



Fire-ravaged ship sinks off Lanka coast

COLOMBO: A container ship carrying chemicals sank off Sri Lanka's capital on Thursday nearly a month after catching fire, raising concerns about a possible environmental disaster, officials said. The ship's operator said the wreck of the Singapore-flagged X-Press Pearl "is now wholly sitting on the seabed at a depth of 21 meters (70 feet)." A salvage crew was at the site to deal with any debris and report any spill, X-Press Feeders said. The head of Sri Lanka's Marine Environment Protection Authority, Darshini Lahandapura, also confirmed that the ship had sunk. She said it was currently unsafe to remove the wreck because of rough monsoon seas. "The sea is very violent. In the rough season, we can't do anything," she said. The monsoon season started last month and usually ends in September. "Until such time, the owner of the vessel has appointed a caretaker company," she said.



Three Chinese astronauts dock with new space station

BEIJING/JIUQUAN: A Chinese spacecraft carrying three astronauts successfully docked with the country's nascent space station on Thursday, hours after blasting off from the Gobi Desert, in a major milestone for the Communist giant's space exploration plans and its ambitious bid to establish itself as a leading space power. According to the China Manned Space Agency (CMSA), Shenzhou-12 manned spaceship successfully docked with the space station core module Tianhe on Thursday afternoon. The spaceship, launched on Thursday morning, completed orbital status setting after entering the orbit and conducted a fast autonomous rendezvous and docking with the front docking port of Tianhe at 3:54 pm (Beijing Time), forming a three-module complex with the cargo craft Tianzhou-2, the state-run Xinhua news agency reported. The whole process took approximately 6.5 hours. This is Tianhe's first rendezvous and docking with a Shenzhou spaceship since it was sent into orbit on April 29, the report said. Earlier, the spaceship, atop a Long March-2F carrier rocket, was launched from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwest China's Gobi Desert at 9:22 am (Beijing Time). In a textbook launch, telecast live by the official television channels, spacecraft Shenzhou-12 sent the three astronauts into the same orbit of the core module of the space station Tianhe launched in April.

Adani loses \$9bn as stocks bleed



India is 'priest' of peace, but can give apt reply to aggression: Rajnath

GUWAHATI

DEFENCE Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday said India is the "priest" of world peace, but it has the full ability and strength to give a befitting reply to acts of aggression.

Dedicating the 20 km Kimin-Potin double lane road in Arunachal Pradesh and 11 other strategic road projects constructed by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) in Arunachal Pradesh and other places, he said any kind of disturbance in the peace and tranquility in the border areas

is bound to have adverse implications. The 12 strategic roads would not only give a boost to connectivity but facilitate faster movement of troops along the international border as well, the defence minister said.

Singh said: "The capacity of the BRO in construction of world-class roads despite challenges in tough and hilly terrain demonstrate the mantra of 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat'. Praising the BRO for its contribution to the development of roads and other infrastructure in the remote border ar-



Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh during inauguration of Kimin-Potin Road in Assam's Lakhimpur district on Thursday

eas of the country, the Defence Minister virtually dedicated the 12 new roads to the nation.

He reiterated the resolve of the Government to connect all

regions of the country to the overall national mainstream to provide an equal opportunity for development and growth. Speaking on the oc-

casion, Director General of BRO, Lt General Rajeev Chaudhry restated the efforts of the BRO in the overall development of Arunachal Pradesh and thanked the state for assisting the organisation to ensure development of infrastructure in a smooth manner.

Out of the 12 road projects dedicated to the nation, one has been constructed in the Union Territory of Ladakh, one road in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir and the remaining in Arunachal Pradesh.

Apex court okays 30:30:40 CBSE plan for Class 12

RESULTS BY JULY 31

NEW DELHI

THE Supreme Court on Thursday accepted the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) formula for the assessment of Class 12 students.

The CBSE, in an affidavit, informed a bench headed by Justice AM Khanwilkar and comprising Justice Dinesh Maheshwari that the performance of the students in Class 11 and Class 10 exams will also be factored in while making the assessments for Class 12 students.

The CBSE said for Class 12, marks based on unit test/mid-term/pre-board exam will have 40 per cent weightage; Class 11, marks based on the theory component of the final exam will have 30 per cent weightage; and Class 10 marks based on average theory component of the best three performing subjects out of the main 5 subjects will have 30 per cent weightage.

The CBSE informed the top court that results for Class 12 will be declared by July 31.

Attorney General KK Venugopal, representing the CBSE, contended that for Class 12, the marks will be based on unit test/mid-term/pre-board exam and 40 per cent weightage will be given. He added that the total marks awarded should be in consonance with the past performance of the school in Class 12 board examinations.

The CBSE finalised the formula after obtaining feedback from 229 Sahodaya School Complex comprising of 7,734 schools and a 13-member

THE CRITERIA

Marks based on unit test/mid-term/pre-board exam will have 40 per cent weightage; Class 11, marks based on the theory component of the final exam will have 30 per cent weightage; and Class 10 marks based on average theory component of the best three performing subjects out of the main 5 subjects will have 30 per cent weightage

committee of experts, comprising of IAS officers and education experts, constituted on June 4.

According to the policy, a result committee under the principal of the school will be formed in each school comprising two senior most PGT from the same school and two PGT from the neighbouring schools. The committee has been given liberty to prepare the result by following the policy.

"In case where any candidate is not satisfied with the assessment done, based on the policy, such candidates will be given an opportunity to appear in examinations to be conducted by the Board, when conditions are conducive for holding the examinations. As per this policy, marks scored in the later examination will be considered as final", said the CBSE's affidavit.

Computation of Class 12 theory marks will be on the basis of the year end final theory exam in the respective subjects.

Uniform pollution certificate for all vehicles across India

NEW DELHI

THE Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has issued a notification to make the PUC (Pollution Under Control) certificate for all vehicles uniform across the country and also to link the PUC database with the National Register.

After the changes in the Central Motor Vehicles Rules 1989 by the road ministry, the QR code shall be printed on the PUC form and will have details

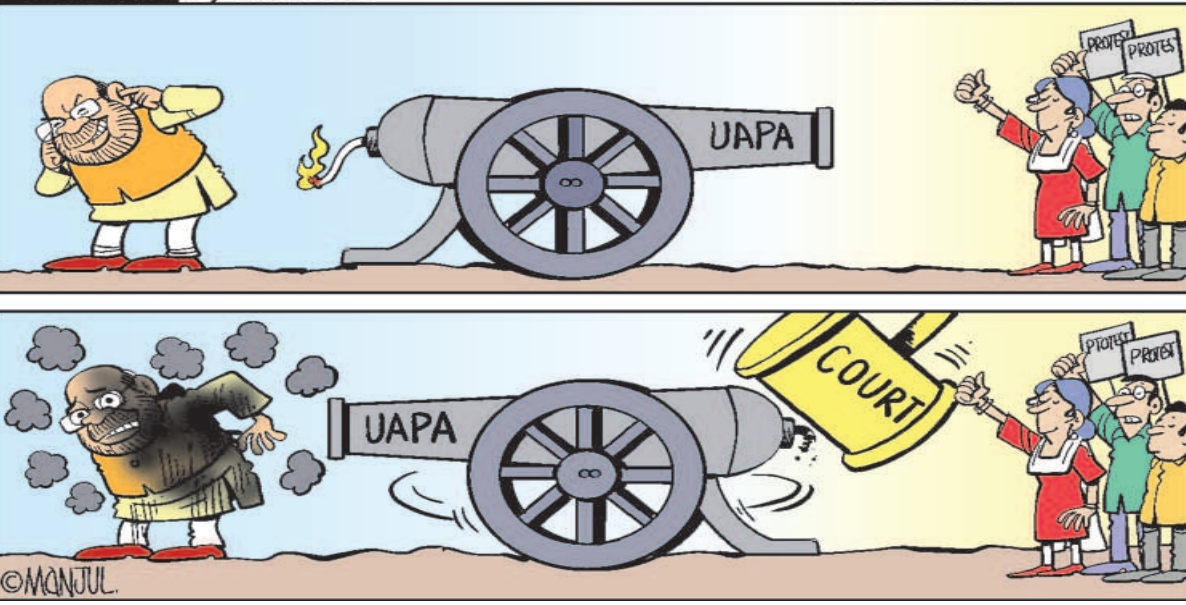
of the vehicle, owner and the status of the emission. "The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has issued a notification dated 14th June, 2021, for a common format of the PUC Certificate to be issued across the country, under the Central Motor Vehicle Rules 1989," an official statement said.

According to the statement, the new PUC will have vehicle owner's mobile number, name and address, engine number and chassis number. "The

owner's mobile number has been made mandatory, on which an SMS alert will be sent for validation and fee," it said.

The statement said the concept of rejection slip is being introduced for the first time. "A common format of rejection slip is to be given to the vehicle owner in case the test result value is more than the maximum permissible value, as mandated in the concerned emission norms," the statement said.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



CBSE formula 'time-bound' but 'far from fair'

NEW DELHI

THE evaluation formula decided by CBSE for class 12 students has evoked mixed reaction from experts with some hailing it as an "unbiased and time-bound" method and others terming it "far from being fair", saying students showing progress over a period of time will be at disadvantage. "The proposed methodology may seriously disadvantage students showing progress over a

period of time. CBSE, as a system, has never rewarded consistency in performance. It was built on the concept of one high-stakes exam. "To begin with, that is a wrong system. One cannot try to correct it with this kind of criterion, especially so in a year when the students have gone through so much trauma. The evaluation criteria released by CBSE for class 10 was far superior," said Maniit Jain, Chairman, FICCI ARISE, a collegium of stake-

holders aimed at promoting quality education.

According to Vishnu Kartik, CEO of The Heritage schools, the criteria decided by CBSE achieves the limited objective of providing a time-bound implementable framework but it is far from being a fair and accurate methodology. "The alternative formula for arriving at class 12 board exams is simple to implement and easy to understand. It achieves the limited objective of providing

a time-bound implementable framework. But is it a fair and near accurate methodology? Far from it. Our past data shows that performance in class 11 or 10 is not a reasonable prediction of performance in class 12," he said.

Rajat Goel, the Director of MRG School in Rohini said the criterion declared by CBSE and approved by the Supreme Court raises questions on some very important aspects.



Satya Nadella steps in as Microsoft Chairman too

SAN FRANCISCO: Microsoft has elected CEO Satya Nadella as Chairman of the tech giant, a first in two decades when Microsoft's chairman will also be its CEO.

Bill Gates was the only other Chairman and CEO of Microsoft who stepped down as CEO in 2000.

Gates stepped down as chairman in 2014 and the board then elected John Thompson as independent chairman.

Gates left the Microsoft board entirely last year to pursue his philanthropic ambitions.

In this role as Chairman, Nadella will lead the work to set the agenda for the board, leveraging his deep understanding of the business to elevate the right strategic opportunities and identify key risks and mitigation approaches for the board's review, the company said in a statement late on Wednesday.

Microsoft also unanimously elected John Thompson as lead independent director, a role he held previously from 2012 to 2014.

As lead independent director, Thompson will retain significant authority including providing input on behalf of the independent directors on board agendas, calling meetings of the independent directors, setting agendas for executive sessions, and leading performance evaluations of the CEO, Microsoft said.

In addition to these role changes, the board declared a quarterly dividend of \$0.56 per share.

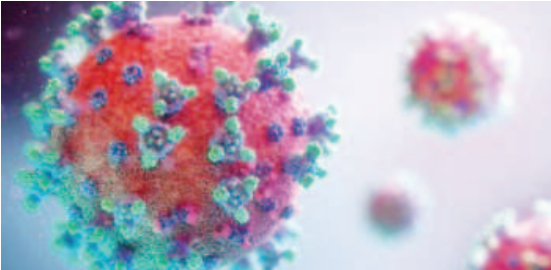
Delta variant doubling every 11 days in England

ADITI KHANNA
LONDON

THE number of people infected with the coronavirus is increasing rapidly in England, doubling every 11 days, which coincides with the Delta variant of Covid-19 becoming dominant in the country, a new study reports on Thursday. The Imperial College London led Real-time Assessment of Community Transmission (REACT-1) analysis, based on over 100,000 home swab tests taken between May 20 and June 7, estimates that 0.15 per cent of people have the deadly virus, or roughly 1 in

670. It found that the link between infections, hospitalisations and deaths had been weakening since February, but since late April, the trend has been reversing for hospitalisations.

"We found strong evidence for exponential growth in infection from late May to early June in the REACT-1 study, with a doubling time of 11 days on average for England," said Professor Paul Elliott, director of the REACT programme from Imperial's School of Public Health. "These data coincide with the Delta variant becoming dominant and show the importance of continuing to



monitor infection rates and variants of concern in the community," he said. The findings come days after UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced a month-long delay to an end to lockdown restrictions, citing the rising number of cases of the Delta variant - first identified in

India. "These findings highlight the stark context in which we took the difficult decision to delay Step 4 of the roadmap out of lockdown," said UK Health Secretary Matt Hancock. "Cases are now rising, but thanks to our incredible vaccination programme and enhanced re-

sponse package including surge testing, we have the tools to curb the spread of this virus. We all must hold our nerve that little bit longer as our vaccine rollout continues and I urge everyone to keep observing hands, face, space and fresh air, and make sure you receive both doses of the vaccine for the best possible protection," he said. The Imperial study scientists estimate that the reproduction number, or R number, of the deadly virus is now well above one at 1.44, meaning 10 infected people would pass the virus on to 14 others on average, resulting in fast growth of the epi-

demic. Most infections are happening in children and young adults, but they are rising in older people too, increasing at a similar rate in the over 50s and the under 50s. "Even though we are seeing the highest infection prevalence in younger people who are less susceptible to COVID-19, if this growth continues it will drive up infections in older, more vulnerable people, as the vaccines are not 100 per cent effective and not everyone has been fully vaccinated," said Professor Steven Riley, Professor of Infectious Disease Dynamics at Imperial.

Womenia

Yoga makes you to breathe easy

SARVESH SHASHI

Yoga is often mistaken as an exercise that only caters to the body. But the most important thing we forget is that the central dogma of yoga is breath. Life is breath.

"We breathe in oxygen and release carbon dioxide, it's simple biology," is what some said. But breathing is a very powerful way to control the mind.

Here's an example, if you breathe slowly and deliberately, you begin to feel sleepy. Your heart rate normalizes and you feel calmer. But when you are stressed, your breath quickens, it increases blood pressure. It increases heart rate and so on. If we flip the situation here and breathe easy while stressed, we're training our body to react calmly to situations of stress! I'd say breathing is not just inhaling and exhaling, it's actually a complex combination of intricate internal processes that lead to life!

Here are five things you can practice for better breath control and easier breathing.

The first pose is Bhujangasana or the Cobra pose. Designed to open the chest muscles, the Bhujangasana is a beginner-friendly pose that not only provides relief in asthmatic conditions but also allows one to calm the mind and promotes an overall feeling of happiness.

The second pose is the Ardha Matsyendrasana or the half fish pose. Designed to be a great twist



for the upper body, this induces deeper breathing than usual and enhances the muscles of the Lungs to perform better. It also aids in better circulation to the body and provides relief in times of stress.

The third pose is the toughest. No its not an elaborate twisting and balancing exercise, its Shavasana. We carry tension around our bodies for several days/weeks and some of us even years! This can really affect our breathing patterns. Shavasana helps regulate these in a resting pose. Clearing your mind of the chaos and the body of all the tension is a challenging task for us, who live every single conscious moment thinking or doing something!

The last two are breathing

proved breathing and circulation.

And lastly, Bhramari Pranayama. Bhramari word is made from the Hindi word "Bhramar" which means Bumble Bee. Brahmani (Bee Breath) is a very effective pranayama for calming the mind. The activity of this respiratory exercise helps to induce a calming impact on the mind rapidly. Brahmani Pranayama edges in reducing high vital signs, fatigue, and mental stress. This Pranayama is one of the great breathing exercises to release the mind of disquiet, anxiety, or frustration and get rid of anger.

There is research that corroborates the fact that Yoga is very beneficial for breathing. While the universe of Yoga is endless, It speaks of asanas, pranayamas, mudras, meditation techniques that have several benefits from their practice, the above are suitable for beginners to start their journey to yoga. We must remember that breath is life and life is breath.

Consistent daily exercise, breathing techniques to boost immunity and good nutrition can do the trick, just like it did for me during the time I suffered from Covid. June is celebrated as International Day of Yoga Month, as it lauds a practice that ensures holistic well-being. We want people to start their tryst with good health and utilize our platform towards helping communities thrive and work towards feeling healthy, physically and mentally.

Vaani Kapoor: It's been a long wait to see my films get a release

Vaani Kapoor has a dream line-up right now. After her last release, the blockbuster "War" in 2019, she was cruising along, looking at three mega releases in 2020. Then, pandemic struck.

It's delayed her date with the box office, of course, but "Bell Bottom" starring Akshay Kumar, "Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui" with Ayushmann Khurrana and "Shamsher" with Ranbir Kapoor are still mega attractions at the box office. It's been a

long wait, but with "Bell Bottom" being formally announced for theatrical release on July 27, Vaani tells you it pays to be patient.

"It's a solid product and Akshay sir, like in every film of his, is simply outstanding.

One has to see the film to understand what he has done. I'm grateful that I have a big film coming out now," says Vaani. "It's been a long wait to see my films get a release due to the virus, but I'm being super hopeful now that the audience will be entertained by them," she adds.

Vaani feels restarting the film industry has become important because the onslaught of losses has been relentless over the past year. A glossy spy thriller as "Bell Bottom" could perhaps be the right film to kick-start things once again.

"I'm really excited about the prospect of our industry restarting because it has endured the relentless onslaught of the pandemic. 'Bell Bottom' is a big screen entertainer. Hopefully, the film will play a huge hand in bringing people back to the theatres," she says.



Monsoon super foods to include in your diet

PUJA GUPTA

Along with strong winds and incessant rain, the monsoons in India also usher in a time for

savoury delicacies. It is important to remember that extreme change in weather conditions has an impact on our digestive system and makes it vulnerable to infections. Consuming certain foods items

that are rich in nutrients and help strengthen the body's immune system can help protect ourselves. Rohit Shelatkar, VP at Vitabiotics, Fitness & Nutrition Expert shares a list of these super foods:

Corn (Bhutta)

A roasted corn cob coated with spices and butter is the classic Indian monsoon snack. Corn is the ultimate power-packed and healthy monsoon food because it is low in calories and high in fiber. It is also very rich in lutein and two phytochemicals that promote better vision. Besides helping with weight loss, the insoluble fibre in corn feeds the good bacteria in our gut which in turn aids better digestion. Corn can be boiled, steamed or roasted and it is an extremely versatile food that can be incorporated in salads and mains.



Bananas

Gastrointestinal infections are more likely to occur during the monsoon season and the humble banana is the best defence against this. They are packed with vitamins and minerals that help with proper digestion. They also have ascorbic acid (vitamin C) and retinol that can help keep up our body's immune high. Additionally, bananas have a low caloric value and help the stomach to feel fuller for longer periods.



Eggs

Eggs are an all-weather super food that is rich in protein and help to build muscle mass. Eggs also boost the body's immune system and help to fight off infections.



Seasonal Fruit

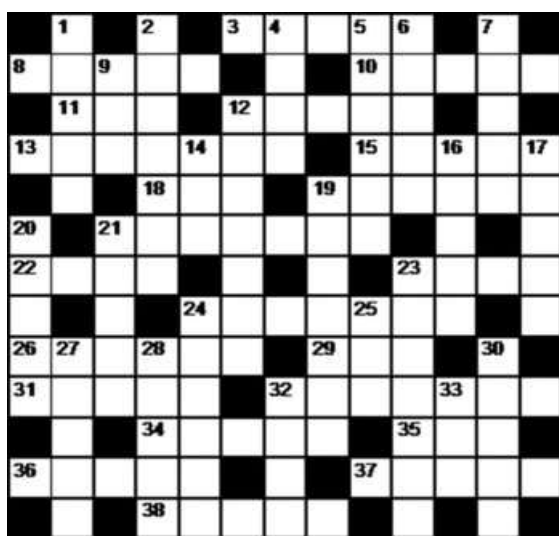
Monsoon fruit such as lychee, papaya, pomegranates, and pears not only help the body to digest food better but also aid in fighting infections that are caused due to this rise in humidity levels. Monsoon fruits are also rich in antioxidants that help to reduce blood pressure and prevent various infections. Jamun is another seasonal fruit that should be consumed as it is high in iron, folate, potassium, and vitamins.

Coconut water

Staying hydrated is one of the best ways to be healthy and prevent bacterial infections. Coconut water is a great source of electrolytes that can help the body to flush out toxins. It is also high in immunity boosting prop-

erties and can work wonders for one's skin and heart health. It is also the best choice for those who are trying to lose weight.

Coconut water should be had at room temperature with either a little bit of lemon juice or pineapple to boost Vitamin C levels in the body.



SOLUTION TO JUNE 17

CROSSWORD

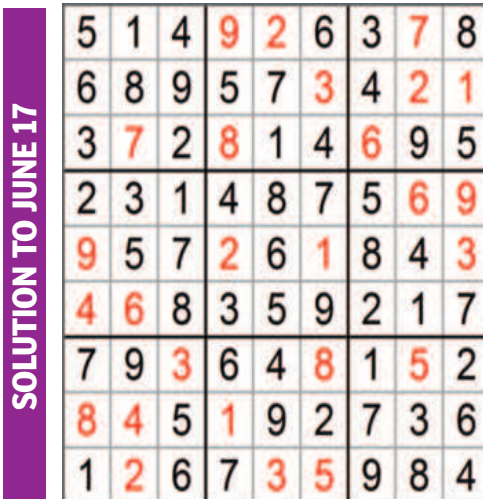
Across

- 3 Expectorates (5)
- 8 Strong boxes (5)
- 10 Flightless birds (5)
- 11 Debutante (3)
- 12 Happen (5)
- 13 Retaliate against or punish ? (3,4)
- 15 Scrimmage (5)
- 18 Illuminated (3)
- 19 Mark Twain's Tom ____ (6)
- 21 Hair pigment (7)
- 22 Pivot point (4)
- 23 Miscellaneous in short (4)
- 24 Country, now Czech (7)
- 26 Be relevant to (4,2)
- 29 Tennis star Henman (3)
- 31 Cancel (5)
- 32 Thistle-family herbs (7)
- 34 ____ New Guinea : island state north of Australia ? (5)
- 35 Sever (3)
- 36 More certain (5)
- 37 Of a city (5)
- 38 Prevent by means of a le-

Down

- 1 Lady's title (5)
- 2 Small stones (7)
- 4 Playful sprite (4)
- 5 33rd president of the U.S (6)
- 6 Termagant (5)
- 7 Cheque beneficiary (5)
- 9 Whimsical; strange (3)
- 12 Eight-sided room (7)
- 14 Feel sick (3)
- 16 Kingdom of Croesus (5)
- 17 Heath genus (5)
- 19 Ol' Blue Eyes (7)
- 20 Brazilian dance (5)
- 21 Sunil Dutt, Nutan starrer of yore (5)
- 23 Apery (7)
- 24 Grinding teeth (6)
- 25 Wine (Fr.) (3)
- 27 Boredom (5)
- 28 Indian coin (5)
- 30 Prince of Darkness (5)
- 32 Colloquial term for a car ? (4)
- 33 Young animal (3)

SUDOKU



SOLUTION TO JUNE 17

International Picnic Day

It's often claimed that life is no picnic but today it is. International Picnic Day is a chance to eat out in the open air with friends or family.

Placed conveniently in the middle of June, for many people this means that the weather should be fine and the sun shining. But even if the weather doesn't want to cooperate, an inside picnic can be a great substitute. Just spread a blanket out on the floor and enjoy a simple meal.

Those who want to get in on the fun can find plenty of opportunities to celebrate this enjoyable day. Consider these creative ways of celebrating or come up with a list of your own:

Join a Picnic Day Event

Charity events, school picnics and all kinds of other group meals are organized to mark the occasion. Check with a community board or website to see if any picnics are planned locally. Look particularly at local parks or museums that often plan these types of events. If they are having one nearby, join in. If not—go ahead and organize it!

Have a Personal Picnic for Lunch or Dinner

A great way to celebrate International Picnic Day is to bike, walk or hike to a nearby beauty spot, or just take your sandwiches and cold hard-boiled eggs into the garden and enjoy an al fresco lunch. Those who are at work for the day can just take their normal lunch hour to head out to a patch of grass or park nearby.



DELHI RIOTS CASE

Court orders immediate release of 3 student activists

NEW DELHI

THE Delhi High Court was informed on Thursday that a trial court has ordered 'immediate release' from jail of Jamia student Asif Iqbal Tanha and JNU students Devangana Kalita and Natasha Narwal who were granted bail on June 15 in the north-east Delhi riots case.

"That's wonderful," said a bench of Justices Siddharth Mridul and Anup Jairam Bhambhani after noting the submissions. It said no further orders are called for and disposed of the pleas by the three students seeking forthwith release from jail on the ground that even after 36 hours of passing of the bail orders the accused have not yet been released.

The high court was informed by the counsel for the accused that the trial court passed order earlier in the day allowing their interim release, subject to verification of documents and addresses and that the release warrants have been sent to the jail superintendent through electronic mode.

The bench, convened at 3:30 PM in pursuance to its order passed in the morning in which it asked the trial court to decide with "promptitude" and "expedition" the issue of release of the three accused from jail.

It had asked the counsel to jointly mention the matter before the trial court at 12 PM, which thereafter, ordered forthwith release of the accused from the jail as per the orders of the



Delhi High Court. The counsel for Tanha submitted an undertaking before the trial court that he will not leave Delhi.

The high court said, "Once the trial court has issued release orders to the jail superintendent, that is the end of the matter. Nothing more needs to be done. The first step we need to cross today is your release."

During the hearing, senior advocate Siddharth Aggarwal, representing Tanha, submitted that the high court in its June 4 order, by which he was granted interim custody bail to appear in exams, had put a condition that at the end of the interim bail, the student shall deposit his laptop with the special cell for forensic audit. He said he was ready to submit his laptop but this condition shall not stall his release.

Special Public Prosecutor Amit Prasad, representing Delhi

Police, submitted that in view of the regular bail granted to the accused, the state does not wish to conduct forensic audit anymore.

The high court also noted that since it has already clarified in its June 15 bail order that this order supersedes the June 4 interim custody bail order, no other clarification needs to be made.

During the hearing earlier in the day, the high court said, "The trial court is expected to proceed further with promptitude and expedition and decide the issue placed before it," and added "our order has to be implemented there cannot be two views on that".

It said that its direction was to the effect of forthwith release of the accused and the "trial court cannot be lax about it once the order is passed by this court". The accused' counsel said the police was delaying the verification

process and it was a delaying tactics.

The counsel said the trial court Wednesday did not pass the order on their release saying it was already 6 PM and listed the matter for Thursday. "The high court's orders are not being implemented in a manner by not passing an order," he contended.

The prosecutor submitted that they were not obstructing the release of the accused but they do not have the magical powers to verify the addresses of the accused from Jharkhand and Assam and other places in a short span of time.

The high court had on June 15 granted bail to Pinjra Tod activists Narwal and Kalita and Tanha, who were arrested in May last year under the stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) in connection with a case related to larger conspiracy in the north east Delhi riots in February last year. The three students were not being released from the jail on time citing lack of verification details of their addresses and sureties. As per the procedure, on being granted bail, the accused are required to furnish personal bond and surety before the trial court which issues their release warrants after verification of documents.

Communal clashes had broken out in north east Delhi on February 24 last year after violence between citizenship law supporters and protesters spiralled out of control leaving at least 53 people dead and more than 200 injured. (PTI)

Sputnik V shots to be available at Fortis' Gurgaon, Mohali facilities from Saturday

NEW DELHI

PRIVATE hospital chain Fortis Healthcare on Thursday announced that Sputnik V, the third anti-coronavirus vaccine approved for use in India, will be available at its Gurgaon and Mohali facilities as part of a limited pilot roll-out from Saturday.

The vaccine stock has been procured directly from Dr. Reddy's Laboratories according to government guidelines, it said. "The two-dose vaccine will be available at Fortis Memorial Research Institute, Gurugram, and Fortis Hospital, Mohali," the private hospital chain said in a statement. In the coming days, the vaccine will be available at more Fortis hospitals across 11 cities as part of the phase-wise pilot project. Dr Ashutosh Raghuvanshi, MD and CEO, Fortis Healthcare, said, "Fortis is actively working towards ensuring that as many Indians as possible are fully vaccinated. To date, our units were only providing Covaxin and Covishield." "However, we are pleased to announce that Fortis, in collaboration with Dr. Reddy's Laboratories, is among the first to provide a third vaccine option, at Fortis Memorial Research Institute and Fortis



Hospital Mohali, with the dual objective of expanding and scaling up the vaccination drive and lowering the infection risks to future mutations of the virus." Earlier, Delhi's Indraprastha Apollo Hospital and Madhukar Rainbow Children's Hospital had also said they will start administering the Russian COVID-19 vaccine by June 20. The Centre has fixed the price of the vaccine at Rs 1,145 per dose. The maximum price of Covishield for private COVID-19 Vaccination Centres (CVCs) has been fixed at Rs 780 per dose, while that of Covaxin is Rs 1,410 per dose. Russia's Gamaleya National Research Institute of Epi-

demiology and Microbiology has developed the vaccine and the Russian Direct Investment Fund is marketing it globally. Hyderabad-based Dr Reddy's Laboratories, the marketing partner for the vaccine in the country, has been importing the shots from Russia. Over a period of time, the vaccine is also going to be manufactured in India. Sputnik V uses two different viruses that cause the common cold (adenovirus) in humans. It employs a different vector for each of the two shots, given 21 days apart. According to Gamaleya and the RDIF, Sputnik V has demonstrated an efficacy rate of 92 per cent. (PTI)

AAP govt makes fresh bid to get L-G's nod for doorstep delivery of ration scheme

NEW DELHI

THE AAP government has sent a file on doorstep delivery of ration to Delhi Lt Governor Anil Bajjal, making a fresh bid to get his approval for the scheme, official sources said on Thursday.

Earlier this month, the Arvind Kejriwal government had claimed that the scheme was rejected by L-G contending that the Centre's approval was not sought for it and there was

a pending case in the court.

According to sources, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has again sent the file to the LG and said that it was according to the law and the objections raised by the Centre earlier have been addressed.

Kejriwal has stressed that the Centre's directions have been followed and claimed that it was wrong to "stop" the scheme during the coronavirus pandemic, sources added. (PTI)

UP: 12 cops injured as protest turns violent; 43 arrested

UNNAO (UP)

TWELVE police personnel were injured when people protesting over the death of two motorcycle riders in an accident pelted stones at them near a village here, officials said on Thursday.

Forty-three people have been arrested, and a case has been registered against 100 named and 250 unknown persons in connection with the violence that took place on Wednesday, the police said. The road crash that led to the protest took place on Tuesday.

Devikhedha village residents Rajesh (32) and Vipin (25) died as the motorcycle they were riding was hit by a car in the City Kotwali police station area, they said.

A day later, after the bodies were handed over to their families for last rites following a post-mortem examination, people of the village blocked the Unnao-Kanpur road near Akrampur to press for action against those responsible and compensation for the kin of the deceased, Superintendent of Police Anand Kulkarni said.

The protesters pelted stones at the sub-divisional magistrate and a police team sent there to pacify them, resulting in injuries to over 12 policemen, the SP said.

Meanwhile, the Lucknow Range inspector general tweeted that Kotwali Sadar Inspector in-charge Dinesh Mishra, police outpost in-charge of Magarwara, and two constables have been suspended for laxity and incompetence.

A clarification has been sought from the CO City, and the investigation of entire case has been given to the Rae Bareilly additional superintendent of police, the IG said. According to local people, the police team was outnumbered and ill-equipped to handle the mob. The situation came under control after additional forces arrived at the spot. (PTI)

REPUBLIC DAY VIOLENCE CASE

Police files supplementary charge sheet against Sidhu, others

NEW DELHI

DELHI Police on Thursday filed a supplementary charge sheet against actor-activist Deep Sidhu and others in the Republic Day violence case.

Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Gajendra Singh Nagar will pass the order on the point of cognisance of the fresh charge sheet on June 19 at 2 pm.

"The investigating officer of the case pointed out the names of the witnesses who were severely injured or from whom the weapon was snatched," the court noted.

On January 26, protesting farmers clashed with the police during the tractor rally against three farm laws and stormed into the Red Fort injuring scores of policemen.

The Crime Branch is tasked



with investigating the case. On May 17, it filed a 3,224-page charge sheet and sought prosecution of 16 accused includ-

ing Sidhu.

Sidhu, who was accused of being the key conspirator of the violence, was arrested on

February 9. The police had also accused him of fuelling the chaos at the Red fort. (PTI)

Mayawati launches fresh attack on SP chief Akhilesh Yadav

LUCKNOW

BSP chief Mayawati on Thursday took a swipe at SP leader Akhilesh Yadav, saying he was getting expelled and "ineffective" leaders from other parties to join his party just to remain in the news.

This is the second consecutive day that Mayawati has targeted Yadav after five MLAs suspended by the BSP last year met the SP chief on Tuesday, triggering speculation that they may join his party.

In a tweet in Hindi, Mayawati said, "The condition of SP has become so bad that in order to remain in the media every day, even former MLAs and small workers of other parties, who have been expelled or have become ineffective in their areas, are being made to join the party by the SP chief himself many times."

She also charged that the SP chief has no longer has faith in his

own local leaders. Mayawati asserted that her party is getting only the right leaders to join the BSP.

"The local level leaders of the BSP have been continuously making only the right people of other parties, including the SP, join after investigation, this is well known," she said.

On Wednesday, Mayawati had said that the "Samajwadi Party, which is an expert in narrow politics of despicable manipulations, malice and casteism, is publicising through the media that some BSP MLAs are breaking away to join the SP. This is an intense illusion".

According to the statement issued by the SP on Wednesday Amar Pal Sharma, former BSP MLA from Sahibabad, had joined Yadav's party along with his supporters. The statement had also stated that leaders and workers of many other parties had taken membership of the party. (PTI)



UP to bring stringent law to check gambling

LUCKNOW

UTTAR Pradesh is now gearing up to ban gambling in public with a stricter law.

According to sources, the State Law Commission has submitted the draft for a new law that prohibits public gambling, including online gambling and various forms of betting, putting them in the category of non-bailable offences.

The draft report titled Uttar Pradesh Public Gaming (Prevention) Bill has been prepared under the chairmanship of State Law Commission, headed by Justice A.N. Mittal and was submitted to the Chief Minister earlier this week.

The Bill provides a maximum punishment of three years. The draft of this new law has been made keeping in mind the fast-growing form of online gambling.

The Public Gambling Act, at present, only provides for one-year imprisonment and Rs 1,000 fine. These punitive provisions are not enough to check online gambling, officials said. Important recommenda-

tions have been made to break the chain of cartels that operate gambling houses and bookies in the state.

The Commission has recommended increasing the punishment to one year and a fine of Rs 5,000. It has also recommended making online gambling, house gambling operation and betting a non-bailable offence.

The new law is slated to give

more power to police.

Justice A.N. Mittal, chairman of the commission, said that a distinction has also been made between game of skill and chance. Card games played under a Game of Skill will not be punishable.

He said that if a family plays cards in their house for rituals and entertainment and no outsider is present there, then it will not be punishable. (IANS)



The oppressive soap opera of North Korea

NORTH Korea recently saw a man executed for being caught with a South Korean drama. His entire neighbourhood was ordered to watch that execution. "If you didn't, it would be classed as treason," people were told.. The North Korean guards were making sure everyone knew the penalty for smuggling illicit videos was death. Imagine being in a constant state of lockdown with no internet, no social media and only a few state controlled television channels designed to tell you what the country's leaders want you to hear - this is life in North Korea.

And now its leader Kim Jong-Un has clamped down further, introducing a sweeping new law against what the regime describes as "reactionary thought". Anyone caught with media from South Korea, the United States or

Japan now faces the death penalty. Those caught watching face prison camp for 15 years. The Daily NK, an on-line publication in Seoul with sources in North Korea, was the first to get hold of a copy of the law.

It states that if a worker is caught, the head of the factory can be punished, and if a child is problematic, parents can also be punished. The system of mutual monitoring encouraged by the North Korean regime is aggressively reflected in this law. And it's not just about what people watch. Recently, Kim wrote a letter in state media calling on the country's Youth League to crack down on "unsavoury, individualistic, anti-socialist behaviour" among young people. He wants to stop foreign speech, hairstyles and clothes which he described as "dangerous poisons".

The Daily NK reported that three teenagers had been sent to a re-education camp for cutting their hair like K-pop idols and hemming their trousers above their ankles. All this is because Kim Jong-Un is in a war that does not involve nuclear weapons or missiles. Analysts say he is trying to stop outside information reaching the people of North Korea as life in the country becomes increasingly difficult.

Millions of people are thought to be going hungry. Kim wants to ensure they are still being fed the state's carefully crafted propaganda, rather than gaining glimpses of life according to glibly K-dramas set south of the border in Seoul, one of Asia's richest cities. North Koreans get all their news, entertainment and information from state media, which unfailingly praises the leadership.

According to Reporters without Borders, citizens can be sent to prison for viewing, reading or listening to content provided by international media outlets. The country has been more cut off from the outside world than ever before after sealing its border last year in response to the pandemic. Vital supplies and trade from neighbouring China almost ground to a halt. Although some supplies are beginning to get through, imports are still limited.

This self-imposed isolation has exacerbated an already failing economy where money is funneled into the regime's nuclear ambitions.

Earlier this year Kim himself admitted that his people were facing the worst-ever situation which they had to overcome. But then, dictatorship grows over time.

It begins with your food habits, your clothing, your beliefs, your systems, language and then moves on to bigger things. Isn't it so?



India has quietly made deep economic inroads in Africa

MAHUA VENKATESH

INDIA has quietly upped its game in Africa. While pundits have been busy analysing India's involvement with China, US and other European countries, Indian public sector as well as private sector have been making deep inroads in Africa. So when India became Africa's third largest trading partner, the news failed to grab eyeball.

"Every Indian company wanting to expand globally is looking at Africa as the land of a new set of opportunities," Chandrajit Banerjee, director general of Confederation of Indian Industry said in an interview. The recent visit of external affairs minister S Jaishankar to Kenya just highlighted the importance India is now attaching to Africa notwithstanding the derailment in engagement between India and the African countries due to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Several Indian companies such as ONGC Videsh, Tata Group, Bharti, Godrej Group, Mahindra & Mahindra, Escorts, Apollo, and Essar among others are already present in Africa.

The Economist in a report published in April said "many Zambians, like people in many other developing countries, complain loudly and often about the Chinese firms that are big local investors. India is also a big commercial presence but no one bats an eyelid."

"In central Lusaka a brand-new flyover flutters with the green, white and saffron of the Indian flag. Throughout the Zambian capital lorries produced by Tata Motors, part of the steel-to-tech Tata empire, are used for everything from construction to rubbish collection. Signs inside the vehicles instruct drivers in both English and Hindi. The lorries' occupants phone each other over a mobile network run by Bharti Airtel, an Indian telecoms firm," the report said. Africa, rich in natural resources such as minerals, also has 40 per cent of the world's potential hydroelectric power and a large swath of untilled farmland.

"Africa's importance will only grow in the coming years and India, which has already expanded its engagements in the continent must continue to do so with a more focused strategy amid the changing global political order," a member of an industry body who deals with Africa told India Narrative. Agriculture is one area of investment that India must look at, said another analyst.

According to the Diplomat, Africa, as a continent of increasing importance to both China and India, stands to see another manifestation of this competition. The Diplomat further said that India can compete with China in two ways: by working to enable greater African agency and also pursue its interests, and it can also leverage the long standing and well-integrated diaspora. "This can enable India to chart its own course between the United States, the European Union, and China, in Africa," it said. Africa is home to more than three million people of Indian origin. The Asia Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) that was initiated by India and Japan jointly could now once get much needed fillip. "India and Japan need to now move fast on this. Until now there has been negligible progress on this mega project. The governments of the two countries must get the project started at the earliest," the analyst said.

As the geopolitical thrust shifts towards the Indo-Pacific and Africa, the Group of Seven nations in it just concluded meeting said that collaboration with the continent will increase. "We resolve to collaborate with partners around the world, including in the Indo-Pacific and Africa, to actively promote these shared values for the good of all," the statement issued at the end of the summit said.



India collaborates with UNICEF to tackle youth employment

INDIA on Thursday signed a Statement of Intent (SoI) with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to co-create and implement solutions at scale to tackle the employment and skilling challenges for adolescents and youth in India.

A particular focus will be on the vulnerable population, including young people with special needs, migrant youth, victims of child labour, violence, child marriage and trafficking.

Minister of State for Labour and Employment (Independent Charge) Santosh Kumar Gangwar announced the collaboration soon after the SoI was signed between his ministry and the UNICEF.

The State of Intent to highlight the partnership was signed by Shri Apurva Chandra, Secretary Ministry of Labour and Employment and Yasmin Ali Haque, UNICEF Representative in India and Co-Chair, YuWaah, in the presence of Dhruwarakha Sriram, Chief of Generation Unlimited, Youth Development and Partnerships, UNICEF India and Abhishek Gupta, Chief Operating Officer of YuWaah.

This effort will be spearheaded by YuWaah, UNICEF's multi-stakeholder alliance in India, globally known as Generation Unlimited.

Launched in 2019, YuWaah aims to prepare India's young people to transition from education and learning to productive work and active citizenship.

By 2030, YuWaah aims to build pathways for 100 million young people to aspirational socio-economic opportunities, facilitate 200 million young people to gain relevant skills for productive lives, partner with 300 million young people as active change-makers and create spaces for leadership development. Towards achieving these goals, MoLE, UNICEF and YuWaah will create linkages between young people and aspirational economic opportunities, upskilling young people with 21st-century skills and supporting direct dialogue between youth and policy stakeholders. To ensure that schemes and programmes are consistent with young people's priorities and aspirations, YuWaah's community participation online platform, U-Report, will act as a feedback mechanism. To strengthen the National Career Service (NCS), MoLE will also provide the necessary API integration to YuWaah for connecting with more job seekers. Delighted to announce this partnership, Gangwar said, "We are committed to improve employment outcomes for all youth in India, including females and vulnerable ones too, through an enduring, long-term commitment for better opportunities."

"By leveraging the strengths of MoLE, YuWaah (UNICEF) and associated network members, we hope to enable abundant choices for our young generation to contribute and shape our country's future."

Labour Ministry Secretary Apurva Chandra, said, "To effectively harness capabilities of our youth, interventions must reflect labour market demand and the needs of employers, as well as the aptitude and aspirations of youth. "With this partnership between MoLE, YuWaah (UNICEF), we are committed to make an inclusive and participatory association by establishing a feedback mechanism between youth and policy stakeholders to ensure that schemes and programs are consistent with young people's priorities and aspirations." (ANS)

TROUBLE @TWITTER



WITTER has turned 15 this year. Could it be a coincidence that Twitter is in deep trouble in India, while it celebrates this milestone? Has it come of age or did it deviate from its stated purpose on which this enterprise was founded?

Jack Dorsey - the founder CEO of this mega social networking platform, has plenty of commercial reasons to be nosey and provocative on ruling parties and incumbent governments across the world. Twitter has repositioned itself from a mere social media platform when it was founded in 2006, to an iconic platform for anti-government, anti-national, anti-social, revolutionary and even militant voices sometime in the last decade. Twitter's brand re-positioning has earned it billions of dollars all these years, no wonder Jack has been treading the same path in India.

Twitter is trying to leverage democracies for its commercial advantage. This company understands that democratically elected governments are not agile in making decisions. Twitter knows collective decision-making, constitutional checks and balances, legal framework, opposition voice, public perception and free-press in a democracy can slow down the decision-making process. Especially, if governments intend to act against the re-positioned agenda of Twitter, to stroke unrest in the name of free speech and brazenly violate laws of the land.

Twitter is playing with the above push and pull forces. This enables it to hold elected governments for ransom with their commercial agenda of 'consistent user engagement' on their platform. Eventually, Twitter makes billions of dollars through advertisements and

other revenue streams.

However, the government in India under the leadership of PM Narendra Modi is quite different than many other nations with whom Twitter has successfully played its 'engagement games'. Indian government has a stated agenda of 'minimum government and maximum governance'. Modi government works 24/7 to ensure the nation is governed with required speed of decision-making, while following due process.

Twitter can't take Government of India for a ride. Its recent attempts at it, will cost Twitter big-time sooner than later.

For Twitter, more chatter is more money. The ever-increasing user base with over 330 million active users on its platform, needs consistent engagement to keep users hooked and responsive.

Twitter's current business model has implications for both its revenue and continuity of business. In India, its renewed brand positioning and business model has hit a huge wall. It has to rework its brand positioning and business model to suit the conditions locally. However, it's easier said than done. The global positioning of the brand will take a hit if Twitter were to tweak its brand personality or showcase a perceptive weakness. The company is in an unenviable position, it is stuck between devil and the deep sea.

I am outlining four big reasons why Twitter is running into massive trouble in India. This global platform's future operations in India are quite uncertain.

Twitter brand positioning

After operating few initial years as a regular social media platform like Facebook, Twitter has re-positioned its brand globally as a platform for 'the outspoken and the restless'. The brand personality has been explicitly pronounced by ensuring the loudest among its users get the validator blue ticks easily, in comparison to the moderate voices.

Through the algorithm of Hashtags, twitter has hit hot buttons in every nation to draw the perennial whiners and political opponents onto its platform. There are many in every democracy who are desperate to voice their opinions and views,



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whether they have any substance, relevance or purpose.

This brand positioning drives twitter into a one-way street of being a rebel with a cause, platform for the anti-social, anti-national and anti-government. Twitter can no more re-position itself as a regular social media platform ever again, from its current position. It will not just lose all the 'loud tweeters' who draw million others onto its platform, but it will also lose billions of dollar revenues for the same reason.

The serious trouble brewing for Twitter in India, is driven out of this irreversible and aggressive brand positioning.

Twitter nation

Twitter believes it is a nation by itself. Its belief is driven out of the user base of over 330 million, who are actively engaged globally on a daily basis. Imagine the power to have users who outnumber the population count of over 90% of nations on this planet. That is the power that Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey has been experiencing since a decade, every day.

No wonder, Twitter CEO feels intimidated and challenged when the Government of India demands compliance to the laws of the land. It's not just his pride, but the brand personality he has built for Twitter, which doesn't allow the enterprise to be a rule-follower and law-abiding entity. Twitter has been promoting the herds who break or bend rules, who spew venom, hatred and challenge the law-and-order of their own nations.

Twitter is in trouble for its self-created faulty notion of being a virtual-nation. Twitter acts as if it is unbound by any laws, rules and regulations. This make-believe world has lasted so far. However, it might not work in India. Lawlessness, insubordination and anarchy will

not be tolerated in India under the leadership of PM Narendra Modi.

Leveraging democracy

Twitter is banned in China, Russia, Turkey, North-Korea, Egypt, Iran and Nigeria. Twitter doesn't make any noise on these nation's conditions, their human-rights, oppression of free speech nor does it promote any revolutionary global hashtags about these nations.

Twitter feeds on democracy. It leverages the spirit of democracy to make billions of dollars. In the guise of freedom-of-expression, Twitter enables and empowers those who wish to drive social-unrest, disharmony, hate and resentment against elected governments.

The largest democracy of the world does not need lessons in free-speech, journalist freedoms, civic-rights, social-justice and religious tolerance from a bunch of half-baked, irresponsible, ignorant keyboard-punchers sitting half-way across the world in their T-shirts and short pants.

India doesn't allow anyone to meddle with its internal affairs, and Twitter by no means has a veto on this policy. Government of India is an elected law-making and enforcing body. It is empowered by its people to protect, enable and enforce the constitutional rights and responsibilities of its citizens.

Twitter also prevails on the natural weaknesses of a democracy in comparison to a dictatorial regime. Elected governments in democracies are wary of public perception, public image, display of democratic credentials unlike monarchies and single-party ruled nations.

Twitter survives its market position by challenging the rul-

be viewed with scepticism as China is not in good books of the world.

Dr T Ramadas, Visakhapatnam

Have uniform pricing policy

THE prices of all essential commodities are generally high. Inflation rules the roost. Added to this, fuel prices keep rising every now and then. Prices of fuel both petrol and diesel have crossed the 3 figure mark. Prices have risen many times during the months of May and June. Taxes like Excise duties, VAT, etc gets added to the base price. Taxes are close to 70 per cent. It's common knowledge that spiraling prices of fuel has a cascading effect and will help in jacking up the overall inflation.

The Govts attribute the price rise to a rise in international crude oil prices but, ironically when the prices of crude gets reduced, the benefit is not passed on to the beneficiaries. This is because the



LETTERS

Enable livelihoods of AP fishermen

THIS has reference to your editorial 'Improving the lot of fisherfolk'. The mechanised trawling ban imposed in several states in the country, must not be viewed as 'evil', but a necessary reality enabling the fishermen to harvest the sea wealth for a long time to come, in a systematic and scientific way.

The interregnum of sixty two days trawling ban is to help the seas to rejuvenate and replenish in terms of marine wealth since monsoon time is regarded as the breeding time of several fish and prawn varieties that are in demand domestically and globally. These practices are strictly imposed by states having seas as the border, and fishing as the main profession for the majority of people living in these areas. India's Exclusive Economic Zone does not permit other foreign trawlers fishing in the EEZ, taking advantage of the trawling ban imposed by India.

As for improved and better facilities for fishermen of Andhra Pradesh, in terms of marketing of the produce, improved and advanced methods of trawling in high seas is a legitimate requirement about which the government must seriously think of as other states are do-

ing in improving the lot of fishermen, by way of acquiring fuel efficient trawlers with large cold storage capacity to keep the catch fresh before it reaches the shore to fetch attractive price.

K R Parvathy, Mysuru

Cuba's medical system impressive

THE Moot Point column - Lessons from Cuba's health card - by Ramu Suravajjula (June 16) is comprehensive. I don't know if Modi was referring to Cuban international solidarity and brotherhood philosophy of late Castro while he proposed 'One Earth-One Health' but it'd have been better if he'd called for Cuban doctors in the Covid crisis as they served in the Western countries when the first wave of it wretched havoc. South African President's announcement that his country would nominate the Henry Reeve Int'l Contingent of Doctors for 2021 Nobel Peace Prize will be unanimously acclaimed as it is on par with Medicine sans Frontiers(MSF, Doctors without Borders) that had won the Peace Nobel. Cuban efforts for vaccine for Covid-19 are equally praiseworthy but their working with China for pan-Corona will

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Threat from lakes looms large over dwellers

ESA BIN ABDUL REHMAN
HYDERABAD

WITH monsoon rains are yet to hit the ground, and if as the metrological department believes that the downpour would be more harder this year, the already replete lakes around Himayath Sagar and Osman Sagar pose a great risk to the lives of people living around the water bodies who remain shuddered thinking about previous wrought.

Despite hot spell during the last three months - more specifically since the beginning of the month of May, the present storage capacity of the Himayath Sagar Lake remains standing at 1759.05 feet above bed level of 1690 feet that recorded on June 17. It was noted that during the last one week merely .10 feet absorption was recorded in the lake. This could be ascertained by revisiting the statistics being recorded earlier this week when the water level was hovering at 1759.15 feet on June 10 depicting a depletion of just .10 feet during the last one week. Together during the last one month not atleast a foot of depletion was recorded in the lake capacity. Going with the storage level of 1759.70 feet recorded on 10th May last month it could easily be determined that not more than 0.65 feet of absorption was recorded during the last one month in Himayath Sagar.

Though the fluctuation in



storage capacity is being recorded every four days due to heat waves, no significant impact was made on the storage capacity in the lake yet and the officials are attributing this to good rains during last and the present year.

Not much different is the situation of Osman Sagar Lake where the storage capacity is 1782.40 feet on June 17 making it again vulnerable for any eventual deluge that turned several areas of Narsingi, Manikonda and Bandlaguda Jagir into ponds after lifting the crest gates last year.

During the last one week a slightest depletion of just 0.2 feet was witnessed in the storage capacity. Though 1782.60 feet of water level was recorded on June 10 in the lake the same is stood at 1782.40 feet today leaving no much impact over the storage capacity.

Last year on the unfaithful night of October 13 several lakes from Vikarabad district to Gurram Cheruvu Balaur in Hyderabad city developed breaches leaving a trail of destruction behind. The horrific deluge claimed several lives and damaged properties to an unproportionate level. In some areas the bodies that were flown away with the furious flood, have not yet been retrieved.

Later the official found that a total number of 14 water bodies in and around the city received breaches due to floods. Brahmana Kunta, Brahman Cheruvu, Appa Cheruvu, Palle Cheruvu, Mamidla Kunta, ErraKunta and Gurrum Cheruvu are among the water bodies where bunds are completely breached. Among them Most Brahmana Kunta, Brahman Cheruvu and Appa Cheruvu fall under Rajendrana-

gar area while Palle Cheruvu shares the area boundaries with Bandlaguda of Chandrayangutta. Sensing the enormity the officials even open the crest gates of both Himaath sagar and Osman Sagar the next day to flush out the water through Musi River.

However, these lakes are still brimmed and posing a great risk to nearby residents. Even some of the lakes have received breaches again in recent rains that include Appa Cheruvu Lake of Gagan Pahad and have not yet been repaired by the irrigation officials.

People living around the lakes are still afraid of the prevailing situation as most of the lakes that received breaches last year and some in recent rains remain crammed and there is a great possibility of re-convulsing last year's episode if fresh rains begin to hit the ground hard.

‘Cannot restrain panel formed to survey Devarayamjal lands from doing its job’

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

A single judge bench comprising Justice T Amarnath Goud of the High Court on Thursday made it clear that the court cannot restrain the committee constituted under GO number 1014 on May 3, from entering the properties in different survey numbers in Devarayamjal village of Medchal-Malkajgiri district and taking up a survey to find out the fact as to whether any person was under illegal occupation of the lands belonging to Sri Seetha Ramachandra Swamy Temple.

Justice Amarnath Goud was dealing with the writ petition filed by Sada Kanitha and other, who have lands scattered in different survey numbers in De-

The High Court bench makes it clear that the committee will do its work and submit a report to the State government

LEGAL NOTES

varayamjal village. When the said committee tried to take up a survey of the said lands, the petitioners have approached the High Court seeking suspension of the GO through which the committee was constituted. They further sought a direction to the committee to issue a notice, in case the officials intend to take up a survey of their lands. However, the court refused to suspend the GO, rather it gave a go ahead to the committee with the survey after issuing a prior notice to the petitioners. The committee was constituted by the State government with an intent to find out as to whether any person had encroached upon the temple lands and after taking up the survey, the committee will submit a re-

port to the State government and it is the duty of the committee to take up the survey, observed the judge. Further, the judge directed the committee to issue a notice to the petitioners before entering their lands for the survey and the petitioners were directed to cooperate with the committee by furnishing the requisite relevant documents pertaining to their lands substantiating their stand that the said lands belong to them before the committee and if the petitioners do not cooperate with the committee, then the committee could initiate action against them in accordance with the law.

The court further issued notices to the Principal Secretary to the Government, GAD, Principal Secretary, Municipal Administration, Principal Secretary, Endowments, Sri Seetha Ramachandra Swamy Temple, Devarayamjal village, the Collector, Medchal-Malkajgiri and the Commissioner, Thumkunta Municipality, directing them to respond to the contentions of the petitioner in two weeks.

City doc appointed as member of National Board of Examinations

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

DR Rakesh Sharma, health care professional from Hyderabad has been appointed as member to the new board of National Board of Examinations created on Thursday.

He had worked with several health care establishments in the city. Since then, for the exemplary work done by Sharma, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India has awarded him with Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel Award in the year 2021.

Tiff at vax centre over insufficient doses

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VANASTHALIPURAM

UNRULY scenes were witnessed at a Covid-19 vaccination centre at Vanasthalipuram complex on Thursday. The women who had come for vaccination got into a tiff with the health officials over insufficient doses of vaccine. The health officials informed that they had received only 600 doses from the higher officials which was why only 600 of 1,000 women were vaccinated on the day. Speaking on the occasion, the women said that they came hoping to get the jab after the officials said that 1,000 people a day would be vaccinated. Depressed women got into a quarrel with staff carrying syringes from the vaccine centre. An argument over fewer doses of vaccine triggered the rage among the women, who alleged that health officials were not concerned about the people coming for vaccination, and were neglecting their duties.

Yoga curbs stress and promotes well-being

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

YOGA has been around for ages, practicing it helps to keep the body, mind and soul healthy, said G Suseela, yoga trainer, in National Institute of Naturopathy, Ministry of Ayush at a webinar organised by the Regional Outreach Bureau and the Press Information Bureau on Thursday on topic “Role of common yoga protocol towards harmony in living”.

Delivering the key-note address, she said practicing yoga and meditation helps to promote endurance, strength and well-being.

“Having high stress levels, low physical activities, unhealthy food habits results in lifestyle diseases like diabetes, hypertension. Practising ‘pranayam’ in such pandemic situations will help to keep mentally fit.

Suseela explained various yoga postures that help to promote deep rest and relaxation and better functioning of all organs.

Later she demonstrated common yoga protocols released by

Webinar organised on “Role of common yoga protocol towards harmony in living”

the ministry, which include various yogasanas, pranayama, dhyana (meditation) which are beneficial in managing health-related disorders.

Director PIB and ROB Shruti Patil said amid the pandemic, the ministry has released a common yoga protocol on the theme of ‘yoga day be with yoga be at home’. It includes day-to-day yoga practice, which intends to create general awareness among masses to attain peace and well-being.

Earlier AD, ROB, Bharatalakshmi, Assistant Director welcomed. Officers of PIB and Regional Outreach Bureau attended.

JNTU-H schools engineering college management on running courses

VRC PHANIHANAN
HYDERABAD

THE Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University, Hyderabad (JNTU-H) has come up with new regulations for issuing no-objection certificates (NOC) for its affiliated engineering colleges. According to the JNTU-H authorities, it is distributed with a growing trend of ‘profitability is the priority’ ruling the running of engineering colleges affiliated to it.

The college managements a going gaga over the emerging courses and seeking approvals to start new B.Tech programmes with specialisations like Data Analytics, Internet of Things (IoT), Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning (ML).

However, while applying to new specialisation, the college managements have been asking for NOCs for the closer of the existing courses of B.Tech with specialisations in Civil Engineering (CE), Mechanical Engineering (ME), Electrical and Electronics Engineering (EEE). The reason

- Profitability is priority trend creates an imbalance in the engineering studies
- Engineering does not mean computer sciences and its allied fields, says JNTU-H
- Imposes new conditions to issue NOCs for closure of traditional engineering specialisation

being, the colleges feel these traditional courses are less attractive to get a sufficient number of students to them making them financially unviable to run them visa-a-visa the new specialisation.

In a circular to the colleges on Thursday, the JNTU-H said it has thoroughly reviewed the requests of the colleges for closure of the courses by some colleges for the academic year 2021-22.

It said that the colleges have requested for winding up the core engineering courses of CE,

ME, EEE, apart from few other courses which were approved during the academic years 2020-21.

Schooling to the colleges applying for such NOC’s the university said, “Engineering” means, a blend of all the traditional, conventional courses like CE, ME, EEE etc along with the emerging courses.

It further added, if all the courses offered by the colleges focus only on Computer Sciences and Engineering (CSE), and its allied courses in line with the current market demand and trends, then, it would lead to imbalance.” Also, if this trend continues there is every possibility that the traditional courses will gradually disappear.

The university also reminded that the perspective plan submitted by the Telangana State government to the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) highlighted the imbalance among the circuit branches like information technology, CSE and Electronic and Communication Engineering (ECE) versus other

core engineering courses, which need to be corrected on a priority basis. This was to ensure that the manufacturing and other sectors do not suffer. Though the university always will encourage emerging and thrust areas, at the same time, “it is not at the cost of the traditional courses,” the university underlined.

Another serious aspect that the JNTU-H highlighted was that the closing of the traditional courses would deprive the Polytechnic diploma candidates who seek admission into the second year of B.Tech traditional course through the Telangana State Engineering Common Entrance (TSECE) test.

Against this backdrop, the JNTU-H has decided to issue NOCs for closure of courses sought only if the college could not get admissions less than 30 per cent of the approved intake for the past two academic years. Besides, it has made it clear that the college should maintain at least one class in the traditional courses with an intake of 60 seats in CE, ME, EEE and the like.

REORGANISATION OF SCHOOLS

Not a single employee will be removed, assures AP CM

- Orders officials to prepare an action plan for the implementation of new education policy
- Says primary schools should not be more than 1 km to students and from Classes 3 to X, not more than 3 km
- Asks officials to buy lands under Nadu Nedu for schools that have no playgrounds

HANS NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI

CHIEF Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy directed the officials to prepare an action plan for the implementation of new education policy. During a review at camp office here on Thursday, he said not even a single employee will be laid off from schools and Anganwadi centres and no centre is being closed.

The Chief Minister said there should be two types of schools, of which one school consisting



Education Minister A Suresh shows the dictionaries to be distributed to students under Vidya Kanuka to Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy, during a review on education at Tadepalli on Thursday

of PP1, PP2, preparatory class, Class-1 and Class-2, should be within one kilometre distance to the students and other from Class-3 to Class-10, should be within three km distance to the students.

He said the main purpose of this policy is to keep the teacher-student ratio rational and added that it is not appropriate to have one teacher for four students or single teacher for large number of students. The approach of a single teacher teaching all subjects is also in-

correct, he said. The Chief Minister said it is important to maintain student-teacher ratio in foundation courses as mental development is essential for the children below eight years age and their skills need to be improved.

The Chief Minister said the government is looking forward to teach in English medium, striving to provide quality education to the children and spending huge money for the same.

Reviewing Nadu-Nedu, the

Chief Minister said asked the authorities to prepare an action plan to complete Nadu Nedu works in Anganwadi centres within two years. He said foundation schools concept was introduced by the Central government and everyone should follow it. There are 18 subjects till Class 5 and SGT teacher can’t handle them and a separate teacher is needed for each subject.

He said directed buying of lands for schools that do not have playground under Nadu Nedu scheme and prepare an action plan to provide sports dress and shoes additionally under Vidya Kanuka scheme. He said laboratories and libraries should be strengthened in schools and added better internet facility should be provided in school libraries.

The officials said second phase of Nadu Nedu would start from July 1 and added that Telangana government officials have contacted in regard to Nadu Nedu works in schools. They showed the Chief Minister dictionaries to be distributed under Vidya Kanuka.

AP logs 6,151 cases, 58 deaths

AMARAVATI

THE slide in state’s coronavirus graph continued as 6,151 new cases were registered in the state in 24 hours ending 9 am on Thursday.

The infection positivity rate from 1.02 lakh tests in a day turned out to 5.9 per cent.

While 7,728 patients recovered from the disease, another 58 succumbed in 24 hours, the latest bulletin said.

The active caseload in the state now fell below the 70,000-mark to 69,831, the bulletin said.

The state’s overall coronavirus count touched 18,32,902 while the recoveries stood at 17,50,904 and toll at 12,167. The main hotspot East Godavari district reported 1,244 fresh cases, Chittoor 937, West Godavari 647 and Prakasam 554 while the remaining nine districts added less than 500 each.

Chittoor reported 12 fresh Covid-19 fatalities, Prakasam seven, Guntur six, East Godavari five, Anantapur, Krishna and West Godavari four each, Kadapa, Nellore, Srikakulam and Visakhapatnam three each, Kurnool and Vizianagaram two each in a day. PTI

Decision on exams at appropriate time: Suresh

AMARAVATI

THE state government on Thursday said it would take a right decision on conducting the year-end examinations for Class 10 and Intermediate students at the appropriate time.

“We are keenly observing the situation. We will take an appropriate decision at the appropriate time,” education minister A Suresh told reporters.

Asked about the Supreme Court notice, the minister said he was not aware of it. He, however, said the government would spell out its stand after the notice was received.

“We will tell the Supreme Court why conducting the examinations is necessary,” Suresh said.

“Our stand has been the same from the beginning. We want to conduct the examinations only in the interest of the students’ future,” the minister maintained.

There had been anticipation that the government would take a call on the vexatious issue at a high-level review meeting on education chaired



- The Education Minister says he is unaware of Supreme Court notice on Class 10 and Inter exams
- States that the issue of exams was not discussed at the CM review meet on education

by Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy, in the backdrop of growing demand for cancellation of the annual examinations for Class X and Intermediate.

The government had only been postponing the exams as the Covid-19 curfew in the state continued to be extended in spells.

“We have not discussed the exams issue at the meeting with the Chief Minister today,” the education minister said, in reply to another questions. (PTI)

Army top brass discuss threats from China, Pakistan

NEW DELHI

AMIDST border standoff with China, the Indian Army holds a commanders' conference led by General Manoj Mukund Naravane from Thursday to review the operational situation at the border with China and Pakistan. Indian Army Commanders' Conference is an apex level biannual event, which formulates important policy decisions through collegiate deliberations.

The conference is attended by senior officers of the Army including the vice chief of the army staff, all commanders, principal staff officers (PSOs) of the Army Headquarters and other senior officers.

In the two-day conference, the Army top brass will discuss the current position of Chinese People's Liberation Army positions in disputed areas at Gogra, Hot Springs, Demchok and Depsang at Line of Actual Control in Eastern Ladakh.

China has enhanced troops, artillery and armour deployment in three sectors of Line of Actual



Control -- western (Ladakh), middle (Uttarakhand, Himachal) and eastern (Sikkim, Arunachal) sectors.

A year after the Galwan valley clash in Eastern Ladakh, China is still sitting at the Line of Actual Control and India has geared up for a long grind. Indian and Chinese military delegates had 11 rounds of talks to resolve border disputes at friction points.

During the commanders' conference meeting, Army top brass discuss how to be better prepared to face Chinese belligerence in Ladakh over the last year as a fi-

nal resolution seems far off. India has enhanced military infrastructure, increased troop deployment to 50,000 to 60,000, and constructed better roads connectivity for quick mobilisation.

Last month, General Naravane said that the troops are on high alert at Line of Actual Control and are keeping watch on Chinese People's Liberation Army activities.

The Indian Army chief stated that India wants the status quo ante of April 2020 to be restored. He also stated that India has

made it clear to China that de-escalation will only be considered once disengagement is completed to the mutual satisfaction of both the sides.

He had said that Indian troops are on high alert and deployments have not thinned after the disengagement in Pangong River.

General Naravane said that India is currently concentrating on resolving outstanding problems at other friction points like Hot Springs, Gogra and Depsang at Line of Actual Control.

The army chief also stated that trust levels between two countries are low but pointed out that the trust deficit should not hinder the negotiation process.

At Galwan valley, the clash took place on June 15 last year sparking a war like situation. Later by the end of August last year there was a further build up across and Pangong Lake at 14,000 ft turning it into a battle zone as India occupied key mountain tops at the Kailash Range overlooking the southern bank of the lake. (IANS)

Satisfied with meeting with Prime Minister, says Stalin

CHENNAI/NEW DELHI

TAMIL Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Thursday expressed satisfaction at the outcome of his meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Delhi. Interacting with reporters after the meeting, he said that he had discussed several developmental projects relating to Tamil Nadu for which Modi had assured the Central government's support. He said that the PM has said that he can talk to him anytime.

At the meeting, Stalin said that he had urged Modi to allot higher quantity of Covid-19 vaccine to Tamil Nadu, and also initiate action to start vaccine production at HLL Biotech's vaccine complex near Chennai, and also at the facility in Coonoor.

Urging Modi to release the pending Goods and Services Tax (GST) dues, he also requested to allow Tamil Nadu to increase the water storage level in Mullaiperiyar Dam to its full capacity of 152 feet, and reject permission for Mokedatu dam in Karnataka.

He also called for scrapping all entrance exams, including NEET. The Chief Minister also sought



Katchatheevu transferred to Sri Lanka be retrieved, Thirukkural be declared as a 'National Treasure', and construction of AIIMS in Madurai be hastened and building of another AIIMS in Coimbatore.

Stalin had also submitted a memorandum to Modi, requesting the three farm laws, the Citizenship Amendment Act, and the New Education Policy be revoked, Tamil be announced as the official language in the Madras High Court, citizenship for be granted to Sri Lankan Tamil refugees, and the Sethu Samudram Canal project be implemented.

He also sought implementation of 33 per cent reservation for women in the Parliament and state Assemblies, dropping the hydrocarbon schemes and neuro-trino projects, and repeal of Draft EIA Notification, 2020.

The launch of the Urban Wage Employment Scheme, speedy construction of road projects, resolution of policy issues regarding Chennai Metro Rail, special package for MSMEs, and sanction of mega textile parks and several other matters, was also sought.

Stalin also said the government will gradually reduce the number of liquor shops in the state. (IANS)

SII to conduct clinical trials of Novavax for children

NEW DELHI

THE Serum Institute of India is likely to launch clinical trials of the Novavax Covid-19 vaccine for children in July, sources said. SII is likely to introduce the Novavax vaccine, to be known as Covavax in the country, by September.

This week Novavax Inc announced that its vaccine has turned out to be more than 90 per cent effective in clinical trials conducted in the US. Bharat Biotech has already begun clinical trials of Covaxin for children in the 6-12 age group.

Novavax Inc had announced that NVX-CoV2373, its recombinant nanoparticle protein-based Covid-19 vaccine,

demonstrated 100 per cent protection against moderate and severe disease, 90.4 per cent efficacy overall, and met the primary endpoint in its PREVENT-19 pivotal Phase 3 trial.

The study enrolled 29,960 participants across 119 sites in the US and Mexico to evaluate efficacy, safety and immunogenicity, with an emphasis on recruiting a representative population of communities and demographic groups most impacted by Covid-19.

The company intends to file for regulatory authorisations in the third quarter, upon completion of the final phases of process qualification and assay validation needed to meet chemistry, manufactur-

ing and controls (CMC) requirements.

Upon regulatory approvals, Novavax remains on track to reach a manufacturing capacity of 100 million doses per month by the end of the third quarter and 150 million doses per month by the end of the fourth quarter of 2021.

"PREVENT-19 confirms that NVX-CoV2373 offers a reassuring tolerability and safety profile," said Gregory M. Glenn, President of Research and Development, Novavax.

"These data show consistent, high levels of efficacy and reaffirm the ability of the vaccine to prevent Covid-19 amid ongoing genetic evolution of the virus," Glenn added. (IANS)

Coast Guard saves 16 crew of sinking ship off Raigad



MUMBAI

In a daredevil operation, the Indian Coast Guard on Thursday rescued 16 crew members of a sinking cargo ship near the

Revdanda jetty off Maharashtra's Raigad district, an ICG spokesperson said here.

The incident happened in the early hours when Indian-flagged M.V. Mangalam's second

officer intimated that the ship, with 16 on board, had partially sunk around 3 kms off the Revdanda jetty in the stormy Arabian Sea.

In view of the distress and

with water ingress panicking the crew, the ship captain was even planning to abandon the vessel, the ICG said.

Gauging the seriousness of the situation, the ICG's MRCC team calmed down the alarmed captain and crew and asked them to remain on board as help was being deployed.

ICG Subhadra Kumari Chauhan immediately set sail from Dighi Port towards the sinking vessel, while two ICG helicopters took from Daman for the evacuation operation.

The ship reached the vicinity of M.V. Mangalam by 10.15 a.m. as challenging weather conditions prevailed, but it sent rescue boats to pick up the crew.

Around that time, the two helicopters also arrived and started winching up the crew of vessel, saving all 16, and flew them to Revdanda for medical aid, said the ICG spokesperson. (IANS)

Pashupati Kumar Paras elected LJP president

PATNA

AMID the ongoing tussle between Chirag Paswan and his uncle Pashupati Kumar Paras, the latter has been elected as national president of the Lok Janshakti Party (LJP).

"I had filed the nomination for the post of president and I have been elected unanimously. There was no other candidate who filed

the nomination for the post," Paras said here.

The executive committee of the LJP has 76 members and the majority of them are with Paras, electing him as the president of the LJP. The election was held at the official residence of strongman leader Suraj Bhan Singh in Patna.

Singh holds the post of executive president of the party.

On Wednesday, Chirag Paswan claimed that the election for the post of party president can be held only in two eventualities. First -- if the president dies, and second, if he resigns from the post.

"I am alive and I have not resigned from the post of president. In this case, the election for the post of president is unconstitutional," Chirag said.

Reacting to this, Paras said: "There is no such provision in the democratic system of the party. As per the party constitution, the election can be held every 2 to 3 years. Moreover, the majority is with me and not with Chirag. Hence, I am the president of the party."

"I was one of the founding members of the party when my elder brother late Ram Vilas Paswan formed it in

2000... The party members have elected me as president and I have assured them and the people of Bihar to take the party to new heights at the national level," Paras said. "Our party has a provision of one person per post. In this case, if I get a ministerial berth in the Narendra Modi government, I will resign from the post of party president," Paras said. (IANS)



SUV-HIRAN CASE

NIA nets Mumbai Police's 'Dirty Harry' Pradeep Sharma

MUMBAI

NETTING the biggest catch so far in the sensational SUV planting-cum-businessman murder cases, the National Investigation Agency on Thursday arrested former high-profile 'encounter specialist' Pradeep Sharma - labelled as the 'Dirty Harry' of the Mumbai Police - along with two other key conspirators.

A court sent all three to NIA custody till June 28. While Sharma, a professor-turned-cop-turned-Shiv Sena activist, was picked up from a location in Lonavala hillstation in Pune district, the other duo was rounded up from a Mumbai suburb.

The arrests were preceded by a surprise dawn swoop on Sharma's Andheri East residence from where the NIA and Mumbai Police teams recovered a revolver and collected various evidences like files, documents, laptops, etc.

On the revolver, Sharma told the court that it was a licensed weapon, but the license had expired and he had



not renewed it, besides he was a former policeman, and if he was connected with the (Man-sukh Hiran) murder, why was he not nabbed earlier.

He argued that this was a "conspiracy" against him and there was "group in Mumbai Police" which was targeting him. Besides Sharma, the others nabbed are Satish T. Muthukuri alias Vickybaba, 40, and Manish V. Soni, 46, both from Malad suburb.

This has taken the total number of people arrested by the NIA in the twin cases to 10 till date.

The NIA action and arrests - the fifth involving a former cop and the 10th so far - came in the sensational case of the

abandoned SUV with 20 gelatin sticks and a threat note, found near Antilia, home of industrialist Mukesh Ambani, on February 25.

Soon after that, the police recovered the body of SUV owner Hiran from the Thane Creek marshes on March 5, as both the cases triggered a massive political row.

Last week, the NIA had arrested two other persons, identified as Santosh Atmaram Shelar, and Anand Pandurang Jadhav, both from a slum pocket in Kurar village of Malad East for their roles in the twin cases.

Police sources said that their custodial interrogation revealed more details of the role of Sharma - once labeled as the 'Dirty Harry' of Mumbai Police with 103-mafia scalps to his credit - and culminated in Thursday's action.

Earlier, the NIA had arrested five other persons including former cops like Sachin Vaze, Riyazuddin Kazi, Sunil Mane, convicted ex-cop Vinayak Shinde and cricket bookie Naresh Gor. (IANS)

Congress says both Sonia and Priyanka have taken Covid vax

NEW DELHI: AMID questions being raised by the BJP over the vaccination of Congress leaders including the Gandhis, the Congress on Thursday said that both Sonia Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi have taken the vaccine jab. While Sonia Gandhi has taken both the doses, Priyanka Gandhi has taken her first dose and Rahul Gandhi will take it as per the advice of doctors as he has just recovered from Covid. Ran-deep Surjewala, General Secretary of the party, said that the Bharatiya Janata Party should focus on vaccinating the citizens of the country rather than questioning the opposition.

He said Rahul Gandhi was scheduled to take the vaccination on April 16 but could not take it.

Rahul Gandhi has been critical of the vaccination policy and had demanded that every citizen of the country visiting the vaccination centre should get inoculated. Also, those who do not have access to the internet have the right to life. "Online registration is not enough for the vaccine. Every person walking to the vaccination centre should get the jab. Those who do not have access to internet also have right to life," Rahul tweeted. (IANS)

Not to be cowed down, Sasikala interacts with AIADMK workers in Edappadi

CHENNAI

EVEN as leaders like former Chief Minister E. Palaniswami and O Panneerselvam had openly objected to the entry of former interim general secretary of the AIADMK, V.K. Sasikala into the party fold, she seems unfazed and has telephonically interacted with the AIADMK cadres in Palaniswami's constituency, Edappadi.

She called the cadres even as a party meeting held at Omalur in Edappadi in the presence of Palaniswami passed a resolution against Sasikala's entry into the party.

Sasikala in a leaked telephonic conversation was heard speaking to a local AIADMK functionary, Suresh in Edappadi in which she told him that she would be back in the party soon. Sasikala was speaking against the style of functioning of Palaniswami and Panneerselvam.

Suresh was telling her that she was welcome back into the party fold and that the AIADMK cadres numbering 1.5 crore would rally behind her. He said, "We in Edappadi are waiting for you here."



Responding to Suresh, Sasikala said, "I have been getting a lot of wedding invitations from the party functionaries there and I have been sending replies to them and my wishes."

She said, "Decades ago after the passing away of Thalaivar (MGR), we took everybody along and there was no discrimination between Janaki faction and Jayalalithaa faction during those days." She added, "We did not discriminate anyone on caste lines in the party those days

and we have to give party posts to leaders from all communities and if any one at the top behaves in a high-handed way, the party cadres would never accept that."

Former minister and AIADMK Villupuram district secretary C.V. Shanmugham had categorically stated that Sasikala and her relatives will never be allowed into the party. The Villupuram district committee of the AIADMK passed a resolution condemning Sasikala and her plans of coming back to the party. (IANS)

TODAY's QUOTE

No plans to reduce Sail headcount

“THERE are no plans to terminate any employee of state-owned Sail or reduce its headcount. SAIL will continue to take care of its employees. As part of its expansion plan, the company will have to expand mining operations to produce more iron ore to meet its own requirements

— Dharmendra Pradhan, Union Steel Minister



RIISING NUMBERS

Online gaming to reach ₹29,000 cr in FY25

THE Indian online gaming segment is expected to more than double at Rs 29,000 crore with the number of gamers rising to 65.7 crore by FY25, a KPMG report said. The report estimates that the online gaming market size was around Rs 13,600 crore with 43.3 crore gamers in FY21

| FOREX (buy rates in ₹) | | | |
|------------------------|-------|--------------------|-------|
| US Dollar | 74.55 | South | |
| Euro | 89.09 | African Rand | 6.05 |
| UAE Dirham | 20.7 | Hong Kong Dollar | 10.93 |
| Thai Baht | 2.59 | Japanese Yen | 0.77 |
| British Pound | 104.2 | New Zealand Dollar | 52.65 |
| Australian Dollar | 56.73 | Saudi Riyal | 21.64 |
| Canadian Dollar | 60.64 | Swedish Krona | 9.99 |
| Swiss Franc | 81.66 | Singapore Dollar | 56.22 |

DELHI FRIDAY 18 JUNE 2021

BIZ BRIEFS

WayCool opens retail store

WayCool has announced the launch of its second dairy retail store Shuddha Square in Tirupati. This is the third store in the district, recently Shuddha square store has been launched in Chittoor. Shuddha sources their milk on a daily basis from local dairy farmers with stringent quality check measure to ensure freshness and purity. The store will offer dairy products. Debashish Samal, Head of Dairy, WayCool Foods, said: “We are extremely happy to announce the launch of our second Shuddha square in Tirupati. We have received supportive responses from our first store that has encouraged us to open our doors for new store. We plan to launch our third Shuddha store by this month in Tirupati and introduce products such as ice cream, flavored milk.”

Mouri supports employees

Mouri Tech has announced well-being services for its employees to deal with health challenges thrown by the second wave of the Covid-19. To handle the global crisis, company's Crisis Management Team (CMT) has formed a National Emergency Response Team (ERT), a group of Mouri volunteers who assist its employees for various emergencies in medical, mental, and emotional situations. Regular sessions will be organised for mental well-being and emotional wellness. This group works 24x7 across the nation to support employees who are working remotely. Srinj Sandaka, CTO - Mouri Tech, said: “Following to our ‘Employee First. Customer Foremost’ philosophy, we stand with our employees and their families. Financial and emotional support for our people is our top priority, and our ERT team reflects empathy; that's one of our core values.”

IANI's new initiative

IANI has begin I-Tech IT skill training platform for students from classes 6 to 12 (science, commerce, and arts streams). The courses will combine technology skilling, coding, IT fundamentals, cloud computing, cybersecurity, robotics, artificial intelligence, python, etc. and cognitive learning, self enrichment, mind mapping, general knowledge. The courses will add a new dimension to students' education, which will also be consistent with their classroom learnings. Students belonging to the State board, CBSE, or ICSE can pursue these courses. “The course content is a combination of skills and knowledge and has been prepared keeping in mind the future requirements,” Bhakti Ojha Kherani, Managing Director, IANI.

New products from Mahindra

Mahindra & Mahindra's Farm Equipment Sector has launched a new range of rice transplanters in Telangana named Mahindra Planting Master Paddy 4RO, India's first 4-row ride-on type rice transplanter. The company had previously introduced the Mahindra MP461 walk-behind rice transplanter. Rice transplanters are designed by Mitsubishi Mahindra Agricultural Machinery of Japan and are customized to the specific needs of Indian rice farmers. The product costs Rs 7.5 lakh. Hemant Sikka, president, Mahindra Farm Equipment Sector, Mahindra & Mahindra, said: “With the introduction of our new portfolio of rice transplanters, with our partners Mitsubishi Mahindra Agricultural Machinery of Japan, we want to enable income growth for millions of Indian rice farmers, including in Telangana, where farmers are also experiencing challenges related to labour shortage due to Covid.”

ADANI LOSES \$9BN AS STOCKS BLEED

ALEX SAZONOV

INDIAN billionaire Gautam Adani's dream run up the global wealth rankings is faltering after a media report raising questions about some offshore investors triggered a rout in his conglomerate's six listed stocks.

The 58-year-old tycoon lost more money this week than anyone else in the world, with his personal fortune tumbling by about \$9 billion, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index based on Wednesday closing prices. Just days ago, he was closing the gap with Mukesh Ambani as Asia's richest man. Adani Group stocks continued to fall on Thursday. The U-turn in shares started Monday after media reports that India's national share depository froze the accounts of three Mauritius-based funds because of insufficient information on the owners. The bulk of the holdings of Albulva Investment Fund, Cresta Fund and APMS Investment Fund - about \$6 billion are shares of Adani's firms. Although the Adani group called the report “blatantly erroneous” and said it was “done to deliberately mislead the investing community,” investors concerned over transparency rushed for the exit. The Mauritius offshore funds hold more than 90 per cent of their assets under management in Adani group companies,

Media reports about alleged illegal funding by some offshore investors to Adani group companies, take toll on Asia's second richest man's wealth

Adani Almanac

- The 58-year-old tycoon lost more money this week than anyone else in the world
- His total wealth was about \$80bn crore

- Despite denial by Adani, the investors concerned over transparency rushed for the exit

- Excitement around the Adani empire spanning ports, mines and power plants had been building up over the past couple of years



according to Bloomberg Intelligence. “There should be greater clarity to ensure who the final owners of the shares are,” said Hemendra Hazari, an independent research analyst in Mumbai.

A spokesperson for the Adani Group declined to comment beyond the exchange filings sent this week. These overseas funds “have been investors in Adani Enterprises Ltd. for more than a decade,” Adani Group said in a June 14 statement. “We urge all our stakeholders not to be perturbed by market speculations.”

In identical exchange filings the same day, Adani group companies said that they had written confir-

mation from the Registrar and Transfer Agent that the offshore funds' demat accounts in which Adani shares were held “are not frozen.”

Shares of Adani Green Energy Ltd., the mogul's most valuable asset, slipped 7.7 per cent this week. Adani Ports & Special Economic Zone Ltd. plunged 23 per cent in four days, Adani Power Ltd., Adani Total Gas Ltd. and Adani Transmission Ltd. tumbled at least 18 per cent, while flagship Adani Enterprises fell almost 15 per cent.

Excitement around the Adani empire spanning ports, mines and power plants had been building up over the past couple of years as the

coal magnate looks beyond the dirtiest fossil fuel for expansion, seeking to dovetail his business interests with infrastructure priorities set by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Big Push

Investors have sent some of the group's stocks soaring more than 500 per cent since the start of 2020, betting the first-generation entrepreneur's big push into sectors such as renewable energy, airports, data centers and defense contracting will pay off. Earlier this month, Adani's wealth was close to \$80 billion.

Adding to the tailwind was MSCI Inc.'s decision to include more Adani stocks to its India benchmark index despite scant analyst coverage. Three of Adani's listed companies were included in May, taking the group's total to five. The inclusion also led to more mandated buying by investors that track the indexes.

The quick surge combined with equity largely held by overseas funds with very little public float is a risk for Adani shares, BI analysts wrote last week. This week's events have also brought the opacity around the group and its key non-founder shareholders into focus.

(Bloomberg)

T-Hub announces 2nd batch of funding for startups

HYDERABAD

T-HUB, which leads India's pioneering innovation ecosystem, on Thursday announced the launch of its redesigned funding programme T-Angel to cater to the startups funding needs amid the Covid-19 pandemic. T-Angel will be supported by angel investors who will collectively invest up to Rs 50 lakh in each of the qualified startups.

T-Angel is a 45-days acceleration programme for which 15-20 tech startups with the leading-edge solutions in the various sectors will be shortlisted. The programme for the second batch of chosen startups will commence in July 2021. Startups will be shortlisted from applications received after an extensive screening process by a committee of investors and mentors. Applications will be opened on Thursday, and will close on 30 June. The programme will focus on understanding and resolving two key constraints or pain points of a startup's business



operations that are hindering their chances of raising capital. Startups across India can apply to be a part of the programme.

“Even though there has been a substantial increase in startups' ability to raise funds, only a small percentage of them are successful in raising funding from angels. We realized that the success percentage can considerably increase if entrepreneurs are aware of what the angel investors are looking for. T-Angel's existence has been smartly tailored to solve this issue,” said Ravi Narayan, CEO of T-Hub, said.

MCA amends board meeting norms

NEW DELHI

BOARDS of companies can now approve annual financial statements and matters related to mergers, among others, at meetings held through video conferencing and other audio-visual means. Amid the coronavirus pandemic resulting in the shift from physical meetings to virtual ones, the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) has amended rules pertaining to ‘meetings of board and its powers’ under the Companies Act, 2013.

Nangia Andersen LLP Partner Sandeep Jhunjhunwala said the Companies Act always permitted conducting meetings through video conferencing but key matters such as approving the financial statements, board's report and prospectus required physical meetings. “Acknowledging the difficulty always caused by the ongoing pandemic, the MCA has eliminated the list of matters that could be conducted through audio-visual means.”

India maintains 43rd rank on IMD index

NEW DELHI

INDIA maintained 43rd rank on an annual World Competitiveness Index compiled by the Institute for Management Development (IMD) that examined the impact of Covid-19 on economies around the world this year.

India has maintained its position for the past three years, but this year, it had significant improvements in government efficiency, IMD said. “India's improvements in the government efficiency factor are mostly due to relatively stable public finances (despite difficulties brought by the pandemic, in 2020 the government deficit stayed at 7 per cent) and to the positive feedbacks we registered among Indian business executives with respect to the support and subsidies provided by the government to the private companies,” IMD said.

The 64-nation list was led by



Switzerland, while Sweden has moved up to the second position (from sixth last year), Denmark has lost one place to rank third, the Netherlands has retained its fourth place and Singapore has slipped to the fifth place (from first in 2020). At eighth, Taiwan reached the top-

10 for the first time since the ranking began 33 years ago (moving up from 11th last year). The UAE and the USA remain in their same spots as last year (9th and 10th, respectively). The top-performing Asian economies are, in order, Singapore (fifth), Hong Kong (seventh), Taiwan (eighth) and China (16th). The IMD World Competitiveness Ranking ranks 64 economies and assesses the extent to which a country promotes the prosperity of its people by measuring economic well-being through hard data and survey responses from executives.

Union Bank conducts vax drive for bankers

HANS BUSINESS
HYDERABAD

UNION Bank of India, of Secunderabad region, has conducted three days of vaccination drive for staff and family members of all banks in Hyderabad in coordination with the Lead Bank and Telangana government. Kabir Bhattacharya, Field General Manager, Hyderabad Zone supervised the vaccination drive and S Srinivas, Regional Head, Secunderabad was the convener of the programme.

“During the three-day vaccination camp 1,100 persons were administered first dose of Covaxin by the team of UPHC, Ranigunj under the medical supervision of Dr Lakshmi and Dr Zikra. Vaccine doses were made available to staff of all banks and their family members in tune with the directions of Government of Telangana,” said S Srinivas, Head, Secunderabad Region. Efforts are being made to ensure 100 per cent vaccination to bank staff in the twin cities, he added.



CJI assures on ADR centre at FTCCI

HANS BUSINESS
HYDERABAD

N V Ramana, Chief Justice of India, has assured the Federation of Telangana Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FTCCI) that efforts would be made to set up ‘Nalsar-FTCCI Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Centre’ at the Federation House. A team led by federation president Ramakanth Inani met the CJI at Raj Bhavan.

The ADR centre will undertake skill development programmes pertaining to media-

tion and arbitration thereby creating more awareness about ADR for the effective and speedy dispute resolution.

N V Ramana, CJI, assured his full support and guidance in making the ADR centre successful towards its endeavour which will be of great support to the trade and industry not just in the State of Telangana but also to the neighbouring States. He envisions an International Alternative Dispute Resolution Centre in India on similar lines of Singapore, London and UAE and highlighted the need of setting up one.

CII pegs GDP growth at 9.5% in FY22

ARCHANA RAO
NEW DELHI

THE Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth for the financial year of 2021-22 is expected to be at 9.5 per cent, predicted the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII). The observatory body made economic projections for different sectors of the Indian economy amid ongoing second wave of Covid-19 pandemic.

The unprecedented surge in the Covid cases resulted in the footfall of demand which has hampered the performance growth of the Quarter 1 of FY 21-22. TV Narendran, president, CII, on Thursday said that the CII projects a stronger GDP recovery is likely for FY22 with a growth of 9.5 per cent.

“This is line with most of the institutions. And strong growth in the second half will be supported by robust external demand and resumption of economic activity on the back of large-scale coverage of vaccination. However, even with this high rate of growth, the GDP

Industry seeks ₹3-trn fiscal stimulus to boost demand in mkt



will come back to where it was two years back or slightly higher,” the newly appointed president of the chamber said. CII, on the announcement of economic projections, has suggested number of measures to bring relief to different sectors and speed up the immunization drive. Emphasising on the need to ramp-up the vaccination coverage and reduce vaccine hesitancy, the CII President has called for the appointment of a ‘Vaccine Czar’ to track domestic

vaccine production and import supplies. He also observed that the unemployment rates have shot up to double digit levels in both rural and urban areas, further impacting livelihoods across the country. “The second wave has had a debilitating impact on livelihoods. The CMIE all-India unemployment rate has risen to a high of 11.9% in May 2021 from 8.0% in the previous month,” he said.

The chamber has stated in its observatory report that, the growth

rate can pick up to 8-9 per cent, in the medium term, if positive actions are taken in the current scenario. A lower growth of a 5-6 per cent growth scenario is also possible. To boost the economy towards an upward direction, the CII has offered suggestions including cash transfers to households through Jan Dhan accounts, higher MNREFGA allocation from the budgeted amount, short-term and focused GST cuts to boost demand, time bound tax relief/interest subvention/stamp duty concession for home buyers and extension of the Atmanirbhar Bharat Rozgar Yojana till March 31, 2022.

“Fiscal stimulus of 3 lakh crore is required,” said The CEO and Managing Director of Tata Steel Ltd, to boost the demand in the market. Narendran, who took charge of CII two weeks ago, also said that for MSMEs government needs to ensure timely payment along with timely clearance of dues to the industries.

HCA Apex Council suspends its own president Azharuddin

FORMER INDIA CRICKET TEAM CAPTAIN CALLS IT VENDETTA

HYDERABAD

THE Apex Council of Hyderabad Cricket Association (HCA) has "suspended" its own president, former India captain Mohammed Azharuddin, for alleged violation of its constitution.

Allegations of Conflict of Interest levelled have been levelled against Azharuddin. However, the validity of the suspension can be questioned as only the general body of a state unit has powers to suspend a sitting president and not the Apex Council, five of whose members are already inquired by HCA's Ombudsman.

The HCA Apex Council had been at loggerheads with the former captain and during a recent BCCI Special General Meeting (SGM) wanted Shivlal Yadav as their representative but BCCI intervened, allowing Azharuddin to attend the meeting.

The former India skipper termed the move as vendetta against him by the anti-lobby and vowed to fight back.

The HCA suspension notice, a copy of which is with PTI, stated: "After considering the complaints made by the members against you (Azharuddin), it was decided at the Apex Council meeting on the 10th of this month to

issue a show-cause notice on the ground that you have acted in violation of the rules.

"The Apex Council is suspending you and your membership of HCA is being terminated until completion of the inquiry on these complaints."

The Apex Council had also levelled charges of "misconduct" and various acts of "omission and commission" against the stylish batsman of 80's and 90's. On the Conflict of Interest charge, the notice stated that Azharuddin has never made a disclosure that he owned a T10 team in Dubai and its in violation with BCCI's constitution with no office-bearer allowed to own any cricketing entity.

"The complaint discloses that you are a mentor of a private cricket club in Dubai by name Northern Warriors which participates in a T10 cricket tournament which is unrecognised by the BCCI. The fact of you being a mentor has not been communicated to the HCA at any time."

"It is also apparent that you have not communicated the same to the BCCI. Therefore you being a mentor of an unrecognised tournament comes under the ambit of conflict of interest as envisaged under Rule 38 (1) (iii) of the Memorandum of Association and Rules and Regulations 2018 of HCA," it also stated.

Azharuddin on his part issued a press release and termed it "belligerent" posturing with scant regard for the rule of law. "Today, the institution of cricket administration itself is under threat by these false

narratives being published in the media.

"Please verify the truthfulness of the information, hear the other side, then take a rational view in line with the HCA constitution before you publish something because the society believes what you write," Azhar said.

Azhar has in fact trained his guns at one of the Apex Council members K John Manoj (a reputed coach) and his faction in the Council. The other four are R. Vijayanand, Naresh Sharma, Surender Agarwal, Anuradha.

"All their efforts have gone in vain. Their intention to subvert the appointment of the Ombudsman might be because of the lurking fear that their multiple clubs acquired through manipulation and fraud will be exposed and they may lose their valuable property-the cash cow that sucks the blood of cricketers from a 14-year old boy to a 23-year old youngster aspiring to realise their dreams," the statement added. (PTI)



Former Indian cricket team captain and Hyderabad Cricket Association (HCA) president Mohammad Azharuddin addresses a press conference at Gymkhana Grounds in Hyderabad on Thursday. (Photo: Ch Prabhu Das)

Gopichand announces national badminton scholarship program

BENGALURU: Indian badminton head coach Pullela Gopichand on Thursday announced a national scholarship program at The Sports School here.

Under the chief mentorship of Gopichand, The Sports School Badminton Academy with technical partner Badminton Gurukul has

come together to provide the best training methods to students to groom their willingness to play the sport and turn it into a full-fledged profession, a media release said.

Up to 100 per cent scholarships will be awarded to students who have the drive and talent to succeed in the sport, without

compromising on their academics.

"Badminton Gurukul is an initiative that has been started with the idea to promote physical literacy and create positive playing experiences through quality coaching imparted in an organised and systematic manner," Gopichand said.

"This is a professional academy that will be providing training at the beginner, intermediate and professional levels and at the same time ensuring full-fledged guidance for the young badminton enthusiasts," he added. Students will be selected for the scholarship, which will cover the academic

and sport fees, on the basis of their rankings and achievements, followed by trials. Up to five students per year will receive 100 per cent and 25-75 per cent scholarship.

The selection committee includes Gopichand, Sankar and founder and MD of Badminton Gurukul Supriya Devgun. (PTI)



Italy first to enter Euro 2020 knockouts

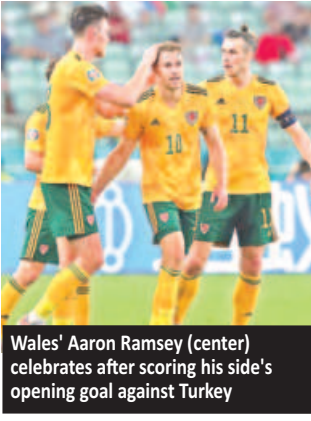
ROME

ITALY became the first side to enter knockout stages of Euro 2020 thanks to a 3-0 win over Switzerland here late on Wednesday.

The result means they will now fight for the top spot in Group A in their final league game against Wales, who beat Turkey earlier in the day. Manuel Locatelli was Italy's hero with two goals as Roberto Mancini's side displayed assured and attacking football, Xinhua reports.

In Group A's other match at the Olympic Stadium in Baku, Aaron Ramsey and Connor Roberts scored a goal each for Wales as they won 2-0 against Turkey.

Both sides traded attacks in the first half, but Wales looked more dangerous in front of the goal and scored the opener in the 42nd minute when Ramsey chested down Gareth Bale's chip into the box before tapping the ball past Turkey goalkeeper Ugurcan Cakir. Turkey's Burak Yilmaz should



Wales' Aaron Ramsey (center) celebrates after scoring his side's opening goal against Turkey

have restored parity early in the second half, but the captain wasted a golden chance from close range following a corner. At the hour mark, Wales were awarded a penalty but Bale put the spot-kick over the bar.

Bale had a hand in Wales's second goal though, as the striker danced through Turkey's penalty box before squaring to Connor Roberts, who sealed the deal in the dying seconds of injury time. (IANS)

India announce women's hockey team for Olympics

BENGALURU

THE Hockey India (HI) announced a 16-member national women's hockey team, including experienced Rani Rampal, for the Tokyo Olympic Games.

The team is a blend of youth and experience. Eight seasoned players -- are part of the 16-member strong squad. The team captain will be announced later, said HI. The eight stalwarts are Rani, Savita, Deep Grace Ekka, Sushila Chanu Pukhrambam, Monika, Nikki Pradhan, Navjot Kaur, and Vandana Katariya, who have the experience of representing India at the 2016 Rio Olympic Games.

"This team has worked very hard over the last few years and has made progress consistently. There's a good mix of experienced players and new talent, which is excellent. We look forward to taking on the best in the world in Tokyo. This is a team with a lot of potential and drive which we hope to channelise to our best performance yet," said chief coach Sjoerd Marijne.

This will be the women's third appearance at the Olympic Games. India competed in the 1980 Moscow Olympic Games and 2016 Rio Olympic Games. Since Rio 2016, the Indian team has won 2016 Asian Champions Trophy, 2017 Asia Cup and silver medal at the 2018 Asian Games. Drag-flicker Gurjit Kaur, Udita, Nisha, Neha, Navneet Kaur, Sharmila Devi, Lalremsiami will make their Olympic debut in Japan.

TEAM: Savita (goalkeeper), Deep Grace Ekka, Nikki Pradhan, Gurjit Kaur, Udita (defenders), Nisha, Neha, Sushila Chanu Pukhrambam, Monika, Navjot Kaur, Salima Tete (midfielders), Rani Rampal, Navneet Kaur, Lalremsiami, Vandana Katariya and Sharmila Devi (forwards). (IANS)

Nadal pulls out of Wimbledon, Olympics

LONDON

RAFAEL Nadal, winner of 20 Grand Slam title, will skip this year's Wimbledon and will also not feature in the Tokyo Olympic Games as he wants to rest his body.

The Wimbledon runs from June 28 to July 11 while the Olympic Games begin on July 23.

"Hi all, I have decided not to participate at this year's Championships at Wimbledon and the Olympic Games in Tokyo. It's never an easy decision to take but after listening to my body and discuss it with my team I understand that it is the right decision," tweeted 35-year-old Nadal, who is the joint highest winner of Grand Slam titles along with Roger Federer at 20.

Nadal lost to world No.1 Novak Djokovic in the French Open semi-finals recently. It was only his third defeat in 108 matches at the Roland Garros.

Women's Test: India 63/0 in reply to Eng's 396/9 decl (Tea)

BRISTOL

INDIA were 63 for no loss at tea, in reply to England's first-innings' 396 for nine wickets declared, on the second day of the one-off Test here on Thursday.

At the break, openers Shafali Verma was batting on 35 (73 balls, 5x4s, 1x6) and Smriti Mandhana was on 27 (65 balls, 4x4s).

Earlier, England declared their first innings at 396 for nine wickets, scored in 121.2 overs, in the second session of the second day of the four-day match.

Sophia Dunkley remained unbeaten on 74 (127 balls, 9x4s), though the top scorer was captain Heather Knight with 95.

Towards the end of the innings, Anya Shrubsole scored a brisk 47 not out off only 33 balls, and it included six boundaries and a six.

The other chief contributors were Tammy Beaumont (66), Natalie Sciver (42), and opener Lauren Winfield Hill (35).

Earlier, England had started the day at overnight 269/6 wickets in 92 overs.

For India, off-spinner Sneha Rana was the top wicket-taker with four for 131 and off-spinning all-rounder Deepti Sharma bagged three for 65.

Brief scores (Tea, Day 2)

England: 396/9 wkts declared in 121.2 overs (Heather Knight 95, Sophia Dunkley 74 not out, Tammy Beaumont 66, Anya Shrubsole 47 not out, Natalie Sciver 42, Lauren Winfield Hill 35, Sneha Rana 4/131, Deepti Sharma 3/65); India: 63/0 (Shafali Verma 35 batting, Smriti Mandhana 27 batting). (IANS)

World Test C'ship final

SOUTHAMPTON

Rusty India take on NZ in Test cricket's pinnacle

SQUADS

India: Virat Kohli (captain), Rohit Sharma, Shubman Gill, Cheteshwar Pujara, Ajinkya Rahane (vc), Rishabh Pant (wk), Ravindra Jadeja, Ravichandran Ashwin, Ishant Sharma, Mohammed Shami, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Siraj, Umesh Yadav, Hanuma Vihari, Wriddhiman Saha (wk). **New Zealand:** Kane Williamson (C), Tom Blundell, Trent Boult, Devon Conway, Colin de Grandhomme, Matt Henry, Kyle Jamieson, Tom Latham, Henry Nicholls, Ajaz Patel, Tim Southee, Ross Taylor, Neil Wagner BJ Watling and Will Young. On-field Umpires: Richard Illingworth, Michael Gough Match Referee: Chris Broad.

INDIA, boosted by the sun that has been drying the Hampshire Bowl pitch over the past few days, will hope to dent their biggest threat, New Zealand's swing bowlers, in the inaugural World Test Championship (WTC) final that commences on Friday.

But unlike the Kiwis, who beat England 1-0 in a two-Test series this month, India are devoid of any match practice here and will head into a game of magnitude without any competitive match practice. Virat Kohli's men, therefore, will have to recall all the past experience of playing in England.

India had played Kiwis in the WTC cycle, losing 2-0 in an away series last year. The Kiwis pace bowlers turned out to be unplayable as they ran through India's batting order.

Ahead of the WTC final, there has been talk about how New Zealand's pace bowlers could again trouble the Indians.

However, Hampshire Bowl pitch's history of helping spinners as well as the bright sunshine that would leave the surface dry could offer encouragement to Indians who are likely to field two spinners in Ravindra Jadeja and R Ashwin.

Whatever be the nature of the pitch, India will have to start well whether they bat or bowl.

The New Zealand pace bowlers are seasoned and are aware of weaknesses in Indian batting. The Dukes cricket ball, which moves more than the Kookaburra, and throughout the day in England, will give them advantage against an India team that has not played any warm-up.

Rohit Sharma and Shubman Gill have just got together and given hope to India who had been struggling to find a reliable opening pair. But the two are untested in English conditions at Test level, especially against

the new ball. Sharma has played just one Test in England and that was way back in 2014. Gill is yet to play a Test in England.

Besides, Southee and Boult are extremely accurate. Pitch curator Simon Lee has said he will give a pitch with pace and bounce and that could leave Kyle Jamieson smiling.

India too have an extremely good battery of pace bowlers, who have experience in England. In spin, they are much superior to the Kiwis.

The difference could lie in captaincy. While Kohli is aggressive and has, at times, made blunders that has cost India matches in the past, Williamson is reserved but remains in control of the match without showing any emotion. Williamson's weapon is patience and that has allowed players around him to express themselves freely.

The two teams have played 59 Test matches with India winning 21 and losing 12. But 16 of those wins have come at home, in 34 Tests. In New Zealand, India have lost 10 and won only five of the 25 Tests they have played. (IANS)





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