

IN BRIEF

Power tariff order for 2021-22 delayed

New Delhi: Announcement of electricity tariff order in Delhi for 2021-22 have been delayed by over 3 months even as the discoms in the city have raised a demand with power regulator DERC for a hike in the rates in view of the Covid. The reason behind the delay is primarily the 2nd wave of Covid and a lockdown imposed due to it, chairman of Delhi electricity regulatory commission Justice (ret'd) S.S. Chauhan said. "Besides, we also had to implement certain court orders. Our endeavour is to come out with the tariff order as soon as possible," said Mr Chauhan, who completes his term as DERC chairman on July 4. He was appointed to the post on July 5, 2018. The Delhi has already set up a selection committee to find Chauhan's replacement. Delayed and insufficient tariff revisions burden the consumers with interest costs, sources said. "If the tariff order is not announced before the chairman retires, the process will get delayed. Though a single-member commission can also discharge its full duties, a large part of the tariff process will have to be re-run," a source said. — PTI

AIIMS docs among 4 injured in scuffle

New Delhi: Four people, including two doctors working at AIIMS here, were injured during a scuffle in south Delhi's Gautam Nagar, police said on Thursday. The incident took place on Wednesday, they said. According to police, a few doctors from the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) went to the shop of Bhagat Singh Verma Paranthi Walla in Gautam Nagar and allegedly consumed alcohol there. "A heated argument broke out between the doctors and the shopkeeper following which both the sides allegedly assaulted each other," DCP (south) Atul Kumar Thakur said. Two doctors and shopkeeper Bhagat Singh Verma and his son Abhishek sustained injuries in the incident, police said.

2 from transport dept held for taking bribe

New Delhi: Two transport department officials have been arrested by the Delhi Government's Anti-Corruption Branch for demanding a bribe of ₹70,000 from a man for issuing the trade license for an e-rickshaw, officials said on Thursday. Sandeep Kalyan, a data entry officer, and Naresh Kumar, a peon at the Delhi Transport Authority in Wazirpur were caught red handed while taking the bribe, they said. The matter came to light on Wednesday when Sunny, a resident of Azadpur, approached the Anti Corruption Branch, alleging that officials at the Delhi Transport Authority in Wazirpur demanded a bribe of ₹70,000 from him for issuing trade license for an e-rickshaw, officials said.

COVID HIT EDU SECTOR BADLY, SAYS SISODIA

New Delhi: Noting that the education sector has incurred maximum losses due to the Covid pandemic, Delhi deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia on Thursday stressed upon newer approaches for teaching to reduce the learning gap. "The education sector has incurred maximum loss due to the pandemic. Reducing the learning gap is a very difficult mission to undertake, but an important one," Sisodia said after laying the foundation stone for a new placement centre, open theatre and auditorium at the GGSIIP University here. There is a need to come together and take the responsibility of adopting newer and better approaches to teaching and learning in order to reduce this learning gap, he added. "Covid has widened the learning gap in students, and to reduce this learning gap, we have to urgently adopt novel approaches in our teaching and learning. We have to decide whether we should continue to teach our children using archaic and traditional approaches or really teach them how to learn," the deputy chief minister said. — PTI

Blow to cops: SC rejects plea against HC order in CS case

*Police can't choose things that suit it and it has to be fair, says court***PARMOD KUMAR**
NEW DELHI, JULY 1

Observing that the investigating agency has to be fair and can't choose material that suits it, the Supreme Court, on Thursday, rejected the plea of the Delhi police challenging the Delhi high court order directing it to supply a statement by V.K. Jain to Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal in the case of alleged assault of then Delhi chief secretary Anshu Prakash in February 2018 during a meeting attended by Mr Kejriwal, deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia, and 11 other MLAs.

Mr Jain was then advisor to chief minister Arvind Kejriwal.

Telling the Delhi police that "it can't choose things that suits it" and that "it has to be fair," Justice D.Y. Chandrachud heading a bench also comprising Justice M.R. Shah said, "Investigating agency must abide by its duty to be fair

► Telling the Delhi police that 'it can't choose things that suits it' and that 'it has to be fair,' Justice D.Y. Chandrachud heading a bench also comprising Justice M.R. Shah said, 'Investigating agency must abide by its duty to be fair in its investigation.'

► As additional solicitor general Aman Lekhi argued that the statement by Mr Jain was part of the case diary and could not be given to the accused, Justice Chandrachud said, 'Politically, this case may be a hot potato, but on merits the high court passed a correct order.'

in its investigation."

As additional solicitor general Aman Lekhi, appearing for the Delhi police, argued that the statement by Mr Jain was part of the case diary and could not be given to the accused, Justice Chandrachud said, "Politically, this case may be a hot potato, but on merits the high court passed a correct order."

Having reminded the Delhi police to be fair in its approach and shun the

mindset of convicting an accused at all costs even by holding back the material that can be read in the favour of accused, the court, in its order, said: "We are not inclined to entertain the special leave petition under Article 136 of the Constitution of India. The special leave petition is accordingly dismissed." Mr Kejriwal, Mr Sisodia, and other AAP MLAs were charge-sheeted by the Delhi police on August 13, 2018, in the

case.

Before the high court, Mr Kejriwal, in his plea, had alleged that the prosecution was withholding the statement of witness Mr Jain recorded on February 21, 2018, because it did not suit the prosecution case in falsely implicating him, Mr Sisodia, and other AAP leaders including Prakash Jarwal and Amanatullah Khan. Mr Jain, in the 2018 statement which was reproduced in the high court judgment, stated that on the night of February 19 there was a meeting that took place between the AAP leaders and Anshu Prakash on the issue of doorstep delivery of ration, advertisement funds release, and slow processing of files.

During the meeting, Mr Jain stated that he went to the washroom and upon returning saw Mr Prakash leaving, adding that he could not say anything about what transpired while he was in the washroom.



Members of Tibetan Youth Congress during their protest outside the Chinese Embassy, as Chinese Communist Party (CCP) celebrates its centenary in New Delhi on Thursday. — G.N. JHA

Govt waives 2-month licence fee for bars in hotels, restaurants**AGE CORRESPONDENT**
NEW DELHI, JULY 1

In a relief for the hospitality sector, the Delhi government has waived two months of licence fee of bars in hotels and restaurants that were closed due to lockdown during the second wave of Covid infection in the city.

The move will help hotels, restaurants, guest houses, motels and clubs in the city that serve liquor in saving money ranging from a few thousand to lakhs of rupees.

Delhi went into a lockdown when it was hit by a second wave of Covid. All bars in the hotels and restaurants were closed from April 16 to June 20 following an order from the DDMA.

The Excise Department had last month directed the licence holders to pay the fee for extension of their excise licence from

July 1 to September 30.

"Considering the impact of Covid and lockdown on hotels and restaurants in Delhi, the competent authority in view of the provision of Rule 49 of Delhi Excise Rules 2010, has decided that the lockdown period (April 16 to June 20) may be treated as deemed cancellation of licences," said an order of the excise department on Wednesday. Accordingly, the licence fee paid by the licensees for the first quarter of 2021-22 may be adjusted towards the second quarter (July 1 to September 30), it said.

The department has also extended the last date of payment of the licence fee for the second quarter from June 30 to July 31. The order will benefit licence holders of L-15/L-15 F, L-16/L-16 F, L-17/L-17 F, L-18/L-18 F, L-19/L-19 F, L-20/L-20 F, L-28/L-28 F, L-29/L-29 F.

Covid: 4 deaths, 91 new cases in Delhi

AGE CORRESPONDENT
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, JULY 1

Delhi recorded four more Covid-related deaths and 91 new cases on Thursday with a positivity rate of 0.12 per cent, according to the Health department.

The national capital had recorded 94 Covid cases at a positivity rate of 0.12 per cent and six fatalities on Wednesday.

As many as 111 more patients have recovered from the disease in the city, as the recoveries again outnumbered the new cases.

Delhi had recorded 101 fresh Covid cases at a positivity rate of 0.15 per cent and four more deaths on Tuesday.

With the fresh cases on Thursday, Delhi's COVID-19 caseload has increased to 14,34,281, and the death toll stands at 24,981, the bulletin said, adding that the case fatality rate is at 1.74 per cent.



Children bathe in a reservoir to get relief from the ongoing heatwave during a hot summer day on the banks of river Yamuna in New Delhi on Thursday. — PTI

Heatwave drives peak power demand to a high of 7,026 MW

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 1

The national capital's peak power demand crossed 7,000 MW on Thursday afternoon, the highest in this season so far, as the city sizzled under heatwave conditions with the maximum temperature soaring up to 43.1 degrees Celsius.

According to the real-time data of the Delhi State Load Dispatch Centre, the peak power demand reached 7,026 MW at 3.30 pm.

The season's previous peak of 6,921 MW was recorded just a day earlier on Wednesday.

This year, Delhi's peak power demand has already crossed last year's peak of 6,314 MW on June 30, 29, 28, 24, 23, discom officials said.

The BSES discoms -- BRPL and BYPL successfully met the peak power demand of 2,933 MW and 1,598 in their areas, respectively, said a BSES spokesperson. Tata Power Delhi Distribution Limited (TPDDL) successfully met the peak power demand of 2,039 MW on Wednesday afternoon, the highest for it in this season, without any net-

Delhi reels under heatwave, maximum temperature 43.1°C

New Delhi, July 1: The national capital on Thursday sizzled under heatwave conditions with the maximum temperature settling at 43.1 degrees Celsius, six notches above the normal, the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) said. For the plains, a heatwave is declared when the maximum temperature is over 40 degrees Celsius and at least 4.5 notches above the normal.

The minimum temperature of the city was recorded at 31.7 degrees Celsius, also our notches above the normal. The relative humidity in the evening was 29 per cent.

A thunderstorm with rain is predicted in the city on Friday.

Delhi recorded its first heatwave of this summer on Monday when the mercury settling at 43 degrees Celsius.

The national capital's air quality was in the 'poor' category on Thursday evening. Data from the Central Pollution Control Board showed that the hourly air quality index (AQI) at 7.05 pm stood at 236.

An AQI between zero and 50 is considered "good", 51 and 100 "satisfactory", 101 and 200 "moderate", 201 and 300 "poor", 301 and 400 "very poor", and 401 and 500 "severe". — PTI

work constraint and power outage, according to a TPDDL spokesperson. Because of the Covid-induced curbs and the weather, Delhi's peak power demand this year is expected to be in the range of 7000 MW to 7400 MW. Initially, the estimates were around 7,900

MW, officials said. There is no chance of Delhi and its neighbouring areas receiving monsoon rains till July 7 and after that, the region will witness below-normal rainfall till the middle of this month, the India Meteorological department said.

Delhi hospital begins Sputnik V jabs, beneficiaries to register through CoWin**AGE CORRESPONDENT**
NEW DELHI, JULY 1

After a long wait and much delay, citizens of the national capital have begun to receive the much awaited jabs of Sputnik V Covid vaccine. A private hospital in Delhi, on Thursday, started the administration of the Sputnik V vaccine for the public in a staged manner.

Around 1,000 people have been administered with the first dose of the Russian vaccine so far, informed the hospital.

On Monday, the city had recorded 59 cases of the infection, the lowest single-day rise this year, and two deaths. On Sunday, Delhi had reported 89 cases and four deaths while the positivity rate

swept the country, claiming a large number of lives.

Daily cases and deaths in the city began spiralling upwards from April 19 onwards. According to official data, over 28,000 cases and 277 deaths were recorded on April 20 and 448 deaths on May 3.

Thursday's bulletin said a total of 76,468 tests, including 53,649 RTPCR/CBNAAT/TrueNa t tests, were conducted in the city on Wednesday, while the rest were rapid antigen tests.

The number of active cases decreased to 1,357 from 1,379 on Wednesday. As many as 14,07,943 patients have recovered from Covid in the city so far, it said.

The number of patients under home isolation dropped to 314 from 329 a day ago, while the number of containment zones fell to 1,349 from 1,599 the previous day, the bulletin said.

Stray dogs have right to food, feed them without causing nuisance: HC

SANJAY KAW
NEW DELHI, JULY 1

Observing that animals have a right under law to be treated with compassion, respect and dignity, the Delhi High Court has asked the Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI) to designate areas in consultation with Resident Welfare Associations for feeding of community dogs in the national capital. The court also directed all law enforcement authorities to ensure that no harassment or hindrance is caused to the people feeding street dogs at the designated spots.

Stating it was the moral responsibility of each and every citizen to protect the animals, the court said that the RWAs or Municipal Corporation have to ensure that every community dog in every area has access to food and water in the absence of caregivers or

community dog feeders.

While directing the AWBI to ensure that every RWA constitutes an Animal Welfare Committee, the court made it clear that if any of the street or community dogs are injured or unwell, it will be the duty of the RWA to secure their treatment by the vets from their own funds.

In an order, Justice J.R. Midha said: "Community dogs (stray/street dogs) have the right to food and citizens have the right to feed community dogs but in exercising this right, care and caution should be taken to ensure that it does not impinge upon the rights of others or cause any harm, hindrance, harassment and nuisance to other individuals or members of the society."

While issuing guidelines for the welfare of the community dogs, the court constituted a committee for effective implementation of



A man feeds stray dogs in New Delhi. — PTI

the order and asked it to hold a meeting within four weeks. The committee will comprise the Director, Animal Husbandry Department or his nominee; a senior officer of the Municipal Corporations, Delhi Cantonment Board and AWBI; Delhi's

Additional Standing Nandita Rao, AWBI counsel Manisha T. Karia and lawyer Pragyan Sharma. A copy of the order will also be sent to the Delhi Judicial Academy to sensitize the judges about these directions. Recognizing every dog as a 'territorial being',

the court emphasized that the street dogs have to be fed and tended to at places within their territory which are sparingly used by the general public and residents. While keeping in mind the fact that community dogs live in 'packs', the court said that care should be taken by the AWBI and RWAs to see that each 'pack' ideally has different designated area for feeding even if that means designating multiple areas in a locality.

The court also directed all law enforcement authorities to ensure that no harassment or hindrance is caused to the people feeding street dogs at the designated spots. It also said that the RWAs or Municipal Corporation have to ensure that every community dog in every area has access to food and water in the absence of caregivers or community dog feeders. "Any person having com-

passion for stray dogs can feed the dogs at the private entrance/porch/driveway of their house or any other place not shared with other residents," the order said, adding that no person can restrict anyone from feeding dogs until and unless the same is causing harm or harassment to them.

The court emphasised said that the dogs have to be sterilized and vaccinated and then returned to the same area. It said that vaccinated and sterilized dogs cannot be removed by the municipality. The judge said that if any of the street or community dogs are injured or unwell, it will be the duty of the RWA to secure their treatment by the vets from the funds of the RWA. Despite the law prohibiting cruelty to animals, the court pointed out that there was an increasing tendency of defiance among citizens and many times the government offi-

cials also take up a position contrary to the well-settled law. "Such act of defiance be noted down in the ACR file of Government employee. If any such complaint is received by AWBI, the same be sent to the concerned office for being placed in the ACR file of the government employee for necessary action as per CCS Rules."

The court observed that being territorial animals, dogs live in certain areas and play the role of guards by protecting the community from the entry of outsiders or unknown people. "If these are removed from a certain area, the new stray dogs will take their place... Every RWA should form Guard and Dog partnerships and in consultation with the Delhi Police Dog Squad, the dogs can be trained to make them effective as guard dogs and yet friendly to those who live in the colony."

SHORT TAKES

Odisha cop kicks boy, suspended

Police officer suspended for kicking minor boy for keeping tea-stall open beyond Covid-19 restricted deadline

A police officer in Odisha was Thursday suspended for allegedly kicking a minor tea-seller at Kesura area under Sahid Nagar police station and running away with some articles from the shop. According to police sources, an investigation into the incident has been launched and two other police personnel have also been brought under its purview. According to reports, while patrolling in the area on Tuesday the police team found the tea-stall open after 1 pm in clear violation of the state government's Covid-19 guidelines. The cops entered the stall and started beating the boy severely. One cop even went to the extreme extent of kicking him on the belly.

Fuel price rise due to Cong policy: BJP

Noida: BJP MP and former Union minister Mahesh Sharma on Thursday said the rise in fuel prices in the country is due to policies of the previous Congress-led central government. Mr Sharma, the Lok Sabha MP from Gautam Buddh Nagar, also said that checking fuel prices is not in the control of any government or minister now. If you look at the rate of price rise in petrol and diesel, you know it is not because of our government but of the Congress. The Congress during its rule had linked the fuel prices to the international price index, which is now not in control of any government or minister, he said. The fuel prices are rising because of a system that was created by the Congress, he told reporters at a press meet when asked if inflation could be an issue for the BJP in future elections. — PTI

Fake call centre busted in Ludhiana

Ludhiana: The police said they have busted a fake call centre which used to dupe UK-based residents by impersonating government officials of that country. With 27 people held in the case, the police said the accused had also been threatening the victims to impose some penalty on them. The police said that employees at the call centre used to approach UK citizens through an internet based calling application and at times posed as "Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, United Kingdom officials". The CP said these fraud callers used to induce fear in victims by telling them that their identity has been used to carry out tax or insurance frauds in their country and a criminal case would be filed against them. — PTI

■ Govt ready for talks, 3 farm laws will uplift the economy of farmers, says Union minister

No talks on repeal of farm laws: Tomar

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY
BHOPAL, JULY 1

Union agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar on Thursday reiterated that the Centre will not drop the three new farm laws.

Talking to reporters in Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh, Mr Tomar said the government was ready to talk with the agitating farmers on options other than the farm bills. "The government was ready to talk with the agitating farmers on any provision in the farm bills. But, we will not consider any demand for repealing the three farm laws", he said.

Mr Tomar said the government had held several rounds of talks with the agitating farmers and was ready to sit with them again to end the impasse. "If the farmers' organis-



Narendra Tomar

■ **UNION MINISTER** Narendra Singh Tomar said he was asking the farmer leaders what was wrong in the three laws. But, no one was forthcoming.

■ **THE MINISTER** described the three farm laws as an 'important step' for the welfare of the farmers in the country

ers are ready to discuss options other than the agriculture bills, then the government is ready to talk to them," he added.

Farmers have been agitating on Delhi borders against the three new farm laws since November last year.

Mr Tomar, who represented Morena Lok Sabha constituency in MP, was currently on tour of Gwalior-Chambal region in the state.

The Union minister said he was asking the farmer leaders what was wrong in the three laws. But, no one

was forthcoming. He described the three farm laws as an 'important step' for the welfare of the farmers in the country.

The laws have given farmers options to sell their produce outside the 'mandis' and unlike the state government notified market places, such sale would not attract any tax.

He said all the states barring a few have accepted the farm laws.

Mr Tomar said the three farm laws would uplift the economy of farmers in the country and give a boost to the farm sector.

SC rejects plea seeking spl budget for judiciary

PARMODO KUMAR
NEW DELHI, JULY 1

The Supreme Court on Thursday refused to entertain a petition asking the Central and the state governments to allocate a percentage of their budget for the judiciary to let it spend as per its priorities.

A bench comprising Chief Justice N.V. Ramana, Justices A.S. Bopanna and Hrishikesh Roy also turned down the plea of petitioner lawyer Reepak Kansal for the Supreme Court and the high courts to manage the funds so allocated to the judiciary.

"We don't want to direct the government to allocate us funds," CJI Ramana remarked. In his petition, Mr Kansal claimed the judiciary is not able to discharge its functions as expected due to poor allotment of funds to it.

"It is a matter of great concern that the Centre and state governments are not even spending 1% of the Budget allocated to the judiciary, which is necessary for the development of judicial infrastructure and its functioning," said the petition.

"To have an independent Judiciary India is not merely a fundamental right of the citizen but is part of the basic structure of the Constitution as held by the Supreme Court," the petition said.

Spl drive to bring more farmers under PM crop cover scheme

New Delhi, July 1: In a major farmer outreach, the government on Thursday launched a special drive to enrol more cultivators under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY).

A week-long drive, starting July 1, will cover all notified areas under the kharif 2021 season with special focus on 75 aspirational districts where crop insurance penetration is low.

PMFBY, launched on January 13, 2016, aims to provide a comprehensive risk solution to farmers at the lowest uniform premium across the country.

Launching the special drive, Agriculture

Minister Narendra Singh Tomar said so far 29.16 crore farmers have insured their crops under the PMFBY.

More than ₹95,000 crore worth of claims have been provided to farmers since the launch of the scheme, against the total premium of ₹17,000 crore paid by them, he said.

However, there is a need to expand the scheme in the country so that the crop insurance coverage can be increased and more farmers get benefits, an official statement quoted the minister as saying.

Mr Tomar also urged state governments and other stakeholders such as banks and insurance com-

panies to work together and reach out to the farmers in these identified 75 aspirational districts.

He also urged the farmers to come forward and enjoy the benefits of crop insurance and become self-sufficient in times of crisis. The minister flagged off Information Education Communication (IEC) mobile vans to engage with farmers on PMFBY during the week-long drive.

He also launched a PMFBY e-brochure, FAO booklet and a guidebook to assist farmers and on ground coordinators to understand the scheme, its benefits and the process of crop insurance. — PTI

Heatwave sings N. India, monsoon not yet in sight

New Delhi, July 1: Blistering heat scorched north India on Thursday driving power demand to new highs while the India meteorological department warned that the heatwave is likely to continue in this region for the next two days.

It also said there is no chance of Delhi and its neighbouring region receiving monsoon rains till July 7. After that, the region will witness below-normal rainfall till the middle of this month.

Temperatures across the northern plains have crossed 40 degrees Celsius in the last few days. The southwest monsoon has covered the entire country but has eluded Haryana, Delhi, parts of Punjab, west Rajasthan and west Uttar Pradesh.

A number of places in the Himalayan hills have been experiencing unusually high temperatures.

Thoise in Ladakh's Nubra Valley and Solan hill station in Himachal Pradesh recorded 31 degrees Celsius and 35.5 degrees Celsius, Drass, one of the coldest places in the country where the mercury falls below minus 20 degrees Celsius, recorded a high of 22.6 degrees Celsius.

Heatwave conditions were recorded in most places is Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, west Uttar Pradesh, northwest Rajasthan and northwest Madhya Pradesh, with severe heat-

■ **THE IMD** said there is no chance of Delhi and its neighbouring region receiving monsoon rains till July 7. After that, the region will witness below-normal rainfall till the middle of this month.

wave conditions at isolated areas in the region.

Severe heatwave conditions were observed at isolated places over northeast Rajasthan as well, the IMD said.

The national capital on Thursday recorded a maximum temperature of 43.1 degrees Celsius, six notches above the normal, pushing the city's peak power demand to 7,026 MW on Thursday afternoon, the highest in this season so far.

The season's previous peak of 6,921 MW was recorded just a day earlier on Wednesday. Delhi recorded its first heatwave of this summer on Monday with the mercury soaring to 43 degrees Celsius.

Among other places in Haryana, Hisar recorded a high of 44 degrees Celsius, up five notches against normal, while Rohtak and Bhiwani recorded identical maximums of 44 degrees Celsius each. Narnaul also braved the hot weather at 43.5 degrees Celsius, according to the meteorological department here.

In Punjab, Patiala recorded a maximum temperature of 41.6 degrees Celsius. — PTI

HC upholds conviction in '97 Gulshan Kumar case

State appeal against Ramesh Taurani's acquittal rejected

SHAHAB ANSARI
MUMBAI, JULY 1

The Bombay high court on Thursday upheld the conviction and life sentence of sharpshooter Abdul Rauf Merchant in the 1997 music baron Gulshan Kumar murder case. The HC also upheld the trial court order acquitting Ramesh's business rival Ramesh Taurani.

Gulshan Kumar, the founder of T-Series, was shot dead while coming out of a temple in Mumbai on August 12, 1997. The trial court had passed judgment on April 29, 2002.

The state government had filed an appeal challenging acquittal of Ramesh Taurani of Tips Industries. The division bench of Justices S.S.



Gulshan Kumar

Jadhav and N.R. Borkar however dismissed the appeal as it couldn't prove charges against him beyond reasonable doubt.

The HC partly allowed state's appeal against acquittal of Abdul Rashid Merchant, brother of Abdul Rauf, and held him guilty of murder and criminal conspiracy. The court has directed him to either surrender before Sessions court or the DN

Nagar police station. A non-availability warrant would be issued against him if he failed to surrender as per HC order.

Even though the court acquitted Abdul Rauf from sections 392 (punishment for robbery) and 397 (robbery, or dacoity, with attempt to cause death or grievous hurt) but didn't grant him any remissions. The high court denied him remissions looking at his past conduct in absconding twice.

Kumar was killed by three hitmen outside Shiv Temple in Andheri on August 12, 1997. Kumar tried to escape through the bylanes of the slum but the assailants, who fired in the air to disperse the crowd first, fired 16 bullets to kill him on the spot.

27 python eggs hatch in incubator

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO
BHUBANESWAR, JULY 1

History was created on Thursday when Odisha forest department officials and Snake Helpline personnel successfully released 27 newborn pythons into the wild at Niala in Khurda district.

The newborns were hatched through artificial incubation following abandonment of the eggs by the mother python after 18 days of natural incubation in a small cave.

According to Subhendu Mallick, honorary wildlife

warden of Khurda district, 30 eggs abandoned by the python were rescued on May 22 and they were later brought to Chandaka forest range office in Khurda district. With the technological support by the Snake Helpline and logistical system provided by the state forest department, an artificial incubation system was developed.

"During the incubation, three eggs were destroyed by ants while the remaining 27 eggs hatched. The hatching process began on Wednesday morning and continued till early hours

■ **DURING INCUBATION,** 3 eggs were destroyed by ants while the remaining 27 eggs hatched

■ **IN JUNE 2016,** 22 python eggs were hatched through artificial incubation

on Thursday," said Mr Mallick.

"While Wednesday's spectacle of newborns emerging out of the eggs was overwhelming and awe-

some, today's scene was nonetheless breathtaking. We released the hatchlings near a shallow water body in Chandaka forest. They merrily crawled into the

Maratha quota: SC junks govt's review plea

PARMODO KUMAR
NEW DELHI, JULY 1

The Supreme Court has dismissed the Centre's plea seeking review of the top court's constitution bench judgment that held that the states no longer have powers to declare socially and educationally backward classes (SEBC) for grant of quota in government jobs and admissions in higher education because of the 102nd Constitution amendment in 2018.

Rejecting the Centre's application for oral hearing of the review petition, the top court in its order said, "We have gone through the review petition filed against the judgment dated May 5, 2021. The grounds taken in the review petition do not fall within the limited ground on which review petition can be considered. The various grounds taken in the review petition have already been dealt with in the main judgment. We do not find any sufficient ground to entertain this review petition. The review petition is dismissed."

The 102nd Constitution amendment Act of 2018 inserted Articles 338B, which deals with the structure, duties and powers of the National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC), while 342A deals with power of the President to notify a particular caste as SEBC and power of Parliament to change the list.

A five-judge bench of Supreme Court headed by Justice Ashok Bhushan, who relinquished the position on Wednesday on reaching the retirement age, passed the review judgment as one of his last acts as a judge.

Asst. Prof. alleges 'caste bias' at IIT-Madras

Chennai, July 1: An assistant professor of the IIT-Madras on Thursday said he was quitting the institute and alleged caste discrimination as one of the primary reasons for his move.

In an e-mail, purportedly from the assistant professor of economics, he apprises members of the faculty that one of the primary reasons for "my leaving the institute is the caste discrimination I have faced at the HSS (Humanities and Social Sciences) department since my joining in March 2019."

Asked if the professor has formally resigned and if he has made allegations of such discrimination in his letter of "resignation" to the institute, IIT-M did not respond immediately.

However, the premier institute said in a statement, "the institute has no comments on this email. Any

complaint received by the institute from employees and students is attended to promptly through the established process of redressing grievances."

The professor could not be contacted immediately.

The e-mail that was widely circulated in the social media was also retweeted by the Ambedkar Periyar Study Circle, an initiative of the IIT-M students.

"The discrimination came from individuals in position of power irrespective of their claimed political affiliations and gender. There were multiple specific instances of discrimination and I shall be pursuing appropriate actions to address the matter," the mail claimed.

The institute should set up a panel to study the experiences of the Scheduled Caste and OBC faculty members, the mail added. — PTI

BIHAR MINISTER THREATENS TO QUIT CITING HIGH-HANDEDNESS OF BABUS

Patna, July 1: Bihar social welfare minister and JD(U) leader Madan Sahani threatened to resign in protest against high-handedness of bureaucrats in his department.

Sahani alleged that he was distraught over officers concerned putting on hold transfers and postings he had approved in his capacity as a cabinet member. "If the offi-

cers have the temerity to do so, what is the point of my remaining in my chair? I do not want to remain a minister just to enjoy some facilities", Sahani told reporters.

Interestingly, when asked if he had shared his grievances with the CM, Sahani replied "Why should I do so? He would think I am taking recourse to blackmail". — PTI

'Ready to counter threat of drones'

■ **Continued from Page 1**

and counter-drone systems "has radically altered the way we think or we will have to fight in the future".

He added: "With the ease of availability, drones can be easily accessed and can be used by both state and non-state actors, so we will also have to factor that in, as we go along and make our plans. But I would like to assure you we are fully seized of this and are working towards making sure we are not found wanting in this regard,"

the Army Chief said. "A capability is developed and then another capability is developed to counter it.

Then another capability goes further up, so this seesaw battle between drones and counter-drone technologies will continue, and this is how the character (of warfare) will keep changing, and we have to keep adapting to this if we have to succeed," he added.

On J&K, the Army Chief said that since the ceasefire agreement between the DGMOs of India and Pakistan in February this year, the situation in the UT had seen a marked improvement, especially regarding terrorism. "There has been little or no infiltration from across the LoC. And the number

of incidents, terror-related incidents in the Valley have also seen a considerable decline," said the Army Cchief. He said the overall sharp drop in all parameters of violence have clearly indicated that the general population in Kashmir is all for peace and development. "I think going ahead, this is where we need to focus and make sure that we create the conditions which are conducive to peace and development," he added.

On the situation along the Line of Control with China, the Army Chief said it was normal for quite some time now, since

the disengagement in February from the northern and southern banks of Pangong Tso as well as the Kailash ranges. "Since then both sides have strictly adhered in letter and spirit to the disengagement agreed upon. We are engaging with the Chinese at various levels at the political level, at the diplomatic level and of course at the military level," said the Army Chief. This, he said, had helped build trust between the two sides, and going ahead "we are sure we will be able to resolve all the remaining issues", he added.

UK opens work visa route for students

■ **Continued from Page 1**

minimum salary requirements or caps on numbers, allowing graduates on the route to work flexibly, switch jobs and develop their career as required.

In a statement, the British High Commission (BHC) said on Thursday "A new graduate immigration route has been opened by the UK Home Secretary, Priti Patel, for applications today (1 July 2021), allowing Indian students the opportunity to stay longer in the UK after they have finished their studies. The Graduate route provides an opportunity for talented international students who have been awarded

their degree to stay in the UK and work, or look for work, at any skill level for at least two years."

The BHC added, "For the first time, the vast majority of applicants to the Graduate route will be able to apply in a fully digital way, using the UK Immigration ID Check smartphone app. Successful applicants will be issued an eVisa and be able to conveniently access this status whenever needed to prove their rights in the UK. This is a more convenient application process which means applicants will not have to visit a UK Visa and Citizenship Application Service or re-submit their

biometrics. Customers who cannot use the app can still apply online but will need to visit a UK Visa and Citizenship Application Service."

Ms Patel was quoted as saying, "Under the UK Government's points-based immigration system, talented students from India and across the globe now have the opportunity to kick start their careers in the UK at the highest levels of business, science, technology and the arts. Once they've received their world-leading qualification from one of our fantastic education institutions, this new visa will give them the freedom to fulfil their aspirations and advance their

careers."

Acting British High Commissioner Jan Thompson said, "The numbers show that UK universities are already a popular destination for Indian students, who contribute immensely to the unique living bridge that exists between the UK and India. The Graduate route will further help students who wish to stay and work in the UK, strengthening this bond between our two countries even more. Cooperation in higher education is one of the crucial commitments in the UK and India's 2030 Roadmap, and this is another positive step in that direction."

Akhil Gogoi freed

■ **Continued from Page 1**

which has come about." The judge added: "Nevertheless, as long as it remains on the statute book in the present form, for enforcing the law on sedition, it is desirable for the investigating authorities to be continually trained to conform to the parameters of the law of definition laid down by the Hon'ble Supreme Court in the Kedari Nath Singh case. This is to ensure while enforcing this penal law by the police and other investigating agencies, the ambit of sedition doesn't get stretched beyond the permissible limits imposed by the Supreme Court."

Mr Gogoi, newly elected to the Assam Assembly from Sivasagar, has been in jail for the past 18 months. Over 12 cases were slapped on him by the Assam police following protests led by Mr Gogoi and his outfit, Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti, against the Citizenship Amendment Act in 2019. Two of these cases were taken over by the NIA, which accused him of having "Maoist" links and being involved in "seditious activities".

Mr Gogoi said the NIA court's ruling has reaffirmed the public's faith in the judiciary. Saying he would continue his struggle for the people, Mr Gogoi told reporters the court order has once again proved that the

nation's judiciary was independent, and the public can seek relief against injustice. Mr Gogoi, who was elected to Assembly from jail, said he would be leaving for Sivasagar, his constituency, on Friday morning to meet the people who had elected him.

Mr Gogoi's release was welcomed by people from all political quarters. Mr Upamanyu Hazarika, convener of the Prabajan Virodhi Manch, said the judgment should be seen as a stern warning to the ruling class against the use of undemocratic means to quell critics. "It is singularly unfortunate for our democracy that political opponents are muzzled by slapping false cases against them and that Mr Gogoi was deprived of his personal liberty for resorting to democratic means of protest. The NIA court's judgement has reaffirmed public faith in the judiciary."

Rajior Dal chief and RTI activist Akhil Gogoi shot into the limelight in 2005 when he exposed a PDS scam in his hometown Golaghat. A close associate of Anna Hazare, Mr Gogoi has relentlessly fought corruption in Assam, for which he was awarded the Shanmugam Manjunath Integrity Award in 2008. He was also awarded the national RTI Award by Public Cause Research Foundation in 2010.

THE ASIAN AGE

2 JULY 2021

SC nudge on Covid ex-gratia exposes govt sloth, red tape

The Supreme Court's directives to the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) to frame guidelines for paying ex gratia compensation to victims of Covid-19 and to the governments to simplify the process of certification of deaths due to the pandemic have come as a big relief for a large number of people. The directives also expose the sloth that has become part of the character of the government even in the face of a national crisis and the love for red tape while dealing with the lives of worst-affected people in a given point of time.

The court's decision has come against the government's position that it did have the money but its focus is on providing food, medical care, oxygen, vaccination and on supporting the economy and not to pay compensation to the kin of four lakh odd people who have lost their lives due to the pandemic. The court, however, did not buy the argument and told the government that the relevant section of the National Disaster Management Act, 2005, says that the NDMA shall recommend guidelines for the minimum standards of relief to be provided to persons affected by disaster, which shall include ex gratia assistance on account of loss of life. The government cannot run away from its responsibility, the court reminded it.

The court's decision has come against the government's position that it did have the money but its focus is not on helping the kin of the four lakh people who have lost their lives

The government's argument not only sounded specious but also revealed its disdain for the legal responsibilities when it comes to bringing succour to the most vulnerable sections of people during a national disaster. The government conveniently forgot the fact that it had invoked the appropriate sections of the Act while dealing with the pandemic but chose to ignore those that talked of compensation. The court refused to accept the government interpretation of the law dealing with compensation as "recommendatory"; it is instead mandatory and statutory, the court said.

The judges who chastised the NDMA, the statutory body headed by the Prime Minister and vested with the power and responsibility to form a national strategy to face disasters, saying it failed to perform its duty but refrained from fixing the quantum of the compensation and instead left it to the wisdom of the executive. The court, in fact, limited itself to interpreting the law and reminding the government of its duty; it did not transgress the boundaries that separate the two branches of government.

The court's direction to streamline the process of certifying Covid deaths has not come a day earlier. Several state governments have been following a pattern that did not count a death as a Covid death if it comes after the victim tested negative for the virus. This is in fact not in conformity with the international practice and has two inimical impacts. One is that several deaths, which had indeed been caused by the virus, would not be counted, resulting in the denial of compensation to the relatives. The second is that it would deny the decision-makers the advantage of reliable and accurate data to analyse and take decisions on the ways to resist the pandemic. A simplified and transparent death certification process would hopefully reverse the practice.

Fuel price paradox

A minister remarked facetiously in relation to rising fuel prices that cycling is good for health. The middle and lower classes may wish to send him by bullock cart to a school of economics so that he may understand what damage high fuel taxes can inflict on the economy that is just about to emerge from the depths of a Covid-hit slump. While petrol is selling at above ₹100 a litre and diesel is inching to those heights in multiple regions, the price of cooking gas is hitting the roof too, raised as it was by ₹25 per cylinder on Thursday.

The cascading effect of the fuel price rise is reflected in price escalation in goods as milk to cement prices spiral and services. The effect was visible in retail inflation ruling at six per cent, which helps explain somewhat the sharp rise in cost of living. For governments, at the Centre and in the states, fuel is a weapon to raise revenues at a time of a sluggish economy as lock-downs are technically still in force in many parts of India. In the last 12 months, the government's take from fuel tax was a phenomenal ₹5.6 lakh crores, with the Centre taking a lion's share as most recent increases were in the form of cess and surcharge among many other levies.

A study showed how the Centre could easily cut fuel price by ₹4 to ₹5 per litre and not suffer a dip in revenues as demand would climb when the economy takes off again with post-Covid consumption. However, low hanging fruits like liquor and fuel sales, with very few hazards for the treasury to mop up the money, are too tempting. Paradoxically, India raised taxes on fuel, of which it imports about ₹8 lakh crore worth annually, when international prices were hitting the bottom at \$30 per barrel last year but are now ruling at \$70. Consumption is being taxed whereas corporate taxes have been reduced. This is not an economic riddle so much as a disaster in waiting that will put our economic recovery in jeopardy.

THE ASIAN AGE

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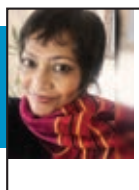
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Subhani



Covid's impact, WFH has hit India's women harder



Patralekha Chatterjee

Dev 360

What does being a homemaker and a mother really mean for the vast majority of Indian women? In an essay in *The Atlantic* last year, Helen Lewis, journalist and author of *Difficult Women: A History of Feminism in 11 Fights*, pointed out some home truths which resonate with millions of women across the world. "When people try to be cheerful about social distancing and working from home, noting that William Shakespeare and Isaac Newton did some of their best work while England was ravaged by the plague, there is an obvious response: Neither of them had child-care responsibilities."

For millions of people in many parts of the world, things have not changed that much.

In India, the situation is particularly stark as a new analysis from the Centre for Global Development reconfirms. The Global Childcare Workload from School and Preschool Closures During the Covid-19 Pandemic, by Charles Kenny and George Yang of the US-based think tank, estimates that women around the world each provided as much as an additional 173 hours in childcare for free during the pandemic. This is about three times more than men (59 hours). The figures from India are even more extreme.

According to the study, which draws on published data from multiple sources including Unesco and OECD, the estimated additional unpaid childcare burden per woman because of pandemic-related care burdens between January and October 2020 in India was 360 hours. The corresponding figure for men was 33 hours. The unpaid childcare burden per woman in India in a "normal" year is estimated to be 2,380 hours.

None of this should

come as a huge surprise to anyone in India not totally removed from ground realities.

Everyone, including Bollywood, pays tribute to motherhood. Think of Shashi Kapoor's iconic line from that 1975 blockbuster *Deewar* — "Mere paas Ma Hain". A noble sentiment. But pedestalising mothers can lead to motherhood being rarely unpacked in terms of the extra hours of unpaid work in the popular discourse.

Women's unpaid care work has emerged as a big issue among progressive economists in recent years. But millions of women in India, as in many other countries, are still socialised into accepting the notion that it is "natural" for women to be tasked with unpaid domestic work. And they should not complain.

But when we talk about women's "natural" role in the context of unpaid work, what is traded off, and at what cost?

The first-of-its-kind pan-India time use survey (TUS), released by the ministry of statistics and programme implementation last year, tossed up some telling data. The survey, that covered 4.5 lakh persons aged six years and above, across 1.4 lakh households in India, offers valuable information about the activities performed by every individual and the time spent in each of these activities during January-December 2019. The respondents were asked to recall what they did during the last 24 hours of the day of the survey.

Unsurprisingly, Indian men were found to have spent a lot more time in remunerated work. Their participation in paid employment was found to be around 57.3 per cent, compared to women, whose participation rate was only 18.4 per cent.

However, when it came to unpaid work such as cooking, cleaning or unpaid caregiving, looking

after children or adults, women were way ahead. Every day, women spent nearly five hours in unpaid domestic work; for men, the corresponding figure was one hour and 37 minutes.

Sona Mitra, a feminist economist, associated with the Initiative for What Works to Advance Women and Girls in the Economy (IIWAGE), has drawn attention to related troubling issues in her public presentations: according to OECD (2014) data, women in India spent an average of 5.6 hours a day in unpaid work, compared to 52 minutes a day for men (same source); ILO 2018 shows on an average women in India spent 297 minutes per day on unpaid care work, as against 31 minutes by men (in paid work, women spend only 160 minutes, compared to 360 minutes by men).

Ms Mitra points out the multiple implications of unpaid care work for women — it means increased stress and less time for many other things which women may want to do; it means reduced income earning potential, missed opportunities for upgrading skills, education, socialisation, and also leisure and entertainment.

Most important, it means entrenching the sexual division of labour, furthering gender inequalities and creating an intergenerational cycle of "unpaid work" for girls and women. The bottomline — it leaves women with fewer options and choices in life, with all attendant consequences.

While working from home may open up more opportunities for a small section of middle class and upper middle class women, for millions of others, including large numbers of not-so-poor women, the closure of schools and childcare

Unpaid care work means entrenching the sexual division of labour, furthering gender inequalities and creating an intergenerational cycle, with all attendant consequences

centres, etc., during the pandemic has made things much tougher.

In an article in the *Economic and Political Weekly* in May 2020, Ashwini Deshpande, professor of economics at Ashoka University, presciently flagged these issues. "South Asia, India and Pakistan in particular, have among the most unequal norms of sharing domestic chores and housework. Will the WFH (work from home) regime, where middle class families have to manage without helpers, propel men to share the domestic work burden more equitably than they have done in the past? Will the pandemic shift the social norms of sharing of domestic work? Only time will tell."

"Going forward", wrote Prof. Deshpande, "we should use this crisis to overhaul the current system that prevents women from entering the workforce and when they do, by not rewarding them enough".

We can do this, she added, "by recognising the myriad facets of women's work, the need for adequate compensation, putting support structures in place that allow for an equitable sharing of domestic chores and care work, and most important, creating favourable opportunities for work and livelihoods within a conscious anti-discriminatory policy framework".

In India, less than a quarter of women are a part of the labour force. Globally, India has amongst the lowest rates of female labour force participation, with only parts of the Arab world lagging behind us. Worryingly, this trend shows scant signs of reversal. India's workforce continues to rapidly masculinise.

This must change, so that not only Indian women, but India realises its true potential. We must have an honest discussion about what being a mother and homemaker really mean in the India of 2021.

The writer focuses on development issues in India and emerging economies. She can be reached at patralekha.chatterjee@gmail.com

LETTERS

POWER-HUNGRY AAP

A war of words has broken out between the Congress and the Aam Aadmi Party over free electricity to the people ahead of the Punjab Assembly elections. Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal is dreaming of winning Punjab but his party has few leaders of his calibre. His announcement to deliver 300 units of electricity free to each family and a waiver on previous power bills is bogus as well. With the state reeling under a debt of ₹3 lakh crore, any party that talks about freebies is not to be trusted.

Bhagwan Thadani
Mumbai

NOT A PUNY CITY

THE HISTORIC Pune is now Maharashtra's geographically largest city, surpassing the financial capital of Mumbai. The Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) now commands an area over 518 sq km as against the BMC which is spread over 434 sq km. However, if one considers the budget and population, Pune is behind Mumbai. The PMC has an estimated budget of ₹8,370 crore for 2021-22, as compared to the ₹39,038 crore budget of the BMC. Similarly, Pune's population is 34 lakh as against Mumbai's whopping 1.2 crore.

Sankar Paul
Chakdaha, West Bengal

DRONES A MENACE

THE DECISION to ban drones and flying toys in the Rajouri district of Jammu & Kashmir is a step in the right direction. The move follows explosions caused by a couple of drones that rocked the technical airport of the IAF. Sorties by drones around security installations in Jammu have put security agencies and the government on edge. The Centre must engage with military and aviation experts on a war footing and develop a lasting solution to counter the menace of armed drones.

N.J. Ravi Chander
Bengaluru

BESTED BY WOMEN

FORMER ENGLAND captain Michael Vaughan likes to keep things spicy. After the Indian women team put on an improved performance in the second ODI in Taunton, Vaughan praised the side for playing a good brand of cricket in English conditions. He also took a jibe at the men's side. He was clearly taking a potshot ahead of their five-match Test series against England.

M.R. Jayanthi
Mumbai

Zahid Hussain



Civil war looms: Taliban to take Afghans back to mess of 1990s

With the revival of armed regional militias to stop the Afghan Taliban offensive, Afghanistan is edging towards a new civil war. Headed by old mujahideen warlords, these armed bands are fighting along the Afghan government forces in some areas, but in many cases they are defending their own regional fiefdoms.

It appears that we are returning to the 1990s following the downfall of the Najibullah government when several mujahideen groups fought each other, plunging Afghanistan into a devastating civil war and killing thousands of Afghans. Those events saw the rise of the Taliban movement, which swept away warlord rule and established the so-called Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. But the warlords returned to power after the American invasion. The withdrawal of the foreign forces and the looming threat of a Taliban takeover compelled them to raise their

own forces. They don't seem to have much faith in government security forces to protect them. Some three decades later, the same former mujahideen commanders are again arrayed against their old nemesis.

Most prominent among them are Abdul Rashid Dostum, Ismail Khan and Ata Muhammad — the same old faces that symbolise four decades of conflict in Afghanistan. The Taliban offensive in northern Afghanistan in recent weeks has been a major reason behind the revival of the militias representing different ethnic groups, particularly the Tajik and Uzbeks.

Over the past weeks, the insurgents have achieved some spectacular successes in the region that has never been considered their stronghold. The Taliban are generally seen as a Pakhtun-dominated movement, with eastern and southern Afghanistan as their main support base.

The Taliban have overrun many

northern districts and have besieged some major towns. They now control major roads leading to Mazar-i-Sharif. In many areas, Afghan government soldiers have abandoned their posts without any fight. In some cases, the soldiers have joined the insurgents. The Taliban now control the main border crossing with Tajikistan, a main trade route. While these militia movements have helped reinforce the government forces fighting the Taliban in many northern districts, they have also strengthened the warlord fiefdoms, thus weakening the authority of the government in Kabul.

Some analysts, however, contend that these militias may eventually serve as the last line of defence, with the security forces unable to counter the Taliban onslaught. But there is also the question of whether these ragtag armed groups can stand their ground against a more committed enemy.

The Taliban's success in the north

has not come as a surprise. While consolidating their military and diplomatic gains, the Taliban have also sought to secure the support of communities it had fought in the past in order to present themselves as a national movement. The Taliban had traditionally relied on ethnic Pakhtuns, but made a clear shift to recruit members of other ethnic groups with a view to expanding their area of influence.

Over the years, the insurgent group made significant inroads into the non-Pakhtun belt in northern Afghanistan and inducted several Tajik and Uzbek commanders in its ranks, giving them more operational autonomy. The non-Pakhtuns assumed important positions in the Taliban leadership and held key posts in the provinces.

The changing ethnic profile of the group was evident in the fact that non-Pakhtuns now constituted a quarter of the Taliban leadership council and its various commissions. Members of eth-

nic minorities were also handed out senior positions as provincial and district shadow governors and zonal commanders. By inducting Shia Hazaras, the Taliban wanted to make themselves more acceptable by presenting themselves as a multiethnic, multi-sect force. As an example, the Taliban appointed a Shia ethnic Hazara as its shadow district chief before the intra-Afghan peace talks. The hard-line Sunni Taliban had been previously blamed for persecuting the minority group during its stint in power. The Hazaras largely inhabit the central Afghan provinces.

The Taliban also leveraged the peace deal with the US to their advantage in order to woo regional ethnic groups. With the withdrawal of US forces, joining the Taliban had once again become a serious option for many people and groups in Afghanistan.

By arrangement with Dawn

SHORT TAKES

BILL COSBY
RELEASED FROM
PRISON

New York, June 30: US comedian Bill Cosby was freed from prison Wednesday, in a blow to the #MeToo movement after a US court overturned his conviction for drugging and sexually assaulting a woman 17 years ago. The 83-year-old flashed the V sign outside his home near Philadelphia after leaving jail following a Pennsylvania Supreme Court ruling that he had been denied a fair trial. He did not answer reporters' questions. Cosby, who shattered racial barriers with his Emmy-winning role on "I Spy" in the 1960s, was convicted in 2018 of assaulting Andrea Constand at his Philadelphia mansion in 2004.

But the judges wrote in a 79-page decision that a non-prosecution agreement between a former district attorney and Cosby over evidence he gave in a civil case meant the actor should not have been charged.

"Cosby's convictions and judgment of sentence are vacated, and he is discharged," they wrote. Cosby left SCI Phoenix, a state jail 35 miles northwest of Philadelphia, just before 2:30 pm (1830 GMT).

F-16 COLLIDES
WITH BUILDING AT
DUTCH AIR BASE

The Hague, July 1: A Belgian F-16 fighter jet collided with a building at a Dutch airbase Thursday morning as it prepared to take off, injuring two people, Dutch and Belgian authorities said.

Belgium's defence ministry said in a statement that the incident happened at the start of an F-16 mission and the pilot had to use his ejector seat.

There was no fire or explosion following the incident at Leeuwarden military airbase, the Dutch air force said.

The air force said the cause of the incident was unclear and was being investigated.

Further details were not immediately available.

PAK INDUCTS
CHINA-MADE VT-4
BATTLE TANKS

Islamabad, July 1: The Pakistan Army has formally inducted the first batch of the China-made VT-4 battle tanks into its armoury. Produced by Chinese state-owned armoured vehicle manufacturer, Norinco, the delivery of VT-4 tanks from the manufacturer began in April last year. Pakistan is the third country to have bought these tanks from China after Thailand and Nigeria.

The Army's media affairs wing in a statement said that Commander Mangla Corps, Lieutenant General Shaheen Mehmood, on Wednesday visited the Armoured Division and inspected the first batch of VT-4 tanks. Major General Rashid Mahmood briefed the commander about ongoing post shipment inspections of the first batch of tanks.

DEADLY HEAT
WAVE SLAMS
CANADA, U.S.

Vancouver, July 1: Millions of people in western Canada and the northwestern United States were under heat alerts Wednesday as the region baked in record-breaking temperatures and police reported scores of deaths likely linked to the scorching conditions.

The heat wave has stretched emergency services, with at least 134 people dying suddenly since Friday in the Vancouver area and hundreds more across British Columbia, according to Canadian police and the local coroner. "The temperatures recorded this week are unprecedented — lives have been lost and the risk of wildfires is at a dangerously high level," said Canadian PM Justin Trudeau.

TRUMP'S CFO
SURRENDERS TO
FACE CHARGES

New York, July 1: The chief financial officer of Donald Trump's company surrendered Thursday to New York authorities planning to indict him, possibly with tax-related offences, US media reported.

The indictment of Allen Weisselberg, Trump's long serving and loyal CFO, has been expected for days as part of an almost three-year investigation by the Manhattan district attorney into alleged fraud at the Trump Organisation. Weisselberg, 73, could be charged with evasion of taxes on fringe benefits, according to sources quoted by The New York Times and Wall Street Journal.

The district attorney's office did not immediately confirm these reports.

No foreign force can bully China: Xi

Ruling Communist Party celebrates centenary with show of strength at Tiananmen Square

Beijing, July 1: Any "foreign force" trying to "bully" China will encounter a "great wall of steel" erected by over 1.4 billion Chinese people and its powerful military, President Xi Jinping warned on Thursday, as the ruling Communist Party celebrated its centenary with a massive show of strength at the historic Tiananmen Square here.

In his keynote address at a highly-choreographed ceremony from the balcony of Tiananmen Gate, which also adorns a giant size photo of 'Chairman' Mao Zedong, the founding father of the People's Republic of China, Xi also underlined that the "reunification" of Taiwan with the Chinese mainland is a "historic mission" and an "unshakable commitment" of the Communist Party of China (CPC).

Xi, who is also the General Secretary of the CPC and Chairman of the Cen-

● **CHINA HAS** repeatedly accused the US of trying to curb its "peaceful rise", amidst concern in the neighbourhood about the growing assertiveness of the Chinese military in the strategic Indo-Pacific region and elsewhere.

tral Military Commission, warned that any foreign force will be allowed to bully China, an apparent reference to the US.

China has repeatedly accused the US of trying to curb its "peaceful rise", amidst concern in the neighbourhood about the growing assertiveness of the Chinese military in the strategic Indo-Pacific region and elsewhere.

Both former US president Donald Trump and his successor Joe Biden have pursued a hardline policy towards China, targeting it on several fronts including trade, human

rights and the origins of the Covid-19, which first emerged in the central Chinese city of Wuhan before becoming a pandemic. "We Chinese are a people who uphold justice and are not intimidated by threats of force. We have never bullied, oppressed, or subjugated the people of any other country, and we never will," Xi said.

"By the same token, we will never allow any foreign force to bully, oppress, or subjugate us," the 68-year old leader said. "Anyone who would attempt to do so will find themselves on a collision course with a great wall of steel forged by over 1.4 billion Chinese people," he said.

Over 70,000 carefully vetted party workers and schoolchildren who took part in the event cheered Xi's over an hour-long speech which was telecast live. About 71 aircraft participated in the flypast.

— PTI



Balloons fly during the celebration marking the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China in Beijing on Thursday.

— AFP

Delta shadow over EU Covid travel pass

Double Covid jab seems to control Delta variant: EMA

The Hague, July 1: Two doses of Covid vaccine appear to provide protection against the rapidly spreading Delta variant of the coronavirus, the European Medicines Agency said on Thursday.

The upbeat assessment came as the World Health Organization warned that the variant first spotted in India could fuel a new wave of cases in Europe.

The EMA's head of vaccine strategy, Marco Cavaleri, said the Amsterdam-based watchdog was "aw-

MARCO CAVALERI,
Head, European
Medicines Agency

are of concerns caused by the rapid spread of the Delta variant."

W.H.O.: VACCINATE AT LEAST 10% OF POPULATION IN EACH COUNTRY

— DIDIER REYNENDERS
EU Justice Commissioner

ase by warning Thursday that Covid case numbers in Europe were on the rise once again, up 10 percent after two months of decline, because of a loosening of social restrictions and increased travel.

The darkening context could limit the effects of the EU certificate.

"There is no doubt that the tourist industry could do with a boost in time for the summer season," economic research consultancy Capital Economics said in a note.

But it forecast the EU certificate "will have very little impact on European tourism this year", observing that "most adults are not fully vaccinated and the Delta variant is making people and governments more cautious".

Airlines grouped together in an umbrella lobby group, A4E, have expressed worries that an "inconsistent approach" among EU countries in vetting the EU Covid certificate could create lengthy lines in airports with the potential to "create new health hazards". They called for the certificates to be checked online before travellers even arrived at the airport. There were scenes of problems at Brussels' airport early Thursday as the first day of school summer vacation in Belgium, an airport strike in neighbouring France.

— AFP

London, July 1: Voicing concern over many countries failing to vaccinate their people, WHO chief Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus on Thursday called for vaccinating at least 10 per cent of the population of every country by September, at least 40 per cent by the end of the year, and at least 70 per cent by the middle of next year.

"Vaccine equity is not just the right thing to do. It's the best way to control the pandemic and reboot the global economy," the WHO chief said as he warned that "until we end the pandemic everywhere, we will not end it anywhere".

"Vast inequities in the access to vaccines are fuelling a two-track pandemic. While some countries have reached a high level of coverage, many others don't have enough to vaccinate health workers, older people & other at-risk groups," the World Health Organisation Director General said at the virtual India Global Forum.

Asserting that when some countries cannot

"Right now it seems the four vaccines approved in the European Union are protecting against all the strains circulating in Europe, including the Delta variant," he said.

"Emerging data from real world evidence are showing that two doses of vaccines are protective against the Delta variant." Four vaccines are currently approved for use in the EU: Pfizer/BioNTech, Moderna, AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson.

— AFP

Study: Viral load less in re-infected

Washington, July 1: People who contract Covid-19 even after vaccination are likely to have a lower viral load or quantity, experience a shorter infection time and have milder symptoms than unvaccinated individuals, according to a study of mRNA preventives in the US.

Researchers noted that while Covid-19 vaccines are proving to be highly effective in preventing infection, no vaccine is 100 per cent effective, and breakthrough infections — infections after immunisation — do occur.

"If you get vaccinated, about 90 per cent of the time you're not going to get Covid-19," said Jeff Burgess, a professor at the University of Arizona Health Sciences in the US. "Even if you do get it, there will be less of the virus in you and your illness is likely to be much milder," Burgess said.

The study, published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* on June 30, involved 3,975 health care personnel, first responders, and other essential and frontline workers in the US. From December 14, 2020, to April 10, 2021, the participants completed weekly SARS-CoV-2 testing by providing nasal swabs for qualitative and quantitative RT-PCR analysis, the gold standard for testing for Covid-19.

Among the participants, SARS-CoV-2 infections were identified in five participants who were fully vaccinated and 11 who

TREATMENT FOR
BLOOD CLOTS DUE
TO VAX FOUND

Toronto, July 1: Scientists in Canada have found a new lifesaving treatment for people suffering from rare blood clots associated with Covid-19 vaccination.

The researchers at the McMaster University recommended a combination of anti-clotting drugs and high doses of intravenous immunoglobulin to combat vaccine-induced immune thrombotic thrombocytopenia (VITT).

VITT is a rare side effect of adenoviral vector vaccines against Covid-19. It occurs when antibodies attack a blood protein, which results in activation of platelets in the blood, causing them to clump together and form clots.

The treatment, described in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, has proven effective in three Canadian patients.

— PTI

were partially vaccinated, as well as in 156 unvaccinated participants. The research found that participants who were partially or fully vaccinated with the Pfizer and Moderna messenger RNA vaccines at the time of infection had a viral load that was 40 per cent less than that of unvaccinated participants.

— PTI

Russia booster shots amid spike

Moscow, July 1: Russian health authorities on Thursday launched booster vaccination for those who had been sick with Covid-19 or immunised more than six months ago, an effort that comes amid a surge in new infections and deaths.

Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin said he had received a booster shot and urged city residents to follow suit. "In view of the difficult epidemiological situation today, doctors

recommend having booster shots six months after vaccination," Sobyanin said on his blog. "I'm pleading with you not to miss a chance to get additional protection from the virus, which is particularly important amid the spread of a more aggressive delta variant."

Moscow health authorities on Thursday started offering booster shots with the domestically produced, two-shot Sputnik V vaccine and its one-shot

Sputnik Light version.

Other Russian regions are also starting to offer booster shots. Health Minister Mikhail Murashko told a government meeting Tuesday that the ministry has issued guidelines allowing those who contracted Covid-19 to get vaccinated six months after they recovered, and those who have been immunised to get booster shots six months after their first vaccination. Health authorities said that the more conta-

gious Delta variant of the virus has accounted for the bulk of recent new infections in Moscow and some other regions. The nation's chief sanitary doctor, Anna Popova, confirmed Tuesday that the authorities also registered the first contagion with the Delta Plus variant. The new guidelines come as infections in Russia soar and vaccination rates lag behind many other nations.

— AP

SOARING | PRICES

Court had ruled government policy to freeze rents for five years as illegal

Berlin to vote on bid to combat housing crisis

Berlin, July 1: Berliners are to vote on a referendum to force major property companies to sell thousands of their flats to the city, officials said Thursday as the election-year issue of high rents grows more charged.

A grassroots petition campaign fuelled by anger over surging housing costs submitted 183,711 valid signatures, "more than the total required" of around 172,000 to put the question to a general ballot, the Be-

rlin election supervisor said. Local officials must now set a date for the vote, which is widely expected to be held on September 26, the same day as elections for a new federal parliament and Berlin government. The "Expropriate Deutsche Wohnen & Co." initiative, named after Berlin's biggest property group, targets companies with more than 3,000 apartments in their portfolios.

The movement would like to see more than

240,000 homes placed under a public agency to be administered "democratically, transparently and in the public interest".

In a city of 3.7 million residents where more than 80 percent rent their homes, the capital's attractiveness to investors and structural lack of housing sent prices soaring by nearly 85 percent between 2007 and 2019.

Berlin's city-state government already moved to freeze rents for five years

from 2020 in a bid to halt runaway gentrification, but the federal constitutional court ruled that policy to be illegal in April.

"Expropriate Deutsche Wohnen & Co." bases its claims on Article 15 of the German constitution, which stipulates that "land, natural resources and means of production may be transferred to public ownership" in the public interest in return for compensation. Adopted in 1949 with the founding of the

West German state, the article was long forgotten during the Cold War with its tensions between capitalist West and communist East.

Deutsche Wohnen owns around 111,000 of an estimated two million rental apartments in Berlin and in May announced plans to merge with fellow real estate giant Vonovia.

It sharply criticised the initiative's aims as counterproductive "because it doesn't create a single

square metre of additional living space".

"We need more housing built to ease the market pressure, that is why we will be stepping up building in the coming years in Berlin," a company spokesman said.

The city's Social Democratic mayor Michael Mueller has also rejected the referendum, arguing that he would prefer "partnerships with the private sector" to develop more housing.

— AFP

quick
BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	52,318.60	-0.31
Nifty 50	15,680.00	-0.26
S&P 500*	4,308.61	0.26
Dollar (₹)	4,305.76	0.19
Pound Sterling (₹)	1.466	0.022
Euro (₹)	88.38	0.004
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	46,310*526	1.13
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	75.76	1.53
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.039	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.456	0.012

* As of 8:30 PM IST

QR code printing
on B2C invoices
deferred till Oct.

The government has extended the implementation of printing dynamic QR codes on B2C (business-to-consumer) invoices generated by businesses by three months till October 1. QR code printing on B2C invoices by large businesses having an aggregate turnover of over Rs 500 crore was originally envisaged to be rolled out from October 1, 2020. However, the CBIC has been deferring its implementation.

Special drive on
to promote govt
crop insurance



In a major outreach, the Centre has launched a special drive to enrol more farmers under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY). A week-long drive, starting July 1, will cover all notified areas under the kharif 2021 season with a special focus on 75 aspirational districts where crop insurance penetration is low. PMFBY, launched on Jan. 13, 2016, aims to give a comprehensive risk cover to farmers at low premium.

Srei Infra board
okays ₹2,500-cr
fundraising

Srei Infrastructure Finance's board has approved a plan to raise up to Rs 2,500 crore through various means, including public offer and QIP. Earlier, its subsidiary Srei Equipment Finance Ltd (SEFL) attracted investment proposals of Rs 4,200 crore from foreign investors. Singapore-based Makara Capital Partners offered a term sheet for an investment of Rs 2,200 crore by way of infusion of capital.

Biocon official
barred from mkt
for 3 months

The Sebi has restrained a Biocon's senior VP Shreehas P. Tambe from the securities market for three months and levied monetary penalty for insider trading. Biocon had announced collaboration with Sandoz and the period of unpublished price sensitive information was from Dec. 20, 2017 to Jan. 18, 2018. Tambe, being an insider, traded in the shares of the firm during Dec. 19-27, 2017, in violation of market norms, Sebi said.

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■ All sellers in the network have to register with DPIIT
Registration must for
direct selling players

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, JULY 1

Direct selling entities like Amway, Avon, Herbalife and Modicare as well as millions of sellers operating in their networks will now have to register with the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), as per the new rules proposed by the government. The entity should also have one physical location as a registered office in India.

The draft rules also say direct selling entities cannot charge entry or registration fee or the cost of equipment/ materials for sales demonstration from their agents.

As per the proposed Consumer Protection (Direct Selling) Rules, 2021, notified by the Ministry of Consumer Affairs late



Wednesday, every direct selling entity which intends to operate in India and every direct seller operating in the network will need a registration number from the DPIIT.

The rules define direct selling entity as an entity which sells or offers to sell goods or services through direct sellers but does not engages in a pyramid scheme or money circulation scheme. A direct seller is a person appointed or authorised by a direct selling entity.

In India there are more

than 450 registered direct selling companies and several others which are not registered. As per the new rules, not just the entity, but the individual sellers who are part of the network also will have to register with the DPIIT.

According to the World Federation of Direct Selling Associations, India had 5.7 million direct sellers in 2018-19.

Rajat Banerjee, vice chairman, Indian Direct Selling Association (Idsa), welcomed the government's move. "However,

there are a few areas, Idsa needs to engage in discussion with the government," he said.

Aseem Sood, MD, Proveda Marketing India, said, "Registering with the DPIIT will increase the trust customers have with the company and individual participants."

No direct selling entity or direct seller should promote a Pyramid Scheme or Money Circulation Scheme in the garb of doing direct selling business. In such schemes there is transaction of money without sales of goods and services.

The entity shall appoint a grievance officer as well as a chief compliance officer as a nodal contact person.

Also, anyone offers to sell any product of a direct selling entity on an e-commerce platform must have prior consent of the entity.

Cadila applies for Covid vaccine approval

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, JULY 1

Zydus Cadila has applied for emergency use authorisation to the DCGI for its three-dose Covid vaccine, which has achieved primary efficacy of 66.6 per cent. Once approved by the Drug Controller General of India, it will be the second home-grown Covid vaccine and the fifth to be cleared for use in the country.

The company plans to manufacture 10-12 crore doses annually.

ZyCoV-D is a three-dose Plasmid DNA vaccine, which produces the spike protein of the Sars-CoV-2 virus when injected. Primary efficacy of 66.6 per cent has been attained for symptomatic RT-PCR positive cases in the interim analysis and 100 per cent accuracy for the third dose on moderate disease.

The company conducted the clinical trial for its vaccine in India in over 50 centres and has tested in adolescent population in the 12-18 years age group.

Around 1,000 subjects were enrolled in this age group and the vaccine was found to be safe and very well tolerated.

"As the first ever plasmid DNA vaccine for human use, ZyCoV-D has proven its safety and efficacy profile in our fight against Covid-19. The vaccine when approved will help not only adults but also adolescents in the 12 to 18 years age group," said managing director of the company Sharvil Patel.

"We expect to produce 1

crore vaccine doses per month from August onwards and 5 crore doses by December this year. Our target is to produce 10-12 crore vaccine doses in a year," Patel said. Once the vaccine gets approval, the company plans to launch ZyCoV-D in 45-60 days.

The vaccine has to be stored at 2 to 8 degrees Celsius but has shown good stability at temperatures of 25 degrees for at least three months, says the company. This makes it easier to transport and store.

MANUFACTURING
PMI DIPS IN JUNE

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO
NEW DELHI, JULY 1

India's manufacturing industry contracted in June for the first time since July last year, as the Covid second wave forced containment measures that impacted demand. As a result, renewed contractions were witnessed across all the sectors in factory orders, production, exports and quantities of purchases, a private survey showed on Thursday.

The seasonally adjusted IHS Markit India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers Index, or PMI, showed that the index declined to 48.1 in June against 50.8 in May. "The latest reading pointed to a renewed deterioration in the health of the sector that was, however, moderate. The PMI averaged 51.5 in the opening quarter of fiscal year 2021-22, the lowest three-month figure since the same period one year ago," the survey showed.

Pollyanna De Lima, economics associate director at IHS Markit, said, "Companies became increasingly worried about when the pandemic will end, which resulted in downward revisions to output growth projections.

June car sales in high gear; demand rises

MICHAEL GONSALVES
PUNE, JULY 1

Car manufacturers have driven a swift turnaround in wholesales in June and hope to continue the trend as they replenish low stocks with dealers even as orders pile up for popular models, fuelled by pent-up demand and consumers switching from public to personal transport.

In fact, reopening of dealerships and a low base of

VODA IDEA SEEKS
MORATORIUM ON
₹8,200 CRORE
SPECTRUM FEE

MOUMITA BAKSHI
CHATTERJEE
NEW DELHI, JULY 1

Cash-strapped Vodafone Idea Ltd (VIL) has approached the government to seek a one-year moratorium on payment of spectrum instalment of over Rs 8,200 crore, due in April 2022.

VIL, in a letter to the telecom secretary on June 25, has said it will be "unable to pay the instalment of Rs 8,292 crore due on April 9, 2022" due to "cash being used for payment of AGR (adjusted gross revenue) dues and the inability of the operations to generate the required cash in a predatory pricing situation".

As per the letter, sent by PTI, the company has requested the Department of Telecom to grant it another year of the moratorium to pay this instalment in April 2023 and has made it clear that "it is almost inevitable" that the firm will not be able to pay the amount in April 2022.

VIL has also said that while it is working on raising new funding for the last six months, "investors are not willing to invest in the company because they believe that unless there is a significant improvement in consumer tariffs, the health of the industry will not recover and they will incur a loss on their investment". —PTI

RBI Guv flags rising
cyber-attacks as risk

Mumbai, July 1: The second wave of the pandemic took a "grievous toll" on India, but the dented economic activity has started recovering from late-May, Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das said on Thursday.

In a first, Das flagged the rising data breaches and cyber attacks as a risk facing the economy, along with other risks like firming global commodity prices.

"The recovery that had commenced in the second half of 2020-21 was dented in April-May 2021, but with the wave of infections abating as rapidly as it had set in, economic activity has started to look up in late May and early June," Das wrote in his foreword to the bi-annual Financial Stability Report prepared by the RBI.

The report said the gross non-performing assets of banks have been stable at 7.5 per cent in March 2021—the same level as six months ago—but are expected to go up to 9.8 per cent in March 2022, as per its baseline scenario.

Das said the dent on balance sheets and performance of financial institutions in India have been much less than what was projected earlier, but was quick to add that a clearer picture will emerge as the effects of regulatory reforms fully work their way through.

He said capital and liquidity buffers at financial institutions are "reasonably resilient" to withstand future shocks.

BANKS TOLD TO
TRACK RETAIL,
MSME LOANS

Mumbai, July 1: The RBI on Thursday asked banks to monitor their exposures to the retail and small businesses, saying both the segments are witnessing high stress.

In its bi-annual financial stability report (FSR), the RBI also asked banks to shore up capital positions while favourable market conditions prevail, improve governance and remain vigilant in the context of global spillovers.

"The banking sector will be required to specifically guard against adverse selection bias while being alive to the credit demand from productive and viable sectors," the FSR said. —PTI

The financial system is on the front foot to aid recovery, but the priority is to maintain and preserve financial stability, he said.

Domestic financial markets are also boosted by the strengthening signs of the pandemic's abatement, the growing pace and breadth of the vaccination drive and renewed hopes of the economy clawing back lost ground as it unlocks, he said.

—PTI

Jet Airways creditors
to recoup just 5% money

RAGINI SAXENA
JULY 1

Lenders to Jet Airways India Ltd stand to receive just about 5 per cent of what they're owed, another blow to banks in the nation that are growing increasingly accustomed to paltry recoveries.

The new owners of Jet Airways -- Dubai-based businessman Murari Lal Jalan and Kalrock Capital Management Ltd in London -- have proposed paying Rs 380 crore (\$51 million) of the Rs 7,810 crore they owe to financial creditors, according to a bankruptcy tribunal order tabled late Wednesday.

Some Rs 190 crore will be paid upfront within six months while the rest will come from the proceeds of issuing zero-coupon bonds. The new owners have also offered the lenders a 9.5 per cent stake in Jet Airways and a 7.5 per cent interest in Jet Privilege, the carrier's loyalty and rewards management company.

In India, recoveries for financiers from resolved

insolvency cases dropped to 39 per cent of dues as of March from 46 per cent a year earlier, Macquarie Capital data show. If the top nine cases by recovery are excluded, lenders received just 24 per cent of dues.

Jet Airways was India's biggest private carrier before it went belly up in 2019 under mounting debts.

Even though Jet Airways is closer to flying again now that its rescue plan has been approved, there are many challenges ahead for the grounded carrier. Jet Airways was planning to operate all its historic domestic slots, which went to other airlines in the time it wasn't flying, but the bankruptcy court didn't agree to restore them.

"The allotment of slots and their usage is like a constantly changing jigsaw puzzle," the order said. "A single slot therefore could not be left or kept idle. Besides, other airlines have utilised those slots for all these years." —Bloomberg

DROPS | THAT COUNT

Many businesses are going to customers for money and offering great yields

How crowdfunding can revive small businesses

TINA OREM
NEW YORK, JULY 1

A pandemic-fuelled boom in crowdfunding has small businesses flocking to capital-raising platforms that experts say could help many companies get back to normal as long as small-business owners are able to launch effective campaigns.

Regulation on crowdfunding, in which companies raise capital from investors via government-monitored online platforms, has mushroomed in the last two years, going from about 100 million in 2019 to over 200 million in 2020, according to Chris Lustrino, founder and CEO of crowdfunding analytics and ratings firm

KingsCrowd. It's already exceeded the 200-million mark year to date in 2021, he adds.

Covid has been a massive boon to this market, Lustrino says.

When the pandemic disrupted traditional financing options, more small-business owners began looking for alternative funding sources; that made them more open to the ideas of crowdfunding and of capital as a commodity, he says. More investors got comfortable with crowdfunding during the pandemic, too.

There are so many angel investors and investors in general out there who had a lot of skepticism about putting money into private companies online,



Lustrino says. But suddenly that was the only way they could do these deals. And so almost overnight there was this total buy-in from the retail investor market.

Although crowdfunding is often associated with raising capital for new businesses, months of lockdowns have many small businesses exploring crowdfunding as a

way to get back to normal operations, according to Sherwood Neiss, a principal at Crowdfund Capital Advisors.

"What we're seeing is a lot of these small restaurants, local parlours, beauty salons, that type of thing, that were struggling during the pandemic are now going up to the customers and saying, 'Hey, I need 25,000, 50,000 to reopen, get us up and running,'" he says. And the businesses are offering great yields, if you think about it. Many of them are 7 per cent, 8 per cent, 9 per cent%, which is a healthy yield for a short-term loan, and people don't have to pony up 25,000. The average investment is about \$700, he says.

Keys to an effective crowdfunding campaign: Crowdfunding may not be a good fit for small-business owners who are strapped for time or energy. Small businesses launching recovery-oriented crowdfunding campaigns should keep three things in mind, according to the experts.

Find a good fit: A small business may have more success on a platform that aligns with its mission and goals. Some crowdfunding platforms cater to businesses in certain industries; others focus on geography or businesses of certain sizes. Look at how much money their companies have raised or are raising right now so you can start to get a sense

of how big their investor base might be.

Don't skip the legal work: This isn't people just giving money to support someone...you have to file disclosures for investors. Templates and boilerplate language can go a long way, but have a lawyer review the final documents, says Neiss.

Promote your campaign: Campaigns that just go up there without any marketing behind them get zero, Neiss says. Targeted social media efforts, email outreach and in-store promotions such as QR codes with campaign information are popular: "I've seen people do really creative things like have an ice cream social," Lustrino says. —AP

PANDEMIC-HIT CAFE
COFFEE DAY TAKES
VENDING MACHINES
BACK, JUNKS CABINS



New Delhi, July 1: As the Covid pandemic forces work-from-home and travel restrictions, Coffee Day Global Ltd, which operates the coffee chain Cafe Coffee Day (CCD), discarded about 30,000 custom-made cabinets used for vending machines at its customers' places.

According to a regulatory filing by Coffee Day Global Ltd (CDGL), parent firm Coffee Day Enterprises Ltd, a lot of vending machines installed by the company has been withdrawn from customers' locations in view of the pandemic situation.

CDGL on Wednesday reported a consolidated net loss of Rs 306.54 crore for the financial year ended March 31, 2021 and its revenue from operation was down 73.4 per cent Rs 400.81 crore.

According to CDGL, in the earlier year, to attract new customers, vending division of the company used to install custom-made cabinets at customers' locations. Custom-built cabinets are fixtures and cannot be removed and do not have any salvage value. "In this situation, 29,996 cabinets are discarded," it said. —PTI

SHORT TAKES

Dunkley dazzles in England's win

Taunton: Skipper Mithali Raj's second successive fifty went in vain as Sophie Dunkley produced a fighting half-century after Kate Cross' five-wicket haul to help England Women register a five-wicket win over India Women and grab an unsailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series here on Wednesday. Chasing 222 for a win, England batswomen couldn't capitalise on their starts to lose five wickets for 133 in 28.5 overs but Dunkley and Katherine Brunt produced a 92-run partnership for the unconquered sixth wicket to take the team home with 15 balls to spare. — *PTI*

Brief Scores: India 221 (Mithali Raj 59, Shafali Verma 44; Kate Cross 5/34) lost to England 225/5 (Lauren Winfield-Hill 42, Sophia Dunkley 73 (not out), Katherine Brunt 33 (not out); Poonam Yadav 2/63).

12-yr-old Mishra is youngest GM

New Delhi: Indian-American prodigy Abhimanyu Mishra on Wednesday became the youngest ever chess Grandmaster after he scored his third GM norm in Budapest, Hungary, according to a report. The 12-year-old from New Jersey in United States became a GM from International Master, having crossed the required 2500 Elo rating barrier, chess.com website said. Mishra broke GM Sergey Karjakin's record that has stood for 19 years. On August 12, 2002, Karjakin, a world championship challenger in 2016, secured the Grandmaster title at the age of 12 years and seven months. Mishra, born on February 5, 2009, took 12 years, four months, and 25 days to obtain the highest title in chess, the website said. — *PTI*

Jhajharia rewrites own world record

New Delhi: India's greatest Paralympian, javelin thrower Devendra Jhajharia, rewrote his own world record once again as he punched his ticket for the Tokyo Paralympics during a national selection trial here. The 40-year-old, who has won two gold medals in the men's F-46 category at the Paralympics, sent the spear to a distance of 65.71m during the trial here on Wednesday. With that effort, he not only sealed a spot for the Tokyo Paralympics but also bettered his own world record of 63.97m, set at the Rio Games in 2016. "Today at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in Delhi, I qualified for the Tokyo Paralympics by setting a new world record of 65.71, breaking my older record of 63.97 in a qualifying event." Jhajharia tweeted in hindi. — *PTI*

Fifteen athletes qualify for Tokyo

New Delhi: Star sprinter Dutee Chand, javelin thrower Annu Rani and 400m hurdler M P Jabir qualified for the Tokyo Olympics through world rankings as 15 Indian athletes and two relay teams were confirmed for the Games by the sport's world governing body on Thursday. Twelve individual athletes, including star javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra, booked automatic quota for the Olympics by breaching the qualification mark, while the trio of Dutee, Rani and Jabir, as well as the men's 4x400m relay team made it to the Games through rankings. Dutee was 41st and 50th respectively in the list of 56 athletes to compete in both the 100m and 200m events, while Rani was at 18th (out of 32) and Jabir at 32nd (out of 40). The mixed 4x400m relay team had booked an Olympic berth after reaching the final of the World Athletics Championships in 2019. — *PTI*

Live on TV

EURO

Quarterfinals: Spain vs Switzerland from 9.30 pm; Belgium vs Italy from 12.30 am (Saturday) on Sony Ten 2

COPA AMERICA

Quarterfinals: Peru vs Paraguay from 2.30 am (Saturday); Brazil vs Chile from 5.30 am (Saturday) on Sony Ten 2

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BELGIAN BAFFLE

Mystery remains over Belgian duo's fitness as Italy tie looms

Munich, July 1: Belgium are anxiously waiting on the fitness of stars Kevin De Bruyne and Eden Hazard for their Euro 2020 quarter-final showdown against Italy on Friday. Thorgan Hazard fired Belgium into the last eight with the goal that knocked out holders Portugal, but the fitness of his brother Eden and De Bruyne is Belgium's main concern before facing the Azzurri in Munich.

De Bruyne came off early in the second half against Portugal with an ankle knock, while Belgian captain Hazard injured a hamstring late in the game.

Neither trained on Wednesday with the Belgium's medical staff working around the clock to get them fit to face Italy.

Coach Roberto Martinez admits neither player will probably be 100 percent in Munich, "but we will use every day to get them as fit as possible".

Manchester City midfielder De Bruyne is central to Belgium's hopes of reaching the semi-finals, where Spain or Switzerland would await next Tuesday.

Martinez is assessing his alternative options in attacking midfield. Atletico Madrid's Yannick Carrasco could replace Hazard, while Napoli forward Dries Mertens may step in for De Bruyne.

Martinez expects Italy to "attack from the very first second, they will be very structured", underlining the need for De Bruyne's presence to guide Belgium's counter-attacks.

Chelsea midfielder Jorginho, who faced De Bruyne's City in last month's Champions League final, has warned his Italy team-mates.

"De Bruyne is a player who makes the difference. We have to stop him because he always finds space. He can be really dangerous," said Jorginho.

With four dominant victories and three clean sheets so far at the Euro, the Belgians are living up to their billing as the world's top-ranked team. — *AFP*



Italy's Francesco Acerbi during a training session with his teammates ahead of the Euro 2020 quarterfinal against Belgium. — *Twitter*

Swiss eye another big scalp

St. Petersburg, July 1: Switzerland will try to follow up their shock elimination of world champions France at Euro 2020 against Spain on Friday after reaching the quarter-finals of a major tournament for the first time in 67 years.

Vladimir Petkovic's side recovered from two goals down to force extra time against much-fancied France and prevailed on penalties as 2018 World Cup hero Kylian Mbappe missed the decisive spot-kick.

Now the Swiss hope to spring another surprise against a Spain team that has scored 10 times in two

games after a slow start to the group stage.

Alvaro Morata's redemptive strike helped secure a 5-3 extra-time win over Croatia, but Spain will need to cut out the errors if they are to contend for a record fourth European Championship.

The Juventus forward and his family had been subjected to abuse by fans in Seville after he missed a series of chances in the group stage.

History is on Spain's side against Switzerland, having lost just once in 22 meetings, a 1-0 defeat in South Africa that sparked their run to the 2010 World Cup title.

Sergio Busquets, the Spain captain, is the lone survivor from that team, while the Barcelona midfielder and Jordi Alba are the only two players in the squad left from their Euro 2012 triumph.

The win over Croatia was Spain's first in a knockout fixture since they beat Italy 4-0 to claim the second of back-to-back European crowns.

"The quarter-final depends on us not our rival. It wouldn't matter if it were France, the Swiss, Ukraine — we are here to win so we have to face and beat the best," said goal-keeper Unai Simon. The Athletic Bilbao

50-50 CHANCE FOR KDB AND EDEN: COACH

Brussels, July 1: Kevin De Bruyne and Eden Hazard on Thursday were both absent from Belgium's final training session before their Euro 2020 quarter-final against Italy.

Coach Roberto Martinez said both players were "50/50" to feature against Italy in Munich on Friday. "Italy will attack from the very first second; they will be very structured and dynamic. Every player knows his role. The game against Portugal was a game that could have been played a lot further down the line; usually players don't play these physical and intense games at this stage of the tournament," added Martinez.

Midfielder Thorgan Hazard said: "Italy will be the toughest opponent. They've had a good run of wins and it will be a nice challenge for us to end that sequence. Their style may suit us more than Portugal. They are enterprising so we may be able to profit from the open spaces." — *Agencies*

COPA | AMERICA



Brazilian star Neymar during a training session ahead of the Copa America quarterfinal. — *Twitter*

Neymar back for Chile clash

Rio de Janeiro, July 1: Defending champion Brazil and Chile will have their star players back in action when they meet in the Copa America quarter-finals on Friday.

Neymar will return for Brazil and Alexis Sánchez has recovered from a calf muscle injury ahead of the encounter at the Nilton Santos Stadium in Rio de Janeiro.

The Seleção spared a group of regular starters in the 1-1 draw with Ecuador on Sunday, resting Neymar, defender Thiago Silva and striker Gabriel Jesus. Others, including Casemiro, entered as substitutes in that game.

Brazil, with three wins in four Copa America matches, are the clear favourites to win. Chile's only win in the group stage was against Bolivia and they are lacking the kind of form that inspired their back-to-back championship wins in 2015 and 2016.

The last memorable match between Brazil and Chile was in the Round of 16 at the 2014 World Cup. Regular time ended 1-1,

with goals by David Luiz and Sánchez. The Chileans almost beat the hosts in extra time, with a strike by Mauricio Pinilla hitting the bar in the last minute.

But Brazil won on penalties, 3-2 — Pinilla also missed his from the spot. Thiago Silva, who could start on Friday, was marked by that match for his tears of tension during the shootout.

"I didn't programme myself to get emotional. It just happened," Silva told a news conference on Wednesday. "I was labelled negatively for that moment against Chile. It was very sad for me for a long time, but it was also a learning experience so I could prepare myself for other objectives, decisive matches."

Sánchez missed Chile's group-stage matches and his absence affected the team's production; La Roja only tallied three goals, with Eduardo Vargas scoring twice and Ben Brereton once.

Coach Martin Lasarte is yet to decide whether 32-year-old Sánchez will start against Brazil or come off the bench. — *AP*

HUMPY, PRANEETH JOIN RATNA NOMINEES LIST

New Delhi, July 1: Olympic-bound shuttler B. Sai Praneeth and Kidambi Srikanth have been nominated for the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna award by the Badminton Association of India, which has also recommended three players for the Arjuna award.

Praneeth, who won a bronze medal at the 2019 World Championship, is the only men's singles shuttler to have qualified for the Tokyo Games. Srikanth has been struggling of late but won four titles in 2017.

The Badminton Association of India (BAI) nominated HS Prannoy, Pranav Jerry Chopra and Sameer Verma for the Arjuna honour. The federation also sent

applications of S Muralidharan and PU Bhaskar Babu for the Dronacharya award.

Leroy D'sa and PVV Lakshmi have been nominated for the Dhyan Chand award.

Reigning women's world rapid chess champion Koneru Humpy has been nominated for the prestigious Khel Ratna award by the All India Chess Federation (AICF).

Humpy is already a recipient of the Arjuna award and Padma Shri.

Also, seven other players — Vidit S Gujrathi, B Adhban, S.P. Sethuraman, M R Lalith Babu, Bhakti Kulkarni and Padmini Rout have been nominated for the Arjuna award, AICF secretary Bharat Singh Chauhan said. — *PTI*

SANIA-BETHANIE UPSET 6TH SEEDS IN FIRST ROUND

London, July 1: Sania Mirza and her American partner Bethanie Mattek-Sands knocked out sixth seeds Desirae Krawczyk and Alexa Guarachi to move to the second round of the women's doubles event at the Wimbledon Championships, here on Thursday.

Sania and Mattek-Sands were a bit rusty at the start but once they got their rhythm they dominated the match and won 7-5 6-3 against the American-Chilean combination in one hour and 27 minutes. Pressure was put on the pair early in the match when Mattek-Sands served the third game that featured seven deuce points. — *PTI*

NOVAK, ROGER, NAOMI ON ENTRY LISTS FOR TOKYO

Wimbledon, July 1: Serbia's Novak Djokovic, Switzerland's Roger Federer, Japan's Naomi Osaka and Australia's Ash Barty are on the entry lists for the Tokyo Olympics that were announced on Thursday by the International Tennis Federation.

As the ITF noted, though: "The entry lists are still subject to change." Federer, for one, said last weekend he would wait until after Wimbledon ends on July 11 to decide whether he will head to Japan.

Djokovic would like to pursue a Golden Slam, something only Steffi Graf has done: winning all major tennis tournaments and an Olympic singles gold medal in the same year. — *AP*



Poland's Magda Linette plays a shot against Ukraine's Elina Svitolina during their second round match at the Wimbledon Championships on Thursday. — *AP*

RESULTS

Men's singles: Second round: Christian Garin (CHI x17) bt Marc Polmans (AUS) 7-6 (7/3), 6-2, 2-6, 7-6 (7/5); Roberto Bautista Agut (ESP x8) bt Miomir Kecmanovic (SRB) 6-3, 6-3, 6-7 (3/7), 3-6, 6-3; Aljaz Bedene (SLO) bt Yoshihito Nishioka (JPN) 6-1, 6-0, 6-2; Alexander Zverev (GER x4) bt Tennis Sandgren (USA) 7-5, 6-2, 6-3; Cameron Norrie (GBR x29) bt Alex Bolt (AUS) 6-3, 6-1, 6-2

Women's singles: Second round: Katerina Siniakova (CZE) bt Coco Vandeweghe (USA)

4-6, 6-2, 6-2; Anastasiya Sevastova (LAT) bt Marta Kostyuk (UKR) 1-6, 6-4, 6-3; Barbora Krejickova (CZE x14) bt Andrea Petkovic (GER) 7-5, 6-4; Magda Linette (POL) bt Elina Svitolina (UKR x3) 6-3, 6-4; Paula Badosa (ESP x30) bt Yulia Putintseva (KAZ) 6-4, 6-1; Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova (RUS x16) bt Kristyna Pliskova (CZE) 6-3, 6-3; Karolina Muchova (CZE x19) bt Camila Giorgi (ITA) 6-3, 5-7, 6-3; Shelby Rogers (USA) bt Maria Sakkari (GRE x15) 7-5, 6-4.

COCO MAKES ANOTHER RUN

Back on Centre Court, Coco Gauff beat an opponent twice her age to reach the third round at Wimbledon.

However, Barty produced a far from perfect performance in her 6-4, 6-3 win over Russia's Anna Blinkova as she progressed to a third round meeting with Czech Katerina Siniakova.

"She pushed me incredibly hard," said Barty.

"She pushed me incredibly hard," said Barty.

The 17-year-old American defeated 34-year-old Russian veteran Elena Vesnina 6-4, 6-3 to keep her on track for making another run into the second week at the All England Club. — *Agencies*

2 UAE cricketers banned for fixing

Dubai, July 1: The ICC on Thursday banned two UAE players Amir Hayat and Ashfaq Ahmed for eight years after they were found guilty of trying to fix T20 World Cup qualifying round matches in their country, colluding with an Indian bookie.

While the ICC's Anti-Corruption Tribunal had charged both the Pakistan-born cricketers back on September 13, 2020, the backdated quantum of sentence was passed on the day.

"The bans are backdated to 13 September 2020, when they were provisionally suspended for corrupt conduct in relation to the ICC Men's T20 World Cup Qualifier 2019 in the UAE," the ICC release stated.

Both cricketers had taken 15,000 AED (United Arab Emirates Dirham totalling USD 4083 approx) from an Indian bookie, identified as Mr 'Y' in the ICC charge-

Both cricketers had taken 15,000 AED (United Arab Emirates Dirham totalling \$4,083 approx) from an Indian bookie.

sheet for fixing the qualifying round games. Hayat is a medium pacer while Ahmed is a batsman.

As per ICC's anti-corruption code, the duo has been charged on five counts which includes failure to disclose a corrupt approach, trying to improperly influence the outcome of a match, and accepting gifts worth more than \$750.

"In October 2019, the ICC ACU commenced an investigation into allegations that members of the UAE senior international team may have had dealings with a known corruption network controlled by an Indian man named," the release said. — *PTI*