

SHORT TAKES

JNU figured in top 1,000 institutes list, says V-C

New Delhi: With the JNU finding a spot in the top 1,000 of the coveted QS World University Rankings, its vice-chancellor on Wednesday said the varsity strengthened its existing courses and introduced several new programmes which led to the success. Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) Vice Chancellor M Jagadeesh Kumar said it is for the first time the varsity has appeared as a comprehensive university within the 550-600 range in the global rankings. While expressing his gratitude to all students, staff, faculty members and the alumni who have contributed to this recognition, he said the varsity will continue to work towards improving educational standards. "Our collective efforts during the last five years in strengthening the existing programs in Science, Humanities and Social Sciences disciplines and the introduction of several new academic programs, particularly the undergraduate engineering programme and the establishment of Atal Bihari Vajpayee School of Management and Entrepreneurship, have largely contributed to this recognition," he said.

Cyber cell cop tries to dupe bizman, transferred

New Delhi: A Delhi Police sub-inspector, posted at the cyber cell, has been transferred to district lines allegedly for trying to extort ₹10 lakh from a businessman. According to the police, the businessman has alleged that the sub-inspector threatened to file a case of sedition against him. A senior official said that an internal enquiry has been initiated against sub-inspector Deepak Jakhar before taking any action. Jakhar called the businessman at his office on April 27 and threatened to file a case of sedition against him, the police said. He later started demanding the amount for not taking any legal action against the businessman and also called him thrice which was recorded by the businessman. The businessman then sent an email to the vigilance branch and also informed a Delhi court while applying for anticipatory bail, they added.

Noida: 13 booked for violation of Covid-19 protocol

Noida: Police have booked 13 people from Delhi, including three women, for violating Covid norms by gathering at a party here, officials said on Wednesday. Acting on a tip-off, the local expressway police raided the party being held at a farmhouse in Sector 135 on Tuesday evening. Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police (Noida) Ranvijay Singh said. There was no liquor or objectionable substance found at the spot but only snacks, food and drinks, Singh said. However, these people were booked for partying in violation of the Covid-19 protocols and guidelines besides violation of CrPc restrictions imposed here, he said. The coronavirus-induced curfew was relaxed in Gautam Buddh Nagar from Monday.

— PTI

Accused had created a web of 25 shell companies for routing cheated money

11 held for duping 5 lakh of ₹150cr on promise of lucrative returns

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA
NEW DELHI, JUNE 9

The Delhi Police Cyber Cell has arrested 11 men, including two chartered accountants, for allegedly cheating more than five lakh people of over ₹150 crore in two months on pretext of lucrative returns on an app, police said on Wednesday.

A total of ₹11 crore of cheated money has been blocked in various bank accounts and payment gateways, police said.

Police took notice of various posts being made on social media by people from across the country about two mobile applications Power Bank and EZPlan. These apps offered lucrative returns on investment, a senior police officer said. The Power Bank App projected

itself as a Bengaluru-based start-up, but its server was found based in China.

The apps, in order to entice large number of people to invest more and more money, initially gave a small payout amounting to 5 to 10 per cent of the invested money, police said.

People, believing the scheme to be genuine, started investing more money as well as circulating and sharing the app with their friends and relatives, they said.

Police invested a token amount in the app and the money trail was followed. It was found that the accused persons had created a web of around 25 shell companies for routing the fraud money. These companies were located in different parts of the country

► POLICE INVESTED a token amount in the app and the money trail was followed. It was found that the accused persons had created a web of around 25 shell companies for routing the fraud money. These companies were located in different parts of the country and money was being moved from one account to another to hide the trail, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Cyber Cell) Anyesh Roy said.

Police analysed the mobile numbers connect-

ed with the bank accounts and found that one of accused Sheikh Robin was in Uluberia, West Bengal, police said.

On June 2, raids were conducted at multiple locations. Robin was arrested. At the same time, nine others were arrested from the Delhi-NCR, including two CAs — Avik Kedia, a resident of Gurgaon, and Ronak Bansal, a resident of Katwaria Sarai, the DCP said.

The CAs created over 110 shell companies and sold these companies to Chinese nationals for ₹2 to 3 lakh each, police said.

Robin, who was contacted by the Chinese national through Telegram, initially opened a bank account for these fraudsters, but later started acting as an operative whose primary

task was to manage the large number of fund transfers, Roy said, adding that at the time of the arrest, he was operating around 29 bank accounts, police said.

The main Chinese handlers behind this massive scam, used to randomly contact people over various apps such as WhatsApp and Telegram and hired the interested persons as partners for procuring bogus bank accounts, creating shell companies, circulating and promoting the apps, transferring money, etc., police said.

Names of several Chinese nationals have been revealed so far. Investigation in respect of their whereabouts, specific roles and their large fraud network is underway, police added.



Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal and Dy CM Manish Sisodia during the inauguration of 'Jahaan Vote, Wahin Vaccine' campaign in New Delhi on Wednesday.

— PTI

People happy over getting jabs at polling booths: Kejri

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA
NEW DELHI, JUNE 9

The Centre should move proactively to procure Covid-19 vaccines for children as many countries have started working on it, deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia said on Wednesday.

The ruling AAP dispensation led by chief minister Arvind Kejriwal has voiced concern over safety of children while citing opinion of experts that children may be affected in a possible third wave of Covid-19. Kejriwal himself visited a vaccination centre on Wednesday, a day after his government launched 'Jahan vote, Wahan vaccine' campaign.

The campaign is aimed at spreading awareness and encouraging citizens aged above 45 to get vaccinated against Covid-19 at local polling booths in their assembly constituencies. "Visited a centre under the 'Jahan vote, Wahan vaccine' today. People there seemed to be happy about the fact that they could get vaccinated near their homes at the polling booths where they go to cast their votes," Kejriwal tweeted in Hindi.

"There is also no issue

Delhi receives vaccine for youth after long wait

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 9

Senior Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader and MLA Atishi released the vaccination bulletin on Wednesday and stated that after the two-week-long distress of no vaccination, a sigh of relief for Delhi as vaccine stock arrives for the youth.

Atishi further added that for the youth between 18-44, we have received 1.25 lakh doses of Covishield and 20,000 doses of Covaxin. Free-of-cost vaccination for youth will kick start again after 2 weeks,

of online booking. Booth officers are going to people's houses to allot vaccination slots to them," he added.

The campaign was launched at the Ballimaran assembly constituency on Tuesday.

As part of the campaign, booth-level officers are visiting the people in their wards and encouraging citizens to get vaccinated at local polling

youngsters can register on the CoWIN app. For 45+, we have received 30,000 doses of Covaxin which are being distributed to different centres of Delhi today. Covaxin for 45+ will be used to administer only the second dose. For 18-44, we have Covaxin available for the second dose and 8 days of Covishield. For 45+, we have two days of Covaxin and 27 days of Covishield available. Delhi on Wednesday reported 337 new cases of coronavirus with a positivity rate of 0.46 per cent, according to the health bulletin on Wednesday.

Booths. E-rickshaws have been arranged to take citizens to polling booths to get them vaccinated.

A statement from the Aam Aadmi Party had said that those above 45 years of age should be vaccinated in four weeks and the Delhi government would similarly carry this out for those in the 18-44 age category as well.

Rapper who went missing after posting suicide note on social media traced in MP

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 9

A 23-year-old city-based rapper, who had gone missing a week ago after posting a suicide note on social media, was traced by a team of Delhi Police on Wednesday, officials said. Police said they received information that the rapper, Aditya Tiwari, was at his friend's house in Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh.

A police team was sent to Jabalpur from where he was traced on Wednesday, deputy commissioner of police (South) Atul Kumar Thakur said. Tiwari is being brought back to the national capital where he will be questioned, police said.

His mother Deepa Dhingra had filed a kidnap case after he went missing, police had said here. In her report, Dhingra, a Vasant Kunj resident, said her son had been missing since Wednesday, they said. She also men-



Aditya Tiwari

Man held for strangling pregnant wife over suspicion of illicit affair

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 9

A 20-year-old pregnant woman was strangled to death allegedly by her husband in outer Delhi's Narela after he suspected her of having an illicit relationship with someone else, police said. The incident took place on early Tuesday morning. The couple engaged in a fight during which he allegedly strangled her to death.

A case was registered and the accused was taken into police custody after he confessed to killing his wife, the police said. The accused was working at a gas stove manufacturing factory in Narela, they said.

As she came to know that her son was traced in Jabalpur, Dhingra said he was being trolled after his rap song went viral on social media.

bers but police are verifying claims and awaiting post-mortem report to ascertain the facts.

They often fought as Dilshad suspected her of having an illicit relationship with someone else, police said. The incident took place on early Tuesday morning. The couple engaged in a fight during which he allegedly strangled her to death.

A case was registered and the accused was taken into police custody after he confessed to killing his wife, the police said. The accused was working at a gas stove manufacturing factory in Narela, they said.

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Mercury breaches 44°C mark in city, rains likely on weekend

Highest minimum temp recorded; dust-carrying winds worsen air quality

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 9

The maximum temperature breached the 44 degrees Celsius mark in parts of Delhi on Wednesday, even as winds carrying dust from Rajasthan pushed the capital's air quality to the "very poor" category, according to India Meteorological Department. However, "widespread rainfall" is likely to bring down the mercury and pollution levels on the weekend, it said.

The Safdarjung Observatory, considered the official marker for the city, recorded a minimum of 31.4 degrees Celsius, the highest minimum temperature this year so far, and a maximum of 42.2 degrees Celsius.

On April 28 too, the obser-

► THE LIKELY formation of a low-pressure area over north Bay of Bengal around June 11 and its movement towards north-westerly direction may lead to "fairly widespread rain and thundershowers over Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi and west Uttar Pradesh on June 12 and June 13," the IMD said

vatory had recorded a maximum of 42.2 degrees Celsius, the highest temperature recorded this year so far, the IMD said. In Najafgarh and Pitampura, the mercury settled at 44.1 degrees Celsius and 44.3 degrees Celsius, it said.

The likely formation of a low-pressure area over north Bay of Bengal around June 11 and its

movement towards north-westerly direction may lead to "fairly widespread rain and thundershowers over Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi and west Uttar Pradesh on June 12 and June 13," the IMD said.

It also predicted heavy rainfall at isolated places in Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh and Delhi on June 13. Notably, Delhi has not recorded any heatwave so far this summer.

"It is likely to be the first time since 2014 that there will be no heatwave this year," an official said. Frequent Western Disturbances kept the mercury in check. Cyclone Tauktae also led to record rains last month, the official said.

Delhi hospital official apologises over 'No Malayalam' circular

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 9

The nursing superintendent of the Govind Ballabh Pant Institute of Post Graduate Medical Education and Research (GIPMER) has issued an apology after the controversial circular banning nursing personnel from speaking in Malayalam and directing them to use only Hindi and English for communication.

In a letter to the medical superintendent, dated Monday, 7 June, the nursing superintendent said the circular in question was issued in a "positive sense" and there was no bad intention against Malayalam-speaking staff.

The hospital had withdrawn the circular on Sunday, saying it was issued "without any instruction or knowledge of the hospital administration and the Delhi government". The official

said he had acted on the basis of complaints received on May 31, June 1 and June 2. "The gist of the complaint was that most of the staff communicates in regional language due to which other staff members as well as attendants of the patients feel helpless. It was requested to sort out the matter. Complainant clearly mentioned Malayalam language," the letter by the nursing superintendent read.

Earlier, too, patients and attendants had complained verbally to seniors about some staff members using their regional language, he said. The patients would assume they had some serious health issues and that's why languages are changed to hide their condition. Hence, the circular was issued to "avoid any confusion due to language barrier", the nursing superintendent said.

75-year-old man's semi-decomposed body found in drain

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 9

The body of a 75-year-old man in a semi-decomposed condition was recovered from a drain in Paschim Vihar area on Wednesday, three days after he went missing from his home in west Delhi, police said.

The deceased, Chinna Tambi, a resident of Raghuraj Nagar in west Delhi went missing from his home on June 6, they said.

The police said a missing report was lodged by his grandson on June 7 and accordingly efforts were initiated to trace him.

No apparent assault marks were seen on the body and statements of family members and enquiry done do not reveal any foul play.

DU student's body recovered from debris after house collapses

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 9

A 26-year-old Delhi University student died after basement of an under construction building adjacent to his house collapsed on Wednesday in south Delhi's Malviya Nagar area, police said.

The deceased, Ishan Sethi, resident of Mussoorie, Uttarakhand, was pursuing his post graduation from Delhi University and was living at a rented house in Panchsheel park here, they said.

The accused contractors have been arrested in the case, police said. The police said they were informed at Malviya Nagar police station at around 4.30 pm that due to digging of basement of adjacent under construction building, house has collapsed and one person has fallen down the debris.

On reaching the spot, after removing the debris, Sethi's body was recovered and shifted to AIIMS mortuary for post-mortem, police said. According to police, Sethi was staying on rent at a house in Panchsheel park just adjacent to the under construction site where digging of basement was taking place.

Deputy commissioner of police (South) Atul Kumar Thakur said "We have registered a case under section 304A (Causing death by negligence), 288 (Negligent conduct with respect to pulling down or repairing buildings) and 427 (Mischief causing damage to the amount of fifty rupees) of Indian Penal Code. Accused contractors Vikas Bhayana and Rahul Bhayana have been arrested in the matter."

Delhi court denies wrestler Sushil special food, supplements in jail

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 9

Noting that everyone is equal in the eyes of law, a Delhi court on Wednesday dismissed an application filed by Olympic medallist wrestler Sushil Kumar, an accused in a murder case, seeking special food and supplements in the prison.

Kumar had approached the Rohini court with the demands claiming that they are extremely necessary for him to maintain his health and performance as he wishes to continue his career in wrestling.

He sought supplements like isolate whey protein, omega 3 capsules, joint-movement capsules, pre-workout C4 and hyde, multivitamin GNC and exercise



Sushil Kumar

Satvir Singh Lamba said that special foods and supplements appear to be only the desires and wishes of the accused and are not in any manner the essential need or necessity.

It is well settled law that all the persons, whether natural or juristic are equal in eyes of law irrespective of caste, religion, sex, class. It also implies absence of any special privilege in any person due to his rank, status, whether rich or poor, he stated in the order.

It was further noted that the basic needs and necessities of the accused are being taken care of in the jail as per the provisions of Delhi Prisons Rule, 2018 and that balance and healthy diet is being provided to him without any discrimination.

The chief metropolitan magistrate said that Sushil neither disclosed the details of any upcoming competition for which he has been qualified to participate nor has he mentioned the name of any competition in which he is participating in the near future.

Alluding to the medical report of the accused, the judge noted that he is not suffering from any disease for which he would require food supplements and a special diet.

Forced to chant 'Jai Shri Ram' in Tihar: ISIS man

New Delhi, June 9: An alleged ISIS member arrested for planning suicide attacks and serial blasts across the country, approached a Delhi court on Wednesday claiming that he was beaten up by other inmates in Tihar jail and forced to chant 'Jai Shri Ram'.

The accused, Rashid Zafar, was arrested in 2018 on the allegations of being member of an ISIS-inspired group who were planning suicide attacks and serial blasts, targeting politicians as also government installations in Delhi and other parts of north India. Advocate M.S. Khan claimed in the application, which is likely to come up for hearing on Thursday, that the incident was disclosed by the accused to his father telephonically from Tihar Jail. The accused was beaten

up and forced to chant religious slogans like 'Jai Shri Ram' by his inmates, the application said. The plea, moved by advocate Qasim Khan, requested that appropriate directions may be passed to the Jail Superintendent to look into the matter."

The accused were arrested along with nine others in December 2018 after NIA carried out searches, in coordination with Special cell of Delhi Police and Anti-Terrorism Squad of Uttar Pradesh Police, at six places in Jafrabad, Seelampur in Delhi, and 11 places in Uttar Pradesh — six in Amroha, two in Lucknow, two in Hapur and two in Meerut. The searches and the arrests came a month before the Republic Day celebrations on January 26.

— PTI



People wait in a queue at a vaccination camp in Gurgaon on Wednesday.

— PTI

SHORT TAKES

Polls proved BJP outsider: Banerjee

Berhampore: West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee's nephew Abhishek Bandyopadhyay asserted that the recently concluded Assembly Election has proved BJP as *Bohiragoto* (Outsiders) in the state. He sarcastically observed that the saffron party can not be found even in "microscope" now. The newly appointed Trinamul Congress national general secretary said on the BJP, "It has been proven that they are Bohiragoto here. They are not visible even in a microscope now. They were busy in photo sessions of their lunch while sitting on bamboo cot in March and April before the media. But after the results on May 2, they are nowhere." Mr Banerjee handed over the state government's compensation of ₹2 lakhs to each family of the nine victims of lightning in the district during a visit to them. He also assured them jobs.

Nath in hospital after 2 days fever

Bhopal: Madhya Pradesh Congress president Kamal Nath was admitted to a private hospital in Gurugram on Wednesday for a routine medical check-up for fever, his aide said. Because of fever for the last two days, the former Madhya Pradesh chief minister (Nath) has gone to Medanta Hospital, Gurugram, for a routine check-up and health examination. His coronavirus test is negative. Besides, his routine check-up and all test reports too are normal, Nath's media coordinator Narendra Saluja told PTI. Madhya Pradesh chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan tweeted: Received information that former CM Kamal Nathji is unwell. I pray to God for his speedy recovery". Mr Chouhan tweeted that he spoke to Mr Nath, 74, over the phone and enquired about his health. — PTI

ASSAM GETS SEVENTH NATIONAL PARK

Guwahati: Assam got its seventh national park, two within a week, with a notification declaring Dehing-Patkai as so on Wednesday, state environment and forest minister Parimal Suklabaidya said. The Raimona National Park in the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) was notified as the sixth such park on the occasion of World Environment Day on June 5. The state now has the second highest number of national parks in the country. Madhya Pradesh and Andaman and Nicobar Islands have nine national parks each, the minister said in a statement. "The newly created national parks will help boost conservation efforts and also provide fillip to tourism and agriculture sectors," Mr Suklabaidya said. The newest national park, popularly known as Dehing Patkai Rain Forest, has unique floral and faunal diversity, which was recognized by the state government in 2004, when 111.19 square kilometres of the area was notified as Dehing Patkai Wildlife Sanctuary. Forest and wildlife conservation have now been further strengthened as another 123.07 sq km has been added to the original sanctuary area, the minister said. The area is home to hooleek gibbon, elephant, slow loris, tiger, leopard, clouded leopard, golden cat, fishing cat, marble cat, sambar, hog deer, sloth bear, and several bird species including the endangered state bird, the white-winged wood duck. — PTI

Bengal STF kills 2 Punjab gangsters

Both notorious criminals were accused of killing 2 Punjab Police officers

RAJIB CHOWDHURI
KOLKATA, JUNE 9

Two notorious gangsters, wanted in multiple criminal cases over the last five years in Punjab, were gunned down after they shot at a cop during an encounter with the Special Task Force (STF) of the West Bengal Police (WBP) inside an upscale housing complex in New Town on Wednesday afternoon.

A huge cache of sophisticated arms and ammunition and large amounts of cash were also recovered after the daring operation at

Shapoorji Pallonji Housing Complex in Action Area III of New Town. The two deceased gangsters were Jaipal Singh Bhullar and his aide Jaspreet Singh.

Their bullet-ridden bodies were found inside their flat no 201 at the top floor of a five-storeyed apartment of the residential complex. They were accused of shooting dead two officers, Bhagwan Singh and Dalwinder Singh, posted as assistant sub-inspectors of the criminal investigation agency of the Punjab Police, in Ludhiana on May 15.

A HUGE CACHE of sophisticated arms and ammunition and large amounts of cash were also recovered after the daring operation at Shapoorji Pallonji Housing Complex in Action Area III of New Town

After the killings, both fled to Kolkata for shelter and were hiding at the flat apparently since May 22. Punjab DGP Dinkar Gupta told this newspaper, "Jaipal was in our A-category list of gangsters with more than two dozen high-profile criminal

cases against him. He was also involved in illegal business of drugs smuggling linked to Pakistan. At around 12 pm today we arrested an accused Bharat Kumar, who courtesy to his family links in Kolkata, had helped Jaipal and Jaspreet to get the accommodation in New Town. We immediately intimidated the WBP about it." WBP (STF) additional director general Vineet Kumar Goyal informed that the accused duo had also committed a lot of bank robberies, looting of jewelry shops and murders since before 2016.

Mamata assures support to agitating farmers

TMC chief said she would ask CMs of non-BJP ruled states to back farmers

RAJIB CHOWDHURI
KOLKATA, JUNE 9

West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee has renewed her total support to the nation-wide farmers' movement against three controversial agriculture bills of the Centre after Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) leader Rakesh Tikait on Wednesday met and congratulated her for defeating the BJP in the Assembly Election.

The Trinamul Congress supremo also announced that she would consult the CMs of non-BJP ruled states to circulate their "uniform letter" voicing the plight of the farmers to make the situation only tight for the BJP ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

Newly-inducted TMC leader Yashwant Sinha was also present at the meeting between Ms Banerjee and Mr Tikait with a BKU delegation in the state secretariat Nabanna in the afternoon.

The CM said, "We pledge our full support to the farmers' movement. We have already passed a resolution in the state Assembly against the three farm bills. In the very beginning, we sent our MP team to the venue of their agitation. I also addressed them in some rounds. In my life I once led a movement for the farmers against forcible acquisition of their land."

The TMC chief added, "We will continue to support them totally until and unless their demands are not met. They requested me to talk to other CMs, who are in the opposition of the BJP, also so that we can sit and discuss the issue at a virtual conference. They have also created a platform under their forum and invited us to be a part of it. We will talk about it once there is a drop in the Covid-19 pandemic. But I will certainly get in touch with other CMs, who are our friends, on the farmers' movement so that a uniform letter can be sent to help the farmers ahead of the next Lok Sabha polls." Lashing out at the BJP in power at the Centre, Ms Banerjee slammed it's laws and national policies "starting from Kishan to Covid" by bulldozing the federal structure.

Mr Tikait suggested her to turn West Bengal into a model state for the farmers' welfare in the country.



Bharatiya Kisan Union leader Rakesh Tikait meets West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee in Kolkata on Wednesday. TMC leader Yashwant Sinha is also seen. — PTI

Repeal of farm laws only option before govt: Cong

New Delhi, June 9: The Congress on Wednesday asserted that the only way to end the ongoing farmers' protest is to withdraw the three contentious farm laws, and demanded agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar's resignation over what it said was his "egoistic" stance on the issue.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi expressed support for the farmers who have been agitating against the Centre's farm laws for over six months now, and said they have died fearlessly defending their farms and the country.

"Farmers have died while defending their farms and the country. And yet the farmers continue to be fearless and true," he said in a tweet in

Hindi, using the hashtag "#500DeathsAtFarmersProtest".

Congress' chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said the protesting farmers are not begging but are seeking their rights and the government should shed its stubbornness and agree to their demands.

"The farmers are not begging and don't want alms, they want justice. Farmers don't want ego, they want their rights. Come down from the throne of pride, give up your stubbornness and the only way is to withdraw the three black laws," he said on Twitter.

The Opposition party's attack came over the remarks of Tomar that if the farmers' organisations are ready to discuss

options other than the repeal of new agriculture laws, then the government is ready to talk with them.

Later in the day, Mr Tomar took a swipe at Gandhi and said he would not like to respond to his remarks as even his own party does not take it seriously. "As far as Rahul Gandhi's tweet is concerned, even the Congress does not take it seriously and I don't think there is a need for me to respond to that," he said.

At a press conference, Congress spokesperson Supriya Shrinete said, "Mr Tomar farmers do not want to come and discuss the weather with you. They want to come and discuss laws which are against them." — PTI

MP: Ex-CM and saffron face Uma not in working committee Scindia loyalists dominate BJP team

RABINDRA NATH CHOUHDURY
BHOPAL, JUNE 9

Rajya Sabha member Jyotiraditya Scindia's supporters dominated the working committee of the Madhya Pradesh unit of BJP, constituted late on Tuesday night.

As many as 63 leaders including five ministers in the Shivraj Singh Chouhan ministry, considered loyalists of Mr Scindia, have found place in the committee headed by state BJP president Vishnu Dutt Sharma.

All these leaders had quit Congress along with Mr Scindia in March, 2020 and joined BJP.

The jumbo committee has also accommodated loyalists of other senior leaders of the party including chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, BJP national general secretary

Kailash Vijayvargiya and state home minister Narottam Mishra. However, Mr Scindia has dominated the committee by getting the maximum number of his supporters in the body. The committee compris-

THE JUMBO panel has also accommodated loyalists of other senior leaders of the party including chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, BJP national general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya

es 162 members, 218 special invitees and 23 permanent invitees. Chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, former Lok Sabha speaker Sumitra Mahajan, Union ministers Dharmendra Pradhan, Thabarchand Ghelot, Narendra Singh Tomar, Fagan Singh

Maharashtra to enact its own separate farm laws

BHAGWAN PARAB
MUMBAI, JUNE 9

Continuing its opposition to Centre's three farm laws, the Maharashtra government has decided to amend its own agriculture law to "protect" farmers and APMC's in the state. State revenue minister and Congress leader Balasaheb Thorat announced that the draft law will be introduced in the monsoon session of the Maharashtra legislature beginning July 5.

"We want to amend the state agriculture law as we feel that the Union government's agriculture laws are not in the interest of farmers. The proposed amendments will ensure the protection of Agriculture Produce Marketing Committees (APMCs), redressal of grievances of farmers and protection of the interests of agriculturists during the crop trade among others. We will also insert a provision mandating license for traders which was not there in the Central laws," said Mr Thorat on Wednesday.

As a part of the efforts to prepare the draft law, Mr Thorat met NCP chief Sharad Pawar a senior Congress leader to discuss the issue. He was accompanied by the state cooperation minister Balasaheb Patil, Agriculture Minister Dada Bhuse and MoS Agriculture and Cooperation Vishwajeet Kadam. "We also discussed the Centre's new law on cooperative banking which we feel will hurt the cooperative sector," Mr Thorat added.

Tomar: Govt ready to talk with farmers

New Delhi, June 9: Union agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar on Wednesday said the government is ready to resume talks with protesting farmers but asked the unions to point out their objections to the provisions of the three farm laws with sound logic.

The government and unions have held 11 rounds of talks, the last being on January 22, to break the deadlock and end the farmers' protest. Talks have not resumed following widespread violence during a tractor rally by protesting farmers on January 26.

Thousands of farmers, mainly from Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh, have been camping at Delhi's borders for more than six months in protest against the three laws that they say will end state procurement of crops at MSP. The Supreme Court has put on hold the implementation of the three laws till further orders and set up a committee to find solutions.

"All political parties of the country wanted to bring the farm laws, but they could not gather courage to bring them. Modi government took this big step in the interest of farmers and brought reforms. Farmers got benefit of that in several parts of the country. But in the meantime farmers agi-



Narendra Singh Tomar

tation started," Mr Tomar said at a Cabinet briefing.

He said that the government held 11 rounds of talks with farmers and Unions were asked about their objections in the laws and which provisions they think were against farmers. "But neither leader of any political party gave its answer in the Parliament nor any farmers' leader, and the talks did not move forward".

The minister said that the government is committed towards farmers and it also respects farmers.

"So, whenever farmers want discussions, Government of India will be ready for discussion. But we have repeatedly asked them to tell the objections in the provisions with logic. We will listen and find a solution," Mr Tomar said.

Three union ministers, including Tomar and food minister Piyush Goyal, held 11 rounds of talks with the protesting farmer unions. — PTI

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NATHPA JHAKRI HYDRO POWER STATION
PRESS NOTICE, E-Tender No. PCD-2669

Online bids (e-tender) on Domestic Competitive Bidding (DCB) are invited on behalf of SJVN Ltd. for, "Repair of Kitchen of Monal Bhawan, Painting work of Monal Bhawan and providing chain link fencing around 10 pole structure near Generator room and near DPS pre-primary School at Jhakri". For details, please visit websites www.sjvn.nic.in, <https://sjvn.abcpocure.com> & www.eprocure.gov.in. Last date for downloading of bid documents is **01.07.2021** (12:00 Hrs.). Last date for bid submission is **02.07.2021** (13:00 Hrs.). Amendment (s), if any, shall be issued on above websites only.

Dy. General Manager (P&C)
NJHPS, SJVN Ltd., Jhakri, Distt. Shimla H.P.-172201

NORTHERN RAILWAY

TENDER NOTICE

Invitation of Tenders through E-Procurement system

Deputy Chief Materials Manager, Northern Railway, New Delhi-110065, for and on behalf of the President of India, invites e-tenders through e-procurement system for supply of the following items:-

S.No.	Tender No.	Brief Description	Qty.	Closing Date
1.	82211056	Tab. Sacubitril 24mg + Valsartan 26mg	146774	29.06.2021
2.	82211055	Tab. Sacubitril 49mg + Valsartan 51mg	96264	29.06.2021
3.	82211161	Tab. Sitagliptin 50mg	252482	29.06.2021
4.	82211454	Tab. Sitagliptin 50mg + Metformin 1000mg	429000	29.06.2021
5.	82211193	Tab. Sitagliptin 50mg + Metformin 500mg	501000	29.06.2021
6.	82211216	Tab. Empagliflozin 25mg	193000	29.06.2021
7.	82211208A	Tab. Empagliflozin 10mg	153000	29.06.2021

Note:- 1. Vendors may visit the IREPS websites i.e. www.ireps.gov.in for details.
2. No Manual offer will be entertained.

Tender Notice No. AMI/2021-22/NRCH/02 Date : 08.06.2021.

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

1249/21

NORTHERN RAILWAY
TENDER NOTICE

No. CIID/DLI/Stacking/Tender/2018 Dated: 09.06.2021
The Senior Divisional Commercial Manager/Freight, Northern Railway, New Delhi invites E-tender for the contract of management of Stacking of Parcels at Delhi Junction Railway Station (PF 20 outward Parcel Godown and Machchi Godown) for three years. The details are as under:-

S. No.	Station Name	Station category	Type of work	Total Area (in sq. mtr.)	Advertised Value/ Reserve Price for One (1) year (in ₹)	Total Reserve Price for Three (3) years (in ₹)	Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) (in ₹)	Tender cost including GST@18% (in ₹)	Tender No.
1	Delhi Junction Railway Station (PF20) outward Parcel Godown and Machchi Godown)	A-1	Management of Stacking of Parcels at Delhi Junction Railway Station (PF20 outward Parcel Godown and Machchi Godown)	2909.02	1,63,02,149	4,89,06,447	9,78,200	11,800	CIID-Stacking-DLI-PF20-Jn21

Interested bidders may please visit official website for e-tendering i.e. www.ireps.gov.in for further details and submitting the tender. Important note:- 1. Bidders, who wish to participate in the E-tendering will have to procure class-3 valid digital security certificate (DSC) as per Information Technology Act, 2000. Bidders can procure this certificate from any of the certifying authority of Controller of Certifying Authorities (CCA) Government of India. Details of certifying authorities can be obtained from www.cca.gov.in. 2. The bidder has to register (if not registered earlier) with www.ireps.gov.in using DSC to participate in tender process. Detailed procedure for registration, system requirements and bidding are also available on www.ireps.gov.in. 1254/21

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

IMPORTANT NOTICE

It is notified for the information of rail passengers that the Railways have decided to restore the following Special Train, as per the following details:-

RESTORATION OF SPECIAL TRAIN		
Train No. & Name	Frequency	Restoration w.e.f.
09805 Kota Jn.-Udhampur Express Special	Weekly	Already restored
09806 Udhampur-Kota Jn. Express Special	Weekly	10.06.2021

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

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

Visit RailMadad website:- www.railmadad.indianrailways.gov.in
Download RailMadad app.
RailMadad Helpline No.: 139
Please join us on [f](https://www.facebook.com/railmadad) [i](https://www.instagram.com/railmadad) [y](https://www.youtube.com/railmadad) [w](https://www.whatsapp.com/railmadad)

NORTHERN RAILWAY
Your Convenience - Our Concern
Visit us at : www.nr.indianrailways.gov.in
"SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE"

1263/21

SHORT TAKES

DILIP KUMAR TO WALK OUT OF HOSPITAL TODAY

SHAHAB ANSARI
MUMBAI, JUNE 9

Legendary Bollywood actor Dilip Kumar's family friend on Wednesday Tweeted from the actor's official handle saying a successful pleural aspiration procedure was performed on Dilip Saab and he is expected to be discharged from the hospital on Thursday. "Thank you for your prayers. A successful pleural aspiration procedure was performed on Dilip Saab. I personally spoke to Dr. Jalil Parker and Dr. Nitin Gokhale. They are optimistic that he will be discharged tomm (Thursday).- FF (@FAISALmouthshut)," tweeted Faisal Farooqui. Kumar was taken to the PD Hinduja Hospital in Khar on Sunday after he complained of breathlessness. The doctors here admitted him for further tests and medical treatment. The investigation by doctors showed that the veteran actor was suffering from bilateral pleural effusion refers to the collection of fluid in the thin cavity which acts as a buffer between the lung and inner chest wall. The doctors waited for some test reports before conducting a pleural aspiration procedure upon him. Finally Farooqui confirmed that the same has been done and Mr Kumar is expected to be discharged from the hospital on Thursday.

HC STRENGTH INCREASED TO 42 IN T'GANA

PARMOD KUMAR
NEW DELHI, JUNE 9

In a big boost to Telangana high court, the Centre has decided to increase the sanctioned strength of the judges from existing 24 judges to 42 — an unprecedented increase of 75% — which was urgently required in view of mounting backlog of 2,37,000 cases. Out of 42, 32 will be permanent judges and 10 will be additional judges. Twenty eight judges will be elevated from the Bar and 14 will be from the judicial services. The Union law and justice ministry by June 7, 2021 letter to Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana gave its concurrence to the proposal to increase the sanctioned strength of high court judges. And the very next day — on June 8, 2021 — CJI Ramana gave his requisite final approval to the proposal. The credit for the decision to increase the sanctioned strength of Telangana high court judges, sources said, entirely goes to Chief Justice of India Ramana. Soon after becoming the CJI, he taken up the matter, including other pending issues, with the Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Mr Prasad.

Nusrat marriage...

■ Continued from Page 1 marriage at all in the eye of law."

She alleged, "My visit to any place for business or for the purpose of leisure should not concern anyone with whom I have separated. All my expenses have always been borne by me contrary to claims by 'someone'. I would also state that I have solely borne the expenses for my sister's education and my family's well-being from day one, as they have been my responsibility. I need not use or keep anyone's Credit Card, who I am not related to anymore. This too can be backed up by evidence. The one who claims to be 'rich' and 'been used by me' has been taking money from my account by accessing my bank accounts illegally and by illegitimate means at odd hours of the night, even post separation."

The TMC MP claimed, "I have already taken this up with the concerned banking authority and a police complaint shall be filed shortly. In the past, details of all family accounts were handed over to him upon his request and none of me or my family members were aware of any instructions given to the bank via our accounts. He has also been mishandling my funds from various accounts without my knowledge and consent. I am still battling it out with the bank and if need be, would release proof of the same. Also, my belongings, including my

clothes, bags and accessories still remain with them. I am disheartened and disappointed to state that all my family jewellery, given to me by my parents, friends and extended family, including my own hard-earned assets, has been illegally held back by them."

She added, "Being 'rich' does not always give a man the right to act as a victim and belittle the woman alone. I have made my own identity by my sheer hard-work; thus would not allow anyone not related to me to share the limelight or a title or followers based on my identity. I would never speak up about my personal life or anyone I am not related to. Thus, people who call themselves 'normal people' must not entertain anything which is not related to them. I would request the media to refrain from questioning the wrong person, who has not been a part of my life since long now. Turning a 'Sadharon' person, as claimed by someone, into a 'Hero', giving one-sided stories to malign my image is not desirable. I would earnestly request my friends from the media to not give unnecessary mileage to such people or situations."

However Mr Jain said, "I already filed whatever I had to file in court. It is a civil suit for annulment. So I do not want to say anything because the matter is in the court. She knows everything I did for her. So no comment on her application now."

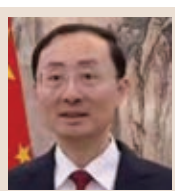
■ Beijing is committed to settle border issue through talks: China envoy 'Let's cooperate, not confront each other'

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI
NEW DELHI, JUNE 9

China does "not believe in the philosophy of using one's strength to bully the weak or winner-takes-all" and it "will never pursue a China first approach" nor seek to dominate the world", Chinese ambassador to India Sun Weidong has said. He also said India and China "need to help each other succeed instead of undercutting each other" and that Beijing is committed to settling the boundary question with India through dialogue and consultation. The Chinese envoy further said that "amity with neighbours and harmony without uniformity are values cherished in the Chinese cul-

ture", adding that "China is committed to peaceful co-existence with all countries, true multilateralism and to non-hegemony, non-expansion, non-alignment and non-coercion".

In an online interaction — "Understand China's Development, Keep Faith in Cooperation" — with the Confederation of Young Leaders (CYL) and Students and Faculty from Indian Universities, ambassador Sun said that when "India fought the pandemic, China was not absent nor sat back apathetically", pointing out that "China exported more than one lakh oxygen concentrators, eight thousand ventilators, 90 thousand thermometers and over 10 crore masks to India during the first half of May". He added that



Sun Weidong

THE CHINESE envoy said that 'amity with neighbours and harmony without uniformity are values cherished in the Chinese culture' and 'China is committed to peaceful co-existence with all countries, true multilateralism and to non-hegemony, non-expansion and non-coercion'.

Beijing "approved more than 10 Indian chartered cargo flights for June", further adding that "Chinese workers worked overtime during the May Day holiday and completed three batches of medical equipment which were airlifted to Calcutta (Kolkata)".

The ambassador said, "The Chinese people do not believe in the philosophy of using one's strength to bully the weak or winner-takes-all. China's develop-

ment has never been at the expense of other countries' interests. We will never pursue a 'China first' approach, nor do we seek to dominate the world. ... History has proven time and again that to pursue the beggar-thy-neighbour practice, conduct isolation and exclusion, and build small circles seeking zero-sum confrontation always failed. Only openness, inclusiveness and win-win cooperation are the right way forward for mankind."

Govt ropes in clerics, youth to check vaccine hesitancy

YOJNA GUSAI
NEW DELHI, JUNE 9

From madrasa teachers to panchkarma practitioners to medical lab technicians, frontline health workers among others, many such young professionals have been roped in by the minority affairs ministry to participate in the campaign to combat Covid-19 vaccine hesitancy. India has set an ambitious goal of vaccinating all above 18 years by December.

Amid reports of the hesitancy coming mainly from rural, tribal and minority dominated areas, the ministry has set up task forces to check such cases. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had himself addressed the vaccine hesitancy issue by getting vaccinated and has on many occasions urged people to get vaccinated.

Sources disclosed minority affairs minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi had himself called up some prominent people of the minority community



Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi

MOST OF the professionals helping the ministry in spreading awareness are professionals who had benefitted from the ministry's various schemes, including the skill development

after their reported remarks were seen fuelling vaccine hesitancy and had asked them to urge people to get vaccinated.

Most of the professionals helping the ministry in spreading awareness are professionals who had benefitted from the ministry's various schemes, including the skill development schemes. Many youths who had got training in various fields like

lab technicians, panchkarma practitioners and other skills have been reaching out to people in the rural areas.

The minority affairs ministry has also reached out to religious figures among minority communities asking them to use their influence to check vaccine hesitancy.

For instance, the ministry provided health sector training to 1.12 lakh youths in the last two years, who are not only assisting in the treatment of corona affected people but most of them are also assisting in the awareness campaign.

Similarly, more than 3.84 lakh women, who benefitted from the ministry's "Nai Roshini" scheme and self-help groups associated with them have been helping in the awareness campaign. Many NGO's who have been running various health care programmes under 'Garib Nawaz Self Employment Scheme,' "Seekho aur Kamao", among others have also been roped in for the campaign.

In MP, shops, restaurants offer discount to vaccinated people

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY
BHOPAL, JUNE 9

In a bid to shed vaccine hesitancy among the people, departmental stores, restaurants and various other business establishments have started offering discounts on their products to the customers if they produce inoculation certificates.

With the state heading towards unlocking in a phased manner, various business establishment promoters have launched

a drive to woo the people to get the jab by offering them discounts on purchasing of goods to save the state from experiencing the third pandemic wave, believed to hit by December this year.

"The business has suffered due to two long spell of lockdowns in the last two years. We cannot afford to face another lockdown. Hence, various business establishments are encouraging people to get vaccinated by offering them discounts," Bhopendra Jain, presi-

dent of Madhya Pradesh chapter of confederation of all India traders, said on Wednesday.

He said a businessman in "Saraf bazaar" (jewelry market) in Gwalior has even offered to cut the making charges of jewelry to the customers by 50 per cent if they produce vaccination certificates.

The discounts offered on different consumer goods ranged from 5-50 per cent, Dr Pravin Agrawal, secretary, Gwalior chapter of Chamber of Commerce, said.

"Without peace, there will be no development and cooperation. Amity with neighbors, harmony without uniformity are values cherished in the Chinese culture. ... China grows not by expansion or colonial plunder, but through the hard work of its people. China is committed to an independent foreign policy of peace and is the only country that has codified peaceful development in its Constitution. China is committed to peaceful co-existence with all countries, true multilateralism and to non-hegemony, non-expansion, non-alignment and non-coercion... We must uphold peace, and address differences through dialogue. And when peace is undermined, we must strive to defend peace," he added.

Anup Chandra, ex-chief secy of UP, takes charge as EC

New Delhi, June 9: Former Uttar Pradesh chief secretary Anup Chandra Pandey assumed charge as an election commissioner on Wednesday.

Mr Pandey joins the Election Commission (EC) as the second election commissioner. The three-member body is headed by Chief Election Commissioner Sushil Chandra and Rajiv Kumar is the other election commissioner.

Mr Pandey was appointed as an EC on Tuesday.

Born on February 15, 1959, Mr Pandey was a 1984-batch IAS officer. During the span of about 37 years of service, he has worked in various ministries and departments at the centre and his state cadre of Uttar Pradesh, an official statement said.

He will demit office in February 2024 on attaining the age of 65. — PTI



MP and NC president Farooq Abdullah, PDP chief and former chief minister Mehbooba Mufti and other members after a meeting of Peoples Alliance for Gupkar Declaration in Srinagar on Wednesday. — PTI

Change of heart: Gupkar alliance to quit path of clash

Pledges to fight for rights of people

YUSUF JAMEEL
SRINAGAR, JUNE 9

In apparent strategic flexibility or change of strategy, the People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD), an alliance of J&K's regional opposition parties and their allies from the national Left parties, will move away from the path of confrontation and fight on issues, including restoration of the erstwhile state's special constitutional status in the existing system.

That is what could be gathered from the briefing of its leaders after they met on Wednesday after a gap of several months to discuss the prevailing political situation of J&K and other important issues faced by it. The meeting, which held at the residence of former chief minister Mehbooba Mufti, took place in the backdrop of the fresh influx of troops setting rumour mill agog in the Union Territory (UT).

These rumours, which have been swirling from Jammu to Srinagar to Kargil and Leh but have taken over vast sections of the population, mainly in Kashmir, purport the scenic Muslim majority Valley is being bifurcated and one part of it (volatile south Kashmir districts)

may be merged with predominantly Hindu Jammu region to "weaken its political strength" and "dilute its population's voting power".

It was amid these rumours that a section of local media had discussed the inertness of the alliance and asked if it was already dead.

On Wednesday, PAGD president Farooq Abdullah cited the Covid-19 pandemic as the main reason for the PAGD remaining dormant all these months. "I had myself contracted the virus. The situation was really bad and, therefore, we couldn't meet as often as we should have."

Asked if he would quit as a member Parliament if Kashmir Valley was bifurcated or a similar move was made by the Centre, he retorted, "Why should I quit. I will fight on issues within the Parliament and outside it as well."

CPIM's Muhammad Yousuf Tarigami, who has replaced PC's Sajad Gani Lone as the spokesperson of the PAGD, said, "We will continue to fight for the rights of the people of all the three regions of J&K- Jammu, the Valley and Ladakh- and for this seize even smallest opportunity that comes our way."

Arunachal villagers get free rice in return for jabs

Itanagar, June 9: Free rice in return for a Covid-19 jab, and as much as 20 kg. The prospect turned out to be lucrative enough to dispel rumours around vaccination among villagers of an administrative circle in Arunachal Pradesh, as over 80 of them turned up on foot for the inoculation within days of the announcement of the sop.

The brainchild of circle officer Tashi Wangchuk Thongdok of Yazali in Lower Subansiri district, the offer of free rice for those getting vaccinated in the 45-plus age group was launched on Monday and was valid till Wednesday.

There are 1,399 people above the age of 45 in the Yazali Circle, officials said.

Jitin Prasada quits Cong

■ Continued from Page 1 Bharat (Modi government's slogans)," said Mr Prasada after joining the BJP in the presence of Union minister Piyush Goyal and BJP media incharge Anil Baluni.

Before reaching BJP headquarters, Mr Prasada had met Union home minister Amit Shah. He met BJP president J.P. Nadda after formally joining the saffron party.

Mr Prasada is the second leader after Jyotiraditya Scindia, who was also considered close to Rahul Gandhi, to join the saffron fold. The Congress is abuzz with renewed speculation that Sachin Pilot could also switch camp amid ongoing rumours that Rajasthan chief minister Ashok Gehlot could face fresh challenge from the Pilot camp after last year's political crisis.

In political circles speculation had been rife since early 2019 that Mr Prasada could switch camp as he was feeling sidelined.

Since 2014, Mr Prasada has lost all the elections he contested. He lost last two Lok Sabha polls — 2014 and 2019 — from Dhaurahra Lok Sabha seat in Lakhimpur Kheri and the 2017 Assembly polls and was said to be miffed after the Congress leadership decided to

appoint Ajay Kumar Lallu as the UPCC chief, a post Mr Prasada was said to be eyeing.

A former Union minister, Mr Prasada was member of the Congress Working Committee and the Congress' election incharge for the recently concluded Assembly polls in West Bengal where the party failed to win even a single seat.

In an obvious reference to the development, Congress leader Milind Deora tweeted, "I believe in @INCIndia as a party that can and must reclaim its position as India's big tent party. We still have a strong bench that if empowered and optimally utilised, can deliver." While Mr Pilot said, "It's very, very sad that Jitin Prasada has quit the Congress." There has also been talk of Mr Deora leaving the party.

During the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, Mr Prasada was on the verge of switching sides but was persuaded by the then Congress incharge, Jyotiraditya Scindia, who is currently in the BJP.

Once considered an integral part of team Rahul Gandhi, Mr Prasada has left the Congress when Mr Gandhi is expected to return to the helm following the party's organisational elections.

Covid patients recover

■ Continued from Page 1 of the patients showed improvement within 12 hours and they were discharged shortly. Doctors feel this cocktail of REGCov2 (CASIRIVIMAB Plus IMDEVIMAB) can be a game changer in Covid critical care. More Delhi hospitals have now started this therapy to save lives.

The two patients who were given the antibody therapy were a 36-year-old healthcare worker and an 80-year-old elderly with comorbidities.

Another important drug, 2-Deoxy-D-Glucose (2-DG), developed by the DRDO, will soon go for bulk production as the DRDO has called for expression of interest (EoI) to transfer the technology to Indian pharma-

ceutical industries.

Meanwhile, Bharat Biotech, makers of Covaxin, has said that it will conduct the Phase 4 trials of its vaccine to check the "real-world effectiveness". Phase 4 trials involve the participation of a larger group to study the efficacy and safety of the vaccine or a treatment. This comes a day after a Kolkata doctor-cum-researcher and one of the co-authors of a study said Covishield produced more antibodies than Covaxin.

"A recent comparative report on evaluation of immunogenicity responses to spike protein after 1st and 2nd dose of Indian manufactured vaccines study had lots of flaws. The journal that stated

the comparative report said more antibodies were produced by Covishield than Covaxin. It is not a peer-reviewed publication, nor statistically and scientifically designed study. The study design and conduct reflect an ad-hoc analysis, rather than predetermined hypothesis. Further, the study was not registered on CTRI website, nor approved by CDSCO and SEC," Bharat Biotech said.

The Centre has tweaked the CoWin App to allow corrections. These corrections can be made to rectify inadvertent errors in name, year of birth and gender printed on the CoWin vaccination certificate. Users can make the correction through the CoWin website.

MSP for kharif crops hiked

■ Continued from Page 1 and will help farmers take a call on which Kharif (summer) crop to grow as sowing picks with the spread of the southwest monsoon in the coming weeks.

While the MSP of paddy was raised marginally to Rs 1,940 per quintal, the rates of pulses, oilseeds and cereals were hiked substantially. While the highest absolute increase in MSP is for sesamum, it

is followed by tur and urad at ₹300 per quintal each. Groundnut MSP was increased by ₹275 per quintal, niger seed by ₹235, cotton medium staple by ₹211 and long staple by ₹200.

The increase comes during the ongoing farmers' protest against three contentious farm laws passed last year.

Briefing reporters after the Cabinet meeting, agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar

said the Cabinet has approved the MSP of 14 kharif crops for the 2021-22 crop year (July-June) and farmers would get 50-85 per cent returns over their cost of production.

Dispelling apprehensions about the MSP, the minister said when doubts about MSP were raised, both the Prime Minister and he had assured that the MSP policy is there and will continue in future as well.

THE ASIAN AGE

10 JUNE 2021

In distress, MSMEs and middle class cry for help

The Tamil Nadu chief minister, M.K. Stalin's idea of mobilising opinion among his 12 counterparts in non-BJP states to demonstrate collective strength in pressing for a loan moratorium for MSMEs (ministry of micro, small and medium enterprises) has a sound base in the current economic situation. The call may also be seen as a shrewd one at a time when the political winds blew in one direction so hard that a crucial change in the public vaccine procurement and disbursement policy was thrust upon the Centre with free vaccination on offer for all Indian adults. The top court's ominous warning that the Constitution does not envisage courts to be silent spectators when executive policies infringe upon citizens' rights, which was a reference to the invidious nature of the vaccine policy that tended to discriminate against citizens under 45, may have had everything to do with the Centre resiling.

The decision to change tack may have signalled that collective pressure could make the executive see reason, particularly when all the arguments in

A loan moratorium, particularly for small-sized ones like ₹5 crores that is the lifeblood of MSMEs that generate a huge number of jobs, would work well

intensive sectors, including hotels and restaurants tourism, aviation ancillaries and several others badly impacted by the pandemic.

The point is, much more can be done to alleviate the economic distress. A loan moratorium, particularly for small-sized ones like ₹5 crores that is the lifeblood of MSMEs that generate a huge number of jobs, would work well. In principle, it is not loan truancy but a mere granting of time to tide over as the economy recovers in the wake of the second pandemic wave subsiding in India. The RBI extended a special liquidity facility of ₹16,000 crores to Small Industry Development Bank (SIDBI) besides facilities for banks to park matching funds at 40 basis points higher than the reverse repo rate. Even then, the economic pain has been running so deep in the second lockdown that extraordinary measures are still needed.

Recovering as it is from a very low base, the economy is bound to grow in the coming quarters though the forecasts factoring in the deleterious effects of the lockdown are tending to get lower, even as low as 8.5 per cent by the World Bank. However, the projected growth trajectory might hide the suffering of the last several quarters, beginning with April 2020. There is no better time than now to come to the help of small industries across sectors most hit by the slow-down and the middle class burdened by housing EMIs, etc. Radical measures like generous printing of notes has also been recommended, which the RBI and official India, hemmed in by having to think within the box, would be wary of. The economic distress is, however, very real and only doles, grants and loan moratoriums can do something to assuage the economic hurt.

Include Northeast in syllabus

Former Union minister and currently a member of the Arunachal Pradesh Assembly, Ninon Ering, has rendered public service of national significance in proposing to the Union government that a chapter be added in the CBSE syllabus and that of state boards on the northeastern region of the country, about which there appears to be very little understanding in the rest of India.

This frequently leads to insult, abuse and violence unleashed against people from this region living in different parts of the country, notably the national capital. It is prejudice born of ignorance that gives rise to the "othering" of people from the northeast. Mr Ering's proposal made in writing to the Union home minister and the education minister are in line with the report of the M.P. Bezbaruah Committee set up in February 2014.

India is a vast and diverse land. While this is accepted as a general truism, it is Indians themselves who seem to have so little idea about how diverse we are. Until this is fully realised, and the contribution to national life of all those who make up this country is fully acknowledged, our nationalism project, which commenced with the anti-colonial movement, cannot be said to be complete. Until that happens, only notional unity will prevail, not real, emotional unity.

Mr Ering, whose proposal stems from sentiments expressed by various sections of the people of northeastern India, has sought to underline that all Indians should be made familiar with the geography, the ethnicities, and cultural patterns, of our northeastern states, by introducing a section in school text books on this part of the country.

His concern arose from the recurring stories of violence that people from the northeast have to face in so-called mainland India. But the issue he highlights is larger, and of deep-going importance. It concerns us all. In fact, it may be a good idea to have as compulsory study sections in school-books on people of each state so that prejudice against one another may give way to understanding.

THE ASIAN AGE

T. VENKATRAM REDDY

Editor in Chief

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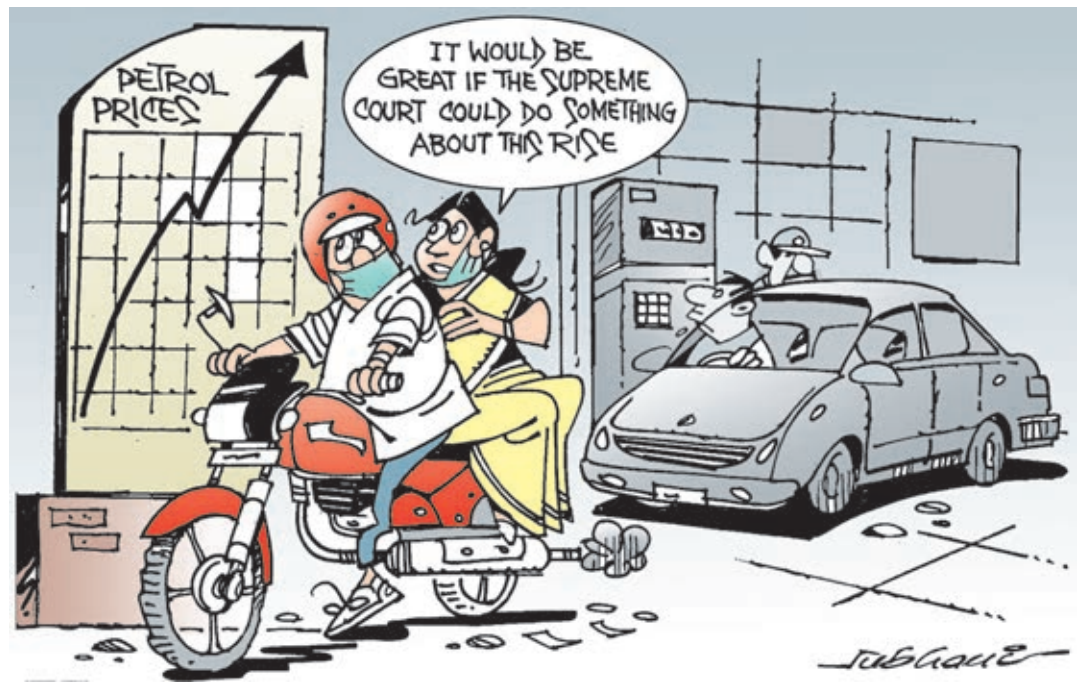
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Subhani



Why monopoly of power is a threat to democracy



Sunanda K. Datta-Ray

Reflections

As the world reeled from the Belarus kidnapping, the crack-down in Hong Kong and Israel's bombardment of the Gaza Strip, I came across a poignant description not just of another tragedy but of an underlying factor in all such traumas. Looking back at Beijing's Tiananmen Square massacre of June 4, 1989, when hundreds, perhaps thousands, of demonstrators were killed for demanding democratic governance, the writer spoke bluntly about the corruption of absolute power which undermines democracy.

"It is the monopoly of power by the ruling party, which makes it impossible for people to check the abuses from which they suffer," Chao-hua Wang wrote towards the end of an essay of nearly 4,000 words in the *London Review of Books* of July 5, 2007. "Only democratic rights could make the holders of power accountable for their actions and release the popular energies needed to achieve all the things of which they are incapable."

In short, no matter how legitimately political power is acquired, justice demands the balancing factor of an opposition. If there is none, then only the supervision of the law courts can prevent the tyranny of the majority and save the populace from elective absolutism. China had neither.

Ms Wang was an ardent activist and office-bearer in the Beijing Autonomous Association of College Students, which organised the 1989 movement. As a result, she was put on the Chinese government's "21 Most Wanted Student Leaders" list and had to spend more than six months underground before escaping to the United States (where she still lives) in early 1990. What she wrote could apply to many other seemingly democratic countries, at times even

to the nation whose official spokesmen as well as sycophantic TV anchors miss no opportunity of boasting that India is the world's largest democracy. That undeniable numerical achievement makes for representative government but not necessarily a democracy, as Senator Adlai Stevenson once pointed out to me at a seminar in Chicago.

Belarus seems almost to have been choreographed for the latest outrage. The protests against last year's election when President Alexander Lukashenko (often called "Europe's Last Dictator") claimed victory on August 9 for a sixth term in office had left behind a deeply unsettled country. Domestic discontent was matched by sharp differences abroad with the European Union, which imposed sanctions against 40 Belarusian officials accused of political repression and vote rigging. Belarus retaliated with symmetrical sanctions against an undisclosed number of EU officials. While the United Nations Human Rights Office cited more than 450 cases of torture and ill-treatment of detainees, as well as rape and other sexual abuse, the human rights centre in Minsk, Belarus' capital, documented 1,000 testimonies of torture of victims.

What excites and outrages civilised opinion even more is the manner in which subterfuge was used to kidnap a young dissident Belarusian jour-

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nalist, Roman Protasevich, while he was flying from Athens, Greece, to Vilnius in Lithuania on May 23. While in Belarusian airspace, the pilot of his commercial flight was ordered to divert from his course and land in Minsk. Mr Protasevich — a prominent opponent of President Lukashenko — and his girlfriend, a law student, Sofia Sapaga, were arrested there.

No one thinks the Belarussian claim of being tipped off about Hamas planting a bomb on the aircraft at all plausible. Even if Belarus can show that it lawfully diverted the plane, under International Civil Aviation Organisation treaties, Flight FR4978 was under the jurisdiction of Poland where the plane was registered. No country has the right to detain suspects on a civil aircraft for crimes that were not committed on board that aircraft.

Of course, such things have happened down the ages. Lawlessness has always been man's natural state. History records that in 1804 Napoleon Bonaparte, then First Consul, sent his soldiers illegally into Switzerland to seize a 32-year-old Bourbon prince, the Duke of Enghien, and take him to France where he was shot after a parody of a rushed trial. In 1956, France forced a Moroccan charter plane to land in Algiers to jail four Algerian nationalists travelling to a diplomatic conference in Tunis. Four years later Israeli Mossad and Shin Bet intelligence agents captured the German Nazi Adolf Eichmann in Argentina and took him to Israel to be hanged.

Napoleon would not have become what he did if he had been at all finicky about democr-

ic norms. Republican France saw no reason to respect democratic niceties either in its determination to retain Algeria as a colony against the will of the Algerians. Despite — perhaps because of — the agony European Jews suffered, the State of Israel knows no rules save those it frames for its own survival and aggrandisement.

Whatever the outcome of the tortuous ministry-making in Tel Aviv (the only capital city to which Israel is entitled until it is prepared to share Jerusalem with Palestine), hardly any Israeli leader accepts the two-state solution this column had welcomed on May 25 ("Israel & Gaza: Use truce to find a lasting solution").

Even Israel's late President Shimon Peres, a dove among Zionist hawks, wrote that the two states already existed in Israel and Jordan, leaving no scope for a third. Hong Kong's transition from a free (to the extent that a colony can be free) colony to a subservient one is perhaps the most tragic instance of democracy denied. Despite Beijing's clampdown, small numbers of Hong Kongers turned up on June 4 with candles and glowing mobiles to honour those who perished in Tiananmen Square 32 years ago. "But what is remembered so powerfully in Hong Kong cannot even be mentioned on the other side of the border that separates the Special Administrative Region from the rest of the People's Republic of China," Ms Wang lamented.

The problem is as old as man. It suggests no quick fix solution. But if democracies don't go to war against each other, as is said, they also have the capacity to address grievances and provide each citizen, however humble, the assurance that his or her voice will not be ignored. A vigorous Opposition and a vigilant judiciary can most effectively practise the eternal vigilance that Bagehot had famously called the price of liberty. They offer the only protection against a majoritarian abuse that is no less pernicious because it can claim voter legitimacy.

The writer is a senior journalist, columnist and author

LETTERS

KUDOS CHHETRI

Indian football talisman Sunil Chhetri deserves accolades on marching past Argentina's global superstar Lionel Messi on the active goal scorer's list. The champion footballer scored a brace against Bangladesh in the World Cup Qualifier in Doha to guide India home and take his tally to 74, thus becoming the second-highest active international goal-scorer after the iconic Cristiano Ronaldo. India leans heavily on Chhetri to find the net, and he has seldom disappointed. Incredibly, the 36-year-old striker has a lot of steam still left to represent the country and score goals at will.

N.J. Ravi Chander
Bengaluru

THANK YOU, RAMANA

ONLY IN A LITERATE, politically aware state like Kerala can one find a 10-year-old writing to the Chief Justice of India on Covid concerns. Chief Justice N.V. Ramana has been very gracious in replying to Ludwina Joseph and encouraging her to pursue her quest. Such an act increases our faith and respect in the judiciary as also the timely intervention of his bench in the vaccination imbroglio which literally shamed the government to sit up and course-correct. Only an aware and responsible citizenry can act as a bulwark against forces threatening the nation.

Anthony Henriques
Mumbai

NEW VACCINE TRICKS

THE NEW PRICING policy of coronavirus vaccines at private hospitals where a jab of Covaxin will cost ₹1,410 is sure to drive people towards Covaxin in government hospitals and free vaccination camps. As for rural India, since registration is through apps only, free slots of Covaxin will be allotted. The earlier system of providing vaccines at ₹250 in private hospitals was working smoothly with even walk-in facilities available. It is too early to look away. Assisted by the Opposition and judiciary, the civil society must continue to hold the government accountable.

Subhash Agrawal
New Delhi

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

Dilip Cherian
Dilli Ka Babu



As Centre-state crossfire builds up, morale sinks

The instances of bureaucrats getting caught in the middle of political battles are a growing and dynamic list. Those in the know say that after the Centre recently amended the empanelment policy for IAS officers, young officers fear that their careers will be jeopardised if there is no political consensus between the Centre and the concerned state government.

Under the revised policy, the Centre has made the Central deputation of two years mandatory for IAS officers before they complete the first 16 years of service in their cadre state to be eligible for joint secretary's post in Delhi in the future. This would not be a problem if the Centre and state were ruled by the same party. The problem arises, as in the case of West

Bengal, when there are ruled by bitter political foes. The babus are caught in a bind. Whether this is an inevitable feature of federalism isn't clear yet, but babu nervousness isn't something that helps with better administration in these perilous times.

HOME AND THE WORLD

It's not just the Vice-President and the Prime Minister who are getting new residences in Lutyens' Delhi. Though not included in the Central Vista project underway in the heart of the capital, officials, or at least some lucky ones, at the ministry of external affairs too may get spanking new residences by 2023.

The ministry is building 97 state-of-the-art residences in the Gole Market area, known these days mostly for its nondescript and low-

cost sarkari housing, into a high-powered diplomatic enclave replete with the modern bells and whistles that matches the lifestyle the IFS mandarins are accustomed to when serving abroad.

Perhaps the residential project is a belated move by the Modi sarkar to signal that it does not ignore the Indian Foreign Service. While in recent years other services have gained ground eroding the exclusivity enjoyed for decades by the IAS club, the IFS is too is now getting its share. A sarkari house in Delhi, as any government babu will tell you, is all about availability and location. The IFS seems to have scored a diplomatic victory on both.

AN AVOIDABLE FRACAS

Even as Karnataka grapples with

the Covid pandemic, two women IAS officers have stirred up an avoidable controversy, given the current circumstances.

Shilpa Nag, the Mysuru corporation commissioner, reportedly resigned from the IAS after accusing her senior, Rohini Sundari Dasari, deputy commissioner of the district, of interfering in her efforts to manage the pandemic. The state government has indicated that Ms Nag's resignation has not been accepted nor will it be. But sources say that Ms Nag has gathered several voices in her support, with other city corporators demanding that Ms Dasari be transferred out. Ms Dasari has denied the allegation and said that she had merely asked Ms Nag to explain the "contradictory data" on Covid from her ward.

It is believed that the root of the

dispute between the two senior IAS officers is Ms Dasari's insistence on the deployment of CSR funds for the entire district rather than limiting the funds for managing Covid in the city area only.

Meanwhile, to allow tempers to cool down, the state government has transferred both officers. Ms Dasari will be the new commissioner of Hindu religious and charitable endowments, while Ms Nag has been named director of e-governance in rural development and panchayati raj department. Sources say that the fracas was wholly avoidable and the disputed issue could have been dealt with within the government without a fuss.

Share a babu experience! Follow [dilipthecherian@Twitter.com](https://twitter.com/dilipthecherian). Let's multiply the effect.

SHORT TAKES

**S. KOREA BUILDING
COLLAPSE KILLS
FOUR, INJURES 8**

Seoul, June 9: A five-story building being demolished in southern South Korea collapsed on Wednesday, sending debris falling on a bus and killing four people on board, officials said. Concrete from the collapsed building in the southern city of Gwangju fell on the bus when it stopped on a nearby street, the National Fire Agency said.

Emergency officers dispatched to the site rescued eight people from the bus, all seriously injured, before discovering the four dead bodies, an agency official said on condition of anonymity citing department rules. He said emergency officers were searching for any other people who might be trapped under the debris.

**BREXIT: UK URGES
EU TO SHOW
COMMON SENSE**

London, June 9: The UK's chief negotiator called on the European Union to show "pragmatism and common sense," instead of threatening to retaliate, as the two sides meet to resolve differences over the deal that was supposed to keep trade flowing after Brexit.

David Frost made the comments after his EU counterpart said the bloc was ready to act "firmly and resolutely" if the UK fails to honour its commitments under the divorce agreement.

The two men are scheduled to meet Wednesday in London amid rising tensions over implementation of the deal in Northern Ireland, the only part of the UK that shares a land border with the bloc.

**VOTE COMMENTS:
ALBANIAN PARL
IMPEACHES PREZ**

Tirana, June 9: The Albanian Parliament on Wednesday impeached President Ilir Meta for violating the constitution and discharged him from the post. In an extraordinary session, the parliament voted 104-7 to discharge the president. Three abstained.

The final approval comes from Albania's Constitutional Court within three months. A report of a parliamentary probe concluded that Meta had violated the constitution with his biased approach against the ruling Socialists during the April 25 parliamentary electoral campaign. It said Meta violated 16 articles and also incited violence. Meta accused PM Edi Rama of concentrating all legislative, administrative and judicial powers in his hands.

**DIESELGATE
SCAM: EX-CEO
OF VW CHARGED**

Berlin, June 9: Berlin prosecutors said Wednesday they have charged Volkswagen's former chief executive Martin Winterkorn with making false statements to a parliamentary committee over the automobile giant's emissions-cheating "Dieselgate" scandal.

"The public prosecutor's office accuses the defendant of giving false testimony on January 19, 2017, as a witness before the 'emissions' investigation committee," they said.

Winterkorn claimed to have learnt about illegal devices installed in VW vehicles to trick emissions tests only in September 2015, when he is believed to already be aware by May that year, they said.

The issue was also raised at a crisis meeting of Volkswagen executives in July 2015, the statement said.

Winterkorn resigned in September 2015.

**10 MINE-CLEARING
WORKERS KILLED
IN AFGHANISTAN**

Kunduz, June 9: Masked gunmen killed 10 people working for the HALO Trust mine-clearing organisation in northern Afghanistan, the interior ministry said Wednesday, blaming the Taliban for the latest attack to rock the violence-ravaged country.

The raid happened on Tuesday evening as dozens of deminers were relaxing at a HALO compound in Baghlan province, around 260 kilometres (160 miles) north of the capital, after a day spent looking for ordnance in the area.

Baghlan has seen fierce fighting in recent months, with near-daily battles between the Taliban and government forces. A survivor said that five or six armed men scaled the compound walls and gathered everyone together before asking if there were any Hazara present.

US passes bill to combat Beijing

China to be accountable for predatory tactics

Washington, June 9: The United States Senate has passed a major legislative package aimed at improving the country's economic competition with China and holding its Communist government accountable for predatory tactics.

The important anti-China bill was passed by the Senate with 68-32 votes. It is considered a major political victory by Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer who had made it a top priority.

The US Innovation and Competition Act invests more than \$100 billion of taxpayer funds to solidify the United States' leadership in scientific and technological innovation critical to national security and economic competitiveness.

It will also strengthen the security of essential supply chains, and US ability to solve supply-chain disruptions during crises. Additionally, the bill increases funding for National Science Foundation activities.

"Passing this bill — now called the US Innovation and Competition Act — is the moment when the Senate lays the foundation for another century of American leadership. Let me say that again: This bill could be the turning point for American leadership in the 21st Century," Schumer said on the Senate floor.

This legislation will go down as one of the most significant, bipartisan achievements of the US Senate in recent history, the senior Democratic Senator said.

"Around the globe, authoritarian governments believe that squabbling democracies like ours can't unite around national priorities. They believe that democracy itself is a relic of the past, and that by beating us to emerging technologies, many of them will be able to re-shape the world in their own image," he said.

The ruling Communist Party of China (CPC) has made no bones about its desire for global economic dominance through whatever means necessary. They've actively worked to buy up, influence, spy on and steal American innovation, Senator Chuck Grassley said.

"They've sought to spread pro-China propaganda at our research and academic institutions. And while their ill-gotten approach to economic advancement has boosted their status in the world, they

Oz: WTO should punish Chinese economic coercion

Canberra, June 9: The World Trade Organisation should penalise "bad behaviour when it occurs," Australia's prime minister said Wednesday ahead of a Group of Seven leaders' meeting in Britain where he hopes to garner support in a trade dispute with China.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison said Australia would be "working with others to buttress the role of the World Trade Organisation and to modernise its rulebook where necessary." "In my discussions with many leaders, I've taken great encouragement from the support shown for Australia's preparedness to withstand economic coercion in recent times," Morrison said in a speech delivered in the Australian west coast city of Perth before leaving for the G7 meeting in Cornwall. The Australian government announced in December it would ask the WTO to intervene in its

claim to be a developing nation to get better deals to finance their activities," he said, adding that this is the behaviour of a responsible nation.

Senator Sherrod Brown said that China spent billions propping up state-owned enterprises and subsidising research and development, and they also take United States ideas and use them to compete — and sometimes cheat — against American workers and businesses.

"This is an important, bipartisan step to ensure the technologies that will drive the next generation of economic growth and manufacturing — from semiconductors to hydrogen buses to the next generation jet engine — will be developed in America, and put Ohioans to work at good paying jobs," he said.

This bill will help the US stop foreign governments from stealing our research and innovation, so that American taxpayer-funded research will be used to create jobs for hard-working Americans, Senator Rob Portman said. — PTI

El Salvador first country to adopt bitcoin as legal tender

San Salvador, June 9: Bitcoin is to become legal tender in El Salvador, the country's president said, making it the first nation to adopt a cryptocurrency for everyday use.

Lawmakers in the Central American nation's Congress passed a bill late Tuesday that will eventually allow the famously volatile digital currency to be used for many aspects of daily life, from property purchases to tax contributions.

"The #BitcoinLaw has just been approved by a qualified majority" in the legislative assembly, Pres-

ident Nayib Bukele tweeted after the vote late Tuesday. "History!" the president added.

The 39-year-old leader said a majority of 62 out of 84 lawmakers approved the bill, which he proposed just last week.

The law passed with the support of Bukele's allies despite minority opposition parties — who had criticised the speed of the vote — refusing to back it.

Cryptocurrencies have soared in popularity due to their use as a store of value, the relative anonymity they offer users and wild price fluctuations

dispute with China over barley and expects other nations to become involved in the case.

China effectively ended imports of Australian barley in May 2020 by putting tariffs of more than 80 per cent on the crop, accusing Australia of breaching WTO rules by subsidising barley production and selling the grain in China at below production cost.

Trade in Australian seafood, wood, beef, wine and coal has also been disrupted since Australia angered China by requesting an independent inquiry into the origins of the Coronavirus pandemic. "A well-functioning WTO that sets clear rules, arbitrates disputes objectively and efficiently penalises bad behaviour when it occurs. This can be one of the most powerful tools the international community has to counter economic coercion," Morrison said. — AP

CICADAS DELAY WH PRESS BEFORE BIDEN TRIP

Washington, June 9: Reporters travelling to the United Kingdom for President Joe Biden's first overseas trip were delayed seven hours after their chartered plane was overrun by cicadas.

The Washington, DC, area is among the many parts of the country that have been swarmed by Brood X cicadas, a large emergence of the loud 17-year insects that take to dive-bombing onto moving vehicles and unsuspecting passersby. Even Biden wasn't spared.

The president brushed a cicada from the back of his neck as he chatted with his Air Force greeter after arriving at Joint Base Andrews for Wednesday's flight.

"Watch out for the cicadas," Biden then told reporters. "I just got one. It just got me." It was unclear how cicadas disrupted the mechanics of the press plane. — AP

that present opportunities for greater profits than investing on the regular stock exchanges of the world. The volatility of bitcoin — currently priced at \$33,814 — and its murky legal status have raised questions about whether it could ever replace traditional currency in day-to-day transactions.

But El Salvador — a small nation where four out of 10 people live in poverty — has turned to the top crypto asset that has been backed by billionaires like Elon Musk and large financial companies such as PayPal. — AFP

Russian court mulls motion to outlaw Navalny organisations

Moscow, June 9: A Moscow court on Wednesday considered a request by prosecutors to outlaw the organisations founded by Russian Opposition leader Alexei Navalny — part of authorities' efforts to muzzle critics ahead of a crucial parliamentary election in September.

The Moscow City Court is expected to grant the request to designate Navalny's Foundation for Fighting Corruption and his sprawling network of regional offices across Russia as extremist organisations. In conjunction with a new law, the ruling would bar people associated with the groups from running for public office, derailling hopes by Navalny's allies to seek parliament seats.

The extremism label also could potentially carry



Alexei Navalny

prison terms for activists who have worked with the organisations, anyone who have donated to them, and even those who have simply shared the groups' materials.

Navalny's offices across dozens of Russian regions were already shut in April

after the prosecutors issued an injunction to suspend his activities pending the court's ruling.

But, the dissident's associates have vowed to continue their work in different formats.

Navalny, the most adamant political foe of President Vladimir Putin, was arrested in January upon returning from Germany where he spent five months convalescing after a nerve agent poisoning that he blamed on the Kremlin — that Russian officials reject.

In February, Navalny was given a two-and-a-half-year prison term for violating the terms of a suspended sentence from a 2014 embezzlement conviction that he dismissed as politically driven. His

foundation, started 10 years ago, has been relentlessly targeting senior government officials with colourful and widely watched videos that detail corruption allegations against them.

One of its latest productions, which received 117 million views on YouTube, claimed that a lavish palace on the Black Sea shore was built for Putin through an elaborate corruption scheme. The Kremlin has denied any links to Putin.

Vladimir Putin's Russia is morphing into a "dictatorship" intent on punishing and sidelining critics ahead of parliamentary elections, says Dmitry Gudkov, an opposition figure who recently fled to Ukraine.

— AP

Mount Recyclemore



A visitor walks away from a sculpture created out of e-waste in the likeness of Mount Rushmore and the G7 leaders on a hill in Hayle, Cornwall, England, on Wednesday. The sculpture, created by British artist Joe Rush ad sculptor Alex Wreckage, named Mount Recyclemore, aims to highlight the growing threat of e-waste.

— AP

Singaporean housewife held for supporting ISIS Neo-Nazi chats: Lens on police

Berlin, June 9: German prosecutors said Wednesday they had opened a probe against 20 police officers, including elite commandos, accused of taking part in far-right online chats and swapping Nazi symbols.

In the latest political scandal to rock Germany's security services, the Hesse state crime office and the Frankfurt prosecutor's office said they had carried out dawn raids at the homes and workplaces of six of the suspects. "Seventeen of the accused are believed to have distributed con-

tent constituting incitement of racial hatred or images linked to a former National Socialist organisation," the authorities said in a statement on the investigation, which was launched in April.

Three officers stand accused of obstruction of justice "because they were participants of the relevant chat groups and as superiors failed to stop or sanction the communication".

Most of the offending content was exchanged in 2016-17, with the most recent from 2019.

— AFP

entrenched in her radical beliefs," *Channel News Asia* quoted ISD as saying.

"She continues to support ISIS's violent actions and believes in the use of violence against the perceived enemies of Islam."

In contravention of her restriction order, Ruqayah also persisted in communicating online with

overseas ISIS supporters who were associates of her husband. "She was thus detained to prevent her from progressing further down the violent radical path," said ISD.

The department said Ruqayah had supported her husband's intention to join and fight for ISIS in Syria.

— PTI



Kamala Harris

HARRIS DEFENDS CRITICISM OVER MEXICO BORDER

Mexico City, June 9: Vice President Kamala Harris brushed off questions about her decision not to go to the US-Mexico border as part of her work to address the spike in migration, declaring Tuesday that while it was "legitimate" to be concerned about the situation at the border, it wouldn't be addressed with a simple visit.

As she closed out a two-day visit to Guatemala and Mexico aimed at strengthening diplomatic ties to help deal with migration to the US, Harris declared: "When I'm in Guatemala dealing with root causes, I think we should have a conversation about what's going on in Guatemala." Speaking to reporters travelling with her in Mexico, Harris was asked about the prospect that her decision not to visit the border may be overshadowing her focus on the very issues prompting migrants to flee their homes for the US.

"You can't say you care about the border without caring about the root causes, without caring about the acute causes" of migration, she said. She added: "It would be very easy to say, we'll travel to one place and therefore it's solved. I don't think anybody thinks that that would be the solution." Pressed on why she wouldn't simply visit, if her goal is to address migration as a whole, Harris noted that she had visited previously, as a senator from California, and may again. Her work thus far has focused on strengthening diplomatic relations.

— AP

EUROPEAN | MONITOR

Bank ex-head jailed for almost nine years over corrupt real estate deals

Vatican ill-equipped to deal with financial crime

Vatican City, June 9: The Vatican's judicial system is still ill-equipped to deal with financial crimes despite progress in many areas, the Council of Europe said in a new report Wednesday.

The council's anti-money laundering committee Moneyval recommended Pope Francis' judicial authorities recruit more prosecutors with a practical experience in complex financial crime and strengthen the financial investigation unit.

It also recommended "a comprehensive procedure for petitioning the Holy Father" when requesting consent to bring criminal proceedings against cardinals and bishops.

The report underlined the shortage of staff in the Vatican's judiciary, noting the slow pace of legal proceedings, a reference to a years-long trial against a former head of the Vatican Bank.

Angelo Caloia was finally jailed in January for almost nine years for

embezzlement and money laundering relating to corrupt real estate deals — the first time the Vatican State had imposed a prison term for a financial crime. The Moneyval inspection, which was carried out before his conviction, said the sentences previously handed down by the Vatican judiciary "appear rather minimal", saying they are "not proportionate and dissuasive".

Overall, "results in court have been modest" with

just two convictions for money-laundering in the previous eight years, in 2018 and 2019.

For the past two years, the Vatican has been mired in an internal investigation into the opaque and potentially unethical financing by the Holy See of a luxury London building.

Last year, the Pope also fired one of the most influential cardinals at the Vatican, Angelo Becciu, following accusations of embezzlement of funds,

which he denies.

The cardinal also played a key role in the London investment deal.

Moneyval noted that such cases "raised a red flag for potential abuse of the internal system by mid-level and senior figures".

Elsewhere, however, the report hailed the Vatican authorities for their efforts to ensure "constructive international cooperation" in the areas of money-laundering and terrorist financing.

It hailed a "rigorous risk-based transaction monitoring programme" and highlighted controls to prevent criminals and their associates sitting on the board of institutions.

In a statement, the Holy See welcomed the report, pledging its "commitment to continue working towards full compliance with the best international parameters".

It was also welcomed by the Vatican's financial watchdog.

— AFP

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	51941.64	-0.64
Nifty 50	15635.40	-0.67
S&P 500*	4,233.25	0.14
Dollar (₹)	72.97	-0.09
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.44	-0.38
Euro (₹)	88.95	-0.24
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,424.92	0.18
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	71.90	-0.44
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.016	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.501	-0.027

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Blending mustard oil with other oil banned: FSSAI

Food regulator FSSAI has asked states to enforce the decision to ban blending of mustard oil with any other cooking oil from June 8. In a March 8 notification, the FSSAI had prohibited the blending of mustard oil for production of multi-sourced edible vegetable oils (MSEVOs) with effect from June 8. It has issued an order on June 8 asking all the Commissioners of Food Safety of states/UTs to carry out an inspection drive.

Expect tax portal to stabilise this week: Infosys



A day after finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman flagged technical glitches in the income tax department's new e-filing website, IT major Infosys said it expects the system to stabilise this week. The portal went live on Monday evening. "Our teams are making progress to address the technical issues. We expect the system to stabilise in the course of this week," Infosys said in a tweet on Wednesday.

LIC chief Kumar gets nine-month extension

The government has given a nine-month extension to LIC chairman M. R. Kumar till March next year in view of the insurer's proposed IPO towards the end of the current fiscal. The term of Kumar has been extended from June 30, 2021 till March 13, 2022, the date when he completes three years.



Agarwal firm to get majority stake in Ravva oilfield

Anil Agarwal's group said it will make an upfront payment of almost \$40 million (about Rs 292 crore) for the acquisition of Videocon Industries Ltd, which will help it become the largest shareholder in the Ravva oil and gas fields in the KG basin. In a London Stock Exchange filing, Agarwal's Volcan Investments said its subsidiary, Twin Star Technologies India Ltd had submitted a resolution plan for Videocon Group companies.

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■ 25-30% outlets shut down, 50% in red Restaurants run up losses, many exit

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JUNE 9

Hit by the two waves of the pandemic, almost 30 per cent restaurants in the country have shut shop. Around 45-50 per cent restaurants and hotels are incurring heavy losses and around 25-30 per cent restaurants and hotels have permanently closed down, says a report by Care Ratings, which tracks the segment.

The apex body of restaurants and hotels also endorses this estimate.

"We too estimate that around 30 per cent of the restaurants would have probably wound up their operations," said Jaison Chacko, secretary general of the Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAD). More than five lakh restaurants would be operating in the country, the association estimates.

While online delivery of food was permitted during the outbreak of Covid-19 last year, dine-in services were not allowed. Food delivery and take-away contributes to only 10-15 per cent of the total revenue generated.

As the first wave slowly started subsiding, restaurants were allowed to operate with reduced hours of operations and limited seating capacity. The demand for dine-in services started improving from the third quarter of FY21 supported by ease in restrictions on movement of people, opening of



leisure and entertainment activities and places like malls and theatres. The vaccination drive initiated in January 2021 also aided consumer confidence.

However, the rise in caseload since the end of March 2021 has hampered the recovery in demand. Staggered lockdowns and reduced operating hours of business with only takeaway and home deliveries being permitted has hit the top-line of the restaurants.

Even with ease in restrictions from May-June, it is expected that consumer demand for dine-in services may not recover till the second half of FY22 or till consumer confidence returns with significant vaccination coverage. In the absence of proper government support, many restaurants are finding it difficult to survive.

Chacko says the restaurants were eligible for the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme of the government as well as the loan restructuring

scheme for MSMEs. "But very few restaurants have been able to avail of the scheme due to the apathy of the banks. We have come across several instances where banks have declined support under the scheme and procedural delays are making the situation worse," he said. The association has now pinned its hopes on the Reserve Bank of India's recently announced Rs 15,000-crore liquidity support for sectors, including hospitality.

The FHRAD on Tuesday met tourism minister Prahlad Singh Patel and minister of MSME Nitin Gadkari and discussed the deteriorating state of the hospitality and tourism industry and sought immediate fiscal measures to save the segment from an imminent collapse.

It suggested key policy changes, including waiver or relaxation under the EPCG scheme and an extension on moratorium of three years on the principal amount for all loans.

EQUITY MUTUAL FUNDS RECEIVE OVER 10,000 CR INFLOWS IN MAY

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, JUNE 9

The mutual fund industry saw a big jump in inflows in the pure equity funds category to over Rs 10,000 crore in May.

Other fund categories which invest a portion of their funds in the equity market, such as hybrid funds (Rs 6,217 crore) and ETFs (Rs 9,331.98 crore), also saw healthy inflows, data from the Association of Mutual Funds in India (Amfi) shows.

However, the debt funds category saw outflows worth Rs 44,512 crore.

Pure equity funds saw inflows of Rs 10,082.98 crore last month compared to Rs 3,437.37 crore in April 2021.

"Equity-oriented mutual funds witnessed their highest monthly net inflows after February 2020, when the segment received a net inflow of 10,795.81 crore. This was the third consecutive month of net inflows for the segment," Morningstar analysts said.

With healthy inflows across fund categories, total assets of the mutual fund industry hit a new all-time high of Rs 33.05 lakh crore.

The monthly contribution to the systematic investment plan rose to Rs 8,818.90 crore from Rs 8,596.25 crore in April.

"Retail equity-oriented contribution continues to be on the upward trend driven by net flows," said N. S. Venkatesh, CEO Amfi.

Petronet shelves \$2.5 bn deal with USA's Tellurian



GAIL SPLIT PLAN SCRAPPED, PSU TO MONETISE PIPELINES

New Delhi, June 9: A proposal to bifurcate state-owned gas utility Gail (India) Ltd has been scrapped for now, and instead the company will monetise some of its pipelines by selling a minority stake through an InvIT.

Gail chairman and managing director Manoj Jain said the company has sent a plan for monetising two of its pipelines—Dahej-Uran-Panvel-Dabhol pipeline and the Dabhol-Bengaluru pipeline—to the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas and an Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT) is possible within the current fiscal if approvals come soon.

Gail is India's biggest natural gas marketing

and trading firm and owns nearly three-fourths of the country's 17,126-km gas pipeline network, giving it a stranglehold on the market. To resolve the issue, it was proposed that Gail's pipeline business should be hived off into a separate entity.

"There is no pending proposal in this regard," Jain said at a call with reporters.

"We are initially monetising (the pipeline business) through InvIT. Proposals for InvIT for two pipelines have been sent to the ministry. Once it clears, we will start working on monetisation plan," he said.

Asked if this meant that the split plan was junked, he said, "it appears so."—PTI

Singh said. The initial pact, he said, has expired. The September MoU contemplated the conclusion of the transaction by March 31, 2020, but the timeline was first extended to May 31, 2020, and

then to December 31, 2020. Asked about the reasons, Singh said this was not because of Petronet. "We did not get a request from their (Tellurian's) side for an extension," he said. —PTI

AIRPORTS SEEK GOVT RELIEF TO SAVE JOBS

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JUNE 9

Fearing large-scale job losses, airports have sought relief measures, including part wages, from the government.

Among large airports, the Delhi airport had generated 1.06 lakh direct and 5.01 lakh indirect employment as in 2014-15. The Mumbai airport had generated 41,000 direct and 4.19 lakh indirect employment in 2009-10, as per a 2017 NCAER study.

The Association of Private Airports Operators finds that several jobs will be lost due to the stress on the airport finances.

The airports in India are estimated to have witnessed a decline in operating income by 61 per cent to Rs 8,400 crore with operating loss of around Rs 1,700 crore and a net loss of Rs 5,400 crore in FY21, says Icara. The overall cash loss for the sector is estimated to be around Rs 3,500 crore in FY21.

"Relief measures are required not only to ensure sustaining operations at airports, but also needed to save jobs and allow economic recovery of the airport sector," said the association.

Buying frenzy drives price surge in hidden world of diamonds

THOMAS BIESHEUVEL JUNE 9

At the latest De Beers diamond auction this week, buyers shopping for the kind of stones used to make an average engagement ring were in for a sticker shock: some prices had ballooned by 10 per cent since the last sale.

News of the unusually sharp increases spread swiftly through the community of 80-odd hand-picked De Beers customers, according to people familiar with the discussions. But what followed was even more remarkable: within hours, some of those same stones were trading hands at a further 10 per cent markup, as buyers who have access to De Beers flipped them to traders and manufacturers that don't.

The spiking prices -- and buyers' willingness to pay them -- are the latest sign of roaring demand in the secretive rough-diamond trade. Just nine months ago, the industry had been brought to a standstill by the pandemic. Now, the cutters and polishers, who form the backbone of the global diamond market, are competing fiercely for stones.

There's several reasons behind the surge: major retailers in the US and China are buying aggressively to keep up with strong sales, while rough diamond supply is tight because De Beers and rival Alrosa PJSC have limited supply to put onto the market. Perhaps most importantly, polished diamond prices--which have long weighed on the industry--are finally rising.

Diamonds have been a big winner from lockdowns around the globe as access to rival luxury offerings was limited. That first showed with stronger-than-expected holiday sales, from Thanksgiving through to Chinese New Year, and has since continued. "The rough market is hot. There's enthusiastic buying across all rough categories," said Anish



Aggarwal, a partner at specialist diamond advisory firm Gemdax. "There are supply shortages at the moment. That's creating a sense of scarcity at every stage of the pipeline."

For some in the industry, there are worries the market could be running too hot. It takes about three months to cut, polish and sell a diamond, so stones bought cheaply at the start of the year are now being sold for a big profit. That also means those buying at today's prices are betting that polished stones will continue to appreciate in value.

And then there's the risk that the renewed consumer interest in diamonds, driven by the lack of competition from other luxuries such as experiences and travel, could cool as more economies open up.

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Women, mind your voice in virtual meets



FRANCES SCHWARTZKOPFF JUNE 9

Virtual meetings have become ubiquitous now, setting off new anxieties for employees and executives alike. Is the suit jacket covering the sweatpants? Will the kids or the cat interrupt the meeting?

Turns out that if you're a woman, how you sound may be a bigger concern.

Research into video conferencing platforms reveals that services like Zoom, Skype and Teams don't transmit all sounds equally well. Voices are compressed and not all frequencies survive the process intact, according to Oliver Niebuhr, an associate professor at the Center for Industrial Electronics at Syddansk Universitet and assistant professor Ingo Siegert from the University of Magdeburg.

Particularly affected are the voices of women, which end up sounding less expressive and therefore less charismatic than men's, the researchers said. Bad internet connections worsen the effect, they said, and called for the technology to improve.

The recommendation comes amid signs that businesses will continue to use virtual meetings.

"If you want to convince a person of something, then it is essential that you appear charismatic. You need to have that person's full attention," Niebuhr said. "Our voice is extremely important in that context -- especially in a context where body language is taken out of the equation, as is the case in a video meeting."

—Bloomberg

REVEALING | DOCUMENTS

Some of America's richest people paid little to no taxes

US probes disclosure of tax records of rich

June 9: The Treasury Department has asked law enforcement authorities to investigate the disclosure of tax records cited in a media report that showed that some of America's richest people paid little to no income taxes, US officials said on Tuesday.

US media outlet ProPublica said it obtained "a vast trove of Internal Revenue Service data on the tax returns of thousands of the nation's wealthiest people, covering more than 15 years." The data indicated that billionaires including Amazon founder Jeff Bezos and Tesla founder Elon Musk paid no federal income taxes during some years.

White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said that "any unauthorized disclosure of confidential government information" is



illegal.

Treasury Department spokeswoman Lily Adams said in an emailed statement that the matter has been referred to the FBI,

federal prosecutors and two internal Treasury Department watchdogs, "all of whom have independent authority to investigate."

The IRS, part of the Treasury Department, is the nation's tax-collecting agency and many tax records are considered confidential documents. IRS commissioner Charles Rettig also confirmed that an investigation is underway.

"Obviously we take it very seriously," Psaki told a briefing.

ProPublica described the records as "confidential" and did not disclose how it obtained them.

President Joe Biden has sought tax increases on the wealthy to help fund proposed spending on infrastructure and social programmes, including raising the

top tax rate to 39.6 per cent from the current 37 per cent and nearly doubling the capital gains tax rate to 39.6 per cent for Americans earning \$1 million annually or more.

"We know that there is more to be done to ensure that corporations (and) individuals who are at the highest income are paying more of their fair share," Psaki said.

Rettig addressed the matter during testimony to the Senate Finance Committee.

"I can't speak to anything with respect to specific taxpayers. I can confirm that there is an investigation, with respect to the allegations that the source of the information in that article came from the Internal Revenue Service," Rettig said.

—Reuters

SHORT TAKES

Grappler Ravi settles for silver

Warsaw: Olympic-bound Ravi Dahiya could not take advantage of a tiring Gulomjon Abdullaev in the final after outclassing the same Uzbek wrestler in his opening round and settled for a silver medal at the Poland Open here on Wednesday.

Ravi went for several double-leg and right leg attacks but Abdullaev stayed strong in his defence, showing vast improvement from his first round drubbing.

None of his attempts fructified but Ravi did not seem to have a plan B and instead conceded points on counter-attack.

The Uzbekistan grappler was gasping for breath in the second period but Ravi still could not breach his defence and eventually lost the title clash 3-5. — PTI

Kane out of 2nd Test vs England

Birmingham: New Zealand captain Kane Williamson has been ruled out of the second and final Test against England at Edgbaston with a left elbow problem. However, the Blackcaps are confident he will be fit to lead the team in the inaugural World Test Championship final against India starting on June 18.

Williamson, who captained New Zealand in last week's drawn first Test against England at Lord's, has been managing the injury since first missing matches in March. The world's top-ranked Test batsman withdrew from the second Test on Wednesday, a day before the match is due to start at Birmingham's Edgbaston ground. "It's not an easy decision for Kane to have to miss a Test, but we think it's the right one," New Zealand coach Gary Stead said. — PTI

Dashing Donovan downs Clippers

Los Angeles: Donovan Mitchell scored 45 points and Rudy Gobert made a clutch block at the buzzer as the Utah Jazz rallied to beat the Los Angeles Clippers 112-109 in the opening game of their NBA playoff series on Tuesday.

Mitchell scored 32 of his game high 45 in the second half, carrying the Jazz on his back offensively after the team got off to a sluggish start in the best-of-seven Western Conference second round series. — AFP

Another Spanish player Covid +ve

Madrid: Diego Llorente has become the second Spain player infected with the Coronavirus ahead of the European Championship. The Spanish football federation said Llorente tested positive on Tuesday and was put into isolation, two days after captain Sergio Busquets had to leave the team's training camp because of the virus. Llorente's positive result was made public not long after Spain's under-21 squad beat Lithuania 4-0 on Tuesday in Madrid in a match that was supposed to be played by the senior team as its final warm-up before La Roja opened its Euro 2020 campaign against Sweden on Monday in Seville. The Spanish federation did not say whether Busquets or Llorente would be cut from the squad, but coach Luis Enrique has already called up six players to practice separately. — AP

2 Sweden players catch Coronavirus

Gothenburg, Sweden: Two players in Sweden's squad for the European Championship have tested positive for the Coronavirus, the team said three days before the start of the tournament. Juventus winger Dejan Kulusevski returned a positive test soon after informing Sweden's medical team that he had symptoms for a cold. Kulusevski remained in Stockholm while the rest of the squad travelled to Gothenburg. At the start of the first practice session in Gothenburg, Mattias Svanberg left the field to take to national team doctor Anders Valentin and then took a test, which also came back Covid positive. — AP

BARB-AURA

Barbora sends Gauff packing; Nadal dumps Diego to make semis

Paris, June 9: Unseeded Barbora Krejickova of the Czech Republic reached her first Grand Slam semi-final at the French Open on Wednesday as she beat 17-year-old Coco Gauff 7-6 (8/6), 6-3.

The 33rd-ranked Krejickova saved five set points in the opening set and finished off Gauff, the 24th seed, on her sixth match point to set up a clash with reigning champion Iga Swiatek or Maria Sakkari for a spot in the final.

Krejickova, who is also through to the last four of the women's doubles with Katerina Siniakova, claimed her 10th successive win on the tour having arrived in Paris on the back of a maiden singles title in Strasbourg. Krejickova recovered from a rocky start, falling 3-0 and 5-3 behind against Gauff, the youngest Grand Slam quarterfinalist since 2006.

But the Czech saved a set point on the Gauff serve in the ninth game, and fought off two more at 5-6 to secure a vital hold and force a tie-break.

Meanwhile, Maria Sakkari ended defending champion Iga Swiatek's 11-match and 22-set winning streaks at the French Open on Wednesday and reached the semifinals of a major tournament for the first time.

The 17th-seeded Sakkari used strong and steady baseline play to eliminate Swiatek 6-4, 6-4 at Court Philippe Chatrier in the quarterfinals and ensure that the clay-court tournament will end with a new Grand Slam champion.



Czech Republic's Barbora Krejickova slams a forehand to Coco Gauff of United States during their quarterfinal match of the French Open tennis tournament at the Roland Garros stadium on Wednesday. Barbora won 7-6 (8/6), 6-3. — AP

DON'T BE TOO HARSH ON ROBINSON, SAYS HOLDING

London, June 9: West Indies great Michael Holding supports the suspension of England cricketer Ollie Robinson for racist tweets as a teenager but also believes that the pacer should get a second chance if investigation proves that he did not repeat his actions beyond that time.

Robinson was suspended by the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB), pending an investigation, after his racist and sexist tweets in 2012 and 2013 emerged on social media on the day he made his Test debut.

"(It was) eight, nine years ago. Can the ECB then find out please, if beyond that time, Robinson has kept on behaving like that, saying things like that, tweeting things like that?" Holding told *Sky Sports News*.

"If he has done something like that nine years ago, and since then he has learnt and he has done nothing like that and he has changed his ways in recent years, then I don't think you should come down too hard on him," the West Indies legend said.

"Yes, suspend him because you want to investigate. You don't allow him to continue playing, like on Thursday, while an investigation is going on at the same time, because if you find out things that are horrible coming out in that investigation. But do it quickly, let's get it over with quickly," he added. — PTI

Jos, Eoin face heat for alleged racist remarks

London, June 9: England's white-ball skipper Eoin Morgan and wicketkeeper batsman Jos Buttler are under investigation by the country's cricket board after their alleged racist tweets, mocking Indians, surfaced on the social media.

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) has promised "relevant and appropriate action", saying each case will be considered on an individual basis.

The posts, in which Buttler and Morgan used the word 'sir' to mock the Indians, started doing the rounds on social

media after the ECB suspended pacer Ollie Robinson for some of his offensive tweets dating back to 2012-13.

"Screenshots have also been shared of a message by Buttler in which he says 'I always reply sir not else like me like you like me' and, separately, Morgan includes Buttler in a message which says, 'Sir you're my favourite batsman'," according to a report in the *Telegraph.co.uk*.

Buttler and Morgan both feature in the Indian Premier League (IPL) with the former playing for the Rajasthan Royals and the latter leading the

In men's single, Rafael Nadal reached a record-extending 14th French Open semi-final on Wednesday with a 6-3, 4-6, 6-4, 6-0 win over Diego Schwartzman, setting up a potential last-four showdown with world number one Novak Djokovic.

Nadal, bidding for a 14th Roland Garros title and record 21st major triumph, dropped his first set at the tournament since 2019 — ending a run of 36 consecutive sets won in Paris by the Spanish third seed. The 35-year-old Nadal extended his incredible French Open record to 105 wins and two losses as he advanced to his 35th Grand Slam semi-final. He beat Argentine 10th seed Schwartzman in the last four of the 2020 edition.

In another match, Tsitsipas reached his fourth major semifinal and third in a row by upending No. 2 Daniil Medvedev 6-3, 7-6 (3), 7-5 at Court Philippe Chatrier in the last no-spectator night session of this year's tournament.

He escaped two set points held by two-time Slam runner-up Medvedev at 5-4 in the second, but otherwise required only slightly more work than was demanded of 2020 U.S. Open finalist Zverev in his 6-4, 6-1, 6-1 victory over 46th-ranked Alejandro Davidovich Fokina. That put Zverev in his third career Slam semifinal, first in Paris. Tsitsipas and Zverev both have won Masters 1000 titles on red clay this year. Both have won the season-ending ATP Finals. — Agencies

IOA drops China sponsor from kit

New Delhi, June 9: After dropping Chinese sportswear company Li Ning as India's Olympic kit sponsor, Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju on Wednesday said the country's athletes will not wear branded apparel in the upcoming Tokyo Games even as the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) claimed that the search is on for a new partner.

Rijiju's statement came hours after IOA president Narinder Batra said that the National Olympic Committee (NOC) was hoping to find a new kit sponsor for the contingent by the end of this month after cutting ties with Li Ning on Tuesday.

"Indian athletes, coaches and support staff, won't be wearing any branded apparel at Tokyo Olympics. Only 'INDIA' will be written in the kits of our athletes," Rijiju tweeted.

However, Batra said search is on for a new sponsor within the limited available time.

"The process (of finding a new sponsor) is in progress but time in our hand is very limited. We don't want to put pressure on anyone and have them on board under duress. It has to be on mutual agreement," Batra said.

"By month end, we will have to take a call on whether to go unbranded. The apparels are ready and need to hand them over to our athletes as soon as possible," he added.

Sunlight Sports, which is the exclusive distributor of

Li Ning products in India, said the company has accepted IOA's decision looking at the current "fluctuating conditions in the country".

"Sunlight Sports understands the current global situation and the fluctuating conditions in the country and have agreed to allow the Indian Olympic Association to arrange the official sports kit of the Indian Olympic team locally," IOA secretary general Rajeev Mehta said.

The IOA had unveiled the Olympic kit last week in the presence of sports minister Kiren Rijiju, which led to widespread criticism as Chinese companies had faced opposition after last year's military face-off between the two countries in eastern Ladakh.

It is learnt that the Sports Ministry then advised the Olympic body to snap ties with the company. The IOA chief said that the decision to drop Li Ning was taken in public interest.

"I am not going to take the name of any company or anyone, but the decision was taken only after we started to receive criticism from all quarters, including the media following the announcement. We took this decision keeping in mind public sentiment," Batra said. Batra said for the IOA and Sports Ministry, the priority is preparation of the country's Olympic-bound athletes and logistics regarding their travel to Tokyo for the Games. — PTI

CHINA URGES INDIA TO BE OBJECTIVE AND FAIR

Beijing, June 9: China on Wednesday urged India to view bilateral cooperation in an "objective and fair manner" after the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) dropped Li Ning as its kit sponsor for the Tokyo Olympics-bound contingent citing "public sentiment".

"As for the specific business cooperation, I am not aware of it," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said in a media briefing here responding to a question on the IOA's decision.

"We hope that the Indian side will be objective and fair in viewing our normal cooperation between the two countries rather than politicising the issue," he said.

It has been learnt that it was the Sports Ministry that advised IOA to not include a Chinese sponsor for the Games. There have been calls for boycott of Chinese products after face-off between the Armies of the two countries in eastern Ladakh last year.

Last year, the Indian cricket board had put the Chinese sponsorship of the IPL on hold for a while but the company — mobile manufacturers Vivo — is now back as the contract, worth ₹440 crore annually, was on temporary hold and not suspended. — PTI

Hockey team get into Games mode

Bengaluru, June 9: The Indian men's hockey team is simulating Olympic atmosphere at its training base here to prepare for the Tokyo Games in the best possible manner, experienced forward Ramandeep Singh revealed on Wednesday.

Ramandeep said they are assessing their bodies and testing their skills by replicating their side's Olympic schedule in training as they are targeting a winning start to seize early momentum.

The Indian men's hockey team is scheduled to begin its campaign on July 24 against New Zealand. Reigning Olympic Champions Argentina, Australia, New Zealand, Spain and hosts Japan are the other teams in Pool A. "A lot will depend on how we fair in the first match. A good result against New Zealand will set the right

momentum for the rest of the tournament," Ramandeep was quoted as saying in a media release.

"We are currently replicating the Olympic Schedule, three teams with different combinations from within the Olympic core group have been formed and the coaching staff has created an atmosphere that is similar to what it would be like at the Olympics.

"We wear the Indian kit, we get ready as though we are facing a tough international opponent, we do team activation (pre-match drills) just like we would before an international game and we also line-up for the national anthem before the start of the match," explained Ramandeep. He further said there is a lot of excitement within the group as the team selection trials is underway. — PTI

HIMA, DUTEE GET ONE MORE CHANCE TO QUALIFY FOR OLY

New Delhi, June 9: Hima Das and Dutee Chand will get one more domestic event in their bid to qualify for the Tokyo Olympics as the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) on Wednesday announced that it will host the Indian Grand Prix 4 on June 21 in Patiala. The decision to hold the fourth series of the Indian GP was taken after the AFI's efforts to send a 40-member team, including Hima and Dutee, for competitions in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan could not achieve success due to "changed quarantine rules" in those countries. "AFI took this decision to provide additional competition to Indian athletes as the 40-member team will not be participating in the T Kolpakova International Competition in Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan) and the Qosanov Memorial in Almaty (Kazakhstan) later this month in view of the changed quarantine rules in those countries," the AFI said. — PTI

Brazil ride on Neymar gem

Montevideo (Uruguay), June 9: Neymar scored one goal and created the other as Brazil maintained their perfect start to World Cup qualifying with a 2-0 win over Paraguay on Tuesday.

Substitute Lucas Paqueta sealed the win deep into injury time in Asuncion as Brazil opened up a six point lead at the top of South America's single qualifying group after a sixth win out of six.

Brazil got off to a quick start with less than four minutes on the clock.

Gabriel Jesus crossed from the right and although Richarlison missed his attempted volley, Neymar was unmarked at the back post to bobble the ball past goalkeeper Antony Silva.

Meanwhile, Miguel Borja scored four minutes into stoppage time to rescue a 2-2 draw for Colombia against Argentina in Barranquilla.

Argentina were off to a flying start to move 2-0 up inside eight minutes through goals by Cristian Romero and Leandro Paredes. But Colombia's substitutes turned the game around as Luis Nuriel netted from the spot and then Borja snatched a point at the death. — AFP



Brazil's Neymar (left) shoots a free kick during a qualifying match for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 against Paraguay at Defensores del Chaco stadium in Asuncion, Paraguay, on Tuesday. Brazil won 2-0. — AP

FRANCE, SPAIN WIN BIG IN FRIENDLIES

London, June 9: Spain's group of young debutants beat Lithuania 4-0 in a warm-up match for the European Championship.

The friendly counted as a first-team match, with players getting caps and an official debut for coach Luis de la Fuente with the main squad.

Valencia defender Hugo Guillamnn got Spain off to the perfect start in the third minute and Brahim

Daz doubled its lead in the 24th before Abel Ruiz had a penalty saved by Lithuania goalkeeper Tomas vedkauskas.

Juan Miranda curled in a free kick nine minutes into the second half and fellow substitute Javi Puado capped a great night for the youngsters in the 73rd.

Meanwhile, Karim Benzema's return to international football

continues to go awry as the France forward limped off injured in his team's 3-0 victory over Bulgaria.

Benzema's replacement, Olivier Giroud, scored a late double in the final seven minutes to secure victory for the world champions after Antoine Griezmann had opened the scoring in the 29th.

Giroud has now scored 46 goals for France. — AP