

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | SUNDAY 13 | JUNE 2021

WEATHER



Max: 37°C
Min: 23°C
Rainfall: 6%

ASTROGUIDE

Pilava: Vaikashi 30
Tithi: Trithiyai
Star: Poonarpusam
Rahukalam: 4.30 pm to 6.00 pm
Yamagandam: 12 noon to 1.30 pm

PRAYERS

Fajar: 4.34 am
Luhar: 12.11 pm
Asar: 3.16 pm
Maghrib: 6.24 pm
Isha: 7.38 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.36 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.42 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 7.54 PM
MOONSET TOMORROW 9.10 AM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+3,14,897)	(+6,239)
2,94,22,903	3,70,152

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+15,108)
TN: 23,39,705 29,280

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

17,61,95,622

DEATHS

38,03,042

COUNTRIES
AREAS WITH
CASES 219

uorldometers.info

Mehul Choksi denied bail by Dominica High Court

New Delhi, Jun 12: The Dominica High Court has denied bail to fugitive diamantaire Mehul Choksi in the case of illegal entry into the island country after his mysterious disappearance from neighbouring Antigua and Barbuda where he is staying as a citizen since 2018, local Caribbean media reported.

The high court on Friday (local time) gave the ruling by concluding that Choksi was a "flight risk", did not have any ties with Dominica and the court could not impose any conditions which will stop him from leaving the country, news outlet AntiguaNewsroom said. Choksi had approached the high court after the magistrate had rejected his bail petition. The 62-year old diamantaire, who has an Interpol Red Notice against him, had mysteriously gone missing on May 23 from Antigua and Barbuda where he has been staying since 2018 as a citizen after fleeing from India.

COUNTER

POINT



Want to join our party?
Sign a bond that you
will stay for at least
three years...

Eriksen collapses on Euro Cup field

Copenhagen, June 12: Denmark midfielder Christian Eriksen was taken to a hospital on Saturday after collapsing on the field during a match at the European Championship.

The governing body of European soccer said Eriksen has been stabilised and the Danish soccer federation said he was awake. The match resumed following the news.

"Christian Eriksen is awake and is undergoing further examinations at Rigshospitalet," the Danish federation wrote on Twitter.



The Euro 2020 match between Denmark and Finland was suspended after

Denmark's players gather as paramedics attend to midfielder Christian Eriksen during the EURO 2020 match between Denmark and Finland at the Parken Stadium in Copenhagen on Saturday. —AFP

Eriksen was given urgent medical attention on the field near the end of the first

half.

He was treated for about 10 minutes after collapsing. He was then carried off on a stretcher. UEFA then announced the game had been suspended "due to a medical emergency."

Eriksen had just played a short pass when he fell face-forward onto the ground. His teammates immediately gestured for help and medics rushed onto the field. Eriksen was given chest compressions as his teammates stood around him in a shielding wall for privacy. —AP

STATE | 3

Collector Rao gives ₹50K to man who sold calves for CM's fund



NATION | 4

Mukul Roy begins poaching oppn leaders

SPORT | 7

Barbora Krejckova wins French Open



GST on Covid drugs slashed

DC CORRESPONDENT
WITH AGENCY INPUTS
NEW DELHI, JUNE 12

Giving into the demands of most states and experts, the GST Council on Saturday decided to slash tax rates on medicines and equipment used in the treatment of Covid-19 infections but refused to extend the benefit to vaccines.

As per the decision of the Council, tax on medical grade oxygen, oxygen concentrator (including personal imports), ventilators, BiPAP machines and high flow nasal cannula (HFNC) devices has been cut to 5 per cent from 12 per cent.

The Council, acting on the recommendation of a group of ministers, cut to nil GST on Covid-19 drug Tocilizumab and black fungus medicine Amphotericin B from existing 5 per cent. The rate on Remdesivir and anticoagulants like Heparin is lowered from 12 per cent to 5 per cent. GST rate on ambulance has been cut to 12 per cent from 28 per cent.

Tax on Covid testing kits, pulse oximeter (including personal imports) has been brought down to 5 per cent from 12 per cent. Hand sanitisers, temperature check equipment, gas/electric furnaces for crematoriums too will attract lower 5 per cent tax, compared to 18 per cent earlier.

A 5 per cent GST levy on vaccines will continue which will allow manufacturers to get benefit of settling taxes paid on inputs.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman explained that the 5 per cent levy will not put any additional burden on common man as the government was procuring all vaccines and giving them to citizens for free.

"The GST (on vaccines) will also be borne by the Centre. But out of the income from GST, 70 per cent will be shared with the states," revenue secretary Tarun Bajaj said. He said the notification of lower GST rates would be issued "tomorrow or day after".

The reduced tax rates were based on a recommendation of a group of ministers, would remain effective till September 30, 2021.

Be compassionate, reduce rate to 0 p.c.: Thiagarajan

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 12

Minister for finance Palanivel Thiagarajan said the refusal to levy zero rate of tax for medicines and other equipment related to Coronavirus treatment and used by victims of the pandemic by the committee set up by the Goods and Sales Tax (GST) council was not acceptable.

Speaking at the 44th meeting of the council, which announced the reduction of the GST for a range of medicines and equipment to 5 percent, Mr Thiagarajan said Chief Minister M.K. Stalin had



Palanivel Thiagarajan

already written to the Prime Minister seeking a zero rate of tax.

Insisting that the rate of GST should be zero per cent or at the most 0.1 per cent, the minister said the

issue should be approached with compassion. cSince an overwhelming majority of the participants of the meeting, held through video conference, wanted the GST rate for thermal scanners to be reduced, it was brought down to 5 per cent from the recommended 12 per cent. Earlier it was at 18 per cent.

The GST on ambulances was reduced from 28 per cent to 12 per cent and that of gas and electric crematoria from 18 to five per cent, according to an official press release.

The new rates would come into force from September 30, it added.

Reports of higher Covid toll have no proof: Centre

New Delhi, June 12: India on Saturday refuted a report which claimed that its Covid deaths could be "five to seven times" higher than the official number, saying the assessment is based on extrapolation of data without epidemiological evidence.

In a statement, the Union health ministry also slammed the publication,

without naming it, for the article which claimed "India has suffered perhaps five to seven times 'excess deaths' than the official number of Covid-19 fatalities".

The ministry termed the article, published by *The Economist*, speculative, without any basis and misinformed. "The unsound analysis of the said article

is based on the extrapolation of data without any epidemiological evidence," the ministry said, adding the studies used by the magazine to estimate the mortality are not validated tools for determining the death rate of any country or region.

The ministry then went on to list the reasons why the studies used by the

publication cannot be relied upon in calculating the Covid mortality figures.

An internet search of research studies in scientific databases such as Pubmed, Research Gate, etc., did not locate this study and its detailed methodology has not been provided by the magazine either, the ministry said. ■ **P4**

Govt to help ryots set record in food production, says CM

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 12

The Tamil Nadu government is supporting farmers in the state to create a record in food production through several means which included adequate water supply, Chief Minister M.K. Stalin said on Saturday.

Speaking to the media after releasing water for Kuruvai (short term) crop cultivation in the Cauvery basin from the Mettur dam in Salem, Mr Stalin said the government departments, including the agriculture and cooperative departments, were helping the farmers to start cultivation immediately.

All raw materials such as seeds, fertilisers and pesticides were ready and 4061 km of canals in the



Chief Minister M.K. Stalin opens Mettur dam and throws rose petals for kuruvai cultivation on Saturday. — DC

Cauvery basin were being desilted to ensure that the water reached the tail ends for irrigation.

The Chief Minister said he was determined to see that water goes up to the far reaches of the delta and hence visited the spots works have started at a cost of Rs 65.10 crore in 647 places in the nine districts of Trichy, Karur, Ariyalur, Thanjavur,

Thiruvavur, Nagapattinam, Myladuthurai, Cuddalore and Pudukottai.

The desilting was being carried out in consultation with the farmers' association and special teams had been formed to supervise the work since the government wanted to increase the kuruvai cultivation in Cauvery basin, he said. ■ **P3**

Pilot lands in Delhi as Raj politics heats up

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 12

Congress leader Sachin Pilot is once again in Delhi in a bid to have a dialogue with the party high command even as political activity has heated up in Rajasthan with Mr Pilot demanding that the high-powered committee set up by the high command take a stand on his

and his supporters' demands.

In July last, Mr Pilot rushed to Delhi when he was served notice in an investigation into an alleged attempt by BJP MLAs to topple the Congress government in Rajasthan.

The standoff with chief Minister Ashok Gehlot ended with Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and

Priyanka Gandhi Vadra stepping in and persuading Mr Pilot to drop his rebellion.

Mr Pilot, former Rajasthan deputy chief minister, has been pressing for his supporters to be accommodated in the cabinet and party posts. Mr Gehlot has nine Cabinet vacancies to fill, and Mr Pilot has reportedly asked for most of them.

MAKING TAMIL NADU SELF-RELIANT IN OXYGEN MANUFACTURING

SPECIAL INCENTIVE PACKAGE FOR MEDICAL OXYGEN AND OTHER RELATED MANUFACTURERS

Thiru. M. K. Stalin
Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu

HIGHLIGHTS

- 30% Capital Subsidy**
- Upto 100% Stamp Duty Concession**
- Fast Track Loans with 6% Interest Subsidy by TIIIC**

- Priority Land Allotment by SIPCOT/SIDCO**
- Land Cost Concession in SIPCOT Parks**
- Fast Track Single Window Clearance by Guidance with Zero Fee**

ESTABLISHMENT OF LARGE LIQUID OXYGEN PLANTS

Eligibility

- Minimum Capacity of 10 MT per Day
- Minimum Investment of INR 50 crore
- Commercial Production: Before 31.12.2022
- Investment Period: 01.01.2021 to 31.12.2022

Training Subsidy

INR 4,000 to INR 6,000 per Employee per Month for 6 Months

5 Years Electricity Tax Exemption

Intellectual Property Incentive

50% Reimbursement upto INR 30 lakh

Quality Certification Incentive

50% Reimbursement upto INR 25 lakh

MANUFACTURING OF OXYGEN CONCENTRATORS, OXYGEN CYLINDERS & MEDICAL OXYGEN

Eligibility

- New & Expansion Projects
- Commercial Production: Before 15.08.2021
- Investment Period: 01.01.2021 to 31.08.2021

Contact us oxygen@investtn.in www.investingintamilnadu.com [investtn](https://investtn.in) guidance.tn [investtn](https://investtn.in)

Guidance TamilNadu

DIPR468/DISPLAY/2021

SHORT TAKES

4 tonnes of mangoes ripened with chemicals seized

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUCHY, JUNE 12

The food security department officials have seized 4 tonnes of mangoes from more than 10 fruit godowns, whose owners were ripening the fruits by spraying chemicals in Gandhi market area in Tiruchy city on Saturday.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of food security officials led by district designated officer Dr Ramesh Babu conducted a surprise inspection in these fruits godowns and seized 4 tonnes of chemical-ripened mangoes. The seized fruits were destroyed at the corporation's compost yard at Ariyamangalam in the presence of the corporation and police officials.

Dr Babu said three food samples have been sent for clinical analysis. He warned the fruit merchants of stringent action if fruits are ripened by spraying chemicals. He said the general public can complain about food adulteration in the following phone numbers 95859-59595, 99449-59595, and state complaint cell number 94440 42322.

Results of VITEEE declared

Chennai: Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT) declared the results for VIT Engineering Entrance Examination (VITEEE) on Saturday (June 12, 2021).

VITEEE, the entrance examination for various B.Tech programmes offered by VIT was conducted on May 28, 29, 31 and June 10, 2021 as online remote proctored examination. This mode enabled applicants to take VITEEE in the safety and comfort of their home. The results are available in "https://admissionresults.vit.ac.in/viteee".

Applicants from 31 Indian states and 8 union territories and more than 15 foreign countries participated in VITEEE.

Applicants within 1 lakh ranks are eligible to participate in the counselling scheduled from 21st June to 16th July 2021 in 4 phases.

Counselling for ranks 1 to 20,000 will be conducted from 21 to 22 June; 20,001 to 45,000 from 30th June to 1st July 2021; 45,001 to 70,000 from 8th to 9th July 2021 and 70,001 to 1,00,000 from 15th to 16th July 2021.

Applicants who secured more than 1 lakh rank are eligible for admission in VIT-AP and VIT Bhopal only.

The classes are likely to commence on August 2, 2021.

Ration kits ready



Ration shop staff busy packing the second instalment of Covid financial relief and provisions' kit containing 14 items which will be distributed to rice family card holders from June 15.

—DC

Plea to direct ECI to upload relevant forms for filing election petition before high court

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 12

A Public Interest Litigation has been filed in the Madras high court, seeking a direction to the Election Commission of India (ECI) to properly upload Form 7A-the list of the contesting candidates, Form A and Form B submitted by the contested, rejected and withdrawn sponsored candidates of the recognized national and state political parties, Form-21.C declaration of the result of the election and Form 21-E-the return of election certificate of all the constituencies during the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly General Election 2021 and the Kanyakumari Parliamentary by-election 2021 in the websites of the ECI well before the last date for filing the election petition in Tamil Nadu.

This PIL filed by advocate B.Ramkumar Adityan will come up for hearing before the first bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthil Kumar Ramamoorthy on June 14, 2021.

According to the petitioner, as per the provisions of Section 81 (1) of the Representation of the People Act, an Election Petition calling in question any election may be pre-



sented on one or more of the grounds specified in Section 100 and Section 101 of RPA, before the high court by any candidate at such election or any elector within 45 days from the date of declaration of the result. Therefore, with respect to the recent general assembly election in Tamil Nadu, an Election Petition has to be filed on or before June 15, 2021, he added.

He said he had filed a petition to restrain the ECI from allotting reserved symbols of the recognized national and state political parties to members of other political parties and it was pending before this court. The allegation in the said PIL was that the returning officers of 27 constituencies in the recent Tamil Nadu Assembly general election 2021 allotted the reserved symbols of the recognized DMK party to 15 candidates and the recognized

AIADMK party to 12 candidates. These 27 candidates were non-members of both political parties. The returning officers allotted symbols based on Form B issued by both recognized parties, of which 9 candidates declared successful. Hence, the nomination of these 9 returned candidates has to be challenged by filing the election petition by any of the voters of the respective constituency or any of the contested candidates. As a public interest litigant he has already applied to obtain a certified copy of Form A and Form B under the Right to Information Act from all the respective returning officers on May 26, 2021, he added.

He said for filing an election petition, one requires Form A and Form B issued by the recognized political party in favour of its sponsored candidate, the return of election in Form 21 E, and declaration of the result of the election in Form-21-C. Moreover, it was the right of every voter to know about the election process. While going through the records of the ECI uploaded on the website, the ECI has not properly uploaded all the aforesaid election-related forms. Hence, he has filed the present PIL, he added.

Tamil Nadu tourism struggles to stay afloat

T. SUDHEESH | DC
CHENNAI, JUNE 12

The Tamil Nadu tourism sector, hit hard by the Covid-19 pandemic since 2020 January, is now struggling to stay afloat.

S. Nagarajan, a tour operator from Poonamallee, here, said he got 40 enquiries about Kerala tours for April-May, mainly from families, honeymoon couples and adventure tour groups. But none of them turned up amid the devastating second wave.

"Usually the tourists from Chennai choose to travel during summer vacation. We used to conduct more than a hundred school trips between February and March. This year all went in vain. Last

season was also affected by the pandemic as Covid-19 cases were reported just before the summer season. In the pre-pandemic period we organised at least Rs 5-10 lakh business in the April-May months. Last season, our turnover was zero," he said.

He alleged that neither the state government nor the Centre came up with any help for the sector. "Hundreds of tour operators left the business and started doing jobs as painters, auto drivers, fish vendors and daily labourers," he said.

"We have no hope in this year's business even if the situation changes. Last season we thought the situation would turn around for the better this year. But

now the situation has turned from bad to worse', laments Senthnan Amuthan, another tour agent in the city.

"The tour operating business was expecting a fillip after the vaccination drive started. But the second wave played spoilsport, dashing all hopes. Now it's very difficult to get back to business. Many of the operators vacated their office as they could not afford to pay their staff. Most of the employees who worked in the sector before the pandemic don't want to return and have found other jobs," he added.

M. K. Ajit Kumar, spokesperson, the South India MICE Association SIMA, said the tour oper-

ating business has been badly hit in the post-pandemic period as now individual tour makers don't depend on the help of tour operators. The holidaymakers have started contacting hotels and resorts directly for room booking and choose their own vehicles to travel. The uncertainty hit the sector at a time when around 14 lakh tourists from Tamil Nadu, according to the data available with Kerala tourism, used to visit Kerala in the pre-pandemic period.

Last November, the state government had opened up the sector and private travelling started gaining momentum. But the government was forced to clamp down as a result of the second wave.

Innoculation drive restarts in southern dts after week's gap

M.ARULOLI | DC
THOOTHUKUDI, JUNE 12

After running dry with zero stocks for about a week, Thoothukudi district on Saturday received 5,200 dosages of Covishield and Covaxin to restart its vaccination drive in the district.

Having been allotted 4800 dosages of Covishield and 500 dosages of Covaxin, which is highly inadequate to meet the existing demand, the vaccination was done through only 12 vaccination centres in the district, according to the district collector, K.Senthil RAJ, according to whom so far 1,45,376 persons got their first shot of the vaccine and 29,247 the second dosage in Thoothukudi district.

The inoculation drive too resumed on Saturday in Tirunelveli district that was allotted 7800 dosages of Covishield and 1,000 dosages of Covaxin. Kanyakumari district one of the worst affected among the southern districts was allotted around 9400 dosages to resume its vaccination drive at 19 centres. According to health department sources, 1,61,445 persons were administered their first dosage and 46,567 got the second dosage of the covid vaccine in the Kanyakumari district till June 11.

Vaccination drive too resumed at Elathur block and in Shengottai on Saturday in Tenkasi district.

Waiting for rain



Dark clouds hover over Marina beach on Saturday.

—DC

Chennai cases drop below 1,000

Chennai, June 12: Tamil Nadu has recorded 15,108 new Covid-19 infections, including three returnees from outside the State, pushing the total infected to 23,39,705 while 374 deaths took the toll to 29,280 till date, the health department said on Saturday.

Recoveries continued to eclipse the new infections with 27,463 people getting discharged from various hospitals. The number discharged so far totalled 21,48,352 leaving 1,62,073 active cases, a medical bulletin said.

Coimbatore and Erode constituted the majority of new infections - 1,982 and 1,353. Chengalpeta, Salem, Thanjavur and Tirupur witnessed fresh cases in excess of 500 today.

Chennai which has been reporting daily new cases in four digits reported 989 infections for the day.

The state capital, however, leads in the number of total infections among districts with 5,24,085 cases overall.

The number of deceased also remains high in Chennai with 7,793 fatalities to date.

The number of samples tested today was 1,82,878 pushing the cumulative number of specimens examined so far to 2,97,90,743.

Among the 374 deceased, 101 succumbed to the virus without any comorbidity, which includes a 24-year-old woman from Chengalpeta. She died of COVID-19 pneumonia, the bulletin said.

The State had recorded its highest daily infection at 36,184 cases on May 21 and it has since been reporting a decline.

On May 30, the State saw daily

cases dropping below the 30,000-mark and on June 7 below 20,000.

A private hospital in the city was recently approved to hold COVID-19 test pushing the overall number of laboratories operating in the state to 272, including 69 government operated facilities.

Earlier in the day, Medical Minister M Subramanian inspected the construction work for the proposed multi-specialty hospital on the campus of Kilpauk Medical College Hospital along with senior government officials, including health secretary J Radhakrishnan.

Later talking to reporters, Subramanian said Tamil Nadu has taken up steps to upgrade seven government colleges and hospitals, 11 district government hospitals at a cost of Rs 1,634 crore through a partnership with Japan International Cooperation Agency.

For the proposed multi-specialty hospital in Kilpauk Medical College, he said the project cost was expected to be Rs 275 crore.

"For the construction of buildings, Rs 141 crore has been allocated and Rs 134 crore has been earmarked towards the purchase of medical equipment totalling Rs 275 crore. The construction is expected to be completed by August 2022," he said.

On the Covid-19 vaccination front, Subramanian said the number of those vaccinated in the State breached the one-crore mark today.

"The number of those vaccinated in Tamil Nadu has gone past one crore with 1,01,09,750 getting vaccinated till today," he said in a tweet.

—PTI

Two lionesses including a dead lioness test positive for Covid-19

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 12

The Arignar Anna Zoological Park, Vandalur on Friday informed that two lionesses including Neela, the dead lioness, were found to be positive for Covid-19.

The zoo authorities said that the deceased lioness also had Canine Distemper Virus (CDV). Additionally, one other lion named Raghav has tested positive for mild CDV.

According to a press release issued by Vandalur zoo on Friday, it had sent seven samples in all, three lions and four tigers, on June 4 to Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI), Bareilly.

Out of this, all four samples

of the tigers returned negative on June 9. "As per the results communicated by the institute on June 9, the samples of 4 tigers and 1 lion were found to be negative and those 2 lionesses including Neela, the dead lioness, were found to be positive for SARS CoV-2."

The press note said that IVRI has also tested the samples for other secondary pathogens and found that two lion samples were mildly positive (Low-level infection) for canine distemper virus (CDV). "The remaining five samples have tested negative for CDV and other pathogens," AAZP said. It further added that the lion which is reported as CDV positive is asymptomatic to date and is healthy and active.

In the wake of the news reports that a lion has tested positive for CDV the zoo in its press release said "The institute had also mentioned that during COVID-19 infection or any stress conditions, other secondary infections like bacterial, viral, and protozoal are commonly noticed. The diagnosis of secondary pathogens commonly done to help zoo veterinarians to design or choose the treatment to be followed further to save the life of wild animals. It is also clarified by the institute that the animals which are positive for COVID-19 usually gives positivity for various secondary pathogens which is also commonly seen in human covid infections."

Keeladi excavation



Minister for Industries Thangam Thennarasu and Minister for Rural Development K R Periyakuruppan are seen inspecting the works carried out during the seventh phase of excavation at Keeladi in Sivaganga district on Saturday.

—K.Manikandan

THE MODERN DAY CLUBBING IS TURNING POLITICAL



G. Babu Jayakumar

Just spamming

Club House. The term invokes a sense of nostalgia in me for I was initiated into the profession of journalism at an office situated in a ramshackle building on Club House Road. The short road, a sort of cul-de-sac that branches off the legendary Mount Road is still there though that rundown building and a derelict but imposing colonnade structure that in its glorious days was a Club House, lending the name to the approach

road, have both been demolished long ago. For those not familiar with Club House Road, it led to Express Estates. The PTI office, where I started my career, was in the compound next to it. That was over three and a half decades ago and things have changed a lot now with even the term Clubhouse meaning something else to the present generation.

Since this Clubhouse can be accessed with a soft touch on the smartphone

screen, there is a temptation to visit it once in a while, particularly in these days of lockdown when one feels jobless, to roam the corridor and also listen to the chatter in the various rooms. If you are not able to figure out what it is, Clubhouse is an App, the latest one to descend on the social media horizon, which I fear may not serve any meaningful purpose in the long run just as the entire gamut of social networking sites have gone awry. Anyway, as of now it is a rage, particularly among the youth and the growing generation, and helps people to connect and exchange views.

Though reaching Clubhouse is child's play, finding a room to stay on seems to be a difficult task. Of course too many of them

are open at every point of time, emanating cacophony, but not all conversations could be engaging or entertaining to everyone. Anyway, it can be interesting to listen to girls and boys brainstorming on masturbation for some time or when boys ask each other to name openly which of the girls in the conversation is hot, soft and so on. But it is difficult to linger on listening to such drivel and so one moves on from the specific topic of masturbation to an inane discussion on anything and everything but finds that too not very earthshaking.

But one must confess that the new platform has given people the freedom to talk what they feel, something that the world outside is slowly losing. So hot topics from politics and society get

deliberated threadbare with no fear of the user being suspended or disabled due to 'community standards' and such things. But wait, now the latest news is that hawked eyed sleuths from the entire gamut of central agencies like RAW, IB, CBI, NIA, ED, DRI, NCB and CDDT have started snooping at Clubhouse. So, will they soon be swooping down on those they think are talking too much? After all Clubhouse is just about chatter, besides making other sounds like music.

Anyway, till Clubhouse is brought under such total electronic surveillance, the users are not bothered about it. So without fears like losing your Facebook page for a while just for posting a photograph of LTTE leader V Prabhakaran, Clubhouse

users are talking about LTTE and also Prabhakaran freely. In fact much has been already spoken on The Family Man 2 controversy. The Hindi web series on OTT has generated interest in Tamil Nadu for the particular character essayed by Samantha Akkineni, the actress who has won awards for her roles in Tamil films, too. Many people were angry that Samantha accepted to play the role that they felt denigrated the women freedom fighters of the LTTE and slammed her for that.

In that backdrop, the issue came to Clubhouse for discussion following a tweet that just read: 'Fantastic Samantha.' The film personality who lauded Samantha through Twitter is in fact known for landing many other people in a soup

through her tweets in the past, particularly as part of the Me Too movement. She had also once wondered why fishermen who kill fish cannot be killed by the Sri Lankan Navy. Now that she said 'fantastic' to Samantha, those gathered at Clubhouse pounced on her, impelling her to clarify that the particular tweet was a response to another conversation that she had with the actress and has nothing to do with her role in Family Man 2.

Having said that, the film personality allegedly took a screenshot showing the pictures of the participants in the Clubhouse conversation and put it on her Instagram page accusing all of them, some of them expat Sri Lankan Tamil women, of slamming her for her Me Too allegation. Anyway,

after she was pulled up for it, she deleted the Instagram post and apologized. But the episode - a tweet leading to a Clubhouse meeting and getting resolved in Instagram - makes one wonder if modern day politics plays out more in social media. And going by the congregations in Clubhouse, the answer can only be a resounding yes.

For, the delay in the release of seven Tamils, particularly Perarivalan, spending time in jail in connection with the assassination of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1991, was also discussed threadbare. So of at all the government cracks down with draconian laws to curb free speech in Clubhouse, its rooms could turn out to be sounding boards for political maneuvers.



SHORT TAKES

Fresh stock of Covid-19 vaccine arrives in Chennai

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 12

With shortage of Covid-19 vaccines reported in Tamil Nadu, about 8.25 lakhs doses of Covid-19 vaccines arrived at Chennai on Saturday. The additional stock arrived here today following a request by the state government to the Central government.

According to the airport sources, 59 cartons with 6.99 Lakh doses of Covishield from Pune's Serum Institute was airlifted by an Indigo airlines flight on Saturday. Three lakh doses of Covishield was sent to Directorate Of Medical And Rural Health Services in Teynampet in Chennai, while the remaining 3.99 lakhs doses were sent to be stored at the drug storage unit in Periamet.

Similarly, on Saturday evening, 1.26 lakhs doses of Covaxin manufactured by Hyderabad-based Bharath Biotech – arrived at Chennai airport in a charter flight.

The processing of the shipment at the Chennai airport was completed quickly and it was handed over to Department officials, airport sources said. The additional doses are expected to revive the vaccine drive in Tamil Nadu as the daily vaccination numbers recently had fallen sharply due to a shortage.

As of June 11, 21,63,170 people have been vaccinated in Chennai. Though the daily Covid-19 infection rate has gone down in Tamil Nadu, the demand for the vaccine from the people is good.

Three people steal chickens from poultry

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 12

The City police have launched a search for three unidentified people who stole chickens from a poultry shop in Chennai's Korattur. The Incident that happened on May 30, has got the attention of the public after the CCTV footages of the incident went viral on all social media platforms on Saturday.

According to the police, the complainant Boopalan owns a poultry shop on Vallalar street in Padi. When he found 10 country chickens missing from the shop on May 30, he approached the Korattur police station and lodged a complaint.

The police registered a case and began an investigation into the case. While scrutinizing the CCTV footages police found a car stopping outside at around 5 am on that day. Three persons, the driver, a boy and a woman were seen in the footage. The woman sitting in the rear row was seen opening the back door, after which the man brings chickens from the shop and dumps them in the car. After repeating it thrice, the vehicles fled the spot.

This is not the first time, the car gang has struck Korattur. A few weeks back, goats were reported missing from a meat shop in the area. Fresh stock of Covid-19 vaccine arrives in Chennai.



CM Stalin collects petitions from the public on his way to releasing water from Mettur dam on Saturday. —DC

HC deprecates practice of passing order in pre-typed manner by judicial magistrate

J.STALIN | DC
CHENNAI, JUNE 12

Deprecating the practice of passing an order in a pre-typed manner by the Judicial Magistrate No.1, Thiruvannamalai, the Madras high court has directed the Chief Judicial Magistrate, Thiruvannamalai to conduct an inquiry with regard to the order passed by the Judicial Magistrate, Thiruvannamalai dated January 22, 2021 and further to find out how many such orders are passed and file a report before this court on June 22,

2021. "This careless and lethargic act and attitude of the Judicial Magistrate No.1, Thiruvannamalai is deplorable and it shows that the import of Section 156 (3) of Cr.P.C. is not understood properly and why a direction to the police to register a complaint and investigate the case is given. The Judicial Magistrate No.1, Thiruvannamalai, passing such orders is a pre-typed manner, is deprecated", said Justice M.Nirmal Kumar while passing interim orders on a petition filed by Aarthi,

which sought a direction to the Superintendent of Police, Thiruvannamalai to register a case on the basis of the complaint lodged by the father of the petitioner dated August 24, 2020. According to the petitioner, her father had lodged a complaint to the Superintendent of Police on August 24, 2020, which was forwarded to the Inspector of Police, and thereafter, no action has been taken, which made him to file a petition under section 156 (3) of Cr.P.C. before the Judicial Magistrate No.1, Thiruvannamalai. The

Judicial Magistrate by his order dated January 22, 2021, directed the Inspector of Police to expedite the inquiry and complete the same within two months and also directed that during the course of inquiry if any cognizable offence was made out, the Inspector of Police shall take action in accordance with law and in case of closure of the complaint, a copy of the closure report to be furnished to the complainant within four months, she added.

Counsel for the petitioner contended that the petition-

er's father had passed away on April 26, 2021, and hence, the petitioner was pursuing the case by filing this direction petition. He also submitted that the complaint was against one R.K.Balasubramaniam, who was a money lender, taking advantage of his educational qualification and registration as an Advocate, though he does not practice law, fleecing the people by charging exorbitant interest and grabbing the property. The petitioner was the victim of R.K.Balasubramaniam. A complaint has been lodged

against R.K.Balasubramaniam before the Bar Council of Tamil Nadu and Puducherry and the same was pending. On no action taken by the police, the said Balasubramaniam got emboldened, came and encroached the property of the petitioner, for which she preferred a complaint on May 22, 2021, he added.

Government advocate submitted that on the direction issued by the Judicial Magistrate-No.1, Tiruvannamalai, inquiry was conducted and the case was closed on March 9, 2021, and

the closure notice has also been sent to the petitioner and closure report was filed before the lower court. He also submitted that with regard to the complaint dated May 22, 2021, it was a separate cause of action. The prayer, in this case, was to register a case on the basis of the complaint dated August 24, 2020, for which the reply of the petitioner was that had the inquiry and the investigation been proper subsequent closure leading to the lodging of the complaint dated May 22, 2021, would not arise.

The judge said on perusal of the materials available on record and also on the submissions made on either side, it was strange to find that the order passed under section 156 (3) Cr.P.C dated January 22, 2021 by the Judicial Magistrate No.1, Tiruvannamalai, was in printed format, wherein certain particulars alone were filled in hand and other particulars were already pre-typed, which shows that manner in which the Judicial Officer was dispensing the judicial work.

Pondy logs 442 new cases, 9 deaths

Puducherry, June 12 (PTI): Puducherry clocked 442 new coronavirus cases in the last 24 hours ending 10 am on Saturday, raising the aggregate to 1,12,126.

Nine more people succumbed to the deadly disease taking the toll to 1,677.

The 442 new cases were identified at the end of the examination of swabs of 9030 people and they were spread over Puducherry 321, Karaikal 97, Yanam 10 and Mahe 14.

The deceased was in the age groups of 35 and 88 years and two of them had no co-morbidities.

Director of Health Department S Mohan Kumar said 1.04 lakh patients recovered and were discharged so far.

Of the total 5,745 active

cases, 884 patients are in various hospitals and the remaining 4861 patients in home isolation.

He said that as many as 11.55 lakh samples have been examined so far and of them, 9.94 lakh turned out to be negative.

The test positivity rate was 4.89 percent, while the fatality and recovery rates were 1.50 percent and 93.38 percent respectively, he said.

Meanwhile, 36,149 health care workers and 22,609 front-line workers have been vaccinated so far.

He said 2,03,897 people coming under either the category of senior citizens (sixty years and above) or those above 45 years with co-morbidities have been vaccinated since March 1. —PTI

Five arrested in Chennai for black marketing mucormycosis drugs

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 12

The police have arrested five persons for alleged black marketing of black fungus drugs.

A team from St.Thomas Mount police had launched a probe into the black-marketing of mucormycosis drugs after a tip-off received by the Deputy Commissioner of police. After preliminary verification of the input from informants, Saravanan from Chengalpeta was arrested from his house on

Friday night.

Based on his inputs, police arrested four more persons involved in the online sales of Mucormycosis drugs. The accused arrested have been identified as, Arivarasan, a pharmacy salesman at a private hospital in Tiruvannamalai, Vignesh, Thambidurai and Nirmal Kumar, all of them salesman at private hospital pharmacies in the city.

A probe revealed that the suspects were selling vials against the price of Rs 36,000. The demand for

black fungus drugs has significantly increased amid the second wave of Covid-19.

The police said that the fraudsters posted advertisements on a website 'HYLO' promising quick delivery of medicines of black fungus injections. These vials were sold with prescriptions. Police are investigating the case further. The police have asked the people not to attempt to buy Covid-19 and Black fungus related medicines from untrusted sources in black market.

Six jumbos undergo Covid-19 test in Tiruchy

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUCHY, JUNE 12

The Corona test was performed on six pachyderms staying in the elephant rehabilitation camp at M R Palayam near here on Friday.

Forest department sources said there are six female elephants and the Covid-19 test was performed by veterinary doctor Dr Sukumar with help of mahouts.

Sources said after a few lions in Vandalur zoo near Chennai tested Covid positive and one lion died, the Tamil Nadu government has directed all zoo authorities to hold Corona tests on all the animals.



Kapaleeswarar temple tank in Mylapore remains bone dry owing to the rising temperature in the city. —DC

Woman dies waiting in queue for Covid vaccine

G. SRINIVASAN | DC
KUMBAKONAM, JUNE 12

Vallikannu (40), wife of Murali of Lakshminarayanan street, who was standing in the queue to get vaccinated against Corona at Coronation hospital at Kumbakonam, swooned and died on Saturday.

Her relatives were informed and the body

was handed over. There had been a heavy rush on Saturday as vaccination was done at 67 centres in Thanjavur district after a gap of five days.

Vaccination was done at Ganesan hospital, Yaanaiyadi municipal school, Masjid Noor mosque and Saraswathi Padasala along with coronation hospital.

Collector gives ₹50K to man who sold calves for CM's fund

G. SRINIVASAN | DC
THANJAVUR, JUNE 12

Thanjavur collector M. Govinda Rao on Saturday visited Azhivaikkal village near Thanjavur and handed over a cheque of Rs 50,000 from his discretionary fund to K. Ravichandran (52), a visually-impaired per-

son, who donated ₹6000, got after selling two calves reared by him, to the Corona relief fund on Wednesday.

"This is to help him eke out his livelihood by purchasing milch animals," said Rao who acted on the advice of chief secretary Iraiyanbu to support Ravichandran.

It may be recalled that Ravichandran reared two calves so that he may meet expenses for admitting his second son Sanjay in college. A man with a helping tendency, Ravichandran sold the calves and gave the amount to the Thanjavur district collector.

AIADMK continues its attack on government

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 12

Continuing his attack on the DMK government, AIADMK coordinator O Panneerselvam urged Chief Minister M K Stalin to reduce the price of petroleum products and withdraw the order to open liquor shops from Monday.

In a statement on Saturday, Panneerselvam reminded the Chief Minister of his election promise to bring down the price of petrol by ₹5 and that of diesel by ₹4

and pointed out that ever since the DMK government was formed the price of petrol has shot up by ₹4.28 and diesel by ₹4.99.

He urged Stalin to either make efforts to reduce the price of petroleum products which is triggering the skyrocketing prices of essential commodities or bring petrol and diesel under the Goods and Services Tax (GST).

Another statement by Panneerselvam said that when the AIADMK government had opened TAS-



Either make efforts to reduce the price of petroleum products which is triggering the skyrocketing prices of essential commodities or bring petrol and diesel under the Goods and Services Tax (GST).

— O PANNEERSELVAM
AIADMK coordinator

MAC shops during the pandemic in May 2020 in places other than Chennai, Stalin had organized black flag demonstrations in front of houses. Even he had

stood in protest outside his house.

Also when the government opened the liquor shops in Chennai in August 2020, Stalin had opposed the move though

the rate of Covid-19 infection then was 6000 and deaths were between 100 and 120.

Now with 15,757 infections and 378 deaths, Stalin was opening the TASMACH shops in 27 districts between 10 am and 5 pm, which would lead to the spread of the virus, Panneerselvam said and urged him to withdraw the order.

Human lives were more important than earning revenue for the government, the former Deputy Chief Minister said.

Will work towards fulfilling all 7 promises: CM

From P1

To a question on the allegations that the desilting work was not carried out properly last year, the Chief Minister said that the AIADMK government had not responded to party general secretary Duraimurugan for a white paper on the activities and added that it would be investigated.

Mr Stalin said he had written to the Union water resources minister to ensure that adequate flow of water was maintained in river Cauvery to help the farmers undertake their agricultural operations without hitch.

Recalling the seven promises he gave to the people at a meeting in Trichy on March 7 before the elections, he said the government would work towards fulfilling them all. One of them was improving agriculture and water resources and ensuring that the state had a good harvest.

Water supply to all was another target, he said and listed some others such as high class education for all, top notch medical facilities, beautiful cities, best infrastructure, high standard of living and so on.

The government had just started working on realising

the goals and in another 10 years the targets would be achieved, the Chief Minister said.

Talking about the water release from Mettur, he said that letting water out of the dam for irrigation on the customary date of June 12 had its own advantages for farmers.

Between June 12 and September 15, 125 TMC water would be required for irrigating the kuruvai crop and 99.74 TMC water would be supplied from Mettur, while the rest of the water would be sourced from ground water sources and rains.

He said 3000 cubic feet of water had been released now and the flow would be maintained according to the requirement.

As far as the Samba (long term) and the late Thaladi crops were concerned, 205 TMC water would be required between September 5 and January 28. Of that 205.60 TMC would be supplied from Mettur while the rest would be ground water sources and rains.

During the water release from Mettur, 460 MW of electricity would also be generated through the various power stations attached to the dam, he added.



A team of 120 policemen led by IG Loganathan busted an illegal liquor racket at Jawadu Hills in Tiruvannamalai. —K. Senthil Nathan

SHORT TAKES

U.P. COPS TOLD TO GIVE SECURITY TO INTERFAITH COUPLE

Allahabad, June 12: Directing the police to provide protection to an interfaith couple, the Allahabad High Court has clarified the woman's conversion to Islam would not be a relevant factor in ensuring that there is no interference in their liberty, unless there is any allegation by her regarding forcible conversion.

The court directed the Moradabad police to give protection to the interfaith couple who alleged that their family members were interfering in their marital life and liberty.

Yashi Devi, aged about 20, and Guchhan Khan, aged about 40, married on January 11, 2021 after she converted to Islam.

The couple, residents of Moradabad district in Uttar Pradesh, requested the High Court to issue necessary directions to the respondents not to interfere with their marital life and liberty.

'REPORTS OF HIGH COVID TOLL HAVE NO PROOF'

From P1

"Another evidence given is the study done in Telangana based on insurance claims. Again, there is no peer-reviewed scientific data available on such a study," the statement said.

"Two other studies relied upon are those done by psephology groups namely 'Prashnam' and 'C-Voter' who are well versed in conducting, predicting and analysing poll results. They were never ever associated with public health research. Even in their own area of work of psephology, their methodologies for predicting poll results have been wide off the mark many times," it said.

By their own submission, the magazine states that "such estimates have been extrapolated from patchy and often unreliable local government data, from company records and from analyses of such things as obituaries", the statement said.

It said the government has been transparent in its approach to Covid data management.

In order to avoid any inconsistency in the number of deaths being reported, the ministry said, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) issued guidelines as early as in May 2020.

It said that for correct recording of all deaths, the ICD-10 codes recommended by World Health Organisation (WHO) was followed.

Separately, the ministry said in its daily update that the country has reported a total of 2,93,59,155 cases and 3,67,081 deaths till Saturday. — PTI

CHINESE MAN, HELD BY BSF, SENT TO POLICE REMAND

DC CORRESPONDENT KOLKATA, JUNE 12

Chinese national Han Junwe, arrested by the Border Security Force (BSF) for sneaking through the India-Bangladesh border in Malda of West Bengal on June 10, was remanded in six days' police custody by a district court on Saturday.

Han, 36, from Hubei in China was handed over to the district police on Friday following his marathon interrogation by central agencies. He was booked under the Foreigners Act, said superintendent of police (Malda) Alok Rajoria.

On Saturday when Han was produced at the Malda district court, the police sought a seven-day remand for him. Gyanendra Dewang, lawyer of the accused, opposed the plea and said that his client had failed to find the border between two countries in absence of fencing.

According to BSF, Han's business partner, Sun Jiang, was earlier arrested by Uttar Pradesh ATS on several charges. Since then, the process of issuance of a Blue Corner Notice against Han was initiated.

BSF South Bengal Frontier stated that Han is a "wanted criminal" has so far taken "around 1,300 Indian SIMs to China using fake documents from India."

It said, "Han, through his associates, used to hide the SIM in undergarments and send these to China. These SIMs were used to hack accounts and to do other kinds of financial frauds. Their purpose was to cheat people using SIM to get their money out of money transaction machines."

Livelihood up in flames



Firefighters attempt to douse a blaze in a showroom at Lajpat Nagar's Central Market area, in New Delhi on Saturday. Around 30 fire tenders — PTI

BJP SLAMS DIGVIJAY FOR REMARKS OVER ARTICLE 370

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, JUNE 12

The BJP took serious exception to the purported remarks of Congress veteran Digvijay Singh on the abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir, and demanded a probe by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) into his "activities" because of the stands taken by him on sensitive issues in the past.

State BJP president Vishnu Dutt Sharma, a Lok Sabha member, wrote to Union home minister Amit Shah demanding a probe into Singh's "activities" by the NIA "urgently." Sharma drew Shah's attention to the former Chief Minister's conversation on Clubhouse, a social media app, in which a Pakistan-based journalist was reportedly present, criticising abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir.

"Mr Singh's stand on several sensitive issues have not only proved detrimental to the interest of India, but also helped Pakistan strengthen its anti-India campaign. It is high time the Centre initiated a probe into all his activities by the NIA before it is too late," Sharma said in his letter.

He cited how Singh had made a shocking statement in the aftermath of 26/11 terror attack on Mumbai, seeking to portray it a conspiracy by the RSS and how he had defended the accused in the Batla encounter who were later convicted by the court.

2 DELHI COPS ASSAULTED AT SINGHU BORDER

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JUNE 12

Two Delhi Policemen on duty were allegedly assaulted by a group of people at Singhu Border where farmers have been protesting against the Centre's farm laws for over six months now, police said on Saturday.

The two policemen on duty in civil clothes are Assistant Sub Inspectors (ASI) posted with the Special Branch of Delhi Police, they said.

The incident took place on June 10, when the two policemen in civil clothes deployed at the Singhu Border to oversee the security arrangements were allegedly beaten up by the group of people present at the spot, police said.

It is alleged that the two policemen were allegedly found clicking pictures at the protest site when they were allegedly assaulted by the group.

Chances of 3rd wave quite real: Kejriwal

Says government preparing on "war footing" to fight virus

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA | DC NEW DELHI, JUNE 12

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday cautioned that the chances of a third Covid wave were quite real, and asserted his government was preparing on a "war-footing" to combat it. He said that the indications of a third wave are coming from the UK where Coronavirus cases

are rising again despite "45 per cent of its population" being vaccinated.

"So, we cannot afford to sit idle," he told an online event to inaugurate 22 new PSA oxygen plants at nine hospitals across Delhi. He said these plants have a total production capacity of 17.3 metric tonnes (MT), and they will strengthen the preparations to fight Covid. As many as 17 more oxygen plants will be started by July, he said.

The Delhi government is also procuring oxygen tankers to aid the fight against a third wave, he said, adding that the previous wave, which in on the wane, was "very dangerous".

Expressing gratitude towards industries for their help in fighting the second wave, he also said the people of Delhi came together to combat it with struggle and discipline, and have "succeeded in controlling it".

He prayed that a third wave of Covid doesn't arrive. However, he cautioned that the chances of a third wave are "quite real", and "if it happens, Delhi has to again fight together". "We cannot afford to sit idle and our government is preparing on a war-footing to combat it," he said.

He also underlined the need for expanding the vaccination drive to fight the pandemic.

SAD, BSP form alliance for 2022 Punjab Assembly polls

Chandigarh, June 12: The Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) and the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) formed an alliance on Saturday for the 2022 Punjab Assembly elections, coming together after a gap of 25 years.

Under the tie-up, the BSP will fight 20 of the 117 Assembly seats while the rest will be contested by the SAD, said Akali Dal chief Sukhbir Singh Badal here. The SAD earlier had a tie-up with the BJP and the Badal-led party walked out of the NDA over the farm laws issue last year.

BSP chief Mayawati dubbed the alliance as a "new political and social initiative" which will usher in progress and prosperity in Punjab. Former CM Parkash Singh Badal described it as "the beginning of a secular, federal democratic revolution for a total socio-economic and political revamp of polity".

Punjab has 31.94 per cent Dalit population, mainly concentrated in Jalandhar, Hoshiarpur, Nawanshahr and Kapurthala districts. The state has the highest percentage of Scheduled Castes population in the country.

The BSP has a considerable hold over Dalits in the

Doaba belt. Punjab is the birthplace of the party's founder Kashi Ram, who belonged to Rupnagar district. The BSP was demanding more seats but the SAD managed to convince it with 20 seats, sources said.

The SAD had announced that it would appoint a Dalit as deputy chief minister if voted to power. At a joint press conference with BSP's general secretary Satish Chandra Mishra, Sukhbir Badal said, "Today is a new day in Punjab's politics, a historic day...a day of big turn in Punjab's politics."

The BSP will contest seven seats in Malwa, five in Majha and eight in Doaba regions of Punjab, said Badal, adding that the two parties will soon form a coordination committee to jointly chalk out various programmes ahead of the polls.

The seats which the BSP will contest are Kartarpur Sahib, Jalandhar-West, Jalandhar-North, Phagwara, Hoshiarpur, Tanda, Dasuya, Chamkaur Sahib, Bassi Pathana, Mehal, Kalan, Nawanshahr, Ludhiana North, Sujjanpur, Bhoja, Pathankot, Mohali, Amritsar North, Amritsar Central, Payal and

Anandpur Sahib.

Both leaders claimed that the alliance will "sweep" the 2022 polls and oust the "non-performing" Congress from power.

About the new alliance, Mishra said, "Today is a historic day. The BSP, which is a national party, has entered into an alliance with Punjab's strongest party SAD... This alliance will continue forever now."

This tie-up has been revived after two parties were together 25 years ago, said Badal and Mishra.

"Each BSP worker supports and welcomes this alliance. The SAD and the BSP are pro-farmer parties, who have worked for uplift of the Dalits, labourers and weaker sections," Mishra said.

Sukhbir Badal said he wants to thank Mayawati for playing "an instrumental role in stitching this alliance".

"The two parties share similar ideologies as both have always fought to uphold the rights of poor, Dalits and weaker sections," Badal said. Later, during an interaction with the media, the former Punjab deputy CM said the BJP will not be able to open its account in the Assembly elections. — PTI

SISODIA ALLEGES MODI, AMARINDER ARE 'SOLID' PALS

New Delhi, June 12: Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader and Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Saturday alleged a "solid" friendship between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Punjab CM Amarinder Singh ahead of the Punjab elections, after the state was ranked number one in the Performance Grading Index (PGI) 2019-20 by the Centre in terms of school education.

The AAP is in opposition in the Congress-governed Punjab where Assembly polls are slated for early next year.

"This report claims that government schools in Punjab have emerged to be the best, while pointing that government schools in Delhi are not up to the mark. This report is just another way to show the blessings Modiji has showered on Captain Amarinder Singh, extending a hand of friendship similar to the previous elections. Strangely this report has been released at a time when people have been raising questions regarding the performance and inadequacies of the Punjab government in education," Sisodia said. — PTI

Mukul Roy begins poaching oppn leaders for TMC

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, JUNE 12

Within hours of returning to the Trinamul Congress, Mukul Roy is back in the business of poaching Opposition leaders. This has left the BJP worried about its future in West Bengal.

According to sources, at least 10 MLAs and a Lok Sabha MP of the BJP got calls from Roy, their party's former national vice-president, between Friday night and Saturday morning, inviting them politely to follow his footsteps.

Among the 10, three are from North Bengal — one each from Coochbehar, Jalpaiguri and South Dinajpur, BJP insiders revealed. The other seven are from South Bengal. Among them, two are from Purulia and one each is from Nadia, North 24 Parganas and Hooghly, sources added.

The Lok Sabha MP who got Roy's call is also from North Bengal. The state BJP leadership came to know of Roy's bid after two MLAs informed them. Surprisingly, the rest remained silent, which is being seen as an ominous sign for the BJP.

Flagging his concerns BJP veteran Tathagata Roy tweeted, "Clearly Mukul Roy was a Trojan Horse. After having been welcomed into the BJP, (he) gained access to its all-India leaders and hobnobbed with state BJP's gullible leaders... having learnt all about the party and its innermost detail, he went back and leaked everything to

● **BJP LEGISLATURE** party chief whip Manoj Tigga said that the leader of the opposition Suwendu Adhikari was apprised of the overnight development.

Mamata. But what's done is done. Now the big question is, did Mukul leave back Trojan Horses within this Trojan Horse? (sic)"

BJP legislature party chief whip Manoj Tigga said that leader of the opposition Suwendu Adhikari was apprised of the overnight development. The party, which won 77 seats in the Assembly election, but was reduced to 74 in the House barely after a month, put up a brave face amid the threat of defection.

BJP state president Dilip Ghosh said, "Many are known to Mr Roy for a long time. In that sense, he can call them up. I am not bothered about who will stay or leave. Politicians are very clever. They make moves judging the wind. But BJP does not move on Ayaram-Gayaram. Time has come for the dust to go. We are now standing by those party workers who are facing attacks."

Meanwhile Roy and his son Shubhrangshu informed that they have given up the central forces security cover to them in writing to the Union home ministry. They have been provided the same level of security by the Mamata Banerjee government after their return to the TMC.



A commuter walks on the waterlogged railway tracks, after train services in the area were suspended due to heavy rain, at Kurla in Mumbai on Saturday. — PTI

Mumbai rains hit train, bus services

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC MUMBAI, JUNE 12

Mumbai and its surrounding districts are likely to get extremely heavy rainfall on June 13 and 14.

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has issued a high alert asking Mumbaikars not to move out from their homes on these days.

According to Mumbai's Regional Meteorological Centre, the metropolis will receive thunderstorm with lightning, gusty winds and extremely heavy rainfall at isolated places for the next couple of days. In addition to this, a 'red alert' has been issued for Raigad and Ratnagiri districts, whereas Thane, Palghar and Sindhudurg districts will also receive heavy to very heavy

rains. Mumbai mayor Kishori Pednekar has issued a high alert in the city appealing people to venture out only if it is absolutely necessary. The BMC has asked people not to visit the beaches and its nearby places.

Mumbai has been witnessing heavy rains since Wednesday. Heavy rains, coupled with thunderstorms and strong winds, continued to lash the city and its suburbs on Saturday too, leading to disruption of train and bus services as tracks and roads got waterlogged at several locations.

The train services between Dadar and Kurla stations on Central Railway were suspended in the afternoon after the water rose above the track level.

PLEA | REJECTED

Choksi was a "flight risk", did not have any ties with Dominica, the court

New Delhi, June 12: The Dominica High Court has denied bail to fugitive diamondaire Mehul Choksi in the case of illegal entry into the island country after his mysterious disappearance from neighbouring Antigua and Barbuda where he is staying as a citizen since 2018, local Caribbean media reported.

The high court on Friday (local time) gave the ruling by concluding that Choksi was a "flight risk", did not have any ties with Dominica and the court could not impose any conditions which will stop

him from leaving the country, news outlet *AntiguaNewsroom* said. Choksi had approached the high court after the magistrate had rejected his bail petition. The 62-year old diamondaire, who has an Interpol Red Notice against him, had mysteriously gone missing on May 23 from Antigua and Barbuda where he has been staying since 2018 as a citizen after fleeing from India. He was detained in the neighbouring island country of Dominica for illegal entry after a possible romantic escapade with his rumoured girlfriend.



Mehul Choksi

Choksi's lawyers had filed a habeas corpus petition calling his arrest illegal and alleging that he was abducted, tortured

● **THE CBI** and the External Affairs Ministry have sought to implead in the habeas corpus petition by filing two affidavits in the Dominica High Court, officials said here.

and handed over to Dominica authority to deny him rights available to him in Antigua and Barbuda as a citizen. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the External Affairs Ministry have sought to implead in the habeas corpus petition by filing two affidavits in the Dominica

High Court, officials said here. The central agency will focus on establishing criminal culpability of Choksi, fugitive status, pending warrants against him, Red Notice and charge sheets, while the External Affairs Ministry will argue that Choksi continues to be an Indian citizen, they said. The affidavits, if admitted, will pave way for noted lawyer Harish Salve to plead Indian case in Dominica, they said.

Choksi, promoter of Geetanjali Gems and other famous diamond brands in India, had fled the country

weeks before ₹13,500 crore fraud in Punjab National Bank (PNB) allegedly involving him and his nephew Nirav Modi surfaced. His lawyers alleged that he was kidnapped from Jolly Harbour in Antigua by policemen looking like Antiguan and Indian and brought to Dominica on a boat. Choksi was also brought before a Roseau magistrate, on the orders of High Court Judge Bernie Stephenson, hearing the habeas corpus matter, to answer charges of illegal entry where he pleaded not guilty but was denied bail. — PTI

SHORT TAKES

**JAN. 6 CAPITOL
ATTACK: CHICAGO
COP CHARGED**

Chicago, June 12: A Chicago police officer has been charged with breaching the US Capitol and entering a senator's office during the January 6 insurrection. Karol Chwiesiuk, 29, was arrested on Friday and faces five misdemeanour counts, including entering a restricted building, disrupting government business and disorderly conduct on Capitol grounds with the intent to impede a congressional proceeding.

Prosecutors allege in a criminal complaint that Chwiesiuk was among a mob of people who broke into and damaged the office of Sen. Jeff Merkley, an Oregon Democrat. They say that days before he travelled to Washington to attend a rally of ex-President Donald Trump.

**BOMBS HIT 2
MINIVANS IN
KABUL, 7 DEAD**

Kabul, June 12: Separate bombs hit two minivans in a mostly Shiite neighbourhood in the Afghan capital Saturday, killing at least seven people and wounding six others, the Interior Ministry said.

The attacks targeted minivans on the same road about 2 kilometres apart in a neighbourhood in western Kabul, Interior Ministry deputy spokesman Ahmad Zia Zia, said.

It wasn't immediately clear what type of bombs were used and no one immediately claimed responsibility for the attacks. The Islamic State group has carried out similar bombings in the area, including four attacks on four minivans earlier this month that killed at least 18 people.

**13 HURT IN
DOWNTOWN
AUSTIN SHOOTING**

Austin (US), June 12: A shooting in a busy entertainment district in downtown Austin, Texas injured 13 people early Saturday, and police said the suspected shooter was not in custody.

Two of the injured people were in critical condition but as of the news conference at 4 am local time, no one had died, interim Austin Police Chief Joseph Chacon said. Gunfire erupted just before 1:30 am along 6th Street, a popular area filled with bars and restaurants. The street was barricaded to keep out vehicle traffic at the time of the shooting, Chacon said. Eleven of the injured people were taken to one local hospital, another person was taken to a different hospital, and the other person went to an urgent care facility with gunshot wounds.

**SAUDI CAPS HAJ
TO 60K, BARS
FOREIGNERS**

Riyadh, June 12: Saudi Arabia announced Saturday it will allow 60,000 residents vaccinated against Covid to perform this year's haj, but Muslims from abroad will be barred for a second straight year.

The haj — a must for able-bodied Muslims at least once in their lives — typically packs millions of pilgrims into congested religious sites and could be a major source of contagion amid the coronavirus pandemic. This year it would be "open for nationals and residents of the kingdom, limited to 60,000 pilgrims", the haj ministry said, quoted by the official Saudi Press Agency.

The pilgrimage, scheduled to be held in July, would be limited to those who have been vaccinated and are aged 18-65 with no chronic illnesses, it said.

Only up to 10,000 Muslims took part in the haj in July last year, a far cry from the 2.5 million who participated in the five-day annual pilgrimage in 2019 before the pandemic.

"In light of what the whole world is witnessing with the Coronavirus pandemic... and the emergence of new variants, the relevant authorities have continued to monitor the global health situation," the health ministry said.

"Considering the large crowds that perform haj, spending long periods of time in multiple and specific places... requires the highest levels of health precautions." Saudi Arabia said those wishing to perform the haj would have to apply online, without specifying how many foreign residents would be among the 60,000 pilgrims.

In 2020, foreigners were 70 percent of the pilgrims, while Saudis made up the rest.

The kingdom said later that it had informed other countries of the decision not to allow pilgrims from abroad. "There was great understanding," its deputy hajj minister, Abdulfattah bin Sulaiman Mashat, said.



Activists from the climate change protest group Extinction Rebellion, dressed in red robes and known as the Red Brigade, demonstrate in Falmouth, Cornwall during the G7 summit on Saturday. — AFP

G7 adopts global infra plan in riposte to China

Beijing criticised for saddling small nations with heavy debt

Carbis Bay, June 12: G7 leaders on Saturday adopted a rival plan to oppose China's Belt and Road Initiative by helping build infrastructure in poorer nations in a "values-driven, high-standard and transparent" partnership.

The adoption of the US-inspired "Build Back Better World" (B3W) project came after President Joe Biden and leaders met to address "strategic competition with China and commit to concrete actions to help meet the tremendous infrastructure need in low- and middle-income countries", the White House said.

China has been widely criticised for saddling small countries with unmanageable debt as part of its trillion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative, which has seen money lent for projects stretching across Asia, Africa, Latin America and even Europe.

President Xi Jinping launched the BRI in 2013 to significantly expand China's economic and political influence, with many of the infrastructure plans seen as helping deliver its goods globally. China denies any ulterior motives to the vast investment project. But critics argue it uses the financial leverage arising from the scheme to boost its clout, in what they

dub "debt-trap diplomacy". The White House said the G7 initiative would be similarly global in scope, estimating that the developing world needs more than \$40 trillion in infrastructure, a gap "which has been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic".

"B3W will collectively catalyse hundreds of bil-

lions of dollars of infrastructure investment for low- and middle-income countries in the coming years," it said.

Funding will emphasise the environment and climate, labour safeguards, transparency, and anti-corruption, it added, in implicit contrast to China's opaque funding.

Further details would come in the G7 summit's final communique on Sunday, the White House added.

The issue is close to home for the elite club of wealthy democracies.

Italy was the first member nation to sign on to the BRI.

— AFP

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Delta variant may delay Britain's unlock process

Italy limits AZ vax to over-60s

London, June 12: The UK government is considering a delay of up to four weeks from the scheduled June 21 end to all lockdown restrictions amid a continuing rise in cases of the Delta variant of Covid-19, according to a media report on Saturday. It comes as the country reported 8,125 new Covid-19 cases in a 24-hour period, another record daily high since the end of February, and Public Health England (PHE) found that infections from the Delta variant — the B.1.617.2 variant of concern (VOC) first identified in India — rose by nearly 30,000 in a week to hit 42,323.

Downing Street sources said that no final decision has been made yet and that several options are being evaluated as the latest data is studied before UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson makes a scheduled announcement regarding lockdown on Monday. The British Medical Association (BMA) is among some of the leading public healthcare groups and officials calling for a delay to the planned easing of all lockdown restrictions on June 21, dubbed "Freedom Day" as it would see all legal limits on social contact removed. Pushing the date back by a few weeks is intended to allow the country's vaccination programme to take greater effect, as the rollout moves through to younger age groups and the older age groups get covered with their second jabs. — PTI

Rome, June 12: Italy said Saturday it would restrict the AstraZeneca vaccine to the over-60s, with younger people who have already received one dose to complete the cycle with an mRNA jab.

The change follows an improvement in Coronavirus infection rates in Italy, which has been devastated by the pandemic but will next week lift restrictions in much of the country following a sharp decline in cases.

The EU's medicine agency in April drew a link between rare blood clots and AstraZeneca jabs but stressed that the benefits of the vaccines outweighed the risks.

"The changed epidemiological situation has led to a reassessment of the risk-benefit ratio for age groups less at risk of severe forms of Covid-19," the Italian government's Technical and Scientific Committee (CTS) said. — AFP

Pandemic origin: China, US clash

Beijing, June 12: Top US and Chinese diplomats appear to have had another sharply worded exchange, with Beijing saying it told the US to cease interfering in its internal affairs and accusing Washington of politicising the search for the origin of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Senior Chinese foreign policy adviser Yang Jiechi and Secretary of State Antony Blinken held a phone call Friday that revealed wide divisions in a num-

ber of contentious areas, including the curtailing of freedoms in Hong Kong and the mass detention of Muslims in the northwestern Xinjiang region.

Calls for a more thorough investigation into the origin of the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes Covid-19 are particularly sensitive for China because of suggestions that it might have have escaped from a laboratory in the central city of Wuhan. — AP

In Russia, 47% spike in a week

Moscow, June 12: Russia's national Coronavirus taskforce on Saturday reported that the country's tally of daily new infections has risen by nearly 50 per cent over the past week and more than doubled in Moscow.

It said there were 13,510 infections recorded in the previous day, sharply higher than the 9,163 reported on June 6. Nearly half the new cases were in Moscow — 6,701 compared with 2,936 a week ago.

Faced with the spiking figures, Moscow authorities said enforcement of mask- and glove-wearing on mass transit, in stores and in other public places would be strengthened and that violators could face fines of up to 5,000 rubles (\$70).

For the entire pandemic period, the task force has reported nearly 5.2 million infections in the coun-

try of about 146 million people, and 126,000 deaths.

However, a report from the state statistics agency Rosstat on Friday found more than 144,000 virus-related deaths last year alone.

The statistics agency, unlike the taskforce, counts fatalities in which Coronavirus infection was present or suspected but is not the main cause of death.

The agency's report found about 340,000 more people died in 2020 than in 2019; it did not give details of the causes of the higher year-on-year death toll.

The higher death toll and a lower number of births combined to make an overall population decline of 702,000, about twice the decline in 2019, Rosstat said. — AP

UN CHIEF BACKS INDIA OVER WAIVING TRIPS

United Nations, June 12: UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres has extended support to India and South Africa's initiative at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to waive intellectual property protection for Covid-19 vaccines and products, though he cautioned that "technology transfer" must be backed up by "technical support". India has worked with South Africa and other partners at the WTO to seek a relaxation in the norms of the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) agreement to ensure quick and affordable access to vaccines and medicines for developing countries during the Covid-19 pandemic. "I support the initiative that was taken by South Africa and by India in relation to TRIPS, waving TRIPS regulations," he said. — PTI

Keep Brexit word, France urges UK

Carbis Bay, June 12: France on Saturday told United Kingdom Prime Minister Boris Johnson to stick to the terms of the Brexit deal he signed with Europe, amid a standoff over new trading arrangements in Northern Ireland.

Johnson met French President Emmanuel Macron on the sidelines of the G7 summit in southwest England, with Brussels angered by Britain's failure to implement border checks on goods.

A source in Macron's office said he explained to Johnson in no uncertain terms that the UK should "keep its word" and abide by the terms of the deal he signed with the European Union just last December.

Other European leaders attending the summit, including German Chancellor Angela Merkel and EU Commission president Ursula von der Leyen, are expected to deliver the same message. — AFP

PIO wins Pulitzer for exposing Muslims' detention in China

New York, June 12: Megha Rajagopalan, an Indian-origin journalist, along with two contributors has won the Pulitzer Prize for innovative investigative reports that exposed a vast infrastructure of prisons and mass internment camps secretly built by China for detaining hundreds of thousands of Muslims in its restive Xinjiang region.

Rajagopalan from *BuzzFeed News* is among two Indian-origin journalists who won the US' top journalism award on Friday. *Tampa Bay Times*' Neil Bedi won for local report-

ing. Bedi along with Kathleen McGrory has been awarded the prize for the series exposing a Sheriff's Office initiative that used computer modelling to identify people believed to be future crime suspects.

About 1,000 people were monitored under the programme, including children. Bedi is an investigative reporter for the *Tampa Bay Times*.

"What Kathleen and Neil unearthed in Pasco County has had a profound impact on the community," said Mark Katches, *Times* executive editor. "This is what the best investigative



Megha Rajagopalan

journalism can do and why it is so essential."

Rajagopalan's Xinjiang series won the Pulitzer Prize in the International Reporting category. In 2017, not long after China

began to detain thousands of Muslims in Xinjiang, Rajagopalan was the first to visit an internment camp — at a time when China denied that such places existed, *BuzzFeed News* said.

"In response, the government tried to silence her, revoking her visa and ejecting her from the country," *BuzzFeed News* wrote in its entry for the prize.

"It would go on to cut off access to the entire region for most Westerners and stymie journalists. The release of basic facts about detainees slowed to a trickle." — PTI

SPACE | PUPS

Researchers wanted to know if radiation damages reproductive cell DNA

Mouse sperm on ISS produces 168 offspring

Washington, June 12: Turns out the comic books were wrong.

Japanese researchers found mouse sperm exposed to high levels of cosmic radiation for nearly six years produced a large brood of healthy, unremarkable "space pups." Their study was published Friday in *Science Advances* — which noted no signs so far of Mousezillas or rodent Hulks.

The sperm was stored in the International Space Station in freeze-dried

form. Once brought back to Earth and rehydrated, it resulted in the birth of 168 young, free of genetic defects. Developmental biologist and lead author Teruhiko Wakayama said on Thursday that there was little difference between mice fertilised by space sperm and sperm that had remained confined to our planet.

"All pups had normal appearance," he said, and when researchers examined their genes "no abnormalities were found." In

2013, Wakayama and colleagues at the University of Yamanashi in Japan launched three boxes, each containing 48 ampoules of freeze-dried sperm, to the ISS for the long-term study. They wanted to determine whether long term exposure to radiation in space would damage DNA in reproductive cells or pass mutations along to offspring.

That could be a problem for our own species in future space exploration and colonization missions.

Batches were returned to Earth for fertilisation after the first nine months, then after two years, and finally after six years, leading to hundreds of births. Freeze-dried sperm was selected for the experiment because it can be preserved at room temperature, rather than needing a freezer.

The ampoules were also small and very light, about the size of a small pencil, further cutting launch costs. When the space mice reached adulthood,

they were randomly mated and the next generation appeared normal as well.

Wakayama, now director for Advanced Biotechnology Center at the University of Yamanashi, said he had been inspired by the science fiction of Heinlein and Asimov and once wanted to be an astronaut.

Though he settled on becoming a scientist, the sense of wonder and whimsy about space exploration never left him.

"In the future, when the time comes to migrate to

other planets, we will need to maintain the diversity of genetic resources, not only for humans but also for pets and domestic animals," Wakayama and colleagues wrote in their paper.

"For cost and safety reasons, it is likely that stored germ cells will be transported by spaceships rather than by living animals." Getting to other planets means leaving the safety of Earth's protective atmosphere and magnetic field — which also extends to the ISS. — AFP

DECCAN
Chronicle

13 JUNE 2021



Sanjeev Ahluwalia

Off the beaten track

The morality of stock markets

Indian stock markets look like “mushroom rocks”, top-heavy and delicately balanced, just waiting to be tipped over by bad news, of which there is plenty. Investors, whose stocks are part of the on-going bull-run starting February 2021, could not care less having gained ₹11 trillion, since May 24.

This bonanza of wealth accretion, for the less than 15 per cent of households who own stocks, contrasts with increasing penury for most others from the economic and health depredations of the second wave of Covid-19 and its mutants.

It is hypocritical, however, to wring our hands in anguish because a few have become richer whilst the majority, particularly those in the bottom three quintiles are struggling. Gunnar Myrdal “hash tagged” India as a “dual economy” in 1968, in his seminal work *Asian Drama*.

Admittedly, much has changed since then. The urban, modern part of the economy has expanded significantly but so has inequity. Rapid wealth accretion at the pinnacle — an outcome of the 1992 liberalisation which unleashed entrepreneurship and economic growth — remains unmatched by enhanced living standards for the middle class, though, till the pandemic struck, poverty in the bottom two quintile had reduced significantly.

The stock market is not a useful proxy for economic welfare. It tracks the well-being of an elitist minority in the formal sector, albeit with trickle down benefits. But it is a real-time, high visibility metric of government's performance in partially liberalised economies like India, where government continues to be an intrusive economic agent via state owned companies and financial institutions, administered pricing and capital allocation regimes.

India's exchange rate regulator — the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) — strives to keep the exchange rate stable, except for adjustments reflecting the difference across currencies in the rate of inflation, which, RBI is mandated to keep within a float of two percentage points below or above the norm of four per cent per year. Presently we are scraping the under-side of the upper bound.

Sound inflation management and economic growth attracts foreign investors, who have invested ₹Rs 25 trillion in India or 13 per cent of the market capitalisation. These funds are important. They help us plug the foreign exchange gap because we chronically export less than we import.

The eco-system within which stocks are traded and fortunes won or lost, is regulated by the Securities Exchange Board of India (SEBI) since April 1992. On the demand side are 41 million registered investors — individuals and entities — of which 9,823 are foreign portfolio investors and 45,000 domestic companies. On the supply side 5,600 companies supply the bonds and equity traded publicly through 1,343 stockbrokers. Over 400 portfolio management entities and mutual funds, intermediate the flows.

The market capitalisation of ₹212 trillion was 107 per cent of the GDP in 2019-20 at current prices and around 2.4 per cent of the global market capitalisation (SEBI 2019-20).

The Bombay Stock Exchange was the first. It has operated from 1875. Since then, 20 other exchanges were established but have shut shop voluntarily or like the Calcutta Stock Exchange are under litigation to do so. Back then primary goods like opium, indigo and cotton were traded.

Today, Bombay is Mumbai, and the renamed BSE, no longer deals with commodities, for which there are specialised exchanges. 84 per cent of the capital raised in 2019-20, was by telecom, finance and electronics related firms. In 1992 the National Stock Exchange (NSE) became a competitor exchange for domestic trading.

Stock markets however remains a fairly “clubby” business. Of the ₹0.8 trillion of equity raised in 2019-20, just 12 companies accounted for 95.7 per cent while 64 others accounted for the residual 4.3 per cent.

Consider also, the constricted geographic spread from where the funds are sourced. BSE raises 51 per cent of funds from Mumbai, 17 per cent from the National Capital Region, 15 per cent from 18 other cities and the residual 17 per cent from the rest of the country. The newer National Stock Exchange is even more exclusive, relying on the twenty largest cities for 87 per cent for the funds.

Stock trading as an urban phenomenon is not unique to India. Happily, digital trading, allows anyone in remote areas with a smart phone, to link into licensed trading platforms. It already accounts for 12 per cent of the transactions and is the hope for democratising market access.

But democratising capital gains is tougher than democratising access. Capital intensive competitive “games” have a funneling effect where the biggest players benefit disproportionately. Savvy youngsters, with cash to spare, know this. They try and build capital through the volatile cryptocurrency exchanges worth \$750 million — an extra-legal play. Retail “crypto mining” requires spending ₹0.4 million. One computer — a tireless digital slave — can meet household expenses, in a throwback to the leisurely late 19th century, prior to slavery abolition.

Stock markets are as amoral as shopping malls. They make affordable money available for implementing business plans, make companies accountable and spread business gains widely, though transparency should be enhanced, and indiscretions sanctioned better. The trick is to keep regulation light-handed to attract more companies to the exchanges. The compulsory spend from profits on corporate social responsibility is bad regulation whilst taxing capital gains, to fund income redistribution to the have-nots, is good.

The writer is adviser, Observer Research Foundation

Subhani



Curb your enthusiasm, someone tell Dhankhar



Pavan K. Varma

Chanakya's View

Will somebody please tell His Excellency, Mahamahim, the governor of West Bengal, Shri Jagdeep Dhankhar, that he is crossing all the lines of Constitutional propriety? Dhankhar Sahab is under the mistaken impression, it would seem, that he is ensconced in the palatial Raj Bhavan as a representative of the BJP to which he belonged prior to being plucked out and made the Mahamahim. It is a lethal misapprehension, although to be fair to him, it has possessed other governors too in the past cutting across party lines. But, the degree to which Dhankharji appears to have become partisan, and the blatancy of his partisanship, sets a new benchmark of gubernatorial indiscretion.

Articles 155 and 156 of the Constitution lay down clearly where the loyalties of a governor should lie. Article 155 says: “The governor of a state shall be appointed by the President by warrant under his hand and seal.” Article 156 declares: “The governor shall hold office during the pleasure of the President.” The position is, therefore, crystal clear. A governor is the representative of the President of India. He has to then be, like the President, above all party politics, and independent of any political loyalties that may have guided him in the past. Dhankhar was an active member of the BJP for decades, and had represented the party both in the Rajasthan legislature

and the Lok Sabha. It is understandable then that his fidelity to his political alma mater is deep and abiding. However, once he assumed the office of the governor, he is bound, under the express provisions of the Constitution, to transcend such old loyalties and play his role with impartiality and dignity.

I have worked in Rashtrapati Bhavan as the press secretary to two Presidents of India, Shri R. Venkataraman and Shankar Dayal Sharma. I still remember that in very first meeting with President Venkataraman, his first instruction to me was that the President of India does not comment on the day-to-day functioning of government. “I do not want publicity,” he said to me, “especially that which brings into question my political impartiality.” Shankar Dayal Sharma also did not give — with one exception perhaps — a single interview to the media. These were stellar precedents. They reinforced the fact that the President remained resolutely above the political fray, and intervened only during a genuine Constitutional crisis, when — as Venkataraman used to say — the power of the presidency comes alive but only like an emergency lamp.

Governors, appointed by the President, and holding office only at his pleasure, must model themselves on this kind of principled restraint. However, Mr Dhankhar has almost become a continuous voice in the political discourse. He tweets much too frequently. He gives media interviews. And, he is

forever ready to go public on every issue, instead of resorting to the discreet back channel ways in which a Constitutional head should communicate with a duly elected democratic government. As per the conventions of the high office he holds, his actions border on the adventurous. In an unprecedented manner, at the time of the swearing in of Mamata Banerjee, the newly elected chief minister of the state, he launched into a speech, delivering a public homily — bordering on a reprimand — on the need for her to control law and order. This very message could have been conveyed — if he was so keen that it should — to the chief minister in a private conversation. Similarly, in spite of the express advice to the contrary of the elected government, he broke convention by going off on a tour of the areas where alleged violence had taken place against BJP workers. Dhankharji has also made it a habit to summon senior officers of the state government to brief him. Technically, he may be within his rights to do so, but doing so on every occasion, and then publicly berating the officers and the state government if they don't satisfy his exacting and peremptory fiat, hardly appears to be becoming for the Raj Bhavan.

True, violence and lawlessness of any kind, including against BJP workers, needs to be unequivocally con-

Dhankharji's actions, to my mind, constitute a fit case for President Kovind to take suo motu initiative to counsel his state-level counterpart. The endeavour should always be to learn from the past...

demned. It is true also that the governor can legitimately be concerned about a deterioration in the law and order situation. But there is a sustainable perception that Governors'saheb is only exercised on those issues which fit into the BJP agenda. His interventions, therefore, become a kind of partisan hectoring where it almost seems that he is battling for the BJP rather than following the impartiality code befitting his position.

Frankly, I am a little surprised that the President of India has not as yet taken cognisance of the unconventional, undesirable and unprecedented behaviour of his appointee. Dhankharji's actions, to my mind, constitute a fit case for President Kovind to take suo motu initiative to counsel his state-level counterpart. It is not as if governors in the past have not acted in a partial manner. But the endeavour should be to learn from the past, and ensure that in our maturing democracy such mistakes are not repeated in the future.

The BJP, on its part, has already done great damage to several of our institutions. It should seriously ponder on the advisability of justifying the behaviour of Mr Dhankhar. What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. Tomorrow, if they are on the other side of the fence, would they like a governor who in terms of both optics and substance has thrown all constitutional reticence to the winds, and is openly partial to those who rule at Delhi? The fire of wrong precedents must be doused. Otherwise, in the future, it can burn your house and mine, and the Constitution of India.

The writer, an author and a former diplomat, is in politics

LETTERS
TAX EVASION

A report from the USA by ProPublica has revealed that the 25 richest Americans have paid little or no taxes, using several tax dodges to avoid paying taxes during the last few decades. Is it a surprise? The rich have a battery of accounting firms and legal firms, who will make the legal, illegal and the illegal, legal. And the tax authorities will be running around in circles. And the big guys will continue to be model citizens and not pay taxes. Big corporates the world over will continue to maximise shareholder value. And because they are the major shareholders and the lesser taxes they pay, the more the cash surplus in the business. So long as it is done under the veneer of tax avoidance, they will continue to do so. The tax authorities will continue to play catch up. Honestly, there is no honesty when it comes to tax compliance.

M.R. Jayanthi,
Chennai

VACCINE POLICY

Vaccines will no longer be bought by states, only by the Centre and private sector. The vaccine pricing would be capped but the states are now crying foul. They had stocked up on vaccines and medicines with a hope to make well deserved profits. The PM played the spoilsport that he is and has put an end to it. Last heard, some of the opposition states, a few hospital chains, which had hoarded the vaccines and medicines don't know where to run. The super profits they expected will not be there and they may actually end up incurring losses.

C.K. Mani Ramani,
Tiruchy

INNER-PARTY POLLS

This has reference to your editorial, To stay relevant, Congress must hold inner-party polls. The grand old Congress party is becoming weaker after every election. It is in ICU after five state elections. Still, it is yet to read the writing on the wall. No efforts have been taken to rejuvenate the party. India does not have a strong opposition. People have rejected a coalition set up because of inefficiency, corruption and political dharma. It is time to act. It should become strong to take on the BJP in 2024. So it is time that Congress holds inter-party elections and gets a permanent head to lead the party in the elections.

Sravana Ramachandran,
Chennai

Anita
Katyal
Political
Gup-ShupUP rumblings:
Yogi's men bank
on Modi to allay
2022 ticket fears

When the BJP dispatched senior leaders B.L. Santosh and Radha Mohan Singh to Lucknow earlier this month to get feedback about the handling of the coronavirus pandemic by the Yogi Adityanath government, it was expected that they would meet with all legislators. But Mr Santosh and Mr Singh met only a section of ministers and state party leaders after which CM Yogi Adityanath was given a clean chit for successfully tackling the second wave of Covid infections. Already upset with Yogi Adityanath's style of functioning, this led to further resentment among the BJP legislators who hoped to get an audience with the leaders so that they could apprise them of their grievances. The party's MLAs are unhappy as they feel neglected by the chief minister who, they maintain, depends solely on the bureaucracy. The MLAs have reason to worry as many of them were imported from other political parties before the last Assembly polls and with the next election coming up in early 2022, they are not sure if they will have to make way for fresh entrants. They were,

therefore, keen to apprise the BJP leadership about the hurdles they face in addressing the demands of their constituents, before they are axed for their non-performance. They are hoping Yogi's meetings with the Prime Minister and home minister Amit Shah will yield positive results.

Image management has been on top of the Modi government's agenda. The Centre first came in for severe criticism from the domestic and international media for not anticipating the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic. Even as the government's spin doctors were in the midst of handling this negative commentary, the government was pulled up by the Supreme Court which described its vaccine policy as “arbitrary and irrational”. Going into damage control mode, Prime Minister Modi announced a centralised procurement of vaccines and free doses to all in his address to the nation on June 7. Following this announcement, the government's spin doctors were again on the job. “Friendly” media-persons were informally told that the

Prime Minister had actually given in-principle approval for centralised free vaccine on June 1, two days before the Supreme Court's observations. Subsequently, the chosen journalists put out identical tweets giving the official version.

It is no secret that Gandhi loyalist Jitin Prasada was set to join the BJP two years ago but was dissuaded from leaving the Congress by Rahul Gandhi and other senior party leaders. According to the political grapevine, Mr Prasada decided to switch sides now as he had fallen out with Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Congress general secretary in charge of Uttar Pradesh, who did not include him in the state unit's activities. With Assembly elections coming up early next year, Mr Prasada apparently thought this was the most opportune moment to leave. When the young leader was given charge of poll-bound West Bengal earlier this year, everyone believed Mr Prasada was back in favour even though he was among the signatories to the letter seeking radical changes in the Congress organisation.

But, it appears this appointment was meant to ensure Mr Prasada's absence from UP. Plus, he was deliberately given this “punishment” assignment in which he was bound to fail.

As Punjab chief minister Amarinder Singh looks set to emerge victorious in the ongoing battle with his bete noire Navjot Singh Sidhu, he will have to thank his wife and Patiala MP Preet Kaur for the final outcome. The chief minister or Captain, as he is called, deputed Preet Kaur to speak with the dissident leaders. Unlike the Captain, Preet Kaur is considered more approachable and consequently it was easier for her to talk to the rebels. If reports are to be believed, her efforts have paid off as the majority of state leaders who were summoned by the three-member panel set up by Congress president Sonia Gandhi to resolve the Punjab imbroglio, were not in favour of replacing Amarinder Singh. The rebels basically want their concerns to be addressed. The truth is that this rebellion was never about a change in leadership but it was to

ensure that those perceived to be in the anti-Captain camp were not ignored during ticket distribution in next year's Assembly polls.

Unable to travel due to the coronavirus pandemic, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra has stepped up her presence on social media. She has, however, changed trajectory in recent months. Instead of focussing on issues pertaining to Uttar Pradesh, she has also started attacking Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the Centre's vaccine policy, the shortage of oxygen and general handling of the coronavirus pandemic. But her numerous tweets, video messages and Facebook posts taking on Mr Modi have been ignored by the BJP which is usually quick to respond sharply to Rahul Gandhi's tweets. The BJP obviously does not wish to take the focus away from Rahul Gandhi considering its campaign to project the Nehru-Gandhi scion as an immature leader has met with resounding success.

Anita Katyal is a Delhi-based journalist

SHORT TAKES

British Medal for RKFC coach

New Delhi: David Alexander Robertson, coach of Kashmir's famous football club Real Kashmir FC, has been honoured with British Empire Medal (BEM) for his services to the community in the valley and strengthening UK-India relations, a feat he dedicated to the people of Kashmir and the team he has been engaged with.

According to the list released on the occasion of Queen Elizabeth II's birthday on Friday evening, "Manager, Real Kashmir Football Club, India, receives a British Empire Medal (BEM) for services to the community in Kashmir and UK-India relations." The awards were announced on Saturday by the British government to mark the monarch's official birthday. — *PTI*

Sterling in Queen's B'day Honours list

London: Manchester City and England forward Raheem Sterling was on Friday named in Queen Elizabeth II's Birthday Honours list in recognition of his work to promote racial equality in sport. The 26-year-old, who has been heavily involved in anti-racism and anti-discrimination campaigns, has been made an MBE (Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire). Sterling, a Premier League and League Cup winner with City this season, has been subjected to racial slurs in stadiums and online during his career. In 2019, he took part in an anti-racism campaign, "No Room For Racism" and spoke out last year as the Black Lives Matter movement gained traction following the murder of George Floyd in the United States. — *AFP*

Ace marathoner Mathur no more

New Delhi: India's 1951 Asian Games marathon bronze medal winner and 1952 Olympian Surat Singh Mathur has died of Covid-19 here. He was 90. "My uncle passed away on Friday due to Covid-19. He was an Olympian and also a medal winner in the first Asian Games," his nephew Anil Mathur said. "He is our Hall of Fame athlete. Rest in peace sir. Thank you for making #India proud," the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) said in a tweet. Mathur is the first athlete from independent India to complete an Olympic marathon race, at the 1952 Helsinki Games. Though Chhota Singh was the first runner from independent India to take part in an Olympic marathon event in the 1948 London Games, he could not finish the race. — *PTI*

Lahiri makes cut at Palmetto golf

Ridgeland, US: Indian golfer Anirban Lahiri managed to make the cut despite carding a disappointing 2-over 73 in the second round of the Palmetto Championship here. Lahiri, who shot 69 in the opening round, had three bogeys in the last four holes on day two to total an even par 142 and make the cut, which fell at 1-over. The Indian, who was tied-31st after the first round, dropped to tied-44th. Lahiri despite his erratic form has missed more cuts than he deserves to, but this time around, he would heaved a sigh of relief after being inside Top-20 at one point. Chesson Hadley shot 5-under 66 to take a two-stroke lead over World No. 1 Dustin Johnson. — *PTI*

Embiid scores as Sixers pin Hawks

Los Angeles: Joel Embiid finished with 27 points, nine rebounds and eight assists as the Philadelphia 76ers snapped the Atlanta Hawks' run of good fortune at home with a 127-111 win in game three of their NBA Eastern Conference playoff series. The teams split the first two games in Philadelphia, but the Sixers dominated Friday to grab a 2-1 series lead and halt the Hawks' 13-game winning streak at home. Tobias Harris scored 22 points, Ben Simmons tallied 18 points and seven assists, and Furkan Korkmaz drained three of six from beyond the arc for the 76ers in front of a crowd of 16,400 at State Farm Arena in Atlanta. Embiid had a couple of hard falls during the contest but nothing serious. "I'm OK," said Embiid, who is playing with a cartilage tear in his right knee. — *AFP*

NO DJOKE!

Djokovic stuns 13-time champ Nadal in French Open epic

Paris, June 12: Novak Djokovic handed 13-time champion Rafael Nadal only his third defeat in 16 years and 108 matches at the French Open on Friday to reach his sixth Roland Garros final after an epic showdown which even beat the country's Covid-19 curfew.

In their 58th career clash, Djokovic triumphed 3-6, 6-3, 7-6 (7/4), 6-2 and stays on course to capture a 19th major and become the first man in over 50 years to win all four Slams twice.

Djokovic, the 2016 champion in Paris who had also beaten Nadal at the 2015 tournament, will face Stefanos Tsitsipas in Sunday's final in what will be his 29th championship match at the Slams.

Tsitsipas had earlier become the first Greek to reach a Grand Slam final with a 6-3, 6-3, 4-6, 4-6, 6-3 victory over Germany's Alexander Zverev.

Nadal, 35, remains tied on 20 majors with Roger Federer.

"It was a privilege to face Rafa in such an incredible match," said Djokovic after four hours and 11 minutes of intense action.

He now leads Nadal 30-28 in their career rivalry.

"It's hard to find words for Rafa's achievements at Roland Garros. The amount of wins on this court is incredible," he added.

"You have to climb Mount Everest when you meet him here."

It was Djokovic's second win in eight meetings in Paris with Nadal, a sequence which also included three losses in finals.

It was Nadal's first defeat in 14 semi-finals in the French capital.

"Probably it was not my best day today, even if I fought," said Nadal.

"Sometimes you win, sometimes you lose. I had a big chance. There were some crazy points but there was fatigue there."

Djokovic finished with 50 winners; Nadal committed 55 unforced errors under the relentless assault.

Djokovic had two break points in the opening game of the first set which stretched to 10 minutes but was unable to convert. Nadal made him pay, sprinting away for a 5-0 lead before the top seed got on the board.

Djokovic clung on, retrieving one break to get to 2-5 but Nadal eventually prevailed after one hour on court even if he required seven set points to edge ahead. — *AFP*



Novak Djokovic of Serbia celebrates his victory over Rafael Nadal of Spain in the French Open semifinal at Roland Garros in Paris on Friday. — *AP*

One of my greatest wins: Novak

IT'S JUST ANOTHER DEFEAT FOR NADAL

Paris, June 12: Rafael Nadal shrugged off his epic loss to Novak Djokovic at the French Open insisting "life goes on" as the 13-time champion suffered just his third ever defeat in 108 matches in Paris over 16 years.

Nadal, the defending champion and chasing a record-setting 21st Grand Slam title, refused to dwell on the consequences of his 4-hour 11-minute loss.

"I am sad to have lost in the most important tournament of the year for me, but life goes on, it is nothing more than a defeat on a tennis court," said 35-year-old Nadal.

"If everything goes well, tomorrow I will be at home with my family and friends, and then we will see what is next." — *AFP*

career," said Djokovic. "Considering the quality of tennis, playing my biggest rival on the court where he has had so much success and has been the dominant force

in the last 15-plus years, and the atmosphere which was completely electric. Just amazing.

"It's hard to find words bigger than all the superlatives you can

KREJCIKOVA LIFTS MAIDEN SLAM CROWN

Paris, June 12: Barbora Krejckikova won her maiden Grand Slam singles title at the French Open on Saturday, beating Russia's Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova to become the first Czech woman in 40 years to conquer Roland Garros.

Krejckikova, ranked 33 in the world and playing just her fifth main draw in a Slams singles event, triumphed 6-1, 2-6, 6-4 for a second career title.

The 25-year-old emulates compatriot Hana Mandlikova who claimed the trophy in Paris in 1981.

The 25-year-old Krejckikova dedicated her victory to her mentor, the former Wimbledon champion Jana Novotna who died of cancer at the age of 49 in 2017.

"It's hard to put into words. I cannot believe I have just won a Grand Slam," said Krejckikova who was still outside the top 100 when the 2020 French Open took place last October.

"I spent a lot of time with Jana before she died. Her last words to me were 'enjoy tennis and try and win a Grand Slam'."

"I know she's looking after me. All this is pretty much because she is looking after me."

"It was amazing that I got the chance to meet her. She was such an inspiration. I miss her and I hope she's really happy."

In a nervy start to the final, Krejckikova was broken in the first game, serving up two double faults. — *AFP*

NATIONAL | FOOTBALL

Brazil women team protest harassment

Sao Paulo, June 12: Players from Brazil's women's team protested against sexual harassment on Friday, days after the president of the national federation was suspended for allegations of the same thing.

Rogério Caboclo was formally accused a week ago before the ethics committee of the Brazilian Football Confederation. A former staffer provided recordings of conversations and text messages. Caboclo denies any wrongdoing. Brazil players including superstar Marta used their social media channels to protest, but didn't name Caboclo, who is not expected to return to his position after the 30-day suspension.

"Every day thousands of people are affected and disrespected by moral and sexual harassment, especially us women," the text says.

"Saying no to harassment goes beyond words, it is about action. We stimulate women and men to call it out!"

The women carried a banner reading "No to harassment" before their friendly against Russia on Friday. Brazil won 3-0.

Marta said after the friendly in Spain that all players and members of the coaching staff made the decision to speak out.

"We are not prejudging (Caboclo), but the facts are there to be investigated,"

● **Rogério Caboclo was formally accused a week ago before the ethics committee of the Brazilian Football Confederation. A former staffer provided recordings of conversations and text messages.**

35-year-old said. "We needed to show our position."

Their coach Pia Sundhage described the accusation against Caboclo as very serious. She spoke on Thursday amid the Brazil women's team's preparations in Spain for the Tokyo Olympics.

"We spoke with the athletes, informed them of what was going on, and all had the opportunity to speak about it. Each one of us must have responsibility in what we answer," Sundhage said.

"We were a bit overwhelmed by all of that situation, but now it is important to turn our focus to the pitch again."

Brazil's men's national team players did not talk about Caboclo's suspension. Coach Tite said Tuesday it is not for him to discuss what happened to the soccer executive. He spoke after the team's 2-0 win at Paraguay in a match of World Cup qualifiers. — *AP*

IWF CONFIRMS CHANU'S OLYMPIC QUALIFICATION

New Delhi, June 12: The International Weightlifting Federation (IWF) on Saturday conformed that star Indian lifter Mirabai Chanu has qualified for the upcoming Tokyo Olympics in the women's 49kg category.

Chanu, the 2017 world champion in weightlifting, had secured her place in Tokyo by winning a bronze medal in the Asian Championship in Tashkent in April with a world record in clean and jerk.

The 26-year-old from Manipur has qualified on the basis of her standings on IWF's Absolute Ranking list. The Indian lifter is ranked second in the 49kg category with 4133,6172 points in her kitty.

"Many congratulations to #TOPSAthlete weightlifter @mirabai_chanu who has qualified for #Tokyo2020 after @iwfnet published its Absolute Ranking list

where she is placed 2nd in the women's 49 kg," Sports Authority of India (SAI) tweeted.

Chanu was earlier ranked fourth but North Korea's withdrawal from the Olympics lifted the Indian to the second place. This will be Chanu's second appearance in the Olympics, five years after a disappointing outing in Rio, where she failed to lift any of the weights in clean and jerk to bow out of the event.

In the men's 67 kg category, India's Jeremy Lalrinnunga is ranked 12th and lost the continental quota to Korea's Hak Myeongmok, but the 18-year-old still has a chance to qualify.

The final list will be released on June 25.

As per IWF rules, the top eight lifters in each of the 14 weight categories, including seven in the women's group, are eligible to compete in the Games. — *PTI*

ODI SERIES | VS LANKA

Indian team to isolate, train

New Delhi, June 12: India's white ball squad, led by Shikhar Dhawan, will quarantine in Mumbai from June 14 to 28 and undergo six RT-PCR tests on alternate days before flying off to Colombo for the six-match series against Sri Lanka, starting on July 13.

It is understood that all the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) that will be followed by the Lanka-bound squad will be same as those of the first team currently in the United Kingdom for the World Test Championship final and five-match series against England.

"All the rules will be same like we followed in England. The outstanding players will come by charter flight and some fly business class of commercial airline," a BCCI source privy to development said.

"They will do seven days of room quarantine and then can meet in common areas inside the bio-bubble. The players will do gym sessions in staggered manner."

● **While the three-match ODI series starts on July 13, it is expected that Indian team will have match simulation practice (situational training) after individual sessions.**

While the three-match ODI series starts on July 13, the Indian team will have match simulation practice after individual sessions, following three days of room quarantine at the team hotel in Colombo.

"It will be just like what's happening in England. Match situations will be created and that's how the intra-squad training will be held.

"You can't have your main players get out off the first ball and not bat again or bat for the whole innings. Everyone needs training so it won't be practice games as such."

The Indian teams over the years have always stayed at the Taj Samudra Hotel in Colombo. — *PTI*

Henry strikes to boost Kiwis

Birmingham, June 12: Matt Henry removed both England openers before tea on the third day to leave New Zealand in command of the second and final Test at Edgbaston on Saturday.

England had slumped to 18-2 in off just six overs in their second innings at the interval, still 67 runs behind New Zealand's first innings 388.

Henry, one of an exceptional six New Zealand changes to the side that drew the first Test at Lord's, had superb interval figures of 2-7 in three overs.

He struck with just the second ball of England's innings when he had inform opener Rory Burns well caught in the slips by stand-in skipper Tom Latham for a duck.

New Zealand's close-catching, far superior to that of England this series, also accounted for Dom Sibley, who fell to Henry for 10 after being well-taken in the cordon by Daryl Mitchell.

England have not lost a home Test series in seven years. Earlier, Stuart Broad took an impressive 4-48 in 23.1 overs but New Zealand still led by 85 runs on first innings.

— *AFP*
Brief scores (Day 3, at Tea): England 303 & 18/2 (Crawley 10 (batting); Henry 2/7) vs New Zealand 388 (Conway 80, Young 82, Taylor 80; Broad 4/48).



New Zealand's Matt Henry (third from right) celebrates with teammates the dismissal of Dom Sibley of England on the third day of their second Test on Saturday. — *AP*

HOLDING SLAMS ENGLAND'S 'MOMENT OF UNITY' GESTURE

Birmingham, June 12: West Indies great Michael Holding has criticised England cricket team's "moment of unity" gesture in the ongoing Test series against New Zealand, saying it was not supporting Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement but giving subtle meaning of "all lives matter".

England players wore T-

shirts sporting messages against any racism, religious intolerance, sexism and other anti-discrimination slogans, having decided to not take the knee after the series against West Indies last year.

Holding, who is a passionate advocate for equality in cricket and the wider community, feels the gesture is akin to saying "all lives

matter" rather than supporting BLM movement.

"What this England (cricket) team are doing now with this 'moment of unity', that is not supporting Black Lives Matter," Holding told 'Sky Sports'.

"What you are doing there is, when I say, 'black lives matter', you are telling me 'all lives matter'," the 67-year-old added. — *PTI*

PROTEAS PACE ATTACK TOO HOT FOR WINDIES

Gros-Islet (Saint Lucia), June 12: South Africa's relentless pace attack left the West Indies facing the prospect of an innings defeat inside three days as they limped to 82 for four, still needing 143 runs to make the tourists bat again, at stumps on the second day of the first Test in St Lucia on Friday.

The West Indies were routed for 97 — their lowest-ever total in a Test innings against the Proteas — after choosing to bat first on day one.

In their second innings on Friday, the home side again laboured to come to terms with the consistent quality and intensity of the visitors' pacers and seamers.

Earlier, Quinton de Kock had flailed a flagging West Indies bowling attack on the way to an unbeaten 141 to lift South Africa to a first-innings total of 322 and a commanding first-innings lead of 225 runs.

He reached the century landmark with a six, one of seven in an innings embellished further with 12 fours off 170 deliveries. — *AFP*

Brief scores (Day 2): West Indies 97 & 82/4 (Chase 21 (batting); Blackwood 10 (batting)) vs South Africa 322 (de Kock 141 (not out); Holder 4/75).

Quick passes



A fan celebrates Italy's goal against Turkey as she watches the Euro opening Group 'A' match on a giant screen at the official fan zone at the Roman Forum in Rome on Friday. — AFP

Covid chaos will make Spain strong

Spanish defender Diego Llorente believes the team's Covid-19 chaos has pulled the players closer together ahead of their Euro 2020 opener against Sweden on Monday.

Llorente tested positive for the virus on Tuesday but has been allowed to rejoin the squad after giving a fourth consecutive negative test on Friday. Sergio Busquets is still self-isolating at home after testing positive last weekend, which meant the team had to train individually this week and sit out a final warm-up game against Lithuania.

"All of us here see the glass half-full, not half-empty," said Llorente in a press conference on Saturday.

"All these things have made us stronger as a group. We see the light at the end of the tunnel now. Even on a mental level, this sort of thing can help you face these games and trust your teammates. If we all row in the same direction, everything can go well and that is the message we believe in," he added. — AFP

Ukraine agree on kit compromise

Ukraine's football association said Friday it had managed to agree on a compromise with UEFA over Euro 2020 kits that feature patriotic slogans and sparked Russia's ire, but European football's governing body said nothing had changed in practice.

"We've managed to reach a victorious compromise with UEFA!" the association chief, Andriy Pavlov, said in a statement on Facebook, describing the negotiations as "extremely tough".

Kiev has angered Moscow after its football association unveiled Euro 2020 kits that show the outline of Ukraine including Crimea, which was annexed by Russia in 2014.

Russia criticised a slogan written on the inside of the shirts — "Glory to the Heroes". — AFP

Venezuelans hit by virus ahead of Copa

A dozen Venezuela players and coaching staff have tested positive for Covid-19 a day before their Copa America opener against the host in Brasilia, Brazilian health authorities said on Saturday.

The health secretariat of the Federal District, which includes Brasilia, said in a statement that all of the infected people were isolated in a hotel. None of the Venezuelans were named.

CONMEBOL has not said if the match against Brazil on Sunday at Man Garrincha Stadium will proceed as scheduled or be delayed. "They are all asymptomatic, isolated in single rooms and are being monitored by the team of CONMEBOL and local specialists," the statement said.

Venezuela arrived in Brazil on Friday. One day earlier, two players tested positive. — AP

Live on TV

EURO

Group Stage: England vs Croatia from 6.30 pm; Austria vs North Macedonia from 9.30 pm; Netherlands vs Ukraine from 12.30 am (Monday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

COPA AMERICA

Group Stage: Brazil vs Venezuela from 2.30 am (Monday) on Sony Ten 1, 2; Colombia vs Ecuador from 5.30 am (Monday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

ITALIAN JOB!

Mancini's men shoot Turkey as they begin with a bang

Rome, June 12: Italy got their Euro 2020 campaign off the mark with an impressive 3-0 win over Turkey in the curtain-raiser for the postponed continental tournament in front of their home fans in Rome on Friday.

Playing their first major tournament in five years after failing to qualify for the 2018 World Cup, all the goals came in the second half in front of a Stadio Olimpico that was filled to a quarter of its capacity.

Merih Demiral's own goal put Italy ahead before Ciro Immobile and Lorenzo Insigne netted for Roberto Mancini's side in the Group 'A' opener.

The win capped an emotional night in the Italian capital which saw 16,000 fans return to the Stadio Olimpico.

There was a party atmosphere, with a spectacular sound and light show and fireworks display before kick-off for the opening of the month-long 24-team event, which will be played across 11 countries.

There was a performance by the Italian National Police orchestra, a parade of huge inflatable balloons on the pitch, tenor Andrea Bocelli sang 'Nessun Dorma' before a virtual performance from Martin Garrix, Bono and The Edge.

Former Italy World Cup winners Alessandro Nesta and Francesco Totti, who played for Lazio and Roma during their careers at the Stadio Olimpico, carried the ball to the centre of the pitch before kick-off.

On the pitch, Italy dominated early on with a three-man attack led by Immobile, who plays for Lazio.

The 31-year-old had several near misses in the first half, coming up against a solid Turkey defence who held their own.

Turkey could also thank goalkeeper Ugurcan Cakir for pulling off a big save on 23 minutes, tipping over Italy captain Giorgio Chiellini's powerful goal-bound header off an Insigne corner.

Italy finally got on the scoreboard eight minutes after the break when the



Italy forward Lorenzo Insigne (top) and teammates celebrate a goal against Turkey in their Euro Group 'A' match at the Olympic Stadium in Rome on Friday. — AFP

unfortunate Demiral found himself in the path of a Federico Berardi cross for Immobile, the Juventus defender bundling the ball into his own net.

Leonardo Spinazzola had a chance for a second minutes later, with Immobile sending the rebound wide.

Immobile finally got his goal, his 14th for Italy, and

first in a major tournament, in the 66th minute, scoring from a rebound after Cakir had saved from Spinazzola.

And Insigne curled in the third with 11 minutes to go.

Sassuolo winger Berardi had a role in all three goals, with Italy scoring three for the first time in a European Championship

Italy	3
(Merih Demiral 53-own goal, Ciro Immobile 66, Lorenzo Insigne 79)	
Turkey	0

ITALY'S COACH TERMS VICTORY IMPORTANT

Rome, June 12: Roberto Mancini hailed Italy's 3-0 Euro 2020 opening victory over Turkey as "an important win" but warned there is still a long way to go until a possible Wembley final.

"It was important to start well in Rome and I think it's a satisfaction for the public and for Italians," said Mancini of the match played at a Stadio Olimpico that was filled to a quarter of its capacity.

"It was a beautiful evening, I hope there are many others, but there are still six more for Wembley," he added.

Italy failed to qualify for the 2018 World Cup but are now on a 28-match unbeaten run under Mancini.

"We played a good match, even in the first half without being able to score. A great team. There was a lot of help from the crowd," Mancini said.

"We were hoping for another result, but Italy was dominant," said Turkey coach Senol Gunes.

"The first goal changed things in the second half and we lost control of the game," he added.

"There was an incredible emotion before the match, it was spine-chilling," said Roma midfielder Leonardo Spinazzola, UEFA's man-of-the-match after his performance in his club stadium.

"Then it was a perfect match, zero goals conceded and we played great football. We have a strong team, an incredible mix of strength and technique," Spinazzola, wearing a big smile, added. — AFP



Connor Roberts (left) of Wales and Switzerland's Ricardo Rodriguez vie for the ball during their Euro Group 'A' match at the Baku Olympic stadium in Baku, Azerbaijan, on Saturday. — AP

Welsh catch Swiss in the nick of time

Baku, June 12: A header from towering Kieffer Moore claimed a point for Wales in a 1-1 draw with Switzerland in Baku on Saturday to start both teams' Euro 2020 campaigns.

Moore responded to Brel Embolo's second-half opener with a quarter of an hour remaining. Both sides trail Group 'A' leaders Italy, who beat Turkey 3-0 in Friday's tournament curtain-raiser.

Wales coach Robert Page named Gareth Bale on the left wing as the Real Madrid attacker was one of three Wales survivors in the starting line-up from the 2016 semifinal loss to Portugal.

Switzerland boss Vladimir Petkovic kept Benfica's Haris Seferovic and Borussia Moenchengladbach's Brel Embolo up front despite Mario Gavranovic scoring four times in two pre-tournament friendlies.

With Petkovic naming a narrow back three, Bale and fellow winger Dan James found space out wide early on in front of an estimated 10,000 crowd as local authorities allowed up to 50 per cent capacity in the 69,000-seater Olympic Stadium.

After a quarter of an hour played, James broke free down the left before finding 1.95 metre-tall Moore who forced Swiss goalkeeper Yann Sommer to tip the ball over the bar.

From the resulting corner, Moore rose highest

Switzerland	1
(Brel Embolo 49)	
Wales	1
(Kieffer Moore 74)	

again and clashed in the air with Manuel Akanji, which left the Cardiff forward playing the remainder of the game with red tape around his head.

With Moore bandaged, the momentum swung towards Petkovic's side and they dominated the remainder of the half but Seferovic wasted three chances.

Moore returned after the interval despite completing just one of his team's 101 passes in the first half.

Petkovic's Switzerland, who reached the Last 16 five years ago, remained in control with captain Granit Xhaka, Liverpool's Xherdan Shaqiri and Atalanta's Remo Freuler dominating midfield.

They broke the deadlock four minutes into the second half as Embolo sparked into life after a quiet opening 45 minutes of the match.

He broke down the middle and forced Danny Ward into a save, which gave Shaqiri a corner on the right flank.

He delivered to Embolo who headed home after beating Wales right-back Connor Roberts with ease for just his sixth goal in 44 international appearances. — AFP

Austria brace for North Macedonia

Bucharest, June 12: Although scoring goals has been a major issue for Austria at previous European Championships, scoring goals against North Macedonia has been a non-issue in recent years.

The Austrians will open play at Euro 2020 in Group 'C' against North Macedonia on Sunday in Bucharest. The two teams met twice in qualifying for the tournament, with Austria winning 4-1 and 2-1. But goals haven't come easy on the big stage. In six games played in the 2008 and 2016 editions of the continental tournament, the Austrian team managed only a single goal in open play — in a 2-1 loss to Iceland five years ago.

Heading into Euro 2020, Austria lost to England 1-0 on June 2 and was held to a scoreless draw by Slovakia last Sunday.

Austria defender David Alaba, perhaps the team's best known player, tried to take something positive from the last warm-up game, but the lack of goals was on his mind.

North Macedonia, meanwhile, will be making its

debut at a major tournament after qualifying through the Nations League playoffs. But they have had success scoring some goals and pulling off some upsets.

The biggest upset came in March when the team beat Germany 2-1 in a World Cup qualifier.

Earlier this month, North Macedonia drew 1-1 with Slovenia on June 1, with a goal conceded deep into injury time, and routed Kazakhstan 4-0 three days later. North Macedonia's biggest scoring threat will be Goran Pandev, who made his debut for the national team 20 years ago. — AP

Regd. No. TNENG/2010/35692

Printed & Published by **K. Sudhakar** on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited and Printed at Deccan Chronicle Press situated at No 2/22, Sengalipalayam Road, N.G.O Colony Post, Kurudampalayam Village, Coimbatore - 641 022, RNI Registration No: TNENG/2010/35692 Ph No : 2231252,253,255,257 & 358 Editor: **KAUSHIK MITTER**

Eriksen stabilised, 'awake' in hospital

Copenhagen, June 12: Denmark star Christian Eriksen was awake in hospital, the Danish Football Union said on Saturday, after he collapsed on the pitch during the Euro 2020 game against Finland in Copenhagen.

"Christian Eriksen is awake and is undergoing further tests" at the hospital, the Danish federation said on Twitter, after the player was carried off the field having received CPR by medical personnel. UEFA said Eriksen had been "stabilised" after the match was suspended in the first half.

European football's governing body added that a "crisis meeting" had taken place with both teams and match officials over whether to restart the game. The match was stopped after Eriksen fell



Denmark midfielder Christian Eriksen lays on the ground after collapsing during the Euro Group 'B' match against Finland at the Parken Stadium in Copenhagen as one of his teammates calls for medical help on Saturday. — AFP

England to challenge Croatia in opener

London, June 12: There's an indicator of why England has never won the European Championship. In nine attempts, they have never won an opening match at the tournament.

Not even when its first match was at Wembley in 1996. A quarter-century on, England opens another continental campaign at its national stadium against the team that prevented Gareth Southgate's side reaching the World

Cup final three years ago. Croatia on Sunday will face a team refreshed since losing 2-1 and denied a shot at adding to its only major title at the 1966 World Cup. Led by 2018 World Cup Golden Boot winner Harry Kane, only nine members of that squad made the cut for the expanded 26-man group for a cross-continental European Championship that could see England play six games at Wembley if they reach the final.

On the injury front, center back Harry Maguire and midfielder Jordan Henderson might not be fit enough to start. There's also fatigue to consider given the heat forecast for Sunday and the fact seven players were involved in the Champions League final two weeks ago when Chelsea beat Manchester City.

What Southgate won't be doing is trying to overload the starting XI against Croatia with too many of

the exciting attacking options and leave it unbalanced. Perhaps Kane is the only certain starter, with Raheem Sterling, Jadon Sancho, Jack Grealish and Phil Foden vying for roles.

England is planning to make the most of being allowed five substitutes for the first time at a tournament. But in assessing the starting lineup England's coaching staff have been recalling the fate of Argentina at the 2018 World Cup. Since the

World Cup, when Croatia lost the final to France, Zlatko Dalic's side has lost and drawn with England in the UEFA Nations League. Unlike England, Croatia have won opening matches at the European Championship four times, in fact, and drawn another.

England have drawn five and lost four of them, including at its championship debut in 1968 against Yugoslavia, which Croatia used to be a part of. — AP