

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

CHENNAI | TUESDAY 15 | JUNE 2021

WEATHER



Max: 37°C
Min: 27°C
Rainfall: 5%

ASTROGUIDE

Pilava: Aani 1
Tithi: Panchami
Star: Ayilyam
Rahukalam: 3 pm to 4.30 pm
Yamagandam: 9 am to 10.30 am

PRAYERS

Fajar: 4.23 am
Luhar: 12.14 pm
Asar: 3.35 pm
Maghrib: 6.36 pm
Isha: 7.55 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.36 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.43 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 9.43 AM
MOONSET TOMORROW 11.28 AM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+70,421)	(+3,921)
2,95,79,891	3,77,037

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+12,772)	(254)
TN: 23,66,493	29,801

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

17,68,55,363

DEATHS

38,22,178

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES

219

worldometers.info

Bizman admits taking 'help' to beat Anand at chess

Chennai: An online charity chess event featuring former world champion Viswanathan Anand and several celebrities has run into controversy after a young entrepreneur Nikhil Kamath faced flak for resorting to unfair means in order to beat the Indian legend. Kamath, co-founder of Zerodha, a stock brokerage company and True Beacon, an asset management company, apologised on Twitter and admitted that he took help from chess analysts and computers during the event on Sunday. Responding to Kamath's tweet, Anand said on Twitter:

"Yesterday was a celebrity simul for people to raise money. It was a fun experience upholding the ethics of the game. I just played the position on the board and expected the same from everyone." Kamath apologised for his misdeemeanour and said he had help from people analysing the game and computers.

COUNTER

POINT



This is the record of undercounted Covid deaths...

PAWAN BALI
NEW DELHI, JUNE 14

India, China and Pakistan continued to grow their nuclear arsenal in the region in 2020, a report by Stockholm-based think tank SIPRI has claimed.

Among the three countries, China saw the highest addition of 30 nuclear warheads in 2020, taking its total nuclear stockpile to 350. India added six and Pakistan five nuclear warheads. However, China and Pakistan continue to have more nuclear weapons than India. Pakistan has 165

nuclear warheads against 156 with India, according to the SIPRI report.

"China is in the middle of a significant modernisation and expansion of its nuclear arsenal, and India and Pakistan also appear to be increasing the size of their nuclear weapon inventories," said the report. Overall, Russia leads the pack with 6,225 nuclear warheads followed by the US with 5,550.

There was a decrease in the number of nuclear weapons in the world from 13,400 in 2019 to 13,080 in 2020 as the USA and Russia



continued to reduce their overall nuclear weapon inventories by dismantling retired warheads. However, despite this overall decrease, the estimated number of nuclear weapons currently deployed with operational forces increased to 3,825 from 3,720 last year.

Around 2,000 of these — nearly all of which belonged to Russia or the USA — were kept in a state of high operational alert, said SIPRI.

The report said that while initially India's nuclear systems were focused on Pakistan, the country now appears to place increased emphasis on China, with the development of longer-range missiles capable of targeting all of China.

It said that India has assigned its nuclear weapons to a maturing nuclear triad of aircraft, land-based missiles and ballistic missile

submarines.

The report said that the remarks in recent years by Indian defence ministers have created doubts about India's commitment to the no-first-use policy. "Recent scholarship and government statements have called that policy into further question, with some analysts suggesting that 'India's NFU' [no-first-use] policy is neither a stable nor a reliable predictor of how the Indian military and political leadership might actually use nuclear weapons," said SIPRI. It said that there are sugges-

tions that some portions of India's arsenal, particularly those weapons and capabilities designed for retaliation against Pakistan, "are now kept at a much higher state of readiness, capable of being operationalised and released within seconds or minutes — not hours, as has been previously assumed".

The report said that aircraft are the most mature component of India's nuclear strike capabilities. "It is estimated here that approximately 48 nuclear bombs are assigned to aircraft," said the report.



STATE | 3
People without agama training won't be made temple priests: Minister



WORLD | 5
Will better India ties, says Bennett

SPORT | 8

Djokovic gifts winning racquet to young fan

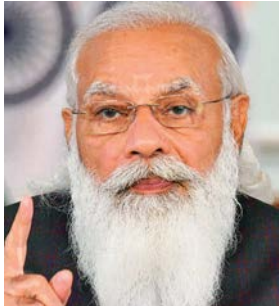


'Land degradation threat to societies'

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 14

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday evening told the United Nations that India is "on track to achieve its national commitment of Land degradation neutrality and ... working towards restoring 26 million hectares of degraded land by 2030". This, he said, would "contribute to India's commitment to achieve an additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent". The Prime Minister was delivering his keynote address in Virtual format at the UN "High-Level Dialogue on Desertification, Land degradation and Drought".

"Land is the fundamental building block for supporting all lives and livelihoods. And, all of us understand that the web of life functions as an inter-connected system. Sadly, land degradation affects over two-thirds of the world today," PM Modi said, adding, "If left unchecked, it will erode the very foundations of our societies, economies, food security, health, safety and quality of life. Therefore, we have to reduce the tremendous pressure on land and its resources. Clearly, a lot of



work lies ahead of us. But we can do it. We can do it together."

"Land degradation poses a special challenge to the developing world. In the spirit of South-South cooperation, India is assisting fellow developing countries to develop land restoration strategies. A Centre of Excellence is being set up in India to promote a scientific approach towards land degradation issues," PM Modi stated.

He further said, "In India, we have always given importance to land and considered the sacred Earth as our mother. India has taken the lead to highlight land degradation issues at international forums. The Delhi Declaration of 2019 called for better access and stewardship over land, and emphasised gender-sensitive transformative projects."

OPPN CALLS LAND DEAL FOR RAM TEMPLE 'SCAM'

Ayodhya, June 14: Amid allegations that the Ram Temple trust paid an inflated price for a plot of land here, its general secretary Champat Rai on Monday asserted that the organisation is committed to full transparency even as some local property dealers said it actually got itself a good deal.

Some local dealers claimed that the market price for the 12,000-square metre plot bought in March by the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Kshetra Trust in Ayodhya is actually three times what it paid.

In separate press briefings Sunday, Aam Aadmi Party MP Sanjay Singh and Samajwadi Party leader Pawan Pandey had said the temple trust bought the land for over Rs 18 crore from people who purchased it for just Rs 2 crore — just minutes before. Other opposition parties too lashed out at the trust over the "land scam", demanding a probe by CBI and ED.

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said the deal betrayed the faith of the devout who had donated money for the construction of the temple in Ayodhya. Sources said the trust sent Sunday night its explanation to the Union government, saying it did not pay more than the going rate.

— PTI

5 LJP MPs ditch Chirag as leader

NAYEAR AZAD
PATNA, JUNE 14

Five of six Lok Janshakti Party MPs in Lok Sabha have joined hands against their leader Chirag Paswan and elected Pashupati Kumar Paras, the youngest brother of Paswan's late father and party founder Ram Vilas Paswan, in his place, causing a big churn in Bihar politics.

Paras on Monday lauded Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar as a good leader and "vikas purush" (development-oriented man), highlighting the deep fault lines within the party as his nephew has been a strong critic of the supreme JD(U) leader. "I have not broken the party but saved it," Paras, the MP from Hajipur, told reporters.

RJD, the main opposition party in Bihar, on Monday accused the JD(U) of scripting the political crisis in the LJP to destabilise Chirag Paswan.

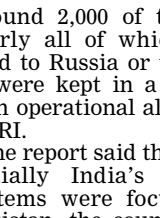
Speaking to this newspaper RJD spokesperson Shakti Yadav said, "The script to marginalise Chirag Paswan was prepared at 1, Anne Marg (Chief Minister's house) with BJP's support. The LJP contested 2020 assembly elections separately due to its differences with Nitish Kumar. But now to



destabilise Chirag Paswan, the JD(U) used one of its senior party leaders and MP to create a split in the LJP. People will not forget this and give fitting reply to the JD(U) and BJP during elections".

Sources said that JD(U) MP Rajiv Ranjan alias Lalan Singh played a significant role in the rift within the LJP. However, the JD(U) has denied such allegations. JD(U) national president R.C.P Singh while talking to reporters in Patna said that "You reap what you sow. Chirag Paswan's party was with NDA but his decisions during assembly polls caused unease within his party".

Sources in the LJP said that the main reason behind the split was the working style of Chirag Paswan. On Sunday four MPs — Veena Devi, Mahboob Ali Kaiser, Chandan Singh, and Chirag Paswan's cousin Prince Raj — backed Hajipur MP Pashupati Paras, the younger brother of late LJP founder Ram Vilas Paswan, as their leader.



continued to reduce their overall nuclear weapon inventories by dismantling retired warheads. However, despite this overall decrease, the estimated number of nuclear weapons currently deployed with operational forces increased to 3,825 from 3,720 last year.

submarines.

The report said that the remarks in recent years by Indian defence ministers have created doubts about India's commitment to the no-first-use policy. "Recent scholarship and government statements have called that policy into further question, with some analysts suggesting that 'India's NFU' [no-first-use] policy is neither a stable nor a reliable predictor of how the Indian military and political leadership might actually use nuclear weapons," said SIPRI. It said that there are sugges-

As TN unlocks, CM wants Covid protocol followed

Tasmac opened to prevent hooch: Stalin

G BABU JAYAKUMAR & D SEKAR | DC
CHENNAI, JUNE 14

The Tasmac shops were opened again as part of the relaxations to the lockdown on Monday only with a view to preventing the flow of hooch, Chief Minister M K Stalin said and warned that the liquor outlets would be closed again if the Covid-19 protocols were not followed.

Illicit liquor would ruin the State and the government wanted to avoid that, Stalin said in his address to the people, even as the new set of relaxations were brought in, and urged the people to show responsibility in stopping the spread of Coronavirus.

Since schools and colleges would have to be opened soon and public transport had to be resumed, he sought the people's cooperation and help, which alone can bring down the numbers further.

The governments' efforts had so far yielded results in bringing the pandemic under control, he said, recalling that the daily infections at one point were at 36,000 with the doctors fearing that it could touch 50,000. But today the



A tippler emerges from lockdown that lasted more than a month to buy liquor as Tasmac shops opened for business on Monday.

— N. Sampath

numbers had not only come down to 15,000 but were also declining by the day due to the various steps taken by the government, he pointed out.

Even infected persons had easy access to beds, oxygen and ventilators now as the number of calls to the Covid-19 war room asking for such assistance had also come down, Stalin said.

Since the virus spread from person to person, the lockdown was brought in to break the chain of the spread and hence people should avoid stepping out of their homes needlessly,

he said. If people adhere to the protocols properly, the spread can be stopped, he said while thanking all those who followed the restrictions brought by the government. The CM made it clear that the spread of Coronavirus had been only brought under control and not fully stopped, calling for people's cooperation in achieving it. Reacting to shopkeepers who had thanked him for the relaxations that enabled them to regain their livelihoods, Stalin said that the government had to balance between controlling the spread of

the virus on one hand and ensuring that people did not lose their livelihoods on the other.

There was also a demand from a textile shop owner for letting them open their establishments with an assurance that they too would follow the norms. Responding to that, Stalin urged people to avoid crowding and maintain social distancing.

Even in tea shops and salons, which were among the businesses that were allowed to open on Monday, the norms should be strictly adhered to, Stalin said.

AIADMK expels 15 for speaking to Sasikala

G BABU JAYAKUMAR & D SEKAR | DC
CHENNAI, JUNE 14

AIADMK factions led by top honchos O Panneerselvam and Edappadi K Palaniswami buried the hatchet on Monday as the meeting of MLAs finalised the office-bearers for the Legislative Party amicably and took a firm stand united against V K Sasikala, terming her a toxic weed, and summarily purging 15 members who had been in touch with her.

Unlike the earlier meetings at the party headquarters in Lloyds Road, Monday's gathering of MLAs displayed a rare show of unity with Panneerselvam, who was initially recalcitrant, agreeing to be the deputy leader of the Legislative Party and also not insisting on go soft of party



■ AIADMK factions close ranks, purge Sasi fans

functionaries striking telephonic conversations with Sasikala.

Though the election of Legislative Party office bearers — besides Panneerselvam, S P Velumani was elected as whip, S Ravi as deputy whip, Kadambur C Raju as treasurer, K P Anbalagan as secretary and P H Manoj Pandian as deputy secretary — was completed in a short while the meeting dragged for close to

three hours, discussing the perceived threat from Sasikala.

MLAs came out strongly against the reported move by Sasikala to strike a rapport with some disgruntled members of the AIADMK through telephonic conversations and then leak those recorded audios to the media to create an impression that the rank and file of the party wants her to take up the leadership role. ■ P3

COURT STEPS IN PAK SC STOPS DEMOLITION OF DHARAMSHALA

Pakistan's Supreme Court has ordered the Karachi administration to stop the demolition of a Hindu dharamshala and leasing out the heritage property located in the heart of the city.

■ REPORT ON PAGE 5

India to make Novavax vaccine

DC CORRESPONDENT
with agencies input
NEW DELHI, JUNE 14

Daily cases of Covid-19 in India saw a big dip on Monday with 70,421 new detections. This was the lowest after 74 days. Though such low numbers are often due to reduced testing on Sundays, the Union health ministry said a total of 14.92 lakh tests were conducted in the last 24 hours in the country. Officials said India's active caseload has dropped below the 10 lakh-mark after 66 days and daily recoveries continue to outnumber the daily new cases for more than a month now. India's Recovery Rate is 95.43 per cent at present while daily Positivity Rate stands at 4.72 per cent. However, the death toll still remains a cause of concerns as nearly 4,000 deaths were reported in one day. Novavax's Covid-19 jab has been found to be more



than 90 per cent effective, including against coronavirus variants, the vaccine maker said Monday after a large-scale US study. The jab "demonstrated 100 per cent protection against moderate and severe disease, 90.4 per cent efficacy overall," the company said in a statement, adding "the study enrolled 29,960 participants across 119 sites in the US and Mexico to evaluate efficacy, safety and immunogenicity." The Maryland-headquartered company said it intended to apply for regulatory approval by the third quarter of 2021. The company said it had begun its regulatory filing in India in association with the Serum Institute of India.

SHORT TAKES

53% Chennai children unhealthy: Survey

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 14

A city-specific annual survey conducted by Sportz Village Schools recorded 53 per cent of children in Chennai unhealthy Body Mass Index (BMI). The survey is being conducted every year to test the overall health of children.

According to the survey report, a total of 25,021 children across the city took part in the survey. 1 in 2 children are unhealthy. It shows 3 in 5 children are unhealthy in Upper Body Strength while 7 in 10 children are unhealthy for lower body strength. When it comes to abdominal strength, 3 in 10 children are unhealthy. In terms of flexibility, 2 in 5 children are unhealthy. Aerobic capacity data shows that 3 in 5 children are unhealthy and in the anaerobic capacity, 1 in 3 children are unhealthy. The report also pointed out that strict lockdowns necessitated by Covid19 pandemic have led to sedentary lifestyles.

This lifestyle has impacted the children, with online classes and minimum or no physical activity, which has taken a big toll on their physical health and fitness as well as mental health. The national level survey report, published earlier in March, revealed that 1 in 2 children do not have a healthy BMI. Moreover, the percentage of children having healthy levels of Aerobic Capacity and Core Strength during the post-pandemic period dropped drastically by 33 per cent and 10 per cent respectively.

343 suburban train services operated

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 14

With more people having to commute within the city on business, railways increased the frequency of their local services. Though metro rail did not operate, the other suburban services increased the number of trips. A total of 343 services was operated on Monday on various routes between Chennai Central and Gummidipoondi, Chennai Central and Tiruvallur, Beach station and Velachery MRTS and Beach and Tambaram routes. Earlier the railways were only running 270 trips a day in all the routes put together.

Police arrest man circulating defamatory content

From P1

He was booked under sections 153 (wantonly giving provocation with intent to cause riot), 505(1) (b) (causing fear or alarm to the public, or to any section of the public whereby any person may be induced to commit an offence against the state or against the public tranquillity) and 505(1)(c) of the Indian Penal Code. He was produced before a magistrate and remanded to judicial custody until June 28.

Kishore Swamy was arrested in the past for targeting women journalists on Twitter by posting obscenities, indulging in character assassination and instigating certain religious groups against them and for posting obscene comments on political leaders.



With all city parks opened from 6am to 9 am, people enjoy their walk at Anna Nagar Tower Park on Monday. —DC



Beauty parlours and salons opened on Monday and people availed their services. —DC

SHRC orders Koyambedu market official to pay ₹25K damages to vendor

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 14

The State Human Rights Commission (SHRC) has directed the state government to strictly instruct the Koyambedu market management committee not to authorise any private individual or office-bearers of any sangam to remove the encroachers or unauthorised vendors from the market. The officials should take strict action in this regard.

When a petition filed by G. Jaishankar, a vendor, came up for hearing on Monday, SHRC member D. Jayachandran passed the direction.

The SHRC also directed the chief administrative officer (CAO), market management committee to pay a compensation of ₹25,000 to Jaishankar for removing his vegetables from the market three

years ago.

In the petition, Jaishankar stated that he was selling coriander leaves and mint leaves for the past 25 years in Koyambedu market. On July 6, 2018, Rajasekar, president of Merchants Association of Koyambedu Market, and 20 others came and dumped the coriander leaves and mint leaves worth about Rs.10,000 in garbage. When questioned, Rajasekar replied that Jaishankar was not an authorised vendor in the market and the entire market is under the control of him and S. Rajendran, then CAO, Koyambedu wholesale market complex, now working as district revenue officer, Karur district. A criminal case was registered against Jaishankar in Koyambedu police station.

In the reply, the CAO said Jaishankar was an unauthorised vendor who encroached the land belonging to the Koyambedu market and was blocking the roads and causing nuisance to the public. As per the order of the Madras high court he had removed the encroachment and was discharging his duty.

SHRC member D. Jayachandran said Jaishankar was a poor man and was selling coriander leaves and mint leaves in the market for his livelihood. Since a criminal case was registered against him, he is suffering from mental torture. Therefore, the action of the CAO is not in accordance with law which amounts to violation of human rights. Jayachandran directed the official to pay a compensation of ₹25,000 to Jaishankar.

Chennai eyes return to near-normal life

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR & D. SEKAR | DC
CHENNAI, JUNE 14

The lifting of a slew of restrictions on Monday was akin to the opening of floodgates as people rushed out to have a whiff of the new freedom by visiting tea stalls, enjoying their morning walks in the parks, visiting the hairdresser and also picking up bottles at the Tasmac shops in 27 districts of the state.

Even in the 11 districts where most lockdown restrictions were intact – Coimbatore, The Nilgiris, Tiruppur, Erode, Salem, Karur, Namakkal, Thanjavur, Thiruvallur, Nagapattinam and Mylāduthurai – more people came out of their homes though there were no tea shops, liquor vends and parks for them.

In the rest of the state, it was chaos on many roads as more people had legitimate reasons to be out on the roads on business and otherwise and they thronged the tea shops to catch up with friends.

It looked as though life had returned to normal with the increased traffic leading to snarls on many roads, vehicle parking lots getting fully packed like a usual Monday and more people out on the streets on work.

Schools and colleges opened their administrative offices to start work on the admission process and many big shops like those selling household appliances, electronic



The queue before a Tasmac shop near Vandalur area on Monday. —DC

3,500 TASMAC SHOPS OPENED

According to Tasmac sources, 3,500 shops were opened on Monday and all of them did brisk business with the authorities ensuring uninterrupted supply of bottles by engaging the usual lorry services to deliver stock without delay.

goods and so on opened after a long gap.

Outlets of cellphone service providers and also repair shops saw long queues as those who had been putting up with conked out handsets and disrupted services rushed in to rectify the hitches. Similarly many people through the service centres of household appliances that opened after a long time.

While liquor shops opened their shutters only by 10 am, in many districts like Trichy, Theni,

Madurai, Kanyakumari and Dindigul, customers thronged the premises by 8 am to collect the tokens. The euphoria over the re-opening of the liquor vends after 34 days was palpable outside some outlets.

The most anticipated moment of the shutters go up was welcomed with traditional rituals like breaking of the coconut or 'taking an aarthi' by some men, while the others formed self-regulated serpentine queues to pick up their bottles.

To the waiting media cameras outside some vends, a few customers even performed gigs to display their excitement and happiness even as business went on at a brisk pace at the counters.

Some of the customers complained that the government had hiked the price in the interregnum and that they had to shell out even Rs 30 more for a quarter bottle.

Men of all ages and class stood in line outside the shops with the police keeping a close watch in many places. There were some who came to stand in for others like the woman who bought 5 bottles for her husband who was unable to make it to the shop due to ill health in Gudalur.

Another man was spotted in the queue with a baby in his arms as the media cameras panned the crowds outside the Tasmac shops looking for spectacular visuals.

Some shops located in villages adjoining the districts that are under stricter lockdown norms since the number of Covid-19 infected persons had not gone down in the recent past did more business with people from the 'dry' zone thronging them.

For example Pudukkottai district, where the lockdown norms have been relaxed, shares a border with Thanjavur that is still under restrictions. So one village in Pudukkottai saw people from across the district borders crossing over.

Puducherry logs 309 fresh Covid cases, seven deaths

AGENCIES
PUDUCHERRY
JUNE 14

The union territory of Puducherry continued to witness a decline in the number of fresh coronavirus cases with 309 new infections being reported on Monday as against 402 the previous day. The 309 new cases were identified at the end of the examination of 7,657 swabs during the last 24 hours ending 10 AM Monday, Director of Health S Mohan

Kumar said. The overall tally of cases in the union territory stood at 1,12,837 while total recoveries were at 1,06,199 after 686 patients recovered and were discharged during the last 24 hours. The new cases were spread over Puducherry (240), Karaikal (47), Mahe (14) and Yanam (8).

The number of fresh cases have stayed below 500 in the last three days. The number of cases stood at 4,947 with 802 in hospitals. —PTI



Heavy traffic on roads after lockdown relaxations on Monday. —DC

City gets more zero traffic violation points

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 14

The Greater Chennai Traffic Police on Monday introduced the 'zero traffic violation points' at some traffic intersections in the city. According to police sources, two traffic signal points, Madhya Kailash on OMR and Chromepet Vaishnav College junction on GST Road are being taken as zero violation points.

The traffic cops will ensure the motorists don't cross the stop

line and also follow all traffic and Covid norms, at these Zero traffic violation points.

The number of such zero violation points could be increased in the future based on the result of the response from the two points, a senior police officer attached to GCP's traffic wing said. Apart from motorists, police personnel are also asked to follow the norms of wearing good quality masks and gloves while dealing with the public, the official noted.

Huge pandal for people standing in queue for job

DC CORRESPONDENT
KUMBakonam,
JUNE 14

A shed of 2,000 sq ft has been put up before the Corona hospital at Kumbakonam to protect people from the scorching

sun when they come to take vaccines.

Erection of the pandal comes after the death of a woman, Vallikannu (42), who swooned when she was standing in the queue to get vaccinated on June 12.

Minister visits zoo to review health condition of infected lions in Vandalur

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 14

Minister of forests K. Ramachandran visited Arignar Anna Zoological Park in Vandalur on Monday to review the measures undertaken by the zoo management to prevent the spread of

covid pandemic and the health status of the lions infected with SARS CoV2.

Director of AAZP Debasis Jana, IFS briefed the minister about the various measures are undertaken by the zoo to reduce the incidence of Covid19 within the zoo premises, such as thermal scanning,

social distancing, UV irradiation of feed, complete vaccination of zoo staff against corona, sanitization of animal enclosures, mandatory PPE for staff working close to animals enclosures.

The forest minister was also given updates on the health conditions of the

lions. It was informed that among the 14 lions 3 lions are responding to the treatment very slowly. However, all endeavours are being made by the team of Zoo Veterinarians in coordination with the experts of TANUVAS to ensure that they recover.

The minister also went around the zoo along with the senior officers in an eco-friendly Battery-Operated Vehicle and reviewed the steps taken by the zoo to stop the spread of Corona. He then visited the Chimpanzee enclosure and enquired about the health of the newly

born chimpanzee baby.

He later visited the Lion Safari Gate where seven lions are infected with SARS CoV2. There he directly spoke with the veterinary doctors who are treating the lions and reviewed their present health condition.

K. Ramachandran expressed

his satisfaction with the safety measures taken by the Zoo management and asked the zoo veterinary team to take all possible steps to improve the health of the infected lions.

Along with forest minister K. Ramachandran, Principal Chief Conservator of For-

ests, Head of the Department Thiru S. Yuvaraj, IFS, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Chief Wildlife Warden Thiru Syed Muzammil Abbas IFS, and Deputy Director, Thiru Naga Sathish Gidijala, IFS were also present during the review visit.

Off-centre

Kotagiri cops trace hiding Covid+ guest workers

It was a rare hunt for the cops of Kotagiri in the Nilgiris for eight elusive migrant labourers who hid themselves in a village after testing positive for Covid-19 after the health department staff took samples from the labourers working at a private construction site at Bettati village in Kotagiri last weekend. They fled the scene, fearing they may have to undergo intensive treatment when they are shifted to the hospital.

When the local health and revenue officials arrived to shift the labourers to the hospital, they had already escaped. The officials lodged a complaint with the Kotagiri police.

The cops acted swiftly, found the hideout, caught all the fugitives and handed them over to the health and revenue officials on Monday evening. Later, they were shifted to the nearby hospital. —B. Ravichandran

Humanitarian gesture

A visually-impaired man, Kovilpillai of Chennai, is distributing groceries and other essential items to the specially-abled people in Chennai. The good Samaritan, a retired government teacher, is helping the differently abled people during the tough times of Covid-induced lockdown. Kovilpillai learnt to read and write with the help of his friends and secured a job as a school teacher. He retired recently after 23 years of service. He had helped around 5,000 people during last year's lockdown and is continuing his service this lockdown too. —Sindhiya Samuel

Philanthropic mission

In a noble gesture, the Thanjavur north district unit of DMK's youth wing decided to give ₹10,000 to each child, who has lost either his father or mother, who are earning members, due to Covid-19 in Thanjavur district. The unit gave ₹10,000 each to 43 children who lost their parents or father or mother to Corona. Kutti R. Dakshinamurthy, organiser of the unit, handed over the list of children and cheques to Chief Minister M.K. Stalin, when he visited Thanjavur recently. Stalin appreciated the efforts of the unit and handed over the cheques to the district collector for distributing them to the children through the district child welfare committee. —G. Srinivasan



Plus-1 admissions process going on in Presidency Girls Higher Secondary School in Egmore on Monday. —DC

SHORT TAKES

BADAL SEEKS NEW DATE TO APPEAR BEFORE SIT

Chandigarh, June 14: Former Punjab chief minister Parkash Singh Badal on Monday asked the SIT, probing the 2015 Kotkapura police firing incident, to reschedule the date of his appearance before it, saying he is not keeping good health.

Reiterating his intent and commitment to fully cooperate with the law and “complete faith” in the judiciary, Badal, in his communication to the SIT chairman, said that he has been advised complete bed rest for ten days by doctors.

The SIT had summoned the Shiromani Akali Dal stalwart to appear before it with “relevant records” on Wednesday at a rest house in Mohali on June 16.

Earlier in the day, a SAD spokesperson had said Badal would not appear before the special investigation team (SIT) on June 16 due to health reasons.

In his two-page response to the summons from the SIT, Badal said, “as soon as my health gets better, I will be available to join the investigation as per law, at my current place of residence (MLA flat in Chandigarh).”

TOOLKIT CASE: COURT STAYS FIR AGAINST PATRA

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, JUNE 14

The Chhattisgarh high court on Monday stayed the FIR filed against BJP national vice-president and former chief minister Raman Singh and party spokesperson Sambit Patra in a police station in Raipur last month in connection with the alleged ‘fake’ toolkit of Congress.

In its interim order, Justice Narendra Kumar Vyas stayed the investigation into the case by the police and sought a reply from the Chhattisgarh government.

The FIR was registered based on a complaint lodged by Akash Sharma, Chhattisgarh unit president of National Students Union of India (NSUI) in Raipur on May 19.

Singh had tagged the purported toolkit of Congress in a Twitter post. The toolkit was denied by Congress.

An FIR was also registered against Patra in the same case. Singh and Patra had earlier moved the Chhattisgarh high court seeking to quash the FIR.

Filing the petition in the Chhattisgarh high court, the counselor of the petitioners Vivek Sharma argued that “The basis on which the cases were registered in the toolkit issue is already in the public domain and the petitioners only commented on the existing digital records. So there does not remain any reason against them any probe or legal proceedings”

MAHA ASSURES NOT TO ARREST PARAM BIR

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC MUMBAI, JUNE 14

The government of Maharashtra on Monday once again assured the Bombay High Court that it will not take any coercive action against former Mumbai police chief Param Bir Singh till June 22, in the case registered against him under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act.

Senior counsel Darius Khambata, representing the Maharashtra government, told the high court that his previous statement on protecting the senior IPS officer from any “coercive action” in the case will be extended till June 22. He told the court that the police will not arrest Singh till this date.

Following Khambata’s statement, a bench of Justices P.B. Varale and S.P. Tavade adjourned the hearing till June 22 on the pleas filed by Singh seeking quashing of an FIR registered against him by the Thane Police under the Atrocities Act and challenging preliminary inquiries initiated against him by the state government.

Police inspector Bhimrao Ghadge has filed a complaint against Singh under the Atrocities Act, in April this year when he was attached to the Akola police station. The Akola police had registered a Zero FIR (mode of lodging FIR in any police station irrespective of the offence committed in that area or any other area) and it was later transferred to the Thane police for investigation.



Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal offers prayers at Lord Krishna temple during his visit ahead of the Gujarat 2022 Assembly elections, in Ahmedabad on Monday.

— PTI

Roy likely to get key post in Trinamul & RS seat too

May soon be appointed as the national vice president of the Trinamul

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, JUNE 14

Close on the heels of his return to Trinamul Congress from BJP, Krishnanagar North MLA Mukul Roy is set to get a double promotion — one in the party and another in parliament — from his party supremo and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee for his political acumen.

According to sources, Roy, who has not got any post since his comeback, is expected to be appointed as the national vice presi-

dent of the TMC, a post he held in the BJP till four days ago, in view of his countrywide network and the party’s ambition to expand in other states and become a formidable player in the national politics ahead of the Lok Sabha elections in 2024.

On June 11, when Roy rejoined the TMC, Banerjee indicated that he would be given an equivalent post to what he had in the BJP.

In November 2017 when he had quit the TMC, his post was national general secretary in the party

then. TMC insiders revealed that Roy, who held a one-to-one meeting with the CM’s MP nephew and newly appointed national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee on Sunday, would start working at the national level once his appointment to the new post is done.

Later, the former railway minister is likely to be fielded by the TMC as it’s candidate in one of the two Rajya Sabha seats which fell vacant after Dinesh Trivedi’s resignation as an Upper House

MP in February and switch to the BJP and election of Manas Bhuniya as an MLA in the West Bengal Assembly polls.

In that case, Roy, who earlier served as a Rajya Sabha MP also, would have to resign as an MLA which he has become for the first time. The BJP is however planning to target him legally over his defection to the TMC as a legislator. Roy said that his party would take a decision about making him a candidate for the Rajya Sabha.

A senior TMC leader

pointed out on anonymity that the double promotion to Roy would also send a signal to the BJP about how much importance it gives to an efficient functionary like him with rewards.

When Roy was in the BJP, he apparently desired to be a Rajya Sabha member and get a cabinet berth also apart from holding a party post. But his wish was ignored then. For the second Rajya Sabha seat, the TMC has plans to make Yashwant Sinha it’s candidate, sources claimed.

NITI REPORT ON GENDER EQUALITY PUTS C’GARH ON TOP

New Delhi, June 14: Chhattisgarh has been declared the top-performing state in India on the gender equality parameter of the Sustainable Development Goals, according to the NITI Aayog’s SDG India Index report 2020-21.

The index, developed in collaboration with the UN in India, measures the progress at the national and sub-national level.

It tracks the progress of all states and Union Territories on 115 indicators aligned with the National Indicator Framework (NIF) of the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.

Last year, Chhattisgarh scored 43 points on the gender quality parameter and was ranked seventh in India. This year, it scored 61 and topped the chart.

The report said the improvement in Chhattisgarh ranking was seen due to a balanced sex ratio at birth, improvement in equal gender pay over the years which has helped it surpass past records, lower crime rate against women, lower domestic violence against, among others.

Other SDG parameters where Chhattisgarh ranked in the top 10 (2020-21) are Clean water and Sanitation, Decent work and Economic Growth and Reduced Inequality.

The Index for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) evaluates progress of states and union territories on social, economic and environmental parameters.

Overall, Kerala retained the top rank in NITI Aayog’s Sustainable Development Goals Index 2020-21, while Bihar was adjudged the worst-performer.

— PTI

Scribe who took on liquor mafia ‘killed in accident’

Pratapgarh (UP), June 14: The Uttar Pradesh Police on Monday registered a case of murder after a journalist of a private news channel, who had recently reported on the liquor mafia, died here in what appeared to be a road accident.

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav demanded a high-level inquiry into the death, terming it “mysterious”, while West Bengal Chief Minister and TMC leader Mamata Banerjee expressed shock over the demise of the ABP journalist, saying “we are unable to save lives who are working tirelessly towards unfolding the truth”.

“Sulabh Srivastava had gone for news coverage to the Kotwali Lalgaanj area on Sunday and was returning home late in the night. He was found seriously injured near the Sukhpal Nagar brick kiln and was taken to the district hospital, where doctors declared him dead,” Superintendent of Police



Akhilesh Yadav

Akash Tomar told reporters.

His motorcycle rammed into a pole near the brick kiln under the Kotwali police station area in Pratapgarh district, police said.

The 42-year-old reporter had recently run a news story against the liquor mafia, and had on June 12 written a letter to the Prayagraj additional director general of police seeking security.

His wife, Renuka Srivastava, in her police complaint said her husband was being threatened for doing a story against the liquor mafia and the Prayagraj additional director general of

police was informed about it in writing but no effective action was taken.

“Because of this, unknown mafia elements murdered my husband on Sunday night while he was returning from Lalgaanj after news coverage,” she said in her complaint.

The murder case, registered on the basis of the complaint, is against unknown persons and investigations have started, the superintendent of police said, adding that the last rites were performed in Allahabad after postmortem.

Samajwadi Party president Yadav in a tweet in Hindi said, “The mysterious death of a TV reporter in an alleged accident is extremely sad.”

“The BJP government in this case should constitute a high-level probe, and tell the family members and the public that despite the apprehension of murder by the liquor mafia expressed by the reporter, why he was not provided security”.

— PTI

KERALA | NEWSLETTER

Reports of huge loot of forest wealth along Western Ghats surface

Trouble mounts for new Pinarayi govt

PREM CHANDRAN KOCHI, JUNE 14

The shine of the highly trumpeted ‘second coming’ of the Pinarayi Vijayan-led Left Democratic Front (LDF) government in Kerala is lost within weeks of its assumption of power, following expose of a massive loot of forest and other governmental wealth along the fabled Western Ghats and beyond.

A re-energised Congress and the United Democratic Front (UDF) leads energetically took up a visual media report of the large-scale cutting down of highly priced

trees like Veeti and Teak from across districts in the western sector in recent months. The loot, in which an individual known to have links with Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan stood in the front, is suspected to be of the order of over ₹100 crore.

The Kerala high court is seized of the matter though there is pessimism as to how this case will be taken to its logical conclusion.

The loot was facilitated by a state government order issued last year in the backdrop of the Covid-induced paralysis of life. Months later, the GO was withdrawn. The suspected plan was to provide a win-

dow of opportunity to facilitate the loot with strong political backing. Communist parties, the CPIM and the CPI, are largely infested with corrupt elements as they handled power in the state for long years, meaning half of the past 70 years.

The CPI ministers handled the revenue and forest departments when the massive felling of prized trees from forest and poramboke lands took place.

The perceived weak organisational strength of the Congress, its ageing leadership that has now been changed, as also substantial support from Muslim and Christian

minorities to ably checkmate the forays of the BJP-RSS in the state helped the LDF return to power this time. Added to this was the free food kits distribution by the first Pinarayi-led government.

Some officials have been suspended and an investigation ordered by the state government into the loot of forest and revenue wealth in a highly coordinated and mischievous manner by gangs with help from top government entities. There are strict rules guiding removal of trees on the Western Ghats, but the forest flying squads were forced by governmental entities to look the other way.

AAP will contest all seats in 2022 Gujarat elections

Ahmedabad, June 14: The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) will contest all seats in Gujarat in the 2022 Assembly polls, the party’s national convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said here on Monday as he visited a Vaishnavite temple in the city and blamed the ruling BJP and opposition Congress for the “plight” of people but avoided a direct attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union home minister Amit Shah on their home turf.

Addressing a press conference on the campus of the Vallabh Sadan temple after taking darshan of the deity, Kejriwal, who was on a one-day visit to the city, said his party

was a credible alternative to the BJP and the Congress in Gujarat who he said had a tacit alliance between them.

“The AAP will contest each and every seat in the 2022 Gujarat Assembly elections. The AAP is a credible alternative to the BJP and Congress. Gujarat will change soon,” he said.

The Gujarat House has 182 seats. “Gujarat is suffering because of this friendship and alliance between the BJP and the Congress. The BJP ruled this state for the last 27 years. I heard people saying that Congress is in the pocket of the BJP. Both the BJP and Congress are the same. This must stop,” he said.

L’DWEEP OBSERVES BLACK DAY AS KHODA RETURNS TO ISLAND

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JUNE 14

Lakshadweep administrator Praful Khoda Patel skipped Kochi airport to reach Lakshadweep on Monday to avoid protests from people in Kerala.

Congress MPs, MLA and other elected representatives had gathered at the Kochi airport to submit memorandum to Khoda against the controversial decisions taken by him in island. However, Patel went to Kavaratti straight from from Goa.

Meanwhile, people in Lakshadweep observed black day against Patel’s arrival. People hoisted black flags atop their houses and raised slogans against the administrator. The Lakshadweep police asked people to remove the black flags. The cops also video-graphed and took pictures of houses that displayed black flags.

“He may have evaded us

but Khoda will face strong protests from people of Lakshadweep,” said Congress MP T.N. Prathapan in Kochi.

Khoda who is a former minister of state for home Gujarat and a close confidante of Prime Minister Narendra Modi returned to the island almost a month after the protests began over his controversial decisions.

Reacting to the ongoing protests he told media that the campaign against him was being organised by people based in Kerala.

Most political parties in the island including CPM, Congress, prominent people have termed many of the decisions as part of the BJP led Central government’s agenda to safronise the island. A section of BJP leaders of Lakshadweep have also opposed these decisions.

The administrator, however, claimed that he aimed at the fast paced development of the island.

BJYM LEADER LET OFF WITH FINE FOR FLOUTING COVID NORMS

DC CORRESPONDENT BHOPAL, JUNE 14

A Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha (BJYM) leader in a Madhya Pradesh town was let off with a mere fine of ₹10,000 without being booked under Epidemic Diseases Act for flouting Covid norms by the local administration, inviting criticism from Congress.

Katni district BJYM president Mridul Dwivedy was penalised ₹10,000 by the local tahsildar for celebrating his birthday in public by throwing Covid norms to wind.

The local administration swung into action when a video showing him celebrating his birthday near a temple in district headquarters of Katni along with his supporters surfaced and imposed the fine on him.

His supporters who attended the birthday bash were sent to home quarantine for a week.

In the video clip, the BJYM leader was seen cutting the birthday cake and celebrating the occasion along with his supporters who were seen without masks.

The BJYM leader has escaped provisions of Epidemic Diseases Act, violation of which is a punishable offence, for being leader of ruling BJP. MP Pradesh Congress Committee vice-president and former minister Raja Pateria alleged.

Such leniency by the local administration on the ruling party leader would hit the ongoing battle against the pandemic, he said.

“A person can be booked under section 188 IPC for causing danger to human beings, under Epidemic Diseases Act and is liable for six months in jail and a fine of ₹1000”, noted lawyer in Gwalior bench of MP high court Pawan Raghuvamsi said.

SHORT TAKES

MAN, 25, DIES
AFTER DOWNTOWN
AUSTIN SHOOTING

Austin (US), June 14: A man has died from his injuries following a mass shooting on a crowded downtown Austin street that left more than a dozen people injured, police said Sunday.

Douglas John Kantor, 25, who was hospitalised with critical gunshot wounds following the early Saturday morning shooting, died Sunday at 12:01 pm, the Austin Police Department said in a news release that also was confirmed by Lt Brian Moon. Interim Police Chief Joseph Chacon said the shooting happened around 1:30 am Saturday on a street packed with bars and barricaded off from vehicle traffic. He said investigators believe the shooting began as a dispute between two parties.

PAK COPS DENIED
FREE BURGERS.
DETAIN 19 STAFF

Lahore, June 14: A group of police officers in Pakistan flipped out when a takeaway joint refused to hand over free burgers, detaining all 19 staff at the branch.

Workers at the trendy chain Johnny & Jugnu in the eastern city of Lahore were rounded up and held for seven hours overnight on Saturday, leaving behind unattended kitchens and hungry customers.

"This is not the first time something like this has happened with our kitchen teams at our restaurant, but we want to make sure this is the last," the fast food chain said in a statement published on social media. It started when staff at the restaurant refused a "request from a very high profile special guest".

Restaurant staff said that most of those arrested were young people.

B'DESH ACTRESS
CRIES RAPE, ASKS
PM FOR JUSTICE

Dhaka, June 14: Prominent Bangladeshi film actress Shamsunnahar Smriti, popularly known as Pori Moni, has sought justice from Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in a Facebook post alleging that a businessman attempted to rape and murder her at a club here.

After making the allegations in a Facebook post without naming the suspect on Sunday, she held a media briefing later in the night and accused businessmen Nasir U. Mahmood, entertainment and cultural affairs secretary of Dhaka Boat Club, of assaulting her; *bdnews24* reported.

The 28-year-old actress alleged that Nasir assaulted her at the club in Dhaka's Uttara four days ago. The businessman could not be reached immediately for comments, the news website said. A founding member of the Dhaka Boat Club, Nasir is involved with real estate business.

TWO AMERICANS
STAND TRIAL IN
GHOSN'S ESCAPE

Tokyo, June 14: Two Americans suspected of helping former Nissan chairman Carlos Ghosn flee Japan while he was out on bail go on trial Monday in Tokyo.

Michael Taylor, a former Green Beret, and his son Peter Taylor are suspected in the Houdini-like operation where Ghosn hid in a box for music equipment that was loaded onto a private jet that flew him to Lebanon, via Turkey in December 2019. Unlike the US, Lebanon has no extradition treaty with Japan.

Ghosn has French, Lebanese and Brazilian citizenship. The Taylors were arrested in Massachusetts in May last year and extradited in March on charges of helping a criminal. The authorities say Ghosn hired the Taylors for at least \$1.3 million.

Mystery of war criminal Tojo's remains solved

Tokyo, June 14: Until recently, the location of executed wartime Japanese Prime Minister Hideki Tojo's remains was one of World War II's biggest mysteries in the nation he once led. Now, a Japanese university professor has revealed declassified US military documents that appear to hold the answer.

The documents show the cremated ashes of Tojo, one of the masterminds of the Pearl Harbor attack, were scattered from a US Army aircraft over the Pacific Ocean about 30 miles (50 kilometres) east of Yokohama, Japan's second-

largest city, south of Tokyo. It was a tension-filled, highly secretive mission, with American officials apparently taking extreme steps meant to keep Tojo's remains, and those of six others executed with him, away from ultra-nationalists looking to glorify them as martyrs.

The seven were hanged for war crimes just before Christmas in 1948, three years after Japan's defeat.

The discovery brings partial closure to a painful chapter of Japanese history that still plays out today, as conservative Japanese politicians attempt to white-

wash history, leading to friction with wartime victims, especially China and South Korea.

After years spent verifying and checking details and evaluating the significance of what he'd found, Nihon University Professor Hiroaki Takazawa publicly released the clues to the remains' location last week. He came across the declassified documents in 2018 at the US National Archives in Washington.

It's believed to be the first time official documents showing the handling of the seven war criminals' remains were made public,

according to Japan's National Institute for Defence Studies and the Japan Center for Asian Historical Records.

Hidetoshi Tojo, the leader's great-grandson, told *The Associated Press* that the absence of the remains has long been a humiliation for the bereaved families, but he's relieved the information has come to light. "If his remains were at least scattered in Japanese territorial waters ... I think he was still somewhat fortunate," Tojo said.

"I want to invite my friends and lay flowers to pay tribute to him" if further

details about the remains' location becomes available. Hideki Tojo, prime minister during much of World War II, is a complicated figure, revered by some conservatives as a patriot but loathed by many in the West for prolonging the war, which ended only after the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the United States. About a month after Aug. 15, 1945, when then-Empress or Hirohito announced Japan's defeat to a stunned nation, Tojo shot himself in a failed suicide attempt as he was about to be arrested at his modest Tokyo home. — *AP*

Will better India ties, says Bennett

Israeli foreign minister Yair Lapid says he hopes to welcome PM Modi to Israel soon



Naftali Bennett

upgradation of diplomatic ties next year.

"Thank you Mr. Prime Minister @narendramodi, I look forward to working with you to further develop the unique and warm relations between our two democracies," Bennett tweeted from his official handle. Bennett took oath of office on Sunday after the Knesset (Parliament) elected him as the 13th Prime Minister of Israel.

Alternate Prime Minister Yair Lapid also said that Israel's new government will work to "advance strategic relations" with India. "I look forward to working together to advance the strategic relations between our countries and hope to welcome you to Israel soon," Lapid tweeted on Monday in response to a congratulatory message from External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar.

Jaishankar earlier in a tweet congratulated his new Israeli counterpart. "Congratulate APM & FM @yairlapid of Israel on his appointment. Look forward to working closely together to further advance our multifaceted strategic partnership," Jaishankar wrote. Lapid, the head of the Yesh Atid party, would take over premiership in September 2023 under a

power-sharing deal with Bennett, serving for two years till the end of the term. In his tweets, Modi also conveyed his "profound gratitude" to Netanyahu, whose long tenure as Israeli prime minister ended on Sunday.

Modi thanked Netanyahu for his "personal attention" to India-Israel strategic partnership. "As you complete your successful tenure as the Prime Minister of the State of Israel, I convey my profound gratitude for your leadership and personal attention to India-Israel strategic partnership @netanyahu," Modi tweeted.

The personal chemistry between the two leaders has often been talked about in the Israeli media and Prime Minister Modi got a royal welcome during his historic trip to the Jewish state in July 2017. — *PTI*

Bibi ouster ends worst conflict, says Palestine

Ramallah, June 14: Benjamin Netanyahu's ouster as prime minister of Israel closes the chapter on one of the "worst periods" of Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Palestinian prime minister Mohammed Shtayyeh said on Monday.

"The departure of the Israeli ex-prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu after 12 years in power marks the end of one of the worst periods in the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict," Shtayyeh said ahead of the Palestinian Authority's weekly cabinet meeting.

But Shtayyeh also said he was under no illusions about the new government

or its likelihood of advancing a peace agreement with the Palestinians.

"We do not see this new government as any less bad than the previous one, and we condemn the announcements of the new Prime Minister Naftali Bennett in support of Israeli settlements," the Palestinian premier said, referring to Israeli construction activity in the occupied West Bank.

"The new government has no future if it does not take into consideration the future of the Palestinian people and their legitimate rights," Shtayyeh added. — *AFP*

US checking leak at China N-plant

Beijing, June 14: The US government is assessing a report of a leak at a Chinese nuclear power plant, after a French company that partly owns and helps to operate it warned of an "imminent radiological threat", a media report said on Monday.

The warning included an accusation that the Chinese safety authority was raising the acceptable limits for radiation detection outside the Taishan Nuclear Power Plant in Guangdong province in order to avoid having to shut it down, the *CNN* quoted a letter from the French company to the US Department of Energy. There is no reaction yet in Beijing by the Chinese government or officials on this report, it said. The media

report said despite the alarming notification from Framatome, the French company, the Biden administration believes the facility is not yet at a "crisis level".

While US officials have deemed the situation does not currently pose a severe safety threat to workers at the plant or Chinese public, it is unusual that a foreign company would unilaterally reach out to the American government for help when its Chinese state-owned partner is yet to acknowledge a problem exists.

The scenario could put the US in a complicated situation should the leak continue or become more severe without being fixed, the report said. — *PTI*

Suu Kyi on trial but critics say charges bogus

Bangkok, June 14: Myanmar's ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi was set to go on trial Monday on charges that many observers have criticised as attempt by the military junta that deposed her to delegitimise her democratic election and cripple her political future.

Suu Kyi's prosecution poses the greatest challenge for the 75-year-old and her National League for Democracy party since

February's military coup, which prevented them from taking office for a second five-year term following last year's landslide election victory. Human Rights Watch charged that the allegations being heard in a special court in the capital, Naypyitaw, are "bogus and politically motivated" with the intention of nullifying the victory and preventing Suu Kyi from running for office again. — *AP*



Luxury yachts are moored at the Dubai Marina Beach in the Gulf emirate. Charter companies said they have seen an increased interest in yachting after Coronavirus measures eased, especially among those who want to spend time with friends and family.

— *AFP*

UK curbs may lift by July 19 over Delta variant case spike

London, June 14: UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson is expected to announce a four-week delay to an end to all legal lockdown restrictions in the country when he makes a statement later on Monday in relation to so-called "Freedom Day", which was set for June 21.

The last and fourth stage of the lockdown roadmap is now expected around July 19 instead amid a worrying spike in cases of the Delta variant, which experts fear will result in greater hospitalisations in the coming weeks. On Sunday, the UK recorded 7,490 new cases of Covid-19 and eight deaths, with the seven-day average for cases up 49 per cent compared with the seven days before. Scientists and health officials have called for a delay in lifting all social distance norms in order to allow the vaccination programme to gain further ground, with second doses for the older age groups and first doses for the younger population cohorts of over-25s now eligible for jabs.

"It is one last heave. It is a straight race between the vaccine and the virus," a senior government source was quoted as saying after Johnson met his Cabinet ministers and scientific advisers to assess the latest data. Johnson is

Novavax shot 90% effective

Washington, June 14: Vaccine maker Novavax said Monday its shot was highly effective against Covid-19 and also protected against variants in a large, late-stage study in the US and Mexico.

The vaccine was about 90 per cent effective overall and preliminary data showed it was safe, the company said. While demand for Covid-19 shots in the US has dropped off dramatically, the need for more vaccines around the world remains critical.

The Novavax vaccine, which is easy to store and transport, is expected to play an important role in boosting vaccine supplies in the developing world. That help is still months

away, however.

The company says it plans to seek authorisation for the shots in the US, Europe and elsewhere by the end of September and be able to produce up to 100 million doses a month by then. "Many of our first doses will go to ... low- and middle-income countries, and that was the goal to begin with," Novavax Chief Executive Stanley Erck told *The Associated Press*. While more than half of the US population has had at least one Covid-19 vaccine dose, less than one percent of people in the developing world have had one shot, according to Our World In Data. — *AP*

expected to blame the delay on the third wave of Covid-19 infections and say it will allow millions of more people to be vaccinated and more to receive a second jab by the end of July. As well as a delay in lifting restrictions to all-own scientists more time to monitor the Delta variant,

the UK Prime Minister is also likely to announce a drive to accelerate the vaccination programme. The extension will be put to a House of Commons vote this month and could trigger a backbench rebellion from Johnson's own Conservative Party MPs. — *PTI*

NEPAL PLANT TO CUT DOWN INDIA OXYGEN IMPORT

Kathmandu, June 14: Nepal's Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli on Monday virtually laid the foundation stone of Nepal's first-ever liquefied oxygen plant in the Lumbini Province which will help cater to growing domestic demand and reduce oxygen imported from India, amidst the second wave of Covid-19 pandemic.

The plant is being set up at Simarhawa of Rupandehi district in the province. The country has been facing a shortage of oxygen and oxygen cylinders as the second wave of Covid-19 hit Nepal, Prime Minister Oli noted while laying the foundation stone from his official residence Baluwatar. It was an unprecedented event of happiness at a time when the country had been reeling under an acute crisis of oxygen, he noted.

The government was compelled to import oxygen and other essential medical equipment, he said. "Later, the government thought that it would be appropriate to set up an oxygen plant on its own," he added. — *PTI*

NORTHERN RAILWAY
CORRIGENDUM

Ref :- 01 / Tender Notice No. 10/2021-22 Dated 14.05.2021 S.N. 02. 02.) Tender No. 11203802 Due on 11.06.2021.

In reference to the above tender, the (due date has been extended from 11.06.2021 to 28.06.2021) (description / specification has been revised) All other terms and conditions remain unchanged.

The corrigendum has been published on website www.ireps.gov.in. 1302/2021

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TAMILNADU MINERALS LIMITED

(An Undertaking of Government of Tamil Nadu)
No.31, Kamarajar Salai, Chepauk, Chennai - 600 005. Phone No.044-29862018 / 28511972

NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER

Only through - E-Tendering mode
E-Tendering portal: <https://tenders.gov.in>

Online tenders are invited in two cover systems for the following tender

1. Tender No.&date	2768/ST2021 dated: 25.05.2021
2. Description of the item	Differential Global positioning system (DGPS) Survey Equipment
3. Tender ID	2021_TNMIN_202662_1
4. Publishing date	15.06.2021
5. Bid document download/ sale start date	15.06.2021 from 10.00 hrs.
6. Bid submission start date	15.06.2021 from 10.00 hrs.
7. Bid submission end date	30.06.2021 from 16.00 hrs.
8. Last date & time of submission of original demand draft for tender form fee, EMD, other documents	01.07.2021 from 14.00 hrs.
9. Bid opening date (Technical Bid)	01.07.2021 from 16.00 hrs.
10. Bid opening date (Financial Bid)	Will be intimated later on through Tamil Nadu e-portal.
11. Tender fee	Rs.1000/- (Non refundable)
12. EMD	Rs.17,700/- (Rupees Seventeen thousand seven hundred only)

DIPR/1755/TENDER/2021 GENERAL MANAGER (FINANCE)

NORTHERN RAILWAY
E-TENDERING

OPEN TENDER NOTICE No. NIT- 06/UMB-2021-22 DATED 14.06.2021

Open tenders through E-tendering are invited by Sr. Divisional Engineer/Coordination, Northern Railway, Ambala from the willing contractors for following work upto 15.00 hrs. on the date of closing shown against the work and will be opened thereafter.

S. No.	Name of work	Approx. Cost (Rs.)	Period of Completion	Date of closing & opening
1.	Annual repair, white washing, C/washing and painting to staff quarters, Service buildings & RPSF premises in Railway colony for the period ending 30.06.2022 in the section of SSE/W/Jagadhari workshop under ADEN/Jagadhari workshop under SR. DEN-II/UMB.	7797975	12 Month	07.07.2021
2.	Annual repairs, white washing and Painting to staff Qrs. and Service Building From Solan (excluding) to Shimla under ZONE C (Approachable & Non Approachable locations) & ZONE D (Shimla) on KLK-SML section for the Period Ending 30.06.2022 in the section of SSE/W/Shimla Under ADEN/Shimla.	9388733	12 Month	07.07.2021
3.	Annual repairs, white washing and Painting to staff Qrs. and Service Building at KALKa under ZONE-A, from Kalka (ex. Kalka) to Solan (incl.) on KLK-SML. Sec. under ZONE-B (App. & Non Approachable locations) for the Period Ending 30.06.2022 in the section of SSE/W/KLK Under ADEN/ Shimla.	10780277	12 Month	07.07.2021
4.	Annual repair, white washing, C/washing and painting to staff quarters & service buildings under Zone Rajpura for the period ending 30.06.2022 in the section of SSE/W/Rajpura under ADEN/Rajpura.	10578579	12 Month	07.07.2021
5.	Rebuilding of Bridge No. 88 at Km. 459-11 between DBN-NBA section in the section of ADEN/PTA.	4297042	06 Month	07.07.2021
6.	Annual repair, white washing and painting of staff quarters & service buildings for the period ending 30.06.2022 under zone no. 3 from DUJ (excl.) to JHL (excl.) and 4 from JHL (excl.) to HSR (excl.) in the section of SSE (W) SAG under ADEN/PTA.	3159018	12 Month	07.07.2021
7.	GIS Mapping of Indian Railways' off track Assets using Hand Held devices in the section of ADEN/BTI, ADEN/PTA, ADEN/SIR & ADEN/RPJ over Ambala Division.	1689594	06 Month	07.07.2021
8.	Replacement of failed Tubewell No. 7 in Railway Colony Bathinda in the section of SR. DEN-II/UMB.	2301836	03 Month	07.07.2021
9.	(i) Bathinda Cantt. - Katar Singh Wala - TRR (P) 4.668 Km. (P) in the section of SSE/P. Way/BTI under ADEN/BTI. (ii) Assistance to welding team for AT welds in the section of SR. DEN-II/UMB. (iii) TRR (P) of 1.614 Km. on Delhi-Bathinda-Firozpur Cantt. section (Km. 295.56 to 296.34 on DLI-BTI & Km. 297.407 to 298.841 on BTI-SGNR section).	8110660	12 Month	07.07.2021

NOTE:
1. Tenderers are required to upload scanned copies of all related eligibility documents including PAN/TIN/GST as per conditions.
2. Tenderers should have Class-III Digital Signature Certificate to participate in E-Tendering of works tenders.
3. For detail, please log on IREPS website www.ireps.gov.in
4. GST will be levied as per GST Act. 2017.

1293/21

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

DECCAN Chronicle

15 JUNE 2021

A year after Galwan, a lot of questions still remain

Exactly a year ago, on June 15-16, 2020, in eastern Ladakh's Galwan Valley area, soldiers of China's People's Liberation Army attacked a body of Indian soldiers of 16 Bihar Regiment and other units which had gone there to ensure the Chinese had adhered to the agreement reached on June 6 at a meeting of corps commanders from the two sides to facilitate the disengagement of forces at friction points.

The Chinese had to dismantle their camp in parts of the Galwan riverbed near the point where this river meets the Shyok. In an ambush late at night, the Chinese soldiers used iron rods and heavy clubs with steel spikes embedded in them. Twenty Indians, including their commanding officer, a Colonel, were killed. They fought back with bare hands but pushed the Chinese back that night, although the PLA would return later with China claiming it always had "sovereignty" over the Galwan area, which is an outlandish distortion of the facts.

June 15 is an anniversary of bravery and betrayal. To this may be added national humiliation, for Prime Minister Narendra Modi told Opposition parties on June 19 last year that the Chinese "had not intruded, were not intruding, and were not in occupation" of Indian territory." This is at variance with the ground situation.

The Indian troops were carrying firearms as per protocol, but did not use them at Galwan, again as per border stabilisation protocols in force since 1987 and aimed to be confidence-building measures on the Line of Actual Control, the perceived boundary line. Such protocols were created to ensure "peace and tranquillity" on the border so that bilateral relations could continue unmolested in other areas. It is this process which has re-ceived a jolt from which it is yet to recover.

Acknowledging this at a public platform last month, external affairs minister S. Jaishankar noted that India-China relations were at a "crossroads". He also observed that the ongoing relationship had been violated. The Chinese military is yet to vacate the areas where it intruded April 2020 onward. These add up to thousands of square kilometres in strategic regions, including areas where Chinese and Pakistani troops can potentially come together against India.

Numerous rounds of technical meetings between military officials, in some of which diplomats were included, have only produced homilies from China's side. Repeated Indian requests to the Chinese government to disengage, de-escalate and normalise ties have fallen on deaf ears. Beijing seeks a return to normal without first vacating the encroached Indian territories. How matters go from here is not clear.

Strangely enough, the country's military brass has not been above parroting the damaging narrative that no encroachments have occurred, and that India will "not give away an inch". Evidently, they feel protected by the PM's on-record June 19, 2020, observation, of which Beijing has taken full advantage. Baffled Indians naturally ask what the boundary negotiations are then all about. They also wonder about the relevance of the external affairs minister's observations. Is the government speaking to its own people in different voices?

In all areas where China has violated the LAC, its troops are in Ladakh well to the west of the 1960 Chinese claim line, whose map coordinates were given to India by the Chinese four decades ago. But the government seems afraid to point this out to Beijing. India did not accept the claim line and adhered to its historical claim to Aksai Chin.

Undisputed champ of Grand Slams

No one in 52 years has won the four tennis Grand Slams multiple times since Rod Laver did it just after tennis was thrown open, and Roy Emerson. He was returned two sets and seemingly out of the contest when Novak Djokovic returned from a toilet break re-energised like a cellphone coming to life after a recharge and wore down his young opponent, Stefanos Tsitsipas, the most talented of the emerging brigade, to win his 19th Grand Slam.

The Serb was in another fluctuating four-hour battle within 48 hours of having jousted with Rafael Nadal in the greatest duel of the era that contained more shades of art than the raw power of modern tennis. He emerged winner against a player with an unsurpassable record on the red shale of Roland Garros. So fiercely locked in their gladiatorial contest were they that the tennis authorities, prompted by President Emmanuel Macron, overruled curfew rules to allow the crowd to stay to the end on the night of the semi-final.

Djokovic may not win popularity contests against contemporary greats Roger Federer and Nadal, both of whom have just one more Grand Slam title than his 19. But, when it comes to tennis on the varied surfaces of the four Grand Slams, he has a record — nine Australian, two French, five Wimbledon and three US Opens — that is superior to that of the legends, of whom Federer has only one French Open win and Nadal a solitary Australian Open title among 20 Grand Slams.

Djokovic's athleticism is backed up by an array of strokes, including laser-like crosscourt backhands. Such weapons from his armoury come with uncanny anticipation and decisiveness in volleys and drop shots at extreme angles played with amazingly deft touch. Power and subtlety flow from his racket in equal measure and to metronomic accuracy in trading shots from the baseline. Tennis has been known to lament the seeming inability of the younger generation to take over from the three musketeers who are in their 30s but Tsitsipas appears ready to challenge the kings.

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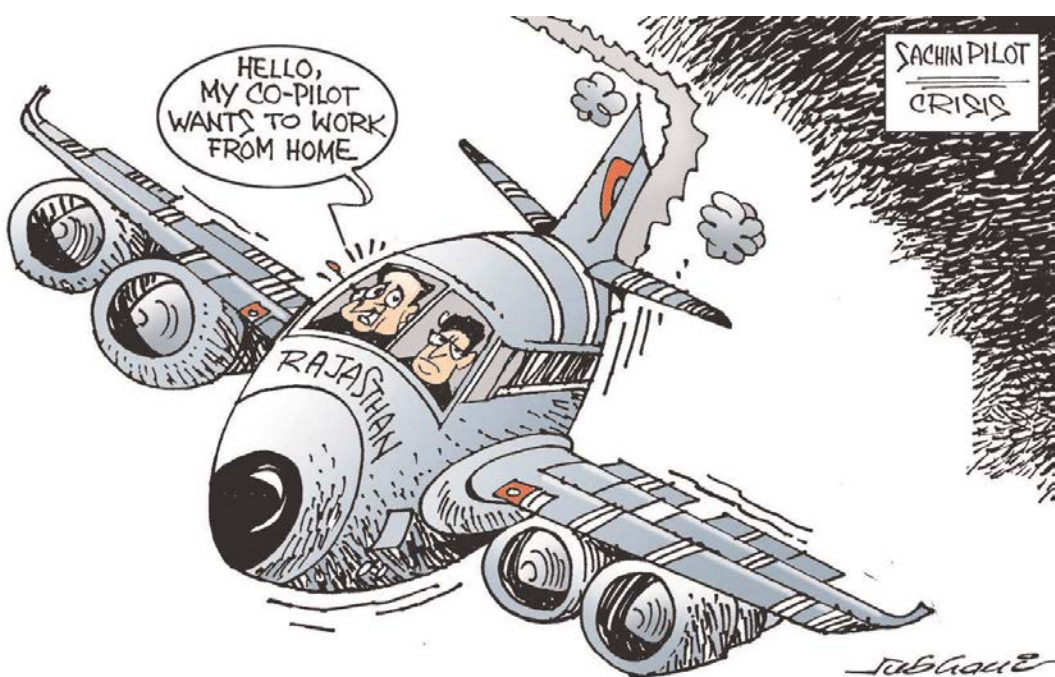
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Subhani



Ladakh standoff: Can Galwan occur again?



Syed Ata Hasnain

What happened in the Galwan Valley on June 15 last year cannot be easily forgotten. Twenty Indian soldiers led by the valiant Col. Santosh Babu, MVC (Posthumous), commanding officer of 16 Bihar, were killed in action. A deceptive enemy who hid behind the veil of 45 years of trust turned upon these unsuspecting soldiers who were on a mission to verify what had been agreed by their senior commanders just 10 days ago.

Perhaps nowhere in the world has occurred an incident in such bad taste and against all ethics of soldiering. You can take counteraction against adversary soldiers who threaten you or deceive you but targeting those on a verification mission after an agreement was something new in the world of military ethics. The PLA had transgressed to ostensibly dominate the Shyok-DBO Road. Not known to be followers of any rule-based order, the PLA took its time in disengaging from the transgression. When pressured to do so, it chose to get aggressive and turned upon those who were verifying the vacation, with weapons which were straight from the Stone Age, to pulverise, shred and tear human flesh. The PLA came prepared with these weapons and perceived that their employment could be projected as non-lethal in today's age.

What was clear from the incident was the fact that the Indian Army worked on a principle of trust. Forty-five years without loss of life at the Sino-Indian border, 22 meetings to resolve the border through a civilised format, dignified campaign at the highest political level to progress economic and people-to-people relations and regular delegation visits to each other's

military establishments, should count for a justified level of trust. Professional armies do not work on assumptions, but yet an element of human compulsion exists, forcing all implausible contingencies out of the consideration and settling for those within the realm of perceptual reason. Even more important, Galwan exemplified camaraderie and team spirit of an extreme kind when soldiers of different units, arms and services all joined the fight for the sake of their comrades, their countrymen and the honour of their nation.

Much water has already flown down the Shyok River through 2020-21, since Galwan, with a lot happening at the Line of Actual Control. From partial mobilisation to staying put in freezing winter conditions with rustic habitats, lifting and transporting stocks of an unimaginable quantum and the virtual conversion of the LAC to a LoC, we have also witnessed the professional Indian riposte via the quid pro quo operation at the seven heights of the Kailash Range in south Pangong Tso. Through negotiations stretching into the eleventh round, a partial de-escalation and disengagement has been executed but restricted to north and south Pangong Tso. It can safely be assumed that the occupation of the Kailash Range heights caused much consternation in PLA ranks as its major war centre in Ladakh was under direct threat. We could force the PLA vacation of north Pangong Tso transgression because of this. However, some other key transgressions, including the one at Depsang, continue and await the outcome of further talks which could be indefinitely delayed.

So is a Galwan likely to be repeated, and for that

matter should one expect a deterioration of the situation in Ladakh anytime soon. It is easy to dismiss Galwan as a one-off event brought on by cascading out of control circumstances. Situations in an environment with troops at close quarters to each other (although a separation exists here larger than at the LoC) can always be unpredictable and response to awkward situations may find escalation. The feasibility of China deliberately triggering tension appears less likely as it should be viewing its actions in Ladakh as a misadventure which failed to deliver. China had reasonable clarity in the politico-strategic domain of aiming to make India realise that it was alone in the high Himalayas even as it may be among future partners in strategic arrangements that it is seeking under the American umbrella in the Indo-Pacific region. The misadventure in Ladakh, effectively thwarted by India, had a flawed military strategy. The occupation of some pressure points, transgressions across some of them and the refusal to vacate, awaiting more negotiations, are being perceived by some as a victory for China. Victories are measured against the attainment of the politico-strategic aim and not bits and pieces of occupation of territory which was vacant. What we in India have failed to capitalise upon is the ethical aspects of functioning between nations. China may have aspirations for superpower status, but it lacks the ability to build a larger perception of itself beyond that ambition; powerful nations show better ethics in international functioning. President Xi Jinping's recent

directions to remove "wolf warrior" diplomacy from China's ways of international dealings and build a more positive external perception about China is proof enough of its failure in pursuance of effective international relations. Notwithstanding what success it may perceive for itself through the Belt and Road Initiative outreach and attempts at cultivating influence in India's near abroad, the world's image of China remains one of a predatory nation which refuses to be bound by rules and agreements and therefore untrustworthy. The outlay of China's external aid remains at a quarter of what the US dishes out although the Chinese economy is just over half the US economy and growing at a much faster speed.

Given all these circumstances and the ongoing transition in the global order, what one should reasonably expect is some change in China's approach. How much this will impact Sino-Indian relations and the Ladakh standoff is difficult to say, being already a theatre of recent and ongoing tension. The fact that China couldn't attain its aims in coercing India even under pandemic conditions and its decision to negotiate at the field level are pointers to a possible change in strategy. The PLA will play hard to get, it will display reluctance to negotiate and for the foreseeable future will effect no change in the LAC's status. A campaign-like operation appears remote but even coercion operations as having potential to go out of control may not take place. However, cyber threats should be expected to escalate, also campaigns in the information domain. Yet a Galwan could always happen as a spinoff from other circumstances, given the unpredictability of the LAC. It is something we should be prepared for even as the tone and tenor of the relationship at the highest levels improves to far greater levels.

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

The fact that China couldn't attain its aims in coercing India even under pandemic conditions and its decision to negotiate at the field level are pointers to a possible change in strategy.

LETTERS

TIPPLERS CHEER

News that the Tasmac shops were open from Monday and the timing was so suitable as if one would be preparing to go to office. Shops will be open from 10 am to 5 pm and the government has decided to issue 500 to 700 tokens under the pretext that it cares for public safety. While in the Opposition the voices pitched in to oppose the functioning of Tasmac during the pandemic, may whisper 'Kabalida' in Rajinikanth style and express cheer on account of the much anticipated record collections.

A.P. Thiruvadi, Chennai

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER

The recent decision of the GST Council to reduce the GST rate from the peak 12% to 5% for all Covid related items of medical nature has come very late but it will still benefit to a great extent in reducing the financial burden of the common man. It would have been better if GST had been fully waived on Covid-related items, which would definitely benefit the affected people to a large extent financially when the pandemic had driven many into joblessness and dire financial straits.

R. Sekar, Chennai

DJOKOVIC'S DOUBLE TREAT

Talented and tenacious as they come, Novak Djokovic was not about to concede a thing after dropping the first two sets of the French Open final against his younger, fresher foe, Stefanos Tsitsipas. Djokovic looked diminished and depleted at the outset but, by the end he was at his imperious best. The top-seeded Djokovic came back to beat the fifth-seeded Tsitsipas 6-7 (6), 2-6, 6-3, 6-2, 6-4 for his second championship at Roland Garros and 19th Grand Slam title overall. Djokovic is now just one major trophy away from tying the men's record of 20 shared by Rafael Nadal and Roger Federer. And reigning Australian Open champion Djokovic now stands halfway to a calendar-year Grand Slam, something no man has accomplished since Rod Laver in 1969. The 34-year-old Djokovic eliminated 13-time French Open champion Nadal, a challenge the Serb likened to scaling Mt Everest. That was only Nadal's third career loss in 108 matches on French Open clay. Djokovic also defeated Nadal in Paris in 2015. Djokovic proved everyone wrong by achieving a win in style. In the end it was game, set, match and the championship in the end.

C.K. Subramaniam, Chennai

Civil society & NGOs: Why they matter in run-up to 2024

Aakar Patel



We have entered the third year of the Narendra Modi government and in the months to come the discussion will inevitably turn to the general election of 2024. Some of the recent political activity around Uttar Pradesh is being seen in this light. In India what the government does is left generally to the political parties, especially by the middle class which, once it has voted, does not engage with the State. But there is a part of our country which does engage and does not remain aloof.

The term "civil society" refers, according to the World Health Organisation, to a wide array of organisations: community groups, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), labour unions, indigenous groups, charitable organisations, faith-based organisations, professional associations, and foundations".

In India we usually use the term "civil society" almost exclusively for the NGOs and activists, because professional associations are quite afraid of confronting the government. There are some exceptions, but these are very few. It is the NGOs, activists and

indigenous groups who represent the people and their interests outside the framework of politics. In India, when we say indigenous groups, we mean adivasis. The model of development that India has adopted is to extract from adivasi lands the resources that are used for the rest of the country. You and I do not get displaced by the government from our homes. It is the adivasis who must leave the homes and settlements that their ancestors have lived in for thousands of years because we need to build a dam or because we have found coal underneath.

The adivasis have protested against India's government and its policies for over a century. The rebellion of Birsu Munda, the man whose statue Amit Shah once wanted to garland (but he wrongly garlanded someone else's) forced the British to introduce the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act, which banned the transfer of adivasi land to non-adivasis. The BJP wanted to garland Birsu Munda's statue but it also passed a law to undo the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act in 2016. This produced such a backlash from the adivasis that the BJP retreated from the law and

was defeated in the next state election. This is why Mr Shah was garlanding what he thought was Birsu Munda's statue in 2020.

Adivasi resistance to the Indian State is not understood and it is not very widely covered in the media. This month has seen at least two places where adivasis have been holding protests. In Gujarat 11 adivasis were arrested for protesting against the proposed parking lot near the Statue of Unity. They said the land acquired by the Sardar Sarovar Narmada Nigam for the development project belonged to them and had been taken illegally.

The strength of the emotion can be understood by knowing that the women among them removed their clothes in public. An FIR was filed against 20 of them under various sections of the Indian Penal Code, including 143 (unlawful assembly) and 294 (singing obscene song, ballad or words near a public place). In Chhattisgarh, which has a Congress government, thousands of adivasis have been on protest against a Central Reserve Police Force camp erected on their land without their permission. The government opened fire on them,

killing three, but the adivasis are still there in the open in Bastar, demanding their rights and insisting that the camp be removed.

On the outskirts of Delhi, tens of thousands of farmers are continuing their protest, having gathered in November and spent the entire winter and now the summer in the open along the highways. The laws that they are protesting against were passed without a division vote in the Rajya Sabha. The laws have been suspended indefinitely by the Supreme Court and the Narendra Modi government itself has offered to suspend them for 18 months. There is extreme disaffection against the laws, including by groups supporting the BJP in Uttar Pradesh, and it is unlikely that the laws will ever be implemented. The Modi government itself has lost interest in them and does not speak about their implementation. But it has allowed the protests to continue because it does not want to be seen as retreating, though it appears to have already retreated.

Similarly, though the Citizenship Amendment Act was passed by Parliament more than a year and a half ago, it has not been implemented.

One reason is the widespread protests against it in India, the other is the widespread condemnation against it globally, including in the European Parliament.

Civil society action in Gujarat has resulted in the setting up of fast track courts to hear atrocities against dalits and adivasis. This came after the protest against the assault on dalits in Una over a cow's carcass. The civil society action was led by a former journalist, Jignesh Mewani, who was then elected to the Gujarat Assembly.

A lot of action has taken place in civil society since 2014. A weakening of the government, meaning a Central government with no party having an absolute majority, or a change in government, will give civil society groups additional leverage. Laws that are unacceptable to civil society groups will not be easy to pass and implement. And laws that are in outright violation of international human rights standards will come under pressure to be repealed. It is a most interesting time that is leading up to 2024.

The writer is a columnist and a senior journalist

quick BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	52,551.53 0.15
Nifty 50	15,811.90 0.08
S&P 500*	4,237.13 -0.24
Dollar (₹)	73.27 0.27
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.25 0.12
Euro (₹)	88.76 0.06
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	47,705▼464 0.97
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	73.18 0.67
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.004 0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.484 0.022

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Government clips powers of cashew council

The government suspended the power of the Cashew Export Promotion Council to issue or renew RCMCs (registration-cum-membership certificate) for cashew kernels, cashewnut shell liquid and kardanol and authorised the Apeda for the same. However, RCMCs already issued by the council would remain valid for the rest of their validity period, the DGFT said in a public notice.

IOB Q4 profit rises more than 2-fold to ₹350 cr



Indian Overseas Bank reported a more than two-fold jump in net profit at Rs 349.77 crore in Q4 against Rs 143.79 crore in the year-ago quarter. Total income in Q4FY21 rose to Rs 6,073.80 crore against Rs 5,484.06 crore in Q4FY20. Provisions for bad loans and contingencies rose to Rs 1,360.46 crore from Rs 1,060.38 crore. For the full year, IOB reported a net profit of Rs 831.47 crore against a net loss of Rs 8,527.40 crore in 2019-20.

Palm oil imports jump 48% at 7.69 LT in May

India's import of palm oils rose by 48 per cent to 7,69,602 tonne in May this year against 4,00,506 tonne a year ago on higher shipments of crude palm oil, industry body Solvent Extractors Association (SEA) said. Total vegetable oil imports rose by 68 per cent to Rs 12.49 lakh tonne in May this year compared to 7.43 lakh tonne in May 2020. The share of palm oil is over 60 per cent in India's vegetable oil imports.

CAI cuts cotton output estimate to 356 L bales

The Cotton Association of India (CAI) reduced its cotton crop estimate for 2020-21 by 4 lakh bales to 356 lakh bales, due to lower output expected in southern and central zones. The crop estimate for the southern zone has been reduced by 3 lakh bales to 91.50 lakh bales. In Telangana, the estimates are lower by 3 lakh bales based on the data provided by the Telangana Cotton Millers and Traders Welfare Association.

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■ Shares tumble up to 25% intraday Hot Adani stocks turn freezing cold

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
with agency inputs
MUMBAI, JUNE 14

Adani Group companies shares fell between 5 per cent and 25 per cent intraday on news that the National Securities Depository Ltd (NSDL) has frozen accounts of three foreign portfolio investors' (FPIs), which own over Rs 43,500 crore worth of shares in four of the group's firms.

According to reports, the market-cap of Adani Group Companies took a \$6-billion hit after media reports emerged about the suspension.

Group flagship Adani Enterprises lost 25 per cent as shares plunged to a low of Rs 1,201.10 on the BSE compared to the previous close at Rs 1,601.45. Later the stock recovered most of the day's losses to close at Rs 1,501.25, still down 6.26 per cent.

Adani Ports & Special Economic Zone ended the day with a loss of 8.3 per cent at Rs 768.70, after plunging 18.75 per cent to a low of Rs 681.50, compared to the previous close at Rs 838.80.

Adani Power and Adani Transmission closed 4.99 per cent and 5 per cent lower, respectively, as both stocks hit the 5 per cent lower circuit and remained locked till the close of the market.

Adani Green Energy, which has risen sharply since August last year and commands a higher market cap than even Adani



Enterprises at Rs 1,83,920 crore, fell 4.13 per cent.

Adani Total Gas fell 5 per cent and hit the lower circuit and was locked in the lower circuit till day's end. It has also risen sharply since mid-October and commands a market cap of Rs 1,69,871.17 crore.

Reports said that NSDL has frozen the accounts of Albula Investment Fund, Cresta Fund and APMS Investment Fund due to insufficient disclosure of information regarding beneficial ownership.

The funds are based out of Mauritius and registered at the same address in Port Louis and the frozen accounts, as of May 31, won't be able to sell or buy new securities, reports said.

However, the Adani Group said it has written confirmation that accounts of three foreign funds that are among its top shareholders are not frozen and reports to the contrary are "blatantly erroneous and misleading". In identical filings to the stock exchange, some group companies said, "This is causing irrepara-

ble loss of economic value to the investors at large and reputation of the group."

A sharp rally in the shares of Adani Group companies had added over \$40 billion to the wealth of Gautam Adani this year.

The quick surge in these stocks, largely held by overseas funds and with very little public float, had also led some analysts to flag the risks involved.

The group's stocks, especially Adani Total Gas, Adani Enterprises and Adani Transmission, "look extended," Bloomberg Intelligence analysts Gaurav Patankar and Nitin Chanduka wrote in a June 10 note after analyzing technical indicators.

"Among the biggest foreign investors are a few Mauritius-based funds holding over 95% of assets in these companies," the analysts wrote. "Such concentrated positions, along with negligible onshore ownership, create asymmetric risk-reward as large investors conspicuously avoid Adani," they said.

SEBI SLAPS ₹15 CR FINES ON FRANKLIN BOSSES, TRUSTEE

New Delhi, June 14: The Sebi on Monday imposed a penalty totalling Rs 15 crore on senior officials of Franklin Templeton AMC and its trustee for violating regulatory norms in the case of winding up six debt schemes in 2020.

A fine of Rs 3 crore has been levied on Franklin Templeton Trustee Services Pvt Ltd and Rs 2 crore each on Franklin Asset Management (India) Pvt Ltd president Sanjay Sapre and its chief investment officer Santosh Kamat, according to a Sebi order.

In addition, the regulator imposed a penalty of Rs 1.5 crore each on Kunal Agarwal, Sumit Gupta, Pallab Roy, Sachin Padwal Desai and Umesh Sharma, who were the fund managers at the time of violation, and Rs 50 lakh on Saurabh Gangrade, who was the chief compliance officer at that time.

They have been directed to pay the penalty within 45 days.

Sebi noted that the trustees of Franklin Templeton Mutual Fund (MF) are thorough professionals and these officials are experts in their respective domain, and yet they failed to avert certain lapses in the functioning of a mutual fund. "The acts and deeds committed by them while discharging their duties are not in the interest of the unitholders in specific and the investors in general," the Sebi said.

—PTI

RBI set to lift pricing cap on micro loans

FALAKNAAZ SYED
MUMBAI, JUNE 14

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Monday proposed to do away with pre-payment penalty, requirement of collateral and provide greater flexibility in repayment frequency for all microfinance loans. For the lenders, the central bank proposed removing the pricing caps on micro loans introduced after the 2010 microfinance crisis.

The proposals are part of a consultative document on uniform regulation for companies engaged in microfinance business released by the central bank. The proposed recommendations aim to ensure a level-playing field between banks, non-banks and microfinance firms, all of which do micro lending but have different regulations.

The suggestions include a common definition of

microfinance loans for all regulated entities, capping the outflow on account of repayment of loan obligations of a household to a percentage of the household income and a board approved policy for household income assessment.

The paper has proposed to align the pricing guidelines for NBFC-MFIs with guidelines for NBFCs, introduce a standard simplified fact sheet on pricing of microfinance loans for better transparency, besides displaying the minimum, maximum and average interest rates charged on microfinance loans on the websites of regulated entities.

At present the maximum interest charged by an NBFC-MFI has to be lower of (i) the cost of funds plus a margin cap of 10 per cent for MFIs with loan portfolio of Rs 100 crore or above and 12 per cent for others; (ii)

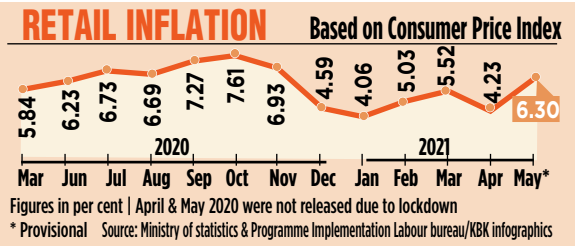
The average base rate of the five largest commercial banks by assets multiplied by 2.75. The average base rate of the five largest commercial banks is announced by RBI at the end of each quarter, which determines the interest rate for the ensuing quarter. These pricing restrictions were introduced in 2014 by the regulator in line with the Y.H. Malegam committee recommendations.

The current regulations are applicable only to 30 per cent of the microfinance loan portfolio NBFC-MFIs whereas other lenders, which comprise around 70 per cent share in the microfinance portfolio, are not subjected to similar regulatory conditions. The emerging dynamics in the microfinance sector as well as the concerns of customer protection call for a review of the regulations, it said.

Inflation spikes above comfort zone in May

New Delhi, June 14: Rising prices of edible oils and protein rich items pushed the retail inflation to a six-month high of 6.3 per cent in May, breaching the RBI's comfort level and thus rendering reduction in interest rates a difficult proposition in the near-term. The government has asked the Reserve Bank to keep the retail inflation at 4 per cent with a margin of 2 per cent on either side.

CPI inflation has breached the upper band of the inflation target about



10 times since the first meeting of the monetary policy committee in October 2016.

Wholesale price-based inflation too accelerated to

a record 12.94 per cent in May on account of rising prices of crude oil, manufactured goods and the low base of last year due to the Covid-19 lockdown. —PTI

PE/VC EXITS MOVE UP AHEAD OF UNICORN IPOs

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, JUNE 14

PE/VC-funded companies have entered a major exit phase with May being the second-best ever in terms of exit values. With some of the unicorns getting ready for IPOs, exit activity is expected to heat up in the coming months.

May 2021 recorded 18 exits worth \$12 billion, almost 42 times the value of exits in May 2020 at \$286 million and nearly four times the value in April 2021 at \$2.7 billion.

Till May this year, there have been \$19.3 billion worth exits and this is three times the total exit value of last year. Large well-funded corporations have been taking advantage of the current environment to consolidate businesses or acquire online capabilities to enhance the value proposition of their existing brick and mortar businesses, says a IVCA-EY report.

Going ahead, PE/VC funds will see a heightened activity. Several PE/VC-funded firms, including Paytm, Nykaa, and Policy Bazaar have announced IPO plans.

Rishi Sunak drawn into tax query on Murthy-funded Clouttail

London, June 14: Clouttail India Pvt Ltd—the online retailing joint venture of Infosys co-founder N. R. Narayana Murthy's firm and Amazon.com—faced a 5.5 million pounds demand, including interest and penalties, from tax authorities after it paid "meagre" taxes over the past four years, a media report said on Monday.

Amazon reportedly developed independent sellers such as Clouttail, as special merchant' which enjoyed over 35 per cent of total sales on the platform until 2019.

While Murthy's Catamaran Ventures indirectly holds 76 per cent in Clouttail and Amazon the remaining 24 per cent, the firm's two top posts—chief executive and finance director—were with the US retailer. Clouttail's holding company, Prione is also run by a former Amazon manager, the report in *The Guardian* newspaper said.

The report said it is not known precisely what the tax dispute is about and the company said that it was contesting the bill, adding that since the "matter is



Rishi Sunak

sub judice, we are unable to comment any further.

Following the report, the office of UK chancellor of the exchequer Rishi Sunak, who is son-in-law of Murthy, was forced to comment.

The revelations come just days after Sunak led the G7 finance ministers' charge to agree to a global deal designed to make tech companies pay more tax.

"Reaching an international agreement on how large digital companies are taxed has been a priority for the chancellor since he took office," said a spokesperson for his UK Treasury office.

"The chancellor's consistent position has been that it matters where tax is paid, and any agreement must ensure digital busi-

nesses pay tax in the UK that reflects their economic activities. That is what our taxpayers would expect and is the right thing," the spokesperson said.

Sunak has been dubbed the UK's richest minister, largely as a result of his wife Akshata Murty's family wealth. The latest *Guardian* report claims that an analysis of Clouttail's accounts and activities shows that it is one of the largest sellers on Amazon.in, as part of a 76-24 per cent joint venture with Amazon.

"The company has received a show cause notice in the current year from Directorate General of Goods and Service Tax Intelligence amounting to Rs 5,455 lakh (5.5 mn pound) along with interest and penalties for service tax-related matters, it quotes Clouttail's most recent accounts as saying.

It claims that the annual report further reveals that Clouttail which only sells via the Amazon platform paid Amazon fees of 95 million pounds last year, almost 10 times more than the Indian business report-

REGULATORS TO VET PNB HOUSING FINANCE PLAN TO RAISE ₹4K CR FROM CARLYLE



New Delhi, June 14: Reserve Bank of India and Sebi will look into various regulatory issues related to the proposed Rs 4,000-crore investment by US-based private equity firm Carlyle and others in PNB Housing Finance, sources said on Monday.

Last month, the board of PNB Housing Finance cleared a proposal to raise up to Rs 4,000 crore by issuing preference shares and convertible warrants to Carlyle Group firms and other entities.

According to the sources, concerns of minority shareholders, corporate governance and others regulatory aspects would be looked into by the RBI and the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi).

Earlier this year, the RBI had shot down a Punjab National Bank (PNB) proposal to infuse capital into its subsidiary PNB Housing Finance through a rights issue on concerns of the lender's financial health.

About the proposed deal, PNB managing director and CEO S. S. Mallikarjuna Rao, earlier this month, said the bank will neither be investing nor divesting its stake but because of investment from other sources, its shareholding could come down to around 21 per cent.

Currently, PNB as a promoter holds 32.64 per cent stake in PNB Housing Finance.

PNB Housing Finance's extraordinary general meeting (EGM) is scheduled to be held on June 22 to seek shareholders' approval for the preferential allotment of shares on a private placement basis to Carlyle and other entities, besides other proposals. —PTI

NEW | STRATEGY

Sovereign wealth fund also keen on warehouses, tech hubs

Abu Dhabi's Adia eyes affordable housing

DINESH NAIR, JACK SIDDERs & NICOLAS PARASIE
JUNE 14

The Abu Dhabi Investment Authority, one of the world's biggest property investors, is considering changes to its real estate strategy after some of its major holdings suffered during the coronavirus pandemic, people with knowledge of the matter said.

The sovereign wealth fund is reviewing the performance of its property assets following weakness in a number of the shopping malls and office buildings in its portfolio, according to the people, who asked not to be identified because the information is private. Adia may consider cutting its exposure to some troubled investments, the people said.

Adia has shifted in recent years to making more direct property investments and relying less on



external managers. The state-owned investor has amassed just under \$700 billion in assets, according to estimates from data provider Global SWF, and Adia has said real estate traditionally accounts for about 5 to 10 per cent of that overall portfolio.

While Adia will continue to be a major player in property, it could shift its focus for future deals and increase exposure to areas like warehouses, life sciences properties, technology hubs and affordable housing, one of the people

said.

Its investments in logistics sites in China through a partnership with industrial real estate investor Prologis Inc are among those that performed well through the downturn, the person said. Adia bet on the UK affordable housing market in 2014 through an investment in Fizzy Living Ltd.

The fund has also been putting more resources into private equity investments, which have outperformed during the pandemic, the people said. The review is ongoing, and Adia hasn't made any final decisions on the changes it will make, the people said.

A representative for Adia declined to comment.

Adia remains in search of new in-house expertise, including a global head of real estate, following a wave of senior departures.

Last year Tom Arnold, a former Cerberus Capital Management executive, left after more than a decade with the sovereign wealth fund.

Pascal Duhamel, the head of European real estate investments, and Anthony Bertoldi, acting head of real estate in Asia, also left the firm in the second half of 2020. Travel restrictions have slowed Adia's efforts to recruit replacements for some positions, according to the people.

Pandemic shutdowns have hurt investors in the commercial real estate market since early 2020. Stay-at-home orders left shops empty and hit the payment of rents to owners of such properties. Offices have also lain dormant, with many companies now reassessing their real estate requirements in the light of work-from-home trend.

—Bloomberg

SHORT TAKES

Malvika pockets Lithuanian crown

Kaunas (Lithuania): India's Malvika Bansod defeated Rachael Darragh of Ireland in straight games to clinch the women's singles crown at the RSL Lithuanian International badminton tournament here. The third seeded Indian got the better of fourth seed Darragh 21-14 21-11 in the summit clash on Sunday night that lasted just 29 minutes. Malvika, who reached the quarterfinals of the Austrian Open last month, had earlier defeated France's Anna Tatranova 21-13 21-10 to enter the singles final. En route to her title triumph here, the 19-year-old Malvika had defeated local player Vilte Paulauskaite 21-6 21-10 in the opening round, before crushing Heli Neiman of Israel 21-10, 21-11. — PTI

Mushfiqu, Bryce get ICC awards

Dubai: Former Bangladesh captain Mushfiquur Rahim and Scottish all-rounder Kathryn Bryce were on Monday adjudged the ICC Players of the Month for May in the men's and women's categories respectively. The winners were announced by the ICC in a press release. Diminutive wicket-keeper batsman Mushfiquur played one Test and three ODIs against Sri Lanka in the month of May, where he helped Bangladesh win their first ODI series against Sri Lanka by scoring 125 in the second game. Bryce, on the other hand, is the first player from Scotland, to make it to the top 10 of the batting or bowling lists in the rankings. — PTI

WTC winners to bag \$1.6 million

Dubai: The winner of the upcoming World Test Championship final between India and New Zealand will walk away with a prize money of USD 1.6 million along with the Test Championship Mace, the International Cricket Council said on Monday. India and New Zealand will battle it out for the prestigious title at Southampton on June 18. "The winners of the much-awaited ICC World Test Championship (WTC) Final between India and New Zealand will take home a purse of \$ 1.6 million along with the ICC Test Championship Mace," an ICC statement read. — PTI

Sporting pitch in store for big Test

Southampton: Head groundsman at Southampton Simon Lee is aiming to produce a pacy and bouncy pitch for the World Test Championship final with some assistance for spinners later on in the game. The final will be played between India and New Zealand from June 18. "Pitch preparation for this Test is a little simpler as we are a neutral venue, we are guided by the ICC, but we all want is a good pitch that offers an even contest between the teams," Lee said. "For me personally I just want to get something out that has some pace, bounce and carry in the pitch." — PTI

Federer eases into Halle 2nd round

Halle Westfalen: Roger Federer eased into the second round of the ATP grass court tournament in Halle on Monday with a straight sets win over qualifier Ilya Ivashka. Federer, who turns 40 in August, had few problems in his first match this season on grass to seal a 7-6 (7/4), 7-5 first-round win over Belarusian Ivashka, ranked 90th in the world. — AFP

Live on TV

EURO

Group Stage: Hungary vs Portugal from 9.30 pm; France vs Germany from 12.30 am (Wednesday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

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DUTCH DRAMA

Dumfries gives Netherlands a thrilling 3-2 win over Ukraine

Netherlands	3
(Wijnaldum 52, Weghorst 58, Dumfries 85)	
Ukraine	2
(Yarmolenko 75, Yaremchuk 79)	

Amsterdam, June 14: Denzel Dumfries scored a dramatic late winner as the Netherlands marked their long-awaited return to a major tournament with a 3-2 victory over Ukraine in a remarkable Euro 2020 game in Amsterdam on Sunday. Dumfries, the PSV Eindhoven full-back, headed in a cross from substitute Nathan Ake to complete a madcap second half after the home side eased into a two-goal lead and then threw it away. Captain Georginio Wijnaldum and Wout Weghorst both scored before the hour mark in front a raucous crowd at the Johan Cruyff Arena, only for Ukraine to silence the home supporters as Andriy Yarmolenko and Roman Yaremchuk netted to briefly restore parity. Frank de Boer's side got there in the end and the victory will provide a major lift to the Netherlands after what was their first game at a major competition in seven years.

They will now hope to build on it on Thursday against Austria, who beat North Macedonia earlier in Bucharest in the same Group C.

It was a brilliant game, and a crowd of around 16,000 created an atmosphere fit for the occasion at the home of Ajax, where supporters held up banners with messages of support for Christian Eriksen following the Denmark star's cardiac arrest on Saturday.

Eriksen made his name at Ajax before moving to Tottenham Hotspur in 2013.

After failing to qualify for Euro 2016 or the 2018 World Cup in Russia, the Netherlands were playing their first game at a major competition since beating hosts Brazil 3-0 to claim third place at the 2014 World Cup.

— AFP



Netherlands' Denzel Dumfries celebrates after scoring a goal against Ukraine in the Euro match at Amsterdam on Sunday. — AP

Austria	3
(Lainer 18, Gregoritsch 78, Arnautovic 89)	
N. Macedonia	1
(Pandev 28)	

AUSTRIA SEE OFF NEWBIES N. MACEDONIA

Bucharest, June 14: Substitutes Michael Gregoritsch and Marko Arnautovic scored late goals as Austria sealed a 3-1 victory over major tournament debutants North Macedonia in their Group C opener at Euro 2020 on Sunday.

Stefan Lainer put the Austrians ahead early on in Bucharest, but 37-year-old captain Goran Pandev levelled before the half-hour mark to become the second-oldest scorer in Euro history and delight the vocal Macedonian fans.

"Above all, the substitutions really paid off," said Austria coach Franco Foda.

"Gregoritsch and Arnautovic gave the team a new impulse. Overall I think it was a deserved win."

— AFP

Czechs grin Schick-to-Schick

Glasgow, June 14: Scotland's long-awaited return to a major international tournament was ruined by Patrik Schick's slick finishing as the Czech Republic won 2-0 at Hampden on Monday to move top of Euro 2020 Group D.

Schick's header just before half-time opened the scoring, but it was his stunning strike from just inside the Scotland half after the break that will live in the memory as one of the all-time great European Championship goals. After a 23-year wait to qualify for a major tournament, Scotland's hopes of making more history

Czech	2
(Schick 42, 52)	
Scotland	0

by getting out of the group for the first time now look slim.

Steve Clarke's men face England next on Friday at Wembley before hosting World Cup finalists Croatia at Hampden on June 22.

Playing in front of fans at Hampden for the first time since November 2019 with 12,000 in attendance, Scotland made a nervous start.

David Marshall was the hero of penalty shootout wins over Israel and Serbia to qualify and was needed early on to turn Schick's powerful effort at the near post behind.

The hosts were desperately missing the driving runs and poise on the ball normally provided by Kieran Tierney on the left side of a back three.

Clarke has settled on a 3-5-2 to make way for two of the Premier League's best left-backs in the same team. Without the Arsenal defender, Liverpool's Andy Robertson was his side's biggest threat with a series of rampaging runs.

His cross was turned narrowly wide by Lyndon Dykes at the near post before the Scotland captain was denied a moment to remember by Tomas Vaclik. Robertson burst onto Ryan Christie's pass but his shot that was headed for the top corner was tipped over by the Sevilla goalkeeper. A cagey game of few chances burst into life after Schick's towering leap put the visitors in front three minutes before half-time.

Scotland were slow to react after initially clearing a corner and the Bayer Leverkusen forward rose highest to flick home Coufal's cross. — AFP

Germany host France in blockbuster group clash

Munich, June 14: France and Germany usually play each other in the latter stages of major football tournaments. Not this time. The teams will meet in the group stage of a European Championship or World Cup for the first time on Tuesday when they open their Euro 2020 campaigns in Munich.

Their last match at a major tournament came in the Euro 2016 semifinals. Antoine Griezmann scored twice for France in the 2-0 victory over then-World Cup champion Germany in Marseille.

Germany have never really recovered, and though the French lost to Portugal in the final five years ago, they went on to win the World Cup two years later. Remarkably, no player in Germany's current squad



Germany' Thomas Müller during a training session ahead of his team's Euro opener against France. — Twitter

has ever scored in a European Championship match. Thomas Müller,

who has played 11 tournament games, missed a penalty in the 2016 quarter-final shootout win over Italy.

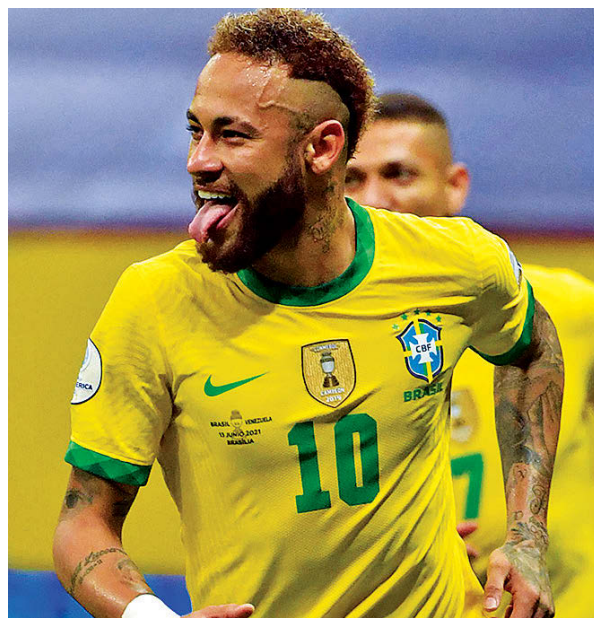
HUNGARY RUN INTO CHAMPIONS PORTUGAL

Home advantage at the European Championship may not count for much when Hungary face a Portugal team with scoring talent and one particular player looking to make history.

Cristiano Ronaldo needs six more goals to become the all-time leading scorer for a men's national team.

If the defending champions go far, Ronaldo could indeed break Ali Daei's record of 109 goals. And he'll get his first chance to add to his total on Tuesday against the Hungarians at the Puskas Arena. — AP

COPA AMERICA



Brazil's Neymar celebrates after scoring against Venezuela during the Copa America 2021 group match in Brasilia on Sunday. — AFP

Big guns Brazil begin with bang

Brasilia, June 14: Star forward Neymar netted a penalty and created a second as hosts Brazil eased to a 3-0 victory over a coronavirus-depleted Venezuela on Sunday in the opening match of the 2021 Copa America.

Center-back Marquinhos opened the scored midway through the first half and Gabriel sealed the win a minute from time.

In a tournament already delayed a year and moved from its original hosts Argentina and Colombia due to the pandemic, it was fitting that the coronavirus should take centre-stage right up to the tournament kick-off.

Played in front of an empty Mane Garrincha stadium in Brasilia due to Covid-19 restrictions, Brazil made light of the continent's minnows, who arrived with a makeshift side missing at least eight players who were ruled out after testing positive for coronavirus the day before. Venezuela called up 15 emergency replacements but could still only name seven out of a possible 12 substitutes due to a lack of available players.

Richardson was denied from close range by Venezuela's goalkeeper Joel Graterol early on before the forward flicked

Brazil	3
(Marquinhos 23, Neymar 64, Gabriel 89)	
Venezuela	0
Colombia	1
(Edwin Cardona 42)	
Ecuador	0

a header wide form a corner.

Centre-back Eder Militao was also off target with a header while Graterol did well to hold a Danilo volley from distance.

Venezuela produced little going forward but Jose Martinez did have the Brazil defence back-peddalling with a dangerous burst before winning a corner that came to nothing.

Brazil took the lead on 23 minutes when Richardson flicked on a Neymar corner that deflected into Marquinhos's path inside the six-yard box, allowing the centre-back to bundle home.

Richardson had a goal ruled out for offside while Neymar incredibly fired wide from 12 yards out as Brazil threatened to put the game to bed before half-time. — AFP

CHARITY CHESS

ENTREPRENEUR KAMATH AGREES TAKING HELP TO DEFEAT ANAND

Chennai, June 14: An online charity chess event featuring former world champion Viswanathan Anand and several celebrities has run into controversy after a young entrepreneur Nikhil Kamath faced flak for resorting to unfair means in order to beat the Indian legend.

Nikhil Kamath, co-founder of Zerodha, a stock brokerage company and True Beacon, an asset management company, apologised on Twitter and admitted that he took help from chess analysts and computers during the event on Sunday.

Responding to Kamath's tweet, Anand said on Twitter: "Yesterday was a celebrity simul for people to raise money. It was a fun experience upholding the ethics of the game. I just played the position on the board and expected the same from everyone."

Kamath apologised for his misdemeanour and said he had help from people analysing the game and computers. "I had help from the people analyzing the game, computers and the graciousness of Anand sir himself to treat the game as a learning experience. This was for fun and charity. In hindsight, it was quite silly as I didn't realise all the confusion that got caused due to this. Apologies," Kamath tweeted.

India women up for English Test

Bristol, June 14: Indian women's team vice-captain Harmanpreet Kaur on Monday said they are mentally prepared to take on mighty hosts England in their first Test in seven years, especially after "picking the brains" of red-ball specialist Ajinkya Rahane.

India and England will play a one-off Test here from Wednesday, which will start the visitors' full-fledged tour of the UK, where they will also feature in ODI and T20 series.

"I have not played much of red-ball cricket, I have played just two Tests. This time we got a chance to speak to Ajinkya Rahane, we picked his brains on how to bat in the longer format, mentally we are prepared," Harmanpreet

said during a virtual press conference.

The swashbuckler has made a name for herself in white-ball cricket and is now looking to stamp her class in the traditional format.

She added, "Even in the nets, we try to be in the right frame of mind. When you are happy, you play good cricket. We try to play to our strengths."

"We had an easy and friendly talk with Rahane, he is very experienced, we had a chance to talk to him and we did exactly that."

"He has so much experience, he shared with us, offered us tips on how to bat, what kind approach should we have to batting because it's long format, how to break your inning in parts..." — PTI