THE ASIAN AGE

NEW DELHI WEDNESDAY 9 JUNE 2021

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Social media is flooded with creative ways to adopt a sustainable lifestyle: Shweta

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WINDOWS

Wales forward Gareth Bale takes part in a training session at Tofiq Behramov Stadium in Baku on Tuesday, four days ahead of the team's Euro 2020 opening match. — *AFP*

5-yr-old girl dies of thirst, grandmother unconscious in Raj

Jodhpur: A five-year-old girl died of thirst while her grandmother fell unconscious in Raniwara in Jalore district of Rajasthan, the police said on Tuesday. The incident took place on Sunday afternoon when Sukhi (60) and her granddaughter Manju (5) were travelling by foot to see a family member in Roda village, station house officer Padma Ram said. While on the way, they felt thirsty but could not find water around as the place was uninhabited, he said. — *PTI*

Full report on Page 4

Social media, news sites hit by outage

London: Numerous websites were unavailable on Tuesday after an apparent widespread outage at the cloud service company Fastly. Dozens of high-traffic websites, including the *New York Times*, CNN, Twitch and the UK government's home page, could not be reached. — *AP*

Full report on Page 6

16 dead, 6 injured in Kanpur road mishap

Kanpur: At least 16 people were killed and six injured in a road accident in the Sachendi area of this Uttar Pradesh district late on Tuesday evening, the police said. Two among the injured are said to be critical, the police added. — *PTI*

COUNTERPOINT

Take action not only against the cartoonist but also those who laughed at his cartoons!

WEATHER

Max: 42°C
Min: 31°C
RH: 31%
Rain: Nil

Forecast: Sunny

ASTROGUIDE

Plava: Uttarayana
Tithi: Vaishakha Bahula Chaturdasi till 1.57pm
Star: Krittika till 8.43 am
Varjyam: 2.42 am to 4.30 am
Durmuhurtam: 11.49 am to 12.41 pm
Rahukalam: Noon to 1.30 pm
SUNSET TODAY 7.18 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.22 AM
MOONRISE TOMORROW 4.26 AM
MOONSET TODAY 6.27 PM

■ Govt sets price ceiling per dose for private hospitals: Covishield ₹780; Covaxin ₹1,410 and Sputnik ₹1,145

Centre orders 74cr doses to give Covid jabs to all by Dec

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 8

A day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that the Centre, in a modification of its vaccination policy, would, acting through the states, administer free doses of vaccines for the 18-plus population, the Union health ministry said on Tuesday that fresh orders for vaccines have been placed. "In an immediate follow-up of the PM's announcement of the changes in the guidelines for the national Covid vaccination programme, the health ministry has placed an order with the Serum Institute of India for 25 crore doses of Covishield and with Bharat Biotech for 19 crore doses of Covaxin. These 44 crore doses of Covid-19 vaccines will be available till December 2021, starting now. Additionally, 30 per cent of the advance for procurement of both the Covid vaccines has been released to the Serum Institute of India and Bharat Biotech. Apart from these two vaccines, an order for 30 crore vaccines have been placed with Biological E's Corbevax. Combining all the three vaccines, we will have 74 crore doses," said Dr V.K. Paul, the Niti Aayog's member (health).

The Centre on Tuesday also set the maximum price that private hospitals can charge for the three Covid-19 vaccines currently available in the country — Covishield ₹780 per dose, Covaxin ₹1,410 per dose and Sputnik V ₹1,145 per dose. In a letter to all states and Union territories, the health ministry suggested that appropriate strict action be taken against

■ Turn to Page 4

A worker cleans a corridor at Parliament House in New Delhi on Tuesday. — *PTI*

Naveen to give ₹26cr aid to 87K street vendors

AGE CORRESPONDENT
BHUBANESWAR, JUNE 8

Giving relief to thousands of street vendors in 164 urban areas of the state, Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik on Tuesday sanctioned assistance of ₹26.29 crores for them. The livelihoods of street vendors are seriously hit due to Covid-19. The aid will come from the CM's Relief Fund. It will benefit as many as 87,657 street vendors in the state. Each will get assistance of ₹3,000.

The CM's decision was welcomed by Odisha Uthadokani Mahasangha, a street vendors' outfit, which urged the CM to extend aid to all those left out. Odisha has two lakh street vendors.

■ More on Page 4

Chinese jets flex muscle near east Ladakh border

India watching closely: IAF deploys Rafales, missiles

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 8

Around 24 Chinese fighter jets, including J-11s and J-16s, recently held exercises near eastern Ladakh amid the heavy deployment of forces on the ground at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) by both countries. The exercises come when both sides have been engaged in a military standoff for over a year now at the LAC in Ladakh.

Reports said that several Chinese airbases, including Hotan, Gar Gunsa and Kashgar, were used for these exercises. The use of these bases is significant as they were used to support the People's Liberation Army's incursions into Ladakh last year. All these bases have been upgraded to carry out operations by all types of Chinese fighter aircraft.

Besides these, four other bases — Shigatse, Lhasa Gongkar, Nyingchi and Chamdo Pangta — were also used. All seven bases are located in Tibet and Xinjiang. While none of the Chinese warplanes crossed over into Indian airspace, the Indian Air Force remained on high alert and closely watched the Chinese exercises. The Indian security agencies also kept a close watch, with the help of satellites and other forms of surveillance.

China has already deployed its air defence system, including HQ-9 and HQ-16, in the sector, which can target aircraft at long range.

India has also deployed air defence missiles, including the Akash missile system, which can take down fast-moving combat aircraft and drones in a few seconds.

The IAF's Rafale fighters also conduct sorties over Ladakh in a boost to Indian capabilities all along the LAC. The IAF now has 24 Rafales, which are armed with the most advanced beyond visual range Meteor air-to-air missiles with a range of upto 150 km and can hit intruding aircraft.

The Indian Air Force has a geographical advantage over the PLA Air Force in Ladakh as the Chinese jets have to fly and take off from very high altitudes, while the Indian warplanes can take off from the plains and reach the mountainous region swiftly. Since the air is thin at those heights, the Chinese jets are forced to carry a lighter load, which affects their operational capabilities.

The IAF has also deployed Sukhoi-30MKI, Mirage 2000 and Jaguar fighter aircraft in advanced positions.

REPORTS SAID that several Chinese airbases were used for these exercises

THE IAF has an advantage over the PLA Air Force in Ladakh as the Chinese jets have to fly and take off from very high altitudes, while the Indian warplanes can take off from the plains and reach the mountainous region swiftly

Jaishankar all set to begin 3-day visit to Kuwait today

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 8

External affairs minister S. Jaishankar will begin a three-day visit to oil-rich Kuwait from Wednesday. Mr Jaishankar will deliver a personal letter from Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Kuwait's new ruler Emir Sheikh Nawaf al-Ahmad al-Sabah during his visit and is also expected to thank the Gulf nation for its help to India in fighting the second Covid wave. Kuwait has been at the "forefront to ensure sustained and reliable supply of Liquid Medical Oxygen to India, including by establishing an air/sea bridge".

In a statement, the MEA said, "The year 2021-22 marks the 60th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Kuwait. Traditionally warm and close bilateral relationship between India and Kuwait is characterised by strong people-to-people connect... There are around one million Indians residing in Kuwait..."

Fix snag on new I-T e-filing portal, FM tells Nilekani

New Delhi, June 8: Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday asked Infosys and its chairman Nandan Nilekani to fix technical glitches being encountered on the income tax department's new e-filing website, after users flooded her Twitter timeline with complaints.

Infosys was in 2019 awarded a contract to develop the next-generation income-tax filing system to reduce processing time for returns from 63 days to one day and expedite refunds.

"I see in my TL grievances and glitches. Hope @Infosys & @NandanNilekani will not let down our taxpayers in the quality of service being provided," she tweeted. — *PTI*

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CJI impressed by girl's letter, sends her signed copy of Constitution

PARMOD KUMAR
NEW DELHI, JUNE 9

Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana has lauded a 10-year schoolgirl from Kerala for her "beautiful letter" to him that has "a heart-warming illustration of the judge at work."

Lidwina Joseph, a class V student, wrote to the Chief Justice about how "happy and proud" she felt to see the Supreme Court make vital interventions to alleviate the sufferings of her fellow citizens in the grip of the pandemic.

"I am happy and feel proud your honourable court has moved orders for supply of oxygen and saved many lives. I understood your honourable court has initiated effective steps in bringing down Covid-19 and the death rate in our country, especially in Delhi. I thank Your Honour for this. Now I feel very proud and happy," Ms Joseph, a resident of Thrissur in Kerala, wrote in her letter that the Supreme Court received towards May-end.

Ms Joseph was "much worried" about the deaths caused by the virus, says the hand-written letter, in the form of a scroll, accompanied by a colourful illustration showing a bespectacled judge using his gavel to give the Coronavirus a knock on its head. A portrait of Mahatma Gandhi

■ Turn to Page 4

LIDWINA JOSEPH, a class V student, wrote to the CJI about how 'happy and proud' she felt to see the SC make vital interventions to alleviate the sufferings of her fellow citizens in the grip of Covid-19

Uddhav meets Modi, requests removal of 50% limit on quota

BHAGWAN PARAB
MUMBAI, JUNE 7

Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray met Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi on Tuesday to press for giving reservation to the Maratha community, allotment of land for Metro car shed, availing the GST compensation from the Centre and appointment of 12 members of legislative council, which is pending with governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari. He was accompanied by deputy chief minister and senior NCP leader Ajit Pawar and senior Congress leader Ashok Chavan. The Prime Minister, Mr Thackeray said, assured him that he would look into the issues.

The PMO tweeted, "Chief Minister of Maharashtra Shri Uddhav Thackeray, Deputy Chief Minister Shri @AjitPawarSpeaks and Cabinet Minister Shri @AshokChavanINC called on PM @narendramodi. @OfficeofUT @CMOMaharashtra."

During the meeting, Mr Thackeray apprised the PM about the important points in the Supreme Court verdict over the Maratha reservation issue. "I raised the issue of Maratha reservation. Despite states being given more rights, the reservation issue will not be solved if the 50 percent cap on reservation is not lifted," he said.

Mr Thackeray said that he has demanded that the 50 per cent limit for providing reservation should be lifted to give "justice" to the Maratha community. "As the Centre has the right to take a decision on the reservation issue, it should decide at the earliest to give justice to the Maratha community,"

■ Turn to Page 4

PM Narendra Modi in a meeting with Maharashtra CM Uddhav Thackeray in New Delhi on Tuesday. — *PTI*

HC cancels MP Navneet Rana's caste certificate

SHAHAB ANSARI
MUMBAI, JUNE 8

The Bombay high court on Tuesday imposed a cost of ₹2 lakh and cancelled the caste certificate of Navneet Kaur Rana, an Independent MP from Amravati in Maharashtra, saying it was validated fraudulently. The court has directed her to surrender her certificate within six weeks. Ms Rana said she would approach the Supreme Court against this order.

The judgment said Ms Rana's claim of belonging to "Mochi" caste for obtaining the Scheduled Caste certificate itself was fraudulent. The HC passed this order on the plea filed by Shiv Sena leader Anandrao Adsul.

Bapu's great-granddaughter gets 7-yr jail in SA for fraud

Johannesburg, June 8: Ashish Lata Ramgobin, the 56-year-old great-granddaughter of Mahatma Gandhi in South Africa, has been sentenced to seven years in jail by a Durban court in a six-million rand ($4,42,000) fraud and forgery case.

Ramgobin is the daughter of renowned human rights activist Ela Gandhi and late Mewa Ram-gobind, who have both played instrumental roles in reviving the Phoenix Settlement established by Gandhi during his tenure in South Africa.

A self-employed mother of two, Ramgobin was found to have defrauded businessman S.R. Maharaj after he advanced rand 6.2 million to her after she promised a share of large profits, allegedly to clear import and customs duties for a non-existent consignment from India.

Ramgobin was also refused leave to appeal both the conviction and sentence by the Durban Specialised Commercial Crime Court on Monday.

When the case against Ramgobin started in 2015, Brigadier Hangwani Mulaudzi of the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) said she allegedly provided forged invoices and documents to convince potential investors that three containers of linen were being shipped in from India.

At that time, Ramgobin was released on bail of rand 50,000 ($3,683).

On Monday, the court heard that in August 2015, Ramgobin met Mr Maharaj, director of New Africa Alliance Footwear Distributors, which imports, manufactures and sells clothing, linen and footwear.

Mr Maharaj's company also provides financing to other companies on a profit-share basis.

Ramgobin had told Mr Maharaj that she had imported three containers of linen for the major South African hospital group NetCare. — *PTI*

ASHISH LATA Ramgobin, 56, is the daughter of renowned human rights activist Ela Gandhi and late Mewa Ramgobind

RAMGOBIN WAS found to have defrauded businessman S.R. Maharaj after he advanced $4,42,000 to her after she promised a share of large profits, allegedly to clear import and customs duties for a non-existent consignment from India

Unitedly urge Centre on loan moratorium: Stalin to CMs

AGE CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 8

Tamil Nadu chief minister M.K. Stalin mobilised his counterparts in 12 states that are not under the BJP's rule on demanding a moratorium on loan repayment for MSMEs and small businesses.

In a letter to the CMs of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Jharkhand, Kerala, Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Telangana and West Bengal on Tuesday, Mr Stalin wrote that they all must come together to "show our collective strength at this hour of great need".

He said that it is the collective efforts of the states that made the Union government and the Prime Minister reverse the earlier policy on vaccine procurement.

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Prez Macron slapped in face during his visit to small town

Tain-l'Hermitage (France), June 8: A bystander slapped French President Emmanuel Macron across the face during a trip to southeast France on Tuesday on the second stop of a nationwide tour.

Images on social media and broadcast on the BFM news channel showed Mr Macron approach a barrier to greet a man who, instead of shaking hands, slapped the 43-year-old across the face.

Mr Macron's bodyguards quickly intervened and two people were arrested afterwards, local officials said.

"The man who tried to slap the President and another individual are currently being questioned by the gendarmerie," the regional prefecture said in a statement.

The man could be heard shouting out "Down with Macronia (A Bas La Macronie)" and then he delivered a slap to Mr Macron's face. — *AFP*

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SHORT TAKES

Amity scientist bags 1st prize in DRDO contest

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 8

Dr Shivani Verma of Amity Institute of Space Science and Technology (AISST) has bagged the first prize in "Dare to Dream 2.0" innovation contest organised by the DRDO. She bagged the award for developing "Artificial Intelligence based detection of a person" based on physiological parameters with an innovative way of data and information fusion. The concept was submitted under Life Science Technology domain which bagged the first prize of ₹5 lakh in the Individual category, in which 60 contenders had participated. According to Dr Verma: "Now Technology Development Fund (TDF) Scheme executed by DRDO has asked details of the project proposal for consideration for further development support of the idea into technology grant-in-aid, as per TDF scheme within four weeks. "Once approved, the DRDO will provide 90 per cent grant-in-aid on accelerated technology development or project value of up to ₹10 crore in 24 month period."

Two civil defence marshals held for robbery

New Delhi: Two Delhi civil defence marshals were arrested for allegedly robbing a person of his mobile phone in Narela area, police said on Tuesday. The accused have been identified as Gaurav (20) and Ayush (20), both residents of Narela, they said. On Monday around 9.30 pm, complainant Vikas Kumar, a resident of Sonipat in Haryana, along with his cousin was going home after finishing work. When they reached at MSP Mall, DSIDC, Narela, two men on a bike came there. They stopped near him, slapped him and robbed him of his cellphone, a senior police officer said. During patrolling, a police team heard loud noise from a spot and pursued it. As soon as police reached the spot, one of the marshals tried to run away, but was nabbed, the officer said. The person, who was on motorcycle, was also held, police said. — *PTI*

56-year-old man kills wife before hanging self

New Delhi: A 56-year-old man allegedly killed his wife before hanging himself in northeast Delhi's Karawal Nagar area on Tuesday, police said. A PCR call was received at Karawal Nagar police station around 7 am on Tuesday wherein the caller informed that his father killed his mother and later hanged himself, they said. Police reached the spot and found that a woman was lying in a pool of blood in a room on the ground floor of the building, while a man was hanging from the ceiling, a senior police officer said, adding the incident was reported from Tunda Nagar, near Champi Chowk in Johripur. The woman had cut marks on her throat, police said. She was identified as Santosh (50) and her husband as Rajbir Singh, they added. — *PTI*

BJP announces names for mayor elections

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA
NEW DELHI, JUNE 8

Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta announced the names of candidates for the mayor post on the last day of filing of nominations for the June 16 elections. BJP candidates Raja Iqbal Singh, Mukesh Suryan and Shyam Sunder Aggarwal are expected to be elected unopposed for the North, South, and East Delhi corporations respectively as the party enjoys a majority in all three corporations. SAD's GTB Nagar councillor Raja Iqbal Singh is set to be the mayor of North Delhi even though his party has severed its alliance with the BJP over the farm laws. The BJP is in power in all three civic bodies — North, East and South. The BJP and SAD had fought the 2017 elections as allies — while the BJP won 179 seats, the SAD bagged five.

'Delhiites in 18-44 age group travelling to Agra for vaccines'

New Delhi, June 8: People in the 18-44 age group from the Delhi-NCR region are travelling as far as to Agra to get vaccinated against Covid-19.

Moolchand Medcity, Agra, started vaccinating people in the 18-44 age group four days ago. Of the 450 people inoculated so far, 40 per cent of the beneficiaries came from places like Delhi, Gurgaon, Noida, Meerut, Etawah and Mathura.

The shortest distance between Agra and Delhi is 224 kilometres. Meerut is 232 kms away from Agra.

After a ferocious second wave of Covid-19, people have realised the importance of getting vaccinated. They are even travelling 250 kilometers to get the jabs, said Vibhu Talwar, medical director, Moolchand Medcity, Agra.

People have been coming from Mainpuri, Aligarh, Etawah, Mathura, Delhi, Meerut, Gurgaon, Noida, among other places, to get vaccinated. It is a good sign that people are travelling 250 kilometres to get inoculated against Covid-19 that they are taking it seriously, he said.

Talwar said around 40 to 50 per cent of those who have been vaccinated at the hospital so far are from outside Agra.

AFTER A ferocious second wave of Covid-19, people have realised the importance of getting vaccinated. They are even travelling 250 kilometers to get the jabs, said Vibhu Talwar, medical director, Moolchand Medcity, Agra. It is a good sign that they are taking it seriously, he said.

Preeti Dungriyal, 35, and her husband travelled from Noida to Agra on Monday to get their second doses of Covaxin. "We took our first dose of Covaxin on May 8 and were trying to book a slot for the second dose for the last three-four days, but did not find success," she said.

"Later, we found that slots were available in Agra, so we drove there. It was pretty convenient... What is more important is that we could get the jab in time," Dungriyal said.

Pulkit Gupta, 32, from Rajouri Garden in west Delhi also travelled to Agra along with his wife to get the second dose of the vaccine. "Slots in Delhi are getting filled fast. We could not get any slot. So, I started searching for available slots in nearby cities. Agra is just a few hours away... I felt that it was important to get fully vaccinated," he said while returning to Delhi. — *PTI*

■ Delhi govt ready to make whatever changes Centre wants in the scheme: CM

Doorstep ration delivery a matter of national interest not politics: Kejriwal

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 8

The Delhi government is ready to make whatever changes the Centre wants in the doorstep delivery of ration scheme, chief minister Arvind Kejriwal said in a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday.

He requested permission for implementing the scheme that he claimed was stonewalled by the Centre days before its launch.

"People have been made to queue up for ration by the governments in the last 75 years. Sir, let them not remain in ration queues for the next 75 years. They will never forgive me or you," Mr Kejriwal wrote.

Last week, the AAP government claimed that lieutenant-governor Anil Baijal "rejected" its doorstep delivery of ration scheme citing lack of the Centre's approval and a pending case in the high court.

Mr Kejriwal said that although the Delhi government was not legally bound, yet it sought the Centre's approval five times to avoid any dispute.

"The food minister of Delhi, Imran Hussain, through letters on February 4, 2019, March 4, 2020, June 17, 2020, November 19, 2020, and December 3, 2020, informed the Central government that the Delhi government is going to implement the Mukhya Mantri Ghar Ghar Ration Yojna. No objection was raised on this from your side even once," he said.

The Delhi government even changed the name of the scheme by dropping 'Mukhya Mantri' and addressed other objections and yet it was said that the Centre's approval was not sought and the scheme was rejected, Mr Kejriwal said.

"We are ready to make whatever changes the Central government wants in this scheme. Kindly permission be given to us to deliver ration to the doorstep of people," he wrote.

The Union Food and Public Distribution Ministry, on Saturday, said that it has not asked the Delhi government to distribute the ration the way they want.

"They can do so under any other scheme. The government of India will provide additional ration for the same. As per notified rates. Where is the issue?" the ministry had said.

"The Delhi government wants to 'tinker' with the nationally administered programme at the cost of Delhi consumers by charging the cost of milling etc. from them.

People have been made to queue up for ration by the governments in the last 75 years. Sir, let them not remain in ration queues for the next 75 years. They will never forgive me or you (PM Modi)

— Arvind Kejriwal, *Delhi CM*

The government of India had only informed them about the rule position," it had claimed further.

"It has been said that Delhi can start its own scheme separately without tinkering with the Centre's scheme," Mr Kejriwal said in the letter.

"Sir, when were we separate? Will now there be two schemes in a state on the same issue — one by Centre and the other by state? Does this mean the Central government and Delhi government each will spend ₹2,000 crore on ration distribution? Sir, will it be a prudent thing to do?" Mr Kejriwal asked Mr Modi.

He asserted that the ration belonged to the people and not to the chief minister and Prime Minister or BJP and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP).

"People are asking if pizza, burgers, and smart phones can be home delivered. Why cannot ration be delivered at the doorsteps of the poor?" he asked.

Claiming that the doorstep delivery of the ration scheme would end ration mafia, Mr Kejriwal said it was very powerful and well-connected and got the scheme rejected days before its launch.

"There should be no politics over any work of national interest," he said, requesting the Prime Minister to give the green signal.

AAP launches 'Jahaan Vote, Wahin Vaccine'

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 8

To encourage citizens aged above 45 years to get vaccinated, a Delhi Cabinet minister and senior AAP MLAs on Tuesday launched the "Jahaan Vote, Wahin Vaccine" campaign on Tuesday.

The campaign was launched to spread awareness and encourage citizens aged above 45 to get vaccinated at local polling booths in their assembly constituencies.

Delhi food and civil supplies minister Imran Hussain launched the AAP government's initiative to spread awareness about Covid vaccination in Ballimaran assembly constituency. Hussain said he went from door-to-door, encouraging people to get vaccinated.

The minister appealed to representatives of RWAs, youth groups, women's groups, market associations, NGOs and religious organisation to do their bit in encouraging citizens aged 45-plus to get vaccinated at local polling booths in the assembly constituency. Hussain said booth-level officers had also begun visiting the people in their wards.

Sushil seeks special food, supplements in jail

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 8

A Delhi court will pronounce order on Wednesday on Olympic medallist wrestler Sushil Kumar's application seeking special food and supplements in the prison where he is lodged in connection with the alleged murder of a young wrestler.

Chief metropolitan magistrate Satvir Singh Lamba reserved the order after hearing the contentions of prosecution and defence at length. Kumar, who is facing charges of murder, culpable homicide, and kidnapping, is currently lodged in Delhi's Mandoli Jail.

Sushil Kumar

Kumar's counsels, advocate Pradeep Rana, Kumar Vaibhaw, and Satwik Misra, stated that their client takes supplements like isolate whey protein, Omega-3 capsules, jointment capsules, pre-workout C4 and hyde, multivitamin GNC, exercises bands, etc. The application added that denial of these basic requirements will have a huge implication on his career as the special nutrition diet and supplements are extremely necessary for him to maintain health and performance.

The applicant's career in wrestling directly depends upon his physical strength and physique without which it cannot sustain and to maintain the same the supplements are required, the plea stated. However, the jail authorities, in their reply to the court, have stated that Kumar's medical condition does not require food supplements or an extra protein diet as an additional diet.

During the course of proceedings on Tuesday, Kumar's counsel advocate Pradeep Rana told the court that Kumar was entitled to the supplement diet as he is an unconvicted criminal prisoner.

SPECIAL TRAINS

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

01057/01058 CHHATRAPATI SHIVAJI MAHARAJ (T) - AMRITSAR JN. - CHHATRAPATI SHIVAJI MAHARAJ (T) SPECIAL TRAIN (Daily)

Train No.: 01057 ARR.	Train No.: 01057 DEP.	↓ STATIONS ↑	Train No.: 01058 ARR.	Train No.: 01058 DEP.
----	23:30	CHHATRAPATI SHIVAJI MAHARAJ T.	00:05	----
16:15	----	AMRITSAR JUNCTION	----	08:45

DAYS OF RUN: 01057 from **Chhartrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus** on Daily from 16.06.2021 to till further advice & **01058** from **Amritsar Jn.** on Daily from 19.06.2021 to till further advice.
STOPPAGE: Dadar, Thane, Kalyan Jn, Kasara, Igatpuri, Nasik Road, Manmad Jn, Chalisgaon Jn, Pachora Jn, Jalgaon Jn, Bhusaval Jn, Savda, Raver, Burhanpur, Nepanagar, Khandwa, Talvadya, Chhanera, Khirkiya, Harda, Timarni, Banapura, Itarsi Jn, Hoshangabad, Budni, Mandi Dip, Habibganj, Bhopal Jn, Vidisha, Gulabganj, Ganj Basoda, Mandi Bamora, Bina Jn, Lalitpur, Talbahat, Babina, Jhansi Jn, Datia, Dabra, Gwalior Jn, Morena, Dhaulpur, Agra Cantt, Mathura Jn, Kosi Kalan, Palwal, Ballabgarh, Faridabad, Hazrat Nizamuddin, New Delhi, Subzi Mandi, Adarsh Nagar Delhi, Narela, Rathdhana, Sonipat, Ganaur, Samalkha, Panipat Jn, Gharaunda, Karnal, Taraori, Nilokheri, Kurukshetra Jn, Shahabad Markanda, Ambala Cant Jn, Ambala City, Rajpura Jn, Patiala, Nabha, Dhuri Jn, Malerkotla, Ahmed Garh, Ludhiana Jn, Phillaur Jn, Phagwara Jn, Jalandhar Cant, Jalandhar City, Kartar Pur, Beas & Jandiala Stations.
ACCOMMODATION: AC 2 Tier, AC 3 Tier, Sleeper & Second Seating (Reserved)

02047/02048 CHHATRAPATI SHAHU MAHARAJ T. KOLHAPUR - HAZRAT NIZAMUDDIN - CHHATRAPATI SHAHU MAHARAJ T. KOLHAPUR SPECIAL TRAIN (Weekly)

Train No.: 02047 ARR.	Train No.: 02047 DEP.	↓ STATIONS ↑	Train No.: 02048 ARR.	Train No.: 02048 DEP.
----	09:10	CHHATRAPATI SHAHU MAHARAJ T KOLHAPUR	13:30	----
17:50	----	HAZRAT NIZAMUDDIN	----	05:10

DAYS OF RUN: 02047 from **Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj (T) Kolhapur** on every Tuesday from 06.07.21 to till further advice & **02048** from **Hazrat Nizamuddin** on every Thursday from 08.07.21 till further advice.
STOPPAGE: Miraj Jn, Sangli, Karad, Satara, Pune Jn, Daund Chord Line, Ahmadnagar, Belapur, Kopargaon, Manmad Jn, Bhusaval Jn, Khandwa, Itarsi Jn, Bhopal Jn, Bina Jn, Jhansi Jn, Gwalior Jn, Agra Cantt & Mathura Jn Stations.
ACCOMMODATION: AC 2 Tier, AC 3 Tier, Sleeper & Second Seating (Reserved)

05279/05280 SAHARSA JN. - ANAND VIHAR (T) - SAHARSA JN. SPECIAL TRAIN (bi-weekly)

Train No.: 05279 ARR.	Train No.: 05279 DEP.	↓ STATIONS ↑	Train No.: 05280 ARR.	Train No.: 05280 DEP.
----	11:37	SAHARSA JUNCTION	18:50	----
11:45	----	ANAND VIHAR (T)	----	17:10

DAYS OF RUN: 05279 from **Saharsa Junction** on every Sunday & Thursday from 13.06.21 to till further advice & **05280** from **Anand Vihar (T)** on every Monday & Friday from 14.06.21 to till further advice.
STOPPAGE: S. Bhakhtiyarpur, Mansi Jn., Khagaria Jn. Begu Sarai, Barauni Jn., Shahpur Patoree, Hajipur Jn., Sonpur, Chhapra, Siwan Jn., Bhatni Jn., Deoria Sadar, Gorakhpur Jn., Basti, Gonda Jn., Lucknow, Shahjehanpur, Bareilly, Moradabad & Ghaziabad Stations.
ACCOMMODATION: 1st AC, AC 2 Tier, AC 3 Tier, Sleeper & Second Seating (Reserved)

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

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

04141/04142 PRAYAGRAJ - UDHAMPUR - PRAYAGRAJ SUPERFAST SUMMER SPECIAL TRAIN (Weekly)

Train No.: 04141 ARR.	Train No.: 04141 DEP.	↓ STATIONS ↑	Train No.: 04142 ARR.	Train No.: 04142 DEP.
----	15:50	PRAYAGRAJ	13:20	----
12:45	----	UDHAMPUR	----	15:40

DAYS OF RUN: 04141 from **Prayagraj** on 14.06.2021 & 21.06.2021 (Monday) & **04142** from **Udhampur** on 15.06.2021 & 22.06.2021 (Tuesday).
STOPPAGE: Fatehpur, Kanpur Central, Tundla Jn., Khurja Jn., Bulandshahar, Hapur Jn., Meerut City, Muzaffarnagar, Saharanpur Jn., Ambala Cantt Jn., Ludhiana Jn., Jalandhar Cantt Jn., Pathankot Cantt & Jammu Tawi Stations.
ACCOMMODATION: AC 3 Tier, Sleeper & Second Seating (Reserved)

05162/05161 MANDUADIH - MUZAFFARPUR JN - MANDUADIH SPECIAL TRAIN (bi-weekly)

Train No.: 05162 ARR.	Train No.: 05162 DEP.	↓ STATIONS ↑	Train No.: 05161 ARR.	Train No.: 05161 DEP.
----	07:25	MANDUADIH	06:00	----
18:09	----	MUZAFFARPUR JUNCTION	----	19:35

DAYS OF RUN: 05162/05161 from **Manduadih and Muzaffarpur Jn.** on every Monday & Wednesday from 14.06.2021 to till further advice.
STOPPAGE: Varanasi, Mau Jn, Deoria Sadar, Gorakhpur Jn, Bagaha, Harinagar, Narkatiaganj Jn, Chanpatia, Bettiah, Sagauli Jn, Bapudham Motihari & Chakia Stations.
ACCOMMODATION: AC 3 Tier, Sleeper & Second Seating (Reserved)

05127/05128 MANDUADIH - NEW DELHI - MANDUADIH KASHI VISHWANATH EXP. SPECIAL TRAIN (Daily)

Train No.: 05127 ARR.	Train No.: 05127 DEP.	↓ STATIONS ↑	Train No.: 05128 ARR.	Train No.: 05128 DEP.
----	13:30	MANDUADIH	04:50	----
05:40	----	NEW DELHI	----	11:35

DAYS OF RUN: 05127 from **Manduadih** on Daily from 14.06.2021 to till further advice & **05128** from **New Delhi** on Daily from 15.06.2021 to till further advice.
STOPPAGE: Chaukhandi, Sewapuri, Parsipur, Bhadohi, Suriawan, Janghai Jn, Badshahpur, Dandupur, Partapgarh Jn, Antu,Amethi, Gauriganj, Jais, Rae Bareili Jn, Bachhrawan, Lucknow, Sandila Balamu Jn, Hardoi, Anjhi Shahabad, Shahjehanpur Tilhar, Pitambarpur, Bareilly, Rampur, Moradabad, Amroha Gajraula Jn, Garhmuktesar,Hapur, Pilkhua & Gaziabad Stations.
ACCOMMODATION: 1st AC, AC 2 Tier, AC 3 Tier, Sleeper & Second Seating (Reserved)

04240/04239 VARANASI JN - LOKMANYATILAK TERMINUS- VARANASI JN SUMMER SPECIAL EXP. TRAIN (bi-weekly)

Train No.: 04240 ARR.	Train No.: 04240 DEP.	↓ STATIONS ↑	Train No.: 04239 ARR.	Train No.: 04239 DEP.
----	19:15	VARANASI JN	05:00	----
20:50	----	LOKMANYATILAK TERMINUS	----	23:50

DAYS OF RUN: 04240 from **Varanasi Jn.** on 11.06.2021 & 13.06.2021 & **04239** from **Lokmanyatilak Terminus** on 12.06.2021 & 14.06.2021.
STOPPAGE: Prayagrajcheoki, Satna, Katni, Jabalpur, Itarsi Jn, Bhusaval Jn, Nasik Road & Kalyan Jn Stations.
ACCOMMODATION: AC 3 Tier, Sleeper & Second Seating (Reserved)

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IMPORTANT NOTICE

It is notified for the information of passengers that Railways have decided to restore the following special trains as per the details given below:-

RESTORATION OF TRAINS

Train No. & Name	Frequency	Restoration w.e.f.
02433 Channai Central-H. Nizamuddin Rajdhani Exp. Special	Fri, Sun	18.06.21 to till further advice
02434 H. Nizamuddin-Channai Central Rajdhani Exp. Special	Fri, Wed	16.06.21 to till further advice
02055 New Delhi-Dehradun Jan Shatabdi Express Special	Daily	15.06.21 to till further advice
02056 Dehradun-New Delhi Jan Shatabdi Express Special		14.06.21 to till further advice
02057 New Delhi-Una Himachal Jan Shatabdi Express Spl.	Daily	14.06.21 to till further advice
02058 Una Himachal-New Delhi Jan Shatabdi Express Spl.		15.06.21 to till further advice
02402 Dehradun-Kota Nanda Devi Express Special	Daily	14.06.21 to till further advice
02401 Kota-Dehradun Nanda Devi Express Special		15.06.21 to till further advice
02414 H. Nizammudin-Madgaon Express Special	Fri, Sat	18.06.21 to till further advice
02413 Madgaon-H. Nizammudin Express Special	Mon, Sun	20.06.21 to till further advice
02040 New Delhi-Kathgodam Shatabdi Express Special	Daily	14.06.21 to till further advice
02039 Kathgodam-New Delhi Shatabdi Express Special		
02264 H. Nizammudin-Pune Duronto Express Special	Mon, Thu	14.06.21 to till further advice
02263 Pune-H. Nizammudin Duronto Express Special	Tue, Fri	15.06.21 to till further advice
04609 Rishikesh-Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra Hemkunt Special	Daily	15.06.21 to till further advice
04610 Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra-Rishikesh Hemkunt Special		14.06.21 to till further advice
02455 Delhi Sarai Rohilla-Bikaner Express Special	Daily	14.06.21 to till further advice
02456 Bikaner-Delhi Sarai Rohilla Express Special		15.06.21 to till further advice
04021 Delhi Sarai Rohilla-Jaipur Sainik Express Special	Tue, Thu, Sat	15.06.21 to till further advice
04022 Jaipur-Delhi Sarai Rohilla Sainik Express Special	Wed, Fri, Sun	16.06.21 to till further advice
04554 Daulatpur Chowk-Delhi Jn. Himachal Express Special	Daily	14.06.21 to till further advice
04553 Delhi Jn.-Daulatpur Chowk Himachal Express Special		15.06.21 to till further advice
04525 Ambala-Sriganganagar Intercity Express Special	Daily	14.06.21 to till further advice
04526 Sriganganagar-Ambala Intercity Express Special		
04053 New Delhi-Amritsar Shatabdi Express Special	Thu	17.06.21 to till further advice
04054 Amritsar-New Delhi Shatabdi Express Special		
02445 New Delhi-Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra Uttar Sampark Kranti Spl.	Daily	14.06.21 to till further advice
02446 Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra-New Delhi Uttar Sampark Kranti Spl.		15.06.21 to till further advice
04307 Praygraj Sangam-Bareilly Express Special	Daily	15.06.21 to till further advice
04308 Bareilly-Praygraj Sangam Express Special		14.06.21 to till further advice
04211 Agra Cantt.-New Delhi Intercity Express Special	Daily	15.06.21 to till further advice
04212 New Delhi-Agra Cantt. Intercity Express Special		14.06.21 to till further advice
04215 Praygraj Sangam-Lucknow Ganga Gomti Exp. Special	Daily	15.06.21 to till further advice
04216 Lucknow-Praygraj Sangam Ganga Gomti Exp. Special		14.06.21 to till further advice
04315 Bareilly-New Delhi Intercity Express Special	Daily	14.06.21 to till further advice
04316 New Delhi-Bareilly Intercity Express Special		
04235 Varanasi-Bareilly Express Special	Daily	14.06.21 to till further advice
04236 Bareilly-Varanasi Express Special		15.06.21 to till further advice
02091 Dehradun-Kathgodam Doon Naini Jan Shatabdi Special	Daily	11.06.21 to till further advice
02092 Kathgodam-Dehradun Doon Naini Jan Shatabdi Special		
05070 Aishbagh-Gorakhpur Intercity Express Special	Daily	13.06.21 to till further advice
05069 Gorakhpur-Aishbagh Intercity Express Special		14.06.21 to till further advice
05104 Manduadih-Gorakhpur Intercity Express Special	Daily	15.06.21 to till further advice
05103 Gorakhpur-Manduadih Intercity Express Special		
02531 Gorakhpur-Lucknow Jn. Intercity Express Special	Daily	11.06.21 to till further advice
02532 Lucknow Jn.-Gorakhpur Intercity Express Special		
05009 Gorakhpur-Mailani Express Special	Daily	10.06.21 to till further advice
05010 Mailani-Gorakhpur Express Special		11.06.21 to till further advice
05044 Kathgodam-Lucknow Jn. Express Special	Daily	15.06.21 to till further advice
05043 Lucknow Jn.-Kathgodam Express Special		14.06.21 to till further advice
05036 Kathgodam-Delhi Jn. Uttar Sampark Kranti Exp. Special	Daily	11.06.21 to till further advice
05035 Delhi Jn.-Kathgodam Uttar Sampark Kranti Exp. Special		
05356 Ramnagar-Moradabad Express Special	Daily	11.06.21 to till further advice
05355 Moradabad-Ramnagar Express Special		
05325 Tanakpur-Delhi Jn. Purnagiri Jan Shatabdi Exp. Special	Daily	12.06.21 to till further advice
05326 Delhi Jn.-Tanakpur Purnagiri Jan Shatabdi Exp. Special		
05203 Barauni Jn.-Lucknow Jn. Express Special	Daily	10.06.21 to till further advice
05204 Lucknow Jn.-Barauni Jn. Express Special		13.06.21 to till further advice
05205 Lucknow Jn.-Jabalpur Jn. Chitrakoot Express Special	Daily	11.06.21 to till further advice
05206 Jabalpur Jn.-Lucknow Jn. Chitrakoot Express Special		12.06.21 to till further advice
05269 Muzaffarpur Jn.-Ahmedabad Jn. Express Special	Thu	10.06.2021 to 24.06.2021
05270 Ahmedabad Jn.-Muzaffarpur Jn. Express Special	Sat	12.06.2021 to 26.06.2021
03257 Danapur-Anand Vihar (T) Express Special	Daily	10.06.2021 to 30.06.2021
03258 Anand Vihar (T)-Danapur Express Special		11.06.2021 to 01.07.2021

Note: For any kind of information such as detailed Time-Table of Stations enroute etc., passengers are requested to contact RailMadad helpine No. 139 or may visit Indian Railways website: https://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in or NTES App.

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SHORT TAKES

Rajasthan opposes Asaram's court plea

New Delhi: Rajasthan government has opposed self-styled Godman Asharam Bapu's plea for temporary suspension of sentence for the treatment of his multiple ailments at an Ayurvedic Institute located at Haridwar-Rishikesh national highway in Uttarakhand. Asking the petitioner Asharam to respond to Rajasthan government's stand opposing his plea, a vacation bench comprising Justice Navin Sinha and Justice Ajay Rastogi posted the matter for further hearing on Thursday (June 11, 2021). The self-styled Godman is undergoing life imprisonment for rapping a minor girl in 2013. He was convicted by a Jodhpur court in 2018. He is being tried for another alleged rape case in Gujarat. Asaram has challenged the Rajasthan high court's order rejecting his plea for temporary suspension of sentences to pursue his medical treatment.

Ex-IAS A.C. Pandey appointed as EC

New Delhi: Former Uttar Pradesh-cadre IAS officer Anup Chandra Pandey was appointed as an election commissioner on Tuesday. The legislative department in the law ministry said the president is pleased to appoint Pandey, a retired Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer of the 1984 batch, as an election commissioner with effect from the date he assumes office. There was a vacancy in the poll panel. Sunil Arora demitted office as the chief election commissioner (CEC) on April 12. While Sushil Chandra is the CEC, Rajiv Kumar is the other election commissioner. — *PTI*

Didi nephew to visit lightning-hit families

Kolkata: As the death toll due to thunderstrike during the Monsoon arrival rose from 20 to 28 in West Bengal, chief minister Mamata Banerjee's nephew Abhishek Banerjee has decided to visit and stand by the families of the victims from Wednesday for two days in two worst-affected districts — Hooghly and Murshidabad. Among the victims, while 11 were from Hooghly while nine were from Murshidabad with two each from East Midnapore, West Midnapore and Bankura and one each in Nadia and North 24 Parganas. On Tuesday the TMC stated that it's newly appointed general secretary "is scheduled to meet the families of victims in Murshidabad and Hooghly respectively, who have been affected due to the recent lightning strikes in Bengal. Tomorrow, he is scheduled to visit deceased families' houses in Behrampur and a camp in Raghunathganj Block 1(Jangipur AC)."

A CAPESIZE SHIP MOORED AT WB ANCHORAGE

RAJIB CHOWDHURI
KOLKATA, JUNE 8

For the first time in the history of Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port Kolkata (formerly Kolkata Port Trust), a Capesize vessel with a record cargo quantity was anchored in its territory on Tuesday. The Panama flag vessel *MV LAKE D* arrived at Sagar Anchorage, 80 miles away from SMP, Kolkata. It is also one of the largest Cape Vessels of its kind with 66,000 MT of Steam Coal cargo bound for Nepal, said SMP, Kolkata spokesperson Sanjoy Kumar Mukherjee. Built in 2011, *M.V. LAKE D*, is manned by 20 Filipino crew including Master Martirez Arlan Narisma. The vessel sailed from Abbot Point in Australia on May 10 and enroute took fuel in Singapore. Discharging about 95,810 MT of cargo at Visakhapatnam, it then sailed for Sagar anchorage. SMP, Kolkata chairman Vinit Kumar said the call of *M.V. LAKE D* at Sagar Anchorage at 9.2 metre draft is a laudable landmark in the history of SMP, Kolkata despite its natural constraint being saddled with the responsibility of maintaining such one of the longest and most unpredictable navigational channels in the world. Mr Kumar added that the arrival of *M.V. Lake D* is significant, not only for being the 1st Cape vessel at Sagar, but also for carrying 66,000 MT of cargo which otherwise would have been carried in 2-3 separate vessels.

SC warns against illegal adoption of Covid orphans

PARMOD KUMAR
NEW DELHI, JUNE 9

The Supreme Court has directed the state governments and Union Territories administrations to take action against NGOs and individuals indulging in collecting money in the names of children orphaned or those who lost one of the parents to Covid pandemic by disclosing their identity and inviting interested people to adopt them.

"The State governments/Union Territories are directed to take action against those NGOs/individuals who are indulging in illegal adoptions. No adoption of affected children should be permitted contrary to the provisions of the Juvenile Justice (JJ) Act, 2015," said a vacation bench comprising Justice L. Nageswara Rao and Justice Aniruddha Bose in its order.

The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) data shows that 3,621 children were orphaned, 26,176 children lost either parent and 274 children were abandoned between April 1, 2021 to June 5, 2021.

The NCPCR had sounded the alarm after it got a number of complaints about illegal adoption of children orphaned by Covid through private individuals and organisations. The NCPCR told the top court that it received many complaints in May, 2021, that private individuals and organisations have been actively collecting data on these children while claiming that they want to assist families and children in the adoption of these children.

THE NATIONAL COMMISSION for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) data shows that 3,621 children were orphaned, 26,176 children lost either parent and 274 children were abandoned between April 1, 2021 to June 5, 2021

The top court also directed that financial assistance to which the disconsolate child is entitled to under the prevailing schemes by the central government and the state governments/Union Territories should be provided without any delay. The court also directed the state governments/Union Territories to ensure continuance of education of the children, studying in government as well as private schools.

New Rajya Sabha members Mahesh Jethmalani, Swapan Das Gupta, John Brittas and V. Sivadasan after their oath taking ceremony in New Delhi on Tuesday. — *PTI*

Stalin rallies 12 CMs against Centre

TN CM demands a moratorium on loan repayment for MSMEs and small businesses

AGE CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 8

In a bold move, chief minister M.K. Stalin mobilised his counterparts in 12 states that are not under BJP regime to "show our collective strength at this hour of great need" on demanding a moratorium on loan repayment for MSMEs and small businesses.

In a letter to the chief ministers of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Jharkhand, Kerala, Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Telangana and West Bengal on Tuesday, Stalin stressed on the need to come together.

Stating that it the collective efforts of the States that made the Union government and the Prime Minister reverse the earlier policy on vaccine procurement, he said: "I believe all the state governments should again come together on the pressing issue of asymmetry in treatment of borrowers, particularly MSME units and small borrowers, during the first and second waves of Covid-19."

M.K. Stalin

He recalled the government of India originally undertaking to vaccinate all frontline workers and the general population above the age of 45 free of cost and subsequently deviating from the policy and shifting the responsibility to procure and administer vaccines to people in the age group of 18 to 45 to the state governments.

"Many amongst us pointed out the fact that the most appropriate monosponic purchaser would be the government of India. Further, considering that the Union government also has considerably larger fiscal resources and a budget provision of ₹35,000 crore in the Union Budget for 2021-2022, it was further emphasised by us that the Union government should purchase the vaccines centrally and issue them free of cost to all states," he said. Mr Stalin said that he was happy that their collective efforts had been instrumental in convincing the Union government and Prime Minister in reversing their earlier policy and appealed to them to come together again.

"In April/May, 2020 when the government of India had announced the nationwide lockdown, a moratorium was offered on repayment of loans for such borrowers. However, in April-June, 2021 when lockdowns are being imposed based on local conditions by the respective states similar relief to borrowers is not being provided for," he pointed out.

BJP state unit chief to complain to Prez

Banerjee warns BJP of losing touch with public

RAJIB CHOWDHURI
KOLKATA, JUNE 8

WEST BENGAL

In an explosive outburst, West Bengal BJP leader Rajib Banerjee on Wednesday evening warned his party's leadership of losing the acceptance of people if they keep randomly "threatening" the ruling TMC with the saffron party's power at the Centre and the imposition of President's Rule while "criticising a government with a huge mandate".

"Enough of criticism... If threats are randomly given in the name of Delhi and Article 356 in the course of criticising a government which came to power with a huge mandate and opposing the chief minister, people of Bengal will not accept it well. All of us must rise above politics and stand by the people who have been devastated by the twin disasters of Yaas and Covid,"

Rajib Banerjee

the TMC turncoat who contested as a BJP candidate but lost in the Assembly elections posted on Facebook.

Mr Banerjee's appeal has once again exposed a sharp divide within the BJP over its policy to take on the Trinamul Congress supremo directly in the aftermath of its whitewash in the Assembly polls. Stumped by his call, the BJP is now looking into whether he has violated any organisational discipline.

Reacting to Mr Banerjee's opinion, newly appointed TMC general secretary Abhishek Banerjee said, "The BJP should tackle its internal feud before talking against us."

The BJP leader's views came hours after he along with two more BJP leaders — Mukul Roy and his son Shubhrangshu — skipped their party meeting where state unit chief Dilip Ghosh announced of a plan to complain to President Ramnath Kovid on the killings of its workers in post-poll violence in the state to mount pressure on the Mamata Banerjee government.

In the afternoon Mr Ghosh said, "We are planning to submit a deputation to the President on the post-poll violence. Since Covid-19 pandemic has been underway, there are some problems. But we will take a decision soon on this. We will tell the President that the situation has not improved even after orders from the court."

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MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (RAIL MANTRALAYA)
(RAILWAY BOARD)

No. 2021/RS(WTA)-149/Deve.Tender/516 New Delhi, dated: 08.06.2021

Developmental E-Tender (Indigenous) No: WTA-516 opening on 05.07.2021 for procurement of 2000 nos. BOX N / BG Axle (22.9 Tonne Axle Load)

Electronic bids are invited for and on behalf of the President of India for procurement of 2000 nos. BOX N / BG Axle (22.9 Tonne Axle Load). The interested bidders are advised to visit the website http://ireps.gov.in for further details, downloading of the tender documents and submission of their e-bids.

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Ministry of Railways (Railway Board)
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1247/2021 E-mail ID - drsm@rb.railnet.gov.in

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SEARCH FOR MISSING PERSON

Deepak

General public is hereby informed that one person namely Deepak, S/o Late Shri Bharat Bhushan, R/o H.No. 21/680, Indira Camp, Kalyanpuri, Delhi, Age 28 years, Height 5'8", Complexion Wheatish, Face Round, Built Normal, Wearing Purple colour T-shirt, black colour lower and black hawai chappal in feet is missing from his house since 01.06.20 at 08:00 am. In this regard DD No. 72-A dated 05.06.20 has been lodged at PS Kalyanpuri, Delhi.

Any person having any information or clue about this missing lady and her daughter may kindly inform to the following.

E-mail ID:cic@cbi.gov.in SHO
Tele: 011-23014046, 23015218 PS: Kalyanpuri, Delhi
Fax: 011-23011334 Ph.: 011-22772251, 22772287
DP/538/ED/21

Adhikari meets Shah, Nadda, discusses post-poll violence

New Delhi, June 8: BJP MLA and Leader of Opposition in the West Bengal Assembly Suvendu Adhikari met Union home minister Amit Shah and party chief J.P. Nadda on Tuesday to discuss various issues concerning the state, including post-poll violence.

Mr Adhikari, a former minister in the last Mamata Banerjee-led West Bengal government, joined the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in December last year, months ahead of the state Assembly polls.

In his first interactions with the top brass of the BJP after becoming the leader of Opposition in the West Bengal assembly, Mr Adhikari also met Union minister Mansukh Mandaviya and party general secretary Bhupender Yadav."Shri @SuvenduWB ji called on Union Home Minister Shri @AmitShah ji," Shah's office said in a tweet, along with a picture of the home minister and the West Bengal leader.

ADHIKARI ALSO tweeted saying he discussed several matters concerning the state with Mr Shah and sought his blessings for West Bengal

Mr Adhikari also tweeted saying he discussed several matters concerning the state with Mr Shah and sought his blessings for West Bengal.

"Honourable HM assured, he was and he will be there for Bengal always," he said.

Mr Adhikari defeated West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamool Congress (TMC) supremo Mamata Banerjee in a closely fought battle in Nandigram during the state Assembly polls held in March-April.

Later in the day, he also met Nadda at his residence and discussed various issues, including political violence in West Bengal.

Talking to reporters after meeting Nadda, Adhikari asserted that the situation in West Bengal is very grim as the BJP workers are facing a continuous threat in the state.

The saffron party stands firmly with its workers and will do everything possible for their well-being, he said.

— *PTI*

House catches fire; Mitra, kin escape unhurt

AGE CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA, JUNE 8

Heavyweight Trinamul Congress MLA of Kamarhati Madan Mitra and his family members had a close shave when fire broke out at their residence in Bhowanipore in South Kolkata on Tuesday morning.

The former state transport minister said that he found a dark smoke billowing out of his residence, which is a century old, at around 10.30 am. He stays there with his wife, two sons, daughters-in-law and a grandson.

"Our neighborhood was suddenly filled with a smell of burning. I initially could not understand what happened as the locals rushed here. They told me that it was my house where the fire broke out. The origin of the blaze was traced to a room on the ground floor. My grandson often studies there. He was not there luckily during the fire," Mr Mitra added.

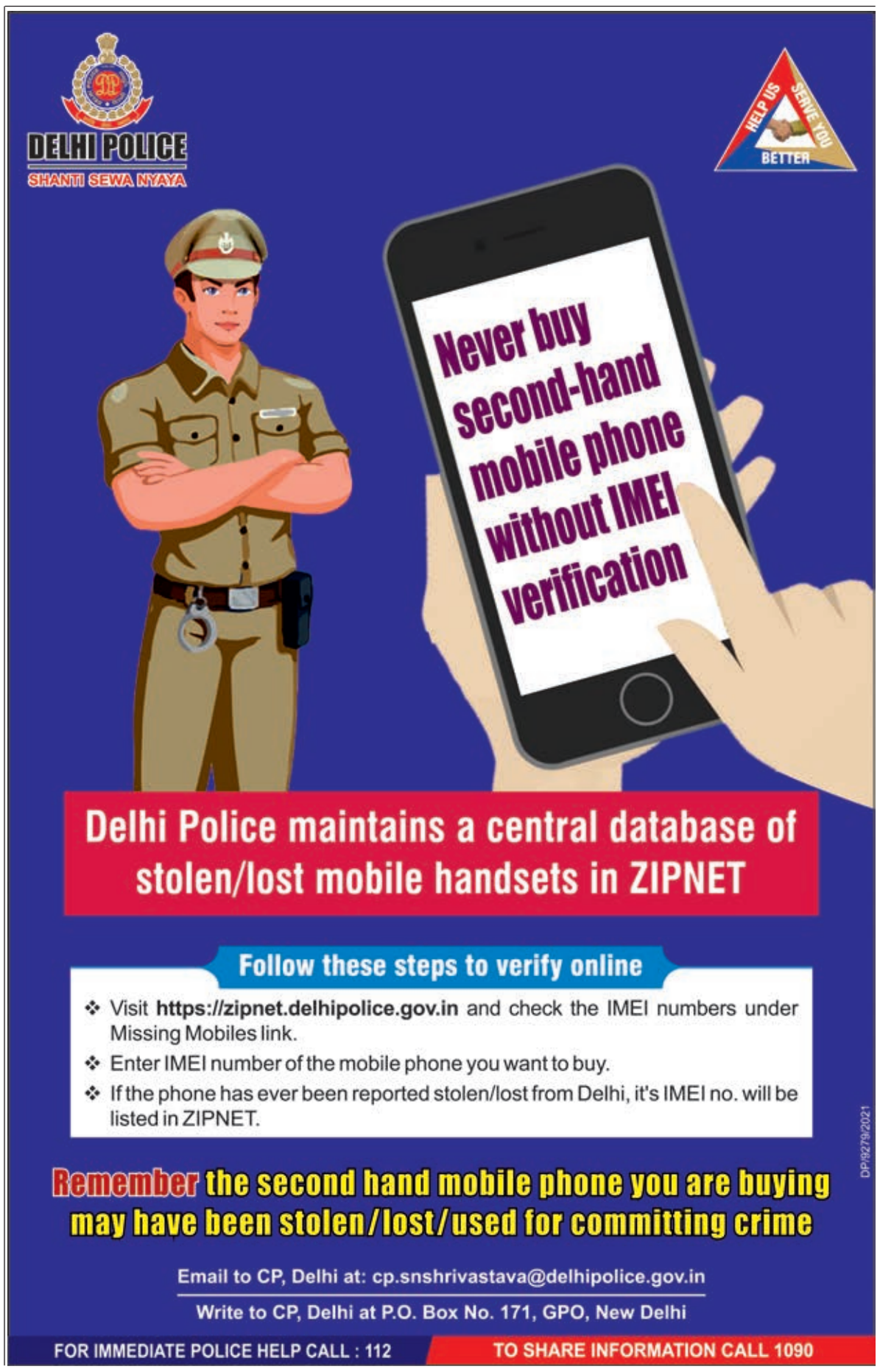
He recalled, "Waking up early, the little boy went to the first floor since I returned from Dakshineswar only on Monday night. If all of us had not come out of the house within five minutes, we would have been choked to death. By the grace of God, we escaped unhurt," he said. Mr Mitra, sitting on a chair in front of his residence, however looked upset by the incident. "I called up state fire and emergency services minister Sujit Bose who assured me prompt response. Three fire engines came here and doused the flames," he said. Preliminary investigation revealed that an electric short circuit might have caused the fire that damaged some items.

Sarma advises Rahul not to 'knit-pick like a child'

MANOJ ANAND
GUWAHATI, JUNE 8

Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma who took Congress leader Rahul Gandhi by disclosing as to how he was busy feeding his dog when Assam government wanted to discuss urgent issues with him in 2015, on Tuesday told him to not "knit-pick like an immature kid" while referring to his remark on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's announcement on free universal vaccination for all adults in India.

While many Opposition leaders lauded Prime Minister Narendra Modi's announcement of free universal vaccination for all adults in India and centralisation of vaccine procurement, some also accused the government of 'wasting crucial time'. Mr Modi also announced the private sector's role in the national vaccination programme by allocating 25 per cent to it.



SHORT TAKES

Woman, 2 minors hurt in acid attack

Bhopal: A woman and her two minor nieces sustained serious burn injuries when a man threw acid on them in a village in Madhya Pradesh, police said on Tuesday. The incident took place when the three victims were sleeping in their home in the village of Panasi in Rewa district in the intervening night of Monday-Tuesday. The accused, Uma Shankar Majhi (28), climbed onto the roof of the house and threw acid on them after removing two mud tiles, police said. The accused, a father of two children, was upset when the woman maintained a distance from him after she got engaged to her prospective groom. Both of them know each other, the police said. The accused has been arrested, Rewa additional superintendent of police Shiv Kumar Sharma said. The three victims have been admitted to the district hospital in Khandwa. — *PTI*

Shopkeeper held for molesting 8-yr-old

Bareilly, UP: A shopkeeper has been arrested for allegedly trying to molest an eight-year-old girl in his shop here, police said on Tuesday. On Monday at about 8 pm, the girl had gone to purchase toffees when Irshad alias Raja (20) closed the shutter of his shop in Azamnagar Khirni locality and tried to molest her, superintendent of police, city, Ravindra Kumar said. Hearing the screams of the girl, a passerby rescued her but the accused managed to flee, he said. On the basis of the complaint by the girl's father, an FIR was registered under relevant sections of POCSO Act against Irshad, who was later arrested from old roadways station, Kumar said. A probe is underway in the matter, he added. — *PTI*

Telangana extends curbs till June 19

Hyderabad: The Telangana government extended the lockdown to contain the spread of Covid-19 by another 10 days with relaxations from 6 am to 6 pm every day. The present lockdown will end on June 9. Bordering areas such as Khammam, Nalgonda and Nagarjuna Sagar among others, will continue to have relaxation up to 2 pm only, given the intensity of the number of cases daily, an official release said. "The Cabinet has decided to extend the lockdown in Telangana for another ten days. The Cabinet also decided to give relaxation from 6 am to 5 pm and give one-hour grace period till 6 pm for people to reach home," it said. The Cabinet instructed the police to enforce the lockdown rules strictly from 6 pm till 6 am next day, it said. — *PTI*

SHARE DETAILS OF RELIEF WORK: SPEAKER TO MPs

New Delhi: Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Tuesday urged Members of Parliament to share details of the relief work done by them in their constituencies amid the Covid-19 pandemic to develop best practices at the national level to deal with similar situations in future. Mr Birla, in a letter to all the MPs, said as public representatives, it is the duty of parliamentarians to stand with people in this severe crisis and help them in every respect. "I believe that you have spent most of your time helping people in their adversity. You have not only given moral support to the distressed citizens but have also made all out efforts to resolve their problems," he said in the letter. "The need of the hour is to share your stellar work and experiences with the entire country so that we are able to develop best practices at the national level to deal with such situations," the Speaker said. Birla, the MP from Kota in Rajasthan, had announced that students who were preparing for medical and engineering entrance exams and had lost their parents or earning members of the family to Covid-19 would be provided free coaching and accommodation in his constituency. — *PTI*

Om Birla

■ Nothing wrong to meet PM one-on-one, had not gone to meet Nawaz Sharif: Maha CM

Uddhav plays down meeting with Modi

New Delhi, June 8: As his one-on-one meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi drew intense interest in political circles, Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray on Tuesday said there was nothing wrong in having such interaction, adding sarkily that he had not gone to meet Pakistani leader Nawaz Sharif.

The Maharashtra chief minister said although his party and the BJP may have parted ways, "the relationship has not ended".

Mr Thackeray led a delegation of his cabinet colleagues comprising his deputy Ajit Pawar, a senior NCP leader, and Congress' Ashok Chavan to meet Modi and discuss issues pertaining to the state.

During the 90-minute interaction, Mr Thackeray also had a one-on-one meeting with the Prime Minister.

Responding to a question on his meeting with Mr Modi, Mr Thackeray said, "Today, politically we are not with them but that does not mean our relationship has ended.

"There is nothing wrong to meet (Modi) one-on-one. I had not gone to meet (former Pakistan Prime Minister) Nawaz Sharif. What is wrong if I have to meet him personally (one on one)? What is wrong in it?" He said during the last one year, there have been instances when he had such conversation with Modi.

The Shiv Sena-BJP alliance crumbled in 2019 over the issue of chief ministership. Sena, which was one of the oldest allies of the BJP, later formed an unlikely alliance with the NCP and Congress to form the Mahavikas Aghadi government in Maharashtra.

Since then the two parties have had a strained relationship, with both leaving no opportunity to viciously attack each other.

"When there was Cyclone Tauktae.....then he (PM Modi) called and said your government is doing a good job in handling the Covid-19 pandemic. That was a one-on-one talk. So even today we had one on one talk. I told him I have come here with my colleagues and the problems faced by the state," Mr Thackeray said. — *PTI*

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray with deputy CM Ajit Pawar addresses the media after meeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi. — *PTI*

Nothing to be afraid of CM-PM meet: NCP

Mumbai, June 8: The Shiv Sena and NCP said the MVA government will complete its full term of five years with NCP state president Jayant Patil saying there is nothing to be "afraid" about a separate meeting that took place between chief minister Uddhav Thackeray and Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Delhi.

Sena MP Sanjay Raut said the MVA government, comprising the Sena, NCP and Congress, will complete its five-year tenure. "Prime Minister Narendra Modi has listened to CM Uddhav Thackeray, deputy CM Ajit Pawar and Congress leader Ashok Chavan about various issues concerning the state. There will be some definitive decision in coming days," he said when asked about the meeting between the Thackeray-led delegation and the PM.

Maharashtra NCP president and water resources minister Jayant Patil echoed Raut. "Our commitment is to serve for five years and we will complete that tenure. There is nothing to be afraid of about a separate meeting that took place between Uddhav Thackeray and Mr Modi. There is no threat to the Maha Vikas Aghadi government in Maharashtra," Mr Patil said. — *PTI*

Flood scene worsens 2 Assam dists badly hit

MANOJ ANAND
GUWAHATI, JUNE 8

With incessant rain for the last two days and discharge of excess water from Ranganadi Power project of Neepco, the flood scenario in Assam has worsened with more than 31000 people getting affected in two districts — Biswanath and North Lakhimpur on Tuesday.

The reports said that about 31,900 people have been affected by the floods in the two districts of Biswanath and Lakhimpur so far. The situation may further deteriorate with the Meteorological department indicating that heavy rainfall is likely to continue across the state over the next three-four days. The first wave of flood had hit the Lakhimpur district on Sunday itself in which about 3,000 people were affected.

According to an Assam State Disaster Management Authority, no less than 31,970 people — including over 10,000 children — in 22 villages in three revenue circles in Lakhimpur and one in Biswanath districts have been affected by the floods.

In the Lakhimpur district, Bihpuria is the worst hit with 28,928 people in 13 villages being affected by floodwaters, while over 2,240 people have been affected in a single village in North Lakhimpur and 791 people being affected in four villages in Nowboicha.

The meteorological department has also warned that heavy rain and thundershowers are likely to occur at most places in Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Meghalaya and at many places in Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura.

Odisha announces ₹26 crore package for street vendors

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO
BHUBANESWAR, JUNE 8

Bringing a sigh of relief to thousands of street vendors in the 164 urban areas of state, Odisha chief minister Naveen Patnaik on Tuesday sanctioned a financial assistance of ₹26.29 crore for them.

The livelihoods of the street vendors have been seriously affected due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The aid will be provided from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund (CMRF).

The decision will benefit as many as 87,657 street vendors in the state. Each street vendor will get an assistance of ₹3,000.

Odisha Uthadokani Mahasangha, an organisation of the street vendors, welcomed the decision and appealed to the chief minister to extend the assistance to those who have been left over.

"There are nearly two lakh street vendors in Odisha. In fact, the Odisha government was carrying out a survey before the pandemic period set in. It was stopped mid-way because of the pandemic situation. As a result, nearly 1.20 lakh street vendors could find a place in the government's list. We appeal to the chief minister to order for resumption of the enumeration process so that the interest of the street vendors could be saved," said Pratap Sahu, president of Odisha Uthadokani Mahasangha.

Newly-wed seeks aid for ailing hubby

Bhubaneswar: A newly-wed woman in Odisha has appealed people for financial assistance to take her critically Covid-19 infected husband to a hospital in Kolkata for better treatment.

Mousumi Mohanty said around ₹1 crore is required to treat her husband Abhisek Mohapatra. Abhisek requires urgent ECMO (extracorporeal membrane oxygenation) treatment. He is planned to be shifted to Kolkata on road as fund crunch has posed hindrance for his airlifting to West Bengal.

Abhisek will be wheeled to Kolkata through a special ambulance with ECMO support on Tuesday evening.

Meanwhile, the Covid-19 single-day cases on Tuesday continued to dip in Odisha for the sixth consecutive day with the state recording 5,896 new cases. With this, the positive tally in the state surged to 8,25,110.

However, with at least 45 patients undergoing treatment for Covid-19 succumbing in the last 24 hours, the death toll has surged to 3,080 in the state.

Of the fresh cases detected across 30 districts of the state on Tuesday, a total of 3,332 cases were reported from quarantine centers, while the rest 2,564 were local transmission cases.

'Modi critic' appointed as Shivraj OSD, triggers row

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY
BHOPAL, JUNE 8

The appointment of "poll strategist" Tushar Panchal, who has rubbed BJP the wrong way by making some harsh comments against Prime Minister Narendra Modi in social media recently, as officer-on-special duty (OSD) to Madhya Pradesh chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has created a ripple in the saffron party.

BJP national spokesman Tajinder Pal Singh Bagga has taken to Twitter to express his strong disapproval of Mr Panchal's appointment to the post.

"Do you need people like this," he asked Mr Chouhan in his Twitter post.

Mr Panchal, however, on Wednesday, said that he will not accept the responsibility.

Madhya Pradesh home minister Narottam Mishra on Tuesday said he would take the matter to the chief minister's notice. "I need to talk to the CM before giving my reaction to it", he told reporters here.

The Congress, which shared Mr Panchal's anti-Modi posts on social media, has described it as a move to weaken Mr Modi's position at the Centre. "The appointment of Mr Panchal as chief minister's OSD has sought to belittle Mr Modi," Congress media wing chief Narendra Saluja said.

Rajasthan govt faces heat as 5-year-old dies of thirst

Jodhpur, June 8: After a five-year-old girl died of thirst while walking in scorching heat through an uninhabited stretch in Rajasthan's Jalore district, Union jal shakti minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat on Tuesday attacked the state government for its indifference towards Centre's Jal Jeevan Mission.

Manju died due to dehydration while her grandmother Sukhi (60) fell unconscious in Raniwara on Sunday afternoon when they were walking to meet a family member in Roda village, station house officer Padma Ram said on tuesday. While on the way, they felt thirsty but could not find water around as the place was uninhabited, he said.

MANJU DIES due to dehydration while her grandmother Sukhi (60) fell unconscious in Raniwara on Sunday afternoon when they were walking to meet a family member in Roda village

In a series of tweets on Tuesday, the union minister attacked the Ashok Gehlot-led state government for distancing itself from Central government schemes and for not utilising the budget it received for implementation of the Jal Jeevan Mission. He said that Rajasthan ranked 29 among 33 states and UTs in giving water connections in rural areas.

Rajasthan was allocated ₹2,522 crore for providing tap connections under the 2020-21 budget of the Central government but only ₹630 crore was spent, the union minister said.

"In 2021-22, the state was allocated ₹10,180.5 crore under the mission which was four times the previous budget," Mr Shekhawat said in a tweet in Hindi.

He held the state government responsible for the incident and accused the chief minister of depriving the people of fundamental resources like water.

It is ironic that on one hand water has reached millions of people through tap in the country while a young girl died of thirst in Rajasthan," Mr Shekhawat said. — *PTI*

Kishore's ancestral home may turn museum

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY
BHOPAL, JUNE 8

Legendary Bollywood singer Kishore Kumar's ancestral home in Madhya Pradesh's Khandwa may soon be converted into a museum if the initiative taken by the local administration bears fruit.

Khandwa district SDM Mamata Khede on Tuesday visited "Gauri-Kunj", where late singer and his two other brothers Ashok and Anup were born, to inspect the condition of the building.

"We are going to submit a proposal to the Madhya Pradesh government to renovate the house which is in a dilapidated condition and turn into a museum in memory of the legendary playback singer," Ms Khede told this newspaper on Tuesday.

Kishore Kumar

The initiative by the local administration came after the Kishore Kumar cultural association, a group of die-hard fans of the singer, met the Khandwa district collector Anay Dwivedy on Monday and demanded to take over the building and convert it into a museum.

THE 6,000-SQ-FT property was developed by the late singer's father Kunjlal Ganguli, a local lawyer.

KISHORE KUMAR, who passed away on October 13, 1987, completed his school in Khandwa and higher education in Indore

"If Pakistan government develops ancestral homes of Bollywood legends Dilip Kumar and Raj Kapoor in its country by purchasing them from their legal heirs, why cannot our country do the same for Kishore Kumar to honour him," the association president Sunil Jain asked. He said his association has been demanding to develop 'Gauri-Kunj' as a museum for the last 15 years.

According to Ms Khede, Kishore Kumar's son Amit and the latter's cousin Arjun are now the joint owners of the property.

The 6,000-sq-ft property was developed by the late singer's father Kunjlal Ganguli, a local lawyer.

Kishore Kumar, who passed away on October 13, 1987, completed his school in Khandwa and higher education in Indore before moving to Mumbai after being called by his actor brother Ashok Kumar.

Centre orders 74cr doses to give Covid jabs to all by Dec

■ Continued from Page 1

private vaccination centres for overcharging. The health ministry asked states to ensure that the prices declared by various private Covid centres do not exceed the ceiling.

The Serum Institute of India sells its Covishield to private hospitals at ₹600 per dose (excluding GST). Bharat Biotech has set the cost of its Covaxin at ₹1,200 a dose for private establishments. Both vaccines are supplied to the Central government at a cost of ₹150 a dose. Sputnik-V is given to private hospitals at Rs 948 per dose.

"The private hospitals may charge up to a maximum of ₹150 per dose as service charges. State governments may monitor the price being so charged," the ministry said.

India, meanwhile, on Tuesday reported less than one lakh daily new cases of Covid-19 after 63 days, with 86,498 fresh detections in the last 24 hours. This figure was the lowest in 66 days. India's active caseload has declined to 13.03 lakhs and 1.82 lakh patients recovered in the last 24 hours. The health ministry said recoveries continue to outnumber daily new cases for over 26 days and the national recovery rate is now 94.29 per cent. The nation's daily positivity rate has fallen to 4.62 per cent.

SII SELLS its Covishield to private hospitals at ₹600 per dose (excluding GST). Bharat Biotech has set the cost of its Covaxin at ₹1,200 a dose for private establishments. Both vaccines are supplied to the Central government at a cost of ₹150 a dose.

The director of New Delhi's AIIMS, Dr Randeep Guleria, said there is no data to show that children will be seriously infected in subsequent Covid-19 waves. "It is a piece of misinformation that subsequent waves of the Covid-19 pandemic are going to cause severe illness in children. There is no data -- either from India or globally -- to show that children will be seriously infected in subsequent waves," Dr Guleria said. He said 60-70 per cent of the children who got infected and were admitted to hospitals during India's second wave either had co-morbidities or low immunity; healthy children recovered with mild illness without any need for hospitalisation.

He said SARS-Cov-2 was a respiratory virus and multiple waves occur when there is a susceptible population. "When a large part of the population acquires immunity against the infection, the virus becomes endemic, and infection becomes seasonal -- like H1N1, that commonly spreads during monsoon or winter. Waves can occur due to change in the virus (such as new variants). Since new mutations become more infectious, there is a higher chance for the virus to spread. One of the reasons behind a wave can be human behaviour. Whenever cases rise, there is a fear in people and human behaviour changes. People strictly follow Covid appropriate behaviour and non-pharmaceutical interventions help break the chain of transmission. But when unlocking resumes, people tend to think not much infection will happen and they do not follow Covid appropriate behaviour. Due to this, the virus again starts spreading in the community, leading potentially to another wave. When enough people are vaccinated or when we acquire natural immunity against the infection, then these waves will stop," Dr Guleria said.

Uddhav meets Modi

■ Continued from Page 1

he added. Mr Thackeray also discussed the controversial Metro car shed issue with Mr Modi saying the state government wants to move the project to Kanjur and the Centre should help it by handing over the land to it.

Mr Pawar demanded that Maharashtra should receive its GST compensation of ₹24,306 crore that is pending with the Centre. "Amidst the coronavirus crisis, it will provide a lot of financial relief to Maharashtra," he said.

Commenting on his relations with Shiv Sena's former ally, he said, "We may not be politically together but that doesn't mean our relationship has broken... Main koi Nawaz Sharif se nahi milne gaya tha" (I didn't go to meet Nawaz Sharif). So if I meet him (PM) separately in person, there is nothing wrong with it."

The delegation from Maharashtra raised the issue of the delay in appointments of 12 seats in the Vidhan Parishad (State Legislative Council) from the governor's quota. There has been a deliberate delay in the appointments, they said.

Former CM and senior BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis welcomed the Thackeray-led delegation's meeting with the PM and said such dialogues were better than pointing fingers at the Centre for everything. He also expressed surprise over Mr Thackeray raising the issue of appointment of 12 MLC as it is the governor's prerogative.

"It is good that Mr Thackeray met the PM. Such dialogue should be held regularly with the Centre. But it is better if the CM meets the PM regarding the issues concerning the Central government. Of 12 points discussed by the state delegation, eight issues have to be settled by the state itself. And raising the issue of 12 MLCs was completely out of place. Only the governor can take a decision on that," Mr Fadnavis said.

CJI impressed by girl's letter

■ Continued from Page 1

hangs on the wall behind the judge. The CJI wrote back to Ms Joseph, saying that he was impressed by the way she kept track of the happenings in the country, particularly her concern for the well-being of her compatriots.

"I am sure you will grow up into an alert, informed and responsible citizen who will contribute immensely towards nation-building," Chief Justice Ramana wrote in his reply and sent her a signed copy of the Constitution of India.

16 killed, 6 hurt in road accident in UP's Kanpur

Kanpur (UP), June 8: At least 16 people were killed and six injured in a road accident on the Kanpur-Allahabad highway in the Sachendi area of this Uttar Pradesh district late on Tuesday evening, police said.

Two among the injured are said to be critical, they added.

Kanpur outer's superintendent of police (SP) Ashtbhuja Prasad Singh said the accident occurred in the Kisan Nagar area when a speeding bus hit a loader, which fell on the other side of the highway, while the bus also overturned and fell into a ditch.

Chief minister Yogi Adityanath has announced an ex-gratia amount of ₹2 lakh each to the next of kin of the deceased and ordered an inquiry into the incident.

The collision was so strong that almost all passengers of both the vehicles got trapped and some of them died on the spot, the SP said.

GSVM college principal R.B. Kamal told PTI over the phone that at least 16 people were killed, while five were admitted at the Lala Lajpat Rai (LLR) hospital with serious injuries.

A heavy police force, comprising personnel from half-a-dozen police stations, was dispatched to the site of the accident.

An official spokesperson in Lucknow said the chief minister has expressed grief over the loss of lives in the road accident in Kanpur and directed senior officials to immediately rush to the spot. He has announced an ex-gratia amount of ₹2 lakh each to the kin of the deceased, and asked the district administration to conduct an inquiry into the reasons behind the accident and submit a report, the spokesperson said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday expressed grief at the loss of lives in a road accident in Kanpur and announced an ex-gratia of ₹2 lakh each from the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund for the next of kin the deceased.

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said ₹50,000 each would be provided to those injured in the accident. — *PTI*

THE ASIAN AGE

9 JUNE 2021

A welcome shift in vaccine policy, but hurdles remain

The Union government's decision to rework its "liberalised vaccine policy" and return to centralised procurement of vaccine doses for all people aged above 18 years is welcome. This is perhaps for the first time that the government has chosen to reverse its policy seeing its adverse impact on the people. It is no secret that the Supreme Court's tough stance that it will have to subject the government decision to exclude a section of people from its vaccination policy to judicial review based on Articles 14 and 21 which guarantee the right to equality and the right to life, respectively, which led to this crucial policy change.

The court's decision to call for files that led to the questionable decision must have rung alarm bells in the corridors of power, though the court has repeatedly assured the government that it had no plans to interfere with its executive functions. The court's insistence that the government produce an account of the ₹35,000 crores earmarked in the 2021-22 Union Budget for vaccine purchase might, too, have forced the Centre's hand. Credit must be given to the political Opposition, led by Kerala chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan, who first suggested that the Union government should procure the vaccine for the states, too, which was endorsed by several other chief ministers including Tamil Nadu's M.K. Stalin and Odisha's Naveen Patnaik.

As per the government's own records, there are about 13,000 villages in the country where there is not a single common service centre through which the people there can register themselves on the CoWin app

The job is half done now, and the governments at the Centre and in the states have a lot of distance to cover to secure Indian people. We are into the sixth month of the "world's largest vaccination programme" but have been able to fully inoculate only 3.3 per cent of the population; the figure for the share of population who have been given at least one dose is below 12 per cent. This is not a satisfactory pace by any reckoning. Given that a third wave could hit the children, too, and they also need to be given the jabs, the figures fall to pathetic lows when the number of children eligible for vaccination becomes part of the denominator. Added to this is the issue of digital divide, which the Supreme Court has flagged: This could deprive the most marginalised sections of society of vaccination. As per the government's own records, there are about 13,000 villages in the country where there is not a single common service centre through which the people there can register themselves on the CoWin app.

The challenges are formidable but not insurmountable. The government has taken some baby steps to address them, which included the agreement it recently signed with Hyderabad-based Biological E. for the purchase of 30 crore doses of the vaccine which is in the advanced stages of clinical trials and the upfront payment of ₹1,500 crores. It is also getting Covaxin produced in more facilities. The government has now to prepare a workable schedule on the procurement and administration of the vaccine to meet the deadline of December 31 which it itself has fixed for the universal vaccination before it gets back to the Supreme Court on June 30 for the next hearing.

Winning new frontier in space

The founder of Amazon who revolutionised the way people shop in the new millennium will be beating fellow billionaires Richard Branson and Elon Musk to blast off into space, fly 105 km up, spend three breathtaking minutes of weightlessness in about 10 minutes or so at the apogee of the flight and return to planet earth. The race to create space tourism 60 years after Yuri Gagarin became the first man to travel into space may be heralded by the seeming vanity of a rich owner of a spacecraft taking a thrilling ride into the sky along with his brother Mark, besides the highest bidder in an online charity auction which is now at $2.8 million, and two pilots.

Non-astronaut civilians have flown into space before but if the world's richest man is prepared to do it while possessing some $200 billion of assets on the ground it might just signal increasing confidence in man's mastery over space flights just as an expensive tourism industry is set to expand. What we do for science in terms of spacecraft exploring Mars and space probes flying a lot further may be a lot more productive. But it is in taking untrained civilians along for up-and-down flights that earth will resonate with stories from space to rekindle the imagination. When Armstrong stepped on the man, the whole of humanity was figuratively with him.

The flight will usher in the crossing of a frontier signalling human capabilities in engineering safety and reliability in space. Several astronauts who have enjoyed the thrill of viewing our planet from way above have waxed eloquent about their experience. The Bezos brothers and others will have even better viewing seats in the roomy Blue Origin's New Shepard capsule with very large windows. What opening the door for rich civilians to tag along means is that the human endeavour to explore space would get a fillip and further propel the human race towards a long stated ambition of colonising Mars and other planets that seemed way beyond reach in billions of years.

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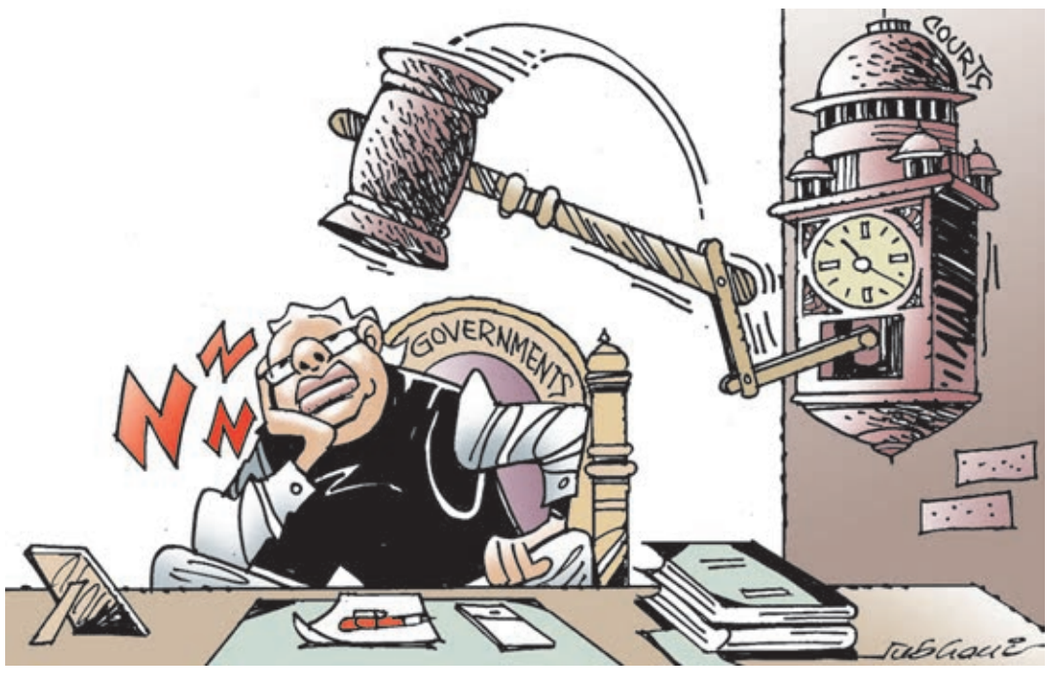
Subhani



Turbulent Afghanistan could impact Kashmir

Syed Ata Hasnain

One feels glad to see Jammu and Kashmir drop steeply in the hierarchy of India's security concerns. I am not going to spoil the party by suggesting that the current situation is just a smokescreen behind which lie many scheming ideas and thoughts to take it all back to 2001. Why 2001? It is simply because that is a landmark year recorded as the one with the highest terrorist casualties (2,100 killed); or, in other words, the year with a disproportionately high number of engagements, contacts, gunbattles. It was also the year when we saw the beginning of the Nato onslaught into Afghanistan (then usually referred as AfPak) after 9/11. Afghanistan and J&K have a long association; I am not alluding to their deep history but only to recent times. It's the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan at the end of 1979 that brought the mercenaries, often called jihadis, to Afghanistan under the sponsorship of the United States and Saudi Arabia. The rise of Islamic obscurantism can be traced back mostly to the 1980s when the refugee camps on the Pak-Afghan border became the centres of conversion to more radical beliefs of Islam. Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence gained much of its experience in handling tricky intelligence and operations related situations in Afghanistan. As soon as the war ended with the Soviet defeat, the mercenaries were available for a song and became the new jihadis in J&K. People unaware of the nuances of the issues in J&K over the last 30 years need to be informed that the original separatist movement of 1989 was largely indigenous and may have been controlled, but for the sudden availability of the mercenary jihadis freed from the war in Afghanistan. The ISI got them together with funds, weapons and military wherewithal no one had control over. They were then infiltrated into Kashmir from every conceivable direction to add to the growing footprint of terror. Many of them were Afghans who had no love lost for Kashmiris. The Indian Army and its fledgling anti-terror force, Rashtriya Rifles, neutralised hundreds as intelligence on them was never far, with them getting on to the wrong side of many in the local population, especially women. The pipeline of so-called jihadis dried up by 1996, when the remnants of the mercenaries who fought the Soviet Army in Afghanistan had either met their end or returned to do service with the Taliban when it came to power. The infiltration of foreign terrorists from 1996 onwards was mainly that of Pakistanis who flooded North Kashmir, in particular in the Bandipur, Sopore, Lolab and Handwara tracts.

Kashmir's proactive media repeatedly queried me in 2010-12 about the then situation in Afghanistan and how it would affect Kashmir if the US troops withdrew. Those were the days when Gen. David Petraeus was in charge of the US Central Command and the principles of the "COIN" (counterinsurgency) doctrine were in full flow in Afghanistan. I always answered with the stock reply that almost became a byline: "When you throw a stone into water there are ripples in every direction. Ripples from the conflict in Afghanistan will invariably travel to J&K." I usually left it at that, and if someone persisted, I would usually say: "Let no one imagine that 2011 is 1989, we are far superior in deployment and even more in experience." All these words are coming back to me in bits and pieces to create a picture for the region once the Americans are out of Afghanistan. That is expected largely by July 2021, without waiting for President Joe Biden's September 11, 2021 deadline.

So, is a resurgence of extremist violence in the region likely after July? The American presence being sought at some Pakistani airbases to afford drone operations and possibly other forms of aerial warfare including Special Forces is with a view to ensure that Afghan territory, and maybe some Pakistani territory as well, is not used to conduct activities that are detrimental to US interests. It's to keep a vigil over these areas which have provided much sorrow to the world in the last two decades. Of course, this will never be sufficient to have full regional coverage, but the US can always be advised to include India in its coverage too, simply as emerging strategic partners, and Pakistan is in no position to resist that, given its precarious financial position.

The current 2021 season has thus far seen minimal activity in Kashmir. The infiltration season began almost two months ago but attempts have been few and far between. Obviously, the flavour for jihadism is low at present, but it would be incorrect to assume it is all over. In 2011 too, the infiltration picked up in the July-October period. Pakistan's attention is focused on Afghanistan, where mistakes can cost it dearly. On the J&K front, a season of low-profile activity can be accepted, and the separatist infrastructure can remain intact with infusion of money and wherewithal through some routes which are extremely difficult to neutralise. What really makes the difference is the absence of human resources. If enough rebels are not being recruited locally, there won't be sufficient resources for guidance, logistics and overground work. 2021 is not 1989 either as far as the Line of Control is concerned. The counter-infiltration layout and network is smart, extensive, integrated and efficient. Twenty per cent attempting infiltration could yet get through, but unless huge resources are deployed for this by the ISI, the impact will be low. That big effort is difficult in view of the visibility today and efforts by outfits like FATF to keep vigil internationally. It won't be easy for Afghan or any other foreign terrorists to function in Kashmir, especially with dilution of the extensive OGW networks. Besides, no one really trusts these jihadi elements in Kashmir nowadays, especially in the urban areas.

We should make the best of the current situation, focus on development activity, and outreach to people with sufficient messaging that India's stable climes are far better than the turbulence of the neighbouring region

Diplomatically, India like all other interested nations have to address the situation of having to deal with an Afghan leadership other than the current one. Back channels would have been established by some nations and exchange of information would be in practice. What one really fears is bloodshed and civil war-like conditions in Afghanistan which could persist for some years. In such a situation it would become extremely unpredictable on what the fallout on Kashmir could be. We should make the best of the current situation, focus on development activity, and outreach to people with sufficient messaging that India's stable climes are far better than the turbulence of the neighbouring region.

The writer, a retired lieutenant-general, is a former GOC of the Srinagar-based 15 Corps

LETTERS

UNSUNG HEROES

It is heartening that India's daily new Covid-19 cases have dipped below the one lakh mark for the first time in 64 days. This is a major milestone for the country that saw a record-breaking number of cases and deaths during the deadly second wave. The last time India had reported fewer than one lakh daily fresh cases was on April 4, when it had registered 93,249 new infections in a single day. The sharp fall in cases will make the medical fraternity, frontline warriors and social activists breathe easier, besides aiding economic recovery. These people are our unsung heroes.

N.J. Ravi Chander
Bengaluru

JOINTS FOR JABS

APROPROS THE PM'S speech pretending to do us Indian mortals a favour by way of a promise of free vaccines while delivering a snub to state governments for actually successfully curbing the second wave at a time when the Centre had excused itself and, by all accounts, exacerbated it, over in the United States, adults will be able to claim a free marijuana joint when they receive a Covid-19 vaccine in Washington state. The promotion, called "Joints for Jabs," is part of the Joe Biden government's push to increase vaccinations. Not that that justifies escaping to America, but it's a pleasant thought.

Priyanka Mathur
Noida

RANCHI'S WUNDERKIND

AIWAN ABHAY MINZ, a Class 4 student at St Xavier's School in Ranchi, had got an invitation to address the Global Ingenious Youth Forum 2021 on the opening day. The meet, organised jointly by the Global Indigenous Youth Caucus, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN and the Indigenous Champions of the UN Food System Summit, will be held virtually from June 16 to 18 this year. He will speak on the traditional system of preservation of seeds and chemical-free farming.

Sankar Paul
Chakdaha, West Bengal

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

SHORT TAKES

OZ POWER CO. LOSES CASE TO GREENPEACE

Canberra, June 8: Australia's largest electricity generator on Tuesday largely lost its court case alleging that the environmental group Greenpeace had breached copyright and trademark laws by using its logo in a campaign that described the company as the nation's "biggest climate polluter". Justice Stephen Burley ruled that AGL Energy had failed in its trademark infringement claim and failed in its copyright infringement claim for all of the uses of the logo except for three social media posts as well as some photographs and placards. Burley denied AGL's request for damages. Greenpeace had argued the Federal Court case had significant implications for charities and advocacy groups.

SERB MILITARY CHIEF MLADIC TO STAY IN JAIL

The Hague, June 8: UN appeals judges have upheld the convictions of former Bosnian Serb military chief Ratko Mladic for genocide and other offenses during Bosnia's 1992-95 war and confirmed his life sentence. The judgment Tuesday means the 79-year-old former general who terrorised Bosnia throughout the war will spend the rest of his life in prison. He is the last major figure from the conflict that ended more than a quarter century ago to face justice. Presiding Judge Prisca Matimba Nyambe of Zambia said the court dismissed Mladic's appeal "in its entirety" and affirmed his life sentence. It also rejected an appeal by prosecutors against Mladic's acquittal on one other count of genocide.

INDIAN GETS 14 MONTHS' JAIL FOR FRAUD

Washington, June 8: A court in Seattle has sentenced an Indian national to 14 months in prison for defrauding his employer of nearly $800,000 in used equipment sales, according to Acting US Attorney Tessa M. Gorman. Arunkumar Singal, 42, pleaded guilty to wire fraud on January 3 and faces deportation after the completion of sentence. "You put everything at risk for one thing: to add to your wealth… You stopped because you were caught by law enforcement, but you continued to lie and deceive," US District Judge Richard A. Jones told Singal during the sentencing hearing on June 4.

According to records filed in the case, in 2014 Singal was the director of Global Product Support at Spacelabs Healthcare Inc. The company was established in the 1950s to make medical monitoring devices for astronauts and then expanded its business to include medical monitoring devices for hospitals and clinics.

MACRON SLAPPED DURING VISIT TO SMALL TOWN

Paris, June 8: French President Emmanuel Macron was slapped Tuesday in the face by a man during a visit to a small town in southeast France. Macron's office confirmed a video that is widely circulating online. The French president can be seen greeting the public waiting for him behind traffic barriers in the small town of Tain-l'Hermitage after he visited a high school that is training students to work in hotels and restaurants.

The video shows a man slapping Macron in the face and his bodyguards pushing the man away as the French leader is quickly rushed from the scene. French news broadcaster BFM TV said two people have been detained by police in the assault. Macron has not commented yet on the incident and continued his visit.

Speaking at the National Assembly, Prime Minister Jean Castex said "through the head of state, that's democracy that has been targeted," in comments prompting loud applauds from lawmakers from all ranks, standing up in a show of support. "Democracy is about debate, dialogue, confrontation of ideas, expression of legitimate disagreements, of course, but in no case it can be violence, verbal assault and even less physical assault," Castex said.

Far-right leader Marine Le Pen firmly condemned on Twitter "the intolerable physical aggression targeting the president of the Republic." Visibly fuming, she said later that while Macron is her top political adversary, the assault was "deeply, deeply reprehensible." Less than one year before France's next presidential election, Macron last week started a political "tour de France".

K.P. Sharma Oli

RIVAL FACTION REJECTS OLI MOVE TO REVIVE PARTY PANELS

Kathmandu, June 8: The rival faction of Nepal's ruling CPN-UML has rejected beleaguered Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli's offer to revive the party's committees prior to its merger with CPN-MC led by Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda, questioning the premier's intentions to keep the party united.

The rival faction led by veteran leaders Madhav Kumar Nepal and Jhalanth Khanal said that the six-point proposal put forth by Oli, who is also the chairman of the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Leninist), harboured an ill-intention to divide their faction and further delay their attempt to take forward the 'communist movement' in a new manner, according to a report in *myRepublica.com*.

"Instead of keeping (party committees) that existed on May 16, 2018, it has been said that they will be in line with his factional interest. This kind of proposal does not seem to have come with an intention to keep the party unity intact. This is simply unacceptable," the Nepal-Khanal faction has said in a statement on Monday. CPN-UML and the CPN-Maoist Centre had merged in May 2018 to form a unified Nepal Communist Party. — *PTI*

WHO: High vaccination rates can help reduce risk of virus variants

Many rich countries inoculating teens, children who have lower risk than the elderly

Geneva, June 8: A top World Health Organisation official estimated Monday that Covid-19 vaccination coverage of at least 80% is needed to significantly lower the risk that "imported" Coronavirus cases like those linked to new variants could spawn a cluster or a wider outbreak. Dr. Michael Ryan, WHO's emergencies chief, told a news conference that ultimately, "high levels of vaccination coverage are the way out of this pandemic."

Many rich countries have been moving to vaccinate teenagers and children — who have lower risk of more dangerous cases of Covid-19 than the elderly or people with comorbidities — even as those same countries face pressure to share vaccines with poorer ones that lack them. Britain, which has vastly reduced case counts thanks to an aggressive vaccination campaign, has seen a recent uptick in cases attributed largely to the so-called delta variant that originally appeared in India — a former British colony.

Ryan acknowledged that data wasn't fully clear about the what percentage of vaccination coverage was necessary to fully have an impact on transmission. "But ... it's certainly north of 80% coverage to be in a position where you could be significantly affecting the risk of an imported case potentially generating secondary cases or causing a cluster or an outbreak," he said. "So it does require quite high levels of vaccination, particularly in the context of more transmissible variants, to be on the safe side," Ryan added.

Maria Van Kerkhove, WHO's technical lead on Covid-19, noted the delta variant is spreading in more than 60 countries, and is more transmissible than the alpha variant, which first emerged in Britain. She cited "worrying trends of increased transmissibility, increased social mixing, relaxing of public health and social measures, and uneven and inequitable vaccine distribution around the world."

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, meanwhile, called on leaders of the developed Group of Seven countries to help the UN-backed vaccination programme against Covid-19 to boost access to doses in the developing world. — *AP*

People sunbathe on the beach in Barcelona, Spain, on Tuesday . Spain is jumpstarting its summer tourism season by welcoming vaccinated visitors from most countries as well as European visitors. — *AP*

BLINKEN: NEED TO RAISE VAX PRODUCTION AROUND WORLD

Washington, June 8: With the US sending millions of its Covid-19 vaccines to several countries, including India, Secretary of State Tony Blinken said that there is a need to increase production capacity on a regional basis across the globe. US President Joe Biden had announced that the US will allocate 75 per cent — nearly 1.9 crore of the first tranche of 2.5 crore doses — of unused Covid-19 vaccines from its stockpile through the UN-backed COVAX global vaccine sharing programme to countries in South and Southeast Asia as well as Africa.

Testifying before the House Foreign Affairs Committee on the State Department's 2022 budgetary proposals, Blinken asserted that it is important to have three-fourths of the world vaccinated soon.

"If we stayed on the current course, before we were distributing the 80 million vaccines, before we're looking at increasing production around the world, not just in the United States, we're on track to have the world vaccinated, or at least to have 75 or so per cent of the world vaccinated, not until 2024," he said in response to a question.

The US, he said, has 80 million vaccines that will be distributed. — *PTI*

US to continue to press China to be transparent: Sullivan

Washington, June 8: The United States in coordination with the international community will continue to press China to be transparent and forthcoming with information on the origins of Covid-19, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan has said.

He also said that at the same time, the US will also launch its own review and process. "We are going to continue to press in coordination with the international community, China to be transparent, to be forthcoming with data and information, we're not going to just stand by and accept that they've said they're not going to participate," Sullivan told a White House news conference on Monday. This would be also one of the topics of discussion with foreign leaders as President Joe Biden departs on his maiden overseas trip — after assuming office — later this week, he said.

Meanwhile, at a Congressional testimony, Secretary of State Tony Blinken said that there are two possible scenarios on the origins of the Coronavirus. One is that it emerged from a laboratory and the other is that it was naturally occurring, he said.

"President Biden has ordered a comprehensive government-wide review to try to get to the bottom of what happened," Blinken said in response to a question from Congressman Steve Chabot, a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. — *PTI*

Global glitch: Cloud outage crashes Net

London, June 8: Multiple websites went offline briefly across the globe on Tuesday morning after an outage at cloud service company Fastly, revealing how critical a handful of companies running the internet's plumbing have become.

Dozens of sites including the *New York Times*, *CNN*, some Amazon websites, Twitch, Reddit, *the Guardian*, and the UK government's home page, could not be reached.

All major future markets in the US dipped sharply minutes after the outage hit, almost exactly a month after a cyberattack that caused the operator of the largest fuel pipeline in America to halt its operations.

When the outage hit, some visitors trying to access *CNN.com* got a message that said: "Fastly error: unknown domain: cnn.com."" Attempts to access the *Financial Times* website turned up a similar message, while visits to *The New York Times* and the UK government's gov.uk site returned an "Error 503 Service Unavailable" message, along with the line "Varnish cache server," which is a technology that Fastly is built on.

In Asia, cities like Hong Kong and Singapore were affected, with users unable to access the *CNN* website. Down Detector, which tracks internet outages, said, "There may be a widespread outage at Fastly." San Francisco-based Fastly acknowledged a problem just before 6 a.m. Eastern Time. It said in repeated updates on its website that it was "continuing to investigate the issue."

About an hour later, the company said the issue has been identified and a fix has been applied. "Customers may experience increased origin load as global services return."

Fastly said it had identified a service configuration that triggered disruptions, meaning the outage appeared to be caused internally.

A number of sites that were hit appeared to be coming back online after the issue was resolved.

Internet traffic measurement by Kentik show that Fastly began to recover from the outage roughly an hour after it struck at mid-morning European time, and before most Americans were awake.

"Looks like it is slowly coming back," said Doug Madory, an internet infrastructure expert at Kentik.

He added it is serious because Fastly is one of the world's biggest content-delivery network and this was a global outage. It provides vital but behind-the-scenes cloud computing "edge servers" to many of the web's popular sites. These servers store, or "cache" content such as images and video in places around the world so they are closer to users, allowing them to fetch it more quickly and smoothly instead of having to access the site's original server. Fastly says its services mean that a European user going to an American website can get the content 200 to 500 milliseconds faster.

The impact of Fastly's trouble highlights the relative fragility of the internet's current architecture.

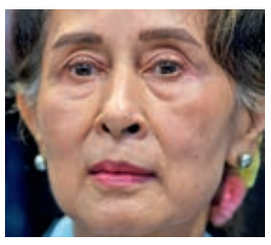
Junta to start case against Suu Kyi next week

Naypyitaw (Myanmar), June 8: Myanmar's military junta will begin presenting its case against deposed leader Aung San Suu Kyi and two others in the Naypyitaw court next Monday, her lawyers have said. The military arrested Suu Kyi in February when it overthrew her elected government, even as public resistance to the coup remains strong. In recent months, it has taken the form of a low-level armed insurrection.

Khin Maung Zaw, a senior member of Suu Kyi's legal team, said she is being tried on five charges in the court in capital Naypyitaw, where the government prosecutors will have to finish their presentation by June 28.

After this, Suu Kyi's defence team will have time until July 26 to present its case, Zaw told journalists after a procedural hearing on Monday for Suu Kyi and two fellow defendants, ousted president Win Myint and former Naypyitaw Mayor Myo Aung.

The court sessions are being held every Monday and Tuesday. Suu Kyi and her two co-defendants have been charged with spreading information that could cause public alarm or unrest.



Aung San Suu Kyi

Suu Kyi also faces two counts of violating the Natural Disaster Management Law for allegedly breaking the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions during the 2020 election campaign, besides charges of illegally importing walkie-talkies for her bodyguards, and unlicenced use of radios.

A sixth charge that Suu Kyi faces is the most serious one: Breaching the colonial-era Official Secrets Act, which carries a penalty of up to 14 years' imprisonment.

It has been handled separately from the other charges and was filed in a court in Yangon, the country's biggest city. It was recently transferred to the Union Supreme Court in Naypyitaw, said San Mar La Nyunt, another of her lawyers. Her supporters say the charges against her are politically motivated. — *AP*

Maldives' FM Shahid is UNGA's 76th session Prez

United Nations, June 8: Maldives Foreign Minister Abdulla Shahid was on Monday overwhelmingly elected as President of the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly, garnering 143 votes out of the 191 ballots cast. India had already voiced its strong support for Shahid's candidature as President of the 76th session of the UNGA, saying he is best equipped to preside over the General Assembly of 193 nations of the world.

The General Assembly voted on Monday to elect the President, who will preside over the upcoming session of the UN body that will commence in September. In the fray for the election was Shahid as well as former foreign minister of Afghanistan Dr Zalmai Rassoul, who got 48 votes.

"Hearty congratulations to Maldives Foreign Minister @abdulla_shahid for the robust victory and for being elected as the 76th President of the UN General Assembly," India's Permanent Mission to the UN tweeted.

"This is a crucial time for the United Nations and for the world. There's very little time to spare, so I intend to get to work right away….I intend to hit the ground running on day one in September as soon as I take my oath of office," Shahid, 59, said in his remarks to the press following his election. The Maldivian minister said his "immediate priority" will be recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic and working to ensure "vaccine equity" to restore hope from a year characterised by "disease, despair and devastation".

"We approach the 76th session in challenging times. Disease, despair and devastation have characterised the past year. Inequality, injustice and instability have increased. The environment, the ocean, our planet is suffering. But we need to get moving again," he said. — *PTI*

Abdulla Shahid

G-7, Nato meetings: Biden to talk Covid, Afghanistan

Washington, June 8: US President Joe Biden is scheduled to leave on his maiden official overseas trip during which he will hold discussions with top global leaders, including at the G-7 summit in the UK and the Nato meetings, on issues such as the impact of Covid-19, security challenges and drawdown of forces from Afghanistan, a top official said.

Biden will leave for the UK on Wednesday and then visit Brussels and Geneva as part of the trip that ends next week.

The visits will advance the fundamental thrust of Joe Biden's foreign policy to rally the world's democracies, to tackle the great challenges of the time, US National Security Advisor (NSA) Jake Sullivan said.

We believe that President Biden goes on this trip from a position of strength. Dramatic progress against the pandemic at home, strong projected growth that will help power the global economic recovery as well, renewed American power and purpose and a rock-solid foundation of alliances that will serve as force multipliers for our global agenda.

At the G-7, Sullivan said Biden will join with his fellow leaders to lay out a plan to end the Covid-19 pandemic with further specific commitments.

He will announce a new initiative to provide financing for physical, digital and health infrastructure in the developing a high standard, climate friendly, transparent and rules-based alternative to what China is offering, Sullivan said. — *PTI*

UN | ORGAN

Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Oman also chosen from Asia-Pacific

India elected to Ecosoc for '22-24 term

United Nations, June 8: India has been elected to the Economic and Social Council, one of the six main organs of the United Nations, for the 2022-24 term. The 54-member Economic and Social Council (Ecosoc) is at the heart of the UN system to advance the three dimensions of sustainable development — economic, social and environmental. It is the central platform for fostering debate and innovative thinking, forging consensus on ways forward, and coordinating efforts to achieve internationally agreed goals. It is also responsible for the follow-up to major UN conferences and summits.

India was elected in the Asia-Pacific States category, along with Afghanistan, Kazakhstan and Oman in the elections held on Monday. India's Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador T.S. Tirumurti, thanked all the member states for their vote of confidence. "I thank all Member States of the @UN for their vote of confidence in India for #Ecosoc," Tirumurti tweeted.

Among the African states, Côte d'Ivoire, Eswatini, Mauritius, Tunisia and the United Republic of Tanzania were elected to Ecosoc, while from the eastern European states, Croatia and the Czech Republic were chosen. Among the Latin American and Caribbean states, Belize, Chile and Peru were elected. Meanwhile, in the Economic and Social Council by-election, Greece, New Zealand and Denmark were elected for a term of office from January to December 2022 and Israel was elected for January 2022-December 2023 term.

India is currently serving the 2021-22 term as a non-permanent member of the powerful UN Security Council and will assume the Presidency of the 15-nation UN organ in August. The UN Charter established Ecosoc in 1945 as one of the six main organs of the United Nations. Ecosoc's 54 members are elected for three-year terms by the General Assembly. Seats on the council are allotted based on geographical representation with 14 allocated to African states, 11 to Asian countries, six to eastern European, 10 to Latin American and Caribbean states and 13 to western European and other states.

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FINANCIAL Chronicle
WEDNESDAY | 9 JUNE 2021 | NEW DELHI

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	52275.57	-0.10
Nifty 50	15740.10	-0.07
S&P 500*	4,229.93	0.08
Dollar (₹)	72.89	-0.10
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.04	-0.06
Euro (₹)	88.74	-0.22
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	49,113▼30	0.06
Brent crude ($/bbl)*	71.90	0.57
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.006	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.533	-0.037

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Vedanta firm Twin Star to take over Videocon

NCLT allowed Anil Agarwal's Twin Star Technologies to take over Videocon Industries Ltd for about Rs 3,000 crore. Twin Star, part of the Vedanta Group, will pay around Rs 500 crore within 90 days as upfront payment and the rest as non-convertible debentures over a period. A two-member Mumbai bench of the National Company Law Tribunal approved the resolution plan by Twin Star Technologies.

CCI clears Byju's buyout of Aakash Educational

The Competition Commission of India has approved ed-tech startup Byju's proposed acquisition of Aakash Educational Services Ltd (AESL). The $1 bn deal, which will bolster Byju's presence in the test preparation segment, was announced in April this year. The CCI said it has approved the proposed combination relating to Think & Learn Pvt Ltd (Byju's) acquisition of certain stake of AESL and thereafter their merger.

ReNew Power merger with RMG II approved

The proposed merger of ReNew Power with blank-check company RMG Acquisition Corporation II (RMG II) has received clearance from the Competition Commission of India. An official release said the CCI has approved exchange of equity shareholding by shareholders of ReNew Power Pvt Ltd with shares of ReNew Global Ltd, along with a reverse triangular merger of subsidiary of ReNew Global with RMG II.

Ocugen pays BB $15 mn for Canada rights of Covaxin

Ocugen Inc, the US partner for Bharat Biotech's Covid-19 vaccine, has announced the payment of $15 million upfront to the Indian firm for extending the vaccine rights to Canada. Ocugen said it has agreed to pay another $10 million to Bharat Biotech within a month from the commercial launch of Covaxin in the North American country. Bharat Biotech earlier said it has agreed to expand the agreement with Ocugen.

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460 claims cleared for ₹50 lakh insurance cover

Over ₹200 cr death claims paid for Covid warriors

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO
NEW DELHI, JUNE 8

With increasing fatalities of health workers fighting Covid-19, the government has fast-tracked settlement of Covid death claims under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package (PMGKP), which provides an insurance cover of Rs 50 lakh to Covid frontline warriors.

India's largest non-life insurer, New India Assurance Company Ltd (NIACL), has so far settled 419 claims under the scheme, disbursing around Rs 210 crore to the claimants.

The PMGKP covers almost all healthcare workers, including doctors, nurses, paramedics, community health workers and even daily wage staff engaged in Covid duty. This scheme covers loss of life due to Covid-19 and accidental death in the line of duty. This is scheme managed solely by the NIACL, with the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare paying the entire premium for over 22

lakh health workers covered under the scheme.

According to Atul Sahai, chairman and managing director of NIACL, "The NIACL has received over 1,100 claims intimations approximately, though only 600 claims were supported by the documents. Of this, we have paid a sum of Rs 209.5 crore for 419 claims as on the date, and 41 more claims stand approved awaiting either nomination documents or claimants' bank details. Some 140 claims have been turned down as the same were not covered under the policy, like the claimant wasn't a frontline healthcare worker or the death wasn't due to Corona."

"We have already received Rs 350 crore from the government in three tranches in the form of premium for the scheme so far. A total of 22.12 lakh health workers across the country are covered under the scheme by NIACL," Sahai added.

Though the claim documents were simple to access--like a laboratory test report and death summary by the hospital--getting them approved through the competent state authority was proving to be time-consuming. So, the government has from this month further simplified the claims procedure by routing them through the district collector. This is expected to improve the claim settlement ratio, which is now less than 55 per cent.

"Now, the government has decided to ease the claims procedure that was finalised between the concerned company and MoH&SW, and the district collectors have to verify that claim documents, counter verified by the state health nodal agencies in just one single page document. The documents shall remain carefully recorded at their office. It's a welcome step for speedy settlement of the claims," Sahai said.

However, health workers are concerned that the scheme does not cover death from post-Covid complications. Explaining, a senior doctor from Faridabad's Escort Heart Institute said, "Insurers now ask for all Covid-19 related documents immediately after the patient's death. So, there is no question of claim settlement from insurers if the patient dies of post-Covid-19 complications. Besides, any type of treatment or quarantine cost is not covered."

FM ASKS INFOSYS TO FIX TECH GLITCHES ON NEW INCOME TAX E-FILING PORTAL

New Delhi, June 8: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday asked Infosys and its chairman Nandan Nilekani to fix technical glitches being encountered on the income tax department's new e-filing website, after users flooded her Twitter timeline with complaints.

Infosys was in 2019 awarded a contract to develop the next-generation income tax filing system to reduce processing time for returns from 63 days to one day and expedite refunds.

The portal went live Monday evening.

Early on Tuesday morning, Sitharaman took to Twitter to announce the launch of the new portal, www.incometax.gov.in, saying that the "important milestone to make the compliance experience more taxpayer-friendly" went live at 2045 Hrs on Monday.

But, soon, her timeline was flooded with user complaints.

"I see in my TL grievances and glitches. Hope @Infosys & @NandanNilekani will not let down our taxpayers in the quality of service being provided," she tweeted later. *— PTI*

Privatisation-bound banks may come out with VRS

New Delhi, June 8: Two state-owned banks being picked up for privatisation by the government are likely to come out with an attractive voluntary retirement scheme (VRS) to get rid of the extra flab, sources said.

Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman while unveiling Budget 2021-22 on February 1 had announced that the government proposed to take up the privatisation of two public sector banks (PSBs) and one general insurance company.

An attractive VRS will make them lean and fit for takeover by the private sector entities that are keen to enter the banking space, the sources said.

VRS is not forced exit but option for those who would like to take early retirement with good financial package, the sources said, adding that it has been done in the past before the consolidation of some of the PSBs.

The Niti Aayog, which has been entrusted with the job of identifying suitable candidates for the privatisation, has recommended the names to a high-level panel headed by Cabinet secretary Rajiv Gauba.

Central Bank of India, Indian Overseas Bank, Bank of Maharashtra and Bank of India are some of the names that may be considered for privatisation by the Core Group of Secretaries on Disinvestment.

Following clearance from the Core Group of Secretaries, the finalised names will go to the Alternative Mechanism (AM) for its approval and eventually to the Cabinet headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the final nod.

Changes on the regulatory side to facilitate privatisation would start after the Cabinet approval.

Banks asked to keep CCTV recordings of DeMo period

Mumbai, June 8: The RBI on Tuesday asked banks to preserve the CCTV recordings of their branches and currency chests from November 8, 2016, to December 30, 2016, till further orders with a view to assisting the enforcement agencies to take actions against persons involved in illegal activities during the demonetisation period.

The government had demonetised the then in circulation high value currency notes of Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 on November 8, 2016. As part of the exercise, the government gave the opportunity to the people to exchange junked currency notes or deposit them in their bank accounts. Huge crowds were witnessed at bank branches across the country for exchanging or depositing the demonetised currency.

On the basis of various inputs, the investigative agencies also started probing matters relating to illegal accumulation of new currency notes.

In order to facilitate such investigations, the RBI has asked the banks not to destroy the CCTV recordings of the period of demonetisation till further orders.

The present order is a continuation of an earlier advisory issued to the lenders in December 2016 to preserve the CCTV footage of operations at bank branches and currency chests.

Of the Rs 15.41 lakh crore worth Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 notes in circulation on November 8, 2016, when the note ban was announced, notes worth Rs 15.31 lakh crore have been returned. *— PTI*

SHYAM METALICS' ₹900-CRORE IPO OPENS ON JUNE 14

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, JUNE 8

Steel products maker Shyam Metalics and Energy's Rs 909-crore initial public offering opens on June 14.

The company on Tuesday announced the price band for the public issue as Rs 303 to Rs 306 per share of Rs 10 face value.

The public issue comprises a fresh issue of equity shares, aggregating up to Rs 657 crore and an offer for sale of equity shares aggregating up to Rs 252 crore by the selling shareholders.

Shyam Metalics proposes to utilise the net proceeds from the fresh issue towards repayment of up to Rs 470 crore of its debt and that of its subsidiary, Shyam SEL and Power Limited and for general corporate purposes.

Shyam Metalics'' manufacturing plants are located at Sambalpur in Orissa and Jamuria in West Bengal.

The plants are strategically located to benefit from nearby iron ore mines for steel manufacturing. It also has a captive power plant.

Global economy to expand 5.6% in 2021: World Bank

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, JUNE 8

The World Bank expects the global economy to expand 5.6 per cent in 2021, the fastest post-recession pace in 80 years. Despite the recovery, global output will be about 2 per cent below pre-pandemic projections by the end of this year. The World Bank also finds that services sector and private consumption will offset pandemic effects in India.

The global economy's expansion will largely be on strong rebounds from a few major economies, fsays WB's latest edition of Global Economic Prospects. Among major economies, US growth is projected to reach 6.8 per cent this year, reflecting large-scale fiscal support and the easing of pandemic restrictions. Growth in other advanced economies is also firming, but to a lesser extent. China is anticipated to rebound to 8.5 per cent this year.

Despite the recovery, global output will be

For India, the Bank projected 8.3% growth in FY22 and 7.5% in FY23

about 2 per cent below pre-pandemic projections by the end of this year. Per capita income losses will not be unwound by 2022 for about two-thirds of emerging market and developing economies. "While there are welcome signs of global recovery, the pandemic continues to inflict poverty and inequality on people in developing countries around the world," said World Bank Group president David Malpass.

Emerging market and developing economies as a group are forecast to expand 6 per cent this year, supported by higher demand and elevated commodity prices. However, the recovery in many countries is being held back by a resurgence of Covid-19 cases and lagging vaccination progress, as well as the withdrawal of policy support in some instances.

In the case of India, the World Bank projected 8.3 per cent growth in FY22 followed by 7.5 per cent in FY23. This is supported by plans for higher spending on infrastructure, rural development, and health, and a stronger-than-expected recovery in services.

Better growth prospects since January, however, masks significant damage to economic activity from Covid-19. The economy is expected to follow the same, yet less pronounced, collapse and recovery seen during the first wave. Growth in FY23 is expected to slow to 7.5 per cent, says the Bank.

South Asia's growth is projected to rebound to a stronger-than-expected 6.8 per cent in 2021, with India accounting for most of the upgrade as strong services sector activity more than offsets the economic effects of the worsening pandemic. The outlook is underpinned by a rebound in private consumption.

RBI buys 61 tonne gold since January 2020

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, JUNE 8

The Reserve Bank of India bought 61 tonnes of gold since January 2020 in staggered purchases. The World Gold Council says central banks will continue to be positive on gold in 2021 as well, though their purchases might be lower than in 2020.

During the pandemic year of 2020, the RBI purchased 41 tonnes of gold. Its gold reserves stood at 635 tonnes at the end of 2019 and expanded to 676.6 tonnes at the end of the year. The central bank continued its staggered purchases in 2021 as well by accumulating 20 tonnes till May. At the end of May 2021, the gold reserves stood at 696.2 tonnes.

The World Gold Council's central bank gold reserves survey found that central banks will continue to be positive on gold, with roughly the same number of central banks expected to buy gold compared to last year. Around 21 per cent of central banks intend to increase their gold reserves over the next 12 months. Central banks are also increasingly valuing gold's performance during periods of crisis.

Though the Bank of Russia had announced to halt its regular purchases, 52 per cent of respondents believe that global central bank gold holdings will grow in the coming year. However, 75 per cent of respondents believed so last year. At the same time, only 11 per cent do not know their plans for gold this year compared to 20 per cent last year.

Further 32 per cent of respondents say that global central bank gold holdings will remain unchanged while 5 per cent say that they will decrease. These results may reflect the slowdown in central bank gold buying in 2020 when net purchases declined to 326 tonnes compared to 668 tonnes in 2019.

Post-Covid economic recovery, negative interest rates, continuation of expansive monetary and fiscal policies combined with the prospect of rising inflation will likely be at the forefront of central bankers' concerns for the foreseeable future.

LARGE STEEL FIRMS RAISE MARKET SHARE

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, JUNE 8

Rising steel prices helped large steel-makers more as they have grabbed a part of the market share from small and mid-sized companies.

Five large steel makers, including Tata Steel, JSPL, JSW and Sail and AMNS, increased their market share to 58 per cent in FY21 from 53 per cent in FY20. As a result, the market share of small and medium steel companies came down to 42 per cent from 47 per cent, says a Crisil report.

While 17 SME steel makers saw their revenues shrinking by 4 per cent and Ebitda by 2 per cent in FY21, the top steel-makers registered a 10 per cent growth in revenues and 60 per cent growth in Ebitda. The top four steel-makers also reduced their net debt in their Indian operations by 16 per cent or by Rs 34,000-35,000 crore.

The improvement in financials was driven by supply-chain efficiencies, higher exports and captive mines.

Franklin to appeal Sebi ruling

RAHUL SATIJA & KARTHIKEYAN SUNDARAM
JUNE 8

Franklin Templeton plans to appeal a ruling by India's markets regulator after the money manager's local unit was barred for two years from offering new debt funds.

The Securities and Exchange Board of India said it had found "several irregularities" following a probe into Franklin Templeton Asset Management (India) Pvt Ltd's actions last year in winding up six debt funds that held about $4.2 billion of assets. The Sebi also ordered the unit to refund management and advisory fees levied from June 2018 to April 2020 on the frozen funds and imposed a penalty of Rs 5 crore, according to its order on Monday.

The regulator separately barred Franklin's Vivek Kudva and Roopa Kudva from accessing the securities market for one year, and imposed a combined penalty of Rs 7 crore.

"We strongly disagree with the findings in the Sebi order and intend to file an appeal with the Hon'ble Securities Appellate Tribunal," Padmanaban Nair, a spokesman at Franklin Templeton India, wrote in an emailed comment. "We place great emphasis on compliance and believe that we have always acted in the best interest of unitholders and in accordance with regulations."

Franklin Templeton shuttered the funds last year, citing drying up of liquidity in some parts of the nation's corporate bonds market. At the time it was the biggest-ever forced closure of Indian funds and the move and fuelled worries of a renewed wave of withdrawals from similar products. The Sebi tightened rules covering the industry since the closure of the funds, imposing limits on some mutual fund debt investments and mandating stress tests.

The Sebi said it found several irregularities in the running of the debt funds closed by Franklin. *— Bloomberg*

LOSING | PROPOSITION **Suit says creditors should get recovery benefit**

63 Moons to challenge DHFL order

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, JUNE 8

DHFL debenture-holder and market infrastructure provider 63 Moons Technologies plans to challenge the order of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) permitting Piramal Group to take over DHFL under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC).

Tech firm 63 Moons holds more than Rs 200 crore of non-convertible debentures (NCDs) of DHFL.

Jignesh Shah-promoted 63 Moon believes the current resolution plan is contrary to law and against the interest of DHFL creditors, including NCD-holders.

The company had filed an

application in the NCLT-Mumbai seeking that recovery benefit of approximately Rs 45,000 crore filed by the DHFL administrator under section 66 of IBC should come to creditors, including debenture-holders.

"The current resolution plan is disappointing for NCD-holders in as much as they stand to bear the greatest loss as opposed to any other party involved. Other members of the Committee of Creditors, who comprise mainly of banks, have recourse to personal guarantees of promoters whereas NCD-holders do not have any such contractual recourse," 63 Moons said'', adding:

"NCD-holders will be left high and dry with a massive 65 per cent to 75 per cent haircut if in future such recoveries from fraudulent transactions are allowed to pass through to the resolution applicants, instead of the creditors."

"The current DHFL resolution plan allows the Piramal Group to buy the company by paying mere Rs 37,500 crore as against the outstanding debt of Rs 85,000 crore. Also, in addition to this, the benefits of claims of over Rs 45,000 crore are to be appropriated by Piramal fully," the petition said.

"The Resolution Plan is drafted in such a way that it favours the resolution applicant (buyer), in this case Piramal Group, allowing it to reap the benefits of recoveries from the promoters," 63 Moons said.

"Ascribing a value of Re 1. to the recoveries of fraud where claims are in excess of Rs 45,000 crore creates unjust enrichment of the buyer (Piramal) at the cost of creditors,'' it alleged.

SHORT TAKES

Refugee team picked for Tokyo

Lausanne: The refugee team for the Tokyo Olympics has 29 athletes competing in 12 sports. The team selected by the International Olympic Committee on Tuesday was drawn from 55 athletes who fled their home countries and got scholarships to train for the games in a new home country. The 29 — a rise from 10 in the inaugural refugee team at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympics — are originally from Afghanistan, Cameroon, Congo, Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Iran, Iraq, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Venezuela. They will compete in swimming, athletics, badminton, boxing, canoeing, cycling, judo, karate, shooting, taekwondo, weightlifting, and wrestling. The refugee athletes will compete against 206 national teams with identifier EOR, for the French acronym of the team name. — *AP*

Deepak pulls out of Poland Open

Warsaw: Olympic-bound Indian wrestler Deepak Punia on Tuesday pulled out of the Poland Open here to avoid aggravating his left-hand injury that he carried into the last Ranking Series event before the Tokyo Games.

Punia was to take mat for the 86kg event but forfeited his quarterfinal against American Zahid Valencia. It has been learnt that the 2019 World championships bronze-winner had suffered the injury two-three days before leaving for Warsaw during practice.

"He did not want to aggravate the injury and had informed the Federation that he will take a call on competing after reaching. After assessing his hand this morning, he decided not to take the mat," a source in the Indian camp said. — *PTI*

English FA gets 1st female leader

London: The English Football Association nominated Debbie Hewitt on Tuesday to be its first female leader of soccer's original national body created 158 years ago. The experienced businesswoman is set to join the English FA in January, 14 months after Greg Clarke resigned in fallout from making offensive comments on race, gender and sexuality at a parliamentary hearing.

Hewitt said in an FA statement she would "relish the opportunity to chair an organisation that has the potential to be a very positive force for good throughout the game and across society."

The FA said its ruling council will be asked to formally ratify Hewitt's appointment at a July 22 meeting. — *AP*

ISL teams to field 7 Indian players

Mumbai: The Indian Super League's 2021-22 season will witness an increase in local players' on-field participation thanks to a new set of guidelines that mandates clubs to field a minimum of seven footballers at one time from the previous six.

A rise in the number of Indian players means one spot less for foreign stars which will now be capped at four.

"Hero Indian Super League 2021-22 season will witness an increase in number of Indian players in the playing XI, as the new Coach & Player Selection Guidelines of Football Sports Development Limited (FSDL) now mandates clubs to have a minimum of seven (7) Indian players on the field at any point of time," the ISL said in a release on Tuesday. — *PTI*

Nets crush Bucks to take series lead

Los Angeles: Kevin Durant had 32 points and six assists as the Brooklyn Nets rolled to their largest playoff win in franchise history on Monday with a 125-86 beat down of the Milwaukee Bucks in game two of their NBA series.

Kyrie Irving finished with 22 points and four threes while Joe Harris and Bruce Brown each scored 13 for the Nets, who seized a 2-0 lead in the best-of-seven Eastern Conference series. — *AFP*

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SLOVE & STEADY

Zidansek first woman from Slovenia to reach Slam semis

Paris, June 8: Tamara Zidansek's breakout display at the French Open is the latest in a long line of outstanding sporting accomplishments by athletes from Slovenia, an Alpine nation of just over two million people.

The world number 85 became the first woman representing the country to reach the semi-finals of a Grand Slam on Tuesday when she battled to beat Spain's Paula Badosa 7-5, 4-6, 8-6.

She will play Russian 31st seed Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova for a place in Saturday's final, and a chance to emulate Maribor-born Mima Jausovec, who won Roland Garros in 1977 while competing for Yugoslavia.

With just three wins from eight previous Slam appearances, Zidansek arrived in Paris a virtual unknown, but she could soon join household names such as Dallas Mavericks star Luka Doncic and Tour de France champion Tadej Pogacar.

"It feels overwhelming. It's hard to take it in like this fast," said a beaming Zidansek following her quarter-final win.

"Winning the first round was a big breakthrough for me. I got a lot of confidence from that," she added.

Slovenia's Tamara Zidansek celebrates her 7-5, 4-6, 8-6 win over Paula Badosa of Spain in the French Open quarterfinal in Paris on Tuesday. — *AP*

PAVLYUCHENKOVA IN AFTER 52 ATTEMPTS

Pavlyuchenkova reached her first Grand Slam semifinal at the 52nd attempt on Tuesday with a three-set win over doubles partner Elena Rybakina at the French Open.

"There are so many emotions to reach a Grand Slam semifinal for the first time," said 29-year-old Pavlyunchenkova who had fallen at the quarter-final stage at the majors on six previous occasions since her 2007 debut. — *AFP*

'Baffled' Nadal reaches quarters

Paris, June 8: Rafael Nadal reached the French Open quarter-finals for the 15th time on Monday to stay on course for a 14th title and record-setting 21st Grand Slam with his biggest challenge posed by blinding stadium lights.

Third seed Nadal downed 19-year-old Jannik Sinner 7-5, 6-3, 6-0 and goes on to face 10th-seeded Diego Schwartzman of Argentina who he defeated in the semi-finals last year.

Nadal has now won 104 matches at Roland Garros against just two defeats since his 2005 debut while Monday's victory extended his run of consecutive sets won to 35.

Despite Monday's match being played in bright sunshine and in temperatues of 25 degrees Nadal was baffled as to why the lights inside Court Philippe Chatrier were switched on. "I don't know why they put the lights on that early. We have been playing without lights here in Roland Garros for forever," said Nadal.

"At 4:00 or 5:00 in the afternoon we have been playing tennis until 9:00 in the evening without lights.

"They say it's because of TV. But my answer is we used to have TV before we had the lights on. I saw plenty of matches here, and from the TV the quality of the image was great without the lights."

"I started well but was a little too defensive. I gave him the chance to come inside the court and play his best shots. That was a mistake," added Nadal.

"I broke back at 5-4 in the first set and the match changed after that. I played at a great level."

Nadal had beaten Sinner in the quarter-finals in Paris in 2020 as well as at this year's Italian Open. — *AFP*

THE RESULTS

Women's singles quarterfinals: Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova (RUS x31) bt Elena Rybakina (KAZ x21) 6-7 (2/7), 6-2, 9-7; Tamara Zidansek (SLO) bt Paula Badosa (ESP x33) 7-5, 4-6, 8-6.

Chhetri above Messi in goal list

Doha, June 8: Indian football talisman Sunil Chhetri has surpassed Argentina's global superstar Lionel Messi to become the second-highest active international goal-scorer with 74 strikes, adding another feather to his illustrious career.

The 36-year-old Chhetri achieved the staggering feat with his brace against against Bangladesh in the joint preliminary qualifying round match for 2022 FIFA World Cup and 2023 AFC Asian Cup here on Monday night.

The seasoned striker, who helped India register their first win in six years in World Cup qualifiers, now stands only behind Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo (103) in the active international goal-scorer list.

Chhetri leads Barcelona star Messi by two goals and sits a place above Ali Mabkhout of the UAE, who is third on the list with 73 strikes to his name.

Messi scored his 72nd international goal in a World Cup qualifier against Chile last Thursday, while Mabkhout added to his tally against Malaysia, also last week.

At the Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium on Monday, Chhetri broke the deadlock in the 79th minute when he headed in Ashique Kuruniyan's cross from the left, and then sealed the victory by curling in a shot from long range in added time.

The India captain is also just goal away from entering world football's all-time top-10.

He is behind Hungary's Sandor Kocsis, Japan's Kunishige Kamamoto, and Kuwait's Bashar Abdullah, who all have 75 goals. — *PTI*

Sunil Chhetri

BANGLADESH COACH IN AWE OF SUNIL'S SCORING SKILLS

Doha, June 8: Talismanic Sunil Chhetri won't miss if you give him the opportunity to score, says Bangladesh coach Jamie Day after the Indian captain led his side to a 2-0 win in the 2022 FIFA World Cup and 2023 AFC Asian Cup Qualifying contest.

The 36-year-old Chhetri scored a second-half brace against Bangladesh to hand India their first win in the joint preliminary qualifying round match on Monday night.

"For a long period, we did well, we had a couple of half-chances. But if you give Chhetri a chance, he scores like he showed tonight. He had two chances in the last 20 minutes, and he took them," Day was quoted as saying by *goal.com*. — *PTI*

MUELLER ON THE MARK AS GERMANY EASE PAST LATVIA

Düsseldorf (Germany), June 8: Thomas Mueller scored his first international goal for three years on Monday as Germany crushed minnows Latvia 7-1 in their final warm-up friendly before the Euro 2020 finals.

Latvia, ranked 138th in the world, rarely got out of their half as Germany tuned up for their opening game of the European Championship against world champions France in eight days time in Munich. After a two-year exile from international football, 2014 World Cup winner Mueller got on the scoresheet while Premier League stars Ilkay Gundogan and Timo Werner also found the net in the rout.

"The result wasn't the most important thing, it was more about the way we wanted to play football and implement things," said Mueller, who claimed his first Germany goal since March 2018.

Germany captain Manuel Neuer was applauded onto the pitch by his team-mates before kick-off as he became the first goalkeeper to make 100 appearances for the national team. — *AFP*

Manu feels Croatia tour 'perfect' before Oly

New Delhi, June 8: One of India's strongest Olympic medal hopes, ace shooter Manu Bhaker feels preparations "cannot get better" than the ongoing training-cum-competition tour of Croatia as she works on her consistency ahead of the Tokyo Games.

Thirteen Olympic-bound pistol and rifle shooters are currently training in Zagreb after having participated as guest invitees in the European Championship recently in Osijek. They will also compete in the ISSF World Cup, also scheduled in Osijek from June 22 to July 3. The Croatia tour was arranged after the National Rifle Association of India realised that it was not possible to hold camps in India amid a deadly second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic.

"The tour is very helpful. We are well looked after, our health and fitness needs are taken care of and, most importantly, we are getting to train at a very good shooting range and with some good competition as well," Bhaker said from Zagreb.

"So, I believe it cannot get better, leading up to the Olympic Games."

When Bhaker says she wants to live up to her own expectations, the remark can be interpreted as a burning desire to win the gold medal, and it has often panned out that way in a stellar career seeking its zenith in a few weeks' time.

In an ominous sign for her challengers ahead of the Tokyo Games, the champion Indian shooter says she is wants to avoid being weighed down by expectations. "I just want to meet my own expectations. I am not thinking about anything else but focusing on giving my best for India in the Games."

The 19-year-old pistol ace will enter Tokyo as one of India's biggest medal hopes having won almost everything one can after a sensational start to her career.

According to the champion shooter, many of her teammates stand a chance of finishing on the podium in Tokyo and given the Indian shooters' form in recent years, she is not far-fetched in her thought.

"I don't think I am the biggest medal hope... that is unfair. In our shooting team itself, I don't see anyone who is not the biggest medal hope. Then there are world class athletes in other sports as well for example badminton, weightlifting, wrestling, archery, boxing and the like," she said. — *PTI*

> **The tour is very helpful. We are well looked after, our health and fitness needs are taken care of and, most importantly, we are getting to train at a very good shooting range and with some good competition as well.**
>
> — **MANU BHAKER**
> Tokyo Olympics-bound shooter

ENGLAND CRICKET | RACISM ROW

Second player under scanner

London, June 8: One more current England player is being investigated by the country's cricket board for his allegedly racist remarks on Twitter as a teenager after Ollie Robinson was suspended for similar conduct.

The old tweets of the player in question were unearthed by *wisden.com*, which did not reveal the identity of the cricketer since he had not reached the age of 16 at that time.

The website posted screenshots of the tweet without revealing the player's identity.

".....Your going out with a asian," the player seem to have posted with hashtags of #asianthroughhand-through # hweollo #chinky.

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) is now investigating the matter. "It has been brought to our attention that an England player has posted historic offensive material on their social media account. We are looking into it and will make a further comment in due course," an ECB spokesperson was quoted as saying by the website.

The offensive posts came to fore hours after the ECB suspended Robinson pending a investigation into his racist tweets in 2012 and 2013.

Robinson, who scored 42 runs and took seven wickets on his Test debut against New Zealand, has already apologised for his behaviour after his old tweets emerged.

England's Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden, howevere, criticised the ECB's decision to suspend Robinson, calling it "over the top". The country's Prime Minister Boris Johnson also agreed with him.

Dowden contended that Robonson's tweets were a decade old, "written by a teenager" but agreed that they were offensive and wrong. — *PTI*

> **The offensive posts came to fore hours after the ECB suspended Ollie Robinson pending a investigation into his racist tweets in 2012 and 2013. The player's identity has not been revealed as he was not 16 at that time.**

KOHLI & CO TO GET 3-WEEK BREAK AFTER WTC FINAL

London, June 8: The Indian team management has decided to give a three-week break to its players after the World Test Championship final in a bid to address the mental fatigue that might be triggered by lengthy spells in a bio-bubble.

The WTC final against New Zealand will be held from June 18 to 22 at the Ageas Bowl in Southampton and the members of the Indian squad will disperse for close to three weeks (20 days) before regrouping on July 14 to prepare for the five-match series against England starting in Nottingham from August 4.

"As skipper Virat Kohli and coach Ravi Shastri had told the media at the pre-departure press conference, there will be a break. There is a six-week gap between WTC final and opening Test against England, so we had to address the issue of players' well-being. Within UK, they can disperse off, go for a holiday, meet friends and family," a senior BCCI official said.

Obviously, there could be some team get-togethers also but players would be free to choose how they want to spend their time.

"Most of them have come to UK for multiple times and have friends and acquaintances around the country. It's only fair that they can switch off," said the source. — *PTI*

Virat Kohli and Ravi Shastri in the file photo.

SL to tour England amid contract row

Colombo, June 8: The Sri Lankan cricketers have agreed to compete against England on a tour-specific contract but would not sign the annual contracts unless governing body SLC explains the evaluation process.

Sri Lanka are scheduled to tour England for three Twenty20s and as many ODIs between between June 18 and July 4.

Following a stormy round of talks, the players were told by the management that they would either call off the England tour or send a third string side.

The players told the management they would sign a tour-specific contract but need more time to sign the annual contracts.

The players had defied a June 3 deadline to sign the contracts, citing lack of transparency in the process.

While defying the deadline the players said they were willing to play for the country even if the administration decided not to pay salaries due to their refusing to enter contracts.

At the height of the dispute and negotiations last month, the players said remuneration proposed to players were more than 3-fold lower than payments made to players of other counties.

The SLC had by then announced that 24 of the leading players had been offered contracts under four categories and they had been given a deadline until 3 June to sign them.

In the categories released only six players featured in the category A and their annual pay ranges between 70,000 to 100,000 US dollars.

The batsman, Dhananjaya de Silva draws highest - 100,000 with the rest of them were to receive 70-80,000 US dollars.

The players then took exception to the decision by the SLC to make public specific payment details of players saying the disclosures amount to a grave security concern to each and every player.

They claimed that the SLC decision to make public pay details of players had affected their self-confidence and peace of mind. — *PTI*