affected by Assam's proposed cattle protection law, he would take up the matter with the neighbouring state and the Central government.

"We have to examine the law after Assam passes and implements it. We have to see the terms and conditions and how they plan to implement it. It would not be correct for me to comment more without seeing the content of the bill," he told reporters a day before in Shillong.

"However, if there is an issue that will hamper the economy of Meghalaya, the matter will be taken up with the Assam government as well as the Union government," he added.

Beef is popular in Meghalaya and cattle from different parts of the country reach the state through Assam. In fact, all

supplies to the Northeast states are routed through Assam only.

"We have had initial communication with states that provide us with cattle like West Bengal, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Uttar Pradesh. Under normal circumstances, the transport of cattle from these states to Meghalaya through Assam should not get hampered. We will take all steps to ensure that it does not get hampered by Assam's new law," Mr Sangma said.

The Assam government has been determined to introduce the bill as the issue was flagged in the Assam governor Jagdish Mukhi's address to the state Assembly in which he said, "We will adopt a zero-tolerance policy and enforce stringent punishment for the offenders."



Flood water surges through a street amid heavy rain after a cloudburst at Mcleodganj, near Dharamshala, on Monday.

NIA searches continue in Kashmir, 3 more detained

YUSUF JAMEEL
SRINAGAR, JULY 12

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Monday detained three more persons during fresh raids carried out by its sleuths in J&K's southern Anantnag district in connection with a "jihadi terrorism" case involving cadres of Islamic State or ISIS. It has also formally arrested three other persons for allegedly being active ISIS cadres.

The NIA and J&K police sources said that after searching a private house in Sofi Mohalla locality of Anantnag's Achabal area owned by one Ghulam Nabi Sofi, the sleuths took his two sons — Aqib Ahmed alias Nadim and Arif Muhammad — into

custody. Another person identified as Arif Hussain Qadiri was detained for questioning following a raid at a private printing press in the neighbouring Ganjiwara area. A laptop in his use was also seized, the sources said.

The NIA had on Sunday conducted raids at seven locations in capital Srinagar and Anantnag and detained six persons including the head of an Islamic seminary for questioning in connection with the case registered by it in New Delhi in June this year under various sections of the IPC and Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967.

The case, it claimed, pertains to a "conspiracy of the ISIS (Islamic State) to radicalize and recruit impressionable youth in

the country to wage violent jihad against the Indian state".

The agency in a statement issued on Monday said that after preliminary investigations three persons Umar Nisar, Tanveer Ahmad Bhat and Rameez Ahmad Lone-all from Anantnag-have been arrested formally for being active ISIS cadres.

The "ISIS voice of Hind case", was registered by it in New Delhi under sections 124A, 153A, and 153 B of IPC and Sections 17, 18, 18B, 38, 39 and 40 of UAPA, 1967 on June 29 "in connection with the conspiracy of the proscribed militant organisation ISIS to radicalise and recruit impressionable youth in India to wage violent jihad against the Indian state".

■ Superstar says no intention to join politics in future

Rajini disbands 'Mandram' designed for political entry

Chennai, July 12: Top star Rajinikanth on Monday announced disbanding the Rajini Makkal Mandram, launched for his political entry and reiterated that he has no intention of involving himself in politics in future.

Hours after he flagged questions among fans and Mandram functionaries as to "whether or not I am going to come to politics in future", the actor, following discussions with office-bearers said he would not join politics.

Due to circumstances, "what we thought did not materialise", he said apparently referring to his previously proposed political entry which he subsequently dropped.

"I have no intention of involving myself in politics in future," he asserted in a statement.

Hence the RMM is disbanded and the func-



tionaries would as before work under the Rajinikanth Fans Forum (Rajinikanth Rasigam Narpani Mandram) which is aimed at carrying out activities for people's welfare, he said.

After he announced last year that he would not take the political plunge, it was his duty to clarify on the status of the Mandram which was created as a precursor body to facilitate the launch of a political party, he added.

The fans forum, an apolitical welfare body, was

converted into RMM and this new outfit was launched in 2018.

Office-bearers were appointed in both districts and at the state-level while separate wings were also formed to support the launch of political party.

Before meeting the functionaries at a marriage hall owned by him, the actor, speaking to reporters referred to questions being raised on Mandram and whether or not he would be in politics, which led to a flutter of excitement among his fans till he came out with a statement reiterating his no to politics stand.

While fans were briefly excited, others on social media wondered why the actor was revisiting this matter as he had himself, last year, given a quietus to the over two-decade old political entry debate.

— PTI

New HC judge will hear Didi poll plea

RAJIB CHOWDHURI
KOLKATA, JULY 12

Acting Chief Justice of the Calcutta high court Rajesh Bindal on Monday reassigned West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee's election petition to a lady judge, Justice Shampa Sarkar, for its hearing after Justice Kausik Chanda recused himself last week from hearing the TMC supreme's plea following her high voltage allegations against him of bias to the BJP.

Unlike Justice Chanda, who is an additional judge, Justice Sarkar is a permanent judge against whom allegations of political biasness have not surfaced so far.

In her letter to the acting CJ earlier, the CM, apart from her complaint of political bias, had also



objected to the assignment of her election petition to an additional judge which later left Justice Chanda anguished.

Ms Banerjee's election petition, challenging her defeat to Suwendu Adhikari of the BJP at Nandigram in the recently concluded Assambyl polls, may come up for hearing before Justice Sarkar this week.

While recusing himself from the prayer of the TMC chief on July 7 Justice Chanda however had slapped a fine of Rs 5 lakh on her for defaming him as a "BJP-man." Though Ms Banerjee's election agent, Abu Sufiyan, initially declared that the penalty would be challenged legally, no such move followed.

Shah will do 'good job' as cooperation minister: Sena

Mumbai, July 12: The Shiv Sena on Monday welcomed the Centre's decision to create the cooperation ministry, saying Union home minister Amit Shah, who has been given the additional charge of the new portfolio, will do a "good job" as he had been part of the cooperative movement in Gujarat.

An editorial in the party mouthpiece *Saamana* also said that there is not much difference in the field of politics and the cooperative sector, and that "everything happens as per convenience".

Notably, NCP chief Sharad Pawar on Sunday said the Centre cannot interfere in the state's cooperative sector.

If Mr Shah has decided to develop and expand the cooperative sector then there is no need to be disturbed. Attempts are being made to create fear that Mr Shah will dig out old cases of leaders of the Congress and NCP and launch inquiries and form a government in the state through 'cooperation'. However, saying so is like defaming Mr Shah," the editorial said. — PTI

'15 JMB terrorists entered India, moved to Kashmir, other states'

Kolkata, July 12: At least 15 neo Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) operatives have entered West Bengal from the neighbouring country earlier this year and 10 of them moved to various parts of India including Jammu and Kashmir, an officer of the Kolkata police's special task force (STF) said on Monday.

The remaining five had stayed back in West Bengal and three of them, who are Bangladeshi nationals, were arrested from south Kolkata's Haridevur area on Sunday.

It was revealed during

interrogation of the three persons that 10 suspected JMB operatives have gone to Odisha, Bihar and Jammu and Kashmir, the IPS officer said.

The other two, who had stayed back in the state, were Sheikh Sakil and Salim Munshi, and the STF is looking for them.

"Sakil had helped them (the three others) in preparing fake Aadhaar cards which they had used to get accommodation on rent in Haridevur. The three came to India following the instructions of senior JMB leader Al Ameen," he said. — PTI



Dark clouds hover over the Golden Temple in Amritsar on Monday.

— PTI

Mekedatu row: TN cries 'conspiracy' over water flow

Chennai/Bengaluru, July 12: The row over the Mekedatu dam escalated on Monday, with Tamil Nadu alleging a "conspiracy" to hinder water from river Cauvery while upper riparian state Karnataka reaffirmed its determination to go ahead with the balancing reservoir project.

DMK-ruled Tamil Nadu sought to put up a united front on the issue, as Chief Minister MK Stalin convened an all party meeting which resolved no con-

struction can be taken up in Mekedatu without the prior consent of lower riparian states.

It decided to convey the same, among others, to the Centre.

Karnataka home minister Basavaraj Bommai reaffirmed that the state will not stop the Mekedatu drinking water project across Cauvery river, with the opposition Congress stating it would stand with the government if it performs the ground-break ceremony.

Addressing the all-party meeting, attended among others by the AIADMK, Congress and BJP, Stalin alleged the Mekedatu dam initiative was a "conspiracy" to hinder water flow to Tamil Nadu.

The meeting condemned attempts by Karnataka to build the dam and urged the Union government to not accord sanction for the proposal.

Karnataka's claim that the proposed dam was aimed at meeting the drinking water needs of

Bengaluru city and for electricity generation is "not true and it is to deceive us", he said, adding Cauvery is a livelihood right for Tamil Nadu. "Not only Karnataka, Tamil Nadu also has full right on Cauvery river," he said.

The Mekedatu dam initiative is a "conspiracy" to block flow of water to Tamil Nadu from catchment areas below Kabini, Krishnarajasagar, sub-basins of rivers Shimsha, Arkavathi, Suvarnavathy

and other small rivers, Mr Stalin alleged.

Hours after the all-party meet in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka home minister Bommai asserted his state would go ahead with the project.

"We have already submitted the detailed project report to the Central Water Commission. This project is related to utilising the additional water for drinking purpose."

"Karnataka has every right to commission this project," he said. — PTI

THE ASIAN AGE

13 JULY 2021

Make space accessible to all as a new age dawns

The safe conduct of a flight for space tourists, including Virgin Galactic boss Richard Branson, to the edge of space and back is another triumph of the spirit of human endeavour. This opens up an opportunity for ordinary people who are not trained astronauts to be able to handle microgravity, high G forces and Mach 3 speeds in the sky. They can travel in a capsule while detached from the mother aeroplane to be fired by a hybrid rocket engine to 86 km above the earth in order just to gaze at our home planet and its curvature and then glide back to the ground.

Man has always been fascinated by heights, be it Mount Everest or flying at altitude and much like Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay, who were the first to climb to the roof of the world. Virgin's septuagenarian Branson will be best remembered for beating the world's richest man Jeff Bezos by nine days to go to space first. After spaceship *VSS Unity's* flight we may be

It is possible to be cynical about rich patrons paying up to ₹1.82 crore for a ticket for about three minutes of weightlessness before floating back to their seats near the threshold of space.

limits of wondrous possibilities without science and engineering being harnessed with such precision to satisfy man's unquenchable curiosity and test the limits of ingenuity.

The perils of technology going wrong cannot, however, be discounted as Virgin's own experience portrayed when it lost a flight with the plane breaking apart during a test flight with disastrous consequences in 2014, leaving at least one co-pilot dead. *The Unity's* "feathering" twin tails have been designed to swing upwards at 60 degrees to create drag and make the capsule drift down to Earth. Branson joked that like James Bond he had a "licence to thrill", which might be true considering the adventurous life he has led. It is in advancing this dawn of space tourism that he has contributed most to the human race.

Aeronautical engineer and researcher Sirisha Bandla, with roots in Andhra's Guntur, is on the pioneering flight on merits whereas 600 budding space tourists have been queuing up with tickets for seven years for the space experience. There is more to come from the world's tech billionaires of the new economy as Bezos' Blue Origin intends sending space tourists beyond the Karman line, which is said to lie 100 km above Earth and Elon Musk's SpaceX which will keep tourists in space for days but at ticket prices running into millions of dollars. Bezos and Musk's flights will be based on space capsules being lifted by rockets unlike Virgin's reusable space plane.

Tennis greatness personified

Chasing Grand Slam tennis titles is his calling in life. The Serbian star Novak Djokovic is already being spoken of as the greatest in tennis history, the world's best ever hard court player with an envious Wimbledon record of six golden trophies on grass and a couple of French Opens. With 20 Grand Slam titles, he is abreast of his contemporary greats Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal, whose votaries rate them as supreme all-time greats. At 34, age favours Djokovic, and he is feeding his insatiable hunger in his golden year of 2021 when a US Open triumph and a calendar slam can put him on an even higher pedestal than yesteryear greats Don Budge and Rod Laver.

A curious aspect of Djokovic's all-court game is he can suffer extreme anxiety as the weight of history seems to sit on his shoulders. He lost the opening set to a rising grass court star in the Italian Matteo Berrettini, who was adopted by the Wimbledon crowd with a strong anti-Djokovic bias. But the Serb, who as a kid was whisked away to Germany when bombs were falling round their home, is not the one to try and win popularity contests. His extraordinary skills come wrapped in a unique understanding that his best game will come together when he most needs it. Returning Berrettini's 240 kmph serves is itself a challenge but Djokovic broke his serve six times to show who is the champion.

The absence of Naomi Osaka had thrown open the distaff side of the draw. Emerging champion with a powerful game backed by craftiness and a spirit of competition to match was the Australian Ashleigh Barty, who as a woman of indigenous heritage from the Ngaragu tribe, wins one for diversity. To make it even more memorable, Barty wore a replica of Evonne Goolagong's dress from the 1980 final. The two native Aussies are not just title winners in a sport dominated by whites. There were slices of history too in young Samir Banerjee of USA, born to Indian parents, winning the boys title in just his second attempt at a major tournament and Marija Cicack becoming the first woman in 144 years to officiate in a men's singles final.

THE ASIAN AGE

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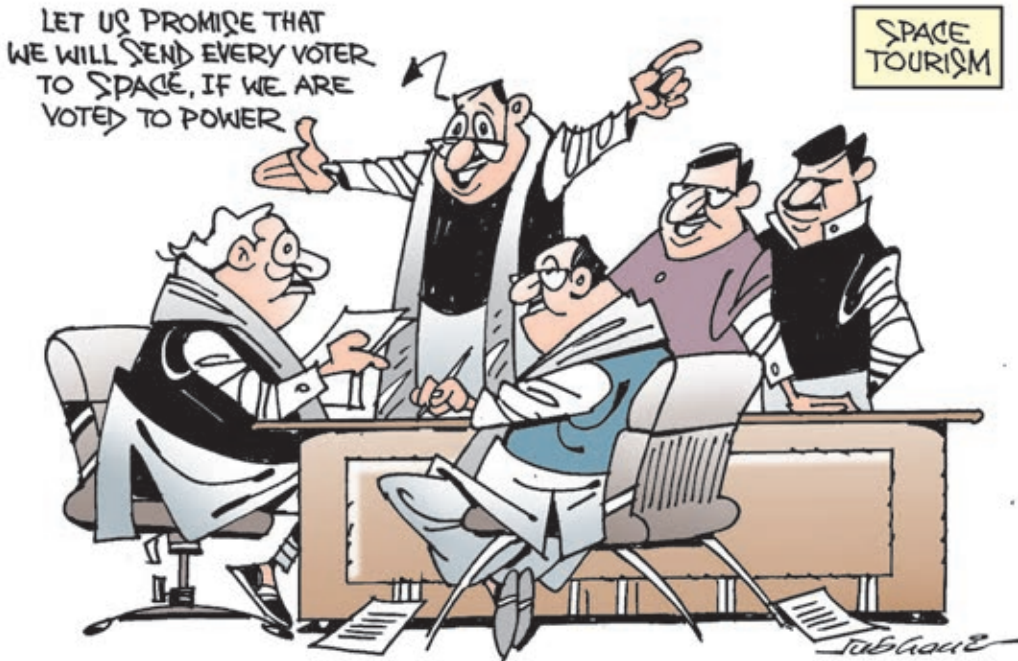
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Subhani



Liberty and rights for all: Myth of the Magna Carta



Mohan Guruswamy

We now take our liberties and rights for granted, and the way of life it guarantees us as inherent. But what we now have has come after a long process of evolution, and many a time they flowed out of something else quite unintended. The Magna Carta is a case in point. In June, the entire English-speaking world celebrated the 806th anniversary of the Magna Carta, or Great Charter, that is synonymous with the fundamental rights and rule of law which are considered the cornerstones of modern democracy. Much of the world now believes that the Magna Carta came out of an eruption of a long-suppressed yearning among the common people for protection against the caprices of the monarch and the nobility. But it is not so.

It came out of an intractable struggle between 40 barons and their King, England's King John had emptied the royal treasuries in a fruitless war with France, and the barons were no longer willing to meet his demands for higher taxes. The consequence was the Magna Carta to protect the barons from the King's demands.

The demand to be judged by their peers was another protection. It was not meant for the ordinary people, but only for the barons. Thus, the Magna Carta was not quite a grand demand for equality, the basic freedoms and rule of law but just a narrow demand for restricting the ruler's powers to ring fence the interests of the elite.

But the myth of the Magna Carta has endured, and it is often invoked whenever and

wherever people struggled against injustice and freedom.

Mahatma Gandhi invoked it in South Africa when he fought for racial equality, and emancipators and freedom fighters like Nelson Mandela, Jawaharlal Nehru, Ho Chi Minh, Fidel Castro and Martin Luther King Jr have invoked it when they were being tried for sedition by oppressive rulers. Like those English barons, they too were arguing for limiting the oppressive and unjust powers of oppressive regimes, but now not just for themselves and their peers, but for all their fellow citizens. The story of modern democracy is about the long journey from the rights of a few to the rights of all.

Another myth that endures is that the twin notions of "democracy" and "the rule of law" somehow originated with the Magna Carta and its acceptance. The fact is that the King rejected the Magna Carta soon after it was presented to him. But King John avoided the consequences of the barons' indignation by helpfully dying and thereby perpetuating the myth.

The first democracies long preceded the Magna Carta of 1215. Even as early as the sixth century BC, several "independent republics" existed in India as "sanghas" and "ganas". The main characteristics of these sanghas and ganas were a raja, elected or hereditary, and a deliberative assembly. These assemblies met regularly and passed laws pertaining to finances, administration and justice. The raja and other officials obeyed the decisions of these assemblies. While these assemblies were mostly comprised of the nobility and

landowners, in some cases they included all free men. But the Brahminical system prevailed in the sense that the monarch always had to be a Kshatriya. While the Licchavis, who held sway over the Kathmandu Valley in present-day Nepal and a major part of northern Bihar, were governed by an assembly of about 7,000 rajas who in turn were the heads of all the major families, others like the Shakyas, the clan to which Gautam Buddha belonged, had assemblies open to all people, rich or poor, and noble or common.

The greatest contribution to the evolution of democracy as a philosophy was in Athens, where great philosophers like Socrates, Plato and Aristotle lit up the public discourse with their brilliance and original thinking. Socrates and his pupil, Plato, deliberated and expounded on the role of a citizen within a community and laid down the foundations of the political philosophy that flourished in Athens and spread to most of the world over the next two and a half millennia. Aristotle, who counted among his students Alexander the Great, dwelt more on systems of government and who first qualified liberty as the fundamental principle of democracy.

This principle that "whatever is decided by the majority is sovereign" has always had to contend with the rights of the individual. In the United States of America, which was formed after a great debate among the founding fathers as a democracy, it was by majority will

that slavery had flourished till the Civil War. It took another century before equal rights for black people became the majority will. This constant struggle for individual rights against the will of the collective has been the central story of the evolution of the modern democratic state.

Free India by contrast provided for all these rights and liberties from the beginning in its Constitution. The Magna Carta, because it sought to limit the powers of the ruler, perhaps still has a place in our hearts and minds, because of just that. To most of us citizens in democratic states, our life is also a constant struggle against the assertion of collective will to trample individual liberties or the rights of smaller groups.

The rise of democratic and elected parliaments in England and Scotland just 50 years after the Magna Carta is not a coincidence but the consequence of that demand to share power. It is from the Magna Carta that the English writ of habeas corpus evolved, safeguarding individuals and their freedoms against unjust and unlawful imprisonment with the right to appeal. It is from this emergence of petitions for the production of the body that parliaments in due course became to be increasingly used as a forum to address all the concerns and grievances of ordinary people.

Thus, whatever be the first intent of the Magna Carta, its consequences greatly expanded over the centuries into a charter, which guarantees individual liberties, equality and justice to all, irrespective of their race, religion and class. But that struggle is far from over. It goes on and only its forms change as human values and means change.

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

LETTERS

THE CAIRN 'SCARE'

Suddenly, Indians seem to be running scared. They are closing accounts in foreign countries and liquidating their assets. That is because Cairn has won a major international arbitration award to collect \$1.2 billion from the Indian government which has chosen to fight. So, friends, whatever assets you may have in the US, the UK, the EU or even Switzerland, please take them out. Shift them all to the tax havens. Or, better still, change your identity.

C.K.R. Nathan Ghaziabad

BENGALURU RAIDS

THE BENGALURU police stumbling upon weapons, phones, pen drives, SIM cards and marijuana during a series of raids on gangsters and rowdies across the city and the central prison at Parapana Aghahara in Bengaluru has rattled many citizens. The cops successfully rounded up 1,514 so-called "history-sheeters" and habitual offenders during a special drive. One wonders how the deadly weapons and other stuff found their way inside a maximum-security prison like Parapana Aghahara. The grave security lapses at the jail point to the prison officials' involvement, and the authorities need to hold them culpable.

N.J. Ravi Chander Bengaluru

A WELCOME MEASURE

THE POPULATION explosion has always been a challenge to all developing economies. India is the second-most populous country in the world, and in fact is projected to soon become the first. It is home to around 20 per cent of the world's population but has only 2.5 per cent of the planet's area. The Uttar Pradesh government is planning to bring in a population control bill that provides for debarment of those with more than two children from contesting local polls, as well as preventing them from applying for or getting promotions in government jobs, as well as getting government subsidies. It is a welcome measure.

Sravana Ramachandran Chennai

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

Aakar Patel



The weak case that kept Stan Swamy in jail, where he died

Stan Swamy, who died around a week ago after being denied bail in the Bhima Koregaon case, was a Tamil priest who spent decades working with adivasis in Jharkhand. Before that he was director of the Indian Social Institute in Bengaluru. Why was he in jail for an event in Pune? The Bhima Koregaon case is five separate and unrelated things. The first was an event called Elgar (or Yalgar, meaning battle cry) Parishad on December 31, 2017 in Pune. The speakers there included former high court judge B.G. Kolse-Patil and P.B. Sawant, a former Supreme Court judge. Jignesh Mewani, Independent MLA from Gujarat, and JNU activist Umar Khalid also spoke. Members of Kabir Kala Manch, who are artists-activists, participated too.

The second event was next day, January 1, 2018. This was the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Koregaon Bhima, a Pune suburb on Bhima river, where on January 1, 1818, the British defeated the remnants of the Maratha empire. The British side had many dalit Mahar soldiers who overpowered a larger army led by the Brahmin Peshwa.

Since 1927 when B.R. Ambedkar visited the village to speak of the vic-

tory, hundreds of thousands of dalits came to Koregaon Bhima each year to gather at the obelisk raised to mark the battle. But in 2018, there had been tension due to events in the neighbouring village of Vadhu Budruk. This had to do with who had cremated Sambhaji, Shivaji's son, who was executed by Aurangzeb in 1689 near Koregaon Bhima. The Mahars claimed it was one of them, Gopal Govind, who cremated the Maratha in defiance of Aurangzeb's orders. This offended the Marathas, who claimed two of their community had performed the rituals. Govind's tomb in Vadhu Budruk was in the same village square as Sambhaji's. On December 28, a board was placed over Govind's tomb, claiming the feat of his cremation of Sambhaji. The next day Govind's tomb was desecrated — the board was removed and the umbrella structure over the tomb was damaged. A complaint was filed by dalits under the Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes Prevention of Atrocities Act. The Koregaon Bhima panchayat asked its residents to boycott the January 1 event and called for shops to remain shut. That morning violence erupted between dalits, who said they were attacked by a group carrying saffron flags, and

the local Marathas, who said they were attacked by dalits. One Maratha was killed. The violence spread to other towns in western Maharashtra and 300 dalits, including children, were held by the Mumbai police.

The third event was a police complaint, filed a few days later, by a man who said the Elgar Parishad's agenda was "to mislead the dalit community, to convert them to Maoist thought... and adopt the path of violence", and that "through their publications, books and speeches, they wanted to increase enmity in society". The man who filed the complaint, Tushar Damgude, said he followed a "simple" rule for his Hindutva: "We should keep things which are helpful for Hindus; the rest should be abandoned".

It was on the basis of this complaint that the police began arresting the activists, many of whom had nothing to do with, and weren't present in Bhima Koregaon. The fourth event was a report produced by an RSS outfit called the Forum for Integrated National Security, whose secretary general, Seshadri Chari, was on the BJP's national executive committee. This report said there was a Maoist strategy to lure people into joining "mass organisations" concerned

about issues like caste, justice and equality, which would then help the Maoists recruit for the final armed struggle against the State. This report was released on March 9, 2018.

Another report by the same author was submitted to Maharashtra chief minister Devendra Fadnis in April. In May, the UAPA law was added to the Bhima Koregaon case. On June 6, the Maharashtra police arrested five people including Dhawale of the Republican Panthers, lawyer and dalit activist Surendra Gadling, scholar Mahesh Raut, who worked on adivasi rights, assistant professor of English at Nagpur University Shoma Sen and Rona Wilson of JNU, who worked with the Committee to Release Political Prisoners. They were described by the police as the "top brass of the urban Maoists".

The police claimed it found a letter in Wilson's house dated July 2017 which said: "Comrade Kisan and few other senior comrades have proposed concrete steps to end Modi Raj. We are thinking along the lines of another Rajiv Gandhi-type incident."

On the basis of this, the police arrested Sudha Bharadwaj, who studied mathematics at IIT Kanpur and gave up her US citizenship at age

18; Gautam Navlakha, who also wrote for *Economic and Political Weekly*; Anand Telumbde, assistant professor at Goa Institute of Management and married to a granddaughter of Ambedkar; Arun Ferreira, a lawyer defending the accused in this case; Vernon Gonsalves, a professor of business management and economics at Ruparel College and HR College of Commerce and Economics; Varavara Rao, an author and poet who was a lecturer on Telugu literature; Hany Babu, a professor of linguistics at Delhi University. Three members of the Kabir Kala Manch — Sagar Gorkhe, Jyoti Jagtap and Ramesh Gaichor — were arrested, and Father Stan Swamy, 83-year-old Jesuit and theologian.

None of them had anything to do with the Bhima Koregaon violence, and weren't even present there. The case is said to be sensitive because of the assassination plot allegation, but the trial hasn't started.

Last year, the BBC carried a report on Stan Swamy headlined: "The oldest person to be accused of terrorism in India".

The writer is a columnist and a senior journalist

SHORT TAKES

ARMED ATTACK
NEAR NIGER-MALI
BORDER KILLS 49

Niamey, July 12: Five civilians, four soldiers and 40 armed attackers were killed Sunday in a clash in Niger's restive southwest region near the border with Mali, the government said. Around 100 heavily armed "terrorists" riding motorcycles attacked the Tchoma Bangou village, Niger's Ministry of Defence said in a statement read on public television that did not identify who it suspected was behind the incident. The "prompt and vigorous reaction" by the Defense and Security Forces, "made it possible to repel the attack and inflict heavy losses on the enemy", the ministry said.

PRO-EUROPEANS'
RESOUNDING POLL
WIN IN MOLDOVA

Chisinau, July 12: Moldova's main pro-European party has won a resounding victory in parliamentary polls, results showed Monday, strengthening the hand of President Maia Sandu as the former World Bank economist pushes to reform her ex-Soviet country. Sunday's snap election — called by Sandu in April to shore up her position against pro-Russia forces — saw her centre-right Action and Solidarity (PAS) party take 52.80 percent of the vote. PAS will get 63 seats in the 101-seat parliament for four-year terms, according to the Central Election Commission. A coalition of socialists and Communists, led by former Kremlin-backed president Igor Dodon, came second with 27.17 percent, the commission said Monday, with all votes counted.

MYANMAR VIRUS
CASELOAD HITS
SUU KYI TRIAL

Naypyidaw, July 12: Myanmar's spiralling Coronavirus count struck the trial of ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi on Monday, her lawyers said, with a witness for the prosecution failing to testify after becoming infected. Cases are spiking in Myanmar, with the State Administration Council reporting more than 3,400 new cases Sunday, up from fewer than 50 per day in early May. Suu Kyi was deposed by the military in February, sparking a mass uprising and a brutal crackdown. More than 890 civilians have been killed by the junta's forces.

A second witness gave testimony on the same charges, and the court also heard evidence on separate charges that Suu Kyi illegally imported and possessed walkie talkies, he said.

EGYPT UPHOLDS
LIFE SENTENCES
FOR 10 ISLAMISTS

Cairo, July 12: Egypt's highest appeals court on Sunday upheld the life sentences of 10 leaders of Egypt's outlawed Muslim Brotherhood, including the group's head, the state-owned MENA news agency reported. In 2019, a Cairo criminal court had convicted all 10, including the group's leader, or supreme guide, Mohamed Badie, of charges related to killing policemen and organising mass jail breaks during Egypt's 2011 uprising.

That revolt culminated in the ouster of longtime autocrat Hosni Mubarak. The defendants were found guilty of helping around 20,000 prisoners escape, and of undermining national security by conspiring with foreign militant groups — the Palestinian Hamas and Lebanon's Hezbollah.

RIOT INTENSIFIES,
S. AFRICA TO
DEPLOY MILITARY

Johannesburg, July 12: The South African government is all set to deploy troops to control the violence that has erupted in various parts of the country over the jailing of former president Jacob Zuma for contempt of court. Initially, soldiers will be deployed in two provinces — Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal, the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) announced on Monday.

KwaZulu-Natal is Zuma's home province. Zuma is currently imprisoned in the Estcourt Correctional Centre for failing to obey a court order to testify at a judicial commission that is investigating allegations of corruption during his term as South Africa's president from 2009 to 2018.

The 79-year-old politician, who denies corruption, handed himself in to police on Wednesday last week to begin his 15-month sentence.

SCS verdict a 'waste paper'

China brushes aside US backing for the judgement as political farce

Beijing, July 12: A defiant China on Monday dismissed the 2016 verdict of the international tribunal on the South China Sea, rejecting its claims over the area as a piece of "waste paper" and brushed aside US' fresh backing for the judgement as a "political farce" to smear Beijing. The Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian's remarks came as the People's Liberation Army (PLA) claimed to have "expelled" US Navy destroyer USS Benfold which sailed through the South China Sea (SCS), coinciding with the fifth anniversary of the verdict to assert freedom of navigation.

Without authorisation from the Chinese government, the US guided-mis-

sile destroyer illegally trespassed into China's territorial waters and the PLA Southern Theatre Command and organised maritime and aerial forces to track and monitor it and warned it away, Senior Colonel Tian Junli, spokesperson of the command, said in a statement.

The US has been periodically conducting such naval and aerial missions through the SCS to challenge China's claims. On the fifth anniversary of the international tribunal on the SCS, which had delivered a stunning blow to China's expansive sovereignty claims over the all-important sea trade route, the Biden administration upheld the previous Trump-era backing to the tribunal verdict.

● **IN A stern warning to China, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Sunday said that any attack on the Philippines by Beijing would draw Washington's response under a mutual defence treaty with the Philippines.**

In a stern warning to China, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that any attack on the Philippines by Beijing would draw Washington's response under a mutual defence treaty with the Philippines. Reacting to Blinken's statement, Zhao said that "the ruling is illegal, null and void and a waste paper". "China will not accept or participate in this tribunal, will not accept or

acknowledge this ruling," he said, reiterating that Beijing will continue to exercise its control over the area in the SCS. "The sovereignty and rights of China on the SCS will not be affected by the ruling and China will not accept any assertion or act based on this ruling," Zhao said. He termed the tribunal as a "political farce", saying the US was the "culprit and manipulator of this farce" to smear China.

"This time the US uses the fifth anniversary of the ruling to hype the SCS issue. This political attempt is clear," the Chinese spokesman said. On Blinken's threat to invoke a bilateral defence treaty with the Philippines if Beijing attacks Manila, Zhao accused the US of

abusing the bilateral military agreements with Cold War mentality "to use force on China which exposes their strong power logic and hegemonic attempts".

On July 12, 2016, the tribunal struck the worst blow to China's claims over almost all of the SCS, saying its much-touted nine-dash line has no legal basis. The Tribunal concluded that there was no legal basis for China to claim historic rights to resources within the sea areas falling within the 'nine-dash line', the five-judge tribunal appointed by the Permanent Court of Arbitration based in The Hague adjudicating on the petition filed by the Philippines had said.

— PTI

Choksi gets bail
from Dominica
for treatment

New Delhi, July 12: In a major setback to India, the Dominica High Court has granted bail to fugitive diamondaire Mehul Choksi, allowing him to travel to Antigua and Barbuda for treatment of his neurological condition, local media there reported.

The high court granted a consent order by Choksi's legal team and the state's lawyer, permitting him to go to Antigua, where he has been staying as a citizen since 2018 after he left India, after depositing Eastern Caribbean Dollars 10,000 (approximately Rs 2.75 lakh as per exchange rate) as bail money to seek medical attention from a specialised neurologist, *Antigua Breaking News* reported.

The court has also stayed the ongoing trial before a magistrate for his alleged illegal entry into Dominica on May 23 till his return, it said.

"Dominica courts finally upheld the rule of law and rights of a human to be treated in the medical facilities of his choice. And, all attempts by various agencies did not bear fruits. There is a solace in saying that all clever foxes end up as fur coats," Choksi's lawyer Vijay Aggarwal said. The order has come as a major jolt to Indian efforts to bring



Mehul Choksi

back Choksi, who is wanted in the ₹13,500 crore scam in the Punjab National Bank, from Dominica where he was held for illegal entry after his mysterious disappearance from Antigua and Barbuda.

His lawyers had alleged that he was abducted from Antigua and Barbuda in an elaborate plot hatched by men of Indian origin and a mystery woman named Barbara Jabarica who had befriended him during last six months. After news of Choksi being held in Dominica surfaced, India rushed a team of officials led by Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) DIG Sharda Raut to make every effort to bring Choksi back on the basis of an Interpol Red Notice against him. The effort was unsuccessful as Choksi's lawyers moved to file a Habeas Corpus petition.

EU puts digital
tax plan 'on hold'

Brussels, July 12: The European Commission said Monday it would delay its plan to propose an EU digital tax in order to not jeopardise efforts to secure a global deal on fairer taxation.

After an "extraordinary" breakthrough at G20 talks on Saturday, "we have decided to put on hold our work on a proposal for a digital levy", an EU spokesman said, a day after Washington asked Brussels to delay its tax plan. Meeting in Venice, G20 finance ministers on Saturday endorsed a plan agreed by 132 countries to overhaul the way multinational companies, including US digital giants, are taxed.

The G20 ministers of finance called on negotiators to swiftly address the remaining issues and finalise the agreement by October.

They approved the result of negotiations at the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) for a global minimum corporate tax rate of at least 15 percent, and to allow nations

● **THE G20 finance ministers approved a global minimum corporate tax rate of at least 15 percent, and to allow nations to tax a share of the profits of the world's biggest companies.**

to tax a share of the profits of the world's biggest companies regardless of where they are headquartered. The European Commission has insisted its new levy plan, that was due to be unveiled later this month, would conform with whatever is agreed at the OECD and would hit thousands of companies, including European ones.

Money raised from the digital tax is intended to help pay for the bloc's 750-billion-euro post-pandemic recovery plan.

Three European Union countries — including Ireland, which has become a European base for a raft of US companies thanks to low tax rates — have yet to sign up to the OECD agreement.

— AFP

Digging up the past in Israel



Israeli students excavate at the site of Khirbat er-Rai near the southern Israeli city of Kiryat Gat on Monday, where a 3,100-year-old pottery fragment bearing a rare inscription was found. It dates from around 1,100 BCE.

— AFP

2 Jordanians jailed over coup

Amman, July 12: A Jordanian state security court on Monday sentenced two former officials to serve 15 years in prison over an alleged plot against the Western-allied monarchy involving the half-brother of King Abdullah II.

Bassem Awadallah, who has US citizenship and once served as a top aide to King Abdullah II, and Sharif Hassan bin Zaid, a member of the royal family, were found guilty of sedition and incitement charges.

They are alleged to have conspired with Prince Hamzah, the king's half-brother, and to have sought foreign assistance. They denied the charges, and Alaa

● **BASSEM AWADALLAH, who has US citizenship and once served as a top aide to King Abdullah II, and Sharif Hassan bin Zaid, a member of the royal family, were found guilty of sedition and incitement charges.**

al-Khasawneh, a lawyer for Sharif, said they would appeal the verdict. He declined to comment further. They two men were swept up in a wave of arrests in April and Hamzah was placed under house arrest.

The rare public rift at the highest levels of the monarchy sent jitters across the region, with coun-

tries racing to express support for Abdullah.

Hamzah denied the allegations in video statements released in April after he was placed under house arrest, saying he was being silenced for speaking out against corruption and poor governance by the ruling system. The palace drama exposed deep-rooted economic and social challenges in the country, which has long been seen as a bastion of stability in a volatile region.

The royal family says it resolved the dispute with Hamzah, whose exact status is unknown but was never formally charged. Awadallah's US lawyer says his client alleged he was

tortured in Jordanian detention and fears for his life. Abdullah is expected in Washington on July 19, when he will be the first Arab leader to meet with President Joe Biden at the White House.

Jordan is a close US ally in the Middle East and is seen as a key partner in eventually reviving the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Lt. Col. Muwafaq al-Masaeed, a military judge, announced the verdict following a closed-door trial that consisted of just six hearings. The two were sentenced to 15 years for each of two felonies, but the judge said only one sentence would be imposed on them.

— AP

Rare anti-govt protests erupt in Cuba

HEAR PROTESTERS, BIDEN URGES CUBAN AUTHORITIES

Washington, July 12: President Joe Biden on Monday urged Cuba's communist government to "hear" protesters demanding an end to "repression" and poverty.

"We stand with the Cu-

ban people and their clarion call for freedom and relief from the tragic grip of the pandemic and from the decades of repression and economic suffering to which they have been subjected by Cuba's authori-

tarian regime," Biden said in a statement. "The United States calls on the Cuban regime to hear their people and serve their needs at this vital moment rather than enriching themselves."

— AFP

began, and Diaz-Canel later visited the town himself surrounded by party activists as residents heckled him, according to videos posted online.

The president lashed out in a television address, saying: "The order to fight has been given — into the street, revolutionaries!" "We call on all revolutionaries of the country, all communists, to go out in the streets where these provocations occur: from now on and in the next few days, and to face them in a decisive, firm and courageous way."

— AFP



Jovenel Moise

NORMS | BREACHED

Concern as changes will give FB access to more information on users

WA faces EU consumer complaint over privacy

London, July 12: Facebook's WhatsApp faces a complaint from European Union consumer groups who say the chat service has been unfairly pressuring users to accept a new privacy update in what it calls a breach of the bloc's regulations.

The European Consumer Organisation, or BEUC, filed a complaint Monday over the way WhatsApp has brought in changes to

its terms of service and privacy policy, saying they aren't transparent or easily understood by users. Many WhatsApp users switched to other chat apps like Signal and Telegram because of privacy concerns when the update was rolled out earlier this year because of concerns the changes would give Facebook access to more information on users.

"WhatsApp has been

bombarding users for months with aggressive and persistent pop-up messages to force them to accept its new terms of use and privacy policy," BEUC Director General Monique Goyens said.

"They've been telling users that their access to their app will be cut off if they do not accept the new terms. Yet consumers don't know what they're actually accepting," BEUC

and consumer rights groups from eight member countries filed the complaint to the EU's executive Commission and the bloc's network of consumer authorities. WhatsApp said the complaint is based on a misunderstanding of the update's purpose and effect and would welcome the opportunity to explain it to the BEUC.

"Our recent update explains the options people

have to message a business on WhatsApp and provides further transparency about how we collect and use data," WhatsApp said in a prepared statement.

"The update does not expand our ability to share data with Facebook, and does not impact the privacy of your messages with friends or family, wherever they are in the world."

— AP

● **They've been telling users that their access to their app will be cut off if they do not accept the new terms. Yet consumers don't know what they're actually accepting.**

MONIQUE GOYENS, Director General, European Consumer Organisation

COMPENSATION
FOR FISHERMEN
HIT BY SHIP FIRE

Colombo, July 12: The Sri Lankan government on Monday said it has started the process of paying compensation to local fishermen affected by the fire aboard a Singapore-flagged container ship that was carrying tonnes of hazardous chemicals and sank off the country's coast.

MV X-Press Pearl was carrying 1,486 containers of chemicals and cargo when it went up in flames on May 21 near the Colombo Port. The Sri Lankan Navy, Airforce and the Indian Coast Guard jointly doused the fire in an operation that took days. However, the ship sank off Colombo's coast on June 17.

The state minister of fisheries, Kanchana Wijesekera, said the payment for the compensation has been made possible by an interim claim laid on the insurance company of the ship's owners. "The fishermen's activities were badly affected since May 20, in addition to the environmental damage. Our interim claim was in respect of expenditure incurred in assessing the damage," Wijesekera said.

— PTI

quick BITES

| INDICATORS | | % |
|------------------------|------------|-------|
| Sensex | 52372.69 | -0.03 |
| Nifty 50 | 15692.60 | 0.02 |
| S&P 500* | 4,377.84 | 0.19 |
| Dollar (₹) | 74.58 | 0.08 |
| Pound Sterling (₹) | 103.35 | -0.36 |
| Euro (₹) | 88.39 | 0.09 |
| Gold (10gm)* (₹) | 46,796▼169 | 0.36 |
| Brent crude (\$/bbl)* | 74.77 | -1.03 |
| IN 10-Yr bond yield | 6.220 | 0.00 |
| US 10-Yr T-bill yield* | 1.365 | 0.009 |

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Biz activity back to pre-2nd wave levels: Nomura

Business activity has rose to the pre-second wave levels, with the seventh consecutive week of surge in levels as new Covid infection cases fall. The Nomura India Business Resumption Index accelerated to 95.7 for the week ending Sunday, from 91.0 the previous week, it said, adding that it is only 4.3 percentage points below the pre-pandemic levels of March 2020 and back to pre-second wave levels from mid-March.

Maruti hikes prices of Swift, all CNG models



Maruti Suzuki India said it has hiked prices of hatchback Swift and CNG variants of other models by up to Rs 15,000. The price change for Swift and all CNG variants is owing to an increase in various input costs, Maruti Suzuki aid in a regulatory filing. "Increase in ex-show-room prices (Delhi) is up to Rs 15,000 on the above models. The new prices are effective from today i.e. July 12," the filing further said.

Airtel records over 1,000 Mbps speed in 5G trial

Bharti Airtel recorded a speed of over 1 gigabit per second during a 5G field trial in Mumbai using Nokia's network gear, sources said. Airtel is running a live 5G trial in Mumbai's Phoenix Mall in Lower Parel. "Airtel is conducting the trial in the 3500 MHz band using 5G gear from Nokia as per DoT guidelines. The trials have delivered speeds of over 1 Gbps with ultra-low latency," one of the sources said.

MobiKwik files draft papers for ₹1,900-crore IPO

Digital payments startup One MobiKwik Systems filed preliminary papers with the Sebi to raise Rs 1,900 crore through an initial share sale. The IPO comprises fresh issuance of shares worth Rs 1,500 crore and an offer for sale of up to Rs 400 crore by promoters and existing shareholders, says its draft red herring prospectus. Those offering shares include promoters Upasana Rupkrishan Taku and Bipin Preet Singh.

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■ Q1 preview: Expect a better quarter YoY A consolidation phase for banks

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, JULY 12

The second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, coupled with localised lockdowns, is likely to impact the asset quality performance of banks, but to a lesser extent compared to the first lockdown.

Analysts expect bad loan formation for the April-June quarter (Q1FY22) to remain moderate—also reflected in the lower cheque bounce rate of 30 per cent versus a peak of 38 per cent last year—partly offset by restructuring and the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS).

Within retail loans, stress remains elevated, mainly in commercial vehicle loans, personal loans, loan against property, two-wheeler loans and microfinance loans, which should lead to higher stress formation for banks with higher exposure to these segments such as HDFC Bank, IndusInd Bank, RBL Bank, Bandhan Bank, AU SFB and Ujjivan, analysts said.

Bad loans in credit cards could be limited as banks and customers have explored the EMI option. Similarly, SME stress could largely be suppressed via ECLGS/restructuring option. Overall credit cost too could be elevated due to upfront stress recognition, partly offset by some contingent provision buffer usage by select banks. "We expect overall pre-



provisioning operating profit (PPOP) growth to be soft due to subdued growth/continued softness in Net Interest Margins accentuated by non-NPA recognition, moderate treasury support, and lack of large one-off gains such as recovery from Bhushan Power in Q4 (though partly offset by recovery from Kingfisher Airlines).... Among large banks, we expect ICICI to report healthy profitability, led by better NIMs/moderate credit cost, while Axis may have the option to claw back provisions to boost profitability. HDFC Bank's growth trajectory remains moderate, but it should be able to deliver around 20 per cent YoY profit growth. IndusInd, RBL should report slightly weaker numbers," said Anand Dama, analyst at Emkay Global.

"IndusInd Bank, in particular, may look to strengthen provisioning buffers, leading to elevated credit cost. Bandhan should continue to reel under MFI pain. PSBs, in general, may report moderate PPOP due to soft

treasury performance, but limited credit cost and lower tax incidence for select banks (Indian, Union Bank) should boost profits. SBI and Indian Bank will be outliers," added Dama.

The momentum in recovery gained over 4QFY21 was impacted by the second Covid wave, with the asset quality outlook deteriorating once again. Business activity was impacted by the second wave over April to May 2021. As a result, systemic growth moderated to 5.8 per cent as of June 18, 2021 (1 per cent decline over FY22 year-to-date).

While economic activity has started to pick up since June, business growth may remain modest over 1QFY22, said Motilal Oswal in a report.

According to Gaurav Jani of Centrum, "Midcap banks could see loan growth at 6.8 per cent year-on-year, largely led by Federal Bank and City Union Bank. Being SME-focused, asset quality impairment could be more pronounced for City Union Bank and DCB Bank."

RETAIL INVESTORS CAN SOON BUY GOVT BONDS FROM RBI

FC BANKING BUREAU MUMBAI, JULY 12

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Monday issued a 'RBI Retail Direct' scheme, which is a one-stop solution to facilitate investment in government securities by individual investors. Under the scheme, retail investors (individuals) will have the facility to open and maintain the 'Retail Direct Gilt Account' (RDG Account) with the RBI, the central bank said.

Also, the RDG Account can be opened through an 'online portal' provided for the purpose, it said. The 'online portal' will also give the registered users facilities like access to primary issuance of government securities, the RBI said, adding, the date of commencement of the scheme will be announced at a later date.

No fee will be charged for opening and maintaining 'Retail Direct Gilt account' with the RBI. However, a fee for payment gateway, as applicable, will be borne by the investor.

Non-Resident retail investors eligible to invest in government securities under the Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999 can also invest under the scheme.

The RDG account can be opened singly or jointly with another retail investor who meets the eligibility criteria, the RBI said.

Walmart's Flipkart investment more than doubles in value

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JULY 12



Ahead of a proposed IPO, Walmart-owned Flipkart has raised \$3.6 billion from a group of investors at a valuation of \$37.6 billion. Japanese SoftBank, which had sold its stakes to Walmart in 2018, has once again invested in the company.

The investment values the group at \$37.6 billion post-money, which is 130 per cent higher than the \$16 billion valuation it got during Walmart's acquisition of the home-grown e-com company in 2018.

Flipkart Group had raised \$1.2 billion from investors and its parent Walmart in July last year. The valuation of the company then stood at \$24.9 billion.

Flipkart Group has raised \$3.6 billion in the latest funding round participated by global investors, including sovereign wealth funds and private equity funds as well as Walmart.

The funding was led by

Singapore's sovereign wealth fund GIC, Canada Pension Plan Investment Board (CPP Investments), SoftBank Vision Fund 2 and Walmart. Sovereign funds DisruptAD, Qatar Investment Authority, Khazanah Nasional Berhad and marquee investors Tencent, Willoughby Capital, Antara Capital, Franklin Templeton and Tiger Global also participated.

CPP Investments later said it has invested \$800 million (about Rs 5,968 crore) in the Flipkart Group. SoftBank had sold its 20 per cent stake in the company in 2018. SoftBank's first Vision Fund had

invested \$2.5 billion in Flipkart in August 2017. Flipkart will use the funding to invest in new categories and leverage made-in-India technology to transform consumer experiences and develop a world-class supply chain, said Kalyan Krishnamurthy, CEO of Flipkart Group.

According to Walmart officials, Flipkart might get listed in the bourses, most probably next year.

Flipkart is also offering buyback of employee stock options worth about Rs 600 crore.

In an e-mail to employees, Krishnamurthy said the group will buyback 5 per cent of the past three years' vested options.

INFLATION REMAINS HIGH, IIP JUMPS ON BASE EFFECT

FC BUREAU NEW DELHI, JULY 12

Consumers have reason to worry as the country's retail inflation as measured by Consumer Price Index or CPI remained high at 6.26 per cent in the month of June as compared to 6.09 per cent reported in the year-ago period. While industrial output, as measured by the Index of Industrial

Production (IIP), recorded 29.3 per cent growth in the month of May as compared to 88.4 per cent in the year-ago period, the two separate government data showed on Monday.

Though the retail inflation eased slightly to 6.26 per cent from 6.3 per cent in June, it still remained above the Reserve Bank's comfort level of 6 per cent for the second straight month. During the month,

prices of eggs, edible oils, fruit, pulses accelerated in double digits. Fuel inflation also grew 12.7 per cent with rising petrol and diesel prices.

The sharp rise in factory output was due to the base effect, as the country was under a strict lockdown in May last year. Six out of the eight core sectors that constitute 40 per cent of the whole IIP recorded positive growth in May.

Brokers see listing gains from Zomato IPO

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, JULY 12

While retail investors are enthused about Zomato's initial public offering for the high visibility the food delivery firm enjoys, brokerages are not very upbeat about the issue considering the high valuation. However, they do believe that the equity shares may offer listing gains to investors. The Zomato public issue is opening on July 14.

The mega public issue of Rs 9,375 crore will allocate only 10 per cent shares to

the retail individual investors and 15 per cent to high net worth investors, with 75 per cent going to the institutional investors, including mutual funds and insurance companies.

However, the IPO priced in the price band of Rs72 to Rs 76 per equity share of Re 1 face value is seen as a risky bet given the company is the first of its kind, with no peer to compare its valuation, and is yet to turn profitable.

Retail investors have to keep in mind that at Rs 10 face value, the share would cost between Rs 720 and Rs

760 per share.

"The company is financially making losses, which remains a concern however the management has strong growth plans going ahead which will aid revival. Considering its financial performance, it would be prudent to wait for a meaningful turnaround to change the long-term stance. However, investors may consider subscribing for the listing gains," Ajit Mishra, VP-research, Religare Broking said. "Subscribe for listing gains," said Motilal Oswal

Financial Services in its review, adding, "Strong consumer brand equity with widespread network: Zomato enjoys the first mover advantage and has built a strong brand name and recall across India."

ICICI Direct, in a report, cautioned investors that "Demand for a food delivery platform is highly sensitive to a range of factors, including, delivery charges charged by delivery partners, incentives given to delivery partners and the commissions charged to restaurant partners."

Kitex chief blasts Kerala govt, hails Telangana approach

Kochi, July 12: Dubbing the Kerala Industries Department as a 'frog in the well', unaware of the investor friendly atmosphere in other states, Kitex Group chairman Sabu Jacob on Monday said Telangana has offered many incentives for his venture and promised him freedom from 'inspections'.

The Telangana government has offered cheap land, water and electricity for investors, which was unlike the attitude of the Kerala Industries Department, he told reporters here. "They are like a frog in the well and unaware of the investor-friendly atmosphere in other states," he said. On apprehensions of inspections, like 11 carried out in his units in Kerala in 30 days, he said the Telangana government assured him that no official would trouble any industry with inspections.

Inspections would be held once in two or three years and that too with the knowledge of the principal secretary or the minister concerned, he was told. "Even that will be informed well in advance after getting our permission and as per our convenience only," Jacob said. He was told that even if any lapses were found during the inspection, steps would be taken to rectify it at the governmental level

and not publish it to "defame and let the business run into losses".

Jacob termed his discussions with Telangana industries minister K. T. R. Rama Rao as "like a talk with the CEO of the state".

Jacob said the main allegation against his business was that it was a polluting industry. But the Telangana minister told him not to worry about waste water treatment, as the state would handle it. —PTI

COSTLY | NET-ZERO Adequate climate finance needed for India to meet clean energy goals

India wants rich nations to pay more for green shift

VRISHTI BENIWAL & RAJESH KUMAR SINGH JULY 12

India can't prioritise eliminating greenhouse gas emissions without sufficient financing from richer nations to help offset the high cost of transitioning to clean energy, according to a senior government official.

In laying out its position ahead of key global climate talks later this year, the top bureaucrat in India's environment ministry also said the country doesn't plan to tighten its emissions goals unless more money is promised from developed economies under the United Nations-sponsored climate change agreement.

"Every policy decision has a cost to the economy. Going net-zero or using less carbon also has a cost," environment secretary Rameshwar Prasad Gupta said in an interview at his New Delhi office. "We are not anti-net-zero. But without adequate climate finance being definitively available, we can't commit on that part."

The stance by India, the world's third-biggest emitter, highlights a top challenge global leaders will face when they meet at the UN Climate Change Conference, which starts in late October in Glasgow. While cutting net global carbon emissions to zero by 2050 is key to meet the goals of the Paris



Agreement, aimed at avoiding catastrophic damage from climate change, figuring out how to pay for the transition toward clean energy has been a sticking point.

Gupta also said the current \$100 billion-a-year pledge by richer nations to help developing nations -- a target they haven't even met yet -- is insufficient to

make the shift.

"We have our own developmental imperatives," Gupta said. "If you want that I don't emit carbon, then provide finance. It will be much more than \$100 billion per year for developing nations."

As well, until negotiations are finalised around funding help, India likely won't upgrade the emissions targets it committed to in 2015, known as a Nationally Determined Contribution, which under the Paris Agreement were expected to be revised by 2020.

"This is not the final decision, but most probably we won't file a revised NDC," he said. "Let there be a decision on climate finance first."

While the government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi discussed setting a 2050 net-zero emissions goal earlier this year, policy makers have resisted, citing the outsized role fossil fuels play in powering its growing population out of poverty, and the progress it's made on earlier climate commitments. But India risks looking like an outlier among other developing economies. While still seeking more funds from richer states, more than 100 countries including large emerging economies like Mexico, as well as neighbouring Pakistan and Bangladesh, have publicly committed to zero carbon by mid-century — Bloomberg

CCEA green signals LIC disinvestment

New Delhi, July 12: The Union Cabinet has cleared disinvestment of the country's largest insurer LIC and a panel headed by the finance minister will now decide on the quantum of stake dilution, a senior official said on Monday.

The Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (Dipam) had in January appointed actuarial firm Milliman Advisors LLP India to assess the embedded value of LIC ahead of the initial public offering, which is touted to be the biggest public issue in Indian corporate history.

The Budget amendments to the LIC Act has been notified and the actuarial firm is expected to finalise the embedded value of the life insurer. Under the

embedded value method, the insurance company's present value of future profit is also included in its present net asset value.

"The Cabinet Committee for Economic Affairs last week cleared the proposal of initial public offering of LIC. The alternative mechanism on disinvestment will now decide on the quantum of stake to be divested by government," the official said.

The government expects to come out with the LIC IPO by the end of current fiscal, the official added.

Up to 10 per cent of the LIC IPO issue size would be reserved for policyholders. The government has already brought in legislative amendments in the LIC Act for the proposed IPO. —PTI

SHORT TAKES

Anand finishes second in Croatia

Zagreb: Former world champion Viswanathan Anand finished second in the Croatia Grand Chess Tour here on Sunday with an impressive performance, accentuated by his two victories over long-time rival Garry Kasparov.

Anand, who had beaten Kasparov on the first day of the Blitz on Saturday, came up with a superb performance again to defeat the Russian legend in the 13th round on Sunday. Frenchman Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (22 points) sealed the title with a round to spare, thanks to a victory over a misfiring Kasparov in the 17th round. Anand took a quick draw in his 18th round game against Alexander Grischuk to finish with 21 points and a clear second ahead of the top-seed Ian Nepomniachtchi. — PTI

Hyderabad FC sign medio Garcia

Hyderabad: Indian Super League side Hyderabad FC has completed the signing of Spanish player Eduardo Edu Garcia ahead of the 2020-21 season, the club announced on Monday. The experienced attacking mid-fielder, who can operate in multiple roles, joins Manolo Marquez's side from last-season's runners-up ATK Mohun Bagan.

"I promise to give my best and help the club grow with my experience and my work," said Garcia after penning a one-year deal with Hyderabad FC. "I want HFC to finish as high as possible on the table, and will work hard for that. I will also always try to help the team by giving what the coach wants from me," he added. — PTI

Manny to meet Errol on Aug. 21

Los Angeles: Manny Pacquiao and Errol Spence Jr. formally announced that they will fight on August 21 in a bout pitting an eight-division world champion against one of the sport's most dominant current champions.

Pacquiao (62-7-2, 39 KO's) and Spence (27-0, 21 KO's) will fight for Spence's WBC and IBF welterweight titles when they meet at T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas. The 42-year-old Pacquiao is a senator in his native Philippines.

He hasn't fought since July 2019, when he beat Keith Thurman by split decision for his third consecutive victory.

At a news conference in Los Angeles, Pacquiao admitted he is taking a significant risk in returning against one of the top active fighters in boxing. The 31-year-old Spence will be in the ring for only the second time since October 2019. — AP

Better in handling matches: Deepti

Hove: Architect of India's eight-run win over England in the second women T20I, talented all-rounder Deepti Sharma says she has got better in reading and handling difficult match situations and enjoys playing under pressure.

England were cruising with opener Tammy Beaumont (59) and skipper Heather Knight (30) in the middle but Deepti dismissed both the batters off successive balls in the 14th over to bring India back into the match.

"I like playing in a pressure situations, whether it is in any position in the team — batting, bowling, or fielding. As an all-rounder, I just want to contribute to my department and take the team forward," Deepti said.

The 23-year-old from Uttar Pradesh also contributed with the bat, scoring 24 off 27 balls as India posted 148 for four. — PTI

High hopes from para shooters

New Delhi: Indian para shooters have the temperament to pull off some good results at the Tokyo Games, says chief national coach J.P. Nautiyal, who is expecting a haul of at least four medals at the Paralympics. In a first, a record 10 para shooters, have booked quota places for the Tokyo Paralympics beginning August 24. — PTI

ROMEOANCE

Italy win Euro Cup on penalties to wreck England party

London, July 12: Italy wrecked England's Euro 2020 party at Wembley on Sunday, winning a tense final on penalties to plunge the host nation into despair and prolong their 55-year wait for a second major title.

Roberto Mancini's men recovered from the shock of conceding the quickest goal ever in a European Championship final to equalise and held their nerve to claim a 3-2 shootout victory after a 1-1 draw following extra-time.

It is the second time Italy have been crowned European champions and comes after the embarrassment of failing even to qualify for the 2018 World Cup in Russia.

Three players fluffed penalties for England, extending their poor record in shoot-outs and leaving the hosts waiting for another major trophy after the 1966 World Cup.

Italians spilled on to the streets from Milan to Palermo to celebrate their side's triumph, pushing aside thoughts of the Coronavirus pandemic which has gripped the nation.

Earlier, a partisan crowd of more than 67,000 mostly England fans at Wembley was whipped into a state of fever pitch by rousing renditions of "Three Lions" and "Sweet Caroline" before kick-off. Gareth Southgate's team



The Italian team celebrates with the Euro trophy after beating England in the penalty shootout at Wembley stadium in London on Sunday.

— AP

raced out of the blocks and were ahead in just the second minute when defender Luke Shaw finished coolly at the back post after an inviting cross from Kieran Trippier.

Italy grew stronger as the match went on and equalised with 23 minutes remaining when Leonardo Bonucci scrambled the ball into the net from close range.

With four minutes remaining of normal time a pitch invader stopped the action and stewards

struggled to catch him, adding to a sense of chaos at the stadium after ticketless fans earlier forced their way in. Normal time finished goalless despite a flurry of substitutions and the sides were still locked at 1-1 after extra time.

England goalkeeper Jordan Pickford saved spot-kicks from Andrea Belotti and Jorginho but Marcus Rashford hit the post and Gianluigi Donnarumma kept out Jadon Sancho and Bukayo Saka, sparking scenes of

delirium from the players and the small pocket of Italian fans.

UNBEATEN ITALY

Italy had been arguably the team of the tournament heading into the final, sweeping through the group stage with a perfect record before knocking out Austria, top-ranked Belgium and Spain to reach the final.

Revitalised since Mancini took over after their failure to qualify for the 2018 World Cup, the Azzurri are now unbeaten

in 34 matches.

The four-time world champions' lone previous European Championship triumph came in 1968. They were beaten finalists in 2000 and 2012.

England fans will have to come to terms with a painful defeat just when it seemed they were on the brink of ending their tournament drought.

Southgate urged England to use the pain to fuel success in the future, accepting the blame for the heartbreaking penalty shoot-out defeat. — AFP

Hawgood all praise for women's hockey coach

New Delhi, July 12:

Former chief coach Neil Hawgood believes the current Indian women's hockey team has become a mentally tough unit under incumbent Sjoerd Marijne which augurs well for its upcoming Tokyo Olympics campaign.

Hawgood, who was in charge of the Indian women's team in two separate stints between 2012 and 2016, acknowledges the growth of Rani Rampal and Co. under Marijne.

"Sjoerd (Marijne) has done an amazing job in elevating the team's level. The current team is mentally tougher than previous years," the Australian was quoted as saying in the latest episode of *Hockey Pe Charcha*, a podcast series initiated by Hockey India ahead of the Tokyo Games.

"Earlier, if the team conceded an early goal then it created a worrying situation which could lead to a heavy defeat. In a similar situation now, the team is calm and confident knowing that they can come back into any game. I am delighted to see that the team has kicked on and reached another level since my time."

Hawgood feels lack of matches leading up to the Olympics due to the Covid-19 pandemic might be a cause of concern for teams like India, Australia and Argentina unlike their European counterparts. — PTI



Indian women's hockey coach Sjoerd Marijne (right).

NRAI TRYING TO ADD TWO MORE SHOOTING COACHES

New Delhi, July 12: The National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) is trying to get approval for two more coaches to accompany the seven permitted to travel with the country's Olympic shooting team to Tokyo, at the expense of office-bearers.

The federation is working with the Indian Olympic Association in this regard and there are chances that the number of support staff could go up.

The 13 Olympic-bound Indian shooters in pistol and rifle, seven

coaches, five physiotherapists and a two-member video crew had left for Zagreb in a charter flight on May 11, for an 80-day training-cum-competition tour of the Balkan nation.

They were later joined by three more coaches — Pavel Smirnov, Samresh Jung and Ronak Pandit. "We are trying to send nine coaches, instead of seven, to Tokyo. The NRAI has already started processing and is working with IOA on this," the federation's secretary Rajiv Bhatia said. — PTI

SPORTS AWARDS SELECTION AFTER TOKYO OLYMPICS

New Delhi, July 12: The process of picking this year's national sports awards winners is set to be postponed until after the Olympic Games to ensure that medal winners in Tokyo are duly considered by the selection panel, which is yet to be instituted.

The awards are given away each year by the country's president on August 29, the National Sports Day which is also the birth anniversary of hockey legend Major Dhyan Chand. The Olympics will run from July 23 to August 8.

"We have already received nomina-

tions for this year's National Sports Awards. The dates of nominations are closed as of now. But in our last meeting we have discussed about including Olympic medallist, if any, for consideration in this year's awards," a sports ministry source said.

"The Olympic ends on August 8 so the process for selection of awardees might get delayed," he added.

The ceremony itself could also be delayed if the selection panel is unable to finalise names of the awardees within 10 days of the Games' end. — PTI

Racist abuse targets England star players

London, July 12: Political leaders and footballing chiefs in Britain expressed disgust on Monday at racial abuse targeting England stars, including three black players who missed penalties in the Euro 2020 final against Italy.

But as Facebook vowed anew to look into abuse on its Instagram platform, Prime Minister Boris Johnson himself came under stinging criticism for earlier refusing to condemn fans who had booed English players' campaign against racism.

England manager Gareth Southgate said the online invective was "unforgivable".

"Some of it has come from abroad, we have been told this, but some of it is from this country," he told reporters.

"We have been a beacon of light to bring people together and the national team stands for everybody."

Marcus Rashford, Jadon Sancho and Bukayo Saka, the three players whose penalty shootout misses handed victory to Italy at Wembley on Sunday, were the victims of a stream of abuse on Instagram and Twitter — many apparently from foreign trolls and bots.

While some people identifying as England fans used racial slurs in blaming the trio for the defeat, other offensive messages were

accompanied by "forza italia" hashtags.

"This England team deserve to be lauded as heroes, not racially abused on social media," Johnson wrote on Twitter.

"Those responsible for this appalling abuse should be ashamed of themselves."

England's players have made a strong stand against racism at the tournament, taking a knee before their games including the final.

But Johnson and others in the Conservatives' "anti-woke" government had initially defended the freedom of speech of England fans who booed the players, before backing the team later in the tournament.

Former Manchester United player Gary Neville accused the prime minister of having "promoted" racism, noting one notorious past comment by Johnson likening Muslim women who wear the veil to "letter-boxes".

Former Conservative party chairwoman Sayeeda Warsi urged the government: "It's time to stop the culture wars that are feeding division."

"Dog whistles win votes but destroy nations."

Johnson's official spokesman pushed back against Warsi and said of Neville: "I'd utterly reject that claim."

— AFP



DJOKOVIC SAYS '50/50' OVER TOKYO OLYMPICS

London, July 12: Novak Djokovic cooled on his commitment to the Tokyo Olympics on Sunday saying it was "50/50" if he would participate.

"I'll have to think about it. As I said, my plan was always to go to the Olympic Games. But right now I'm a little bit


divided. It's kind of 50/50 because of what I heard in the last couple of days," said Djokovic.

The world number one was speaking after he claimed a record-equalling 20th Grand Slam title and sixth Wimbledon crown on Sunday. — AFP

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