

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | WEDNESDAY 7 | JULY 2021

WEATHER



Max: 34°C
Min: 21°C
Rainfall: Nill

ASTROGUIDE

Pilava: Aani 23
Tithi: Tryodashi
Star: Rohini
Rahukalam: 12 noon to 1.30 pm
Yamagandam: 7.30 am to 9.00 am

PRAYERS

Fajar: 4.25 am
Luhar: 12.16 pm
Asar: 3.37 pm
Maghrib: 6.38 pm
Isha: 7.57 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.40 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.48 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 3.21 PM
MOONSET TOMORROW 4.30 AM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+31,247)	(+468)
3,06,50,186	4,03,778

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+3,479) (+73)
TN: 25,03,481 33,132

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

18,51,20,632

DEATHS

40,03,630

COUNTRIES
AREAS WITH
CASES 219

worldometers.info

Pending JEE-Mains to be held July 20-25 and July 27-Aug 2

New Delhi: The pending editions of Joint Entrance Examination (JEE)-Mains will be conducted from July 20 to 25 and July 27 to August 2, Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' announced on Tuesday.

The results of the two editions, which were postponed in view of the Covid-19 pandemic, are likely to be announced in August.

According to an official notification issued by the National Testing Agency (NTA), the candidates who have applied earlier for the postponed editions can modify their particulars from July 6 to 8 for the third edition and from July 9 to 12 for the fourth.

Wipro commits ₹1k crore more for Covid-19 fight

Mumbai: IT major Wipro's philanthropic arm has committed an additional ₹1,000 crore of grants over and above the ₹1,125-crore support it had announced in the early days of the pandemic last year, its Founder Chairman Azim Premji said on Tuesday.

The additional grant will be directed primarily on universal vaccination, Premji said while speaking at the foundation day event of the Bombay Chartered Accountants' Society.

In the early days of the pandemic last year, Wipro had announced a ₹1,125-crore aid for the pandemic, which also included converting its facilities at Pune into hospitals.

COUNTER

POINT



If you want to continue in active politics, then take the Governor's post rather than the minister's!

CITY | 2

Youtuber Madan detained under Goondas act



WORLD | 5

First superman director Richard Donner no more

SPORT | 8

Brazil enter Copa America final



deccanchronicle.com, facebook.com/deccannews, twitter.com/deccanchronicle, google.com/+deccanchronicle

Vol. 11 No.191 Established 1938 | 8 PAGES| 4.00

Reshuffle on as eight States get new Guvs

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 6

In a clear indication that the much-awaited reshuffle of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Cabinet will take place soon, senior Cabinet minister and Leader of the House in the Rajya Sabha Thawarchand Gehlot was named as the governor of Karnataka by President Ram Nath Kovind on Tuesday. Mr Kovind approved the appointment of eight governors, also including Mr Gehlot, as well as former Union minister Bandaru Dattatreya and Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar.

Speculation is rife that the much anticipated rejig of the Union council of ministers, which will be first in NDA 2.0, will take place either on Wednesday or Thursday, and it will also have "new and young faces" and more representation of the BJP's alliance partners.

Now RPI's Ramdas Athawale is the only non-BJP leader in the NDA government. The rejig will also be done keeping in mind the coming Assembly polls, mainly Uttar Pradesh, the 2024 Lok Sabha elections and the representation of OBCs, dalits and tribals and also the representation of regions. More women ministers could also be inducted in Team Modi.

Some ministers, sources

PM MODI'S BRIGHT NEW CABINET

Sources have it that PM Modi's mega cabinet reshuffle will happen today and the new cabinet may be the youngest in history



said, could be sent back to the BJP organisation. A senior Cabinet minister, who is now recuperating, could also be asked to "take a complete rest" and another representative of his state, where elections are due early next year, could be accommodated in the team. At least 10 ministers are now holding more than one portfolio.

Some of the prospective new members of Team Modi, including former Congress leader Jyotiraditya Scindia, former Assam CM Sarbananda Sonowal and Maharashtra heavyweight Narayan Rane have reached New Delhi amid speculation that they were told to reach the national capital. JD(U) leader R.C.P. Singh and LJP's Pashupati Kumar Paras

More women are expected to be inducted to redress the balance heavily weighted in favour of men now

Changes may factor in polls to come in five States next year as well as the national election in three years' time

Some prominent faces seen in New Delhi or on the move to the capital on Tuesday – Jyotiraditya Scindia, Sarabananda Sonowal, Varun Gandhi and Narayan Rane



DURAIMURUGAN COMPLAINS ON K'TAKA DAMS

G BABU JAYAKUMAR & D SEKAR | DC
CHENNAI, JUL 6

In a bid to replenish the State's overall water needs and ensure adequate flow in its rivers for agricultural and drinking purposes, Water Resources Minister Duraimurugan knocked at the doors of the Union Government seeking settlement of disputes with Karnataka, Kerala and other neighbouring States, besides asking for pending funds.

Visiting New Delhi with a slew of demands, Duraimurugan called on Union Water Minister for Jal Shakti, Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, on Tuesday and insisted on the denial of permission to Karnataka for building the proposed dam across River Cauvery at Meke-datu and sought removal of hurdles for raising the storage level in the Mullaperiyar dam. He made it clear that the Meke-datu project would affect the livelihood of farmers in Tamil Nadu and said the it should not be allowed at any cost. ■ **P2**

Withdraw draft cinema bill: CM

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JULY 6

Joining hands with a large section of the Tamil film fraternity, chief minister M.K. Stalin urged the Union Government to withdraw the Draft Cinema tograph (Amendment) Bill, 2021, saying that it was unconstitutional and went against the 'spirit of cooperative federalism' by transgressing the powers of the State Governments.

In his letters to Union Ministers Ravishankar Prasad (Communications, Electronics and Information Technology) and Prakash Javedkar (Law and Justice) on Tuesday, Stalin also said that taking away the right to freedom of thought would weaken democracy that had to be vibrant irrespective of the party in power.

Alleging that the proposed amendments to the Cinematograph Act of 1952 sought to restrict creative thinking and artistic freedom, he said it was not just the members of the film industry who were concerned about it but also all well-meaning sections of society that cherished freedom of expression.

"As you are aware, a vibrant democracy must provide adequate space for creative thinking and artistic freedom," he said, adding that the amendment would restrict it by "restoring the revisionary powers of the Union Government that was



"As you are aware, a vibrant democracy must provide adequate space for creative thinking and artistic freedom"

struck down by the Supreme Court two decades ago."

Stalin said the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) accorded certification to the films if they meet all the criteria mentioned in the section 5(a) of the Cinematograph Act, which also provided for rejection of certification for a film on certain prescribed valid grounds.

"Moreover, adequate provisions for exercising control over filmmaking is available in the form of guidelines that have been provided under section 5(b) of the Act. Given all these, it is considered as excessive to add more Laws and Acts to throttle the freedom of a creative form in the 21st Century," he said. ■ **P3**

Separate ministry for cooperation soon: Sources

New Delhi, July 6: The Modi government has decided to create a new Ministry of Cooperation with an aim to strengthen the cooperative movement in the country, official sources said on Tuesday.

Amid a strong buzz about a massive cabinet reshuffle exercise expected on Wednesday, government sources said the new ministry is being created for realising the vision of 'sahkar se samridhhi' (through co-operation to prosperity).

This ministry will provide a separate administrative, legal and policy framework for strengthening the cooperative movement in the country, sources added.

A minister in charge for the new portfolio may be named on Wednesday. The new ministry will help deepen cooperatives as a true, people-based movement reaching till the grassroots, sources said.

In the country, a cooperative-based economic development model is very relevant where each member works with a spirit of responsibility, they added.

The ministry will work to streamline processes for 'ease of doing business' for cooperatives and enable development of multi-state cooperatives (MSCS).

The central government has signalled its deep commitment to community-based developmental partnership. The creation of a separate ministry also fulfils the announcement made by the Finance Minister in the Union Budget, they added.

— PTI

AMARINDER LEAVES SIDHU ISSUE TO SONIA TO RESOLVE

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 6

Punjab chief minister Captain Amarinder Singh on Tuesday met Congress president Sonia Gandhi in the national capital, but there was no clarity on what the outcome was. The meeting with Mrs Gandhi comes after more than a month of turmoil in the Punjab Congress which was precipitated after public utterances by disgruntled Congress legislator Navjot Singh Sidhu against the Congress government and the chief minister.

After the one-and-a-half hour long meeting with Mrs Gandhi, the Punjab chief minister said, "Whatever Sonia Gandhi decides about the party in Punjab will be acceptable to us and we will implement her will."

Mallikarjun Kharge, chairman of the AICC panel on Punjab, was called by Mrs Sonia Gandhi to the meeting. With just months to go for the Assembly polls, insiders claim that during their meeting, Captain

Amarinder Singh and Mrs Gandhi were to work out a formula to end factionalism by accommodating all sections, castes and regions in the overhaul of the Punjab state unit of the party as well as the state Cabinet.

Insiders also claim that Capt. Singh has made it clear to the high command that the legislators are behind him.

When asked if Navjot Singh Sidhu was discussed at the meeting, Captain Amarinder Singh said, "I do not know anything about Navjot Singh Sidhu. We discussed government and political issues. I discussed only the government's developmental agenda and political issues related to Punjab. I told the party president that whatever she wants on the development front was being implemented."

In the last couple of weeks almost all legislators from Punjab and other leaders have appeared before the high-powered committee constituted by Mrs Gandhi to sort out the Punjab issue.

OUTING MODE BEGINS



Visitors at Cape Comorin after further easing of Covid-19 lockdown restrictions, in Kanyakumari, Tuesday.

— PTI

Modi greets Dalai Lama as China watches

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC
NEW DELHI, JULY 6

In what is being seen as a strong veiled message to China, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday tweeted that he had spoken on the phone to the Da-lai Lama to wish him on his 86th birthday, adding that he wished him a "long and healthy life". A controversy had been brewing on the successor to the current Dalai Lama, who will be the next Dalai Lama as per Tibetan Buddhist practice.

"Spoke on phone to His

Holiness the @DalaiLama to convey greetings on his 86th birthday. We wish him a long and healthy life," Mr Modi said, in a tweet that will no doubt be closely monitored by Beijing which has been warning foreign nations not to play the "Tibet card".

Historically, the Dalai Lama -- regarded for centuries as the supreme Tibetan spiritual leader -- has always been chosen through a procedure rooted in the belief of reincarnation. The current Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, born in 1935 in Tibet and

TIBET CARD

■ **"SPOKE on phone to His Holiness the @DalaiLama to convey greetings on his 86th birthday. We wish him a long and healthy life,"** Modi said, in a tweet

recognised as the 14th Dalai Lama, had fled to India in 1959 after a failed revolt in Tibet against Beijing. Based in Dharamsala in Himachal Pradesh ever since, his current health has reportedly been a

cause of concern due to his advanced age. It is due to this that the selection of the next Dalai Lama eventually is being seen as a potential flashpoint between Beijing and the Dalai Lama's exiled followers in India, who had formed the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), popularly known as the Tibetan government-in-exile based out of Dharamsala in Himachal Pradesh decades ago. However, India has always recognised Tibet as a part of China.

The PM's tweet on Tuesday is being seen in

the context of the current uneasy ties between the two Asian giants, with troops of the two sides not having disengaged yet from all friction points in the Ladakh sector despite numerous rounds of talks at the diplomatic and military level. New Delhi has been upset over what it sees as China's reluctance to pull back its troops. Ties between the two neighbours have remained tense ever since the deadly clash between the troops of both sides at Galwan Valley in the Ladakh sector in June last year.

After strong criticism of India by the United Nations Human Rights office over the death of 84 year-old Christian priest Father Stan Swamy, New Delhi on Tuesday said the priest had been arrested and detained by the NIA and that his bail application had been rejected by the courts in India, adding that "authorities in India act against violations of law and not against legitimate exercise of rights". It further said that in view of the priest's ailing health, the Bombay High Court had allowed his medical treatment at a private hospital where he was receiving "all possible medical attention since May 28" and that "his health and medical treatment was being closely monitored by the courts". It said he died on July 5 following medical complications.

New Delhi added that "India's democratic and constitutional polity is complemented by an independent judiciary, a range of national and state level Human Rights Commissions that monitor violations, a free media and a vibrant and vocal civil society" and that the country "remains committed to promotion and protection of human rights of all its citizens".

Earlier in the day, the UN Human Rights Office tweeted, "We are saddened and disturbed by the death of 84 year-old human rights defender Father Stan Swamy after prolonged pre-trial detention. With Covid 19, it is even more urgent that States release every person detained without sufficient legal basis. No one should be detained for exercising their rights of freedom of expression, of peaceful assembly and of association."

SHORT TAKES



'Want full time head for Cauvery Water Management Authority'

From P1

Expressing concern over the manner in which Cauvery water was being released, he wanted the Jal Shakti Ministry to prevail upon Karnataka to provide the allotted quantum on a monthly basis at Biligundlu and also to advise the Cauvery Water Management Authority to finalise its allotment to the State.

Apart from pointing out that the Cauvery Water Management Authority has been functioning without a permanent chairman since its inception three years ago, Duraimurugan wanted the immediate appointment of a full time head for the authority.

On the contentious Mullaiperiyar dam issue, he said the State wanted to increase the storage level to 152 feet and asked for permission to fell 23 trees in the forest area to strengthen the Baby Dam and the Earth Dam that was required to raise the water level. He also asked the Union Government to tell Kerala to allow Tamil Nadu to repair the forest road leading to the dam site, which was being denied so far.

Underlining the other dispute that the state has with Karnataka over the building of a dam across the River Markandeya that feeds River Pennar, flowing through a few districts in Tamil Nadu before joining the Bay of Bengal, the Minister demanded the setting up of a tribunal to solve the issue as directed by the Supreme Court in 2019.

Duraimurugan referred to the scheme to link the Godavari, Krishna, Pennar and Cauvery, raising a few demands with the Union Government. He wanted the scheme to be implemented as a national project after finalizing it through talks with the various States concerned and asked for Tamil Nadu's share in the scheme to be increased to 83 TMC water.

Also, he wanted the link canal to be taken not to an elevated level, flowing into the Kallanai, but to let it open in the Kattalai shutter dam across river Cauvery.

Reminding the Union Government that funds meant for the implementation of the scheme to link the rivers of Thamirabarani, Karumariaru and Nambiaru were pending for a long time, though permission for the project has been granted, he wanted the release of the funds immediately.

He said Tamil Nadu had spent ₹ 712 crore for the project to link the rivers and was awaiting the Union Government's 60 per cent share of ₹487 crore to be granted.

Demanding the reimbursement of ₹44.48 crore to the State that had already undertaken the repair, renovation and restoration of its water bodies, he said, adding that the State had received only ₹34.25 crore so far.

TV serial manager booked for cheating, rape

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JULY 6

The city police on Tuesday booked a TV serial manager on the charges of cheating a woman.

The accused identified as Raghu (53) is yet to be arrested, the police sources said.

According to the complainant, a 29-year-old woman, the accused sexually exploited her under the pretext of marriage. Though she had lodged a police complaint against him earlier no action was taken and she approached the court which directed the cops to act.

He was booked under sections 417 (punishment for cheating) 376 (rape) 492 (Breach of Contract)

323(Voluntarily causing hurt) 506 (1) (criminal intimidation).

Goondas Act invoked against Madan Kumar Youtuber detained

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JULY 6

Youtuber Madan arrested by Chennai police for making derogatory comments in his videos was detained under the Goondas Act on Tuesday.

Madan Kumar Manikkyam was arrested by the Cyber Crime Wing of the Chennai police on June 18 from near Dharmapuri. Chennai Police Commissioner Shankar Jiwal invoked the Goondas Act against Madan on Tuesday.

According to reports, Madan in his YouTube channels had portrayed

women in a vulgar manner. He used filthy language and cuss words on women. He further went on to comment in his videos that all women are prostitutes and obscenely describe their bodies.

After the videos gained popularity, complaints were lodged against him. He was booked under IT Act 67, 67a, IPC sections 294 b (use of obscene language in public place, 509 (intend to insult the modesty of women) and the indecent representation of women (prohibition) Act. Chennai police also shut down his YouTube channel.

Loaded truck overturns on Grand Southern Truck road

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JULY 6

Traffic on Chennai-Tiruchy highway was disrupted for more than three hours on Monday night after a loaded truck overturned near Singaperumal Kovil in Chengalpet. The driver of the truck sustained grievous injuries in the accident.

Sources said the vehicle carrying beverages and other items from Chennai was heading towards Villupuram when the accident took place. It was said the driver lost control of the vehicle when he attempted to overtake another vehicle. In the impact the truck turned turtle. Following the incident, a heavy traffic dis-

ruption was caused on GST Road also known as Chennai-Tiruchy highway. Maraimalai Nagar rushed to the spot.

Police barricaded the highway to clear the vehicle which resulted in a heavy traffic jam causing severe hardships to the motorists. The vehicles were diverted towards Vandalur-Kelambakkam road and Vandalur-Oragadam road.

The driver of the truck, Poun Raj (28), and the cleaner sustained injuries and were taken to the Chengalpet government hospital. Traffic chaos reigned on the stretch for more than three hours. The Maraimalai Nagar police have filed a case and are investigating.

WAIT FOR YOUR JOB



'No vaccination' board put up outside the corporation school in Kolathur on Tuesday.

—DC

HC directive to insurance companies

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JULY 6

The Madras high court has directed the insurance companies, both public and private, and the transport corporations to send e-mails to the respective Motor Accident Claims Tribunals within 48 hours of the deposit of award amounts with requisite particulars of the Unique Transaction Reference (UTR) numbers and MCOP numbers for ready reconciliation of the same by the Tribunals concerned.

The special bench comprising Justices P.N. Prakash and Abdul Quddus gave the directive while passing further interim orders on a suo motu proceedings initiated following large-scale irregularities committed in the maintenance of the registers of MCOP (Motor Claim Original Petition) Courts.

Originally, appalled over a large-scale irregularities committed in the maintenance of the registers of MCOP (Motor Claim Original Petition) Courts, which had paved the way for embezzlement, Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee of the Madras high court had on June 15, 2021, initiated suo motu proceedings and constituted a Special Bench comprising Justices P.N. Prakash and Abdul Quddus, with a mandate to streamline the existing practice and usher in a fool-proof mechanism in the matter of disbursement of compensation amounts in the



MCOP jurisdiction.

The special bench in its first sitting on June 18, 2021, in turn, issued a set of 10 directions which included the appointment of Chief Nodal Officer and Assistant Chief Nodal Officers and the appointment of district judges as district nodal officers in the districts.

In its present order, the bench said inviting the attention of this court to the orders passed by the Supreme Court in Bajaj Allianz General Insurance Company Pvt.Ltd vs Union of India and others with regard to use of the digital platform for conduct of accident claims proceedings and deposit of compensation, N.Vijayaraghavan, an amicus curiae appointed by the court to assist in this case, has suggested that a direction may be issued to all the insurance companies, both public and private, and transport corporations, to send e-mails to the respective Motor Accident Claims Tribunals within 48 hours of the deposit of award amount with requisite particulars of the UTR



Health minister Ma Subramanian, health secretary Dr J. Radhakrishnan along with officials take World Zoonoses Day pledge at DPH office on Tuesday.

—DC

Minister off to Delhi this week to seek more vaccine stocks

DC CORRESPONDENT,
CHENNAI, JULY 6

Health minister Ma. Subramanian said he would go to Delhi along with the health secretary to meet Union health minister Harsh Vardhan on Friday on matters including vaccine shortage and Madurai AIIMS unit.

"We have a stock of 63,460 doses of vaccines on Tuesday. The vaccination will stop if fresh doses do

not arrive in the coming days. The government has already written letters to Centre and MP T.R. Baalu was sent to Delhi to get more doses. But still we are not getting enough stock. This issue will be taken up with the union minister," he said.

The minister said the state was able to inoculate 1.58 crore doses so far though 1.57 cr doses were received. "It was made possible with an effective

strategy to avoid wastage," the minister added. He said the state had reported 3,300 mucormycosis (black fungus) cases and 122 related deaths so far.

"We have established special wards with the strength of 7,000 beds including 500 each in Chennai and Madurai. The health department has ensured adequate stock of Amphotericin-B and Posaconazole tablets to treat the disease."

Residents want ROB project to resume

T.SUDHEESH | DC
CHENNAI, JULY 6

A road over bridge (ROB) project announced a decade ago to replace level-crossing-2 on the Pattabhiram military siding line, which cuts across the busy Chennai-Tiruvallur High (CTH) Road causing huge traffic jams during rush hour, has come to a grinding halt. No construction activities have taken place at the project site in the last 10 months, causing hardship to local residents in their commute.

Resident T. Sadagopan, who is president of Tamil Nadu Progressive Consumer Centre, said that motorists as well as local residents were suffering as the incomplete project was impeding movement. "The project was announced 10 years ago but construction work began only three years



ago. The project was then delayed due to land acquisition issues. Later, the revenue department cleared around 5,000 sq m of land, despite which the project remains incomplete", says resident V. Rangachari.

The ROB is jointly constructed by the state Highways Department and Southern Railway with the tack portion to be done by Railways and the

rest of the work, including connecting ramps for CTH Road, to be executed by the highways department.

The half constructed portion of the bridge impedes movement of traffic. "We are fed up with travelling through this stretch. There are no lamps and signage plus poor maintenance of the road gives a harrowing time to motorists. We want to get this project completed at the earliest. Since the new dispensation is in place, we hope the technicalities of the project will be resolved and get it finished soon", Rangachari said.

"We have been demanding a service road for easy commuting. However, authorities have taken no interest in taking it forward. Now it's very difficult for ambulances to pass and residents even

struggle to go to nearby hospitals during an emergency", said J. Jayakumar, General Secretary, Bharathiyar Nagar Welfare Association, Pattabhiram.

"Motorists heading towards Pattabhiram have to take a 'U' turn at the Police station and proceed towards Thirunindravur by climbing on the existing road to reach the outer ring road that connects to CTH Road. It is about 500 metres away from the project site", he added.

A state highways department official told DC that the technical issue regarding land acquisition had become a stumbling block. "The main issue is the valuation done by the revenue department for land, which is outdated as it was done five years ago. We hope that the issue will be resolved soon and the project will be resumed", the official said.

TN reports 3,479 new coronavirus cases, 73 deaths

Chennai, July 6 : Tamil Nadu on Tuesday saw a single day rise of 3,479 fresh corona virus cases and 73 fatalities, taking the tally to 25,03,481 and

the toll to 33,132.

During the last 24 hours, Coimbatore reported the highest number of 407 infections, followed by Erode at 311,

according to an official bulletin.

Chennai, Salem, Thanjavur and Tiruppur reported over 200 new cases. Recoveries out-

numbered infections, with 3,855 discharges pushing the overall tally to 24,35,872.

The number of active cases, including

those in isolation, was 34,477.

Of the 73 fatalities, 18 were in private hospitals and 55 in government hospitals.

—PTI

HC orders suspension of sales tax officer

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JULY 6

Coming down heavily on a state tax officer for misleading the court in the matter relating to granting exemption to the sale of "Intra-ocular lenses" from tax, the Madras high court has directed the commissioner of commercial taxes to place D.Mukunthan, state tax officer of commercial tax department, under suspension with immediate effect, by initiating disciplinary proceedings under the Tamil Nadu Civil Services (Discipline and Appeal) Rules and produce the copy of the order of suspension before the court.

Justice S.M.Subramanian gave the directive while passing interim orders on a batch of petitions pending from the year 2004 filed by Appasamy Associates and 24 others, which sought a direction to the authorities to grant exemption on the sales turnover of 'Intraocular lenses' both under the TNGST Act and CST Act.

The judge said in order to understand the facts as well as the legal provisions, this court repeatedly asked the question with the government counsel, whether the general exemption was granted in respect of sales within the state of Tamil Nadu, more specifically if the sale was

made to the hospitals and doctors. The government counsel answered yes.

Then, this court asked a question when the general exemption was granted within the state, how there can be a conditional exemption as far as the interstate sales were concerned. The government counsel was unable to provide an answer for this. Under those circumstances, in order to understand the case, as the cases were pending for long years and the litigants were suffering, this court directly interacted with the state tax officer, D.Mukunthan, who was present before this court. This court asked several questions and the said officer also in clear terms said that the general exemption granted for sale of Intraocular lenses were made applicable within the state, even in the cases where the said Intraocular lenses were sold to the doctors and hospitals, in a wholesale manner. Again and again the same question was asked because of the interpretation given in the written arguments filed by the authorities. The written arguments revealed that the general exemption granted would be applicable only if the Intraocular lenses were sold directly to the affected persons and the exemption was not applicable in respect of the

sales to the hospitals and doctors. The judge added.

The judge said this court, specifically asked a question as to how there can be two different interpretations in respect of general exemption granted under the Act. Even that question was not responded to either by the government counsel or by the state tax officer. "The state tax officer is very much aware of the entire facts as well as the sales taxes, as applicable for the sale of Intraocular lenses, both within the state and for interstate sales. In spite of the knowledge about the sales tax, the said officer has intentionally made false statements and further suppressed the facts for the purpose of misleading the court. Actually this court was totally misled, both by the government counsel as well as the said state tax officer, the judge added.

The judge said when this court started dictating the judgment in open court, on the verge of completion of the judgment, the government counsel said that the sales tax was collected in respect of the sale of Intraocular lenses to the hospitals and doctors, within the state of Tamil Nadu. "This court is absolutely shocked and painful, in view of the fact that all the parties to

the litigants totally misguided this court without informing the vital facts, where the sales tax is collected in respect of Intraocular lenses to the hospitals and doctors, within the state of Tamil Nadu. Thus, the said state tax officer Mukunthan, suppressed vital facts regarding the collection of sales tax for Intraocular lenses, before this court intentionally and further, misled the court and not defended the case of the respondents properly, as expected under law. Thus, he has committed misconduct and acted unbecomingly of a public servant", the judge added and gave the above directive. The judge said a probe in respect of large scale collusion in the commercial tax department was required as to the manner in which the cases were conducted as well as the loss of revenue to the state. In these circumstances this court is inclined to suo motu implead commercial taxes secretary. Accordingly, the commercial taxes and registration department secretary was impleaded as the 3rd respondent, enabling this court to deal with the issues in an appropriate manner and effectively, the judge added and posted to July 8, 2021, further hearing of the case.

CM to decide on reopening of schools soon

MARULOLI IDC
THOOTHUKUDI, JULY 6

Reopening of schools in the state would be decided based on the consultation the state

government has with the medical and health experts, said school education minister Anbil Mahesh Poyyamozhi.

Mahesh Poyyamozhi, after

offering prayers at Subramanyaswamy temple in Tiruchendur in Thoothukudi district, told the media that due to the able administration of the chief

minister, the second wave of corona has been brought under control and the number of daily caseloads has drastically come down. "We too hope that the Covid-19

spread would be completely checked creating a conducive situation to reopen the schools," said the state education minister, who too added that the state government

has been discussing with the medical and health experts about probability of the third wave of the pandemic and the measures taken to reopen the schools.

Amendment to Cinematograph Act: CM demands withdrawal

From P1

If a film was certified for public viewing by the CBFC, it fell within the domain of the state governments first and hence, it must be left to the States as law and order was a state subject, Stalin pointed out.

"Incidentally, as a prelude to this amendment, the Film Certification Appellate Board which was functioning as an appellate body against the CBFC was dismantled," he said and alleged that the restoration of the revisionary power was a misuse of "reasonable restriction" clause under Article 19(2) of the Constitution of India.

The draft amendment was totally unjustified as it went against the spirit of promoting rightful thinking in civil society and curbed the creative thinking of the film fraternity by imposing conditions on them on how films should be made, he said.

"There are certain provisions which have practical difficulties in implementation like the age-wise grouping of the certification under three categories and certain amendments that makes the film making a very risky and uncertain industry like the provision enabling the Union Government to direct the chairman of the CBFC to re-examine a film after certification," the CM said.

He requested the Union government to allow for functional autonomy of the CBFC so that India remained a progressive nation, where creative thinking that included art, culture and film making blossomed without fear or favour.



Minister for food and civil supplies R. Sakkarapani and district collector S. Nagarajan hand over ECMO machines to CMCH hospital in Coimbatore on Tuesday.

—DC

Farmers protest seeking crop insurance compensation

DC CORRESPONDENT
KUMBakonam JULY 6

Farmers staged a demonstration before head post office at Kumbakonam demanding payment of crop insurance compensation for the samba crop raised by them during 2020 affected by rain.

Sundara Vimalanathan, district secretary of Thanjavur district Cauvery farmers protection committee, led the agitation. He said under PM's crop insurance scheme, a sum of ₹12,00 crore of compensation is pending for farmers for the past four months. Farmers paid the premium for samba crop during November 2020. The crop was affected during December 2020 and January 2021 rain. Though under PM's crop insurance scheme, it has been stipulated that compensation should be paid within three months after crop cutting experiments were conducted, compensation has not been paid.



Athlete Revathy from Madurai has been selected to participate in 400 metre relay event at Tokyo Olympics.

—K.Manikandan

FIVE MORE RELAY RUNNERS WILL GET ₹ 5 LAKH EACH: CM

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JULY 6

Five relay race runners from the state, who have been selected to participate in the Olympic Games at Tokyo, to be held between July 23 and August 8 this year, would receive an incentive of ₹5 lakh each, Chief Minister M. K. Stalin announced on Tuesday.

The athletes S. Arokia Rajiv and Naganathan will be taking part in the men's 4X400 relay race and Subha Venkatesan, Dhanalakshmi Sekar and Selvi Veeramani will be participating in the 4X400 mixed relay race, an official press release said.

The government has already announced an



incentive of ₹5 lakh each to seven athletes selected to represent India at the Tokyo Olympics, the release said.

Of the relay runners getting the incentive, Arokia Rajiv and Subha Venkatesan have been undergoing training at facilities of the state meant to prepare athletes for international events.

Coast Guard, forest officials seize over one tonne of sea cucumber

Chennai, July 6: In a joint operation with the forest department, 1, 200 kg of banned sea cucumber, meant for smuggling, was seized from a boat and its crew of two men was apprehended on Tuesday, the coast guard said. Following a tip-off on illegal transshipment of sea cucumber, the coast guard initiated a joint patrol with personnel

from the Forest department and monitored the movement of suspicious vessels.

Subsequently, a boat was intercepted and a joint team of Coast Guard and Forest officials found 110 gunny bags of sea cucumber weighing 1200 kilos in it, a CG release here said. The boat (with its crew of two) was brought to coastal Ramanathapuram dis-

trict's Mandapam north fishing harbour.

"On investigation, it was revealed that the consignment was planned for transshipment across the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) during dark hours." The Wild Life Protection Act prohibits fishing, trade, and transport of sea cucumber. —PTI

SRI LANKAN NAVY PERSONNEL DAMAGE NETS OF INDIAN FISHERMEN

Rameswaram, July 6: Personnel of the Sri Lankan Navy allegedly damaged fishing net and other equipment of Indian fishermen while they were fishing near Katchatheevu, according to a fishermen's association representative. Rameswaram fishermen association chief P. Sesuraja alleged the Lankan naval personnel

damaged the fishing net and other equipment around midnight on Monday.

The matter has been informed to the local Fisheries authorities. Sesuraja and various fishermen associations wanted the Centre to take action to prevent recurrence of such incidents by taking them up with Colombo. —PTI

COFFEE-BREAK

Your day today By Dr C.V.B. Subrahmanyam



Aries: Be sure to consider the legal aspects if you are planning to invest in real estate. Career and professional affairs will require more tact and diplomacy.



Taurus: You should make more of an effort to see things from the others person's point of view. Workplace problems get sorted out.



Gemini: Try not to burden yourself with additional responsibilities on the professional front. Relations with elders suffer as a hectic schedule adds pressure.



Cancer: At work you will be a part of something big, bringing appreciation and rewards. You will have to struggle in the bid to survive against the malicious friend.



Leo: You need to speak thoughtfully as chances of unknowingly hurting someone's sentiments are high. You will have to take initiatives at home.



Virgo: Take the chance of expressing your feelings for your sweetheart now, don't delay. Your fame, reputation for integrity and authority will rule high on the work front.

You share your b'day with

MS Dhoni, former Indian international cricketer who captained the Indian national team. He is also the captain of the Indian Premier League team Chennai Super Kings.



Libra: You must avoid long journey to give complete rest to your body. Joint business venture should be postponed. Finances may be tight.



Scorpio: An excellent day for sitting down with a good book, as your concentration will be very good indeed. Travelling will lead to new romance and financial gains.



Sagittarius: You will undertake some social work and charity. Be careful of false hopes that some people might give to you. Finances don't look well for businessmen.



Capricorn: Domestic problems may arise, so be careful. A secret affair can blossom for some and give a new spark to life. You can feel a bit hemmed in at home due to restrictions.

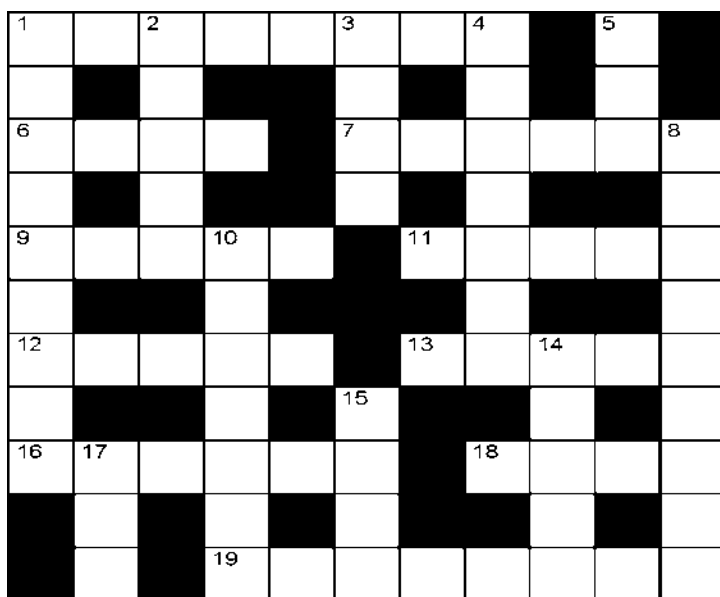


Aquarius: Avoiding a responsibility that has been trust upon you can affect your reputation on the professional front. Renovating a house will prove a drain on finances, spend wisely.



Pisces: Things run smoothly at work. An ideal day to deal with the issue you have been neglecting for long on the domestic front. Some students may feel upbeat about their performance.

QUICK CROSSWORD



Across

- Elated (8)
- Go (4)
- Lodge builder (6)
- Sunken vessel (5)
- Triangular river mouth (5)
- Model (5)
- Civilian dress (5)
- Come to rest (6)
- Indian garment (4)
- Calls into question (8)

Down

- Alpine flower (9)
- Lever open (5)
- Vestment (4)
- French manor house (7)
- Charge (3)
- Israelite (anag) (9)
- Fashioned by hand (7)
- Banquet (5)
- Realises (4)
- Unit of work (3)

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

Across: 6. Belladonna, 8. Alert, 10. Adobe, 13. Acquisition, 14. Cache, 17. Comet, 19. Distillate.

Down: 1. Gene, 2. Plot, 3. Idea, 4. Undo, 5. Maternity, 7. Cavalcade, 9. Rough, 11. Ditto, 12. Ash, 15. Cosh, 16. Evil, 17. Colt, 18. Mate.

Word Mine

P
S
I
L
T
E
N
S
O

TODAY'S RATINGS: 11 AVERAGE; 13 GOOD; 15 OUTSTANDING

How many words of four or more letters can you make from the letters shown in today's puzzle? In making a word, each letter may be used only once. Each word must contain the letter at the top of the pyramid. There should be at least one nine letter word. Plurals, foreign words and proper names are not allowed.

West	North	East
1. 2, 4, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100	2. 1, 3, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100	3. 1, 3, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100
4. 1, 3, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100	5. 1, 3, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100	6. 1, 3, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100

jumble

LIHEW
BIOTR
NIYRWE
VEDORU

Answer here: _____

Yesterday's Jumble: IQLOO WRECK

Answer: The plumbing fixture shop closed because their revenue was — DOWN TO A TRICKLE

happy to make a takeout double.

Then South bid imaginatively, jumping to five diamonds. He liked his six trumps and the singleton. He was worried that his club king would be useless, but when the dummy revealed that that was not the case, he felt fortunate.

West led the spade ace and continued with another spade. Declarer played dummy's 10 and ruffed East's king. He then led the diamond



Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above picture.

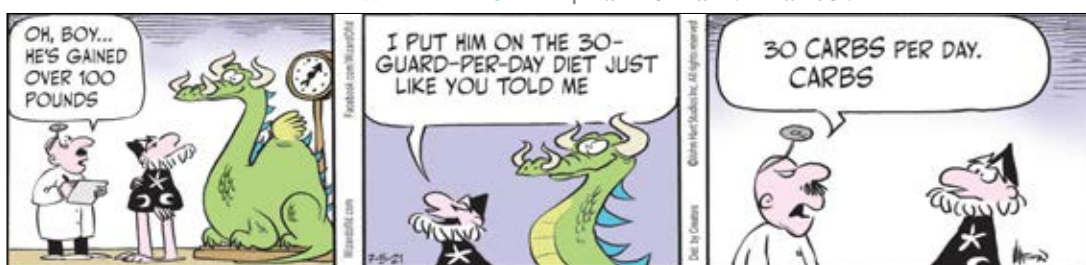
(Answers tomorrow)

Copyright © 2021 United Feature Syndicate (Asia Features)

CALVIN AND HOBBS | Bill Watterson



THE WIZARD OF ID | Parker and Hartsd



ARCHIE | Bill Henry Scarpelli & craig boldman



BLONDIE | Dean Young and John Marshall



ANDY CAPP | Reg Smythe



AMAZING SPIDER-MAN | Stan Lee



bridge
PHILLIP
ALDER

THE UNPRE-DICTABILITY OF SIMPLE BIDS

You are faced with a simple choice: say, a takeout double or a one-no-trump overcall. At that moment, it will be difficult to judge the effects of each option. Probably one will work better on the given deal, but who can then say that it was the percentage action? Looking at today's North hand, what would you do after West opens one club in third chair? One no-trump looks normal to me, despite the weakish clubs. A takeout double with

4-3-3-3 distribution should be avoided if at all possible. After one no-trump by North, some pairs play that two clubs by East is Stayman. Finally, after 20 years, it came up! But if East passes, what would South do? Probably transfer to and play in three diamonds. After North's actual takeout double, East might have bid one spade. But when he passed, South advanced one diamond, and North raised to show a strong hand, East was

West	North	East
1. 2, 4, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100	2. 1, 3, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100	3. 1, 3, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100
4. 1, 3, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100	5. 1, 3, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100	6. 1, 3, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100

Copyright © 2021 United Feature Syndicate (Asia Features)

SHORT TAKES

MAN RUN OVER BY K'TAKA DY CM'S SON'S CAR DIES

Bagalkote, July 6: A 56-year-old man died after being allegedly run over by a car owned by Karnataka deputy chief minister Laxman Savadi's son, at Hungund in the district. The victim's kin have alleged that Chidanand Savadi was behind the wheels and he even asked the locals to delete videos recorded at the site, from their mobile phones or face consequences, a charge denied by the latter.

According to police, the accident took place when Kudleppa Boli was returning home on his bike on Monday evening. The farmer was rushed to the hospital, where he succumbed to injuries.

A case has been registered against the driver of the car, who was present on the spot, based on a complaint from the victim's relative. "We have seized the car and taken the driver in our custody," District Superintendent of Police Lokesh Jagalasar said.

The SP said investigation is on into the matter. Meanwhile, Mangalappa, son-in-law of the victim, alleged that Chidanand was driving the car. He accused Savadi's son of not taking his injured father-in-law to the hospital on time. "My uncle sustained injuries in his head and back. He was lying there. They should have made some arrangements on finding his lying there, but they did nothing," he told the media here.

PUJA, DARSHAN AT AMARNATH GO ONLINE

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC SRINAGAR, JULY 6

The consortium of the Amarnath cave shrine has made darshan, puja, hawan, and prasad rituals at the revered place of worship accessible to the devotees in the virtual mode.

Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Singh, who is also chairman of the Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board (SASB), on Tuesday launched various online services of it "providing a personal experience to the devotees of the holy cave-shrine."

On June 21, Sinha had announced the cancellation of the Amarnath yatra for the second year in a row amid Covid pandemic. The 56-day annual pilgrimage to the cave-shrine at a height of 13,000 feet in lower Himalayas in south Kashmir was to begin from both traditional Pahalgam and shorter Baltal routes on June 28, coinciding with Ashaad Chaturthi, an auspicious day in Hindu calendar, and conclude on Shrawan Purnima (Raksha Bandhan) on August 22.

"For millions of devotees who are unable to visit the holy cave of Shri Amarnathji this year due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the shrine board has brought darshan, hawan, and prasad facility under the virtual mode," a statement issued here on Tuesday said.

WB ASSEMBLY PASSES VIDHAN PARISHAD PLAN

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, JULY 6

The Mamata Banerjee government's ad-hoc committee report to bring back Vidhan Parishad with the Members of Legislative Council (MLC) posts, five decades after it was abolished in West Bengal, was passed after discussion in the House on Tuesday with around two-third majority of votes by the MLAs.

While 196 TMC MLAs voted for the move, 69 BJP MLAs opposed it. The resolution will be sent to Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar for his approval. Once he gives his nod, it will be forwarded to the Union law ministry which will send it to the Parliament for its passage in both the houses before being presented to President Ram Nath Kovind for his ascent.

So far only seven states Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Bihar, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Jammu and Kashmir have Vidhan Parishad in the country. West Bengal also had the same with 51 MLCs from June 5, 1952 before it was dissolved on March 21, 1969.

Though the Trinamul Congress supreme talked about setting up Vidhan Parishad in her 2011 election manifesto to come to power for the first time, it did not follow later. This time she had promised it again, if elected to power.



BJP leader and Rajya Sabha MP Jyotiraditya Scindia offers prayers at Mahakaleshwar temple during his visit in Ujjain on Tuesday. — PTI

Jyotiraditya visits RSS office before Delhi visit

BJP leader likely to be inducted into new Modi cabinet

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, JULY 6

A 'call from Delhi' during his visit to the famous Mahakal temple in Ujjain on Tuesday prompted senior BJP leader and Rajya Sabha member Jyotiraditya Scindia to cancel his programmes in the state and air dash to the national capital.

The purported call from the central BJP leadership came amid speculation on his induction in the Narendra Modi ministry at the Centre in the upcoming expansion of the Union cabinet.

Sources close to the scion of erstwhile royal family of Gwalior said Mr Scindia received a call from the Central leadership of BJP soon after he emerged from the Ujjain temple after paying obeisance to the presiding deity of the ancient shrine spurring him to rush to Delhi from Indore in the afternoon.

"I offered my prayer in the Mahakal temple. After

completing my visit to Ujjain, I am going to Delhi", Scindia told reporters after emerging from the shrine. He dropped at the local Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) office in Ujjain before proceeding to Indore to catch his Delhi flight.

Scindia who had been on a four-day visit to Madhya Pradesh since July three to attend various programmes in Malwa region in the state was scheduled to leave for Delhi on Wednesday.

He, however, cut short his visit to MP and left for Delhi following the "call from Delhi". Scindia had switched over to BJP from Congress in March, 2020 triggering collapse of the 15-month-old Kamal Nath government.

Later, he was elected to Rajya Sabha on a BJP ticket. He had ensured that all his loyalists who had resigned from the Assembly and subsequently from Congress to join BJP 15 months ago, were later re-elected to the house on BJP ticket.

Goa gets full-time Guv ahead of polls

Panaji, July 6: Over ten months after the then governor Satya Pal Malik was transferred out of Goa and ahead of the Assembly elections due in February 2022, the coastal state has got a full-time governor with the appointment of P.S. Sreedharan Pillai.

Pillai was serving as Governor of Mizoram before he was shifted to the coastal state. Maharashtra Governor B.S. Koshiyari had been holding the additional charge of Goa after the then governor Malik was transferred within a year as governor of Meghalaya in August 2020.

Maharashtra Governor B.S. Koshiyari had been holding the additional charge of Goa after the then governor Malik was transferred within a year as governor of Meghalaya in August 2020. Congratulations Shri P.S. Sreedharan Pillai ji, on his appointment as Governor of Goa. Looking forward to welcome him in our beautiful state, Chief Minister Pramod Sawa tweeted.

Meanwhile, former Goa Speaker and BJP leader Rajendra Arlekar, who is appointed as Governor of Himachal Pradesh, told reporters that the BJP looks after ordinary workers of the party.

Arlekar, 67, said Prime Minister Narendra Modi informed him about the new responsibility on Monday.

"On Tuesday, I was informed about my appointment as Himachal Pradesh governor by President Ram Nath Kovind. A notification has been issued," he said.

Arlekar had served as the speaker of the Goa Legislative Assembly from 2012 to 2015. — PTI

NITISH DOESN'T RULE OUT JD(U) JOINING UNION GOVERNMENT

Patna, July 6: Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar Tuesday did not rule out the possibility of his JD(U) joining the Narendra Modi government during its likely expansion but insisted it was the party's national president who will take a call on the number of berths acceptable to it.

Talking to reporters here, Kumar said expansion of the Union council of ministers was a prerogative of the Prime Minister and that he "did not have much information" about what was being offered to his party. "I relinquished the party's national president post a few months ago. Current president RCP Singh has been authorised to take a call in the matter. Only he can share the details," the Chief Minister, the party's de facto leader, said with a smile playing on his lips.

When pointed out that he had disapproved of BJP's offer of "token representation" for allies in the government after the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, Kumar quipped, "I was then the national president of the party, a post which I no longer hold."

Responding to a query as to whether his party was likely to stick to its previous stand of not joining the Union council of ministers, the JD(U) leader said, "I do not think at any point of time it has been said that our party will never join the Union Cabinet."

He deflected questions about speculation in the media that the JD(U), which has become the largest ally of the BJP after Shiv Sena's exit from NDA, was bargaining for three to four berths. "These are things you should be asking RCP Singh," he said.

Incidentally, Singh, a former IAS officer, has risen to the top position in the party within a decade of taking the political plunge, and is seen as a frontrunner for a Cabinet berth.

He also said he was all set to revive his public interaction programme 'Janata ke darbar mein mukhyamantri' from next week. "Of course, there will be some constraints in view of the corona pandemic. Citizens who appear on any given day with their grievances will be extended all facilities, including transport," Kumar said. — PTI

Sonia, Oppn write to Prez over Stan Swamy's death

New Delhi, July 6: Leaders of 10 Opposition parties including Congress chief Sonia Gandhi on Tuesday wrote to President Ram Nath Kovind expressing "outrage" at the death of Father Stan Swamy "under custody", and seeking his intervention in holding accountable those responsible for "foisting false cases" on the activist, his continued detention and "inhuman treatment".

The signatories also include NCP chief Sharad Pawar, former prime minister and JDS leader H.D. Deve Gowda and National Conference leader Farooq Abdullah.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee (TMC), Tamil Nadu CM M.K. Stalin (DMK) and his Jharkhand counterpart Hemant Soren (JMM) have also signed the letter, besides D. Raja (CPD), Sitaram Yechury (CPI-M) and Tejashwi Yadav (RJD).

The 84-year-old priest-activist Stan Swamy, arrested under the anti-terror law Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act in the Elgar Parishad case, died at a Mumbai hospital Monday in the middle of his fight for bail on health grounds.

"We the undersigned leaders of major opposition parties are writing to you in deep anguish expressing our intense grief and outrage at the death of Father Stan Swamy under custody," the Opposition leaders said in their joint letter.

"We are urging your immediate intervention as the President of India to direct your govern-

ment to act against those responsible for foisting false cases on him, his continued detention in jail and inhuman treatment," they said.

"They must be held accountable. It is now incumbent that all those jailed in the Bhima Koregaon case and other detainees under politically motivated cases, misusing draconian laws like UAPA, Sedition etc, be released forthwith," they said.

The leaders said the activist who championed the rights and causes of the adivasis in far flung areas of Jharkhand was jailed last October on "trumped-up" charges under the draconian Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and was sought to be linked with the Bhima Koregaon case.

They have also alleged that he was denied treatment for his various ailments including the debilitating Parkinson's disease.

"Only after a nationwide campaign was conducted that even a sipper to drink liquids was made available to him in jail. The numerous appeals made to shift him out of the over-crowded Talaja jail that had seen a huge rise in Covid cases went unheeded.

"His appeals for bail and being sent home too were rejected. Thanks to the Bombay High Court's intervention he was admitted to a private hospital when his condition started deteriorating after he was infected with Covid. But it was too late to prevent his death in custody," they also claimed in their letter.

— PTI



People hold posters next to candles outside a church holding memorial mass for the rights activist and Jesuit priest Father Stan Swamy in Mumbai on Tuesday. — PTI

SC: No 'rath yatra' at places other than Jagannath Puri

PARMOD KUMAR | DC NEW DELHI, JULY 6

The Supreme Court on Tuesday refused to permit holding of Lord Jagannath's annual Rath Yatra in Odisha except for the one that is taken out from Lord Jagannath's temple at Puri, and allowed holding of rituals relating to Yatra within the premises of other Jagannath temples across the state.

Endorsing Odisha government's order that permits taking out of the Rath Yatra with all precautions at Puri and allowing performing of rituals within temple

premises of all other Jagannath temples, Chief Justice N.V. Ramana heading a three judge bench said, "If Rath Yatra is permitted, it will be the devotees who could suffer and we don't want to take the risk."

Telling that he himself is a devotee of Lord Jagannath and wants to visit Lord's temple at Puri for last one and a half year but had to be content by offering prayers from a distance, Chief Justice Ramana said, "Sorry, we don't want to interfere with the Odisha government's decision."

The court also observed that compared to the first

spell of Covid pandemic that had hit India last year, more people had died in its second wave and people can't be exposed to risks.

Ramana said this as the Odisha government informed the court that it would be impossible to enforce the observance of Covid protocol inducing social distancing if Yatras are allowed as sought by the petitioners.

The court was told that there will be Yatras in every village and it will not be able to control the situation.

There are thousands of Lord Jagannath temples across Odisha.

SURPRISE | REFERENCE

SC dismisses appeal against conviction of a man in a murder case

SC quotes Sherlock Holmes to uphold HC order

New Delhi, July 6: "You see, but you do not observe," the Supreme Court said quoting Sherlock Holmes as it dismissed an appeal against the conviction and life term awarded to a man in a murder case.

The top court rejected the submission of amicus curiae that it was not possible for the four eye witnesses to see at night the face of the man who had committed the murder.

A bench of Justices R.F. Nariman, K.M. Joseph and B.R. Gavai said in its order passed, we find no ground to interfere with the impugned order passed by the High Court. The

Special Leave Petition is, accordingly, dismissed.

During the hearing, advocate Pijush Kanti Roy, who has been appointed amicus in the matter, said it was a dark night in an isolated place and there was no way the four eye witnesses in the case could have seen the face of the petitioner.

Justice Nariman then said, it's like Sherlock Holmes telling Dr Watson, "You see, but you do not observe".

Roy said that his only endeavour is that an innocent should not get punished for the crime he has not committed.

The bench said that there is a finding given by the trial court and upheld by the High Court that they (eye witnesses) have seen the face in the light of the headlight of the motorcycle.

It told Roy, You are flogging a dead horse. You have done more than the duty of amicus curiae. There is a clear cut finding.

The top court was hearing an appeal filed by one Mukesh, currently lodged in Jaipur Jail, against the order of Rajasthan High Court passed on April 5, 2019 dismissing his petition against the conviction and life sentence

awarded to him by the trial court in a murder of fellow villager Gopal Lal on July 18, 2012.

In his appeal, Mukesh has contended that he was falsely implicated in the case and no case under section 302 of IPC, was made out against him.

The High Court while dismissing the appeal of the petitioner failed to appreciate that the incident took place in the dark night in an isolated place and there was no light near the place of occurrence, as such identification of the petitioner by the prosecution witness in such a dark night in an iso-

lated place remained questionable, as such evidence of the prosecution witnesses are not trustworthy, he has said in his appeal.

He said the high court ought to have appreciated the fact that there was no previous enmity between Mukesh and Gopal Lal and he had no intention to kill his co-villager.

Mukesh said that as per the prosecution the incident took place at the spur of the moment in course of their discussion and as such the case in hand at best could be a case under Section 304 Part-II and the order of conviction under

Section 302 IPC has resulted in serious miscarriage of Justice.

He submitted that there were three other persons at the site of crime but only he was made an accused and no charge sheet was filed against the other two persons.

According to the prosecution, on July 19, 2012, one Babulal had submitted a complaint at the police station that his younger brother on July 18, 2012 was coming from Bhanpur to their village at around 10-11 pm, when villagers informed him that Gopal Lal was being beaten by three persons. — PTI

SHORT BRIEF

5 SUSPECTED MILITANTS KILLED IN PAK

Quetta: Security forces shot five suspected militants to death Monday during a raid on their hideout near Pakistan's southwestern city of Quetta, a spokesman for a counter-terrorism department said.

In a brief statement, it said there was an exchange of gunfire during the raid and officers seized weapons from the militant hideout after the successful operation.

Quetta is the capital of Baluchistan province, which has been the scene of frequent militant attacks and a long-running insurgency by small separatist groups that seek independence for the mineral- and gas-rich province bordering borders Iran and Afghanistan.

The Pakistani Taliban also have a presence there.

THAILAND SEIZES 315 KILOGRAMS OF HEROIN

Bangkok: Customs officials in Thailand made their biggest seizure of heroin this year, about 315 kilograms (700 pounds) worth up to 944 million baht (\$29 million), bringing the total confiscated so far this year to 2 tons, officials said on Tuesday.

They did not say where the drugs originated, but the seizure comes amid concerns that production may surge in neighboring Myanmar, the region's main supplier of illicit drugs, because of severe instability following the military's ouster of an elected government in February.

Customs Department Director-General Patchara Anuntasilpa said 134 shrink-wrapped packets of heroin, each weighing about 2.4 kilograms (5.3 pounds), had been concealed in a shipment of acrylic paint headed for Australia.

He said the drugs were discovered on Monday because the packets of heroin were placed in square plastic containers which stood out on X-rays of the paint buckets.

UK COURT QUASHES 1972 ROBBERY CONVICTIONS OF 3

London: Britain's Court of Appeal has exonerated three Black men who were convicted of robbery nearly 50 years ago, the latest in a series of cases that have been overturned because they relied on the testimony of a corrupt police officer who later died in prison.

The court on Monday quashed the convictions of Courtney Harriot, Paul Green and Cleveland Davidson, who were aged between 17 and 20 when they were accused of trying to rob a plainclothes detective on a London Underground train. The men always maintained their innocence and claimed that they were framed by the officer before his career ended in disgrace.

"It is most unfortunate that it has taken nearly 50 years to rectify the injustice suffered by these appellants," Judge Julian Flaux said.

The case is one of several involving questionable arrests of Black men in the 1970s by a British Transport Police unit run by the late Detective Sgt. Derek Ridgewell.

NZ RECORDS WARMEST JUNE ON RECORD

Wellington: New Zealand recorded its hottest June on record as temperatures continued to soar in a pattern consistent with global warming, a government scientific agency said on Tuesday (Jul 6).

Daily temperatures averaged 10.6 degrees Celsius — 1.9 degrees Celsius above average despite a cold snap late in the month, the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research (NIWA) said.

"It's huge. There's only been 13 times since 1909 that we've had such an anomaly," NIWA scientist Chris Brandolino told public radio.

"What's alarming is that over the past 10 years that's happened six times."

Brandolino said that while shorter-term factors such as warmer ocean temperatures helped heat the air over New Zealand, climate change was a constant underlying factor.

"We've had more north-easterly air flows than normal (from the Pacific), so they're coming from a warm place, and ocean temperatures are also warmer than average," he said.

6 kids among 9 held in alleged HK 'bomb plot'

Group was attempting to make the explosive TATP

Big tech threaten to quit HK

Hong Kong, July 6: Nine people, including six secondary school students, were arrested in Hong Kong on Tuesday for allegedly plotting to set off homemade bombs in courts, tunnels and trash cans as political tensions rise in the city where China is tightening its grip.

Police said they were detained on suspicion of engaging in terrorist activity under a harsh national security law that Beijing imposed a year ago as part of a crack-down on dissent in the former British colony that has long enjoyed freedoms not seen on the Chinese mainland.

Hong Kong authorities have used the law, enacted in response to anti-government protests that rocked the city in 2019, to arrest many of the city's prominent activists. Others have fled abroad as a result.

If the allegations are true, the group appears to

unveiled plans to pass a new law targeting "doxxing" — the act of publishing someone's private details online so they can be harassed by others.

But the broad wording of the proposed legislation has spooked major tech companies who fear they

could be held liable and their employees prosecuted for users' content.

They detailed their concerns in a letter sent to Hong Kong's government by the Asia Internet Coalition which includes tech giants such as Google, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Apple. — *AFP*

represent a more radical fringe of the protest movement, which has demanded broader democratic freedoms for Hong Kong just as its liberties are under threat. Police said the group was attempting to make the explosive triacetone triperoxide, or TATP, which has been widely used in bombings in Europe and elsewhere, in a makeshift laboratory in a hostel.

Police accused the group

of planning to use the explosive to bomb courts, cross-harbor tunnels, railways and trash cans on the street "to maximise damage caused to the society."

Since the 2019 anti-government protests, Hong Kong police have arrested several people over alleged bomb plots and for making TATP, including 17 detained that year in overnight raids that also seized explosives and

chemicals.

Nine people between 15 and 39 years old were arrested Tuesday, according to Senior Superintendent Li Kwaiwah of the Hong Kong Police National Security Department.

Hong Kong chief executive Carrie Lam said at a weekly news briefing that she hopes the members of the public will "openly condemn threats of violence." — *AP*



An Afghan soldier plays a guitar that was left behind after the American military departed Bagram air base, in Parwan province north of Kabul, Afghanistan, on Tuesday. — *AP*

US quits Bagram in a mess at night, Afghan commander not informed

Bagram, Afghanistan, July 6: The U.S. left Afghanistan's Bagram Airfield after nearly 20 years by shutting off the electricity and slipping away in the night without notifying the base's new Afghan commander, who discovered the Americans' departure more than two hours after they left, Afghan military officials said.

Afghanistan's army showed off the sprawling air base Monday, providing a rare first glimpse of

what had been the epicenter of America's war to unseat the Taliban and hunt down the al-Qaida perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks on America.

The US announced on Friday it had completely vacated its biggest airfield in the country in advance of a final withdrawal the Pentagon says will be completed by the end of August.

"We (heard) some rumor that the Americans had left Bagram ... and finally by seven o'clock in the morning, we understood

that it was confirmed that they had already left Bagram," Gen. Mir Asadullah Kohistani, Bagram's new commander said. U.S. military spokesman Col. Sonny Leggett did not address the specific complaints of many Afghan soldiers who inherited the abandoned airfield, instead referring to a statement last week.

The statement said the handover of the many bases had been in the process soon after President Joe Biden's mid-April announcement that America

was withdrawing the last of its forces. Leggett said in the statement that they had coordinated their departures with Afghanistan's leaders.

Before the Afghan army could take control of the airfield about an hour's drive from the Afghan capital Kabul, it was invaded by a small army of looters, who ransacked barracks after barracks and rummaged through giant storage tents before being evicted, according to Afghan military officials. — *AFP*

Plane wreckage found in E. Russia

Moscow, July 6: Search teams on Tuesday found wreckage of a passenger plane carrying 28 people that had disappeared in Russia's remote far eastern Kamchatka peninsula, but there was little hope of survivors.

Search and rescue operations were suspended after night fell and Russian news agencies quoted local sources as saying it appeared that all

the passengers and crew had died.

The An-26 plane was flying from Kamchatka's main city of Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky to the coastal town of Palana when it disappeared at 2:40 pm (0240 GMT).

The governor of Kamchatka, a vast peninsula popular with adventure tourists for its abundant wildlife and live volcanoes, said search

teams had found parts of the fuselage along the coast and in the Okhotsk Sea. "There was a catastrophe during the go-around approach for landing," Vladimir Solodov said in a video released on the government website.

Russia's aviation agency said in a statement that the plane's debris had been found at 9:06 pm local time (0906 GMT).

Officials said that com-

munication with the plane had been lost nine kilometres (5.5 miles) from Palana's airport and 10 minutes before its scheduled landing time.

Russian news agencies quoted local officials as saying most of the passengers were from Palana --

which has a population of about 3,000 -- including four local government officials and the town's head Olga Mokhiryova. — *AFP*

LETHAL WEAPON

Director Richard Donner had a 'powerful command of his movies'

He gave us *The Omen* chills, *Superman* thrills

Washington, July 6: Richard Donner, a prolific filmmaker who directed the first *Superman* movie, *The Goonies* and other blockbuster hits, died on Monday at age 91, US media reported.

Donner's other credits include the 1976 horror classic *The Omen*, the *Lethal Weapon* cop franchise with Mel Gibson and Danny Glover starting in 1987,

Scrooged (1988) and his final movie in 2006, *16 Blocks*. He also directed episodes of iconic 20th century television shows such as *Get*

Smart, *Perry Mason*, *Gilligan's Island* and *The Twilight Zone*, according to IMDb, and took on a producer role for blockbuster hits including *X-Men* and *Free Willy*.

The *Hollywood Reporter* cited Donner's assistant in confirming his death, while *Deadline* said there was no cause of death revealed by Donner's business manager or producer wife, Lauren Schuler Donner.

"Richard Donner had the biggest, boomiest voice you could imagine," *Goonies* star

Sean Astin said on Twitter. "He commanded attention and he laughed like no man has ever laughed before. Dick was so much fun. What I perceived in him, as a 12 year old kid, is that he cared. I love how much he cared," Astin tweeted about his time acting in the 1985 teen treasure hunt movie.

Fellow director Steven Spielberg, who wrote the story on which *The Goonies* was based, said in a statement that Donner had a "powerful command of his movies".

"Being in his circle was akin to hanging out with your favorite coach, smartest professor, fiercest motivator, most endearing friend, staunchest ally, and — of course — the greatest Goonie of all," Spielberg said in the statement tweeted by his production company Amblin.

Donner was born in the Bronx and grew up in New York before attending New York University and joining the US military, according to the *Hollywood Reporter*. — *AFP*

COVID AT A GLANCE

Can avoid quarantine if jabbed or recovered

Germany relaxes curbs on travellers from UK, India

Israel, S. Korea agree vax swap

Berlin, July 6: Germany's health agency said on Monday five so-called virus variant countries would be reclassified as "high incidence areas", lifting a ban on entry for travellers from those nations who are not German residents or citizens.

The Robert Koch Institute (RKI) said India, Nepal, Russia, Portugal and the UK would be reclassified from on Wednesday, meaning any traveller will be able to enter as long as they observe quarantine and testing rules.

Germany introduced its "virus variant country" travel category in a bid to stop new Coronavirus variants that have not yet spread widely on home soil.

But Health Minister Jens Spahn said last week that the Delta variant was fast becoming dominant in Germany, meaning that bans on most travellers from countries hit by that variant may be lifted.

Given the increasing spread of Delta, which was first detected in India, and research suggesting vaccines are effective against it, "we will look at the situation in the next few days", Spahn said.

Chancellor Angela Merkel also hinted at a potential softening in Germany's stance towards travellers from Britain during a visit to London on Friday.

Last month, Merkel called for tough restrictions, including longer quarantine, for people travelling from Britain, where the Delta variant has caused a surge in cases. But she indicated that the stance could soften as travel advice was reviewed.

"We think that in the foreseeable future, those who have received double jabs will... be able to travel again, without having to go into quarantine," she said. Only citizens and residents of Germany are permitted to enter from a variant country and are subject to a two-week quarantine, regardless of whether they are fully vaccinated or can provide

Jerusalem, July 6: Israel agreed a Covid vaccine swap with South Korea on Tuesday, sending 7,000,000 doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech jab to Seoul "immediately" in return for the same number in coming months.

A statement from Prime Minister Naftali Bennett's office said the deal, the first of its kind for Israel, would allow more effective use of the vaccine stocks of both countries.

The statement added that Bennett had spoken to Pfizer chief executive Albert Bourla about the arrangement.

Israel received a huge supply of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine shortly after its approval last year following an arrangement with the producers to share data

about its impact.

That deal helped Israel roll out one of the world's fastest inoculation drives but has also raised concerns about unused stock expiring.

The Palestinian Authority last month cancelled a deal that would have seen a million jabs from Israel's inventory sent to the occupied West Bank.

The PA said the doses "were about to expire". Israel insisted they were "completely valid".

More than 80 percent of Israel's adult population is fully inoculated against Covid-19 but cases are again rising, with officials raising concern about the surging Delta variant's ability to evade vaccine protection and cause mild illness. — *AFP*

Cannes fest back after pandemic

Cannes, France, July 6: The famed Cannes Film Festival opens Tuesday, and despite social distancing subduing some of its signature glamour, excitement is rife for the first fully fledged film festival since the start of the Coronavirus pandemic.

Last year's edition was cancelled over the health crisis, and although stars will be allowed to go maskless on the red carpet this year, a health pass is required for entrance and many of the glitzy after-parties that are the festival's calling card have been postponed because of distancing measures.

"Covid is still there, but

being here for the return of the festival, in the opening film... it's a huge sense of relief and excitement," US actor Adam Driver said.

Driver co-stars with French actor Marion Cotillard in the opening night film, "Annette", a musical directed by cult favourite Leos Carax.

Members of the jury — headed for the first time by a black man, US director Spike Lee — arrived Monday night and will give their traditional press conference on Tuesday afternoon, before embarking on their 24-film marathon. — *AFP*

a negative Covid-19 test. By contrast, anyone can enter from a high-incidence country as long as they provide a negative test on arrival. — *AFP*

Israel ban on Arab unifications lapses

Jerusalem, July 6: Israel's Prime Minister Naftali Bennett accused his opponents on Tuesday of harming national security as his coalition failed to extend a ban on citizenship for Palestinian spouses from the West Bank and Gaza.

The ban first enacted in 2003 during the second Palestinian intifada, or uprising, has been justified by supporters on security grounds — but critics derided it as discriminatory toward Israel's Arab minority.

The ban has caused endless complications for Palestinians living across Israel and the territories it has occupied since 1967. Many of those affected live in annexed east Jerusalem, often with Israeli residency but not citizenship.

The failure to pass the ban's extension in a parliament vote early Tuesday highlighted tensions within Bennett's ideologically diverse

eight-party coalition that spans his far-right Yamina party to Raam, a conservative Islamist Arab faction.

It was also a success for Benjamin Netanyahu, who is now the opposition leader after Bennett ousted him following 12 straight years as premier.

"The opposition deliberately took a direct strike at the state's security, out of some sort of bitterness and frustration," Bennett fumed. "They ultimately harmed the good of the country."

In overnight talks, Bennett's coalition had sought a deal for nearly all of its members to back the ban's extension, including Jewish left-wingers and two Raam lawmakers.

In exchange, the government would have granted residency or citizenship rights to more than 1,500 Palestinians who have been living in Israel for many years. — *AFP*



Viktor Babaryko

BELARUS OPPN FIGURE BABARYKO JAILED FOR 14 YRS

Moscow, July 6: One of Belarus's leading opposition figures was sentenced to 14 years in prison on Tuesday, the latest move in a months-long crackdown on critics of strongman leader Alexander Lukashenko.

Former banker Viktor Babaryko — considered one of Lukashenko's strongest opponents — was handed the sentence by the Supreme Court in Minsk.

His Twitter account, which is run by supporters, said he would serve the 14 years "in a maximum security colony".

The 57-year-old was arrested in June last year on fraud charges ahead of a disputed presidential election that sparked several months of protests.

He had planned to run in the election and was considered the strongest challenger to Lukashenko's almost three decade rule. — *AFP*

HINDU RELIGIOUS AND CHARITABLE ENDOWMENTS DEPARTMENT ARULMIGU SWAMY CHIDAMBARESWARAR GROUP TEMPLES Chettiyapathu, Thiruchendur Taluk, Thoothukudi District. Ph.No.04639-250630						
TENDER NOTICE						
Sealed tenders are invited from the registered contractor in Public works Department up to 20.07.2021 and the same will be opened on the Same day at 2.30 pm by the Executive Officer, Arulmigu Chidambareswarar group of Temple, Chettiyapathu, Thiruchendur Taluk, Tutucorin District in the presence of tenders registered.						
Sl. No	Name of the work	Value of contract	Earnest money Deposit	Period of Completion	Cost of Tender Schedule	Eligibility of Tender
1.	Construction of compound wall in vacant place around the north and west side of Aynithu veetu Swamy temple	Rs. 32,35,000/-	Rs. 32,350/-	Six Months	Rs.10,080/-	Registered contractor in PWD, Government of Tamilnadu with Class I Registration
Note: The tender schedule will be obtained up to 5.00 pm on 19.07.2021 during office hours in the office of the Executive Officer, Arulmigu Chidambareswarar Group of Temple, Chettiyapathu, Thiruchendur Taluk, Tutucorin District.						
L. Kalaiivanan, Fit person			DIPR/1961/Tender/2021		M.Radha, Executive Officer	

DECCAN Chronicle

7 JULY 2021

Who has the credibility to probe Stan Swamy death?

The death of the 84-year old Jesuit priest Father Stan Swamy — who had emerged as one of India's foremost human rights defenders — in judicial custody in Mumbai on Sunday offers a great lesson in injustice. This death is a tragedy for India and the values it has cherished for centuries. Clearly, the ruling dispensation is not likely to see it in this way. Its vicious representatives and spokespersons have offered crude and laboured justifications on television for the late activist's unwarranted incarceration and, further, the denial to him of the smallest consideration on grounds of medical condition, advanced age, and his eminence which derived from 55 years of dedicated service to the cause of the adivasis and dalits, namely the poorest Indians.

The death of this indefatigable champion of poor people's causes invites us to ponder over the nature of the present Indian State whose hallmark is to pander to the fatcats, bring about policies for the further impoverishment of the already marginalised sections of our fellow citizens, ingratiate itself with international capital and the political masters in the West, and at home spread divisive venom through carefully articulated economic and social religio-populism.

The rampant misuse of agencies and institutions of the State for political agendas, and the non-stop spread of disinformation to soften up the citizenry, also appear to be integral to the designs of many in authority. Even so, instances from 20th century European history may not be apt to find meaningful parallels with the present Indian regime. It may be more apt to think of patterns of behaviour of police states that operate within the framework of a perfectly democratic Constitution. But does there exist such an example, or is today's India really quite unique?

The late Fr Swamy's shocking demise brings into question the conduct and attitude of the National Investigating Agency (NIA), which reports to the Union home ministry and was created to investigate terrorism-related crimes but all too often happily doubles — along with some other agencies of the Centre — virtually as political police. Alas, it also raises doubts about the judiciary at the trial court level and, in this instance, the Bombay high court, too. Taken together these pretty much constitute the panoply of the justice system in its entirety.

Given the gravity of the situation, to which our attention has been drawn by the death of one of our most eminent citizens, and the negative international attention it has drawn, Fr Swamy's demise makes an impartial high-level inquiry imperative. But today which institution has the experience, and also its credibility intact, to carry out this onerous task?

The matter deserves to be raised in the Monsoon Session of Parliament in a collective voice by all sections of the House, including those on the treasury benches who have a conscience. This is all the more necessary because nearly a dozen noted intellectuals, lawyers, activists, with a lifetime's record of work for the poor, are also being made to rot in prison without trial in the Elgar Parishad case-as the late Fr Swamy was — on the false pretext of their membership of banned organizations intent on violently destroying the sovereignty of India and assassinating the Prime Minister.

If there is transparent justice, these monstrous charges will not stick, but many of those in prison are elderly and suffer from severe health problems, much as Fr Swamy did. The tragedy that befell the country on Monday must not be permitted to play out again.

Persecution with a quashed law

The Indian justice system is in focus after the death of the octogenarian rights activist Stan Swamy. The malaise, however, runs far deeper than just the highest courts of the land. The executive is constantly guilty of over reach when it comes to stifling dissent. The top court was flabbergasted recently when it came across many persons being arrested for posting dissenting opinions on social media under Section 66A of the IT Act which was struck off from the statute six years ago. It is apparent that police in some states are either unaware that the section is invalid or do not bother reading the footnote following an asterisk placed against Section 66 A in the law book.

The cause of such distressing and illegal action of police in going after dissent expressed on social media stems from the eagerness to please their political masters than any great desire to uphold the law. The usual logic behind such action is public order may be affected by the spread of restlessness. The social media is, however, known to host all kinds of rebellious, unconventional, outlandish or even outright cranky opinions but they have hardly wrought greater damage than cause a flutter. It is a well-known fact that posts against politicians are likely to draw the attention of netas ruling in states with Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand and Rajasthan seen to be most active in using the inoperative Sec. 66A.

What is more distressing than the sheer unintelligence of the police in using non-existent provisions of the law to go after critics or rebels is the prevailing atmosphere of distrust and the extreme sensitivity of the ruling class tending to take umbrage at the slightest provocation. It is the harassment of citizens with contrary opinions that is the aim. The registering of cases, which often get thrown out by the courts, is aimed to draw the "accused" into a legal net and use just the process to persecute him. What is to be balked at is the intent more than the ignorance of the police.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

KAUSHIK MITTER
Editor

R. MOHAN
Resident Editor

K. SUDHAKAR
Printer & Publisher

DECCAN CHRONICLE offices are located at:
Chennai: SP 3 Developed Plot, Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai 600032. Phones: (044) 22254747, 22254748
Coimbatore: 77 Vivekananda Road, Ramnagar, Coimbatore 641009. Phone: (0422) 2231255, 2231256
Hyderabad: 36, Sarojini Devi Road, Secunderabad 500 003. Phone: (040) 27803930-4, Fax: (040) 27805256
Bengaluru: 5th Floor, BMITC Commercial Complex, 80 Ft. Road, Koramangala, Bangalore-560095. Ph: 08043460500; Fax: 080-22960551/52/55
Visakhapatnam: Survey No. 1/3A Beach Road, Near Kailasagiri Roadway, Sector-9 MVP Colony, Visakhapatnam - 530 017. Phones: (0891) 2552333/2552334, Fax: (0891) 2755285
Vijayawada: No. C 3 & 4, Patamata, Industrial Estate, Auto Nagar, Vijayawada (A.P.). Phones: (0866) 2555284/ 2555287, Fax: (0866) 2555234
Rajahmundry: Vemagiri, Dhawleswaram Rd, Rajahmundry 533125. Phones: (0883) 2417208, 2417618
Anantapur: Thapovan Colony, Bangalore Bye-Pass Road, Anantapur 515004. Phones: (08554) 276903, Fax: 08554-276904
Nellore: Survey No. 527/2, Burrampur Village, Venkatachalam (M), Chemudugunta Panchayat, Nellore. Phone: (0861) 2348581/ 92, Telefax (0861) 2348580
Karimnagar: Survey No. 1341, Vavilapally Colony, Jagityala Road, Karimnagar 505 001. Phone: (0878) 2228908; Telefax (0878) 2220433
Kochi: No. 3-B, 3rd Floor, DD TRADE TOWER, Kaloor-Kadavanthara Road, Ernakulam, Ph: 0484-4039408
Kozhikode: No 6/1002 E, First Floor City Mall, Opp. YMCA Kannur Road, Kozhikode - 673 001 Fax: 0495 4019018
Thiruvananthapuram: St Joseph Press Thycaud post, Cotton Hills, Thiruvananthapuram-14, Ph: 0471-2735105/6/7, Fax: 0471-4016112 Gram: CHRONICLE Postal registration no: No. H/SD-348/2006-08ss

Subhani



China's hard talk: Sign of Xi's confidence or worry?



K.C. Singh

President Xi Jinping of China, after assuming office in 2012, declared twin goals for his country — a moderately developed China by the centenary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) on July 1 this year and a fully developed, rich and powerful nation by 2049 — the centenary of the People's Republic of China. By most accounts he has been able to achieve the first.

However, China, by its stated ambitions and aggressive behaviour, has also concomitantly set off concerns of its neighbours and the developed nations. Thus, the meetings of the Group of Seven and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation the week before the Chinese kicked off the CPC's centenary celebrations, sounded the alarm. The Chinese behaviour, said Nato, presented "systemic challenges". US President Joe Biden, to the immense relief of America's European allies after his predecessor Donald Trump's dithering, committed the United States fully to the alliance, calling the mutual defence mandate a "sacred obligation". This was a win for Mr Biden as the European allies have earlier been chary of naming and shaming China due to their dependence on Chinese markets. For instance, in 2020, Germany's trade with China was \$256 billion, as that of the US topped \$559 billion.

The two summits also brought the focus back on China's gross abuse of human rights in Xinjiang and the forced assimilation of Hong Kong. Of course, China called all such debates and resolutions "slander". Chinese irritation was understandable as the criticism came on the very eve of their centennial celebrations. It was also a personal affront for President Xi Jinping as the post-2008 Chinese

assertiveness has his imprint on it. Slowly he has tightened the leash of the CPC and increased his centralised control over almost all levers of power. The personality cult and re-education evangelism is a reminder more of Mao Zedong than any of his successors, including the creator of China's economic miracle Deng Xiaoping.

It was therefore not surprising that President Xi's address on July 1 provided the response to the critique. Dressed in a grey Mao button-up assemblage, though his usual attire is a business suit, he spoke at Beijing's Tiananmen Square from the very platform and stage used by Mao. He delivered a stern message, warning that China would not tolerate any attempt by foreign powers at bullying, oppressing or subjugating them. He spun China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), seen by most of the developed world and India as a debt trap and a means of creating permanent dependence on China, as an instrument for China to share the fruits of its development with developing and underdeveloped nations. A strong nation needs a strong military and China is fulfilling that need, he said. President Xi was addressing not just the 95 million-odd members of the CPC, or indeed other citizens of China, but the entire neighbourhood and the world beyond. It was a clarion call that China had now fully arrived and willing and able to match its wits with the United States.

Just in case countries like India did not get the message, a running commentary was provided in English publications like *Global Times*.

Coincidentally, the centenary fell soon after India marked one year of the bloody Galwan clash between the armies of India and China. For decades China has consid-

ered India as an inferior power, incapable of mounting a challenge to it. However, the rising profile of the "Quad", US President Joe Biden persisting with his predecessor's sceptical line on China and the BJP's consolidation of domestic political power has combined to irk China. India therefore began to get elevated in Beijing's perception as a strategic rival, if not yet a threat. This explains the sudden Chinese incursions in Ladakh and reluctance to vacate forward military ingress at a number of points. China has always used the unsettled border as a pressure point to condition India's strategic conduct.

It is also noteworthy that when the 19th Central Committee Politburo of the CPC met on June 25, the focus was on party affairs, foreign policy and security and military matters. Under previous Presidents, post-Mao, much greater attention was paid to economic issues. It is worth examining whether the jingoism and strong language, evoking the powerful imagery that foreign bullies will "face broken heads and bloodshed", is a sign of confidence or deep worry?

Although the Chinese economy has recovered faster and better than the economies of the developed world during the Covid-19 pandemic, its exports have performed better than domestic consumption growth. There is also the Chinese worry over demographics as their population growth continues to fall below sustainable levels. There may also be murmurs within the party about President Xi's confrontational foreign policy as China now faces the potential danger

There may be murmurs within the party about Xi's confrontational foreign policy as China now faces the potential danger of antagonists restraining it through cooperation and coordinated response

of antagonists restraining it through cooperation and coordinated response. The Quad, with its implicit membership criteria being based on democratic credentials, presents an imminent threat. The fact that G-7 invited Australia, India, South Korea and South Africa as dialogue partners for the summit in the UK again underscored an attempt to align the interests of democracies across all continents. The direct or implicit message is that China is the new danger that needs to be contained by all means, including hard and soft power.

The Global Times, the perennial tool for disinformation and propaganda, warned India that because it cannot afford a "long and high-intensity confrontation" it should not try siding with the US in any power games in Indo-Pacific. Reports have been discounted that India had moved more troops to the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in response to China's troop deployment surge. President Xi's jingoism may be more for domestic consolidation than international browbeating as the neighbourhood has known Chinese high-handedness for many years. Thus, the rhetoric does not add to the reality of Chinese unilateralism in real and invented disputes.

India's concerns would be heightened by the new drone-based terrorism from Pakistan and the rapidly succeeding Taliban in Afghanistan. China appears less worried about the Afghan imbroglio than Russia, having the Pakistani assurances in hand. Iran has a new and more conservative President, leaving a question mark over Iranian interests in Afghanistan. Iran's priority would be to get the US sanctions lifted and its nuclear programme restored. India can only hope that China will moderate its "wolf-warrior" diplomacy and move towards a genuinely stabilising role in South Asia. However, events appear to be moving in the reverse direction after the American exit from Afghanistan.

The writer is a former secretary in the external affairs ministry. He tweets at @ambkcsingh.

LETTERS

NOT A SWEET ACT

Indeed it's bitter to come across the news that the former AIADMK minister K.T. Rajenthra Balaji had taken away sweets weighing 1.50 tonnes from the manufacturing unit of Aavin during last year's Deepavali festival without making any payment. This is shameful on the part of a government servant. The government at present also has taken up the issue of the irregularities of job appointments at Aavin during his regime when he was a minister for dairy. The report says that there is enough evidence that the minister has taken away the sweets and it's a blessing in disguise that Aavin does not own any cows or else a number of them too could have been missing. The minister probably believed sweets are freebies for his personal use.

A.P. Thiruvadi, Chennai

PUNISH THEM ALL

Apropos report, Use of scrapped Sec.66A of IT Act shocks apex court. It is baffling how the IT law Sec.66 A which was struck down six years ago is still being brazenly misused by state governments and innocents have been hauled up, incarcerated without basic humanity and negating the very basic fundamental rights guaranteed under Art 19(1) (a). Such cases are filed by bureaucrats at the behest of their ruling party bosses and there are instances where a few were imprisoned for a day or week for contempt of court. When such a defunct section of the law is misused and instead of punishing officials who are mere marionettes, would not the Supreme Court be justified if the law-makers-cum-breakers are imprisoned briefly and held responsible for such a blatant contempt of court?

A. Seshagiri Rao, Chennai

Wolfgang Münchau



Merkel's legacy: German leader leaves behind an Europe in chaos

Perhaps the most absurd thing I ever said about Angela Merkel is that she was the de facto leader of the Western world. She has certainly been one of Europe's most successful politicians, if you define success as political survival. But as she nears the end of her 16 years in office, her luck is deserting her and the mess she created is becoming apparent. She leaves behind a split EU that isn't just unled but might be unleadable.

Humiliating reminders of Ms Merkel's imploded authority come regularly. Take her latest idea to keep British tourists out of the EU this summer. Germany is imposing a mandatory 14-day quarantine for UK arrivals, whether they are vaccinated or not, and Ms Merkel wanted other EU states to do the same. Malta and Portugal refused, saying only the unvaccinated should quarantine. Spain said it wouldn't quarantine anyone who came with a negative test.

Ms Merkel's ban failed as it wasn't really about the virus but about the German elections. The nightmare scenario for her Christian Democratic Union is a rise of infections after the

summer holidays but before the September polls. It's unclear how banning British tourists would help to suppress Covid. The Delta variant is moving fast through Europe. It makes up 20 per cent of cases in Spain and 40 per cent in Austria.

An even more stark sign of the deterioration of EU unity came last week when a Franco-German proposal for a summit with Vladimir Putin triggered one of the most ill-tempered disputes ever seen in European politics. Ms Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron were irked because US President Joe Biden had recently been to Geneva to meet Mr Putin and, like children, they didn't want to be left out. Ms Merkel's idea was for all 27 EU nations to hold talks with the Kremlin. Former Communist states, the Baltic ones in particular, which feel under threat from a resurgent Mr Putin, were appalled. They saw it as a push for a softer approach towards Moscow.

The Baltic states were united in opposition with Poland and Romania. Mateusz Morawiecki, Poland's PM, said that a dialogue with Russia can only happen after Mr Putin ends his

aggressive policies towards Ukraine. Even Dutch PM Mark Rutte drew the line, noting Russia's involvement in the missile attack on the Malaysia Airlines MH17 flight that crashed in Ukraine while en route from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur. Gustav Gressel from the European Council on Foreign Relations wrote that Ms Merkel had destroyed her legacy in 24 hours.

I think it is worse than that. What we are witnessing is the birth of a new breed of Euroscepticism. Not the nationalist sort that led to Brexit and the rise of various right-wing parties, but a principled one that supports democracy and human rights and refuses, on principle, to get close to Moscow. This all amounts to a moment of great danger for the EU.

Perhaps Ms Merkel's most consequential act was not a strategic choice, but a spontaneous executive act: her decision to open Europe's borders for refugees in 2015. She did not consult with the coalition partners, nor with other EU member states - many of which are still living with the political ramifications of her decision. Where

was the leadership? She didn't stop to think about where this would end. In her entire 16 years as Chancellor, she never picked a battle with a genuine strategic advantage.

Her lasting legacy will be a recognition that "Europe" as a political entity — the idea of European strategic autonomy — has been tried and that it has failed. If neither Ms Merkel nor Mr Macron can "lead" Europe, then who can? Look at the field of their potential successors in Germany and France. No one else is on the horizon. So, the EU's future depends on weaning itself off the illusion of Franco-German leadership.

The failed summit proposal ended another European delusion: the idea that the EU can decide foreign policy by majority voting. To many in the EU, this is crucial if Brussels is to issue pronouncements on foreign events. Ursula von der Leyen, European Commission president, had said in September she's tired of "simple statements on EU values being delayed, watered down or held hostage for other motives". Wouldn't it be easier if the EU decided such issues by holding a vote?

But if majority voting was in place

this time, a majority of 20 countries would have been able to back Ms Merkel's plan for talks with Mr Putin. So the Baltics will never give up their veto, especially if they see a fundamental conflict between their interests and those of countries like Germany.

The Merkel years will come to be seen as the last hurrah of a bygone, late-industrial era. When it ends, people will ask the uncomfortable questions they didn't ask during her time: why did a rich country like Germany fail to invest in new technologies? Why did she refuse to lay solid foundations for the eurozone? Why did she do business with Mr Putin and make her country dependent on Russia's natural resources? Why did she agree to climate change targets and then fail to implement them?

I concluded some time ago that Ms Merkel is the most overrated political leader of our time. If she really had been the leader of the West, she would done what she could to create a strong, united EU. Instead, we see bedlam. And that will be Ms Merkel's lasting legacy.

By arrangement with the Spectator

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	52,861.18	-0.04
Nifty 50	15,818.30	-0.10
S&P 500*	4,326.13	-0.60
Dollar (₹)	74.55	-0.30
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.21	-0.25
Euro (₹)	88.26	-0.01
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	46,762.389	0.83
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	74.45	-3.51
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.175	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.360	-0.072

* As of 8:30 PM IST

British Airways settles class action over data

British Airways settled a UK class-action lawsuit involving hundreds of thousands of customers caught up in a 2018 data breach. The settlement, for an undisclosed sum, followed the leak of the personal data of 420,000 customers and staff, including bank details, contact information and addresses. The deal between IAG-owned British Airways and law firm PGMBM doesn't include any admission of liability by the airline.

Wipro commits ₹1,000 cr more for Covid-19 relief



Wipro's philanthropic arm has committed an additional Rs 1,000 crore of grants over and above the Rs 1,125-crore support it had announced in the early days of the pandemic last year, its founder chairman Azim Premji said. The additional grant will be directed primarily on universal vaccination, Premji said while speaking at the foundation day event of the Bombay Chartered Accountants' Society.

Malabar Gold on hiring spree, with 5,000 vacancies

Malabar Gold and Diamonds announced hiring to fill more than 5,000 vacancies across its retail operations in India. The current vacancies are mainly in retail jewellery sales, store operations and accountants across India, along with other functions. Half of these openings are set aside for deserving female candidates. Internships and traineeships are also being offered for fresh BTech/MBA entrants to learn jewellery sales.

IIFL Home Fin's unsecured NCDs offer 10% interest

IIFL Home Finance, a subsidiary of IIFL Finance, announced the public issue of unsecured non-convertible debentures (NCDs) with coupon rates ranging from 9.60 per cent to 10.00 per cent per annum for a tenure of 7 years and 3 months (87 months). The issue with a base issue size of Rs 100 crore with an option to retain oversubscription up to Rs 900 crore, has been rated AA by Crisil Ratings and Brickwork Ratings.



Talks collapse after UAE puts foot down Saudis up prices after Opec+ feud

SERENE CHEONG, SHARON CHO & ANTHONY DI PAOLA JULY 6

Saudi Arabia raised oil prices for buyers from Asia to the US for August after Opec+ talks broke down just as the market was clamouring for more supply.

The Saudis, along with Russia, sought over the past week to rally other members around a plan to unwind production cuts incrementally and to extend their accord through to the end of next year. The proposal collapsed when the United Arab Emirates balked at keeping in place what it says is an unfair production baseline for its quota for longer.

In its main market of Asia, Saudi Aramco increased the official selling price, or OSP, for Arab Light crude by 80 cents a barrel to \$2.70 above the regional benchmark. That's the biggest month-on-month increase since January, and suggests the oil giant won't raise supply next month even as it sees the market tightening.

"With domestic demand peaking around August, there will be less crude available for exports unless they draw down from the inventories," said Giovanni Staunovo, a commodities analyst at UBS Group AG. "As the market was looking for a slightly smaller OSP increase for Asia, Asian refineries can't expect additional vol-



umes from Saudi Arabia."

The kingdom sends more than 60 per cent of its crude exports to Asia, with China, Japan, South Korea and India being the biggest buyers. Last month, it shipped 5.7 million barrels a day globally, according to preliminary data compiled by Bloomberg.

Oil futures and physical markets have strengthened with widespread virus vaccinations supporting demand. The breakdown in Opec+ talks means current production limits will remain in place for August, likely leading to a deeper supply deficit.

Crude could rise to as high as \$90 a barrel with out higher output, Fereidun Fesharaki, chairman of industry consultant FGE, said in a Bloomberg Television interview. He said a compromise between the feuding Opec nations was likely.

Reuters adds from London: Oil prices were heading towards three-year highs on Tuesday, towing petrocurrencies and bond yields with

them, after the world's main oil producers failed to agree on production plans.

Europe's stocks spluttered at the prospect of faster inflation. China had spooked its tech sector too with another high profile clamp down, but the main action was all around the black stuff.

The Opec+ were forced to abandon talks on Monday after the UAE had rejected an eight-month extension to output curbs.

Some Opec+ sources said there would be no oil output increase in August, while others said a new meeting would take place in the coming days and they believed there will be a boost in August.

Crude traders were not hanging around to find out. They pushed Brent up as far as \$77.66—the highest level since October 2018—and US crude to its highest since late 2014 at \$76.90 a barrel. Oil is up roughly 50 per cent this year and over 385 per cent since last year's Covid-driven slump.

Govt plans to develop 10 'freight smart cities'

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JULY 6

The Centre has asked state governments to identify ten cities which can be developed as 'freight smart cities'.

Since final-mile freight movement accounts for 50 per cent of logistics costs in e-commerce supply chains in India, the commerce ministry has come up with a plan to develop freight smart cities, starting with 10 cities in the initial phase, with the ambition to scale it up to 75 cities in the next phase.

The focus of the cities should be on the quick-wins like developing peri-urban freight centres, night-time deliveries, creating truck routes, using Intelligent Transportation Systems and other modern technologies and promoting electrification of urban freight, parcel delivery terminals and the like.

The Centre has asked state governments to set up institutional mechanisms for the same by involving private stakeholders like logistics services providers, users and citizens.

On this, the Logistics Division of the ministry is working closely with Germany's GIZ under Indo-German Development Cooperation. Rocky Mountain Institute (RMI) and RMI India. A challenge could also be announced to encourage the participation in the initiative.

After SBI, ICICI Bank too revises ATM charges

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, JULY 6



After State Bank of India, private lender ICICI Bank is all set to change rules and charges for cash withdrawals from ATMs, cheque books and other financial transactions for domestic savings accounts, including salary accounts. The revised charges would come into effect from August 1.

According to the bank's website, four cash transactions per month are free, after which the bank would charge Rs 150 per transaction. The cash transactions include both deposits and withdrawals at ICICI bank branches.

At the home branch, the value limit for ICICI Bank customers would be Rs 1 lakh free cash transaction per month, per account. To deposit or withdraw more than the fixed

amount, ICICI bank account-holders need to pay Rs 5 per Rs 1,000, subject to a minimum of Rs 150. For non-home branch, cash transactions up to Rs 25,000 per day is free. Above Rs 25,000, the bank would charge Rs 5 per Rs 1,000, subject to a minimum of Rs 150. For third party cash transaction, up to a limit of Rs 25,000 per transaction, the charge would be Rs 150 per transaction.

Customers will get three free cash withdrawals from non-ICICI Bank

ATMs in six metro cities (Mumbai, New Delhi, Chennai, Kolkata, Bengaluru and Hyderabad) in a month. In all other locations, first five transactions will be free. Beyond this limit, the bank will charge Rs 20 per financial transaction and Rs 8.50 per non-financial transactions.

Cheque book fee will be nil for 25 payable-at-par cheque leaves in a year; Rs 20 for every additional cheque book of 10 leaves.

For regular plus salary accounts, no charges will be levied for the first four transactions in a month; thereafter Rs 5 per Rs 1,000 or part thereof, subject to a minimum of Rs 150 in the same month.

A few days ago, State Bank of India introduced new rules and charges for cash withdrawals from its ATMs and bank branches from July 1.

GST collections fall below ₹1 lakh crore

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JULY 6

Hit by the second wave, GST collections for June slipped below the Rs 1-lakh crore mark after a gap of eight months.

The gross GST revenue collected in June stood at Rs 92,849 crore against Rs 1,02,709 crore in May. But the mop-up is 2 per cent higher than that of Rs 90,917 crore in June 2020.

GST collections have remained above Rs 1 lakh crore for eight months in a row since September 2020. The collections for June for

the business transactions made during May, when most of the states were under either complete or partial lock down. In May, only 3.99 crore e-way bills were generated compared to 5.88 crore in April, down by more than 30 per cent, the government said.

Further, taxpayers with a turnover of up to Rs 5 crore were given waiver and reduction in interest on delayed return filing for 15 days.

The government expects the collections to increase again from July. With the reduction in virus caseload

and easing of lockdowns, the e-way bills generated during June stood at 5.5 crore, indicating recovery of trade and business.

Despite declining to a 10-month low, the June 2021 GST collections provided a positive surprise, says Aditi Nayar, chief economist, Ica.

The collections were significantly higher for the April-June quarter. The GST collections in the June quarter are nearly twice as high as the same quarter last year, highlighting the narrower impact of the second wave, Nayar said.

Nilekani joins e-com open network project

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JULY 6

The government plan to develop an inclusive Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) for e-commerce got a boost with former UIADI chairman Nandan Nilekani and Co-WIN committee chairman R. S. Sharma joining the advisory council for the project. While Nilekani is co-founder and non-executive chairman of Infosys, Sharma is a former Trai chairman and the current CEO of the National Health Authority.

ONDC aims to promote open networks developed on open source platforms. ONDC is expected to digitise the entire value chain, standardise operations and promote inclusion of suppliers.

Similar to UPI for payments, ONDC would be a common protocol for digital commerce which can be adopted by various stakeholders. ONDC will go beyond the current platform-centric digital commerce model, where

the buyer and seller must use the same platform to do a transaction. On ONDC platform, the portals connected with an open network, buyers and sellers can transact irrespective of the portals they deal with.

"It will democratise e-commerce, enabling small retailers to showcase themselves easier and customers find products easier. The protocol will provide ease to showcase, list, find and transact on e-commerce platforms," said Kumar Rajagopalan, CEO, Retailers Association of India (RAI).

"It will be one of the most innovative initiatives in e-commerce by any government in the world that will provide uniform opportunities to all e-commerce entities conducting their business activities through any mode of e-commerce," said Praveen Khandelwal, secretary general of the Confederation of All India Traders (Cait.) Both RAI and Cait were part of the steering committee for the project.

PINE LABS CLOSES \$600 MN FUND RAISING ROUND

SARITHA RAI JULY 6

Pine Labs Pvt Ltd, a payments platform for merchants, closed a \$600 million fundraising round with some of the world's largest investors, including Fidelity Management & Research Company and BlackRock Inc, as it targets a public offering within 18 months.

The Singapore-based startup, which offers solutions for in-store and online payments as well as prepaid, loyalty and "pay later" programmes, is valued at \$3 billion, CEO Amrish Rau said. Investors participating in the round included a fund advised by Neuberger Berman Group LLC and India's IIFL Finance Ltd. and Kotak Funds.

"It's a product from India that's succeeded in Malaysia and Singapore and is entering Indonesia and Thailand," Rau said in an interview via video call. "We've got a good, Ebitda-positive story as we plan our IPO in the next 18 months." The IPO will likely take place in the US, Rau said. — Bloomberg

Sumitomo Mitsui to acquire Fullerton Credit for \$2.5 bn

FC BANKING BUREAU with agency inputs MUMBAI, JULY 6

In what is billed as the first entry into India's retail financial business by a Japanese bank, Sumitomo Mitsui Financial Group Inc (SMFG) on Tuesday reached an agreement with Fullerton Financial Holdings (FFH) to acquire a 74.9 per cent stake in the Indian firm's non-banking arm, Fullerton India Credit Company, in a reported

\$2.5 billion deal.

SMFG, Japan's second-largest lender, will eventually acquire 100 per cent of Fullerton India Credit Company (FICC).

Sources said Sumitomo will pay around \$2 billion for the 74.9 per cent stake in the first leg of the deal.

Fullerton Financial is a unit of Singapore's state investment fund Temasek Holdings Pte.

"This investment brings together SMFG's state push towards consumer

and MSME lending, with FICC's expertise in serving mass-market consumers and MSME customers in India," said a statement from Fullerton India.

"We intend to leverage our expertise in Japan market as well as capabilities of our franchisees across key emerging Asian markets," said Jun Ohta, president & group CEO of SMFG.

"India is one of our focus markets where we believe in its high growth potential

and want to build a deeper presence," added Ohta.

Faced with weak growth prospects at home, Sumitomo Mitsui has been allocating resources to Asia's emerging markets in recent years. The bank took control of Indonesian lender PT Bank Tabungan Pensiunan Nasional in 2019 after acquiring a minority stake earlier. Sumitomo Mitsui is looking for targets in Vietnam, the Philippines and India, Ohta said in December.

Tata Motors tanks over chip concerns

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, JULY 6

Tata Motors shares price fell over 10 per cent in the last hour of trade and finally closed 8.4 per cent down after the company flagged concerns of chip supply shortage impacting sales at its wholly owned subsidiary Jaguar Land Rover (UK) in the second quarter (Q2) of FY22.

Tata Motors touched a low of Rs 311.45 on the BSE before closing 8.41 per cent down at Rs 316.95.

While disclosing JLR first quarter (Q1) retail

sales performance during the market hours, Tata Motors said, "The chip shortage is presently very dynamic and difficult to forecast. Based on recent input from suppliers, we now expect chip supply shortages in the second quarter ended 30 September 2021 to be greater than in the first quarter, potentially resulting in wholesale volumes about 50 per cent lower than planned."

"We expect the situation will start to improve in the second half... However, the broader underlying struc-

tural capacity issues will only be resolved as supplier investment in new capacities comes online over the next 12-18 months and so we expect some level of shortages will continue through to the end of the year and beyond," Tata Motors said.

"In the scenario above, we expect an operating cash outflow of about \$1 billion with a negative Ebit margin in the second quarter," Tata Motors said.

JLR at present has about 110,000 global retail orders, the highest in the history of the company, it said.

SMART FOAM New material allows robots to sense nearby objects

Robots get ability to self-heal

TRAVIS TEO & LEE YING SHAN SINGAPORE, JULY 6



Singapore researchers have developed a smart foam material that allows robots to sense nearby objects, and repairs itself when damaged, just like human skin.

Artificially innervated foam, or AiFoam, is a highly elastic polymer created by mixing fluoropolymer with a compound that lowers surface tension.

This allows the spongy material to fuse easily into one piece when cut, according to the researchers at the National University of Singapore.

"There are many applications for such a materi-

al, especially in robotics and prosthetic devices, where robots need to be a lot more intelligent when working around humans," explained lead researcher Benjamin Tee.

To replicate the human sense of touch, the researchers infused the material with microscopic metal particles and added tiny electrodes underneath the surface of the foam.

When pressure is applied, the metal particles draw closer within the polymer matrix, changing their electrical properties. These changes can be detected by the electrodes connected to a computer, which then tells the robot what to do, Tee said.

"When I move my finger near the sensor, you can see the sensor is measuring the changes of my

electrical field and responds accordingly to my touch," he said.

This feature enables the robotic hand to detect not only the amount but also the direction of applied force, potentially making robots more intelligent and interactive.

Tee said AiFoam is the first of its kind to combine both self-healing properties and proximity and pressure sensing. After spending over two years developing it, he and his team hope the material can be put to practical use within five years.

"It can also allow prosthetic users to have more intuitive use of their robotic arms when grabbing objects," he said.

— Reuters

By purchasing jewellery with a diamond protected by a nano mark, the buyer can be sure that it is actually made by Alrosa," CEO Sergey Ivanov said.

The diamond industry has worked hard to reassure consumers that its stones aren't linked to the gems-for-weapons dealing that sullied its reputation in the wake of wars in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Angola. While so-called "blood diamonds" were addressed in the 2002 agreement known as the Kimberly Process, more recent trafficking in precious stones from countries such Central African Republic have highlighted the need to trace the origin of gems. — Bloomberg

SHORT TAKES

Mithali reclaims No.1 rank in ODIs

Dubai: India skipper Mithali Raj on Tuesday reclaimed the number one spot in the women's ODI rankings after more than three years following a stellar show in the three-match series against England. India lost the series 1-2 but the 38-year-old Raj hit a half-century in each of the contest. She struck 72 and 59 in the first two ODIs and then guided India to a four-wicket victory in the final match of the series with an unbeaten 75, gaining four spots to reach the top of the ladder. She last occupied the top spot in February 2018. The first time she reached number one position was in April 2005 after scoring an unbeaten 91 against New Zealand at the World Cup in Potchefstroom and the difference of more than 16 years at No.1 is the largest for any woman batter. — PTI

Rashid to lead Afghan T20 side

New Delhi: Star leg-spinner Rashid Khan was appointed captain of Afghanistan's T20 team keeping the ICC T20 World Cup scheduled to be held in UAE from October 17 to November 14 in mind. Left-handed batsman Najibullah Zadran was appointed as the vice-captain of the team. "Rashid, one of the well-known global faces of the game, was selected by senior ACB leadership led by ACB Chairman Farhan Yousafzai, for the role considering his experience, brilliant performance as well as leadership skills with the National team over the years," Afghanistan Cricket Board said in a statement. Rashid, who is ranked world no 2 among bowlers, had earlier declined Afghanistan captaincy, saying that he believes he is more valuable as a player. — PTI

Anand returns to action after a year

Zagreb: Five-time world champion Viswanathan Anand will resume his storied rivalry with Russian legend Garry Kasparov in the Croatia Grand Chess Tour Rapid and Blitz tournament beginning here on Wednesday, returning to over-the-board action after more than a year. The Indian maestro's last over-the-board event was in March 2020. Anand will be featuring in both the rapid and blitz segments, while his long-time rival and former world champion Kasparov will take part only in the blitz event. Anand and Kasparov, who retired in 2005, have been involved in several memorable matches including the 1995 PCA World final in New York in 1995. — PTI

Injured Hima vows to return stronger

New Delhi: Star Indian sprinter Hima Das on Tuesday vowed to make a strong comeback in the major events next year after missing the Tokyo Olympics due to an injury. "I will miss the Olympics due to untimely injury when I was close to achieve the qualification standard in my new event 100m and 200m," Hima said. "I would like to thank my coaches, support staff and my teammates for their continuous support. But I will make a strong comeback and looking forward to Commonwealth Games 2022, Asian Games 2022 and World Championship 2022." — PTI

Australian Grand Prix cancelled

Melbourne: The Australian Grand Prix has been cancelled after local organisers and Formula One couldn't come up with a compromise over Australia's strict travel and quarantine issues relating to the Covid-19 pandemic. The race was postponed from its original season-opening spot on the F1 calendar on March 21 and had been rescheduled for November 21. The 2020 Australian GP at the Albert Park street circuit in Melbourne last March was called off at the last minute at the start of the coronavirus pandemic shutdown. "It's very disappointing that these much-loved events can't proceed but this is the reality of the pandemic," Victorian Sports Minister Martin Pakula said. — AP

IN THE LIONS' DEN

Denmark wander into Wembley, to take on England

London, July 6: England are shouldering rising expectations. Denmark are powered by resilience and recovery.

And emotions will be high at Wembley Stadium before their European Championship semifinal match even kicks off on Wednesday when there will be a moment to remember the tournament's most harrowing incident and the player who won't be playing for Denmark.

The England squad has signed a No.10 jersey emblazoned with Christian Eriksen's name that will be handed to Denmark captain Simon Kjaer by England counterpart Harry Kane.

The England players were on a bus traveling to London from their training base to prepare for their opening game of Euro 2020 on June 12 when Eriksen collapsed on the field while playing against Finland. He had to be resuscitated with a defibrillator.

"We saw it on the screens. I was close with Christian. The most important thing is he is getting better," said England defender Kieran Trippier, a former teammate of Eriksen's at Tottenham.

Perhaps what is most remarkable is that while Eriksen recovers from his cardiac arrest, Denmark have managed to reach the semifinals for the first time since unexpectedly winning the European Championship in 1992.

After losing the opening two games, the Danes looked on the verge of elimination. But they got used to the formation switch from 4-2-3-1 to 3-4-3 and beat Russia in their final group game to advance before ousting Wales and the Czech Republic.

Kasper Dolberg has scored three goals, Pierre-Emile Højbjerg has been excellent and Kasper Schmeichel has provided leadership even beyond his saves in goal. "We had to pinch ourselves in the arms sometimes to realise what we've achieved," midfielder Christian Norgaard said. — AP



England captain Harry Kane (right) warms up with teammates during a training session at St George's Park on Tuesday, ahead of their Euro semifinal against Denmark. — AP

Southgate's trump cards

London, July 6: England manager Gareth Southgate has been able to regularly change his team, with a plethora of attacking talent at his disposal.

Here is a look at five England players who could make an impact off the bench if not named in the starting line-up:

JACK GREALISH

The Aston Villa forward has impressed during the tournament despite seeing limited game time. The 25-year-old, who has been linked with a move to Manchester City, set up Raheem Sterling's winner on his only start in the final group game against the Czech Republic. "This is what I was born to do. I

can't wait," he said before the Last-16 match against Germany, when he came off the bench to claim another assist, for Harry Kane.

He did not feature in the quarter-final thrashing of Ukraine at the Stadio Olimpico, so will be fresh if called upon by Southgate this week.

PHIL FODEN

The 21-year-old enjoyed a stellar season for Manchester City, scoring 16 goals in all competitions as Pep Guardiola's men won the Premier League and reached the Champions League final. Foden was widely tipped to be one of the stars of Euro 2020, but after starting England's opening two

matches, has not played since.

JADON SANCHO

When England were struggling to create chances during the group stage, Southgate was criticised by pundits and supporters for not giving a chance to Sancho, who made one late substitute appearance across the first four games. But he started in Rome and caught the eye with his dribbling skills and direct style of play.

BUKAYO SAKA

The Arsenal teenager was a slightly surprising selection in the 26-man squad ahead of Jesse Lingard, but has more than played his part in England's run.

Saka shone against the Czech Republic and then kept his place in the starting line-up for the Germany match, only to miss out on the quarter-final with an injury. Southgate has the luxury of choosing between Foden, Sancho and Saka for a spot on the right wing.

MARCUS RASHFORD

The most experienced player on this list is the only one yet to make a start at Euro 2020, although the winger is carrying foot and shoulder injuries and is expected to undergo surgery following the tournament.

Rashford has scored 12 goals in 45 international appearances. — AFP

SURYA TO START FROM SCRATCH IN LANKA SERIES

Colombo, July 6: The high of a successful debut series behind him, Indian batsman Suryakumar Yadav on Tuesday said he would be looking to "start from the scratch" in the upcoming limited-overs assignment against Sri Lanka, eager to learn from "calm and composed" head coach Rahul Dravid. "It will be a great challenge and I am really looking forward to it," said the Mumbai batsman.

Asked if a successful debut series would help him cope better with the pressure, Yadav said, "Everytime you go in or play a different game, you start from scratch," he added. — PTI

BHUVI RELISHES RESPONSIBILITY AS VICE-CAPTAIN

Colombo, July 6: Senior India speedster and vice-captain for the ongoing tour of Sri Lanka, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, says his role as Shikhar Dhawan's deputy would be to help other players in "improving their skills and mental health" during the upcoming limited-overs series.

"But I don't think things will change. I think being a senior player my role is to do things that help other players in improving their skills and mental health," Bhuvneshwar said. "I have played against Rahul Dravid (coach) and he was a part of the RCB team just when I got inducted into the team. When I got to the NCA, we did have some chats," he added. — PTI

COPA | SEMIFINAL

Paqueta powers Brazil past Peru

Rio De Janeiro, July 6: Star forward Neymar set up Lucas Paqueta to score the only goal as hosts Brazil beat Peru 1-0 on Monday to qualify for the Copa America final.

The semi-final was a repeat of the last final, two years ago, when a Brazil team shorn of the injured Neymar also triumphed on home soil.

The Selecao will play either Lionel Messi's Argentina or Colombia, who meet in Brasilia on Wednesday in Saturday's final at Rio de Janeiro's iconic Maracana stadium.

Brazil totally dominated the first half at the empty Nilton Santos stadium in Rio but had to survive some nervous moments after the break before securing a spot in the final.

They opened up Peru on eight minutes as Paqueta's pass sent Richarlison in behind the defense, but after beating goalkeeper Pedro Gallese to the ball, the forward tried to pull it back to Neymar who blazed high and wide under pressure.

Gallese spilled a fierce Casemiro free-kick from distance but gathered the loose ball before winger Everton could turn in the rebound.

Brazil	1
(Lucas Paqueta 35)	
Peru	0

Brazil were turning the screw and Everton cut in off the right flank but shot straight at Gallese. The Peruvian shot-stopper was the busiest player on the pitch in the first quarter and after saving another Casemiro piledriver from distance he made an incredible double point blank save from Neymar and then Richarlison.

And when Gallese suffered a rush of blood to the head and charged out of his area only to be beaten to the ball by Richarlison, Brazil couldn't capitalize as Peru's defenders threw themselves in front of Everton's shot.

Peru were non-existent as an attacking force and when they did manage to win a corner just after the half hour, they ended up playing the ball all the way back to Gallese. Brazil deservedly took the lead 10 minutes before halftime after Peru gave the ball away in midfield for the umpteenth time. — AFP



Lucas Paqueta (left) and Neymar of Brazil celebrate after the former scored the goal against Peru during a Copa America semifinal in Rio de Janeiro on Monday. — AP

Olympic briefs

Maiden Games berth for Mane

Udayan Mane on Tuesday officially booked himself a maiden Olympic berth, becoming the second Indian male golfer after Anirban Lahiri to be Tokyo-bound for the mega-event starting July 23. The 30-year-old Mane, currently the second-highest ranked Indian in the world at 356, was all set to make the cut after Argentina's Emiliano Grillo announced his withdrawal from the quadrennial event on June 24. The official announcement was made on Tuesday with Mane finding himself at the 60th spot in the Olympic golf ranking list which was made available on the International Golf Federation's (IGF) website.

Coach Gopichand opts out

Ched India to two Olympic medals, has opted out of India's Olympic-bound badminton contingent to create space for Indonesian Agus Dwi Santosa, who trains singles shuttler B. Sai Praneeth. Gopichand, under whose guidance Saina Nehwal and PV Sindhu claimed a bronze and a silver medal at London and Rio Games respectively, opted out after the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) cleared only five-members support staff, that includes three coaches and two physios.

WIMBLEDON | CHAMPIONSHIPS

Poland's Hubert storms into SF

London, July 6: Hubert Hurkacz became just the fourth Polish man to reach the Wimbledon quarter-finals on Tuesday with a five-set win over Russian second seed Daniil Medvedev. World number 18 Hurkacz triumphed 2-6, 7-6 (7/2), 3-6, 6-3, 6-4 in a match held over from Monday due to rain and will now face Roger Federer for a place in the semi-finals.

"For this sport, Roger is unbelievable, what he does, how he plays and the titles he has won throughout his career. He inspired so many people and it's going to be fun," said Hurkacz.

The Pole has only met Federer once — a straight sets loss at Indian Wells in the quarter-finals in 2019. His run to the Wimbledon last-eight is impressive as he had won just one match on tour between his surprise Miami title in March and the start of Wimbledon.

KERBER IN SEMIS

Former champion Angelique Kerber reached the Wimbledon semi-finals for the fourth time with a 6-2, 6-3 win over Karolina Muchova of the Czech Republic.

The German world number 28, who won the title in 2018, will face either top seed Ashleigh Barty or Ajla Tomljanovic for a place in Saturday's final.

"It's a magical place for me," said Kerber, who is a three-time major winner, after securing the 80th victory of her career on grass. — AFP

RESULTS: Men's Fourth round: Hubert Hurkacz (POL x14) bt Daniil Medvedev (RUS x2) 2-6, 7-6 (7/2), 3-6, 6-3, 6-3. **Women (QF):** Angelique Kerber (GER x25) bt Karolina Muchova (CZE x19) 6-2, 6-3; Karolina Pliskova (CZE x8) bt Viktorija Golubic (SUI) 6-2, 6-2; Aryna Sabalenka (BLR x2) bt Ons Jabeur (TUN x21) 6-4, 6-3



(From left) Arokia Rajiv, Dhanalakshmi Sekhar, Naganathan Pandi, Revathi Veeramani and Subha Venkatesan.

TN's fab 5 sprint to Tokyo

NEHA SURANA | DC
CHENNAI, JULY 6

Tamil Nadu will have five representatives in the Indian athletic contingent at the Tokyo Olympics starting on July 23. Dhanalakshmi Sekhar, Revathi Veeramani and Subha Venkatesan will be part of the 4x400m mixed relay team, while Arokia Rajiv and Naganathan Pandi are in the men's 4x400m relay team.

Dhanalakshmi, who recently made headlines by breaking P.T. Usha's Federation Cup record, and Subha are from Tiruchy, while Revathi hails from Sakkimangalam, a village near Madurai.

The TN trio have crossed quite a few hurdles before making it to the Olympics, a dream destination for all sportspersons. "The first person I informed about my qualification was my childhood coach and mentor, K. Kannan. When I used to run barefoot, he bought me a pair of shoes and helped me get a sports quota. Getting into the Olympics has been a dream for both of us," said the 23-year-old Revathi who works as a ticket collector in Southern Railway. Revathi who lost both her parents at a young



Arokia Rajiv

age lives with her grandmother along with her younger sister.

Revathi had just recovered from a knee injury and was back on track at

the inter-state event after a four-month break. She won the bronze in 400m. In the trials held to pick the Olympic team, Revathi clocked 53.55 to

emerge on top.

Subha has been competing in athletic events since her school days. The 21-year-old's breakthrough came at the 2016 World U20 Championships when she won a gold.

"When I told my family about the Olympics cut, my mom broke down in tears. She has been a pillar of support for me," said Subha, daughter of a construction worker.

Subha and Revathi have been good friends since childhood. They first met at a state meet.

For Arokia, Tokyo will be his second Olympics. Arokia found it difficult to be away with his young family while preparing for the Games in Patiala. "The lockdown had taken a toll on me. It felt like I was being caged; had a monotonous life with the same schedule of training. And, plus I have been away from my family and especially my newborn daughter for a year now," said Arokia.

At Rio in 2016, Team India were disqualified for a baton exchange violation. "It was a very difficult phase for me to overcome as we had come a long way. However, I am positive now and just hoping for the best," said Arokia, a Junior Commissioned Officer (JCO) in the Indian Army.