

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | SUNDAY 4 | JULY 2021

WEATHER



Max: 34°C
Min: 21°C
Rainfall: Nill

ASTROGUIDE

Pilava: Aani 20
Tithi: Dasami
Star: Asupathi
Rahukalam:
4.30 pm to 6 pm
Yamagandam:
12 noon to 1.30 pm

PRAYERS

Fajar: 4.25 am
Luhar: 12.16 pm
Asar: 3.37 pm
Maghrib: 6.38 pm
Isha: 7.57 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.40 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.47 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 1.21 PM
MOONSET TOMORROW 2.03 AM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+26,030)	(+455)
3,05,27,764	4,01,538

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+4,013)	(115)
TN: 24,92,420	32,933

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

18,39,95,164

DEATHS

39,82,814

COUNTRIES
AREAS WITH
CASES

219

worldometers.info

ASI plans laser scanning of Jagannath's Ratna Singhasan

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, JULY 3

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) will carry out 3D laser scanning of the 'Ratna Singhasan' at Srimandir in Puri during the upcoming Rath Yatra to check for structural damages, if any.

Ratna Singhasan is the sanctum santorum of Srimandir. ■ **P5**

Yogi claims historic BJP win in UP district panchayat polls

Lucknow, July 3: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Saturday claimed the BJP-backed candidates have achieved a "historic victory" in the district panchayat chief polls. The Uttar Pradesh BJP has claimed that the party-backed candidates won 67 of 75 seats of the district panchayat chief, the voting for which was held on Saturday. ■ **P5**

COUNTER

POINT



Now I can travel to any country... I took all companies' vaccines!

Vatican indicts 9 for London real estate deal

Rome, July 3: The Vatican's criminal tribunal on Saturday indicted nine people and four companies on charges including extortion, abuse of office and fraud in connection with the secretariat of state's 350 million-euro investment in a London real estate venture.

The tribunal president, Judge Giuseppe Pignatone, set July 27 as the trial date, according to a Vatican statement.

Four former Vatican offi-

cials, including two officials from the secretariat of state, were indicted, as well as Italian businessmen who handled the London investment. Also indicted on alleged embezzlement charges was an Italian intelligence expert.

Vatican prosecutors accuse the suspects of bilking millions of euros from the Holy See in fees and other losses related to other financial dealings. The suspects have denied wrongdoing.

FOR GOD'S SAKE

■ **ONE** OF the main suspects, Gianlugi Torzi, is accused of having extorted the Vatican 15 million euros to turn over ownership of a London building.

One of the main suspects in the case, Gianlugi Torzi, is accused of having extorted the Vatican out of 15 million euros to turn over own-

ership of the London building in late 2018. Torzi had been retained by the Vatican to help it acquire full ownership of the building from another indicted money manager who had handed the initial investment.

Vatican prosecutors allege Torzi inserted a last-minute clause into the contract giving him full voting rights in the deal.

The Vatican hierarchy, however, signed off on the contract, with both Pope

Francis' No. 2, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, and his deputy approving it. Neither was indicted.

Vatican prosecutors have produced evidence suggesting they were hoodwinked by an Italian lawyer — who was also indicted Saturday — into agreeing to the deal. Torzi has denied the charges and said the accusations were the fruit of a misunderstanding. He is currently in London pending an Italian extradition request. — **AP**

He, however, said the third wave could spread faster if any new virulent variant emerges.

Manindra Agarwal, involved in the 'Sutra Model' or the mathematical projection of trajectory of Covid-19, also said the model has three scenarios—optimistic, intermediate and pessimistic—for the

prediction of the third wave.

The department of science and technology had last year formed the panel to forecast the surge of coronavirus cases using mathematical models. The panel had also received flak for not predicting the exact nature of the second wave of Covid. **PTI**



Health workers administer a dose of Covid-19 vaccine to beneficiaries during a special one-day vaccination drive, in Beawar, Saturday. — **PTI**

Phase 3 trials report says Covaxin 77.8 p.c. effective

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JULY 3

Citing data from Phase 3 clinical trials, Bharat Biotech has claimed that Covaxin is 77.8 per cent effective against Covid-19. "Bharat Biotech concludes final analysis for Covaxin efficacy as part of phase 3 clinical trials, after evaluation of 130 confirmed cases. Covaxin's efficacy demonstrated at 77.8 per cent against symptomatic Covid-19

patients," the company said in a statement.

It added the vaccine offers 65.2 per cent protection against the Delta variant and was also found to be 93.4 per cent effective against severe, symptomatic Covid-19. "This will help to get the vaccine WHO emergency use listing," said Dr N.K. Arora, chairman, Covid working group on Covaxin efficacy results. Covaxin is a whole virus inactivated vaccine developed by ICMR, NIV

and Bharat Biotech.

The Phase 3 clinical trials were done at 25 sites across India. The company said no licensed SARS-CoV-2 vaccine has reported efficacy against asymptomatic infection and this will help in reducing disease transmission.

India reported 44,111 new cases of Covid-19 and 738 deaths in the last 24 hours, marking the sixth consecutive day when less than 50,000 new cases were reported.

‘THIRD WAVE WILL HAVE HALF CASES’

New Delhi, July 3: The third wave of coronavirus could hit the peak between October-November if Covid appropriate behaviour is not followed, but may see half the daily cases recorded during the second surge, a scientist of a government panel tasked with modelling of Covid-19 cases said.

He, however, said the third wave could spread faster if any new virulent variant emerges.

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HC quashes marriage certificate of duped girl



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Unvaccinated vulnerable to Delta: Biden

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Italy beat Belgium to enter Euro semis



Form Markandeya tribunal: TN

■ **Duraimurugan wants Centre to take steps to settle dispute between neighbours**

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, JULY 3

Even as the controversy over Karnataka's bid to construct a dam across river Cauvery at Mekedatu continues to rage, a fresh river water dispute between the two neighbouring states has erupted over the dam across river Markandeya that feeds the Thenpennar river.

It was found out in 2017 that Karnataka was building the dam across Markandeya with a reported capacity to store 0.5 TMC feet water to meet the drinking water needs and also to charge the ground water in the region.

Since 870 hectares of land in Tamil Nadu is dependent on the waters of Thenpennar for irrigation, the dam across Markandeya could impede the necessary flow, it is feared.

Minister for water resources Duraimurugan assured the people that necessary steps would be taken to find a solution to the problem through a tribunal.

The state had already written to the Union water resources minister demanding the setting up of the tribunal, on June 29, he said in a press release.

When the state approached the Supreme Court, it was directed to

seek the Union government's help in forming a tribunal to solve the dispute in November, 2019, Mr Duraimurugan said.

Since then, the dispute had been going on between the states, Mr Duraimurugan said, adding that his government would protect the rights of the farmers.

Meanwhile, PMK Youth Wing president Anbumani Ramadoss wanted the state to put pressure on the Union government to set up the tribunal expeditiously. He said the districts of Krishnagiri, Dharmapuri, Thiruvannamali, Villupuram and Cuddalore would be affected by the dam.

MEKEDATU DAM TO SERVE BOTH STATES, YEDDY ASSURES STALIN

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR, D. SEKAR | DC CHENNAI, JULY 3

In a gesture similar to waving the white flag, Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa has urged Chief Minister M.K. Stalin not to oppose the Mekedatu project across river Cauvery in the interest of better relations between the two states and suggested bilateral talks to clear apprehensions.

In a letter to Mr Stalin,

Mr Yediyurappa claimed that the Mekedatu balancing reservoir-cum-drinking water project would not affect the interests of the farming community in Tamil Nadu.

The project had been contemplated with an objective to regulate the flow of water to Tamil Nadu as stipulated in the final orders of the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal and thereafter modified by the Supreme Court, he said. ■ **P4**

Karnataka lifts night curfew, eases restrictions

DC CORRESPONDENT BENGALURU, JULY 3

The Karnataka government on Saturday announced that it has decided to further relax lockdown restrictions, which included lifting of night curfew from the state.

Making the announcement, Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa said government offices will be reopened from next week. The Chief Minister, however, said the district administrations can introduce restrictions after studying the situation in their areas.

As per the new guidelines, the government has allowed shopping malls to open and all public transport, including the metro, to resume services. Religious places of all communities will also be opened.

Wedding can have a maximum of 100 people in attendance.

The government, however, retained weekend curfew in Kodagu.

Dilip Kumar in ICU, stable

Mumbai, July 3: Legendary actor Dilip Kumar, who has been admitted to the intensive care unit of a city hospital here, continues to remain stable, his wife Saira Banu said on Saturday.

The 98-year-old screen icon was admitted in Khar-based Hinduja Hospital, a non-Covid-19 facility, on Tuesday for age-related issues. — **PTI**

BJP picks young CM for U'khand

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JULY 3

Uttarakhand on Saturday got its third Chief Minister in less than four months after the ruling BJP's legislature party elected Pushkar Singh Dhami as its leader. He is likely to take oath of office on Sunday in the state where Assembly polls are scheduled early next year.

Mr Dhami succeeded Tirath Singh Rawat, who resigned late Friday night due to a "constitutional crisis."

A two-time MLA from Udhampur Singh Nagar's Khatima, Mr Dhami, 45, was associated with the RSS' youth wing, ABVP, during his college days. Incidentally, Udhampur Singh Nagar is the only district in the poll-bound state which witnessed protests by farmers against the Central government's three land laws. The Terai district shares its border with Uttar Pradesh and has a significant Sikh population and is part of Nainital-Udhampur Singh Nagar Lok Sabha seat, which has 14 Assembly seats.



A constitutional crisis was cited as the reason for replacing Mr Rawat, who is an MP, and had to be elected to the state Assembly by September 10 but the Election Commission was yet to decide on the bypoll schedule due to corona.

"My party has appointed a common worker, son of an ex-serviceman, who was born in the border district of Pithoragarh to serve the people... We will work on people's issues with the cooperation of all. I will carry forward the work done by my predecessor," Mr Dhami said. The 11th chief minister of Uttarakhand, he is said to be close to former CM and Maharashtra governor B.S. Koshiyari and Union minister Rajnath Singh.

TN ASKS DEPARTMENTS TO SPEED UP SMALL LOANS

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, JULY 3

Ration shops that are now run by several departments should be brought under a single department, Chief Minister M.K. Stalin suggested at a review meeting in which the need to improve the quality of service at the shops was also stressed.

Chairing the meeting of the cooperation, food and consumer protection department on Saturday, the Chief Minister urged the authorities to ensure that the various services such as supply of commodities and issuance of ration cards were improved. He wanted to issue cards to applicants without delay.

Eligible applicants should be given loans to improve their livelihood

during the Coronavirus crisis, the Chief Minister said. Small help groups, small traders, the disabled and women entrepreneurs should be given priority for loans through the cooperative department, he said.

Computerisation of the public distribution system, construction of own buildings for the ration shops, ensuring basic amenities for women employees, monitoring movement of paddy and other essentials from one place to another through the internet and ensuring hitches in weighing equipment were some other suggestions.

Cooperative bodies were asked to extend farm loans, jewel loans, fertilisers at subsidised rates and provide all the needs of farmers.

NEWBORN DIES IN HOME DELIVERY

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, JULY 3

In a shocking case, a 20-year-old woman lost her newborn baby during an attempted delivery at home performed by her brother in East Tambaram in the city.

The Selaiyur police arrested the woman's brother identified as, Cibi (28) a coolie worker, who performed the botched-up delivery at home. The woman was admitted to Chengalpattu Government hospital on Friday with severe blood loss.

Aaamir, Kiran announce divorce; to work together

Mumbai, July 3: Bollywood superstar Aamir Khan and producer-director Kiran Rao on Saturday announced their decision to get divorced after 15 years of marriage and said they were ready to start a new chapter as "co-parents and family for each other".

They will continue to work as collaborators on movies, their non-governmental organisation Paani Foundation and other professional projects, the couple said in a joint statement.

Khan, 56, and Rao, 47, first met on the sets of the actor's 2001 blockbuster movie Lagaan and tied the knot in December 2005. They welcomed their son Azad Rao Khan in December 2011. "In these 15 beautiful years together we have shared a lifetime of experi-



ences, joy and laughter, and our relationship has only grown in trust, respect and love. Now we would like to begin a new chapter in our lives - no longer as husband and wife, but as co-parents and family for each other.

"We began a planned separation some time ago, and now feel comfortable to formalise this arrangement, of living separately yet sharing our lives the way an extended family does," the statement read. Khan and Rao said they



will remain devoted parents to their son Azad, who they will nurture and raise together.

"A big thank you to our families and friends for their constant support and understanding about this evolution in our relationship, and without whom we would not have been so secure in taking this leap. We request our well wishers for good wishes and blessings, and hope that - like us - you will see this divorce not as an end, but as the start of a new journey." — **PTI**

SHORT TAKES

Two men who travelled to Yemen held at airport

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JULY 3

Despite the government ban due to an adverse security situation, two men from Kerala and Tamil Nadu who travelled to Yemen were arrested at the Chennai airport on Friday.

The arrested persons were identified as Samir (38) of Malapuram in Kerala and Feroz Khan (33) of Pudukottai in Tamil Nadu. They arrived at the Chennai International airport on Friday morning from Yemen via Sharjah in the Air Arabian airlines flight.

The Immigration officers at the airport checked their passports and it was revealed that the duo had travelled to Yemen. Since the Indian Government banned its citizen from visiting countries such as Yemen, Libya, the officials detained the duo.

A preliminary probe revealed that the duo had left for Saudi Arabia for work five years back. As their visa expired recently, fearing action the duo fled to Yemen, from where they returned to India.

The duo said they were not aware of the travel restrictions. However, they were handed over to Chennai Airport police for further questioning.

The Indian government has banned Indian travellers from entering Yemen, due to the fragile security situation there. The government has made Indian passports and travel documents invalid for travel to Yemen.

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Consumer disputes redressal commissions in doldrums

T. SUDHEESH | DC
CHENNAI, JULY 3

Despite the number of grievances rising every year due to increasing awareness of consumer protection laws, the district-level Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions in the state remain in bad shape, causing harrowing experiences to consumers.

For more than a year, the commissions in at least 25 districts in the state have been either vacant or limping without quorum. Each of the district-level commissions in the state, which were formed under the Consumer Protection Act 2019 to deliver speedy and time-bound justice to the concerned consumers, was hearing on an average at least 400 cases every year in the post-pandemic period. Over 2,000 cases are pending in many of these commissions, including those in Chennai due to the inefficiency of commissioners. Raising the matter, Sunil

Shete, a consumer from R.A. Puram in the city, moved the high court to get the commissions operational. Ajay Francis, a high court lawyer, who appeared for the petitioner, said it was sheer negligence of authorities that resulted in the present situation in district-level commissions. As per Section 32 of the Act, the vacancy in the office of member of a district commission should be filled by a notification by the state government. The Act also stipulates that cases admitted by the commissions should be settled within eight months. However, the matter is not yet taken seri-

ously by the government. It will result in losing the faith of consumers in such commissions. Following the petition, the court the other day asked the government to file a detailed affidavit in this regard, he says. T. Sadagopan, president, Tamil Nadu Progressive Consumer Centre, demanded immediate implementation of the Consumer Protection Act 2019 that stipulates one president and two members including a woman in each commission. The consumer awareness is very high and online shopping practices are thriving. It is the Civil

Supplies and Consumer Protection Department which is responsible for the appointment of vacant posts. Since a lot of politics is involved in appointments, the department is delaying the appointments. Now, the government should fill up all the commissions as per the letter and spirit of the Act. The Union Law Ministry came out with the new law in 2019 to ensure speedy justice avoiding prolonged court proceedings, he says.

However, a senior official with the Civil Supplies and Consumer Protection Department told DC that a special committee was formed as per the Act to appoint district-level redressal commissions. It's the state which directly appoints the commissions as per the recommendation of the committee. The government takes the final decision in this regard. Our department only helps to create awareness on consumer rights, the official said.



HEALTH SECY INSPECTION

TN health secretary Dr.J.Radhakrishnan inspects Government Omandurar Medical College and Hospital in Chennai on Saturday.

—DC

Submit info on temple poromboke lands: TN

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JULY 3

The Madras high court has directed the authorities to furnish before the court the details of temple poromboke lands in all taluks of every district in Tamil Nadu.

A division bench comprising Justices N.Kirubakaran and S.Kannammal gave the directive on a petition filed by A. Radhakrishnan, which sought a direction to the authorities to ensure and safeguard the property in S.F.No.144/2 at Ulipuram village, Gengavali taluk, Salem district, and restore the same to Arulmigu Kambaraya Perumal Thirukoil, Ulipuram, Salem.

In his petition, Radhakrishnan also sought a direction to the authorities to take appropriate departmental and criminal action against the erring officials who deliberately failed to evict the encroachers from the property belonging to Arulmigu Kambaraya Perumal Thirukoil.

In its interim order,

the bench said it was evident from the communication dated May 28, 2015, sent by the Salem district collector to the sub-collector, Mettur and Revenue Divisional Officer, Salem/Sankagiri/Attur seeking certain details in respect of lands, which have been classified as temple poromboke (kovil poromboke). However, the petitioner submitted that the said details have not been provided by Sub-Collector, Mettur and Revenue Divisional Officer, Salem/Sankagiri/Attur including the Joint Commissioner and the Assistant Commissioner, Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowment department, Salem. "The temple wise details in all taluks of every district, which are sought for as stated in the above communication dated May 28, 2015 shall be given by all the authorities in Tamil Nadu, especially, the commissioner of land administration and the commissioner of HR & CE department before this court. Call the matter on July 9, 2021", the bench added.

HC directive on bus services

DC CORRESPONDENT
Chennai, July 3

The Madras high court has requested the state government to consider all aspects, including the difficulties faced by ordinary citizens, as to what extent any restrictions should remain anywhere in the state, particularly pertaining to bus services and the number of persons allowed in each bus.

The first bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthil Kumar Ramamoorthy made the request while disposing of a Public Interest Litigation filed by K.K.Ramesh, which sought a direction to the state government, to reopen the operation of bus services in non-affected Covid-19 virus districts.

The bench said the petitioner seeks a direction on the State government to commence regular bus services in certain areas. In the light of the second surge affecting different areas of the State in unlike manner, even as the lockdown has been eased in certain parts of the State, restrictions have been continued in other parts where the number of persons affected were considerable or in areas where the State perceives the risk of the spread of the pandemic to be more severe or likely. A considered decision has been taken by the State to reopen public transport systems, including suburban railway, the metro railway and long distance and intra city bus services, but with restrictions as to the number of passengers that each coach may carry, the bench added.

The bench said there was no doubt that upon the situation in the other districts improving the restrictions now in place will be gradually eased. Such matter was best left to the executive for the State to obtain relevant data and expert advice before imposing restrictions or easing them. There does not appear to be any arbitrary action on the part of the state for the court to interfere in the matter. As has been repeated almost ad nauseam by this court that baby steps need to be taken to return to normalcy and it was better to err on the side of caution than to open up everything and be caught unawares as the country was when the second surge descended on us, the bench added and made the above request.

Soldier laid to rest with full military honours

R. VALAYAPATHY | DC
TIRUCHY, JULY 3

The mortal remains of a 24-year-old armyman of Manakollai village near Lalgudi in Tiruchy district, who died in a road accident in Sillim, were laid to rest with full military honours at his village on Saturday.

Urban development minister K.N. Nehru and his cabinet colleague Anbil Mahesh Poyyamozhi, Tiruchy Collector S. Sivarasu, and a large gathering of villagers paid their last respects to Dev Anand.

The body reached Bengaluru by air and from there it was brought by road to his village in the wee hours of Saturday.

TN: BJP petition against Neet panel not maintainable

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JULY 3

Pointing out that the petitioner under the garb of challenging the formation of the committee attempts to intrude into the basic functions of the government, the Tamil Nadu government has prayed the Madras high court to dismiss the petition as not maintainable, filed by an office bearer of BJP, which sought to quash as illegal, a GO dated June 10, 2021, where under a high level committee under the chairmanship of Justice A.K.Rajan, a retired judge of the Madras high court, has been constituted by the Tamil Nadu government to study the impact of Neet on medical admissions.

State health secretary Dr.J.Radhakrishnan stat-

ed this in his counter affidavit filed in response to the Public Interest Litigation filed by K.Nagarajan, the general secretary of the BJP, Tamil Nadu.

He said the petitioner has not pleaded as to how any fundamental rights or legal rights have been violated or how the formation of the committee has affected the rights of the petitioner or for that matter of the public, as the formation of a mere fact finding body by itself does not affect the rights of any person and does not give rise to a cause of action. The petitioner has presumed the outcome of the report and the action the government will take on the report, which was entirely hypothetical and was nothing but conjecture. The petitioner admittedly being a politi-

cal personality has not explained how the public interest was affected in this case. Justice A.K.Rajan Committee was hearing all stakeholders after issuing a notification. Nearly 86,343 representations have been received by the committee so far. Therefore, a large number of stakeholders have participated in the exercise to ventilate their grievances about the impact of Neet before the committee. The committee only gives a platform to the stakeholders to state their concerns, which will be in turn submitted to the government as a report. The petitioner was neither a student nor a parent and was only an office bearer of a political party. Hence the petition was filed for publicity and lacks bonafides, he added.

Vaccination camps for lactating mothers



Dr.Shanthimalar, Dean, Government Kilpauk Medical College and Hospital, along with team of doctors successfully vaccinated around 13 pregnant women for the first time in Tamil Nadu after the health department permitted Covid-19 inoculation for pregnant women. Health minister Ma Subramanian inaugurated the initiative in Cuddalore district on Saturday.

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUCHY, JULY 3

Vaccination for lactating mothers is a new initiative to encourage them to take vaccines and protect themselves and their children. Special vaccination camps/drives are organised for lactating mothers. Toys /dolls are given to the infants. This is also to remove the concerns that revolve around the impact of the vaccine on their breast milk supply and its effect on the infant, according to Dr R.G. Anand, member, National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR).

Dr. Anand who initiates a special drive for such vaccination told DC over phone that the Union government had approved Covid-19 vaccination based on the recommendations of the Federation of Obstetric & Gynecological Societies of India (FOGSI) and the National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration for COVID-19 (NEGVAC), to lac-

tating women, who wish to administer the vaccine.

He said this reasoning was also backed by the president of the Indian Society of Clinical Research (ISCR), stating that vaccinating lactating mums gives protection against the virus for two as she is breastfeeding her baby. Keeping in view the importance of educating lactating mothers and their families about the benefits of vaccines for lactating mothers; it is important to set examples for the masses to follow, he added.

He also emphasised that lactating mothers must be encouraged to come forward to take vaccines and it is hoped that this initiative of "Vaccination for Lactating Mothers" will help to reach out to a large number of mothers into the fold of vaccination.

Dismissing the false propaganda against vaccination, Dr Anand said for lactating mothers this vaccination is in no way the reason to discontinue breastfeeding at any point.

Three 'Aasiriyam' relics found

R. VALAYAPATHY | DC
PUDUKKOTTAI, JULY 3

Three 'Aasiriyam' stone inscriptions were found in the villages around Thirumayam and Ponnamaravathy taluks of Pudukkottai district during a field survey conducted by the Pudukkottai-based Archaeological Research Forum (ARF), according to A. Manikandan, a research scholar in the department of ancient science at Tanjore Tamil University, Thanjavur.

Apart from him, the ARF team comprised its president Karu Rajendren, Kasthuri Rengan, Manisekaran, Peer Mohamed, S. Masthan Baguruthen Manisekaran, M. Muthukkumar and P. Ramesh Kumar. They identified three inscriptions at Devarmalai, Panaiyur, and Malayadipatti.

Manikandan said as of



now 67 'Aasiriyam inscriptions' were found and recorded. The Tamil spelling of 'Aasiriyam' differs in some of these inscriptions, but 53 inscriptions have clear titles as 'Aasiriyam'. So the argument that the word 'Aasiriyam' originated from Sanskrit is baseless. The word is referred to in Sanga Tamil literature. There is a Tamil poetry genre named 'Aasiriyappa' which means expressing an idea very shortly and clearly. Tamil dictionaries mention 'Aasiriyar' as one who is pure. These facts lead us to believe that 'Aasiriyam' is a Tamil word, he

claimed. He said the inscription at Melappanayur speaks of Bahuya Nayakkar, son of Rayappar, who had the right to administer Kulamangalam village of Panayur. The style and structure of the inscription shows that it belonged to the earlier part of the 14th century. Another inscription found at a private land at Malayadipatti is partly damaged. The third one found on the north side of Devar Malai, a small hillock, speaks of the administrative responsibilities of Akamar-amanikkannar, in-charge of the temple.

WHY IS DISCRIMINATION CONTINUING IN IIT?



G. Babu Jayakumar

Just spamming

IIT-Madras, nestled in the Guindy National Park, appears in the newspapers almost every other day for some innovation or research breakthrough, though in the last two days it made news for wrong reasons. One was the resignation of a faculty member, Vipin V Veetil, alleging caste discrimination, and the other one was the suicide of a research associate, Unnikrishnan Nair, purportedly due to stress. Well, the question that the two

tragedies throw up is why IIT is not able to tackle the twin enduring problems of caste discrimination and suicides in its campus.

It is common knowledge that more than 15 students have ended their lives in the past one decade. But, has the institution with all the financial and academic resources at its disposal tried to find out the reasons? Since many of the suicides themselves are linked to caste discrimination, should not the institute have

revealed the caste identities of the deceased? Also what has it done all these years to address the vociferous charge of overt prevalence of caste discrimination in the campus, particularly the Humanities and Social Sciences Department?

Every time a suicide happens in the campus, it generates a flurry of interest outside. Remember the death of Fathima Latheef in 2019? When the girl's mother made the poignant statement that she thought Chennai would be a safer city for her young daughter, it was a moment that made every resident of Chennai hang their heads in shame. True Chennai is relatively a safe place to live in when compared to many other cities. Also Tamil Nadu is known for providing better opportunities for people

from marginalized communities like OBCs, SCs and STs and minorities than many other States as caste discrimination is almost negligible in campuses.

Why then is the allegation of caste discrimination heard in the IIT campus again and again? One probable reason is that the honchos of the government-funded institute are complacent about the issue itself. Second reason could be that they feel that they are slightly above the law in view of their privileges, meaning that they need not conform to what is considered right and wrong in the rest of the State. And the third reason is that they could get away with anything, particularly suicides.

When an M Tech student committed suicide inside the Sarayu Extension II

women's hostel in August 2012 a news photographer who had taken pictures of the hostel from outside was roughed up inside the campus by a professor, yes he was teacher at the IIT, and some guards. Nothing came of the assault as the police were consistently in favour of IIT even though the entire Chennai media corps was united in demanding justice for their colleague. They even organized a road block outside the Kotturpuram police station one night.

The IIT top brass knew how to handle the situation with elan. They ensured that the professor was not in the dock for his violent act. At one point the IIT brought a group of women students to the police station to file a case of harassment against the photographer, who in

reality never even went near them. Even in the case relating to the suicide of Fathima Latheef, the faculty member whom the girl had accused of harassment did not face any trouble. He seems to be still in the faculty and could probably be taking online classes now in view of the pandemic.

Of course, caste discrimination has come to be seen as an integral part of the academic culture in IITs, where OBCs, SCs and STs are treated as interlopers. Going by the various reports coming from different campuses, the scene is not that different elsewhere, too. In fact there is a plethora of studies on caste discrimination in IITs. A book by Yashica Dutt, 'Coming Out as Dalit: A Memoir,' (published by Aleph) has a chapter on IITs having a

long history of systematically 'othering' Dalit students. The issue of caste discrimination in the IITs has also evoked interest abroad. Odile Henry, a professor of sociology of the University of Paris, was doing research on reservation in IITs between 2014 and 2016. But she had to cut short her research at the IIT Kanpur because she took part in the discussion on the suicide of Rohit Vemula of Hyderabad University.

Very recently, in April, Seema Singh, a professor at IIT Kharagpur, faced the music because she called her students from marginalized communities as 'bastards.' The abusive teacher was actually supposed to teach English to the students as part of the preparatory course for SC and ST students aspiring to enter

the portals of the IIT. That the course itself is a discriminatory act has not been flagged by any one though Seema Singh was 'suspended' because her abuse was recorded.

Otherwise, the kind of actions that IIT Madras takes are just to keep others out. Like the closing of its back gate that opened into the Velachery area one day just because it was giving easy access to the riff raff to enter the sprawling campus. That many outsiders from Velachery area have to come in for work or attend schools or worship at the temple was not the problem of the bright minds of the IIT that are adept at keeping unwanted elements out of their precincts. But then, should the State Government be a silent spectator?

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INNOCEAN-104/21

SHORT TAKES

Number of vaccine doses administered in country has crossed 35 cr: Health ministry

New Delhi, July 3 : The cumulative number of COVID-19 vaccine doses administered in the country has exceeded 35 crore, the Union Health Ministry said on Saturday.

As the new phase of universalisation of COVID-19 vaccination commenced from June 21, more than 57.36 lakh vaccine doses were given in the country on Saturday, as per a provisional report up to 7 pm. The ministry said 28,33,691 first vaccine doses and 3,29,889 second doses were given in the 18-44 years category on Saturday. Cumulatively, 99,434,862 people in this age group across all states and union territories have received their first dose and 27,12,794 have received their second dose since the start of phase-3 of the vaccination drive, the report showed.

Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Gujarat, Karnataka and Maharashtra have administered more than 50 lakh first doses of the COVID-19 vaccine in the age group of 18-44. Also, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Haryana, Jharkhand, Kerala, Telangana, Himachal Pradesh, Odisha, Punjab, Uttarakhand and West Bengal have inoculated more than 10 lakh beneficiaries of the 18-44 years category with the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine, the ministry said.

—PTI

► The ministry said 28,33,691 first vaccine doses and 3,29,889 second doses were given in the 18-44 years category on Saturday. Cumulatively, 99,434,862 people in this age group across all states and union territories have received their first dose and 27,12,794 have received their second dose since the start of phase-3 of the vaccination drive, the report showed.



Chief Minister M.K.Stalin holds a review meeting with officials on Saturday.

—DC

Gold paste seized by Chennai air customs

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JULY 3

The customs officers at the Chennai Airport seized gold worth ₹31 lakhs and arrested two persons for smuggling the gold from Sharjah.

Based on intelligence, Akilan (27) of Thanjavur who arrived from Sharjah by Air Arabia flight G9-471 was intercepted at the exit on suspicion of carrying gold.

Searching him, three bundles of gold paste weighing 715 grams were recovered from the rectum. On extraction 633 grams of 24k purity gold valued at ₹31 lakhs was recovered and seized under Customs Act. Further, he was taken outside the airport to nab the receiver. After some time a person who approached him was also nabbed. He has been identified as Mohamed Uvais (23) of Ramanathapuram and has admitted his involvement. Both carrier and receiver have been arrested by Chennai customs.

Aged sole inhabitant of ghost village near Thoothukudi awaits return of his people

M. ARULOLI | DC
TIRUNELVELI, JULY 3

Once a bustling farming commune, where rainfed crops like cotton and maize were abundantly grown, Meenakshipuram village, located 13 kilometres from the Tirunelveli-Thoothukudi national highway, has now become a ghost village due to mass exodus of people a few years ago because of acute water scarcity and lack of job opportunities.

Nobody can now enter the dilapidated panchayat union primary school, which was functional till 2014, which is fully surrounded with thorny bushes. Some houses including three two-storied buildings also have a deserted look. According to the 2011 census record, the population of the village then was 1,269.

But, Kandasamy, 73, decided to live in the rich nostalgia of his village, where he was born. Located on a comparatively higher plain, farming in Meenakshipuram depended only on the monsoon that played truant and ruined the hamlet, said Kandasamy.



He too sold his five acres of land 25 years ago and used the money for the marriages of his two daughters, who are now settled in Thoothukudi. Kandasamy's two sons too left the village to work as drivers. His elder son Balan, settled at Kasilingapuram, 15 kilometres from Meenakshipuram, visits his lonely father once in a week with his children. "I spent my loneliness eagerly waiting to see my son and grandchildren," said Kandasamy, whose wife Veeralakshmi died 16 years ago.

"One or two visit the village temple (Amman temple) but not often," said Kandasamy, whose com-

panions in the village are his two dogs, Raja and Rani. "My son bought me a mobile phone two years ago for contacting my villagers who settled outside," said Kandasamy, who owns an old TVS 50. "My only aspiration before death is to see our people coming back to make our village lively as it was before. Many of the villagers sold their lands to companies for installing windmills for power generation."

—KANDASAMY

CM sanctions ₹61.09 cr for kuruvasi cultivation

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUCHY, JULY 3

Chief Minister M.K. Stalin has sanctioned ₹61.09 crores for the kuruvasi paddy cultivation consolidated scheme in 3,50,000 acres across the Cauvery delta region, said urban development minister K.N. Nehru.

Nehru accompanied by his cabinet colleague Anbil Mahesh Poyyamozi, district collector S. Sivarasu and oth-

ers told newsmen on the sidelines of a function where they distributed ₹2185 worth chemical fertilizer to the farmers on cent percent subsidy at L.Abishekapuram near Lalgudi on Saturday that under this scheme 10,500 acres in Tiruchy district will be covered at a cost of ₹1.51 crores.

Launching this scheme at Thirumarugal in Nagapattinam district, Collector Dr A. Arun

Thamburaj said 10,000 acres will be covered at a cost of Rs 2.89 crores in Nagapattinam district.

He said since the water released from the Mettur reservoir reached tail-end areas of the district, this year it is planned to cover 22,500 acres under Kuruvasi area as against the last year's coverage of 20,477 acres and so far kuruvasi paddy was sown in 14,507 acres, this year, he added.



Coimbatore District Collector G.S. Sameeran inspects new road laying work at Sulur on Saturday.

—DC

Thanjavur hosp braces to tackle third wave

G. SRINIVASAN | DC
THANJAVUR, JULY 3

In order to tackle a possible third wave of Covid-19, which is likely to affect children more, the Rajah Mirasudhar Government Hospital, in which the paediatrics department of the Thanjavur Medical College functions, has been equipped with adequate oxygen beds.

According to Dr G. Ravikumar, dean of TMC, preparations have been made in accordance with guidelines of the Indian Paediatrics Association. "The expert opinion from IPA is that four patients (children) can be expected per day in case of a worst scenario. They may be required to stay for 10 days. For a month 120 beds will be required. We have augmented our bed strength based on this guideline," said Dr Ravikumar.

"At present, there are 400 oxygen beds in the hospital. We are going to provide an additional 190 beds both at the new ophthalmology building coming up on the campus and at the Comprehensive Emergency Obstetrics and Neonatal Care building. In total we will have 590 beds including 400 available now," he added.

"The Thanjavur medical college hospital has

1,428 oxygen beds for treating Corona patients. The plan is to increase it to 2,000 for future needs. We have liquid oxygen plants at RMH and TMCH. They are of 10 kilo litres capacity. At TMCH, we have two 10 KL liquid oxygen plants," said Dr Ravikumar.

Chief Minister M.K. Stalin inaugurated the 300 oxygen bed facility to treat Corona patients at TMCH through video conferencing on June 3.

Rajah Mirasudhar Hospital was started in 1875 in the 40 acres donated by Rani Kamakshi Bai, granddaughter of Maratha king Serfoji two. The land was donated in the heart of the town beside Big Temple. The then resident collector Sullivan Thomas started the hospital on the land donated by the queen. Later, donations were given by Thiruppanandal Kasi madam, Poondi Veeraiyah Vandayar, Kabisthalam Doraisamy Mooparar, Porayar Thavasimukthi Nadar and Gopala Krishnar - all landlords called Mirasudhars. Buildings were constructed using their donations. Hence the name Rajah Mirasudhar government hospital. It has rendered yeoman services, particularly in child delivery, for the past 145 years.

Passenger traffic picking up at Chennai airport

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JULY 3

After a sluggish phase, the Chennai airport has registered an increase in the number of travellers. The Airport Authority of India (AAI) officials said the sharp increase in the number of travellers and flight services in Chennai is due to the constantly lowering Covid-19 cases in the state.

The officials said for the last three days, the number of passengers were around 12,000, as against less than 3,000 during mid-May. The number of aircraft movements had also seen an increase in July.

According to an official, since the beginning of the Covid-19 second wave in the state, the passenger traffic and flight operations at the Chennai airport came down slowly. The airport saw the lowest passenger traffic (less than 3,500) in over a year on May 11. People in the state got more cautious and avoided travelling.

In June, nearly 80 to 83 flights were handled at the airport daily. Most people, who were stuck in the city, began leaving here and those wanting to return too came here and the passenger count reached more than 4,000 a day.

Meanwhile, from the beginning of the month, the Chennai airport catered to 12,000 flyers who travelled with 120 flights. On July 1 alone, 6,450 passengers arrived at Chennai airport in 61 flights, while 5,707 passengers travelled out of Chennai in 59 flights.

'As per 1892 agreement K'taka cannot build dam without TN permission'

From P1

Thenpennar flows through those districts before entering the Bay of Bengal, he said, adding that it travelled only a short distance inside

Karnataka. Since Thenpennar would receive water only after the 165 feet high dam was filled up, the farmers in Tamil Nadu would be affected, Dr Ramadoss said.

He claimed that the 1892 agreement

between Madras and Mysore presidedencies on the sharing of river water encompasses these rivers, too, and hence Karnataka could not build a dam without the consent of the lower riparian state of Tamil Nadu.



People from Tambaram, Pallavaram and Shollinganallur constituency receive benefits under various schemes by the Tamil Nadu government on Saturday.

—DC

HC quashes marriage certificate of duped girl

J. STALIN | DC
CHENNAI, JULY 2

A 17-year-old girl, who was misled by a 22-year-old youth by taking her to a sub-registrar's office and made her sign in certain documents and later came to know that he had registered the marriage between her and him, got a reprieve with the Madras high court quashing the marriage certificate and holding that there was no marriage between her and the youth.

Allowing the petition filed by the girl, Justice N. Anand Venkatesh said, "Taking into consideration the facts and circumstances of the case and also the fact that the very registration is bad in the eye of law, this court is inclined to interfere with the registration of the mar-

riage by sub-registrar, Thoothukudi. Keelur, Thoothukudi. Accordingly, the certificate of the registration of marriage issued by the sub-registrar dated August 16, 2017 is hereby quashed as illegal and opposed to law".

While the girl was studying in higher secondary school in the year 2014-2016, she got acquainted with the boy. He misled her and took her to the sub-registrar and made her sign in certain documents and later she came to know that the boy had registered the marriage between her and him. Then, she was aged about 17 and, therefore, the entire marriage was invalid in the eye of law. Therefore, she made a representation to the district registrar (administration) seeking cancellation of

the registration on the ground that the entire registration was invalid, since no marriage took place between her and the boy. However, the district registrar rejected her application and directed her to seek an appropriate remedy before the competent court. Aggrieved with the same, she filed the present petition, she added.

The judge said it was clear from the facts of the case that the petitioner and boy were known to each other. However, it was not clear as to why the petitioner accompanied the boy to the office of the registrar and signed in certain documents. Probably the petitioner, who was in her adolescence, did not understand the consequences of a marriage registered before the competent

authority. It was an admitted fact that the petitioner was aged only 17 at the time of marriage. Therefore, the so-called marriage itself was invalid in the eye of law and it ought not to have been registered by the sub-registrar. This court also takes into consideration the specific stand taken by the priest to the effect that no marriage took place on August 8, 2017 and no marriage certificate was issued by him and the very marriage certificate that was produced before the sub-registrar was highly doubtful, the judge added.

The judge said the sub-registrar ought to have confirmed from the priest as to whether any marriage took place between the parties, since both the petitioner and the boy were very young. If

the sub-registrar had taken care to ascertain the age of the petitioner, he would not have proceeded further to register the marriage. In the present case, there was a very serious doubt as to whether any marriage took place. That apart, the so-called marriage certificate that was produced before the sub-registrar was highly doubtful in view of the specific stand taken by the priest. This added to the fact that the petitioner was hardly 17 years at the time of marriage, also makes the marriage invalid in the eyes of law, the judge added.

The judge said the sub-registrar failed in his duty by not scrutinising the documents and ascertaining the age of the petitioner and the registration has taken place in a mechanical fashion.



Students from Government Yoga and Naturopathy Medical College demonstrate asanas to public at the newly opened post corona care clinic at Government Corona hospital inside King Institute, Guindy, on Saturday.

—DC

SHORT TAKES

3 OFFICIALS OF SHIPPING FIRM ARRESTED

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC MUMBAI, JULY 3

Mumbai Police, probing the sinking of ill-fated barge P305 during the cyclone Tautkae arrested three employees of the shipping firm including its director.

Prasad Ganpat Rane (43), Nitinkumar Singh (32) and Akhleshwar Tiwari (49) of Papa Shipping Pvt Ltd were arrested on Friday. While Mr Rane is a manager, Mr Singh is a director and Tiwari works as a technical superintendent, said police officials of the Yellow Gate police station.

Barge P-305, which housed personnel engaged in maintenance work of an offshore oil drilling platform of the Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC), had sank on May 17 during the cyclone. As many as 261 crew members were onboard when the barge began sinking. While most of them were rescued by the Indian Navy warships INS Kochi and INS Kolkata, 71 died after the barge drowned.

On a complaint filed by Mustafizur Rahman Husain Shaikh, chief engineer of the barge, a case under IPC sections 304 (2) (culpable homicide not amounting to murder) and 336 (causing grievous hurt by act endangering life or personal safety of others) was registered at Yellow Gate police station against its captain Rajeshkumar Ballav (52), who himself died in the tragedy.

MAOISTS ATTACK IRON ORE MINE IN BASTAR

DC CORRESPONDENT RAIPUR, JULY 3

Maoists on Saturday stormed an iron ore site allotted to a private firm in Chhattisgarh's south Bastar district and attacked the workers engaged in development of a road in the area, leaving a supervisor of the construction company dead, police said.

Around 150 armed Naxals attacked the Aamdel iron ore mine site under Chhote Dangar police station at around 10 in the morning, beating the workers engaged in development of a road in the area and torching the vehicles used for construction works, a senior police officer posted in Bastar said.

They later held hostage over 10 labourers. However, the ultras later released them with a warning not to work in the mines, allotted to Jayaswal Neco Industries Limited. The Naxals also abducted two workers including a supervisor. They beat the supervisor, identified as Pradeep Sheel of Bhilai to death. The rebels however set the other worker free. Later, the Maoists launched a grenade attack and opened indiscriminate fire on the Dangar Hills police camp, nearly 1.5 km from the iron ore mine site, damaging the security camp extensively.

GOVT TO UNVEIL CYBER SECURITY STRATEGY SOON

New Delhi, July 3: The government will release a new cybersecurity strategy this year, National Cyber Security Coordinator Rajesh Pant said at an event organised by Public Affairs Forum of India (PAFI).

He said the strategy would holistically cover the entire ecosystem of cyber space in India.

The government is expected to release a new cybersecurity strategy this year, he said speaking at the PAFI event on Friday. "The vision of this strategy is to ensure safe, secure, resilient, vibrant, and trusted cyber space," Pant said.

The new strategy would serve as a guideline to tackle various aspects, be it data as a national resource, building indigenous capabilities or cyber audit. "There are about 80 odd deliverables coming out of this new strategy," the PAFI statement quoted Pant as saying. The theme of the PAFI Dialogue was 'Cyber Security in the New Normal.'

On the national security narrative for the telecom sector, Pant said, "While other nations have created a black-list of companies that cannot operate in the country, India is the only nation to create a white-list of telecom companies that are allowed to operate in India".

Pandharpur pilgrims head defies ban, held

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC MUMBAI, JULY 3

The Pandharpur wari (pilgrimage) is likely to snowball into a controversy this year as the police arrested Bandatayya Karadkar, one of the pilgrim heads, for defying the government ban due to Covid pandemic.

The State government has prohibited the annual palkhi procession on foot for the second consecutive year due to Covid. Despite the government ban, some pilgrim outfits have vowed to continue with the walking tradition of the pilgrimage.

Mr Karadkar, who had started the wari on foot along with this supporters, was detained by Pimpri-Chinchwad police in the wee hours of Saturday.

His arrest led to a tense situation with his supporters staging a sit-in agitation on the spot.

The BJP has reacted strongly on Mr Karadkar's arrest with former chief minister Devendra Fadnis condemning the act. He tweeted, "Wari is an integral part of Maharashtra's culture and the relation between Vitthal and warkaris is beyond description. The importance of belief and tradition cannot be ignored. What did the government achieve by arresting Bandatayya Karadkar? Was there no

solution to avoid it? It's a sheer insult of warkaris. The arrest was totally wrong."

Adhyatmik Aghadi, the BJP's religious front, has threatened the State Government with dire consequences if it does not allow warkaris to undertake their pilgrimage to Pandharpur on foot.

Last year, due to the Covid outbreak, the historic wari (pilgrimage) tradition in Maharashtra was not carried out. This year, in the wake of the second wave of the pandemic, the State Government has ruled out any procession by foot, while permitting only 50 devotees to convey the padukas in a Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC) bus towards Pandharpur.

Every year, more than three to four lakh warkaris join in several dindis with the Sant Dnyaneshwar and Sant Tukaram Maharaj palkhis (palanquins) - bearing the 'padukas' or footprints of the renowned saints - that starts from Alandi and Dehu village respectively. There are around 250 registered dindis which follow the palkhis and lakhs of warkaris walk in the wari to converge on the temple town of Pandharpur in Solapur district to take the darshan of Lord Vitthal.

ASI plans laser scanning of Lord Jagannath's seat

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, JULY 3

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) will carry out 3D laser scanning of the 'Ratna Singhasan' at Srimandir in Puri during the upcoming Rath Yatra to check for structural damages, if any.

Ratna Singhasan is the sanctum sanctorum of Srimandir which is more famously known as the Jagannath Temple.

According to Sri Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) sources, the structural damage of the sanctum sanctorum and Jagamohana (the assembly hall) will also be checked by 3D laser scanning so that necessary repairs can be carried out.

"The proposed laser imaging will help in getting a clear picture of the structural damage, if any, of the temple. The technology will also help the ASI to properly document the structural and architectural design of the temple for future use and reference," said a SJTA official.

ASI official Chitta Ranjan Das said laser scanning is safe and it will cause no harm to the ancient structures of the temple. "The technology is effective enough to collect data for the conservation of the

monument," said Das. "The 3D technology is effective enough to collect data on the damage and extent of the conservation of the monument. Once the damage assessment is done, we will be in a position to estimate the cost of the required repair work," said the ASI assistant superintendent Mr Das.

Besides, a private firm has been given the contract of around ₹1.5 crore for the illumination of Srimandir. "We have conducted a primary survey of Srimandir for the illumination work and identified various places for faced illumination," said Santosh Kumar, an employee with the private firm.

Besides, a private firm has been given the contract of around ₹1.5 crore for the illumination of Srimandir. "We have conducted a primary survey of Srimandir for the illumination work and identified various places for faced illumination," said Santosh Kumar, an employee with the private firm.

HC EXTENDS STAN SWAMY'S STAY AT PRIVATE HOSPITAL IN MUMBAI

Mumbai, July 3: The Bombay High Court on Saturday extended the stay of Jesuit priest and activist Stan Swamy, an accused in the Elgar Parishad-Maoists links case, at a private hospital in Mumbai till July 6.

Senior counsel Mihir Desai told a bench of Justices SS Shinde and NJ Jamadar that the 84-year-old was still undergoing treatment at the intensive care unit of the Holy Family Hospital, where he was shifted from the Talaja prison in Navi Mumbai following the HC's order on May 28 this year.

Swamy, 84, who claims to be suffering from several ailments, including the Parkinson's disease, had moved the high court earlier this year through advocate Desai, seeking medical treatment and interim bail on health grounds.

He had tested positive for coronavirus at a private hospital last month and was subsequently shifted to the Intensive Care Unit.

His plea for medical bail and bail on merits was listed for hearing in the high court on Friday but could not be taken up due to the paucity of time.

The bench adjourned the hearing to Tuesday and extended his hospital stay till then.

"Till the next hearing, out interim order on his (Swamy's) treatment at the private hospital will continue," the bench said. Swamy also filed a fresh plea in the High Court on Friday challenging section 43D(5) of the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) that imposes stringent restrictions on the grant of bail to those booked under the Act.

- PTI

TMC PLANS TO TAKE SOLICITOR GENERAL ISSUE TO PRESIDENT

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, JULY 3

A day after indicting solicitor general Tushar Mehta of meeting Narada sting bribery accused and Saradha chit fund scam suspect, Suwendu Adhikari, and seeking Prime Minister Narendra Modi to sack him from his post, Trinamul Congress is now planning to knock the doors of President Ram Nath Kovind next week and raise the same demand with him as well.

A delegation of TMC MPs, according to party insiders, is expected to visit the Rashtrapati Bhavan on Monday and submit a petition to Mr Kovind for Mr Mehta's removal as the S-G over his "direct conflict of interest."

Mr Mehta has been representing the CBI and ED in both the high-profile cases in which Mr Adhikari also is allegedly linked to.

The TMC appears to be confident that Mr Mehta met when the Nandigram BJP MLA visited his New Delhi residence on July 1 though Mr Mehta on Friday termed Mr Adhikari's visit "unannounced" and denied of meeting him due to his preoccupation.

Dissatisfied with Mr Mehta's arguments, chief minister Mamata Banerjee's nephew Abhishek Banerjee however sought proof from him. He tweeted, "Mr Mehta's efforts to dismiss speculations regarding his clandestine meeting with @SuwenduWB can only be valuable if he makes all CCTV footage public until Mr Adhikari was in his residence. Moreover, was Mr Adhikari present in the SG's residence without prior appointment?"

The TMC MP added, "Reports state that Mr Adhikari entered Hon'ble SG's residence in the presence of a cavalcade of officers and stayed there for nearly 30 minutes. Does that imply that a meeting was indeed due? As the episode gets murkier, one can only hope that the truth shall surface."

For a plastic-free world



Disha Volunteer Organisation members during Plastic Waste Awareness campaign to motivate the general public and shopkeepers to use cloth/jute bags on the occasion of International Plastic Bag Free Day in Jammu on Saturday.

- PTI

PM must order JPC probe into Rafale deal: Congress

France appoints judge to probe deal, says Mediapart

New Delhi, July 3: The Congress on Saturday demanded a joint parliamentary committee probe into the Rafale deal, saying it is the only way forward to find the truth about "corruption" in the purchase of the fighter jets.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi should come forward and order the investigation, the party said.

The Congress' demand came after French investigative website Mediapart reported that a French judge has been appointed to lead a "highly sensitive" judicial investigation into alleged "corruption and favouritism" in the Rs 59,000-crore Rafale fighter jet deal with India.

"Corruption in the Rafale deal has come out clearly now. The stand of the Congress and Rahul Gandhi has been vindicated today after the French government ordered a probe," Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala told reporters at a press conference.

The French public prosecution agency has ordered an investigation into the

● **THE STAND of the Congress and Rahul Gandhi has been vindicated today after the French government ordered a probe," Congress chief spokesperson said.**

alleged corruption in the defence deal, he said and urged Prime Minister Modi to come forward and order the JPC probe.

Mr Surjewala said since the matter deals with national security and identity, a fair and independent JPC probe is the only way out and not the Supreme Court.

"When the French government has accepted that there is corruption in the deal, should a JPC probe be not held in the country where the corruption took place," he asked.

Mr Surjewala said this issue is not about Congress versus BJP, but this is an issue that concerns the security of the country and "corruption" in the biggest defence deal.

"The facts now clearly tell and call for a thorough JPC probe into the Rafale

● **When the French government has accepted that there is corruption in the deal, should a JPC probe be not held in the country where the corruption took place, party said.**

scam. Will the prime minister, like the French, now answer to the nation and tell when the prime minister will submit his government to a JPC probe into the Rafale scam," the Congress leader asked.

He said this is an issue of national interest and against those who are filling their pockets by indulging in corruption in defence deals. Mr Surjewala said a JPC probe will be able to call witnesses and will be able to have access to all government files which the Supreme Court or the Central Vigilance Commission could never see.

It will be able to ask probing questions, will be able to punish somebody for lying and will be able to summon the prime minister, defence minister or defence ministry officials

and anybody else, he said.

"The JPC is the only way forward," he claimed.

"This is not a matter to be deliberated by the court as the SC finally conceded. They don't have the jurisdiction, wherewithal or capacity to let witnesses depose before the SC or to have access to the entire government record. Only a fair independent JPC can do it," he said when asked if the Congress would move court again.

Mediapart said the probe, ordered by France's national financial prosecutor's office, is the result of a series of investigative reports into the contract published in April by Mediapart besides a complaint into the allegations by anti-corruption NGO Sherpa.

The report said the judicial investigation was ordered by France's national financial prosecutor's office (PNF) following Mediapart's fresh reports in April of alleged wrongdoings in the deal as well as a complaint filed by French NGO Sherpa that specialises in financial crime.

- Agencies

After Jammu episode, drone attack alert sounded in Punjab

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JULY 3

The Intelligence Bureau in a specific advisory sent to security agencies in Punjab has cautioned that close on the heels of twin drone attacks on defence installation in Jammu a week ago, a "major attack" involving drones could happen in border areas of Punjab.

Following the intelligence alert, Punjab Police chief Dinkar Gupta chaired a high-level security review meeting two days ago where border districts like Amritsar, Tarn Taran, Gurdaspur and other have been put on high alert.

Patrolling has been intensified by the Border Security Force along with Punjab Police in the entire 550-km long Indo-Pak border in Punjab. Even in the past there have been instances where drone from Pakistan were used to drop weapons like AK-47, grenades and narcotics in villages close to the border.

Now specific instructions have been given that any drone should be immediately shot down without any prior warning.

Currently all security forces like Army, BSF and Air Force are closely monitoring security at their installations along the Indo-Pak border.

Sources said a close watch was also being kept in the Rajasthan sector also but admitted that the threat perception was much higher in Punjab and Kashmir region.


The Home Ministry has already handed over the investigations into the

drone attack to the National Investigation Agency (NIA). Initial investigations have already confirmed the involvement of terror outfit Lashka-e-Tayyeba. The National Technical Research Organisation (NTRO) has started work

on ambitious project to jam or freeze the frequency of a Drone and its "mother station or control unit on the ground."

Initial investigations by the NIA have revealed that in all probability heavy duty sophisticated Chinese made drones were used in the Jammu.

The NIA has managed to obtain some C C T V footage of these drones which was being analysed by experts. It appears that drone crossed over into Pakistan after the incident as the border was barely 14-km from the defence installations in Jammu.

	Government of Tamil Nadu		ATTUR MUNICIPALITY	
	Special Road Programme 2020-21			
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Estimate Amount (Rs.in lakhs) 250.00 / EMD 1% of the Estimate Value Rs.250000/- Contractor Class - 1st Class / Period of completion 6 Months.				
Work Package - 2: Rs.250.00 Lakhs: Improvement of B.T & C.C Roads with Storm Water Drain @ Ward No- 2 Upper Court, Ward no- 30 Ambethar Nagar, Main and Cross Streets, Ward no- 31 C Nagar Cross Streets, Ward nos - 15, 16 Putappa Main and Cross Streets, Ward no- 18, 8, 7, McWilliam & Koda Main & Cross Streets, and Ward no-17 24 & 19 Avenue Street, Gandhi Nagar/Parthiyarpet, Main & Cross Streets				
Estimate Amount (Rs.in lakhs) 250.00 / EMD 1% of the Estimate Value Rs.250000/- Contractor Class 1st / Period of completion 6 Months				
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i) Date and time of Pre bid meeting		30.07.2021 at 12.00 Noon		
ii) Last date and time for down loading bid documents		05.08.2021 up to 2.00 PM		
iii) Last Date and time for submission of bid documents through E - Tendering and OFF line submission		06.08.2021 up to 3.00 PM		
iv) Date and time of opening of the Technical Bid		06.08.2021 at 1.30 PM		
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DECCAN Chronicle

4 JULY 2021



Shailaja Khanna

Off the beaten track

What kept the maestros going during pandemic

Four regions, four musicians, four questions, four perspectives — yet a common thread of positivity and introspection running through them all. Regardless of their ages (Abhishek Raghuram is in his 30s, while Pandit Ajoy Chakrabarty is touching 70), all the musicians have made the best of the pandemic, taken the restrictions imposed on them in their stride, dealing with the huge changes in their world with grace. One is left struck and impressed by their spirit of philosophical acceptance.

BIGGEST TAKEAWAY FROM THE PANDEMIC

It is not to take life for granted. That was the message that this writer walked away with after interacting with the four musicians. But for each individual, the lens through which they viewed their experience and reached this conclusion was different. If it was friendship for one, it was the body and its changing dynamics for another, and nature's wisdom and the spirit of humanity that binds us for the remaining interviewees. As Pt Ajoy Chakrabarty, vocal maestro from Kolkata, reflected: "For me, foremost, is the realisation of how ephemeral life is. So many great musicians have been snatched before their time. I have to admit, the amount of time I spent at home has been a huge blessing; it's something I have never done before. Also, there is increased awareness of the need to help others, preserve Nature, respect others."

"Foremost, the pandemic has taught [me]", Ustad Wasifuddin Dagar, dhrupad maestro from Delhi, "about how precious good health, hygiene and, indeed, life is". "My first reaction to the pandemic was that it's a very useful and wonderful time to spend with your Art. But, gradually I realised how important it is to have interaction with others, to have that human touch. Not through the screen but from a body reaction," Wasifuddin said. "In one way, it is absolutely right that you do your art for yourself, but it is very important to get the audience feedback spontaneously, rather than only reading the applause on the screen," he explained.



Ustad Wasifuddin Dagar — GEETALI TARE

Pt Yogesh Samsi, the famous tabla maestro from Mumbai, warned: "It's high time we realise we have to respect Nature, respect what we have got in terms of resources on this planet and learn to look after it, to respect and value it. The amount of abuse Mother Earth has gone through due to the onslaught by humanity — be it social, economic, political or through technology. It has led to such an imbalance that probably it has led to a situation where Mother Earth is trying to heal itself. Across the globe, we have all been taught a huge lesson."

Vidwan Abhishek Raghuram, the Carnatic vocalist who happens to be based out of Chennai, offered, "The pandemic has brought in all of us a strong reassertion of the faith that humanity comes together in support of each other, for the larger cause, when the need arises. I also feel the pandemic has taught us to pick our real needs from what we have assumed them to be so far, almost irrationally!"

MOST PRODUCTIVE ACTIVITY

Riyaaz and retrospection emerged as common themes. "My music. I spent 10-12 hours on my music, something I have never been able to do," was Chakrabarty's reply. It coincided with Wasifuddin Dagar's view and he said: "Definitely, doing my own riyaz, and what I had never done before, teaching online. Also learning to handle these modern gadgets of communication, like laptops and mobiles; I am still learning." For Samsi, "it was having all the time in the world to think of my music — almost like a rewind of my life. All the aspects I had difficulty in doing earlier, reviewing all I had learnt from *abbaji* (Ustad Alla Rakha Khan) these last few decades. Then pondering on it — *chintan*, *mannan karna*, *aur riyaz karna*. *Apne khud ki sadhana*, be it yoga or meditation... I got to give a lot of time to myself, something that I had never done in the last 25 years, due to my professional travels". Abhishek Raghuram, too, spent a lot of time introspecting into his art and his career trajectory. "With the changed routines, I have a lot more opportunity to retrospect clearly and deeply to my journey so far and my course ahead. This, I feel, has been very beneficial to me as an artiste," Raghuram said.

THINGS MOST MISSED DURING THE PANDEMIC

This time, the answers were very varied. Ajoy Chakrabarty "really felt bereft at the loss of so many good friends from the world of the arts". "Great musicians from the Hindustani and Carnatic music world have left us," he lamented. Wasifuddin Dagar was more situated in the present. He missed "live concerts, panel discussions, normal human interaction other than with my family, travelling and, most of all, driving! "It's therapy for me," he added, referring to this hobby. Yogesh Samsi longed for "getting together with my students, teaching sessions, and meeting with intellectuals; *satsang* with like-minded people". Abhishek Raghuram rued the loss of "the ability to meet and interact with co-artists, friends and the larger family".

DO YOU BELIEVE THE MUSIC WORLD WILL RETURN TO WHAT IT WAS?

No investment in the new normal, for these musicians, who were almost unanimous in rejecting the much-tooted idea. All four artists replied to this question in the affirmative, although Ajoy Chakrabarty qualified his response with conditions. He said, "Yes, though there will be changes; for one, I think the online stage will remain for good. Teaching online will remain too, though as far as I am concerned, I had always taught online, in fact have been doing so for the last 11 years, so that's not been new for me." Wasifuddin Dagar sounded more emphatic. He said, "I am an optimist, what has become the 'new normal' will again be replaced by the old 'normal', *Insha Allah*, but don't quite know when. I pray, soon!" Yogesh Samsi felt "the process will be slower, but eventually concerts will happen". "We need to be patient, and not try to hurry things up," he said. "In fact, my faith is that it will resume in a fashion larger and stronger than before. The world is as anxious as we are about the gap the pandemic has brought upon us," was Raghuram's confident observation.

Bonus responses: Lockdown or no, did the masters stoop to perform domestic chores? Wasifuddin shared candidly that the chore he has most hated doing was tidying his room! Abhishek endearingly said every chore he has had to do has been a pleasure, which he will miss once he again has less time!

Shailaja Khanna writes on music, musicians and matters of music

Subhani



Break the Chinese puzzle by studying CPC's game



Manish Tewari

State of the Union

This July, I complete a four-decade-long association with the Indian National Congress (INC) founded in 1885. An involvement that commenced when I joined the National Students Union of India (NSUI) way back in 1981.

As a grassroots political activist, the philosophy, structure and organisation of other political parties has always been an area of academic interest for me. A curiosity that got further buoyed when I was elected president of the International Students Union (IUS) in the early 1990s. The IUS was then a Prague-based syndical organisation of 155 student organisations across 112 countries and territories. One political party that I have continuously studied and observed is the Communist Party of China (CPC).

The current commentary is about this distinctive organisation that lies at the heart of an emerging system of global dominance. The Communist Party of China (CPC) celebrated a hundred years of its existence on the 1st of July. Ironically, all empirical evidence puts its foundation date as July 23, 1921. July 1 was arbitrarily chosen by party apparatchiks when they were hunkering down in the grottoes of Yan'an in 1941.

The CPC was born during what the Chinese call the century of humiliation 1898-1949. China was back then an impoverished and a pastoral society dominated by imperialist powers through ignominious treaty arrangements.

A clandestine get-together of a handful of people took place in the French concession of Shanghai at 106 Rue Wantz. One of the attendees was Mao Zedong who remained a leading light of this fledgling party for over 54 years. In addition to him,

two foreign commissars from the Communist International, a Soviet sponsored structure created for the global spread of Communism, were also present.

These furtive conversations were the precursor to the formal launch of the Chinese Communist Party (CPC). A century later not only does it control China with an iron fist, hitherto considered ungovernable for centuries together, but moreover, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union on the 26th of December, 1991, it is the only political system that presents a successful alternative politico-economic model to the Western neo-liberal democratic order.

In the early 1920s, all kinds of congregations and individuals called themselves Communists in China. It was a fashionable nom de guerre. This new outfit was bedraggled and thinly resourced. They had no arsenal worth the name.

Even in their wildest imagination no keen observer of China back then could have prophesised that this motley collection of virtual nobodies would ignite a successful Communist insurgency that then spread across the countryside like a wildfire consuming everything in its path.

In a short span of 28 years, this human dynamo not only vanquished a Nationalist Army of more than four million strong kitted out by the Allied forces to fight the Japanese during World War-II but established and consolidated a Communist state in 1949 that no one believed would survive more than a few years.

For the longest time, the CPC and the Red Army was led by Mao Zedong who, ironically, had never intellectually devoured Marxism. He was tempered in the fury of the May 4, 1919, struggle. A movement

triggered by the pronouncement of Western powers to transfer Chinese colonial territory in the possession of Germany to Japan post World War I. That effort stimulated both anti-Western nationalism as well as a Chinese desire to reclaim the glory of its yesteryears — a la Middle Kingdom syndrome. It also established a distinctive ideological basis that fused Chinese nationalism with Marxism.

The skill of the CPC and the reason for its longevity has been its ability to navigate the winds of change with nimbleness, without giving up on its core ideological values. Over a century, it has morphed from being a revolutionary army to a party of governance surviving the vicissitudes of not only domestic turmoil but also international intrigue coupled with the idiosyncratic impulses of its own leadership.

Two of those whims were the Great Leap Forward from 1958 to 1962 and the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976. The former resulted in the deaths of over 20 million people mainly due to starvation. The latter was a vicious socio-political housecleaning predicated upon the purging the vestiges of capitalist and traditional elements from the mainstream of China's thought leadership. Mobs of pupils and Red Guards assaulted people wearing "bourgeois clothes" on the thoroughfares, "imperialist" signage were desecrated, and intellectuals and party officials were either murdered or driven to suicide. Over two million lost their lives as a consequence of these deprecations.

Mao Zedong's ruinous tenure ended with his demise in 1976 leaving China in a state of econom-

ic morass and social stratification. However, despite the misery and pain Mao had heaped on the Chinese people, the hold of the CPC on the country remained intact. It did not get undermined even after the Tiananmen Square massacre of protesting students in 1989 that convulsed Chinese society to its very being. The point being that it is not only fear, terror and intimidation that binds the Chinese society to the CPC.

The impulses are much more profound and include rigorous ideological indoctrination coupled with a village to national capital structure that functions like a well-oiled machine.

The CPC moved seamlessly from Mao's tyranny to the model of totalitarian capitalism institutionalised by Deng Xiaoping and his successors that held the field for close to three-and-a-half decades from 1979 to 2012. One of the essential attributes of those years was the cultivated reticence of both the Chinese state and the CPC as it put its shoulder to the wheel of internal consolidation. It once again morphed into an aggressive wolf warrior mode as Xi Jinping took centrestage in 2012.

The beauty of these transitions does not lie in the abrupt U-turns that the CPC took but the fact that they were able to carry the Chinese nation along with them during all these transfigurations.

That is wherein lies the challenge for Indian policymakers as they seek to understand Chinese motivations and behaviour in the 21st century. Till the time they do not understand the functioning of the CPC they will never be able to discern the minds and methods of the Chinese leadership. For, unlike India and other democracies around the world, where political parties and governance systems are distinct, in the case of China, it is a merged mass of dissimulating narratives.

The author is a lawyer, Member of Parliament and former Union information and broadcasting minister. The views expressed are personal. Twitter handle @manishtewari.

It is not only fear that binds the Chinese society to the CPC. The impulses include rigorous ideological indoctrination coupled with a village to national capital structure that runs smoothly.

LETTERS

DISCRIMINATION

It is with reference to the news, IIT M associate's charred body found on campus. The letter he wrote before his suicide was found in his Velachery residence while his half-burnt body was found on campus. With 14 such suicidal deaths in 10 years, IIT-M stands first. In 2019 a Fatima, a girl student who also belonged to Kerala and committed suicide in her hostel room alleging discrimination based on her religion. A few days ago an Assistant Professor resigned from IIT-M alleging multiple instances of discrimination. The central government must constitute a committee to study the religious and racial discrimination faced by the IIT-M students to prevent future incidents.

P.Victor Selvaraj, Palayamkottai

INJUSTICE TO JAYA

It's a sheer waste of time to continue the inquiry by the one-man commission appointed by the then government which has not made any headway with respect to the former Chief Minister J. Jayalalitha's death in 2016. We have only heard of the parties and lawyers seeking adjournments in cases, whereas in this case, the Commission has been granted a number of adjournments by the previous government which has neither the focus nor the great inclination to bring out the truth. Going by the huge expenditure and number of witnesses involved in the proceedings so far, the late J Jayalalitha's rebirth may become a reality rather than a delivery of justice in this case. Considering the same, it's high time that the Madras high court directs the State Government to wind up this case to avoid any further loss to the public exchequer as well as to give relief to Justice Arumugaaswamy.

A.P. Thiruvadi, Chennai

EDUCATION FOR ALL

Apropos many boards declaring results, exams and grades are temporary, only education is permanent, which should be used to solve everyday problems creatively. In fact, life is the most difficult exam. In school, we learn the lessons before the test, but life gives the test and then the lessons. Many fail because they try to mimic others, without realising that in life each person gets a different question paper every time and questions from past years don't repeat always.

T.S. Karthik, Chennai

Taki



The art of sports commentary is really dying now

Wimbledon is here at last, after its absence in 2020. What struck me watching the French Open on television a couple of weeks before was just how much rubbish I had to listen to if I kept the sound on. There are now too many matches broadcast, which means more and more commentators are spouting off about the game in the middle of rallies. I don't know why viewers don't raise hell with the networks about these non-stop blabbermouths who interrupt our viewing. We've become a nation of sheep, accepting everything so-called experts throw at us.

Televised sport needs commentators only before and after the event. Although the Wimbledon lot spout off a lot less than the French Open blabbermouths, I think back fondly to the impeccable Dan Maskell, whose "Oh my word" was as far as he went after witnessing an extraordinary shot. After Maskell came the great South African doubles expert Frew McMillan, who handles the microphone as deftly as he handled

his racquet while winning the Wimbledon doubles title numerous times. Frew was a buddy of mine during our playing days and he's one of the few nowadays who allow the viewer to enjoy the action without being told non-stop what they are watching.

The televised sporting event that allows the viewer to make up their mind no longer exists. There is an epidemic of excess on the part of the speakers, sorry, commentators, that is just a way of giving themselves a bit more gravitas. They explain the obvious — that is to say what we have just seen, and then some. Television's primary mission seems to be to show us something, then to verbalise what we've just seen to death. Never mind, perhaps it's only me who likes to watch tennis without someone explaining to me what I'm watching.

My nerves were tried and tried by watching the French Open recently, where the rallies can be very long, and the blabbermouths very, very wordy. The latter are mostly adulatory towards the players, as it's

normal for them to be. But when Serena Williams or Novak Djokovic are on the court they really surpass themselves. After losing an important point during a match in Paris, the Serb bounced the ball 23 times before serving. Usually, he bounces it 13 times. If that's not gamesmanship my name is Coco Chanel. Again, perhaps it's only me, but American female commentators' voices, some high-pitched and shrill, particularly get on my nerves. Not Chrissie Evert's, however. Chrissie was beautifully behaved on court and always looked pretty and feminine while winning. She and John McEnroe should be the only Americans employed by the European TV networks though Mac is no longer what he was. He was very good when he started broadcasting and told it like it was. But now he's joined the rest in being more of a cheerleader than a critic.

One of those American females commenting in Paris remarked how empowering it was to watch a woman taking control of her body. What was that again? If we're going to

have this kind of psychobabble while commenting on a tennis match, I think I'll start watching wrestling, the pro-kind that involves masked bad guys and screaming women in the audience. If we follow the American way, we'll soon be using the F-word to express sincerity and enthusiasm, not to mention conviction. But let's get back to the game of tennis.

The reason tennis was once referred to as an elite game (played only by country club types) is easy to explain. Wooden rackets and animal-gut strings made it among the most difficult games to master, if not the most difficult. If one failed to make contact with the ball in the racket's sweet spot — a diameter of about eight inches — the ball flew out or didn't go anywhere. If one didn't step into the ball's path and take it on the rise, the return just died. If one didn't meet the ball sideways, ditto.

All of the above are now no-nos. Strings grip and slingshot the ball; graphite, titanium and all sorts of rocket material-made

rackets have turned everyone into a champ. Open-stance forehands, swing volleys, and from-the-baseline drop-shot attempts are now obligatory.

I remember a article about the fastest server in the game, Pancho Gonzales, serving close to 113 mph. Today a 15-year-old's second serve tops that speed. See what I mean about tennis being a different sport than the one I grew up competing in? Touch and guile were equal to power, so don't compare the greats of today with those of yesterday. Rod Laver, Lew Hoad and Roy Emerson were as good if not better than today's great troika, and they didn't have the entourages — no dermatologists, cosmetologists, electrolysis, masseurs, coaches, trainers, dieticians, strategists and cheerleaders.

Enjoy Wimbledon with or without the sound and take it from Taki — tennis is a totally different game now.

By arrangement with the Spectator

SHORT TAKES

38 KILLED, 51 HURT IN RAIN-TRIGGERED NEPAL LANDSLIDES

Kathmandu, July 3: Flash floods and landslides triggered by torrential rains across Nepal have left at least 38 people dead, including seven children, and wounded over 50 others in the last 20 days, the Home Ministry said on Saturday.

The ministry said 51 people sustained injuries and 24 people, including three children, have gone missing in the incidents of floods and landslides in different parts of the country. Similarly, 1,250 people have been evacuated from different parts of the country that were hit by the natural disaster, it said.

A total of 790 houses have been inundated, 519 homes, 90 cowsheds and 19 bridges were destroyed due to the floods and landslides, it said.

MIGRATION FROM BELARUS LEADS TO CRISIS IN LITHUANIA

Helsinki (Finland): Lithuania has declared a state of emergency due to an influx of migrants in the last few days from neighbouring Belarus, as tensions between the European Union and Belarus escalate.

Lithuania's Interior Minister Agle Bilotaite said late Friday that the decision, proposed by the State Border Guard Service, was necessary not because of an increased threat to the country of 2.8 million people but to put a more robust system into place to handle migrants coming in.

It's very important to have a legal system and instruments ... to be able to swiftly make decisions in response to arising challenges, Bilotaite said during a government meeting Friday evening, according to the Baltic News Service.

SYRIAN GOVT SHELLING KILLS 8, MOSTLY CHILDREN

Beirut: Artillery fire from government-controlled territory and airstrikes on Saturday killed at least eight civilians in Syria's last rebel enclave, most of them children, and destroyed a civil defence center and a water station, rescue workers and a war monitor said.

The shelling in Idlib, a village in southern Idlib province, hit the home of Subhi al-Assi, killing him, his wife and three of his children in their sleep, according to the rescue service known as the White Helmets and Idlib's health directorate. Al-Assi was an administrator in a local health center.

Shelling also struck the home of a volunteer for the White Helmets, also known as the Syria Civil Defence, killing his two children.

The volunteer, Omar al-Omar, and his wife were wounded, according to the White Helmets. In a nearby village, another child was killed and four others from the same family were wounded, according to the White Helmets.

MAJOR SWEDISH SUPERMARKET HIT BY CYBERATTACK

Stockholm: One of Sweden's biggest supermarket chains said on Saturday it had to temporarily close around 800 stores nationwide after a cyber attack blocked access to its checkouts.

"One of our subcontractors was hit by a digital attack, and that's why our checkouts aren't working any more," Coop Sweden, which accounts for around 20 per cent of the sector, said in a statement.

"We regret the situation and will do all we can to reopen swiftly," the cooperative added.

Coop Sweden did not name the subcontractor or reveal the hacking method used against it beginning on Friday evening.

But the Swedish subsidiary of the Visma software group said the problem was linked to a major cyber attack on US IT company Kaseya on Friday.

Kaseya has urged customers to shut down servers running its VSA platform after dozens were hit with ransomware attacks.

A wave of ransomware attacks has struck worldwide recently, especially in the United States.

Ransomware attacks typically involve locking away data in systems using encryption, making companies pay to regain access.

Over 300 Taliban fighters killed**Afghan forces intensify predawn air strikes, Taliban rejects claims**

Kabul, July 3: Hundreds of Taliban fighters were killed in fierce battles with government forces across several provinces of Afghanistan, officials said Saturday, as Washington announced it would finish withdrawing its troops from the country by the end of August.

Washington's announcement came after all US and Nato troops vacated their main Bagram Air Base, from where the coalition forces led operations for two decades against the Taliban and their Al-Qaeda allies.

Over the past 24 hours, more than 300 Taliban fighters were killed in fighting with government forces, the Ministry of Defence said on Saturday.

Scores were killed in air strikes, including a pre-dawn assault on Saturday, in the southern province of Helmand, where the insurgents and government troops have regularly clashed. There have been fears that Afghan forces would struggle without the air support that the United States has provided.

"In recent days, the Afghan air force has intensified its air strikes against the Taliban hide-outs and the insurgents have suffered casualties," Attaullah Afghan, a member of Helmand provincial council, said.

The Taliban rejected the government's claims.

Both sides often exaggerate each other's casualties and their claims are diffi-

cult to independently verify. But since May 1 when the US military began its final withdrawal of about 2,500 troops, the two warring sides have clashed fiercely across the rugged countryside as peace talks between them have faltered.

As a result, the Taliban have seized dozens of districts in blistering assaults targeting government forces. The insurgents have encircled almost all major cities across the country, and on Saturday claimed seizing seven more districts in the northeastern province of Badakhshan.

Top US envoy to Kabul, Ross Wilson, lashed out at the insurgents. "The Taliban is using violent

propaganda and hate speech to intimidate, threaten & attack Afghans on social media," Wilson said on Twitter on Saturday. "Violence and terror cannot create peace." The Pentagon pressed on with its withdrawal to end America's longest war.

On Friday, all US and Nato troops left Bagram Air Base, signalling that the military involvement for coalition forces was finally nearing its end.

Over the years, the minority north of Kabul has been visited by hundreds of thousands of US and Nato service members and contractors.

It has great military and symbolic significance.

"For many Afghans, Bagram is remembered as

the hub for more than one foreign intervention, as it was the main air base for the Soviets throughout their occupation of the country as well," said Andrew Watkins, an Afghanistan expert at the International Crisis Group.

"Not only has it been the entry point of most foreign troops that have passed through the country since 2001, it has been home to many of the in-country air assets that have lent the Afghan security forces such a vital advantage on the battlefield." The exit of foreign troops from Bagram has further fuelled concerns the country might slide into new civil war, as in the 1990s after the Soviets left.

— AFP

Unvaccinated vulnerable to Delta: Biden**DELTA VARIANT IS DANGEROUS: W.H.O. CHIEF**

Geneva, July 3: The world is in a very "dangerous period" of the Covid-19 pandemic compounded by more transmissible variants like Delta, which is continuing to evolve and mutate, World Health Organisation (WHO) Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has warned.

He said in countries with low vaccination coverage, terrible scenes of hospitals overflowing are again becoming the norm.

"Compounded by more transmissible variants, like Delta, which is quickly becoming the dominant strain in many countries, we are in a very dangerous period of this pandemic," Mr. Ghebreyesus said at a press briefing on July 2. "But no country is out of the woods yet. The Delta variant is dangerous and is continuing to evolve and mutate, which requires constant evaluation and careful adjustment of the public health response," he said.

— PTI

Biden said on Friday, "I'm not concerned there's going to be a major outbreak ... another epidemic nationwide. But I am concerned lives will be lost," he added.

Celebrating strong data on jobs on Friday, Biden said: "Our economy is on the move, and we have Covid-19 on the run."

But the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) director, Rochelle Walensky, said areas with low vaccination rates were becoming hotspots for new infections, even while the situation in the country as a whole was improving.

Nearly 25% of new US infections have been linked to the "hyper-transmissible" Delta variant, first identified in India, up from 6% in June. As of 1 July, 66.8% of US adults have received at least one dose of vaccine. A total of 54.6% of all Americans have received one or more shot.

"We're very, very close to that [government] goal," said Iwan Barankay, a professor of business economics and public policy at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania.

But he added: "We need to aim for higher than 70% to get us to herd immunity. We have to think clearly about who [has] not gotten vaccinated yet and understand why ... we have to think about the people who are just vehemently opposed,

IRAN FEARS 'FIFTH WAVE' OF DELTA VARIANT

Tehran, July 3: President Hassan Rouhani expressed fears on Saturday that Iran will be hit by a new wave of Covid-19 due to an outbreak of the Delta variant in the Middle East's hardest-hit country.

"It is feared that we are on the way to a fifth wave throughout the country," Rouhani told a meeting of Iran's anti-virus task force, warning the public to be careful as "the Delta variant" had entered the country from the south and southeast.

— AFP

based on their pure convictions or how they understand the evidence and science." — Agencies

Italian health staff dare vax obligation

Rome, July 3: Three hundred healthcare workers in Italy have lodged a legal challenge against the requirement that they get vaccinated against coronavirus, according to media reports on Saturday. The case, brought by professionals throughout northern Italy, will be heard on July 14.

"This isn't a battle by anti-vaxxers but a democratic battle," constitutional lawyer Daniele Granara, who helped build up the case, was cited as saying in the *Giornale di Brescia* newspaper.

"We force people to take a risk under threat of no longer being allowed to

exercise their profession," he added.

Granara is also defending dozens of caregivers who have been suspended from work for refusing to be vaccinated.

Italy passed a law in April obliging anyone working in public or private social health positions, including in pharmacies and doctors' offices, to get vaccinated against Covid-19 or be suspended without pay, unless their employer can reassign them to a less sensitive position.

After the elderly and vulnerable, caregivers including teachers were the first to be vaccinated in Italy.

— AFP



A general view shows mud and debris at the scene of a landslide following days of heavy rain in Atami in Shizuoka Prefecture on Saturday.

— AFP

2 dead, 20 missing after homes swept away in Japan landslide

Tokyo, July 3: Two people died and around 20 others remained missing on Saturday after a huge landslide at a resort town in central Japan swept away homes following days of heavy rain, officials said.

Television footage showed a torrent of mud obliterating buildings as it crashed down a hillside in Atami, southwest of Tokyo, sending people fleeing as it buried part of a road.

"I heard a horrible sound and saw a mudslide flowing downwards as rescuers were urging people to evacuate. So I ran to higher ground," the head

of a temple near the disaster told public broadcaster NHK.

"When I returned, houses and cars that were in front of the temple were gone."

Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga said emergency services and the military had launched rescue and evacuation missions, warning that more downpours were forecast.

"There is a possibility of heavy rain due to the rain front, so we still need to be alert at the maximum level," he said at an emergency disaster meeting.

Atami saw rainfall of 313 millimetres in just 48 hours to Saturday—high-

er than the average monthly total for July of 242.5 millimetres, according to NHK.

Two women discovered by the coastguard at a port without showing vital signs were later confirmed dead, the municipal government of Atami said.

"Because of the heavy rain, the ground loosened and the mudslide occurred ... it picked up speed and swept away houses together with people," Shizuoka Governor Heita Kawakatsu told reporters.

He said "around 20" people were still missing after being swept away by the

landslide.

The disaster began at around 10.30am at a river near the city, which is around 90km from Tokyo and is famous as a hot spring resort.

A video posted on TikTok from the scene showed a huge slurry of mud and debris sliding slowly down a steep road and nearly engulfing a white car, which drove away before a faster and more violent torrent arrived.

In other clips on social media, the landslide was seen toppling electricity poles, with large areas left inundated by several waves of earth.

— AFP

Nepal gears for polls despite uncertainty

sKathmandu, July 3: Nepal's election commission is preparing for the mid-term elections in November despite the uncertainty over polls due to the pending petitions in the Supreme Court against the dissolution of the House of Representatives, according to reports.

At the recommendation of Prime Minister K. P.

Sharma Oli, President Bidya Devi Bhandari dissolved the lower house for the second time in five months on May 22 and announced snap elections on November 12 and November 19.

Prime Minister Oli is currently heading a minority government after losing a trust vote in the 275-member House.

The constitutionality of the President's move is being heard at the Supreme Court, raising the question if the elections would be held on set dates. But the Election Commission of Nepal said that it would start to procure materials required for holding the polls next week after the Finance Ministry approved 7.72

Nepalese Rupees billion for holding the elections, The Kathmandu Post reported.

The ministry said it approved the budget for the commission to procure election materials and election management. This budget, however, does not cover the expenses for security arrangements for the polls.

— PTI

BREAKING | POINT

Choice of footwear leads to accusations that women soldiers being sexualised**Ukrainian women march in heels, spark row**

Kiev, July 3: Ukrainian authorities found themselves buried in controversy on Friday after official pictures showed women soldiers practising for a parade in heels.

Ukraine is preparing to stage a military parade next month to mark 30 years of independence following the Soviet Union's breakup, and the defence ministry released photographs of fatigue-clad women soldiers marching in mid-heel black pumps. Today, for the first time, training takes place in heeled shoes," cadet Ivanna Medvid was quoted as saying by the defence ministry's information site Armiainform.

"It is slightly harder

than in army boots but we are trying," Ms Medvid added in comments released on Thursday.

The choice of footwear sparked a torrent of criticism on social media and in parliament, and led to accusations that women soldiers had been sexualised.

"The story of a parade in heels is a real disgrace," commentator Vitaly Portnikov said on Facebook, arguing that

some Ukrainian officials had a "medieval" mindset.

Another commentator, Maria Shapranova, accused the defence ministry of "sexism and misogyny." "High heels is a mockery of women imposed by the beauty industry," she fumed.

Several Ukrainian lawmakers close to Ukraine's former president Petro Poroshenko showed up in parliament with pairs of shoes and encouraged the defence minister to wear high heels to the parade.

"It is hard to imagine a more idiotic, harmful idea," said Inna Sovsun, a member of the Golos party, pointing to health risks.

She also said that

Ukraine's women soldiers — like men — were risking their lives and "do not deserve to be mocked".

Ukraine has been battling Russian-backed separatists in the country's industrial east, in a conflict that has killed more than 13,000 people since 2014. Olena Kondratyuk, deputy speaker of the legislature said authorities should publicly apologise for "humiliating" women and conduct an enquiry.

Ms Kondratyuk said that more than 13,500 women had fought in the current conflict.

More than 31,000 women now serve in the Ukrainian armed forces, including more than 4,000 of whom are officers.

— AFP



A handout photograph taken and released by the Ukrainian Defence ministry press-service shows the Ukrainian female soldiers wearing heels while taking part in the the military parade rehearsal in Kyiv.

— AFP

SHORT TAKES

Smith may skip T20 World Cup

Melbourne: Recuperating from an elbow injury, star Australia batsman Steve Smith says Test cricket remains his top priority and he is ready to skip the T20 World Cup to be in the best shape for the Ashes series against England. The 32-year-old had withdrawn from the ongoing white-ball tour of the West Indies due to the elbow injury. "There's still a bit of time between now and (the World Cup), and I'm tracking okay at the moment — it's slow, but I'm going okay," Smith told *cricket.com.au* on Friday. The T20 World Cup was shifted from India due to the Covid-19 pandemic and will be held in the United Arab Emirates and Oman from October 17 to November 14, while the Ashes is scheduled to begin on December 8 in Brisbane. — *PTI*

Spinners keep India in the hunt

Worcester: India spinners took wickets at regular intervals to nullify a promising start by England as the tourists bundled out the hosts for 219 in the rain-curtailed third and final Women's ODI on Saturday. Looking for a consolation win, India invited England to bat under overcast conditions after the contest became a 47-overs per side affair but as has been the case in the series, the hosts largely remained untroubled. They were placed comfortably at 110 for two but their strategy to attack Indian spinners resulted in wickets falling in clutches with a middle-order collapse. Indian enjoyed early success when Shikha Pandey trapped opener Tammy Beaumont. **Brief scores:** England Women 219 in 47 overs (Nat Sciver 49, Heather Knight 46; Deepti Sharma 3/43) vs India.

2 Windies women collapse on field

Antigua: Two West Indies women cricketers — Chinelle Henry and Chedean Nation — collapsed briefly on the field in two separate incidents during the second T20 International against Pakistan here and taken to hospital where they were "stable", according to reports. Both the incidents happened during Pakistan's run chase, which also saw rain interruptions on Friday. "(Seam bowler) Chinelle Henry and (batter) Chedean Nation were taken to hospital for medical attention. Both Henry and Nation are conscious and stable at hospital and are being assessed," CWI said in a statement. West Indies brought on two substitutes and the game continued, with the home side eventually declared winners by seven runs on Duckworth-Lewis-Stern after another interruption. — *PTI*

Ollie cleared, will play India series

London: England pacer Ollie Robinson was on Saturday cleared to play cricket again immediately after being deemed to have served his suspension following an investigation into his discriminatory tweets, thus making him eligible for selection for the five-Test series against India. "As regards the three matches which are the subject of immediate suspension, the Panel has taken into account the suspension imposed by the England Team from the second Test against New Zealand, together with two of the Vitality Blast T20 matches from which Robinson voluntarily withdrew himself from selection for Sussex CCC due to the impact of these proceedings. Robinson is therefore free to play cricket immediately," the ECB said in a statement. — *AFP*

Verstappen takes pole in Austria

Spielberg: Relentless Max Verstappen clinched his third straight pole position with a commanding drive for Red Bull at the Austrian Grand Prix on Saturday, while title rival Lewis Hamilton could only manage fourth place for flagging Mercedes. Hamilton was under pressure in his final lap and went too wide on the last two turns. Verstappen leads Hamilton 5-2 in poles this season. — *AP*

ITALIAN MARBLE

Rock-solid Azzurri prove too hard to crack for World No.1 Belgium

Italy	2
(Nicolo Barella 31, Lorenzo Insigne 44)	
Belgium	1
(Romelu Lukaku 45+2-p)	

Munich, July 3: A stunning strike by Lorenzo Insigne fired Italy into the semi-finals of Euro 2020 on Friday as a 2-1 win over Belgium sent them through to a last-four meeting with Spain.

Nicolo Barella struck the opening goal of the quarter-final in Munich before Insigne curled in Italy's second in an action-packed first half.

Belgium grabbed a lifeline just before the break when Romelu Lukaku converted a penalty, but Roberto Martinez's side ultimately fell short against a disciplined Italian defence.

"We scored two and we could have scored more," said Italy coach Roberto Mancini.

"I think the victory is fully deserved. Spain are next but the more you go forward the most difficult it becomes."

While Italy face Spain at Wembley on Tuesday, defeat means more European Championship quarter-final heartbreak for Belgium, who exited at the same stage in 2016 after defeat by Wales.

Belgium sorely missed their captain Eden Hazard, ruled out by a hamstring injury, even as Kevin De Bruyne won his race to shake off an ankle injury.

The Manchester City playmaker showed why the medical staff worked around the clock to get him fit by regularly causing Italy problems, but Romelu Lukaku twice was denied by Gianluigi Donnarumma.

"It was a miracle that I played, because there was definitely damage to my ankle," said De Bruyne.

"We tried everything to win that match."

"Getting eliminated is always a disappointment. Too bad I couldn't do more."



Italian players celebrate after defeating Belgium 2-1 in the Euro quarterfinal on Friday.

— Twitter

SPINAZZOLA INJURED

Italy's win came at a cost, with left-back Leonardo Spinazzola out of the tournament with a leg injury.

"Leonardo had a great European championship. Now whoever replaces him will do the same," said Italy defender Leonardo Bonucci.

Italy had the ball in the net on 13 minutes when Bonucci chested it past Thibaut Courtois from a free-kick, but the goal was disallowed by VAR for an offside against captain Giorgio Chiellini.

Marco Verratti and Youri Tielemans both earned yellow cards for midfield tussles involving the pair. Verratti was booked for holding Tielemans in a tackle, while the Belgian picked up a yellow card moments later. — *AFP*

Danish the menace as minnows stun Czechs

Baku, July 3: Denmark's fairytale run at Euro 2020 will continue into the semi-finals after they beat the Czech Republic 2-1 in Baku on Saturday to move into a last-four meeting with England or Ukraine at Wembley.

First-half goals from Thomas Delaney and Kasper Dolberg were enough to see Kasper Hjulmand's men through despite a second-half rally from the Czechs inspired by Patrik Schick's fifth goal of the tournament.

The Danes have now scored 10 goals in winning

Denmark	2
(Thomas Delaney 5, Kasper Dolberg 42)	
Czech	1
(Patrik Schick 49)	

their last three matches after starting the tournament with two defeats, the first amid shocking circumstances when Christian Eriksen suffered a cardiac arrest on the pitch.

Three weeks on, they are dreaming of a repeat of 1992 when Denmark won

the European Championship despite not even qualifying.

Celebrations started within five minutes as Delaney was left completely unmarked to head home Jens Stryger Larsen's corner. Tomas Vaclik then had to deny Mikkel Damsgaard to prevent the Danes doubling their lead in a blistering start.

Denmark were always a threat on the break, though, and Vaclik had to stand up to parry another powerful drive by Damsgaard. — *AFP*

SHAW SHOULD TAKE PLACE OF PUJARA: HOGG

Sydney, July 3: Former Australia spinner Brad Hogg feels young Prithvi Shaw is more suited for the number three spot in Test cricket and is the top candidate to step in place of Cheteshwar Pujara if India think of replacing the veteran India batsman in the series against England. "If anyone was going to replace Pujara it would be Prithvi Shaw. Feel he is more suited there than opening. Has a lot of talent and long future. He is not in the tour group but a wild card choice," Hogg tweeted.

Shaw is part of the national squad for the limited-overs series against Sri Lanka. — *PTI*

COPA | AMERICA

10-man Brazil ward off Chile

Rio De Janeiro, July 3: Lucas Paqueta's second-half strike was enough for defending champions Brazil to hold off determined Chile 1-0 on Friday and book a Copa America semi-final showdown with Peru.

Second-half substitute Paqueta made an instant impact, finding a gap in Chile's defense and firing into the back of the net in the 47th minute to put Brazil up 1-0.

Less than two minutes later, however, Brazil were reduced to 10 men when Gabriel Jesus's reckless high kick caught Eugenio Mena in the face and drew a straight red card.

Chile couldn't capitalise on the man advantage, no matter they how hard they tried.

Eduardo Vargas thought he'd grabbed the equalizer in the 62nd with a close-range shot, but VAR confirmed the offside call was correct.

In the 69th, Mena's cross from the left found Ben Brereton, whose looping header had Brazilian goalkeeper Ederson wrong-footed but caromed off the crossbar.

RESULTS	
Brazil (Lucas Paqueta 46)	1
Chile	0
Peru (Gianluca Lapadula 21, 40, Yoshimar Yotún 80)	3
Paraguay (Gustavo Gómez 11, Júnior Alonso 54, Gabriel Avalos 90)	3
(Peru won 4-3 in shoot-out)	

PERU MOVE INTO SEMIS

Peru beat Paraguay 4-3 on penalties to punch their ticket to the Copa America semi-finals after the teams played to a 3-3 draw after an action-packed 90 minutes. Miguel Trauco scored the decisive penalty for Peru in a shoot-out that echoed the drama match with two shots over the crossbar and three saves.

Peruvian keeper Pedro Gallese set the stage for Trauco with his diving save of Alberto Espinola's attempt.

Paraguay captain Gustavo Gomez had opened the scoring in the 11th minute, but Gianluca Lapadula scored in the 21st and 40th to give Peru the lead. — *AFP*



Brazil's Luis Paqueta (left) and Neymar celebrate after defeating Chile in the Copa America quarterfinal in Rio De Janeiro on Saturday.

— Twitter

Olympic briefs

24 para-athletes for Tokyo

The Paralympic Committee of India (PCI) on Saturday announced a 24-member athletics team, headlined by star javelin thrower Devendra Jhajharia and high jumper Mariyappan Thangavelu, for the Tokyo Paralympics, beginning August 24. Besides Jhajharia and Thangavelu, who won gold in the F46 javelin and T-42 high jump events respectively in the 2016 Rio Paralympics, other top para-athletes include world record holders Sandeep Chowdhury and Sumeet.

Gopi eyes rich haul of medals

Chief national badminton coach Pullela Gopichand reckoned the upcoming Olympics would be one "like never before" because of the coronavirus-related restrictions but he is expecting a rich haul of medals from the Indian athletes to herald a sporting turnaround for the country. "This is going to be challenging but I do believe that Indian sport is at crossroads of making a big achievement or a big jump. I hope that we get enough medals, so they give a boost in the arm to us," he said.

SPECIAL FLIGHT | TO TOKYO

Team India to leave on July 14

NEHA SURANA | DC
CHENNAI, JULY 3

Indian Association secretary Rajeev Mehta on Saturday said the first batch of the country's Olympic contingent will leave for Tokyo in an Air India chartered flight on July 14.

Mehta confirmed that they will undergo a four-day quarantine upon arrival in Japan. "As many as 115 athletes and some officials will leave on July 14. After the quarantine, we can move around in Tokyo," said Mehta during an online felicitation ceremony organised by Chennai-based Sunshine Senior Secondary School and Youthlink Foundation.

Mehta expects a minimum of 10 medals from Indian athletes in Tokyo.

SHARATH LOOKS TO PULL OFF SURPRISE

Indian table tennis star Achanta Sharath Kamal said the Tokyo Olympics will spread the much-needed positivity across the world when the sporting spectacle begins on July 23

amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

"It is quite a difficult situation for all of us. There is uncertainty and a lot of negativity. I think sport is something which can bring out positivity and it is one of the most important reasons why the Olympics should happen. It's really good that they haven't cancelled the Olympics," said Sharath.

Along with the TT veteran, a host of Olympic-bound athletes such as G. Sathiyam, C.A. Bhavani Devi, Dutee Chand, Varun Thakkar, K.C. Ganapathy and Sajjan Prakash were also honoured.

Sharath, who will be competing in his fourth Games, has set his sights on surpassing a few top-ranked players in Tokyo.

"There are a lot of good players out there to beat. But one team whom the world wants to defeat is China. Table tennis is completely dominated by them. Hopefully, this time I will be able to surprise a few top-seeded players. And, for that we have been training quite hard," he said.

Ranji back after a year break

New Delhi, July 3: The BCCI will conduct all its domestic tournaments across age-groups with the coveted Ranji Trophy, starting on November 16, being the marquee event among the 2127 matches scheduled for 2021-22 season.

Last season, the BCCI couldn't conduct any age-group tournament and was forced to cancel the Ranji Trophy due to Covid-19 pandemic.

However, a full-fledged domestic season will take place this year with Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 to begin from October 20 and the National One-Day Championship for Vijay Hazare Trophy being scheduled from February 23 next year.

"The season will com-

DOMESTIC CALENDAR	
Syed Mushtaq Ali T20	October 20 to November 12
Ranji Trophy 2021	November 16 to February 19
Vijay Hazare 2021	February 23 to March 26
Women's one-day	September 21 to October 22
Women's Challenger	October 27 to October 31
Women's T20	March 19 to April 11

mence on September 21, 2021, with the Senior Women's One Day League and will be followed by the Senior Women's One Day Challenger Trophy, which will take place from October 27, 2021," BCCI secretary Jay Shah said in a media release.

The final of the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy will be played on November 12 this year.

The coveted Ranji

Trophy will be played in a three-month window from November 16, 2021 to February 19, 2022.

The Vijay Hazare Trophy final will take place on March 26, 2022.

"The BCCI is confident of hosting the domestic season with health and safety of players and all people involved being paramount," the statement further read.

The Ranji Trophy will

be played with two Elite groups comprising nine teams each and the C group and Plate will have 10 teams each.

It is expected that the top five teams as per points from the Elite groups will make it to the quarterfinals while two from group C and topper of Plate group completing the last eight line-up.

In case of Vijay Hazare Trophy, the groupings will remain same while Mushtaq Ali T20 will have five groups with two groups of seven teams and three groups of eight teams each respectively.

The BCCI will conduct Vinoo Mankad Trophy and U-19 Challengers Trophy in between September to November. — *PTI*

Federer glides into last 16

London, July 3: Roger Federer moved into the fourth round of a Grand Slam tournament for the 69th time on Saturday, overcoming a raucous home crowd and the last British man in the draw Cameron Norrie in an entertaining 6-4, 6-4, 5-7, 6-4 win at Wimbledon.

Federer kept his dream alive of a record-extending ninth singles title.

Federer said this Wimbledon held special significance for him.

"I hope there is a little bit more left in me as this one is special for it is the last slam before I hit the big 40," said Federer, the third oldest man to reach the Last 16 in the Open era.

Zverev ended big-serving Taylor Fritz's impressive campaign — 6-7 (3/7), 6-4, 6-3, 7-6 (7/4) — given he exited the French Open in a wheelchair due to a knee injury. The match of the day on the men's side was

Coco Gauff of the US celebrates after defeating Kaja Juvan of Slovenia in the third round on Saturday. — *AP*

a dumpy squib as fiery Aussie entertainer Nick Kyrgios retired with an abdominal injury tied at one set all with stylish Canadian 16th seed Felix Auger-Aliassime.

The maverick that is Kyrgios did not have the

best of starts as he had left his shoes in the locker room.

Coco Gauff and Angelique Kerber will meet in the last 16 after the American teenager breezed past Slovenian Kaja Juvan while the

RESULTS	
Men's singles: Third round:	
Roger Federer (SUI x6) bt Cameron Norrie (GBR) 6-4, 6-4, 5-7, 6-4; Alexander Zverev (GER x4) bt Taylor Fritz (USA x31) 6-7 (3/7), 6-4, 6-3, 7-6 (7/4); Felix Auger-Aliassime (CAN x16) bt Nick Kyrgios (AUS) 2-6, 6-1 (retired); Lorenzo Sonego (ITA x23) bt James Duckworth (AUS) 6-3, 6-4, 6-4.	
Women's singles: Third round:	
Coco Gauff (USA x20) bt Kaja Juvan (SLO) 6-3, 6-3; Angelique Kerber (GER x25) bt Aliaksandra Sasnovich (BLR) 2-6, 6-0, 6-1; Barbora Krejickova (CZE x14) bt Anastasija Sevastova (LAT) 7-6 (7/1), 3-6, 7-5.	

German had a tough three-setter against Aliaksandra Sasnovich of Belarus.

Gauff is not the only teenager making her mark at Wimbledon this year. Britain's Canada-born 18-year-old Emma

Raducanu, who moved with her Romanian father and Chinese mother to England aged two, produced a brilliant display to beat the experienced Sorana Cirstea of Romania 6-3, 7-5.

SANIA-BETHANIE BOW OUT

Indian star Sania Mirza and her American partner Bethanie Mattek-Sands on Saturday bowed out of the women's doubles event at the Wimbledon Championships following a straight-set defeat.

Mirza, who has returned to grass court Grand Slam after three years, and Mattek-Sands lost 4-6 3-6 to the Russian pair of Elena Vesnina and Veronika Kudermetova in one hour and 28 minutes.

Mirza is still alive in the tournament as she will play in the mixed doubles second round with compatriot Rohan Bopanna.

— *Agencies*