

SHORT TAKES

Man arrested for fleecing kin of Covid patients

New Delhi: The kingpin of an inter-state gang has been arrested for allegedly duping kin of Covid patients on the pretext of providing oxygen cylinders, police said on Sunday. Chhotu Choudhary was nabbed by the Delhi Police Crime Branch from Nalanda in Bihar based on the disclosure of four other gang members who were arrested in May, they said. Deputy commissioner of police (crime) Monika Bhardwaj said during interrogation, Chaudhary revealed that he along with his partner Manoj Mahto has been operating the gang for the last two to three years and had engaged 200-300 people of his area for the operation. During the pandemic, when there was a rising demand for oxygen cylinders and concentrators, Chaudhary found an opportunity and started cheating people on the pretext of selling them cylinders. The officer said each person in Chaudhary's gang had been given specific task. While one of them arranged bank accounts to receive the cheated money, others opened them on the basis of forged credentials, taking a cut of Rs 25,000 for each account. The accused used forged pre-activated SIM cards of different areas for cheating, police said. — *PTI*

2 men beaten up in suspected road rage case

New Delhi: In a suspected road rage incident caught on camera, two men were allegedly beaten up with sticks by a group of people in southwest Delhi's Palam after their motorcycle grazed a scooter, police said on Sunday. The incident was reported to police on Wednesday, and a video clip of the attack has surfaced on social media, they said. The video purportedly shows the motorcycle-borne duo being beaten up by a few men even as a woman tries to stop them, the police said. Both parties sustained injuries in the clash, they said. Deputy commissioner of police (southwest) Ingit Pratap Singh said complaints were received from both parties, based on which cross-FIRs were registered. The people involved are acquaintances and live in the same locality in the Palam area, the police added. — *PTI*



A man ties a handkerchief around his face as he walks past a wall mural depicting a frontline Covid worker in New Delhi on Sunday. — *AFP*

■ 'Making jobs available for children will be a milestone achievement'

AIIMS: Vaccination of kids must before schools reopen

More delay in Sputnik V rollout in Delhi-NCR

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 27

The rollout of Russian jab 'Sputnik V' has been delayed at various private hospitals in the Delhi-NCR region yet again.

The hospitals however suspect that there may be a delay on the part of suppliers. Indraprastha Apollo Hospital in the national capital had earlier said that it would tentatively start administering the two-dose vaccine by June 25 however, spokesman from the hospital said that authorities do not have clarity on the dates of the vaccine rollout yet.

"We do not have a clarity on the dates of the vaccine rollout," a spokesman of Apollo Hospitals said. Another official of Madhukar Rainbow Children's Hospital said the facility

has also not received Sputnik V doses so far from Hyderabad-based Dr Reddy's Laboratories, the marketing partner for the vaccine in the country. "There is a delay on the part of the suppliers. They have not shared any specific reason for it. I think it could be related to the supply of both the doses together," an official said.

The Centre has fixed the price of the vaccine at ₹1,145 per dose. The maximum price of Covishield for private COVID-19 Vaccination Centres (CVCs) has been fixed at ₹780 per dose, while that of Covaxin at ₹1,410 per dose. Russia's Gamaleya National Research Institute of Epidemiology and Microbiology has developed the vaccine and the Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) is marketing it globally.

City needs 45L Covid doses in July: Delhi govt

New Delhi, June 27: The Delhi government has informed the Centre that the city needs 45 lakh doses of Covid-19 vaccines in July to keep up the current vaccination rate of 1.5 lakh jabs daily, AAP MLA Atishi said on Sunday.

"More than 45 lakh doses will be needed if the pace of vaccination increases," she said.

According to the city's vaccination bulletin, 25 per cent of Delhi's population in the 18-44 age group has received at least one dose of vaccine. Ninety-two lakh people in this age group are eligible for vaccination in the city. The national capital reported 89 cases of Covid-19 and four deaths on Sunday as the positivity rate dipped to 0.12 per cent, according to data shared by the health department here. — *PTI*

Chhatrasal stadium brawl: 22-year-old wrestler held

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 27

The Delhi police's crime branch arrested a 22-year-old man in connection with the Chhatrasal Stadium brawl in which a wrestler died and his two friends were injured, the police said on Sunday.

The accused, Gourav Lora, a native of Haryana, is also a wrestler. He was living here in Najafgarh's Baprola village, it said.

The police said a crime branch team probing the case nabbed Lora from Delhi and he was produced before Rohini court here which has sent him to police remand for two days for further investigation.

A senior police officer said, "He was found to be involved

in the incident at Chhatrasal Stadium here where he engaged in a fight along with others leading to the death of the young wrestler."

"During the investigation of the case, accused Gourav Lora was arrested on June 26 at 9.30 pm and he has been remanded to two days' police custody by the court," said DCP (Crime) Monika Bhardwaj.

The police said 12 accused persons, including two-time Olympic medallist Sushil Kumar, have so far been arrested in connection with the case. The court has issued non-bailable warrants against six absconding accused persons, the police said, adding that further investigation is underway.

Kumar, along with his associates, allegedly assault-

ed Sagar Dhankar and two of his friends at the stadium on the intervening night of May 4 and 5 over an alleged property dispute. Dhankar (23) succumbed to the injuries later.

The police has claimed that Kumar is the "main culprit and mastermind" of the murder and said that there is electronic evidence in which he and his associates could be seen beating Dhankar.

A Delhi court on Friday extended the judicial custody of Kumar till July 9 in connection with the alleged murder. Kumar was nabbed on May 23, along with co-accused Ajay Kumar Secshrawat. Till now, he has undergone police and judicial custody of 10 and 23 days respectively.



Supporters with BKU spokesperson Rakesh Tikait during farmers' protest against three farm reform laws at Ghaziipur border in New Delhi on Sunday. — *PTI*

3 juveniles nabbed for killing 45-yr-old man during robbery bid

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 27

Three juveniles were apprehended for allegedly stabbing to death a 45-year-old man during a robbery bid in outer Delhi's Sultanpuri area, police said on Sunday.

The deceased identified as Ravinder, a resident of Nangloi, was engaged in the work of shoe upper printing mechanism at Mangolapuri Industrial Area, they said.

Police said the juveniles, all aged 17, involved in the crime work at horse and buggy shops where they developed drinking habit. To fulfill their liquor needs, they required money and took to snatching.

According to police, the incident took place on Friday when the three juveniles were looking for an easy target at a park near Jalebi Chowk, Sultanpuri. Around 9.30 PM, they spotted Ravinder who was standing near the park and talking over mobile phone.

During this, one of the juveniles caught Ravinder from his back by interlocking his neck to restrict his movement while another juvenile tried to take his mobile phone but he resisted. Meanwhile, the third juvenile took out a button-actuated knife and stabbed Ravinder multiple times, said a senior police officer.

They then took out the wallet from victim's pocket and fled from the spot, he said.

Parvinder Singh, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Outer) said "On Saturday,

2 stab man to death in south Delhi, arrested

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 27

Two men were arrested on Sunday for stabbing a 42-year-old man to death over personal enmity in south-east Delhi's Govindpuri area, police said.

Accused Rahul killed with his friend Babu killed Hari Kishan on Friday and fled to Agra from where they were nabbed, they said, adding Rahul is victim's brother-in-law's son. Both Rahul and Hari Kishan had developed enmity over a family dispute which led to the murder, police said.

On Friday evening, when the accused duo got an opportunity, they confronted the victim inside the lane near his house during which Kishan tried to attack them with a beer bottle. But accused Rahul and friend Babu stabbed the victim with a knife and fled from the spot, police said.

We received information from Sanjay Gandhi Hospital that one person named Ravinder was admitted in injured condition from Jalebi Chowk, Sultanpuri Delhi. He had stab injuries on his chest and succumbed to his injuries during the course of his treatment."

Woman jumps off Signature Bridge, dies as falls into river

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 27

A 24-year-old woman died after she allegedly jumped off the Signature Bridge earlier this week.

Initial investigation has revealed that the victim, Himanshi Gandhi, had been missing for the last two days and her family members had lodged a missing person's complaint at Burari police station in North Delhi.

According to police, the incident came to light on June 24 when Himanshi's father, Lavesha Gandhi, approached them to lodge a complaint.

"He informed police that his daughter went to Vijay Nagar area in the morning, where she and three of her friends had opened a cafe. It was her first day. Around 4 pm, her friend Ayush called and told her mother that Himanshi had left the cafe following a heated argument with them. She was not picking up their calls and later her phone was unreachable," a senior police officer said.

Police started looking for her and found that on June 25, the body of a woman had been found in the Yamuna river.

The body was taken to the mortuary where it was identified by Himanshi's family members.

Delhi Metro bags top Japan award for high quality infra, safe transportation

New Delhi, June 27: The Delhi Metro has bagged an award from the Japan Society of Civil Engineers for its "high-quality" infrastructure development projects under phases I-III, officials said on Sunday.

The 'Outstanding Civil Engineering Achievement Award' is for the year 2020. The JSCE termed the Delhi Metro's project as 'high-quality Infrastructure develop-

ment project'," the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) said in a statement.

The JSCE in its award note mentioned that the Delhi Metro's projects have brought awareness of safety and efficiency at construction sites in India, and provided residents with safe, secure and comfortable transportation.

Delhi Metro's civil engineering achieve-



ments in the past two decades have received global recognition and have been appreciated by prominent international organisations, the officials said.

Earlier, Delhi Metro's implementation of Phase I was rated 'Excellent' in a post evaluation study conducted by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). The study rated Delhi Metro's project exe-

cution capability at '3', which is the highest possible grade indicating that the performance of DMRC was excellent, the statement said.

The Delhi Metro since its inception has been closely associated with Japan. The JICA has supported Delhi Metro's all phases, including the ongoing Ph-IV project by providing not only smoothest financial support but with excellent value-added activities such as knowledge assistance by introducing Japanese innovative technologies and unique work culture, the officials said.

— *PTI*



Members of the United Hindu Front shout slogans during a sit-in protest in New Delhi on Sunday against cases of conversion of Hindus through intimidation or inducement in parts of the country. — *G.N JHA*

Green nod suggested for Delhi's 1st transit-oriented hub

New Delhi, June 27: The environment ministry's expert appraisal committee (EAC) has recommended granting environmental clearance to phase one of the 'Integrated Development of East Delhi Hub' project under which 123 trees are planned to be felled and 20 transplanted.

The Delhi Development Authority (DDA) had approved the project in 2014 and entrusted it to National Buildings Construction Corporation NBCC (India) Limited in 2019.

The proposed project at Karkardooma is "conceptualised to be a new transit-oriented development

that imbibes the core values of a sustainable 'Smart City'", the minutes of the 65th meeting of the EAC held on May 27-28 read.

Spread over 37.42 hectares, the ₹1,168-crore project will bring together Metro stations, residences, workplaces and recreational spaces such as museums. The total green area proposed for phase one of the project, to be developed on 25.89 hectares of land, is 78,213 sqm.

"At the site, 462 trees are existing, of which 123 trees shall be cut and 20 trees shall be transplanted, while 3,200 trees are proposed for plantation at

the site," the minutes read. Okhla Bird Sanctuary is at 9.14 kilometres. The project is located outside the notified eco-sensitive zone of the sanctuary.

"Considering the large scale of the project and the population involved

for all activities, it is therefore desirable that the project demonstrates all sustainable development parameters and environmental concerns," the EAC said.

The project will be developed around the Delhi Metro routes — Blue Line and the Pink Line — and will include a massive open landscaped green area and a 48-storey signature tower that will come up in the first phase of the project, according to officials.

It will comprise 6,518 dwelling units, including 1,992 for the Economically Weaker Sections (EWS), along with various amenities like schools, dispen-

saries, library, cultural centre, community halls, convenient shopping, community spaces and creche.

The EAC had earlier examined the proposal in its 62nd meeting held on March 1 and asked the project proponent to resubmit the EIA report after making certain changes.

According to the transit-oriented development policy for Delhi, development along or around transit corridors can have a higher floor area ratio to accommodate more residential, office and recreational spaces within walking or cycling distance of the transit stations. — *PTI*

Wedding industry heaves sigh of relief after Delhi unlocks

New Delhi, June 27: For the wedding industry in the national capital, it is the permission to reopen rather than the hope to make some profit that has shown a sliver of hope after three months of no business.

The Delhi government on Saturday allowed weddings at banquet, marriage halls and hotels with 50 people in attendance, and reopening of gyms and yoga centres at 50 per cent capacity under the phased unlock process initiated with an improvement in the city's Covid-19 situation. The relaxations will come into force from 5 am on Monday.

Wedding planners and banquet hall owners welcomed the Delhi government's decision. They, however, said they do not hold any hopes for making profit this season.

"We are glad that we have been allowed to open at least. After paying the employees from our pockets and incurring losses, we will at least be able to make the ends meet," said Sunil Juneja of Precious Moments Banquets. Wedding planner Jitesh Khanna of The Velvet Weddings noted that as Delhi maintained strict lockdown

Yoga institutes prefer to stay online

New Delhi, June 27: Apprehensive about a possible third Covid wave, owners of many yoga institutes in the national capital said they prefer to continue conducting their classes in the online mode for some more time despite the Delhi government allowing them to operate in-person from Monday.

Neha Vasisht, the founder of Yoga Guru which has several centres across the city, said she is hopeful about starting her classes physically gradually but for now she prefers to operate only at complexes where she can conduct classes in open spaces.

"We also have a studio in DLF mall but we are not plan-

ning to open it anytime soon," she said. Dharendra Singh of Navadha Yoga Health Care Institute in Malviya Nagar says his centre remained closed amid the pandemic for over a year and it was operational for hardly two months this year. However, when the second Covid wave hit the city in April, he got back with his online classes.

"I am not planning to open the centre for now. There has been heavy losses in business but we have online yoga sessions. Even though many of our old members have left the session midway, there are still many who continued with their classes," he said.

— *PTI*

thoughts and said that "they were not looking at making profits, as reopening the business was more important for now".

The one year of pandemic has not been favourable to the industry, said Mohsin Khan of Vivah Luxury Weddings, as he said several people postponed their weddings last November after revision of Covid guidelines.

— *PTI*

SHORT TAKES

All HC websites are disabled-friendly

New Delhi: All websites of the high courts now have captchas that are accessible to people with disabilities, the law ministry said on Sunday. The task of making the digital infrastructure of the Indian judicial system more accessible to people with disabilities has been a core component of the work of the e-Committee of the Supreme Court in the last few months, it said in a statement. "A significant milestone that the e-Committee's efforts towards this objective have yielded has been to ensure that all high court websites now have captchas which are accessible to Persons with Disabilities (PwDs)," it said. Captcha is a programme that protects websites against bots by generating and grading tests that humans can pass but current computer programmes cannot. — PTI

Fall in O2 level kills hundreds of fish

Guwahati: Environmental degradation leading to depletion of dissolved oxygen level in a pond has claimed the lives of hundreds of fish in Dighalipukhuri in Guwahati, Assam Fisheries Minister Parimal Suklabaidya said on Sunday. A large number of dead fish were found floating in the waterbody since Saturday night following which the minister had directed officials of his department to visit the site and ascertain the exact reason. After examination of samples of the dead fish and the Dighalipukhuri or long pond in Assamese, the officials found that depletion of dissolved oxygen in the waterbody coupled with high organic load were the causes behind the mass fish deaths. — PTI

Minor gangraped in UP's Bijnor, 1 held

Bijnor: Police in Bijnor district on Sunday arrested a man in connection with the alleged gang rape of a 14-year-old girl, with officials saying a search is underway to nab a second accused. The action came on a complaint filed by a resident of Seohara, who said his minor daughter was gang-raped by the two accused, Munawwar and Faisal, on June 19, Bijnor superintendent of police Dharamveer Singh said. According to the complainant, he and his daughter had gone to collect grass for their cattle on the day of the incident when they came across the accused, Singh said. The accused duo apparently sent the complainant to fetch water for them, and while he was gone, they allegedly raped his daughter, the officer said. — PTI

TMC LEADERS EXTORT ₹60K FROM VISUALLY DISABLED

PRANMOY BRAHMACHARI
BERHAMPUR, JUNE 27

visually impaired tribal widow has become the victim of extortion in the hands of two Trinamul Congress workers, who allegedly took away ₹80,000 from her as cut-money from the amount she had received to build her house under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) in Murshidabad of West Bengal. Parbati Hembram, the woman of Belsanda village in Bokhara gram panchayat II, was sanctioned ₹1.20 lakh in two instalments under the PMAY recently. She claimed, "₹60,000 was deposited in my bank account as the second instalment so that I could complete the construction of my house. Two local TMC workers, Kausar Sheikh and Mujibur Sheikh, accompanied me to the bank. I withdrew the money with their help since I cannot see." She added, "But later, the duo extorted the amount from me. Earlier also I was forced to give them ₹20,000 from my first instalment. I am now living in an incomplete house with my little son as the roof could not be built for want of money." Ms Parbati lodged a complaint with Sagardighi block development officer Suvojit Kundu, who said that an inquiry has been initiated by the police into the complaint by her. Her neighbours also complained of Kausar and Mujibur extorting money from them.

BSP to contest UP, U'khand 2022 polls solo: Mayawati

Ex-CM denies any tieup with AIMIM for Assembly election

Lucknow, June 27: The BSP will not enter into any alliance for Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand assembly polls, party chief Mayawati said on Sunday.

In a series of tweets in Hindi, the former chief minister categorically denied any tie-up with the AIMIM for the assembly election in Uttar Pradesh due next year.

"A news channel is broadcasting news since yesterday that in the upcoming UP Assembly elections, BSP will contest along with (Asaduddin) Owaisi's party AIMIM. This news is completely wrong, misleading and devoid of any fact. There is not even an iota of truth in this. The BSP vociferously denies this."

"The party wants to clarify that barring Punjab, the BSP will be contesting the Assembly elections to be held in UP and Uttarakhand alone, and will not be entering into any alliance with anyone," Mayawati said in another tweet.

The BSP has recently joined hands with the Shiromani Akali Dal in Punjab.

Mayawati said that BSP general secretary and Rajya Sabha MP Satish Chandra Misra has been



Mayawati

made the national co-ordinator of the party's

MAYAWATI SAID that BSP general secretary and Rajya Sabha MP Satish Chandra Misra has been made the national co-ordinator of the party's media cell. She also appealed to the media to consult Misra before publishing any news regarding the Bahujan Samaj Party or its national president.

media to consult Misra before publishing any news regarding the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) or its national president. Mayawati, 65, is a four-time former chief minister of UP.

Her party had tied up with Akhilesh Yadav's Samajwadi Party (SP) and RLD in Uttar Pradesh for the 2019 Lok Sabha polls. BSP had won 10 seats while SP had bagged five out of 80 Lok Sabha seats.

— PTI

AIMIM to contest UP polls in alliance with Rajbhar's party

Hyderabad, June 27: After showing 'good performance' in the Bihar Assembly elections, the AIMIM party on Sunday announced that it would contest 100 seats in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls in 2022.

All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul-Muslimeen (AIMIM) president Asaduddin Owaisi said they will contest the Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls in alliance with Om Prakash Rajbhar-led Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party (SBSP) and Bhaagidaari Sankalp Morcha, a front of



Asaduddin Owaisi said they will contest the Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls in alliance with Om Prakash Rajbhar-led Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party (SBSP) and Bhaagidaari Sankalp Morch

smaller parties.

The Hyderabad MP, by tweeting in Hindi, announced that his party will contest the Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls.

He usually sends out his message on the social media platform in English.

"Regarding Uttar

Pradesh elections we have decided to field our candidates in 100 seats. The party has started the process of selecting the candidates and has also released the candidate/aspirants application forms," Owaisi tweeted.

— PTI

Twitter interim grievance officer for India quits

New Delhi, June 27: Twitter's interim resident grievance officer for India has stepped down, leaving the micro-blogging site without a grievance official as mandated by the new IT rules to address complaints from Indian subscribers, according to a source.

The source said that Dharmendra Chatur, who was recently appointed as interim resident grievance officer for India by Twitter, has quit from the post.

The social media company's website no longer displays his name, as required under Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules 2021. Twitter declined to comment on the development.

The development comes at a time when the micro-blogging platform has been engaged in a tussle with the Indian government over the new social media rules. The government has slammed Twitter for deliberate defiance and failure to comply with the country's new IT



rules. The new rules which came into effect from May 25 mandate social media companies to establish a grievance redressal mechanism for resolving complaints from the users or victims. All significant social media companies, with over 50 lakh user base shall appoint a grievance officer to deal with such complaints and share the name and contact details of such officers.

The big social media companies are mandated to appoint a chief compliance officer, a Nodal Contact Person and a resident grievance officer. All of them should be resident in India.

Twitter in response to the final notice issued by the government on June 5 had said that it intends to comply with the new IT rules and will share details of the chief compliance officer. In the meantime, the microblogging platform had appointed Chatur as interim resident grievance officer for India.

— PTI

Kashmiri medical student found dead in Chandigarh hostel

AGE CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR JUNE 27

A 22-year-old Kashmiri student was found dead in a hostel room of a government-run medical college in Chandigarh, triggering protests by his family members and a large number of mourners attending his funeral back home on Sunday.

The family of the deceased Aamir Hassan

Mir said that he was found dead in mysterious circumstances in his hostel room by a fellow student during the intervening night of June 25 and 26. It claimed that the police has after registering a case said that the death of the student who was doing internship in govt Medical College and Hospital at Chandigarh is 'unnatural'.

New Okhla Industrial Development Authority
Administrative Building, Sector-6, Noida, (UP)
Website : www.noidaauthorityonline.com

E-TENDER NOTICE

E-Tenders are invited from eligible contractors/firms for the following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened/downloaded as per schedule mentioned. The details and conditions of all tenders are available on NOIDA Authority's official website: www.noidaauthorityonline.com & <https://etender.up.nic.in>. Please ensure to see these website for any changes/amendments & corrigendum etc.

S.No.	Job no.	Name of Work	Amount (Rs.)
1.	06/SPE/PE(PH-2)/2021-22	Providing and Fixing Signage Board for various location of Public Health-II, Area, Noida.	452667.10

The above tenders can be uploaded by date **05-07-2021** upto 5.00 PM. Pre-qualification shall be opened/downloaded on dated **06-07-2021** at **11.00 AM**.

Project Engineer (Public Health-2) Noida

Office Sector-39

CLEAN, GREEN, SAFE & SECURE NOIDA

Bengal Bar Council seeks removal of Calcutta acting CJ

RAJIB CHOWDHURI
KOLKATA, JUNE 27

In a rare move, the Bar Council of West Bengal has urged Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana to remove Justice Rajesh Bindal as the acting chief justice of the Calcutta High Court immediately.

It has branded Justice Bindal as a "BJP's man through and through" over his controversial role in hearing the Central Bureau of Investigation's plea against the bail of the four heavyweight Narada sting bribery accused on May 17 and assigning chief minister Mamata Banerjee's election petition to another BJP linked judge: Justice Kausik Chanda.

On June 25 the state level lawyers' forum chairman Ashok Kumar Deb wrote to the CJI on Justice Bindal, "On and from his date of appointment as the acting chief justice of the Calcutta High Court, there have been numerous instances which have forced us to issue the instant letter praying for the removal of his Lordship as a Judge from the Calcutta High Court. We would like to set out some of the instances which has given rise to a perception that Hon'ble Justice Bindal is an unfair, partial and biased judge and

whose continuance at the Hon'ble High Court interferes with the fair and impartial dispensation of justice."

He alleged the way the CBI petition was dealt with, "sets serious doubts over the conduct and character of Hon'ble Justice Bindal. Hon'ble Justice Bindal by an order dated 17.05.2021 had stayed an interim order of bail passed by the Special CBI Court in favour of members of a certain political dispensation without giving the aggrieved parties an opportunity of being heard." According to advocate Deb, "Justice Bindal does not have any regard for judicial propriety and has committed a mockery of the judicial conscience."

He also pointed out the "absurdity and insanity" of Justice Bindal in assigning cases and petitions to judges like Justice Chanda who "is an erstwhile member of Bharatiya Janata Party and is someone who takes great pride in such an association." Mr Deb also stated that Justice Chanda, yet to be made a permanent judge, "is known to have a deep and profound association with the BJP and it's leaders" which hints that he would not be able to deliver "impartial justice."

Another BJP leader defects to Trinamul

AGE CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA, JUNE 27

Close on the heels of West Bengal BJP Alipurduar district chief Ganga Prasad Sharma's defection to the Trinamul Congress, another key district level functionary, Madan Mohan Choubey, of the saffron party in Union minister Babul Supriyo's Lok Sabha constituency (Asansol) changed his colour along with more than three dozen other leaders and a record number of rank and file on Sunday.

According to TMC insiders, since their party has swung into a wait-and-watch mode in poaching the MLAs from the Opposition after the anti-defection law petition by Leader of Opposition Suwendu Adhikari against Krishnanagar North legislator Mukul Roy for his defection, damage of the BJP organisation in the districts has become the main target.

Mr Choubey, who was the general secretary of BJP Asansol district and contested the Assembly election earlier also, joined the TMC along with 38 other leaders in the presence of state law minister Moloy Ghatak at Rabindra Bhavan auditorium.

Govt. of Haryana

Heartiest Greetings on the selection of 30 players from Haryana for Tokyo Olympics

Haryana's Players will write the golden history of success again

Sh. Manohar Lal, Chief Minister, Haryana

Prize money by Haryana Government to Olympic medal winners will be

Gold	Silver	Bronze
Rs. 6 Crore	Rs. 4 Crore	Rs. 2.5 Crore

Advance amount of Rs. 5 lakh per player for the preparation of Olympic Games

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SHORT TAKES

'Revive welfare state to cope with Covid'

Jodhpur: The Covid pandemic has paved the way for learning many lessons with regard to the country's health situation and preparedness in general as well as highlighted the need to redesign welfare systems, Noble laureate and renowned economist Abhijit Banerjee said on Sunday. While addressing a webinar organised by the city-based National Institute for Implementation Research on Non-Communicable Diseases, Mr Banerjee focused on the economic aspect of the country's health situation, welfare and healthcare systems. On the economic aspect of the health situation, he said that India has a large population afflicted with lifestyle diseases, which are non-communicable diseases. "Many young people died in the second and first wave of the pandemic, but their conditions were not detected. Casualties among the young has caught us without any clue," the economist said, terming awareness about NCDs a key challenge. — PTI

TV star, models held in Nashik party raid

Mumbai: The Nashik Rural police on Sunday raided two private bungalows in Igatpuri and detained 22 persons including 12 women, a former TV reality show, few small time models and actresses among them, from an alleged rave party. According to Nashik Rural police sources, the bungalows where raids were conducted are situated around 50km from Nashik. During the raids the police found people present there allegedly consuming drugs, liquor and hookah in a birthday party. Amongst detained women, at least five are small-time actresses and one had taken part in a TV reality show. There is also a foreign national model in that group that was detained. The men are businessmen from Mumbai. One is said to be a bookie.

Naxal with ₹5L on head gunned down

Bhopal: A suspected hardcore Naxal, believed to be involved in the killing of a cameraman of Doordarshan (DD) and two jawans in Bastar in 2018, was on Sunday gunned down in an encounter with security forces in Chhattisgarh's Dantewada district. The encounter took place in Pordem jungle in the district at around 12.30 in the afternoon when a search party of district reserve group (DRG) came under attack by Maoists in the area. Body of a Maoist and two weapons were recovered at the site after the encounter ended, Dantewada district superintendent of police (SP) Abhishek Pallav said. The slain Maoist has been identified as Santosh Markam, member of Malangir area committee of the outlawed CPI (Maoist). He was allegedly involved in the killing of DD cameraman Achyutanand Sahu and two jawans in Nilwaya in Dantewada district in October 2018. The DD cameraman was doing the 2018 assembly coverage in the area. The deceased Maoist has 25 criminal cases pending against him in Nilwaya police station. He carried a bounty of ₹5 lakh on his head.

Statehood for Kashmir after delimitation, before polls?

■ **Continued from Page 1** sources said more rounds of negotiations are expected in the next few months with the J&K leadership on the complex issue of restoring the democratic process, but the Centre was "favourably inclined" towards restoring statehood once the delimitation process was completed in J&K. "The meeting on Thursday was held on a very positive note and some more talks are likely in the coming weeks. Seeing the state leadership's response, the Centre too is willing to concede some of their demands like giving full statehood if the local leadership cooperates in the delimitation exercise," a senior home ministry official added.

Chirag must join fight against Golwalkar's ideas: Tejashwi

ASIM KAMAL
NEW DELHI, JUNE 27

Amid signs of chill in LJP leader Chirag Paswan's ties with the BJP-led NDA, RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav on Sunday reached out to him for alliance with the Opposition, saying he can carry forward his father Ram Vilas Paswan's legacy only by joining the "existential fight" against RSS ideologue M.S. Golwalkar's thoughts.

With Chirag going public with his disappointment with the BJP's silence over his bitter feud with his uncle Pashupati Kumar Paras for control of the Lok Janshakti Party (LJP), Tejashwi Yadav alleged that the BJP has "disposed of" and "abandoned" most of its old allies after coming to power and gaining maximum from them.



Tejashwi Yadav

In an interview with PTI, Yadav said his party has always stood by Ram Vilas Paswan and recounted that when the LJP did not even have a single MLA and Paswan lost the election in 2009, it was Lalu Prasad Yadav who sent him to Rajya Sabha from the Rashtriya Janata Dal quota.

Has anybody done or sacrificed so much for any other leader or party in the country, he asked. "Our party has decided to celebrate Dalit messiah, Ram Vilas Ji's birth

anniversary to commemorate his contribution to the state, I think this itself is self-explanatory," Mr Yadav said.

Significantly, Mr Chirag has also announced an "aashirvaad yatra" from July 5, the birth anniversary of his father and party founder Ram Vilas Paswan, from Hajipur in Bihar.

Asked about his call last week urging Chirag to quit the NDA, Yadav said the country is at a juncture where pro-Constitution, pro-democracy, pro-farmers and pro-people forces are on one side and those antithetical to this ideology are on the other side.

"Late Ram Vilas Paswan Ji was a socialist and a firm believer in the idea of social justice throughout his life. He fought caste supremacy, poverty and inequality during his political journey," the 31-

Tender floated to clear plant area of toxic effluents MP: 37 yrs after gas tragedy, toxic waste to be disposed

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY
BHOPAL, JUNE 27

A fresh move has been initiated to dispose of the toxic waste of the now-defunct Union Carbide factory here which had caused death of more than 20,000 people due to the leakage of the deadly methyl isocyanate (MIC) gas in its pesticide plant post midnight of December 2, 1984.

Madhya Pradesh government has floated a tender to clear the plant area, now sealed, of toxic effluents of the factory 'buried' under the earth, according to minister for Bhopal gas tragedy relief and rehabilitation Viswas Sarang.

"We have floated a tender for clearing the site of toxic waste. A memorial will be built at the Union

■ **MADHYA PRADESH** government has floated a tender to clear the plant area, now sealed, of toxic effluents of the factory 'buried' under the earth, according to minister for Bhopal gas tragedy relief and rehabilitation Viswas Sarang.

■ **ACTIVISTS FIGHTING** for the causes of the victims of the Bhopal gas tragedy have been demanding for a comprehensive scientific study on depth and spread of toxic waste in and around the factory before initiation of any move to clear area of the toxic effluents.

Carbide site after disposal of the toxic waste," Mr Sarang said in his twitter post on Sunday.

According to sources, two Gujarat-based companies have participated in the tender and made their presentations before the minister showcasing their technical prowess in the field.

"The two companies will make technical presentations before the officials of the Central and state pollution control

board as well as the state government. If everything goes as per planning, one of the companies will be chosen for the job and a work order for disposal of the toxic waste will be issued within ten days", official sources said.

The process of packing, transporting and then incinerating the toxic wastes may take at least four months, sources added.

This was the second

'Never imagined a village boy like me would become Prez'

Lucknow/Kanpur Dehat, June 27: President Ram Nath Kovind on Sunday said he had never imagined that an ordinary village boy like him would have the honour of occupying the highest post in the country, and thanked the people of his birth place for this.

He was addressing a gathering at the Paraunkh village, which is his birthplace, in Kanpur Dehat district of Uttar Pradesh.

The Rashtrapati Bhavan tweeted that in a rare emotional gesture, after landing at the helipad near his village, Kovind bowed and touched the soil to pay obeisance to the land of his birth.

This is the first time the president is visiting his village after taking over his present assignment. Though he desired to visit the place earlier, plans could not materialise because of the pandemic, an official statement had earlier said.

"I had never imagined, even in my dreams, that an ordinary village boy like me would have the honour of occupying the highest post in the country. Our democratic system made

I had never imagined, even in my dreams, that an ordinary village boy like me would have the honour of occupying the highest post in the country. Our democratic system made this possible.

— Ram Nath Kovind, President

this possible," Mr Kovind said.

"Wherever I have reached today, the credit goes to the soil of this village, this region, and to your love and blessings," he said.

The president paid tributes to B.R. Ambedkar, makers of the Constitution and freedom fighters. He also visited Milan Kendra and Veerangana Jhalkari Bai Inter College and addressed a Jan Sambodhan Samaroh.

"According to my family's 'samskaar' (values), the oldest woman in the village is given the status of mother and the oldest man is given the status of father, irrespective of caste or community. Today, I feel happy that this tradition of giving

respect to the elders in our family is still continuing," Mr Kovind said.

He said the scent of soil of the village and the memories of its residents always remain etched in his heart. "For me Paraunkh is not only a village, it is my 'maatribhoomi' (motherland) from where I get inspiration to serve the country," Kovind said.

"This inspiration has made me reach from high court to the Supreme Court to the Rajya Sabha. From the Rajya Sabha, I moved to the Raj Bhavan and from there to the Rashtrapati Bhavan," the President said.

Mr Kovind also recited a Sanskrit phrase to highlight the pride of 'jannabhoomi' (place of birth) and said, "The pride of a mother who gives birth (to a child) and the 'jannabhoomi' is greater than heaven."

"There have been a number of prime ministers from UP, but this is the first time that the state has given a president to the country. Now, the path for the people of UP to become president has also opened up," he said. — PTI



Maratha Community people participate in 'Maratha Kranti Morcha Bike Rally' demanding reservation in Mumbai on Sunday.

Ex-VC of Sambalpur varsity hacked to death for ₹100

Attacker was a boozier who wanted ₹100 to buy liquor

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO
BHUBANESWAR, JUNE 27

A boozier in Odisha's Jharsuguda town on Sunday hacked former Vice-Chancellor (VC) of Sambalpur University Professor Dhrubaraj Nayak to death as the latter refused him to pay ₹ 100 to buy liquor. According to Arjun Nayak, the younger of Dhrubaraj, the miscreant attacked the victim with an axe after barging into his residence at Sargiguda in Jharsuguda town.

The police informed that the attacker was taken into custody before he tried to flee the town soon after committing the ghastly act. "The miscreant has been taken into custody. We are trying to ascertain the exact reason behind the attack. A detailed investigation into the case has been launched," said the local Laikera police.

As per reports, the accused reportedly stormed into Nayak's resi-



Dhrubaraj Nayak

■ **ACCORDING TO** Arjun Nayak, the younger of Dhrubaraj, the miscreant attacked the victim with an axe after barging into his residence in Jharsuguda town.

■ The accused reportedly stormed into Nayak's residence at around 11:30 am. He then asked for ₹100 which was opposed by Nayak.

dence at around 11:30 am. He then asked for ₹100 which was opposed by Nayak. Enraged at the denial, the miscreant attacked Dhrubaraj with an axe and fled the spot.

Nayak, who sustained critical injuries in the attack by the miscreant, was immediately rushed to a private hospital in the district where he was declared brought dead by doctors. "The man who was in an inebriated condition entered the bedroom of my elder brother's house without any prior information. Seeing his misdemeanour, my brother

confronted him for trespassing which led to a heated exchange of words. During the scuffle, he dragged out a small axe strapped to his waist and hacked him," said Arjun.

The police said the accused hailed from the same locality.

Dhrubaraj was Vice Chancellor of Sambalpur University from 1998 to 2001. After his retirement, he returned to his native place where he worked for environment protection. His efforts saw acres of barren lands turning green because of massive plantation activities.

Take steps to end Covid jab shortage: Rahul asks Modi

New Delhi, June 27: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi should end the "shortage" of Covid-19 vaccines, which should be available to every citizen, and not make excuses to distract from this important issue.

He said this after the Prime Minister in his "Mann Ki Baat" monthly radio address talked about ending vaccine hesitancy.

"The only thing to do is to end the shortage of vaccines. The rest are all excuses for diverting attention," Rahul Gandhi

said in a tweet in Hindi using the hashtag "Mann Ki Baat".

"Just make the vaccine available to all fellow citizens. Then you can also say your 'mann ki baat'," he said in another tweet with the hashtag "VaccinateIndia".

Hitting back at the Congress leader, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh

Chouhan accused him of spreading "misconceptions, confusion and lies" about Covid-19 vaccines due to which many people were "putting their lives in danger" by refusing to take the doses.

— PTI

64L jabs in 1 day: ICMR says 'third wave' may be late

■ **Continued from Page 1** expects to get around 188 crore vaccine doses from at least five manufacturers to be able to vaccinate the entire adult population of India by December. "The total population above 18 is approximately 93-94 crores.

As such, administering two doses to these beneficiaries will require an estimated 186 to 188 crore vaccine doses. Out of this requirement, 51.6 crore doses will be made available for administration by July 31, leaving a requirement of approximately 135 crore vaccine doses for complete vaccination to the eligible population," the Centre said in its affidavit.

Shed vaccine hesitancy; follow science, not rumours: PM

■ **Continued from Page 1** pressure on these sportspersons but "cheer for India". "Every athlete who is going to Tokyo has worked hard. They are going there to win hearts. It must be our endeavour to support our team and not put pressure on the team," said the PM. He applauded the Olympic-bound athletes, saying they have all endured "years of toil" and should be cheered by the country to bolster the enthusiasm of every player.

Recalling his last conversation with Milkha Singh, when the PM urged him to boost the morale of Indian athletes and to motivate them with his message, the PM said: "He (Milkha Singh) was so committed and emotional for sports that he immediately gave his consent even during his illness. But unfortunately, providence had other plans."

More than 100 Indian sportspersons have qualified for the Olympics in Tokyo, that was postponed for a year because of the Covid-19 pandemic and will be held under strict health safety protocols from July 23 to August 8 in the Japanese capital. Noting how most participants come from a humble background and are from smaller towns and villages, including archers Deepika Kumari and Pravin Jadhav, hockey player Neha Goel, boxer Manish Kaushik, race walker Priyanka Goswami, javelin thrower Shivpal Singh, badminton players Chirag Shetty and his partner Satwik Sairaj Rankireddy, and fencer C.A. Bhavani Devi, the PM said their "life inspires a lot".

Drones set off twin blasts at Jammu airbase, spark scare

■ **Continued from Page 1** material, another IED weighing 5-6 kg was seized from the arrested person. He described him as a

Lashkare-Tayyaba operative and said the man had claimed it was to be planted at a crowded place in Jammu. Police sources said another person had been detained from the same area and was being questioned. "Major terror attack has been averted with this recovery. The suspect is being interrogated. More suspects are likely to be

picked up in this foiled IED blast attempt," the DGP said.

Soon after the blasts, a security alert was issued for all airports, airbases and other vital installations in J&K and Ladakh. Tight vigil is being kept near key installations in Pathankot in Punjab, where on January 2, 2016, a terror attack took place by a heavily armed group at Pathankot Air Force Station.

An NIA team rushed to the spot to gather evidence

immediately after hearing of the incident. The National Investigation Act 2008 gives the NIA powers to take suo motu cognisance of terror activities in any part of the country and register a case, enter any state or UT without permission from the concerned government and to investigate and arrest people. In 2019, the law was amended to widen the offences it could investigate and prosecute, including ones coming under Explosive Substances Act 1908. A defence official who

spoke to this newspaper and sought anonymity said: "The perpetrators may have failed to inflict fatalities or damage to aircraft or equipment, but it's a serious lapse that needs serious action."

Defence minister Rajnath Singh, before leaving for Leh on a three-day visit, spoke to IAF vice-chief Air Marshal Harjit Singh Arora over the explosions. Air Chief Marshal Rakesh Kumar Singh Bhadauria, now on a three-day visit to Bangladesh, will soon reach Jammu for an on-the-spot

assessment of the situation. The Western Air Commander, Air Marshal VR. Chaudhari, has already reached the Jammu airbase. Sources and witnesses said while an IAF team with forensic experts and a bomb disposal squad reached the scene immediately, those of the NIA and J&K police and officials of Central intelligence agencies entered the at first light.

Simultaneously, a massive search operation was launched outside the Air Force Station.

altitude bases in eastern Ladakh "to assess the ground situation as well as to boost the morale of the troops guarding the Line of Actual Control in a hostile environment". Later, he will be given a detailed briefing about the overall situation in eastern Ladakh at the Leh-based headquarters of 14 Corps of the Army, which is responsible for guarding the LAC in Ladakh.

"Kyungam Bridge" built by the BRO deep inside Ladakh. "The bridge is quite vital for road connectivity in the strategically important region," an official said.

He will have a comprehensive review of India's operational readiness in the backdrop of last year's faceoff with China along the Ladakh-Tibet border and will also visit various key formations and high-

Rajnath...

■ **Continued from Page 1** Development Councils of Leh and Kargil in Leh. The meeting was also attended by senior UT government officials. It is learnt the representatives of the two councils apprised Mr Singh of the "demands, aspirations and various issues" of their respective regions.

THE ASIAN AGE

28 JUNE 2021

Don't shift goalposts, meet jab deadlines

Reports of the Delta Plus variant of SARS-CoV-2 virus, declared a variant of concern by the Union government, have become a new threat here in India and the world over at a time when it looked like the worst is over for this country caught in the second wave of Covid-19. The government has cautioned eight states about the urgent need to take precautionary measures against the spread of the variant, which is stated to have increased transmissibility, stronger binding to receptors of lung cells and potential reduction in monoclonal antibody response. As of now, there are 50-odd cases and four deaths that have been attributed to the variant. Given its potential to spread at a faster rate, no amount of caution looks excessive.

A disturbing feature of the mutant virus that experts fear it possesses is its ability to resist medical intervention such as vaccination and treatment. With only 19.2 per cent of the population receiving at least one dose and only four per cent fully vaccinated, and with a proven inadequacy of medical infrastructure to withstand a major surge, India has reasons to remain alert. The government has asked states to implement the Covid-appropriate protocol more vigorously and be careful when it comes to allowing more relaxations.

All experts are in agreement saying that the way out of the mess is to speed up the vaccination programme before more mutants appear. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who reviewed the drive the other day, has directed officials to maintain the momentum it has got of late. India had vaccinated a record 89 lakh people last

Monday but the numbers slipped in the following days. As per the affidavit the Union government filed in the Supreme Court, a total of 35.6 crore doses of the Covid vaccines have been made available by now. It has also estimated that the country will require 186 crore doses to fully vaccinate all eligible people above 18. The government, which launched the "world's largest vaccination drive" in January, has, for the first time, given the apex court a sneak peek into its procurement plan for the vaccines — 51.6 crore doses will be made available by July 31. As for the remaining 135 crore doses, the two Indian manufacturers together will offer 90 crore doses and the imported Russian vaccine will chip in with another 10 crore. The vaccines in the pipeline by Biological E. (30 crore) and Zydrus Cadila (5 crore) will make up the rest.

The government has been able to cobble up a procurement plan but how far the people can rely on it depends on the determination with which it pursues its targets. The government, which had told the Supreme Court that domestic manufacturing of the vaccines would be substantially increased by July, has, in a subsequent note, said it will happen only by October. This wavering is unacceptable. The government needs to pull up its socks and ensure that the milestones it has marked will be covered in time. Excuses hardly offer immunity against the deadly virus.

Fears over Tokyo Games

Japan's Olympic Committee and the government of Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga seem equally determined to go ahead with the 2020 Tokyo Olympics from July 23 despite adverse opinions expressed by the Emperor of Japan and millions of citizens. Having invited the investment of huge sums into the Games, which were postponed by a year due to the pandemic, the core decision-makers may wish to avoid losses by going ahead with the Games that are, however, unlikely to be a hit with the athletes, fans and Japanese people.

The money committed may be to the tune of \$30 billion, all but \$6.7 billion of which is public money. With less than seven per cent of the Japanese population having been vaccinated as of now, there are genuine fears of the Games becoming an incubator for the coronavirus despite an inhibiting number of restrictions that will be imposed on participants, coaches, officials and spectators, of whom 10,000 locals may be allowed into each venue.

Indian athletes have even more reason to feel hyper-anxious about the Games as they are lumped with the participants of 10 other countries who will have special restrictions imposed on them. They would have to keep away from mingling with fellow athletes for three days after landing at the Olympic Village. Their special diets could be compromised as the Japanese would have to make arrangements to get their food to their rooms where they will virtually self-isolate. How they can prepare for what is invariably once in a lifetime opportunity to shine on one of the world's biggest stages in Olympic arenas is anybody's guess.

Indians have also to take RT-PCR tests every day for seven days before they leave for Tokyo where, of course, everyone will have to take the test every day and go to a fever clinic if they fail it. The movement of all visitors could be tracked by GPS making the Games unique though it is being held in difficult circumstances clouded by succeeding Covid waves around the world. The Games may go on in ritualistic fashion but the spirit of competition and camaraderie may be compromised.

THE ASIAN AGE

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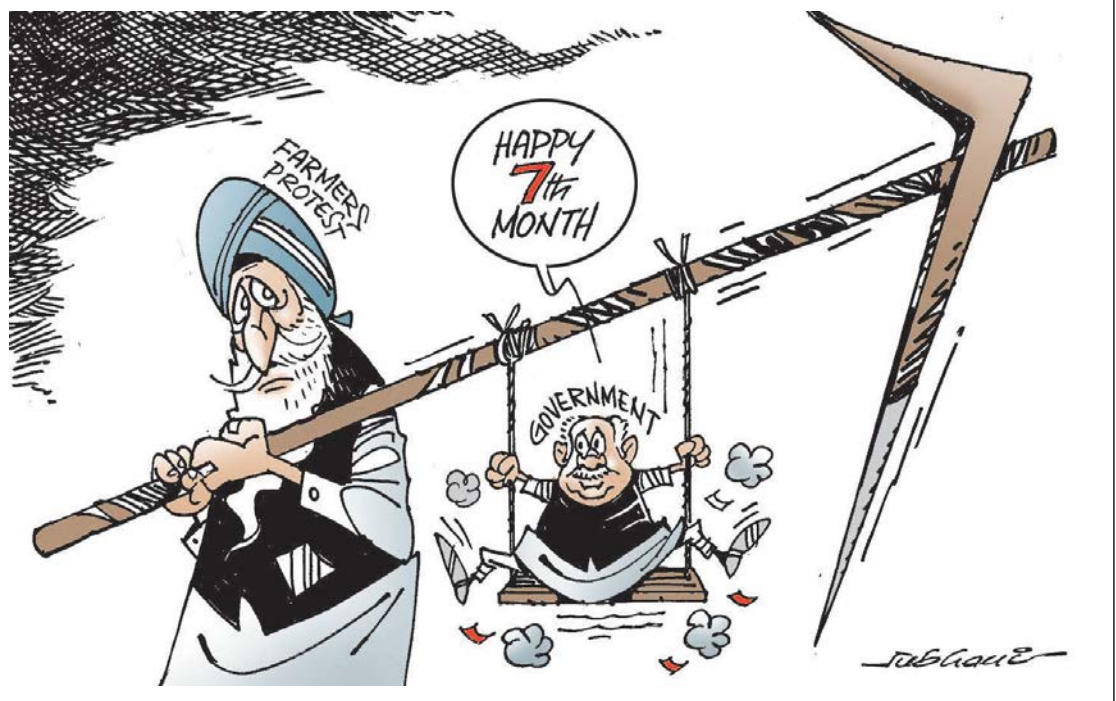
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Subhani



A step forward after two steps back: Twist in J&K



Sanjaya Baru

Sanjayovacha

Our democracy's biggest strength, Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted hours after his meeting with 14 senior political leaders from Jammu and Kashmir on Thursday, "is the ability to sit across a table and exchange views". Regrettably, that thought had not occurred to the leadership of the BJP when they chose to boycott the three all-party roundtables on Kashmir that Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had convened during 2006-07. The need to sit across a table and exchange views had also not been felt when the Union government took momentous decisions with respect to Kashmir in August 2019.

Far too much pain has been inflicted on the Kashmiri people over these past two years before the dawning of this new wisdom that both "Dilli ki doori" and "Dil ki doori" have to be bridged. While a total of 14 leaders attended Mr Modi's meeting last week, close to 30 had attended Dr Singh's roundtables. The 2006-07 process reached out to a wider cross-section of Kashmiri public opinion than last week's meeting which was dominated by what Prime Minister Modi and Union home minister Amit Shah have pejoratively dubbed the "Gupkar gang". The Abdullah and Mufti families and the likes of Ghulam Nabi Azad have been discredited by decades of misgovernance. It remains to be seen if the new process restores public faith in the electoral process given that it is being initiated with their imprimatur.

In his opening remarks at the 2006 meeting Dr Singh had called the roundtable "a dialogue of equals" that would achieve historical importance provided "we are able to unleash a process by which we can arrive at a workable blueprint that can help create a new chapter in Kashmir's history. Not by compromising on one's ideals, but in a spirit of mutual tolerance, understanding and accommodation". That sentiment did not come through clearly in Mr Modi's recent initiative.

An important difference between the 2006-07 meetings and last week's is that Article 370 of the Constitution, granting a special status to the erstwhile state of J&K, stands repealed and J&K reduced to the status of a Union territory, minus Ladakh.

The repeal of Article 370 was in accordance with the BJP's long-standing electoral commitment and has since become a non-issue. While many non-BJP parties did not support that decision in August 2019, most have reconciled to the change. The question of J&K's statehood remains on the table and none less than the Union home minister, Amit Shah, gave an assurance to Parliament that statehood would be restored at some point. A new round of elections to local bodies and a UT government will not, however, address the real challenge facing New Delhi in J&K. Neither the repeal of Article 370 nor the question of statehood are really at the centre of what may be called the Kashmir conundrum. The core issue remains the status of Kashmir and the equation with Pakistan.

Even if Kashmir is denied its own flag and nomenclature for the head of the government, some elements of its special status will have to be preserved. In theory this is not a problem since there are other border states with special

status.

Continental nations with far-flung regions have to extend some form of special status to border areas in the interests of national unity and integrity. India is still a 70-year-old republic and extending benefits to certain regions to facilitate their fuller integration is not a big price to pay.

The question remains if New Delhi is any closer to a resolution of the Kashmir conundrum as a result of all the steps taken by the Modi-Shah team or whether the delimitation exercise and election process that is to follow will continue to feed dissension in the Kashmir Valley. Over the past three decades state Assembly elections and delimitation exercises have been held several times and their validity internationally endorsed.

This new round of delimitation must inspire the confidence of all if the elections following it have to acquire legitimacy. Even after all that the Kashmir problem would not have been resolved if all stakeholders are not party to the final solution.

Dr Manmohan Singh and Gen. Pervez Musharraf worked towards a final solution that the BJP has repeatedly rejected. Yet, given its U-turn on so many issues, it remains to be seen if on this issue too the BJP will take a different view in future if the current process does not yield results. Dr Manmohan Singh summed up his approach pithily when he said that "borders can't be changed but can be made irrelevant"; if there was trust between India and Pakistan and the assurance of peace and security.

Dr Singh and Gen. Musharraf came to an understanding on resolv-

ing the Kashmir issue but the matter was never clinched. Early resumption of cross-LoC trade and traffic can help in building confidence.

How things evolve will also depend on the response of regional and global actors. Many analysts have suggested that last week's meeting was part of an elaborate exercise orchestrated by the United States to facilitate its peaceful retreat from Afghanistan. It may be recalled that in his first term in office President Barack Obama had named Richard Holbrooke as the US special envoy for Afghanistan and Kashmir, linking the American exit from the former to a resolution of the latter. The Manmohan Singh government flatly refused to allow Mr Holbrooke to land in New Delhi till President Obama delinked the two.

President Joe Biden, who comes from the same stable, has been cleverer. Without making any explicit link between the two he is seen as having pushed India and Pakistan into addressing both issues together. This would explain much toing and froing by the external affairs minister and the national security adviser to countries that are obviously involved in facilitating the transition in Afghanistan.

That the United States, China, Russia and Pakistan would have an interest in stabilising Kashmir as part of the transition in Afghanistan is entirely understandable. But the question that still remains is if half-hearted and self-serving initiatives pursued through some discredited leaders will be welcomed in the Valley. The challenge of winning the hearts and minds of the Kashmiri people and finding a final solution acceptable to all concerned remains.

The writer is an economist, a best-selling author and a former adviser to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. His latest book is *India's Power Elite: Class, Caste and a Cultural Revolution*.

LETTERS

SATIRIST'S WORTH

K. Shankar Pillai not only routinely criticised the policy decisions of Jawaharlal Nehru through his cartoons, he didn't spare Indira Gandhi as well! Yet, far from harbouring antipathy towards him, Indira Gandhi was on excellent terms with Shankar. When his magazine, *Shankar's Weekly*, had to fold due to financial hardship, Gandhi wrote to Shankar: "I learnt a few days ago about your decision... You are the best judge. We shall miss the journal." Would Shankar have been similarly appreciated had he been alive today?

Kajal Chatterjee
Kolkata

MISPLACED PRIORITIES

THIS IS WITH reference to "Guleria terms oxygen audit report interim" (June 27). The governments wrangling over oxygen supply in Delhi only show their misplaced priorities. They ought to focus on tackling the anticipated third wave of the pandemic together rather than petty mudslinging. They should comprehend that, in order to overcome the pandemic, they need to keep their differences at bay and let bygones be bygones. The country cannot once again witness a fresh catastrophe.

Deepak Singhal
Noida

FITTING RETRIBUTION

FORMER MINNEAPOLIS police officer Derek Chauvin getting 22.5 years in jail for the murder of George Floyd is fitting retribution. Floyd's dying gasps under Chauvin's knee led to the most significant outcry against racial injustice in the US in generations. The punishment is one of the most extended prison terms ever imposed on a US police officer in killing a black person. Though the sentence fell short of the 30 years prosecutors had requested, the verdict must bring some cheer to Floyd's family.

N.J. Ravi Chander
Bengaluru

₹500 for the best letter of the week goes to Bhaskar Roy (June 27). Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com.

SHORT TAKES

5 DIE IN HOT AIR BALLOON CRASH IN NEW MEXICO

Los Angeles: Five people died in a hot air balloon accident in Albuquerque, in the south-western United States, the city's police announced on Saturday.

The accident caused power outages in the area for several hours after the balloon came into contact with a power line.

"Unfortunately, 4 individuals died as a result of their wounds from the hot air balloon crash," Albuquerque police said on Twitter, adding that one person was taken to a hospital in critical condition.

Authorities said later Saturday that the adult male had died of his injuries.

"Our prayers go out to the friends and family of all five people who tragically lost their lives," police said on Twitter. Early Saturday morning, some 13,000 people were without power because of the accident, local utility PNM weeted.

VATICAN PROBES ALLEGED ABUSE NEGLIGENCE

Warsaw: The Vatican's embassy in Poland said on Saturday that a Holy See envoy spent 10 days in the country checking reports of alleged negligence by a retired archbishop of Krakow who had served as personal secretary to the late Pope St. John Paul II.

The embassy said that during his June 17-26 visit, retired Cardinal Angelo Bagnasco held a number of meetings and reviewed documents.

"The aim was to verify signals, also made in public, of negligence by Cardinal Stanislaw Dziwisz during his term as the archbishop of Krakow (2005-2016)," the embassy statement said.

Bagnasco is to present his finding at the Vatican.

A priest in Poland, the Rev. Tadeusz Isakowicz-Zaleski, says that in 2012 he personally gave Dziwisz a letter containing evidence of sex abuse by a priest of a 12-year-old altar boy. Dziwisz at first denied it and suggested the matter should be investigated, but later said the letter had been found.

MAN JUMPS FROM MOVING PLANE AT LA AIRPORT

Los Angeles: A passenger was taken to the hospital Friday night after jumping out of a moving plane at Los Angeles International Airport, authorities said.

United Express flight 5365, operated by SkyWest, was pulling away from a gate shortly after 7 pm when the man unsuccessfully tried to breach the cockpit by pounding on the door; then managed to open the service door and jumped down the emergency slide onto the tarmac, according to the airport, the FBI and SkyWest.

The man was taken into custody on the taxiway, treated for injuries that were not life-threatening and taken to the hospital, authorities said.

The twin-engine Embraer 175, which was headed to Salt Lake City, returned to its gate, the airport said. Nobody else aboard the plane was injured. The flight department for Salt Lake City late Friday evening and arrived early Saturday morning, according to the flightaware.com website.

TWO CHURCHES BURNT ON CANADA INDIGENOUS LAND

Ottawa: Fires on Saturday destroyed two more Catholic churches in indigenous communities in western Canada, following grim discoveries at former church-run indigenous residential schools of nearly 1,000 unmarked graves.

St Ann's Catholic Church on the Upper Similkameen Indian Band and the Chopaka Catholic Church on the Lower Similkameen Indian Band were set ablaze less than an hour apart in the early morning, federal police said.

"Both churches have been destroyed," Sergeant Jason Bayda of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police said in a statement. Authorities consider the two fires "suspicious, and are looking to determine any possible connection to the church fires in both Penticton and Oliver on June 21, 2021," he said.

The Penticton and Oliver fires are still under investigation. The destruction of the four churches comes at a raw time for many of Canada's Indigenous peoples still struggling with the discovery.



People crowd to board a ferry as authorities ordered a new lockdown to contain the spread of the Coronavirus in Munshiganj in Bangladesh on Sunday. —AFP

Moscow sees high Covid death toll

New delta variant drives infections in Russia since mid-June

Moscow, June 27: Moscow on Sunday recorded the worst daily coronavirus death toll so far for a Russian city, as countries across the Asia-Pacific region extended or reimposed restrictions to tackle fresh waves of infections.

The pandemic has now killed close to four million people across the world but vaccination drives have brought down infection numbers in many wealthy countries, though the Delta strain of the virus remains a concern.

The variant is now in 85 countries and is the most contagious of any Covid-19 strain identified, according to the World Health Organisation. Still, in much of Europe and the United States curbs on daily life are easing as vaccination programmes bear fruit, although Russia is grappling with a deadly third wave.

The Russian capital on

Migrant workers flee Bangla capital

Reenagar, Bangladesh, June 27: Tens of thousands of migrant workers fled Bangladesh's capital Sunday on the eve of a tightened lockdown that will curtail most economic activity and confine people to their homes as Coronavirus infections soar. Restrictions on activities and movement have been in place since mid-April as cases and deaths jumped.

Infections declined in May but started to rise again this month, with

Sunday recorded 144 Covid-19 deaths in the last 24 hours, a day after Saint Petersburg set the previous highest figure.

over 5,000 new cases and a pandemic-high of 119 deaths on Sunday, according to the health ministry.

The resurgence has prompted the government to tighten restrictions in stages from Monday, with economic activity — including shops, markets, transportation and offices — to shut down by Thursday. People will be ordered to stay at homes while only emergency services and export-oriented factories continue operations.

—AFP

capped at half but still upwards of 26,000 people.

Russia as a whole has seen an explosion of new infections since mid-June driven by the Delta variant. The dramatic rise in cases comes as officials in Moscow are pushing vaccine-sceptical Russians to get inoculated after lifting most anti-virus restrictions late last year.

"To stop the pandemic, one thing is needed: rapid, large-scale vaccinations. Nobody has invented any other solution," Moscow mayor Sergei Sobyanin told state-run television on Saturday.

The Delta variant is also feeding fresh outbreaks in Southeast Asia and Australia where authorities have brought back or prolonged restrictions. More than five million Sydney residents endured their first full day of a two-week lockdown Sunday to contain an outbreak of the strain.

—AFP

UK FINDS SECRET DEF. DOCUMENTS AT A BUS STOP

London, June 27: Britain's government said Sunday it was investigating how secret defence documents, outlining the movements of a warship that led to Russia firing warning shots off the Crimean coast, were found at a bus stop in England.

The Ministry of Defence said that an employee told it last week that the documents had been lost, and that an investigation had been launched. "It shouldn't be able to happen," Brandon Lewis, minister for Northern Ireland, said.

—AFP

After min quits, UK probes leak of his kissing footage

London, June 27: The UK government said on Sunday that it will launch an investigation into how footage from inside a departmental office was leaked and ended in Matt Hancock resigning as Health Secretary to make way for Sajid Javid.

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) will look into how the former health secretary came to be videoed kissing one of his aides, Gina Coladangelo, who has also resigned from her DHSC role of non-executive director in the wake of the scandal.



Matt Hancock

There had been growing calls for a probe after questions were raised about the reasons behind the presence of a camera inside a smoke alarm in

Hancock's former office and security concerns over footage from it being accessed.

"The Department of Health will be investigating quite rightly to understand how this was able to happen," UK Northern Ireland Secretary Brandon Lewis said.

"We have got to be concerned about the fact that someone was able to secure a recording from inside a government building... We have to understand how that happened and how we deal with that," he said.

—PTI

Nearly 20 hurt in Lebanon protests

Beirut, June 27: Nearly twenty people were wounded in overnight scuffles in northern Lebanon between security forces and protesters angered by a spiralling economic crisis, a medical association said on Sunday.

The protests in the city of Tripoli came as the Lebanese pound plumed fresh lows on the black

market due to a financial crisis that the World Bank says is likely to rank among the world's worst since the mid-19th century.

Calm returned to the city on Sunday after protesters tried to storm official buildings, including a branch of the central bank, overnight, forcing the army to deploy.

"18 people, both civilians

and soldiers, were injured, including four who were hospitalised," said the Emergency and Relief Corps, a local medical charity that dispatched ambulances to treat the wounded.

Rubber bullets and shrapnel from stun grenades accounted for some of the injuries, a spokesperson for the charity said.

The army said 10 sol-

diers were wounded in the Tripoli clashes, the majority in a single incident that it said involved a group of protesters on motorcycles throwing stun grenades at personnel.

The southern city of Sidon and the capital Beirut saw smaller demonstrations against the ongoing dramatic fall in living standards.

—AP

Macron, Le Pen face new poll test

First round of France's regional polls were shunned by a record 66.72% of voters

Paris, June 27: France was voting in the second round of regional elections on Sunday after a first round that saw a drubbing for President Emmanuel Macron's ruling party, disappointment for Marine Le Pen's far-right and record low turnout.

For some observers, the outcome of the June 20 first round raised doubts over whether the 2022 presidential election would come down to a duel between Macron and Le Pen in a run-off long seen as the most likely scenario.

The first-round results marked a boost for the traditional right-wing The Republicans as well as the Socialist Party, who have been squeezed after the centrist Macron surged into power in 2017 with his brand-new Republic on the Move (LREM) party.

Analysts warn against too much extrapolation onto a nationwide scale from the results of the regional elections, which choose the heads of France's 13 mainland regions from Brittany in the northwest to the Provence-

Alpes-Cote d'Azur (PACA) region in the southeast.

But there was cross-party concern over the turnout for last week's polls, which were shunned by 66.72 percent of voters — a record in modern France. "What we are seeing is the culmination of a disconnection between voters and the political class," said Jessica Sainty, politics lecturer at Avignon University, while acknowledging the Covid-19 crisis also played a role in high abstention rate.

The woeful turnout prompted a debate over how to improve participation, with several figures including government spokesman Gabriel Attal suggesting electronic voting could help in future.

According to a poll published Thursday, just 36 percent of voters plan to cast their ballots on Sunday. "France is sulking," the Le Parisien newspaper said.

Four hours after polls opened, turnout on Sunday stood at the same dismal 12.66 percent as during the first round.

The first-round results put Le Pen's National

Rally (RN) ahead in just one region, PACA, a major disappointment after polls showed a possible breakthrough in several areas.

One of the most closely watched races on Sunday will be whether RN candidate Thierry Mariani can defeat his right-wing rival Renaud Muselier in the region. Gaining control of a region for the first time would be a huge boost for Le Pen as she seeks to convince voters that the RN — which she has reformed and rebranded since taking over from her firebrand father Jean-Marie — is a serious party of power.

Muselier could be helped by the withdrawal of left-wing candidates in a repeat of the "Republican Front" seen in past presidential elections to block the far-right.

"The idea of a victory for Mariani — even if it is far from being probable — would show that the RN can almost triumph alone over the coalition of all the others and head the powerful executive of a modern region," said Jerome Sainte-Marie, president of the Pollingvox Institute.

—AFP

Trump silent on 2024 election bid

Wellington, June 27: Donald Trump held his first big campaign-style rally since leaving the White House, giving a vintage, rambling speech Saturday to an adoring audience as he launched a series of appearances ahead of next year's midterm elections.

The former president, who has been booted from social media platforms and faces multiple legal woes, has flirted with his own potential candidacy in 2024, but in the 90-minute address at a fair grounds in Ohio he made no clear mention of his political future, even when the crowd chanted "four more years! four more years!" Trump did tease them at one point by alluding to the possibility of another stab at the White House.

"We may have to win it a third time. It is possible," he said, showing yet again he thinks he won in November. The crowd

cheered wildly.

On other matters Trump flitted from one to the next — immigration, crime, gun rights, Afghanistan, Iran and more — bouncing like a pinball in true Trumpian style. One repeated message was that President Joe Biden is a catastrophe. "Joe Biden is destroying our nation before our very eyes," Trump said. And Trump hammered away yet again at the falsehood that he won the November election but Biden prevailed through fraud.

"The election was over," Trump said. "And we took a massive victory. They did into something that should never be allowed." Until now Trump had delivered two major speeches since leaving Washington in January, including a vindictive monologue in North Carolina early this month when relitigated his loss to Biden.

—AFP

Friction in North America after one year of trade deal

Washington, DC, June 27: One year after it took effect in the midst of a record economic downturn, the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) has yet to end trading friction between the North American allies.

The three countries said the new treaty would benefit their economies and workers but, as the anniversary nears on Thursday, the neighbors have already entered into a range of disputes — many of which have seen the United States object to Mexican or Canadian

practices. "Most of the focus on USMCA over the next several years is going to be on the disputes," said Edward Alden, an expert at the Council on Foreign Relations.

USMCA replaced the North American Free Trade Agreement, which had been in force since 1994, and which Alden said had envisioned the continent's three economies at one point becoming a single market, like the European Union.

That vision appears to be dead, at least for now. "USMCA is very much

the rules for three separate North American economies to cooperate, where they can, and rules for fighting where they can't cooperate," Alden said.

While the disputes between the countries have made headlines, Jeffrey Schott, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, credited the deal with "removing the cloud of uncertainty" over continental commerce.

"That creates a better atmosphere for trade and investment than we've had in some time," he said.

—AFP

DESPERATE | MOVE

G7 hopes to see through proposal after a year of pandemic-induced stimulus spending

Bargaining over global tax enters key stage

Paris, June 27: Nearly 140 countries will haggle over key details of a global corporate tax plan this week, with some concerned about giving up too much and others eager to ensure tech giants pay their fair share.

The Group of Seven (G-7) wealthy democracies approved a proposal to impose a minimum corporate tax rate of at least 15 per cent earlier this month, hoping to stop a "race to the bottom" as nations compete to offer the lowest rates.

It is one of two pillars of

reforms that would also allow countries to tax a share of profits of the 100 most profitable companies in the world — such as Google, Facebook and Apple — regardless of where they are based.

The deal now goes to the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which is overseeing two days of talks starting on Wednesday (June 30) to find a consensus among 139 countries.

The proposal will then be taken up by the G-20 club

of wealthy and emerging countries at a meeting of finance ministers in Italy on July 9 and 10.

"I don't think we have ever been so close to an agreement," said Mr Pascal Saint-Amans, director of the OECD tax policy centre. "I think that everybody has realised that a deal is better than no deal," Mr Saint-Amans said earlier this month, adding that failing to agree would lead to unilateral taxes and US reprisals.

US President Joe Biden has galvanised the issue

by backing the global minimum corporate tax, and Europeans want a deal, he said. Negotiations have gained new urgency as governments seek new sources of revenue after spending huge sums on stimulus measures to prevent their economies from collapsing during the coronavirus pandemic.

While the G-7 — the United States, Canada, Japan, France, Britain, Italy and Germany — approved the plan, it still faces hurdles as the negotiations expand to other nations.

—AFP



The Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development will on Wednesday discuss a plan backed by G7 leaders for a minimum 15% corporate tax rate. —AFP

quick BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	52,925.04 0.43
Nifty 50	15,860.40 0.44
S&P 500*	4,280.70 0.33
Dollar (₹)	74.20 -0.04
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.17 0.39
Euro (₹)	88.59 0.00
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	46,309₹66 0.14
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	76.07 0.67
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.028 0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.502 0.015

* As of Friday/Saturday

FPIs invest over ₹15,280 cr in stocks in June

After remaining net sellers for two months, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) in June turned net buyers by pumping in a net Rs 12,714 crore into Indian markets. Prior to this, they had pulled out Rs 2,666 crore in May and Rs 9,435 crore in April. According to depositories data, FPIs invested Rs 15,282 crore in equities between June 1 and 25. At the same time, FPIs withdrew Rs 2,568 crore from the debt segment.

Front seat airbags must for cars by Dec. 31



The road transport ministry has deferred by four months the mandatory installation of dual airbags for front seats in the existing car models, in view of the pandemic, an official said. Now only the driver's seat airbag is mandatory for existing models of cars. The ministry on March 6 had said that existing models shall be fitted with an airbag for the person occupying the front seat, other than the driver, by August 31.

KIMS, Dodla Dairy to make mkt debut today

Krishna Institute of Medical Sciences (KIMS) and Dodla Dairy, which recently concluded their initial public offerings, will make debut on the stock exchanges on Monday. KIMS successfully raised Rs 2,144 crore through its IPO, which included a little over Rs 955 crore that was mobilised from anchor investors. Dodla Dairy garnered Rs 520 crore from its public issue, including Rs 156 crore from anchor investors.

Crude steel output grows 47% in May

India registered a 46.9 per cent year-on-year growth in its crude steel output at 9.2 million tonnes (mt) in May, according to worldsteel data. The country had produced 5.8 mt steel in the same month a year ago. "The production of the 64 countries reporting to the World Steel Association (worldsteel) was 174.4mt in May 2021, a 16.5 per cent increase compared to May 2020," the global industry body said.

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■ Broader market rally helps smaller funds win by large margin Mid-cap, small-cap funds shine in H1

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, JUNE 27

The broader market out-performance in the first half of 2021 has helped mid-cap and small-cap mutual funds outshine large-cap funds by a big margin. The returns kept increasing down the ladder, said analysts about the stock performance in January-June period.

The top five small-cap funds, ranked by the size of their assets under management (AUM), have given returns between 30 per cent and 44 per cent in the last six months period. This is way higher than the returns of the top five large-cap funds, which grew by 11.69 per cent to 20.48 per cent. The top five

BEATING THE BIG BOYS	
Mutual funds' performance in the first half of 2021	
Fund return %	(Last six months)
MID-CAP FUNDS	
Axis Midcap Fund	22.82
HDFC Midcap Opportunities Fund	27.51
Kotak Emerging Equity Fund	32.76
Nippon India Growth Fund	27.22
Sundaram Midcap Fund	24.25
SMALL CAP FUNDS	
Nippon India Small Cap Fund	44.52
HDFC Small Cap Fund	42.08
DSP Small Cap Fund	33.70
Franklin India Smaller Companies Fund	32.60
SBI Small Cap Fund	30.55
LARGE CAP FUNDS	
Axis Blue Chip Fund	11.69
ABSL Frontline Equity Fund	17.43
HDFC Top 100 Fund	20.48
ICICI Prudential Blue Chip Fund	17.58
Mirae Asset Large Cap Fund	17.78

mid-cap funds by AUM have given returns ranging between 22.82 per cent and 32.76 per cent.

These top performing funds are managed by the top 10 fund houses by AUM.

Executives, babus vie for Irdai chairman's post

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO NEW DELHI, JUNE 27

A government-appointed high-level search committee is learnt to have identified the best performing CMD of the insurance sector for the Irdai chairman's post.

It is, however, expected that the top post at the insurance regulator may be offered to a retired or working bureaucrat. The post at the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (Irdai) has fallen vacant after Subhash Chandra Khuntia, a former chief secretary of Karnataka, completed his three-year term on May 6 this year. According to a finance

ministry source, technically, no other chairman and managing director (CMD) of any state-run insurance firm, except LIC chairman, is eligible for the post, which is equivalent to the Union secretary post. "As all the heads of state-run insurers are having the rank of additional secretary, the search committee has the power to consider a relaxation in case it finds an eligible candidate therein," the source said.

"Many heavyweights, like retired and working bureaucrats, and a few heads of insurers have applied for the Irdai chairman post. The selection committee will vet them. The final announcement

for the post will come soon," the source added.

It is learnt that Anup Wadhawan, commerce affairs secretary, who will be retiring this month-end, is another name doing the round for the coveted post. Wadhawan had a good stint in the Department of Financial Services earlier as a joint secretary in charge of the insurance sector and was also an acting chairman of the PFRDA, the pension regulatory body.

Among the serving and retired IAS officers who are believed to have applied for the top regulatory job are B.V.R. Subrahmanyam (1987 batch), who recently joined as secretary, Ministry of Comm-

The large-cap indices—Sensex, Nifty-50 and BSE 100—have given returns of 11.76 per cent, 14.85 per cent and 15.20 per cent, respectively, during the last six month period.

But broader market returns are much higher, with the BSE Mid-cap Index's return at 26.27 per cent, Nifty Mid-cap's, at 28.06 per cent and BSE Small-cap's, at 40.85 per cent.

These top performing funds are managed mostly by the mutual fund industry's top 10 fund houses.

For some of the smaller asset managers in the mid-cap and small-cap categories the outperformance is even higher, like in cases of Edelweiss Midcap Fund (33.08 per cent),

Quant Mid-cap Fund (36.16 per cent), Quant Small-cap Fund (66.93 per cent) and BOI-Axa Small-cap Fund (40.02 per cent).

Mid- and small-cap scrips continued to fare better than their larger peers for the second consecutive month even during the second wave of the pandemic, according to a report by Tata Mutual Fund.

"This is evident from the performance of the broader market indicator—CMIE Overall Share Price Index (Cospi), which housed 2,810 actively traded scrips in May 2021. The Cospi rose by 7.8 per cent, outperforming the Nifty 50 and the S&P BSE Sensex by 1.3 per cent each," Tata Mutual Fund said.

erence after having served as a chief secretary of J&K since 2018, Manoj Parida (1986 batch), advisor to the administrator of Chandigarh, V.P. Joy (1987), chief secretary, Kerala, Chhabilendra Roul (1985), former secretary, Department of Fertilisers, and Preeti Sudan, (1983-batch) who retired as the Union health secretary in July 2020.

The name of Injeti Srinivas is also doing the rounds in the government circuit. Srinivas is currently the chairman of the International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA), located in GIFT City, Ahmedabad. Srinivas was also a former secretary of Ministry of Corporate Affairs and was

instrumental in pushing through significant reforms in the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code and the Companies Act.

Irdai members such as K. Ganesh and T.L. Alamelu have also applied for the post. LIC chairman M.R. Kumar, who has got one-year extension of late, has also applied for the post. The other applicants for the post include Rajesh Relan, former head of PNB Met Life, who is currently the CMD of Economy Insurance, and S.S. Gopalaratnam, MD of Chola MS General Insurance.

The government is yet to decide on the date of the interaction to be held for the post.

E-commerce rules could prolong MSME recovery

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JUNE 27

Disruption and uncertainty over the proposed new amendments in e-commerce rules will affect the recovery of micro, small and medium businesses hit by the pandemic, say experts.

"During the pandemic a large number of MSMEs are struggling to restart their business. During lockdowns and other restrictions, e-commerce is the most viable platform for MSMEs to sell their goods and services. By coming out with new rules for e-commerce at this time will disrupt the market and hinder the recovery of MSMEs," says Aruna Sharma, member, digitisation committee, Reserve Bank of India.

According to her, MSMEs that are looking to grow their export businesses are increasingly depending on e-commerce platforms, replacing the traditional exporter and trader meets. "MSMEs account for 45-48 per cent of exports and the aim is to take it to 60 per cent.

For this, MSMEs will have to tap the e-commerce route," she said.

In a similar vein, Anil Bharadwaj, secretary general, Fisme said, "In recent times we have increasingly seen MSMEs using the digital platform to improve their reach. E-commerce has played an important role during the lockdowns by ensuring products are delivered at home safely."

E-commerce companies have been handholding MSMEs and providing sales platforms as well as logistics services. For instance, Amazon Small Business Days from July 2 to July 4 to help generate customer demand for the unique and differentiated selection of products offered by small sellers, manufacturers, start-ups, and brands, women entrepreneurs, artisans and weavers and local shops.

Some of the proposed amendments in the E-commerce Rules are detrimental for the MSMEs. As per the rules, no e-commerce entity shall indulge in mis-selling of goods or

services offered on its platform. Mis-selling means an e-commerce entity selling goods or services by deliberate misrepresentation of information by such an entity about such goods or services as suitable for the user who is purchasing it.

According to experts, goods and services are sold by the seller, and e-commerce companies are just the platforms. E-tailer can do due diligence and take measures based on customer feedback. But for all the products and services, the platform cannot be held liable.

Further, a marketplace e-commerce entity shall be subject to a fall-back liability where a seller fails to deliver the goods or services due to negligent conduct, omission or commission of any act by such seller in fulfilling the duties and liabilities in the manner as prescribed by the marketplace e-commerce entity which causes loss to the consumer. These two rules will result in restraint on the part of the platforms while boarding MSMEs.

Bankruptcy board goofs up, leaks Aadhaar and PAN info of creditors

New Delhi, June 27: The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) "inadvertently" put out on its website Aadhaar and PAN details of creditors, including workmen, of some companies undergoing resolution process, and the issues are expected to be sorted out in the next few days.

A senior official said the details came into the public domain "inadvertently", as the regulator is working on a beta project to host the information of creditors of companies undergoing Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP) and liquidation.

The IBBI, a key institution in implementing the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), is working on the project to ensure and enhance transparency with respect to CIRP and liquidation processes, the official said, adding that the matter will be sorted out in the next few days.

The details that were put out have been removed, the official added.

It could not be immediately ascertained details of how many creditors were put on display.



There was no official comment from the IBBI. Under the IBBI regulations, details about creditors, including workmen, of companies undergoing CIRP or liquidation should be disclosed on the websites of the companies (corporate debtors). The details required include name of the creditor concerned, amount claimed and amount admitted.

In case of a CIRP, these details have to be disclosed by the resolution professional while in liquidation processes, the liquidator would make these disclosures.

Such details have to be put out on the websites of the companies concerned.

With instances where many small companies do not have or are unable to maintain their websites, the IBBI is working on a project to host these details on its website for easy

Crypto exchange WazirX parent Binance in a jam

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JUNE 27

Crypto currency exchange WazirX, which is facing troubles over Fema violations, has more worries in store. Its parent Binance has been asked to stop all regulated activities in Britain.

The UK's financial watchdog, the Financial Conduct Authority, has also imposed stringent requirements on one of the world's biggest crypto currency exchanges. "Binance Markets Limited is not permitted to undertake any regulated activity in the UK... no other entity in the Binance Group holds any form of UK authorisation, registration or licence to conduct regulated activity in the UK," FCA was quoted by a Reuters report.

Binance Markets is not approved under the FCA's crypto currency registration regime. The entity had applied to become a registered crypto currency company with the regulator, but pulled that application last month "following intensive engagement from the FCA".

The FCA reviews controls and practices of such exchanges to prevent money laundering and the financing of terrorism.

Binance is one of the most important operators in the fast-emerging crypto market, offering a wide range of services to customers around the world,



including trading in dozens of digital coins, futures, options, stock tokens, as well as savings accounts and lending. It recorded crypto trading volumes equivalent to \$1.5 trillion last month.

Japan's Financial Services Agency had warned last week that Binance was conducting unauthorised trade in crypto currencies with Japanese citizens. Germany's financial watchdog too has warned investors in April that Binance had probably violated securities rules over its launch of trading in stock tokens.

A troubled parent could not be of much help to WazirX, which had received a show-cause notice from Enforcement Directorate a few days back for foreign exchange management violations.

"ED has issued show cause notice to WazirX crypto-currency exchange for contravention of Fema, 1999 for transactions involving crypto-currencies worth Rs 2,790.74 crore," the ED had said in a tweet.

WazirX allows users to trade in crypto currencies such as Bitcoin, Ethereum and others.

SHEELA FOAM FOCUSING ON EXPORTS, IMPORT SUBSTITUTION



New Delhi, June 27: Sheela Foam Ltd, maker of popular mattress brand Sleepwell, is looking at exports and import substitution as the next big opportunities for itself, leveraging "on China becoming weaker on sentiments" in the global markets, according to the company's managing director Rahul Gautam.

The company, which recently completed 50 years of operations, is also looking to expand into beddings related areas such as bedsheets, comforters, duvets, and beds and bedroom furniture as it embarks on the journey for the next half century.

"Post-corona, I think, there are two things which are coming out as glaring for us. Number one is exports. Till date we could not have thought that we would be able to export voluminous items like mattresses, but with China suddenly becoming weaker on sentiments and other things, that opportunity has come by and we're trying to take full advantage of that," Gautam told PTI.

Earlier, the company wasn't too focussed into exports although it was shipping some quantity to the US from India.

"Foam products are very voluminous and the freight costs are very high. There was no background or system for exporting polyurethane foam, except that China had learned to compress the mattress into a small box and put it on a ship and send it across. And that's the technology that we use now," he said.

At present, Sheela Foam has a presence in Spain and Australia. The company also uses its Spanish operations to export to the US market. —PTI

TIGHT MARKET Domestic travel is roaring back but many workers are still at home

After layoff, Disney offers \$1,000 signing bonus

CHRISTOPHER PALMERI JUNE 27

Walt Disney Co is offering \$1,000 bonuses to recruit new housekeepers and select kitchen staff at its Florida theme parks, just months after laying off some 32,000 employees.

Housekeepers, making \$16 an hour, and line cooks, earning \$18, can receive the money if they stay on the job for at least 90 days, according to the company's website.

Disney, the world's largest theme-park operator, also reinstated its paid summer internship programme, which lets students live in dedicated apartments while they work in the Orlando, Florida, resorts.

It's a sign of how tight the labour market has become, with domestic travel roaring back at a time when many potential work-



ers are still at home. The overall unemployment rate in Orlando was 5.6 per cent in April, a third of what it was a year ago.

At Florida's Walt Disney World - which includes four theme parks and a couple dozen hotels - about 33,000 of the more than 41,000 members of the Service Trades Council Union have returned to work, according to Matt Hollis,

president of that worker coalition. About 15,000 of the 32,000 workers at California's Disneyland resort have returned, the company said.

Disney, which was forced to close its theme parks around the world due to the coronavirus, announced plans in September to lay off 28,000 employees, a number that later grew to 32,000 companywide. Most of them were at its domestic resorts.

Disney said it has rehired more than three-quarters of those affected by furloughs and work reductions. Disneyland, in Anaheim, California, has been bringing back 300 staffers a week, and the company wants to hire thousands more at its US resorts this summer and fall.

Enhanced federal unemployment benefits, enacted in the wake of the pandemic, may be one reason employees aren't

returning to work. They were set to end June 26 in Florida, which opted not to continue them, but will last until September in California.

Another union executive said some California employees are reluctant to return to the parks, which no longer take the temperatures of guests coming in the gates and don't require masks, except in select areas like buses. Guests who self-identify as unvaccinated are encouraged to wear them, however.

Another challenge is finding safe child and elder care in the wake of the pandemic, when unemployed workers have gotten used to staying at home. Many of those being asked to return have the least seniority and less certainty in their work schedules when recalled. Disney said it offers employees support for child and senior care. —Bloomberg

SHORT TAKES

England women get better of India

Bristol: Skipper Mithali Raj's fighting half-century went in vain as England Women rode on Tammy Beaumont and Nat Sciver's aggressive unbeaten fifties to beat a below-par India by eight wickets in the first ODI of the three-match series here on Sunday. Mithali led from the front with a patient 72 to guide India to a modest 201 for eight after being put in to bat. Mithali held India's innings together following two early dismissals. She shared two crucial partnerships — 56 runs with Punam Raut and 65 with Deepti Sharma — to help India go past the 200-run mark. — *PTI*

Brief scores: India 201/8 (Mithali Raj 72, Punam Raut 32; Sophie Ecclestone 3/40; Katherine Brunt 2/35, Anya Shrubsole 2/33) lost to England 202/2 34.5 overs (Tammy Beaumont 87 (not out), Nat Sciver 74 (not out); Jhulan Goswami 1/25, Ekta Bisht 1/55).

Max emerges on top in Styrian GP

Spielberg: Max Verstappen tightened his grip on the Formula One driver standings as he cruised to victory in the Styrian Grand Prix on Sunday with his closest challenger Lewis Hamilton a distant second. The Dutchman started from pole in his Red Bull and led throughout to finish more than 35 seconds head of British reigning champion Hamilton in his Mercedes. Finn Valtteri Bottas was third for Mercedes, chased home by the second Red Bull of Mexican Sergio Perez. "Unbelievable. The car was on fire," Verstappen on team radio at the finish. "Another win at home feels really good. It's looking really good," he said after climbing out of his car. — *AFP*

Yuvraj might play for Melbourne club

Melbourne: A Melbourne-based cricket club has claimed that it is very close to striking a deal with Yuvraj Singh and Chris Gayle for its T20 games this summer. The Mulgrave Cricket Club, who play in Melbourne's Eastern Cricket Association (ECA) third-tier competition, said they are also in talks with West Indies legend Brian Lara and South Africa great AB de Villiers. Mulgrave president Milan Pullenayegam said: "We are in negotiations, and with Chris (Gayle) and Yuvraj we are nearly 85 to 90 per cent there. We need to finalise a few things but it looks really good." — *PTI*

Sajan on a spree of setting records

New Delhi: A day after achieving the elusive 'A' cut for the Olympics, swimmer Sajan Prakash continued his purple patch by setting a new national record in the 200m freestyle event at the Sette Colli Trophy in Rome, Italy on Sunday. Prakash clocked 1:49.73 seconds in the heats at the FINA-accredited Olympic Qualifier, bettering the 2010 Asian Games bronze medalist Virdhawal Khade's previous national mark of 1:49.86 seconds. This is his third national mark this month. On Saturday, he became the first-ever Indian to breach the Olympic Qualifying Time (OQT), clocking a record-breaking 1:56:38 seconds in the men's 200m butterfly event. — *PTI*

Top-10 finishes for Honda riders

Netherlands: An incredible charge through the field from Marc Marquez at the Dutch TT delivered seventh from 20th on the grid as Pol Espargaro clinches another top-ten. Round nine of the MotoGP World Championship was held under clear skies at the TT Circuit Assen, the Repsol Honda Team lining up on the grid as they prepared for an uphill challenge. The morning started well with both Marquez and Pol finishing the morning Warm Up in the top ten. Early fears of rain soon vanished as the grid formed up for the 26-lap Grand Prix later in the day. Marquez was unstoppable off the line as he jumped up the order when the lights went out, ending lap one in 12th after starting down in 20th on the grid.

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ITALY CIOUS WIN

Super subs fire Italy past Austria in extra-time thriller

Italy	2
(Federico Chiesa 95, Matteo Pessina 105)	
Austria	1
(Sasa Kalajdzic 114)	

London, June 27: Substitutes Federico Chiesa and Matteo Pessina struck in extra-time as Italy beat battling Austria 2-1 to reach the quarter-finals of Euro 2020 at Wembley on Saturday.

The two teams were locked at 0-0 after 90 minutes in London, with Italy enjoying the better of the first half and Austria coming back strongly in the second period.

But Chiesa made the crucial breakthrough early in extra-time and another goal from Pessina set up a quarter-final against the winners of Sunday's tie between Belgium and holders Portugal, despite late drama.

"We knew we had to suffer because Austria are the typical side who do not allow (you) to play well," said Italy boss Roberto Mancini.

"The substitutes made the difference for us, but everybody gave their best tonight. I'm happy because the lads gave everything to win even when we were tired."

Having emerged as Group A winners with a 100 percent record after playing all three of their games in Rome, Italy were on the road for the first time in the tournament.

Mancini made seven changes from the side that beat Wales as Marco Verratti started instead of Manuel Locatelli in midfield, while Giorgio Chiellini again missed out with a hamstring injury.

After belting out a rousing rendition of their national anthem with ample backing from the largely Italian crowd, the Azzurri made a lively



Italy's Domenico Berardi goes for an acrobatic kick during the Euro Last 16 match against Austria at Wembley in London on Saturday. — AP

start. Leonardo Spinazzola's buccaneering bursts from left-back were a constant threat and he had Italy's first sight of goal with a blast wide from an acute angle.

Nicolo Barella's low volley from Spinazzola's cross forced Daniel Bachmann to save with his legs. Marko Arnautovic thought he had given Austria a shock lead in the 65th minute when he nodded home from David Alaba's header, but the former West Ham striker was ruled to be marginally offside after a lengthy VAR review.

Substitute Locatelli fluffed his chipped effort and Domenico Berardi sent a bicycle kick well over as Italy's frustration mounted. The sides were locked at 0-0 at the end of normal time but it did not take long for Italy to make their mark in extra-time.

— *AFP*

Rejuvenated Spain on a mission against Croatia

Copenhagen, June 27: The good news for Spain came all at once, their five-goal rout of Slovakia on Wednesday steering them clear of an early exit and restoring hope they could even win Euro 2020.

Luis Enrique said he would have taken any position in Group E as long as Spain got through and yet from desperation came elation, a goal-fest in Seville transforming expectations after a whirlwind 60 minutes.

Whether optimism proves brief or longer-lasting will depend on the outcome on Monday against Croatia, the World Cup finalists who appear

to be growing into this competition themselves.

Croatia also qualified in second place and will certainly offer a sterner examination than Slovakia, who put up surely the worst performance of any team in all 36 matches of the group stage.

SWISS HAVE THEIR TASK CUT OUT

Winning the toughest group at the Euro wasn't really a big surprise for the World Cup champions. Winning only one match in that group was, though.

Regardless, it was still enough for France to finish first in Group F and

set up a match against Switzerland on Monday in the round of 16.

"A new competition is starting," France coach Didier Deschamps said.

With Kylian Mbappe, Antoine Griezmann and Karim Benzema, Deschamps has enough attacking power to deliver back-to-back major titles.

Switzerland have it's own battle with history to deal with. The Swiss are hoping to end a run of three consecutive exits in the round of 16 at major tournaments. Overall, they have not won a match in a knockout stage at any major tournament in 67 years. — *Agencies*

Winning series is priority: Dravid

Mumbai, June 27: India head coach for the tour of Sri Lanka, Rahul Dravid, on Sunday said it is unrealistic to expect that all the youngsters picked for the limited-overs assignment will get a game as they try to make an impression ahead of this year's T20 World Cup.

The series marks the coaching return of Dravid, who is based in Bengaluru as the chief of the National Cricket Academy. The second string squad, led by Shikhar Dhawan, has six uncapped players.

"...I think it's probably going to be unrealistic to expect us in a short tour like this with three games, or three one-dayers to give everyone an opportunity...and the selectors will be there as well," Dravid declared in the pre-departure press conference.

Among the players who are fighting for a place in the T20 squad for this year's World Cup are the capped trio of Ishan Kishan, Suryakumar Yadav and Sanju Samson.



India second-string team captain Shikhar Dhawan and coach Rahul Dravid. — *BCCI*

The Sri Lanka series starts with the ODIs from July 13, followed by T20s from July 21.

The World Cup, originally scheduled in India, is set to be held in the UAE in October because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

to cement their places in the World Cup coming up, but I think the key goal of everyone in the squad and in the team...is to try and win the series," the former India captain said.

"The primary objective is to try and win the series and hopefully people get the opportunity to put in some really good performances. These are the only three games before the World Cup.

"I am sure that you know the selectors and management would have a pretty fair idea by now as to what is the kind of squad that they are looking for."

DHAWAN EYES SUCCESS AS CAPTAIN

It's a new challenge, said Shikhar Dhawan as he geared up to captain an India senior team for the first time in his career, confident that the positivity and excitement in the squad would ensure a successful limited-overs tour of Sri Lanka.

Dhawan said the two-week quarantine has helped the bonding among

the players and hoped that it will reflect in performances on the ground.

"This is a very good team. There is positivity, confidence in our team and everybody is confident that we will do well. There is a lot of excitement," Dhawan said.

"It is a new challenge but at the same time it is a great opportunity for all of us to show our talent. Everybody is waiting (for the tour to begin)," he added.

In the absence of regular skipper Virat Kohli and the first side, currently touring England, Dhawan will have pacer Bhuvneshwar Kumar as his deputy.

Talking about the composition of the side, Dhawan said: "The boys are doing smart work and are looking forward to these matches. The players have already performed well."

"The team is a nice blend of experience and youth," said the left-handed opener.

— *PTI*

Netherlands Czechmated

Budapest, June 27: Tomas Holes and Patrik Schick scored second-half goals Sunday to give the Czech Republic a 2-0 victory over 10-man Netherlands and a place in the European Championship quarter-finals.

The Netherlands central defender Matthijs de Ligt was sent off for a handball in the 55th minute when under pressure from Schick. The red card was given following a video review.

Holes then put the Czechs ahead in the 68th minute with a powerful close-range header. He sprinted into the left of the penalty area and squared the ball to give Schick his fourth goal of the tournament in the 80th.

Only Portugal forward Cristiano Ronaldo has more goals at Euro 2020 with five.

The Czechs will next face Denmark in the quarter-finals on Saturday in Baku, Azerbaijan.

The Czechs reached the last eight of a major tour-

Czech	2
(Tomas Holes 68, Patrik Schick 80)	
Netherlands	0

namment for the first time since Euro 2012, when they lost to Portugal. Ronaldo scored the winner that day. They have not qualified for past three World Cups and finished last in their group at Euro 2016.

On a warm evening at the 67,215-capacity Puskas Arena in Budapest, the Dutch team paid for not creating enough chances.

With Schick practically on his back inside the penalty area, De Ligt slipped and scooped the ball away with his right hand. Referee Sergei Karasev awarded a free kick and, after jogging over to check his TV monitor, sent off De Ligt with a red card.

The incident came only moments after the Dutch could have taken the lead.

— *AP*

ARCHERY | WORLD CUP



Indian archer couple Atanu Das and Deepika Kumari after winning a gold in the mixed team event at the Archery World Cup Stage 3 in Paris on Sunday. — *Twitter*

Golden glow for Deepika & India

Paris, June 27: The seasoned and in-form Deepika Kumari was a constant in India's remarkable haul of three gold medals at the World Cup Stage 3 here on Sunday, an unprecedented sweep for the country at the mega-event ahead of next month's Tokyo Olympics.

Deepika blanked Russia's Elena Osipova 6-0 in the final of the women's individual recurve event to complete a hat-trick of gold medals in one day. She had earlier been a part of the mixed and women's gold-winning Indian teams.

In the mixed final, Deepika and her husband Atanu Das, who are India's best medal hope in archery in the Olympics, bounced back from a 0-2 deficit to down the Netherlands' Sje

van den Berg and Gabriela Schloesser 5-3.

This was after the women's recurve team of Deepika, Ankita Bhakat and Komalika Bari notched up the gold medal with a comfortable win over Mexico, shrugging off the disappointment of missing Olympic qualification last week.

"It feels amazing. First time we won the final together; it feels so happy," Atanu said after their win.

The two got married after a two-year courtship and would be celebrating their first wedding anniversary on June 30.

"It feels we are made for each other. But in the ground we are not couple but like just other competitors, we motivate, support and back each other," Atanu said. — *PTI*

Olympic briefs

Serena not to play in Tokyo

Serena Williams said on Sunday that she will not compete at the Tokyo Olympics next month, joining fellow Grand Slam legend Rafael Nadal in withdrawing from the Games. The 39-year-old American revealed her decision at her pre-Wimbledon press conference. "I'm actually not on the Olympic list, so...Not that I'm aware of. If so, then I shouldn't be on it," she said. She refused to divulge the reasons for her decision. "There's a lot of reasons that I made my Olympic decision," she said.

PM Modi applauds athletes

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday applauded India's Olympic-bound athletes, saying that they have all endured "years of toil" and the country should back them without putting them under pressure during the Tokyo Games next month. "Every player going to Tokyo has had one's own share of struggle, and years of toil. They are going not only for themselves but for the country," Modi said in 'Mann ki Baat'. "These players also have to enhance the glory of India and win the hearts of the people and that is why my countrymen I want to advise you too, that we should not pressurise these players."

Sindhu told to work on tactics

Absence of defending champion Carolina Marin will be an advantage but there are at least six more title contenders at the Tokyo Games and PV Sindhu must examine her past performances to devise a proper strategy, says former India chief coach Vimal Kumar. Vimal said there is still a lot of time and Sindhu needs to work on her strategies against potential opponents. "A lot can be done like they can discuss about her potential rivals, can look and analyse the matches: what situation they lost a match, the errors that they committed. It helps devise tactics and also gives confidence to the players. They still have time as Olympics is still a month away," he advised.

Djoker aims to add one more feather in his cap

London, June 27: Novak Djokovic targets a record-equaling 20th major and sixth Wimbledon title from Monday which will edge him tantalisingly closer to becoming only the third man in history to complete a calendar Grand Slam.

The world number one has already won a ninth Australian Open and second French Open this season.

That has put him halfway to emulating Don Budge (1937) and Rod Laver (1962 and 1969) in sweeping all four majors in the same year.

It is a feat even his closest rivals Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal have

never managed.

"Everything is possible," said 34-year-old Djokovic after winning the French Open earlier this month when asked if the Golden Slam of all four majors and Olympic gold was a realistic target.

Djokovic memorably captured a fifth Wimbledon in 2019, saving two championship points to defeat Federer in the longest ever final at the All England Club at four hours and 57 minutes.

He was deprived of defending his title in 2020 when Wimbledon was cancelled due to the pandemic. Djokovic has won seven

of the last 11 Slams as he ramps up his assault on the record of 20 majors held jointly by Federer and Nadal.

The Serb starts his defence on Monday against British world number 250 Jack Draper who was born just six miles (9.5km) from the All England Club.

Federer, who underwent two knee surgeries in 2020, won the last of his eight Wimbledon in 2017 and the most recent of his 20 majors in Australia in 2018.

The Swiss star has lost three finals to Djokovic at the All England Club — 2014, 2015 and the epic 2019 clash.

— *AFP*



Serbian tennis star Novak Djokovic during a photoshoot ahead of the Wimbledon Championships. — *Twitter*