



### India is in the grip of a weak monsoon spell, says IMD

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### Mamata seeks recusal of HC judge Kausik Chanda from poll case

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### Jailed anti-virus software pioneer John McAfee ends life

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### Williamson says it's a really good feeling to be World Test champion

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### Four students arrested in Israel Embassy blast case

**NEW DELHI**  
The Delhi Police Special Cell has arrested four students from Ladakh in connection with the Israel Embassy blast case. They were arrested from Kargil and brought to Delhi on transit remand.

NEWS PAGE 8

### HC grants relief to Twitter India chief

**BENGALURU**  
In a temporary relief to Twitter India's managing director Manish Maheshwari, the Karnataka High Court on Thursday restrained the U.P. police from taking any coercive action against him till June 29 in a criminal case.

SOUTH PAGE 5

## Notify Class 12 assessment plan, SC tells State Boards

Announce results by July 31, orders court

Court criticises A.P. govt.

**KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL**  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday directed State Boards to notify their respective schemes for internal assessment of the final marks of Class 12 students within the next 10 days and ordered them to declare the results by July 31.

A Bench of Justices A.M. Khanwilkar and Dinesh Maheshwari refused to entertain a plea for a "uniform scheme" of assessment to be made applicable across Boards in the country. The court said each Board, whether the CBSE, ICSE or State Boards, was "autono-

The Andhra Pradesh government, which was planning to conduct Class 12 examinations, has decided to cancel them.

Earlier on Thursday, the Supreme Court criticised

the A.P. government's plan to hold the exams, asking what it was trying to prove by risking lives when other States had opted to cancel their State Board examinations.

mous and independent". They could formulate their own schemes after consultation with experts.

However, the Bench clarified that allowing Boards to form their own independent schemes did not preclude the court from judicially reviewing their correctness and validity when an occasion arose.

By directing the State Boards to declare their re-

sults before July 31, the court ensured that students across the country get a level playing field in college admissions and other opportunities for higher studies.

Earlier, the CBSE and the ICSE had agreed in the Supreme Court to announce the internal assessment results of their Class 12 students by July 31.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

## PM backs delimitation exercise, grassroots democracy in J&K

First outreach meeting with political leaders held in a cordial atmosphere

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi reiterated his government's commitment to fostering grassroots democracy in Jammu and Kashmir during his meeting with 14 leaders of eight mainstream political parties even as he sought their cooperation in first completing the delimitation exercise for Assembly seats in the Union Territory, which would eventually lead to elections.

He said this at the first outreach meeting between the Union government and mainstream political leaders of Jammu and Kashmir - a meeting, which by all accounts, was held in a cordial atmosphere.

Both Mr. Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah reiterated their previous public commitments to restoring statehood, government sources said.

The sources said in his address, Mr. Modi said, "Dilli ki doori kam honi chahiye aur dil ki doori bhi" (The distance from Delhi - and the seat of central power - and the distance between hearts should both be reduced) to convey the spirit in which the meeting was called.

While every party spoke about the restoration of statehood, the contentious



**One step at a time:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi greeting Jammu and Kashmir leaders in Delhi on Thursday. Also present were Home Minister Amit Shah and J&K L-G Manoj Sinha.

issue of special status to Jammu and Kashmir, which was removed by the reading down of Article 370, was also raised but many parties spoke of it as a legal fight as the matter is being heard in the Supreme Court.

After the meeting, Mr. Modi indicated that it was the first of such outreach efforts, tweeting: "Today's meeting ... is an important step in the ongoing efforts towards a developed and progressive Jammu and Kashmir."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8  
CONG. RAISES 5 DEMANDS PAGE 9

### Hope this is the beginning of a process, says Omar

**PEERZADA ASHIQ**  
SRINAGAR

National Conference (NC) vice-president Omar Abdullah on Thursday said he hoped the Prime Minister's dialogue initiative was the beginning of a process.

"There has been a breach of trust between Delhi and Srinagar and requires measures from the Prime Minister. It is the Centre's duty to

restore it [trust]," the former Chief Minister said.

Mr. Abdullah, who described the August 5, 2019, move as "unacceptable", said, "People do not like Jammu and Kashmir's status to be reduced to a Union Territory. They want the full State and J&K cadre restored."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

## Farmers to observe 'Save democracy day'

Protests planned outside Raj Bhavans tomorrow to mark 46th year of Emergency

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
GURUGRAM

The Samyukt Kisan Morcha, a coalition of hundreds of farmer unions, will observe June 26 as "Save Agriculture and Save Democracy Day" to mark the 46th year of Emergency and seven months of their ongoing agitation against the Centre's farm reform laws.

Making this announcement at a press conference in Rohtak on Thursday, the SKM leaders said that farmers across the country would protest outside Raj Bhavans on June 26 and submit a memorandum to President Ram Nath Kovind through the Governors.

Swaraj India national pre-



Farmer leaders Yogendra Yadav and Inderjit Singh addressing the media on Thursday.

new normal and it has become imperative for the farmers' movement to save democracy along with seeking the repeal of the three laws and guarantee for Minimum Support Price.

**'History repeating itself'**

All India Kisan Sabha, Haryana, vice-president Inderjit Singh said history is ironically repeating itself as the same BJP leaders, who had been projecting themselves as victims of Emergency all these years, are now running the country under "undecared Emergency". Himself a Maintenance of Internal Security Act detainee in 1976, Mr. Singh cited how the Constitution was systematically

subverted by the BJP.

Farmer leader Prem Singh Gehlawat recalled how Prime Minister Narendra Modi had "deceived" the people with populist slogans before the elections and was now "blatantly serving the corporate sector at the cost of toiling people".

Satyawan, another farmer leader, said agriculturists from Haryana would assemble at Nadda Saheb Gurdwara before marching towards Raj Bhavan to submit the memorandum urging the President to prevail upon the Union government to amicably settle their demands.

RLD CHIEF URGES PM TO END IMPASSE ON FARM LAWS PAGE 9

## 4,340 containment zones, 1,797 active cases in Delhi

**NIKHIL M BABU**  
NEW DELHI

Delhi has 4,340 active containment zones but only 1,797 active COVID-19 cases, according to government da-

ta till June 22.

The number of such zones is higher as an area can be removed from the list of containment zones only after a 28-day period of no new CO-

VID-19 cases, as per Central government rules.

"Even if there are no active cases, we cannot delist an area. But we start de-escalation process after 14 days

from the last positive case and people can start moving out of the containment zone after 14 days," an official said.

DETAILS ON PAGE 3

## Awash with faith



**Prayer power:** Shree Jagannatha Temple servants taking part in the bathing ceremony or *Snana Yatra* festival at Puri in Odisha on Thursday.

## Monuments see poor footfall in first week of reopening

Tourists unable to visit on weekends due to local lockdown restrictions

**DAMINI NATH**  
NEW DELHI

Some of the major Centrally protected monuments that reopened on June 16 after a closure due to the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic saw only about 1% to 7% of their average pre-pandemic daily footfall in the first eight days of the reopening, according to Archaeological Survey of India data.

The Union Culture Ministry on June 14 ordered that all monuments under the ASI be opened to the public from June 16, subject to local administration rules, including

State-wise weekend lockdown orders. The monuments, sites and museums of the ASI had been closed since April 15.

From June 16 to Wednesday, Taj Mahal in Agra was open for five days due to the weekend lockdown in Uttar Pradesh. The daily footfall ranged from 2,128 on June 16 to 4,322 on Monday, according to ASI data accessed by *The Hindu*.

In February 2020, before the pandemic, the UNESCO World Heritage Site used to receive 16,000 to 17,000 visitors on an average, with the



**Slow recovery:** A worker sanitising the 'Diana bench' as tourists visit the Taj Mahal on Thursday.

numbers increasing on weekends and holidays, said an ASI official.

**Cap on tickets**

While tickets are sold only online to maintain crowd control and social distancing, the number of visitors at Taj Mahal was not limited, ac-

ording to the official. In Delhi, however, tickets at each monument were capped between 7,000 and 10,000 a day.

In Delhi, popular tourist destinations such as Humayun's Tomb, Qutub Minar and Red Fort saw a few hundred visitors a day on an average, down from the thousands of

## Nod to cutting, transplanting over 1,500 trees

**STAFF REPORTER**  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government has given permission for cutting and transplantation of 1,639 trees for redevelopment of General Pool Residential Accommodation at Netaji Nagar.

Of these trees, 325 will be felled and 1,314 will be transplanted, according to a notification issued by the Delhi government. The project is part of the redevelopment of seven government colonies in the city. NBCC (India) Limited is doing the construction, and compensatory plantation of saplings, which is mandatory, has been done.

DETAILS ON PAGE 3

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### Man arrested for helping gang member flee custody

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

A 28-year-old man has been arrested for allegedly helping gangster Kuldeep alias Fajja escape from police custody after Guru Teg Bahadur Hospital, the police said on Thursday.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Rohini) Pranav Tayal said that the accused has been identified as Amit Mathur, a resident of Karala. Amit was arrested from his residence.

He is a friend of Deepak alias Titar, an active gang member of Jitender alias Gogi gang, the police said, adding that Amit helped Kuldeep on Deepak's instructions, the DCP said.

On March 25, Kuldeep, a member of Jitender gang escaped from police custody. One gangster was killed and another was injured in police action on the day of the incident.

## DU final-year classes to begin from July 20

Registration process for new session likely to start from July 15

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Delhi University on Thursday announced that classes for fifth-semester students will begin from July 20 and examinations are likely to be held from November 30.

Due to the pandemic, examinations were conducted only for terminal-year students this year. The current batch of second-year students will begin their final-year classes from July end, according to a notification issued by the university.

The academic calendar released also states that sixth-semester classes will begin on January 1 with dispersal of classes on April 28, 2022, and theory examinations to be held from May 11 next year.

Earlier, the university had said that third-semester classes for the current batch



The Arts Faculty at Delhi University wears a deserted look due to the ongoing pandemic crisis. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

of first-year students will begin from August 31 while those taking admissions for the 2021-22 academic session will begin classes from November 18.

Admissions to the university were delayed last year as well due to the pandemic and classes for the first-semester students had begun only in November. With their second-semester examinations due between Au-

## Long queues due to reduced carrying capacity, says DMRC

Train frequency similar to pre-pandemic times, it says

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Following long queues outside several metro stations since the resumption of services, the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) on Thursday said that the current frequency of trains is similar to pre-pandemic times.

The public transporter attributed the long queues to reduced carrying capacity of the Delhi Metro network due to government guidelines.

Metro services resumed on June 7 after a hiatus of nearly a month due to the COVID-19-induced lockdown. Guidelines issued by the Delhi government stated that the metro can run only at a 50% capacity.

**Single-entry points**  
DMRC spokesperson Anuj Dayal said, "The long queues are caused as only



**The long queues are caused as only single-entry points are permitted at most of the metro stations**

ANUJ DAYAL  
DMRC spokesperson

single-entry points are permitted at most of the metro stations, as in a mass transit system it is difficult to regulate the number of persons inside the system once entry is permitted. At present, the carrying capacity of the Delhi Metro as per existing guidelines is in the range of 10%-15% only."

The DMRC also said that 5,100 train trips were being run every day with a frequency of 2.5 minutes to 5 minutes on all major corridors.

"This was the same fre-

quency at which metro was operating during the normal pre-COVID times. The metro is thus, operating and running at its full frequency or capacity but with reduced carrying capacity owing to restrictions," it said.

According to government guidelines, passengers are required to sit on alternate seats and are not permitted to stand inside the metro coaches. The restrictions have resulted in each coach carrying approximately 25 passengers as opposed to the 300 it could accommodate without restrictions.

### Dust storm hits Capital; rain expected today

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

A dust storm hit Delhi on Thursday afternoon, bringing the maximum temperature down to 38.2 degrees Celsius, one notch below the normal, the Indian Meteorological Department said.

The minimum temperature in the morning was recorded at 28.3 degrees Celsius, normal for this time of the year, it said. The relative humidity at 5.30 p.m. was recorded at 45%.

The weatherman has predicted thunderstorm accompanied by rain for Friday, with the minimum and maximum temperatures expected to hover around 28°Celsius and 38°Celsius, respectively. Delhi's air quality was in the 'moderate' category on Thursday evening. Data from the Central Pollution Control Board showed that the hourly air quality index at 7.05 pm stood at 140.

## Two fake call centres busted, 30 arrested for duping U.K. citizens

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Two fake call centres operating from Rohini have been busted and 30 persons arrested for allegedly duping U.K.-based residents over tax dues by posing as revenue officials.

Deputy Commissioner of

Police (Outer North) Rajiv Ranjan Singh said that the centres were being operated by Parvinder Singh and his three accomplices Paramjeet Singh, Gagandeep Singh and Manthan Arora, who were also arrested along with six women.

The police said they

duped them by claiming themselves as personnel from the Department of Justice, United Kingdom and H.M. Revenue and Customs.

The accused had purchased the data of customers through internet for ₹5 lakh and provided a script to the callers, who through VOIP,

called up U.K.-based residents.

The police said that the accused induced fear in victims by telling them that a criminal case had been filed against them for tax dues. When the victims asked them for a remedy, they told them to transfer amount to a

U.K.-based account by providing the account number of facilitators in the U.K. Half of the transferred amount was being kept by the facilitators and the remaining was received by the accused through hawala transactions or by Bitcoins, police claimed.

## HC issues notice to Centre on harassment complaint by officer

Court tells officers to attempt resolution on their own

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has issued notice to the Centre on a petition by a senior Indian Police Service (IPS) officer, who has complained of sexual harassment against the Director General of the Bureau of Police Research & Development (BPR&D), claiming that the Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) in her case was not properly constituted.

Justice Anup Jairam Bhambhani also issued notice to BPR&D while posting the case for further hearing on June 25.

In the meantime, the High Court asked if the parties involved, being very senior officers of a uniformed force, could attempt to resolve the issue on their own.

**Proceedings under way**  
The High Court's direction came on a plea by the senior IPS officer who said proceedings in her complaint are under way before the ICC constituted by BPR&D.

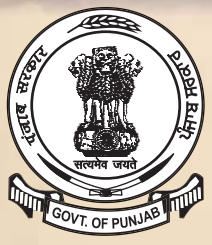


She explained that an internal complaints committee must not comprise members who are subordinate in rank to the person who is subject matter of the complaint before such committee.

"This, it is submitted, vitiates the very constitution of the ICC and all proceedings being conducted before it; and is against the principles of justice and fair play," Ms. John argued.

In the meantime, Centre's counsel Monika Arora suggested that considering that both the complainant and the person against whom ICC proceedings are pending, are very senior officers of a uniformed force, an attempt be made to resolve the issues that have arisen.

Ms. John also did not oppose the suggestion. "Accordingly, counsel may attempt resolution of the matter, if possible; and report on the next date of hearing," Justice Bhambhani said.



Punjab Government led by Chief Minister **Capt. Amarinder Singh** pays glowing tributes to the **Legendary Sikh General Baba Banda Singh Bahadur** on his **305<sup>th</sup> Martyrdom Anniversary**

Supreme sacrifice of Dasmesh Pita Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji's great disciple and the founder of 1st Sikh Raj stands out as an unparalleled and iconic moment in India's history

Department of Information & Public Relations, Punjab



## Taekwondo coach found dead

In note, deceased blamed school authorities for salary dues

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

A 46-year-old man was found dead at his residence in Outer Delhi's Mangolpuri, allegedly over non-payment of pending salary by a private school where he used to work as a taekwondo coach, the police said on Thursday.

A note has been recovered. The police said the victim had been unemployed for over a year now. He was found dead by his family members on Tuesday.

**Two named**  
The police said that in the recovered note, the victim had mentioned names of two persons from the school management and accused

the authorities over non-payment of his pending salary. He wrote that he was disturbed because of the situation.

**Filed case last year**  
The police said he had also filed a case in the Labour Court against the school management last year over non-payment of salary.

The police said that one of the deceased's former colleagues has informed them that the victim was taking online classes since March last year but discontinued later following a dispute with school authorities because of salary issue.

The colleague allegedly told the police that two

months after taking online classes last year, when the victim has asked for salary, the authorities had said that they were waiting for the children to pay fees. However, when teachers asked a few months later, the school management allegedly told them to resign. Teachers then moved court against the school.

A senior police officer said that all the allegations are being looked into and the matter is under inquiry. No case has been registered so far, he added.

*Suicide prevention helpline: Sanjivini, Society for Mental Health, 011-4076 9002, Monday-Saturday (10 a.m.-7.30 p.m.)*

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- LAJPAT NAGAR, 49, Main Ring Road, Adj. Haldi Ram, Near Moolchand Crossing

Timings DELHI
FRIDAY, JUN. 25
RISE 05:26 SET 19:23
SATURDAY, JUN. 26
RISE 05:26 SET 19:23
SUNDAY, JUN. 27
RISE 05:26 SET 19:23

Delhi Weather
Delhi City max 38 min 28
Safdarjang 38 28
Palam 40 27

Delhi Palam Today
37°C An easy morning turn very warm and humid day with partly cloudy sky.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
38°C Rain or thunderstorm with gusty winds likely at some places.

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IN BRIEF

15-day Van Mahotsav to begin on June 26

The Delhi government will hold a 15-day Van Mahotsav from June 26, and Cabinet Ministers, MLAs, NGOs and resident welfare associations will participate in this mega tree-plantation campaign.

CM building lavish home from taxpayers' money: BJP

The BJP on Thursday accused Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal of squandering taxpayers' money on a "lavish official residence for himself" at Flagstaff Road.

In a joint press conference held at Delhi Vidhan Sabha, BJP legislators led by Leader of the Opposition Ramvir Singh Bidhuri alleged that Mr. Kejriwal was bent upon spending ₹10 crores' taxpayers' money in building an almost new official residence.

Set up emergency response team to resolve complaints: Chadha to officials

Senior engineers to make plans in consultation with area MLAs

Delhi Jal Board (DJB) Vice-Chairperson Raghav Chadha on Thursday instructed officials to set up emergency response teams to address and resolve complaints, said authorities.

He also laid special emphasis on the deployment of an emergency response team comprising Chief Engineers and Superintendent Engineers who will draft special task plans for critical areas under their jurisdiction in consultation with area MLAs and site visits.

Delhi court denies bail in gang-rape case, terms allegations 'very grave'

A Delhi court on Thursday denied bail to an accused in a gang-rape case, saying the allegations against him were grave and he may flee if allowed to come out of jail.

'24 containment zones out of 4,340 have active COVID-19 cases'

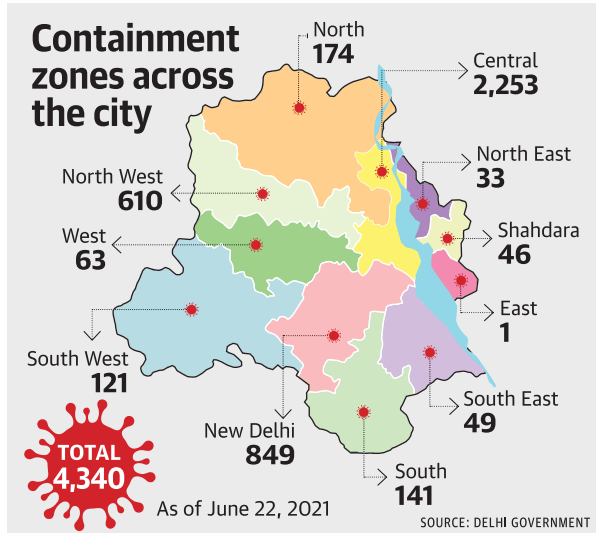
Such zones can be delisted only 28 days after the last positive case, says official

NIKHL M BABU NEW DELHI

Delhi has 4,340 active containment zones but only 1,797 active COVID-19 cases, according to government data till June 22.

The number of such zones is higher as an area can be removed from the list of containment zones only after a 28-day period of no new COVID-19 cases being reported from the same place, as per officials.

"We can delist a containment zone only 28 days after the last positive case as per Central government rules. So, even if currently there are no active cases, we cannot delist that area. But we start de-escalation process after 14 days from the last positive case and people can start moving in and out of the containment zone after 14 days," an official said.



A district-wise breakup of data showed that there was a total of only 998 active cases. The government did not explain why it is less than the official bulletin data of 1,797 active cases. Of these 998 ac-

tive cases, the Central district has the highest number of containment zones - 2,253 containment zones for just 37 active cases - while the east district has the lowest, just one contain-

ment zone for 29 active cases, as per the data.

"Presently there are only 24 containment zones with active COVID-19 cases and the rest have zero active cases. But these can be delisted only 14 days after recovery of the last case in the respective containment zone [roughly 28 days from last case being reported]. That is why active containment zones are more than the active cases," a Delhi government official said.

The official said almost all containment zones are "micro containment zones" and in many cases one or two houses.

"In the beginning of the pandemic, we used to make very large containment zones, but for the past many months the focus is on micro containment zones and in many cases, it is just one house," the official said.

Notices served to Google to remove certain apps

Most of them dupe people, say police

SAURABH TRIVEDI NEW DELHI

Delhi Police's Cyber Cell served notices to Google to remove apps from the play store that are being operated from outside the country and offering multiple financial investments with high returns, said an officer on Thursday.

The officer said an FIR was registered against the apps - Power Bank and EZPlan.

This comes after the police on June 10 busted a syndicate run by a group of Chinese nationals who cheated more than 5 lakh Indians of over ₹150 crore via fake investment apps.

"We had arrested the person responsible for sending pre-activated Indian SIM cards to China for the scam. More than 50 digital devices used in the offence have been seized," said the officer.

He added that during probe, it was found that more than ₹13 crore have been moved out of the coun-

try through Cryptocurrency via Crypto Currency Exchanges.

The apps identified in the scam have been found linked to Chinese servers and seven Chinese nationals - part of the scam - have been identified.

"The gang sued to contact and recruit random people over WhatsApp and Telegram. In a similar way, several other apps are operating and luring small investors. They used the Multilevel marketing (MLM) model for cheating and approaching people on various social media platforms. Several other virtual bank account addresses have been traced, which were linked with the crypto exchanges and money was transferred through those accounts as well. Details are being sought from Crypto Exchanges. We are tracing money trail to identify more accused involved in the scam," said the officer.

Delhi reports 109 cases, 8 deaths

'20 days of Covaxin, 9 days of Covishield stock available'

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

The city reported 109 fresh COVID-19 cases in 24 hours, taking the total cases to 14,33,475, according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government on Thursday.

Also, eight deaths were reported and the total number of deaths stood at 24,948. A total of 77,382 tests were done in a day and that test positivity rate (TPR) was 0.14%. Of the total cases, 14,06,760 people have recovered and there are 1,767 ac-



People wait to get vaccinated at a government school in Vinod Nagar. ■R.V. MOORTHY

As of yesterday [Wednesday], Delhi received more than 68,000 Covaxin doses and 80,000 Covishield doses, which totals to 10,24,000 vaccine doses available in the State

ATISHI AAP MLA

active cases.

AAP MLA Atishi, presenting a daily vaccination bulletin, said 25% youth in Delhi have received at least one dose of vaccine.

"As of yesterday [Wednesday], Delhi received more than 68,000 Covaxin doses and 80,000 Covishield doses, which totals to 10,24,000 vaccine doses available in the State. Currently, Delhi has 20 days of Covaxin and 9 days of

Govt. grants permission for cutting, transplantation of over 1,500 trees

Measure part of Netaji Nagar redevelopment project

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

The Delhi government gave permission for cutting or transplantation of 1,639 trees for redevelopment of General Pool Residential Accommodation (GPRA) at Netaji Nagar.

Of these trees, 325 trees will be felled and 1,314 will be transplanted, as per a notification issued by the Delhi government. The project is part of the redevelopment of seven government colonies in the city.

NBCC (India) Limited, is doing the construction, and compensatory plantation of sapling, which is mandatory, has been done, as per the notification.

'Over 16K saplings'

"100% Compensatory Plantation of more than 16,390 [i.e. 23,833] saplings of native species have already been done by DCF (North) with maintenance arrangements for 7



The transplantation of trees has to be done before felling of 325 trees, says the government. ■FILE PHOTO

years over 21.45 ha. land of New Delhi and monitored till its successful establishment," the notification said.

The timber obtained from the removal of trees has to be auctioned and the money obtained from it has to be deposited as revenue to the government account by the NBCC.

"The lops and tops of the trees shall be sent/ supplied

to the nearest crematorium free of cost and the same should be reported," the notification read.

Also, the transplantation of trees has to be done before felling of 325 trees. "The 325 trees shall be removed or felled after successful transplantation of 1,314 trees and submission of compliance certificate to DCF (South)," the document said.

Man serving jail term in POCSO case allowed to attend brother's wedding

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court permitted a man, serving a 10-year rigorous jail term in a Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) case, to attend a wedding ceremony.

Justice Anup Jairam Bhambhani directed that the applicant be taken in custody by jail or police officers in plain clothes to let him attend the marriage function of his elder brother from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. on Thursday.

Advocate Aishwarya Rao, representing the man, argued that though this application was moved earlier, it has been listed now since he has approached the court through the jail-visiting counsel of the Delhi High Court Legal Services Committee.

The Additional Public Prosecutor argued a pre-verification of the ground cited

for interim suspension of the sentence was made and it stands confirmed that the man's elder brother is scheduled to be married on June 24.

The Additional Public Prosecutor, however, submitted that verification from the to-be bride's family could not be completed as the man's father dissuaded the police officer from conducting verification from her family, saying if they find out that the applicant is in prison, they may not go ahead with the marriage.

With the Additional Public Prosecutor citing no objection to the arrangement, the court allowed the man to attend the wedding.

He is yet to serve 7 years and 8 months jail term. The court had earlier dismissed his interim bail application on the ground that he had furnished wrong information.

Goel challenges CM to drink water supplied by DJB

Former Union Minister Vijay Goel and Ex-Mayor Jai Prakash on Thursday led a demonstration with dirty water bottles in their hands against bad quality water allegedly being supplied across the city by the Delhi Jal Board (DJB).

Mr. Goel challenged CM Arvind Kejriwal to drink the water supplied by the DJB. He said samples of dirty water being supplied by the DJB had been collected from several locations in the city.

NDMC hikes licence fee for 2021-22 by up to 7%

The New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) has increased by up to 7% the annual fees for grant and renewal of various trades licenses for 2021-22, including those for hotels, restaurants, coffee shops, lodging houses and sweet shops, officials said on Thursday. The maximum hike in the license fee is for the five-star hotels, which were earlier required to pay ₹61,200 per annum. They will now have to pay to ₹65,484 for the purpose, the civic body said.

ter being supplied by the DJB had been collected from several locations in the city. "People from 50 different places sent samples of the dirty water coming to their homes. In some areas people have been getting dirty, stinking water for the past 10 days. Several complaints made by residents, however, have not yielded any result," Mr. Goel said at the protest staged at Anand Parbat.

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## 'A good start, but nothing beyond'

SOBHANA K. NAIR  
NEW DELHI

Neither Prime Minister Narendra Modi nor Union Home Minister Amit Shah proposed any action at the end of the three-hour-long meeting on Jammu and Kashmir, said Communist Party of India (Marxist) leader and spokesperson of the People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) M.Y. Tarigami.

Though there was no concrete outcome, Mr. Tarigami said the parties had agreed to come down to the capital for the meeting because it was the first such gathering hosted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"It was a good beginning but nothing beyond. Having a conversation is equally important, but I can not say that it was result-oriented," Mr. Tarigami told *The Hindu*.

Mr. Tarigami said the concerns of the people of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh were raised at the meeting. "We told him [the PM] that such a meeting should have been conducted prior to August 2019."

# Cong. raises 5 demands on J&K

But the party did not call for restoration of Article 370 in meeting with PM

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister and Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad, who led the party's delegation at Prime Minister Narendra Modi's meeting on J&K on Thursday, said the party had placed five demands, including restoration of full Statehood, holding early elections, and the return of Kashmiri Pandits, but did not demand the restoration of Article 370.

Mr. Azad told mediapersons after the meeting that in the new Bill for Statehood, the government should protect land rights through new domicile rules and guarantee employment for locals. The other demand by the Congress delegation, which included J&K Pradesh Congress Committee chief Ghulam Ahmad Mir and former Deputy Chief Minister Tara Chand, was the release of political detainees at the earliest.

"In today's meeting, from Congress's side, we informed the Prime Minister why the State should not have been dissolved. The move was done without con-



**Crucial meeting:** Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad, NC chief Farooq Abdullah and PDP's Mehbooba Mufti with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi on Thursday. \*ANI

sulting elected representatives. But in the end, after saying all this, we have put up five big demands in front of the government. Statehood should be restored at the earliest was our first demand," Mr. Azad said.

"The Home Minister as well as the Prime Minister had assured on the floor of Parliament that Statehood would be restored [to J&K] at some point. There is peace now, ceasefire is also there and the borders are also quiet. There can't be a better

time to grant Statehood," he added.

"We had historic domicile rules and also rules regarding employment. The government should give a guarantee that they will bring Bills on land and employment [for J&K]," Mr. Azad said.

Though the Congress did not directly refer to the restoration of the special provisions under Article 370, party leaders claimed that its demand for special land rights and job guarantees for

locals would "have the same effect". Specifically asked about the party's position on Article 370, Mr. Azad said the matter was sub-judice.

"For now, we will not talk about this. The people of J&K are in distress since the August 5, 2019 decision..." Mr. Mir added.

Recently, former Finance Minister P. Chidambaram talked about *status quo ante* by repealing the "offending laws" in the forthcoming monsoon session of Parliament.

## Trinamool to back Roy for PAC chairperson post

BJP has demanded his disqualification

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
KOLKATA

The Trinamool Congress will support the candidature of Mukul Roy as the chairperson of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) in the State Assembly, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said on Thursday.

Mr. Roy had joined the Trinamool Congress earlier this month after being associated with the BJP for over three years.

The development comes at a time when the BJP has written to the Assembly Speaker seeking Mr. Roy's disqualification as an MLA. Mr. Roy contested and won the recently concluded Assembly election from the Krishnanagar Uttar Assembly constituency.

"The Speaker's decision is final in such matters. If anyone has an issue, there



Mukul Roy

can be voting in the Assembly," the Chief Minister said.

The decision to appoint Mr. Roy the PAC Chairperson will not only help accommodate the veteran politician in a key post but also prevent a BJP legislator from occupying the post. Usually, the post is reserved for a member of the Opposition parties. On Wednesday, Mr. Roy filed his nomination for the post.

The BJP leadership said the development proved that the Trinamool Congress did not follow Constitutional norms.

## Calcutta HC reserves order on Mamata's recusal petition

She wants Nandigram plea to be referred to another Bench

SHIV SAHAY SINGH  
KOLKATA

The Calcutta High Court on Thursday reserved its order on a recusal application filed by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee urging that the election petition filed in the Nandigram results be assigned to another Bench.

Ms. Banerjee virtually participated in the hearing. Senior advocate A.M. Singhvi, who appeared for the Chief Minister, sought recusal of Justice Kausik Chanda on grounds of his association with the BJP as a lawyer. Reading from the recusal application, Dr. Singhvi said posts on various social media platforms suggested that Justice Chanda had a "close, pecuniary, personal, professional and ideological relationship with the BJP" and "close relationship with pro-



minent leaders such as Dilip Ghosh and Tathagata Roy".

Justice Chanda asked why the recusal petition had not been presented on June 18, when the matter was brought before him for hearing. During the hearing, there had been cordial discussions between the parties, and Justice Chanda observed that when he had first appeared for the BJP as a lawyer, he had not known the full name of the party.

Dr. Singhvi remarked that since then, the BJP has made

large strides in West Bengal. He added that the judge would only be elevating his stature by recusing himself from hearing the petition. Dr. Singhvi pointed out that two judges of the Supreme Court had recused themselves from hearing matters related to West Bengal.

Justice Chanda said while Dr. Singhvi was associated with the Congress, other counsel having links to the BJP were appearing for the Trinamool in the case. He also asked if he would not be giving in to a media trial if he recused himself. He added that he would think it over and reserved the judgment.

Earlier this month, Ms. Banerjee had filed a petition alleging irregularities in the counting exercise of the Nandigram Assembly results.

## RLD chief urges PM to end impasse on farm laws

Govt. appears to have further withdrawn from engaging with farmers, says Jayant Chaudhary in letter

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GHAZIABAD

In a fervent appeal to the Prime Minister to end the deadlock on the farm laws, Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) president Jayant Chaudhary said on Thursday that "policy measures can be termed as reforms only if they satisfy the larger social good".

"It pains the nation that even after your statement, the government appears to have further withdrawn from engaging with the farmer organisations even as the



**A long struggle:** Farmers protesting at the Singhu border in Delhi on June 12. \*SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

farmers are waiting at Delhi's borders," Mr. Chaudhary said in a letter to the Prime

Minister, written on the eve of the completion of six months of farmers' protests

against the farm laws.

Referring to the Agriculture Minister's statements suggesting that a rollback of laws was not possible, Mr. Chaudhary said he could understand that there was a fear in government circles that backtracking on these laws could become a precedent. "However, in the face of public sentiment, a sensitive government would not shy away from taking a step back in order to move forward."

"It is not clear to the farm-

ers how these laws improve their market position or pricing power," he said.

He contended that the farmers' agitation had a negative economic impact, but the failure to resolve the key issues had also hurt the pride of the nation's agriculturists.

Meanwhile, Bharatiya Kisan Union spokesperson Rakesh Tikait said on Thursday that "the farmers would find their remedy in Parliament and the government would be treated in villages".

## Rahul appears before court in Surat

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
AHMEDABAD

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi appeared before a magisterial court in Surat on Thursday in connection with a defamation case by a Gujarat BJP lawmaker Purnesh Modi.

"How come all the thieves have Modi as the common surname," he allegedly said at a rally in 2019, referring to diamond merchant Nirav Modi, former chief of IPL Lalit Modi and Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Mr. Gandhi said in court he never made such a statement. The case will be heard on July 12.

## In contact with stakeholders on Afghanistan, says India

MEA comment adds to reports of backchannel talks

KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE  
NEW DELHI

India on Thursday said it was in contact with "various stakeholders" in and around Afghanistan, confirming that South Block has adopted a broad-based approach to discuss the future of Afghanistan and the region around with various parties involved. The response came after National Security Adviser Ajit Doval addressed a meeting of his counterparts of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) held on Thursday in Dushanbe.

"India supports all peace initiatives and has a long-term commitment towards development and reconstruction of Afghanistan. In this context, we remain in touch with various stakeholders, including regional countries," said Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Arindam Bagchi. The comment has added more substance to the reports that India has held a round of secret talks with the members of the Taliban in Doha.

Arguing in favour of stron-

**India supports all peace initiatives and has a long-term commitment towards development of Afghanistan**

ARINDAM BAGCHI  
MEA spokesperson

ger ties with Kabul, Mr. Bagchi said India has brought development to Afghanistan which was ravaged by violence inflicted by cross-border actors. "India has brought electricity, dams, schools, health clinics, roads and community projects to Afghanistan. The world knows what Pakistan has brought to Afghanistan."

The comments on dialogue with relevant stakeholders has also added to the officially unconfirmed reports of backchannel talks that India has been conducting with Pakistan through third parties. Mr. Doval attended the SCO NSAs meeting, which also saw the participation of his Pakistani counterpart Moeed Yusuf, who has

been in the news over reports of backchannel talks.

Sources said Mr. Doval argued for the "need to preserve gains made in the last two decades in Afghanistan and give top priority to the welfare of its people". He also proposed an action plan against Pakistan-based terror outfits Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) as part of the anti-terror framework of the SCO and sought adoption of international standards to counter terror financing, including an MoU between the SCO and the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

Cross-border attacks against India by LeT and JeM have been at the centre of recent tensions with Pakistan. The issue was being discussed at the FATF on Thursday and a decision on grey-listing of Pakistan is expected as early as Friday. Mr. Doval also called for monitoring of new technologies used by terrorists, such as drones, dark web, Artificial Intelligence, blockchain and social media.

## Kerala women's panel chief's remark draws flak

She expresses regret for her reply

STAFF REPORTER  
KOLLAM

Kerala Women's Commission chairperson M.C. Josephine has courted controversy for asking a domestic violence victim to "suffer" as she has not filed a police complaint.

The video clip of a seemingly annoyed Ms. Josephine snapping at a victim created much resentment, with many demanding her resignation. Her rude remark to a distressed woman, who seemed a little hesitant to open up, also generated a volley of trolls on social media.

When the woman said she was being abused by her husband and her mother-in-law, the chairperson asked if she had approached the police.

The Ernakulam resident revealed she had not shared it with anyone and Ms. Josephine retorted with a curt "then you suffer".

Many prominent persons, including politicians, pointed out her behaviour as arrogant and demanded a more humane person as her replacement.

Ms. Josephine, in her statement, said that her hard tone was due to the issues in audio quality and she had only taken a mother's freedom with the woman. "It was my self-indignation over girls failing to come forward bravely with complaints, but on second thoughts I felt I could have avoided that comment. If my words have hurt her, I express regret," she said.

**'Totally clueless'**

She further explained that she was totally clueless about the format of the programme. "I had tried to avoid that programme due to my busy schedule and health issues. I decided to go when they told me my response was necessary and the subject was dowry-related. Only after reaching there, I came to know that it was a call-in programme," Ms. Josephine said.

In Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) president K. Sudhakaran slammed Ms. Josephine for slighting a victim of domestic violence.

## Maharashtra Congress chief called to Delhi

STAFF REPORTER  
MUMBAI

While on his trip to north Maharashtra to take stock of his party's growth in the region, Maharashtra Congress president Nana Patole was abruptly called to Delhi, giving rise to yet another round of speculation upon the already shaky political ground being seen in Maharashtra. However, the Congress said Mr. Patole's visit to Delhi was for organisational reasons.

"It's likely that we will be electing an Assembly Speaker in the upcoming monsoon session of the State legislature. The leaders in Delhi needed to speak about this. At the same time, several BJP MLAs want to join the Congress party in the coming time. That issue also needs to be discussed," said Mr. Patole.

Two days ago, NCP chief Sharad Pawar held a meeting with non-Congress, non-BJP leaders. Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray has slammed the Congress for its stand on going solo in future polls.

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### 'Pandemic hikes narcotics sale over web'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The lockdown restrictions during COVID-19 may have accelerated drug trafficking using the Internet, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime's World Drug Report 2021.

In Asia, China and India are the most frequently mentioned countries linked to shipment of drugs sold on the 19 major darknet markets analysed over 2011-2020.

"Access to drugs has also become simpler than ever with online sales, and major drug markets on the dark web are now worth some \$315 million annually. Contactless transactions, such as through the mail, are also on the rise, a trend possibly accelerated by the pandemic," it said.

Although this is a "tiny fraction" of overall drug sales, the trend of using dark web on the rise, with a fourfold increase in annual sales from the beginning of the 2010s to more recent years. While cannabis dominates darknet sales, marketing on the so-called clear web often involves new psychoactive substances.

## U.P. leads in number of shots given on Thursday

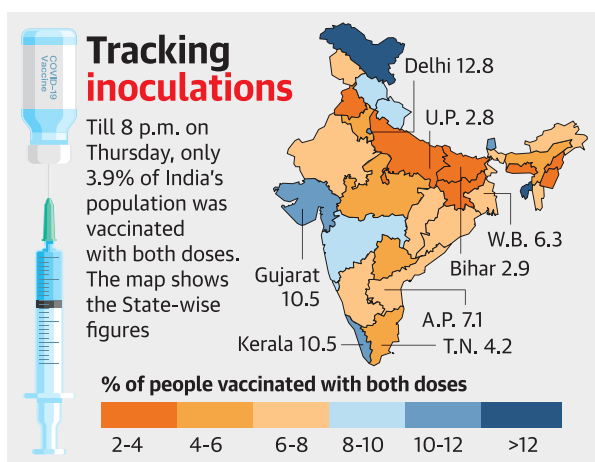
It is followed by Madhya Pradesh (7.3 lakh) & Gujarat (4.3 lakh)

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI

India administered 59.1 lakh (5.91 million) doses of COVID-19 vaccines until 9 p.m. on Thursday. Uttar Pradesh recorded the highest number of vaccinations (8.2 lakh) followed by Madhya Pradesh (7.3 lakh) and Gujarat (4.3 lakh).

Between June 1 and 23, 37.2 lakh doses were administered daily in India on average. At the current rate, a total of 100.3 crore doses can be administered by December 31, 2021, which is around 87.7 crore doses fewer than those required to fully vaccinate all adults (188 crore doses). To fully inoculate all adults by the end of this year, 82.2 lakh doses need to be given daily on average in the country.

The seven-day rolling average of daily vaccinations in the country continues to increase. It stood at 51.6 lakh on June 23, which is more than the 32.6 lakh recorded a week ago (June 16). It was also significantly higher than the average daily doses recorded a month before (May 23) which was 18.8 lakh.



About 26.8% of adults in India, 46% of those aged above 45, and 48.8% of people aged above 60, have got at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. However, only 3.9% are fully vaccinated. The figures are based on the estimated population in 2021.

India recorded 47,755 new COVID-19 cases until 9.15 p.m. on Thursday, taking the cumulative caseload to 3,01,29,934. As many as 1,280 new deaths were also registered taking the tally to 3,93,294. Kerala reported 12,078

new infections, followed by Maharashtra (9,844) and Tamil Nadu (6,162). Maharashtra recorded 556 new fatalities, followed by Tamil Nadu (155) and Karnataka (138). Maharashtra's fatalities include backlog deaths which were missed in the previous reports.

The figures do not include cases and deaths from Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Tripura, Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Ladakh. The data are sourced from the respective States' health bulletins.

## Full licence for Covaxin may take time

Health officials have sought more data from studies

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Bharat Biotech, the manufacturer of Covaxin, may not be given full licence for its COVID vaccine just yet, said a senior health official, saying the vaccine will continue to be used under emergency authorisation.

While the company refused to comment on the latest development, Union Health Ministry officials said the authorities have sought more data from follow up studies.

The company earlier this week had submitted data from Phase 3 trials to the subject expert committee (SEC) of the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO). The yet-to-be published data submitted showed that Covaxin had demonstrated a 77.8% efficacy in its Phase 3 trial, which was conducted on 25,800 subjects. "The proposal seeking full licensure for Covaxin, was looked into and we have sought more details. Till then Covaxin will continue to be available to public under the earlier emergency authorisation," an official said.



Inoculation drive: A religious leader getting vaccinated at a mosque in Bhopal. \*A.M. FARUQUI

Meanwhile, the Health Ministry on Thursday denied allegations of non-transparent allocation of COVID-19 vaccines to States.

### Allocation of doses

The Central government continues to allocate COVID-19 vaccines to States and Union Territories in a transparent manner, it said, adding that distribution of vaccines is based on population of a State, caseload or disease burden and the State's utilisation efficiency.

The Ministry noted that allocation is negatively affected by vaccine wastage. "India's national COVID

vaccination programme is built on scientific and epidemiological evidence, WHO guidelines and global best practices. Anchored in systematic end-to-end planning, it is implemented through effective and efficient participation of States and Union Territories and the people at large," said the Ministry.

It noted that information about the vaccine supply by Central Government, consumption by the States and Union Territories, unutilised vaccine doses available with them, along with vaccine supply in the pipeline, is regularly shared in the public domain.

## Mamata calls for early WHO approval

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking his intervention to ensure early approval of indigenously developed Covaxin from the World Health Organisation (WHO). Ms. Banerjee has for the past few days flagged concerns of students vaccinated with Covaxin, who are in a bind as their vaccination certificates are not valid abroad.

"Large number of students from all over the country travel abroad every year for higher studies. Many of these students have got themselves vaccinated with Covaxin and came to learn later on, that their vaccination certificate is not valid abroad. These students are now in a fix regarding their next course of action and their career is at stake," the Chief Minister wrote.

Ms. Banerjee said WHO's approval for Covaxin would also help those travelling abroad for jobs.

## Outrage over felling of heritage pine trees for road in Meghalaya

NHIDCL told to halt chopping until govt. finds a solution

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GUWAHATI

The felling of several iconic pine trees for widening a road in Meghalaya capital Shillong has triggered outrage, forcing the State government to intervene.

Most of these coniferous trees, among the hill town's USPs, were more than 100 years old.

Green activists said the National Highway Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL) took advantage of the COVID-19 lockdown to chop the pine trees locals were attached to. But the government swung into action on June 23 after photos and videos of the logs lying beside the road from the town's Riblong Bridge to Upper Shillong went viral.

This stretch of the road is part of the 71 km Shillong-Dawki four-lane project estimated to cost ₹1,251 crore. Dawki is a trade point on the border with Bangladesh.

Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma asked the NHIDC to immediately stop felling the trees until the government finds a better solution. His instruction coincided with an observation of the National Green Tribunal on a Goa bypass that construction of a



Chopped pine trees along the Shillong-Dawki road. \*SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

road may be a necessity but should not result in the destruction of biodiversity.

### Cleared by Centre

A Meghalaya Forest Department official said it had received orders to cut down 4,447 trees for the road widening project after it was cleared by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

The State's Forest Minister, James Sangma said the trees on one side of the road were felled as it was "totally unavoidable".

He also said the right of way for the project had been reduced from the standard 45-60 metres to 24 metres in

order to minimise the damage.

Forest officials said 10 trees would be planted in lieu of each tree felled. But locals said this would hardly make a difference as the site chosen for compensatory afforestation is in another district.

"We would like to know if the government followed Indian Forest Act, Biodiversity Act and Meghalaya Forest Regulation Act before the trees were hewn. Who gave the land for the project and who is funding for the destruction of the trees?" said activist Agnes Kharshiing, president of Civil Society Women Organisation.

## Congress to combat vaccine hesitancy

Party plans outreach in 736 districts

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Thursday asked party colleagues to play an active role in ensuring vaccination coverage of 75% of India's population by the year end and also address the issue of hesitancy with regard to COVID-19 vaccines.

Following a virtual meeting of the general secretaries and All India Congress Committee (AICC) members in charge of various States with Ms. Gandhi, the party has decided to step up its COVID-19 outreach programme by visiting over 3 crore households across 736 districts in a span of 30 days.

From July 1 to 17, the Congress will also hold protests against rising prices of petrol and diesel as well as food items by taking out protest marches, cycle yatrias and signature campaign at petrol pumps, general secretary (organisation) K.C. Venugopal said.

Addressing the AICC office-bearers, Ms. Gandhi said experts had pointed to the possibility of a third wave in a few months and the vulnerability of the children in such a scenario.

"The second wave these past four months has been



Sonia Gandhi

devastating for lakhs and lakhs of families all over the country. We must learn from this traumatic experience so that we do not have to experience it yet again," Ms. Gandhi said.

The Congress chief urged party leaders to disseminate the party's white paper (released on June 22) that not only details the "failure" of the Narendra Modi government in handling the pandemic but also offers suggestions in aggressively vaccinating the majority of the adult population in the shortest possible time.

Ms. Gandhi also talked about the 'intolerable' burden placed on the people because of the rising fuel prices and the skyrocketing prices of essential commodities like pulses and edible oils.

## Jab status linked to resuming of businesses in northeast

Assam to release pay to frontline staff only after vaccination

RAHUL KARMAKAR  
GUWAHATI

The COVID-19 vaccination status has been linked to the opening of shops and business establishments, operation of commercial passenger vehicles as well as the salaries of some government employees in the northeastern region.

Besides, these are incentives such as free rice and cash offered by some local authorities to counter the reluctance or resistance to inoculation by people, many of whom believe that the vaccine induces infertility and genetic changes.

On June 23, the High Court of Meghalaya directed all shops, commercial establishments, taxi, auto-rickshaw and bus operators to display the vaccination status of their staff. This followed the hearing of a petition challenging the orders of the State's Deputy Commissioner asking shopkeepers, vendors, local cabbies and others to get vaccinated before they resume their business.

The Bench of Chief Justice Biswanath Somadder and Justice H.S. Thangkhiew observed that the orders of the district heads should be



Meghalaya has asked all shopkeepers to take jabs.

seen as a "persuasive advisory" and not coercion. The court, however, pointed out that forced vaccination violates the fundamental rights of the people concerned while advising all shops, commercial centres and public commercial vehicles should prominently display the words "vaccinated" or "not vaccinated" to let their customers or passengers know about their status.

"In the event, any shops/establishments/local taxis/auto-rickshaws/maxi cabs and buses flout the above directions, the authority concerned of the State shall immediately direct its closure/stoppage of plying," the court ordered.

The court, fixing June 30 as the next date of hearing, also said the authorities should immediately step in and proceed in accordance with the law if there was any

attempt made by any person or organisation to spread misinformation regarding the efficacy of vaccines among the people of the State.

The Assam government has directed all the departmental heads to ascertain the vaccination status of their frontline employees before releasing their monthly salaries.

Chief Secretary Jishnu Barua, also the chairperson of the State Disaster Management Authority, Assam (ASDMA), issued the order after officials found out that many frontline government employees had not taken their COVID-19 vaccine shots. "Non-vaccination of such frontline government servants may give rise to the possibility of further spread of the virus, which in turn may endanger the lives of common citizens, especially the vulnerable groups like children, pregnant women, etc.," the order said.

"Direct all department heads to ascertain the vaccination status of such government servants before releasing the monthly salary/remuneration from the current month (June) onwards," it added.

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SCAN TO PLAY

- 15 Ire of heavenly messenger switching sides (5)
- 16 Rise with first toe stuck in beach (5)
- 18 Regularly sign report in reverse (9)
- 22 Rarotonga district has argon air mixture (8)
- 23 Sleep a smaller amount? Not quite in this city (6)
- 25 Instrument for a University teacher oddly near nightshade (10)
- 26 Prosecuted complicated dues (4)
- 27 Designed enclosure with light emitting diode (6)
- 28 Idiot, alien initially stumble upon valuables (6)
- DOWN
- 1 Winter wind removes one from invalid court case (7)
- 2 Rotis made by trunks (5)
- 3 Crucify, we hear, one who gives light (7)
- 5 Alters ridiculous demands, removes source of doubt (6)
- 6 Living quarters make ringing sounds around water source (9)
- 7 Sea mammal overturned silvery metal at afternoon performance (7)
- 8 Confused senior happens to have misgivings (13)
- 14 As a rule, has army commander's regular play (9)
- 17 Rodent returns, attains goals (7)
- 19 In a riot, ensnared, let go of ringleader of groups of nine (7)
- 20 They walk out to face the new ball (7)
- 21 Irritable single heartless canine emotes initially (2,4)
- 24 Spread ancient education at first (5)

SUDOKU

9						7		5
4	7				8			
		6		9		1		
			4	3		5		
1	4	5		9	2		7	
	9		1	7				
	3		4		8			
		8					5	6
6	7							2

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

Solution to puzzle 13282

C	A	R	N	A	U	R	A	S	O	R	D	I	O
B	O	R	A	C	I	A	R	T	I	S	T	S	
A	E	H	K	C	E	A	H						
L	I	S	T	E	S	C	I	N	T	I	L	L	
T	T	T	C	N	L	L	N						
H	Y	D	R	O	G	E	N	B	O	M	B		
F	M	V	E	N	T	A	T	A	W	E			
E	L	E	V	E	N	T	H	E	O	U	R		
E	A	C	E	G	S	F							
B	E	T	H	L	E	H	E	M	H	E	L	L	
L	B	O	I	U	T	U	R						
E	V	A	S	I	O	N	S	H	I	N	D	I	
S	L	R	G	I	E	G	E						
T	I	L	L	E	R	S	C	A	R	I	E	S	

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

5	1	2	4	3	7	9	6	8
6	3	4	1	8	9	5	2	7
8	7	9	2	5	6	3	1	4
3	5	1	9	7	8	2	4	6
9	2	7	5	6	4	1	8	3
4	6	8	3	1	2	7	5	9
7	9	6	8	2	5	4	3	1
1	4	5	6	9	3	8	7	2
2	8	3	7	4	1	6	9	5

FAITH

### Blissful atma swaroopa

In the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, Yagnyavalkya explains to Maitreyi that the self or the atma alone is very dear to each one of us, though we may think we love and care for our kith and kin, etc, and our possessions. This is because the atma swaroopa is essentially blissful and each one longs to attain this bliss.

In the grantha Satasloki, Adi Sankara alludes to the human tendency to get attached to people, objects, places, etc, and shows that this attachment is the real cause of sorrow, pointed out Sri K. Ramasubramanian in a discourse. The acharya explains with examples to show that the self is dearer than anything else to each one of us. All objects are valued because we think they give us happiness though in reality no object can give sorrow or happiness always. Thus we shift between likes and dislikes throughout our existence. If some objects cause sorrow, they are discarded. Though one may say one's wife, son or others are dear to him, they are not really the object of his desire. For, he will not hesitate to assert his rights and views in case differences of opinion may arise. Suppose the son refuses to act according to the wishes of his father or the wife chooses to make independent decisions that are not to one's liking, then the choice would be to reject them in preference to his own wishes. If suppose a man's hand is badly infected and the doctor advises amputation, the person surely will agree rather than endanger his life. He would not mind losing his hand though it had served him well until then.

The idea is that all these are dear to a person only because he thinks he derives happiness from them. Ultimately it is one's own self that is the real object of love and not others. Everything is dear only for one's own sake.



## MARKET WATCH

	24-06-2021	% CHANGE
Sensex	52,699	0.75
US Dollar	74.18	0.12
Gold	46283	-0.24
Brent oil	75.38	-0.40

## NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	709.90	-8.80
Asian Paints	3043.25	55.90
Axis Bank	739.15	6.30
Bajaj Auto	4226.90	28.30
Bajaj Finserv	12333.25	51.00
Bajaj Finance	6043.60	28.00
Bharti Airtel	528.75	-5.30
BPCL	466.10	-3.50
Britannia Ind	3689.10	29.80
Cipla	950.90	-6.85
Coal India	146.40	-2.05
Divis Lab	4250.35	25.75
Dr Reddys Lab	5277.65	-21.70
Eicher Motors	2706.75	-21.85
Grasim Ind	1498.90	0.15
HCL Tech	989.70	16.80
HDFC	2487.40	-9.80
HDFC Bank	1506.25	20.75
HDFC Life	719.60	1.85
Hero MotoCorp	2906.95	-21.40
Hindalco	369.05	0.95
Hind Unilever	2490.15	9.65
ICICI Bank	634.05	9.35
IndusInd Bank	1000.65	1.10
Infosys	1559.20	56.05
Indian Oil Corp	111.45	-1.45
ITC	203.25	-0.70
JSW Steel	679.00	13.50
Kotak Bank	1737.90	1.20
L&T	1504.05	24.80
M&M	791.80	9.85
Maruti Suzuki	7527.45	94.75
Nestle India Ltd.	17619.75	204.95
NTPC	118.00	0.75
ONGC	122.00	-1.35
PowerGrid Corp	231.15	-1.10
Reliance Ind	2153.50	-51.85
SBI Life	1002.15	1.60
State Bank	417.20	-1.65
Shree Cement	28672.30	-194.90
Sun Pharma	664.80	-0.45
Tata Consumer		
Products Ltd.	757.45	-0.40
Tata Motors	334.65	-0.60
Tata Steel	1113.15	13.05
TCS	3373.60	112.20
Tech Mahindra	1080.00	23.55
Titan	1780.85	-1.70
UltraTech Cement	6961.95	58.60
UPL	813.45	9.45
Wipro	549.05	8.90

## EXCHANGE RATES

Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on June 24

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	73.96	74.28
Euro	88.32	88.73
British Pound	103.27	103.75
Japanese Yen (100)	66.71	67.00
Chinese Yuan	11.43	11.49
Swiss Franc	80.48	80.87
Singapore Dollar	55.05	55.30
Canadian Dollar	60.16	60.42
Malaysian Ringgit	17.77	17.86

Source: Indian Bank

## IN BRIEF



## Govt. will rely on COVID data for an intervention

KOLKATA The Centre will closely monitor COVID-19 data for six weeks to chart the path it needs to walk for economic intervention, rather than making announcements based on projections of the third wave, Principal Economic Advisor to the finance ministry, Sanjeev Sanyal said. PTI

## SAT stays SEBI penalties in Cairn buyback case

NEW DELHI The Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT) has stayed the penalties imposed by markets regulator SEBI on Cairn India and others for making a misleading announcement regarding buyback of shares in 2014. It also directed Cairn India, which was merged with Vedanta Ltd., and others, to deposit ₹2.5 crore with SEBI within three weeks. PTI

## SPORT

## Brazil edges Colombia amidst controversy

Peru rescues a draw against Ecuador, leaving both with a chance to progress

## COPA AMERICA

REUTERS  
RIO DE JANEIRO

Brazil trailed for the first time in eight games on Wednesday but responded with a controversial equaliser before netting a dramatic winner deep into stoppage time for a 2-1 victory over Colombia in the Copa America.

Brazil went behind in the 10th minute thanks to a wonder strike from Luis Diaz. Juan Cuadrado swung in a cross from the right and Port midfielder Diaz leapt acrobatically to volley an overhead kick past a helpless Wervton.

Brazil was forced to chase the game and it had most of the ball and almost all the chances, though Colombia did an excellent job of closing it down in the final third.

The hosts eventually got an equaliser with 12 minutes

## Reliance to invest ₹75,000 crore in 'new energy'

Company to set up four 'giga factories' for solar photovoltaic modules, batteries, electrolyzers and fuel cells in Jamnagar

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

Reliance Industries Ltd. (RIL) on Thursday announced plans to invest ₹75,000 crore in its 'new energy' business.

RIL aims to set up four large manufacturing units involving an investment of ₹60,000 crore in three years at Jamnagar, Gujarat.

"We have started work on developing the Dhirubhai Ambani Green Energy Giga Complex on 5,000 acres in Jamnagar," CMD Mukesh Ambani told shareholders at the company's 42nd annual general meeting. "It will be among the largest such integrated renewable energy manufacturing facilities in the world." He said the four factories would make and fully integrate all 'critical compo-



**Eyeing scale:** RIL will create a fully integrated, end-to-end renewable energy ecosystem, says Ambani. ■ REUTERS

nents of the new energy ecosystem".

"We will build an integrated solar photovoltaic module factory. We will build an advanced energy storage

battery factory, an electrolyser factory, and for converting hydrogen into motive and stationary power, we will build a fuel cell factory," he said. "Reliance will thus

create a fully integrated, end-to-end renewables energy ecosystem," he added.

Mr. Ambani said the Jamnagar complex would offer infrastructure and utilities to make ancillary material and equipment so that all critical materials were available in time. "We will invest an additional ₹15,000 crore in value chain, partnerships and future technologies, including upstream and downstream industries."

## 'Affordable smartphone'

Mr. Ambani also announced that the Google and Jio teams had developed an 'ultra-affordable', fully featured 4G smartphone — JioPhone Next. The phone would support applications from both Google and Jio as well as from the Android PlayStore.

Developed for the Indian market, the phone would be commercially available from September 10.

RIL also announced that Saudi Aramco's chairman Yasir Al-Rumayyan would join the board as an independent director, adding that the RIL-Aramco deal would be formalised in 2021. In 2019, RIL had said it would sell 20% in its oil-to-chemicals unit to Saudi Aramco for \$15 billion.

On the partnership with Facebook, Mr. Ambani said an initial set of integrations between WhatsApp and JioMart had been introduced on a trial basis.

"Our joint teams are developing the full new commerce solution linking merchants and consumers," the RIL CMD said. The firm planned to unveil these over

the next few quarters.

He added that RIL had tested Jio's 5G solutions in India and had demonstrated "speeds well in excess of 1 Gbps... we are confident of being the first to launch full-fledged 5G services."

## 'Threefold growth'

The firm's subsidiary Reliance Retail would grow at least threefold in the next 3-5 years, he said. The unit, which aims to be among the top 10 global retailers, would create employment for more than 10 lakh people in three years, he added.

Reliance Retail would continue to acquire businesses to heighten its offering, sharpen omnichannel capabilities, and drive operating efficiencies, Mr. Ambani said. (With PTI inputs)

## Fitch lifts RIL's rating a notch above India's

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

Fitch Ratings has upgraded Reliance Industries Ltd.'s rating to 'BBB', one notch above India's sovereign rating, as RIL benefits from cash flow generation across diversified business segments and the continuation of deleveraging.

In a statement, Fitch said it had upgraded RIL's long-term foreign-currency issuer default rating (IDR) to 'BBB' from 'BBB-', with a negative outlook. At the same time, the agency affirmed RIL's long-term local-currency IDR at 'BBB-' with a stable outlook.

The company has cut its foreign-currency borrowings outside India by 36% following prepayment of \$7.8 billion in FY21.

## 'Ensure GST cuts reach users'

Plaints on COVID-essentials' prices must be prioritised: NAA

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The National Anti-Profitteering Authority (NAA) has directed GST officials across the country to ensure that the tax rate cuts notified on some COVID-19-related essentials are passed on to consumers.

Complaints from end users about lack of price reductions commensurate with the tax cuts, are to be treated on a priority basis and forwarded to the State-level Screening Committees and Standing Committees on Anti-Profitteering, the NAA Secretary A.K. Goel said in a memo posted on its website on Thursday.

At its last meeting on June 12, the GST Council had waived the indirect tax le-

## Suppliers are required to commensurately reduce prices

vised on two critical drugs, Tocilizumab and Amphotericin B, and reset the tax rate to 5% on 14 COVID-19 essentials. On June 14, the Finance Ministry had notified the revised rates, which are applicable till September 30.

"The suppliers are required to commensurately reduce the prices of each of the supplies of Goods and Services made by them so that the benefit of the reduction in tax rates and/or of input tax credits is passed on to the recipients/consumers," the NAA emphasised.

Tax experts said that producers of items ranging from

ambulances to pulse oximeters and oxygen concentrators would need to ensure retail price reductions were effected soon and paperwork filed to justify the extent of reductions, in order to avoid action under the anti-profitteering framework.

"Businesses dealing with medical supplies that have undergone a GST rate reduction need to ensure that they have adequate documentation to demonstrate that the rate cuts have been passed on to the consumers," said M.S. Mani, senior director at Deloitte India.

Suppliers or firms who had not got the benefit of input tax credits on account of cuts in the GST rate could also file complaints, with the anti-profitteering apparatus.

## NCLT reserves order on Siva Industries' bid

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI

The National Company Law Tribunal, Chennai, has reserved its order on the one-time settlement (OTS) offer made by promoters of Siva Industries & Holdings Ltd. to lenders.

Last week, NCLT directed the lenders to explain the rationale behind accepting the OTS. Under this, ₹4,200 crore of claims will be settled with Siva Industries paying ₹323 crore and third-party guarantors ₹555 crore. In 2019, the NCLT admitted an insolvency plea against the C.Sivasankaran-promoted firm in a case filed by IDBI Bank.

Later, a majority of the committee of lenders approved the OTS offer.

## S&amp;P cuts India's FY22 growth forecast to 9.5%

'Further waves pose a risk to outlook'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

S&P Global Ratings on Thursday cut India's growth forecast for the current fiscal to 9.5%, from 11% earlier, and warned of risk to the outlook from further waves of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The agency lowered the growth outlook saying that a severe second COVID-19 outbreak in April and May led to lockdowns imposed by States and sharp contraction in economic activity.

"We forecast a growth of 9.5% this fiscal year from our March forecast of 11%," S&P said.

Stating that permanent damage to private and public sector balance sheets would constrain growth over



er the next couple of years, it projected India's growth at 7.8% in the fiscal year ending March 31, 2022.

One of the criteria is the net NPA ratio must be lower than 6% in each of the last three years. No specific ceiling on payout has been set for NBFCs not taking public funds and not having customer interface.

The maximum payout ratio for core investment firms would be 60%, standalone primary dealers 60% and other NBFCs 50%.

## RBI sets rules for NBFCs to pay dividends

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has issued norms for NBFC dividend distribution to infuse greater transparency in the practice.

The norms will be effective for dividend declaration from the profit for the financial year ending March 31, 2022.

One of the criteria is the net NPA ratio must be lower than 6% in each of the last three years. No specific ceiling on payout has been set for NBFCs not taking public funds and not having customer interface.

The maximum payout ratio for core investment firms would be 60%, standalone primary dealers 60% and other NBFCs 50%.

## '88% of SMBs yet to avail stimulus benefits'

Lockdowns severely crippled sector with 59% of units laying off staff: CIA survey

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

As much as 88% of self-employed, small and micro businesses (SMB) were yet to avail any benefit under the stimulus schemes unveiled by the Centre, the findings of a survey by the Consortium of Indian Associations (CIA) and its 40 partner SMB associations show.

Also, 82% of the more than 81,000 self-employed, micro/small businesses (SMBs) surveyed opined that the Union and State governments were not taking care of their interests.

The respondents included manufacturers (49%), service providers (15%), self-employed (14%) besides consultants, start-ups, traders,



food and hospitality units.

The COVID-19 first wave and second wave "induced lockdowns over the last 15 months have severely crippled the sector, as disclosed by the findings of the report," the CIA said in a release on Thursday.

As per the findings, 73% of SMBs had not made any profit during the last fiscal and

42% were unable to decide on retention of employees; 59% said they had reduced/sacked/removed their staff compared with the pre-COVID period.

## 'Pain points, solutions'

"Over the past year, CIA has provided vital suggestions on several initiatives taken by the Central and State governments for the benefit of MSMEs," said K.E. Raghunathan, convener, CIA. "We realised a data-backed survey would help consolidate the feedback from this sector, to bring out the pain points and provide solutions and a way forward to revive the sector," he added.

The findings suggest the need for a three-pronged ap-

proach by exempting SMBs from statutory compliances, penal actions and litigation; protecting them from high interest burden, price wars, high cost of raw materials, losing employees, penalties, and late fees, and supporting them by giving liberal loans, clearing pending dues, offering moratorium with interest waiver and not declaring sectoral NPAs for a year.

CIA proposed that the Centre amend the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Act, 2006, to strengthen State facilitation councils.

It also suggested collecting data on self-employed, MSME units from banks, which could help in correct classification of businesses.

## ALL turned a profit in Q4 on higher volume

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI

Ashok Leyland Ltd. has returned to black, reporting standalone net profit of ₹241 crore for the fourth quarter ended March due to 66% industry volume growth in M&HCV sector.

The truck-and-bus maker had incurred a net loss of ₹57 crore a year earlier due to a slowdown in the commercial vehicle market. Revenue from operations rose to ₹7,000 crore (₹3,838 crore). The board declared a final dividend of 60 paise per share. During the quarter, M&HCV truck volumes grew 111% for the company, it said in a regulatory filing.

## 'U.S. group views India's e-com plan as worrying'

It limits operating environment: USIBC

REUTERS  
NEW DELHI

A top lobby group, that is a part of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, considers India's proposed new e-commerce rules a cause for concern and would lead to a stringent operating environment for companies, according to an e-mail reviewed by Reuters.

India has spooked online retailers like Amazon and Walmart's Flipkart with plans to limit 'flash sales,' reigning in a private label push and mandating a system to address grievances.

The Washington-headquartered U.S.-India Business Council (USIBC), of



which Amazon and Walmart are members, described the rules as concerning in an internal e-mail, saying some provisions were in line with New Delhi's stance on other big digital companies.

The USIBC did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

## Focusing on reaching quarterfinals: Marijne

## HOCKEY

UTHRA GANESAN  
PATIALA

The Indian women's hockey team will be appearing in its second consecutive Olympics at Tokyo and coach Sjoerd Marijne insists the team's focus is firmly on realising its optimum potential.

"The team's focus has grown in the last few years, but the really important moments were the matches against Argentina. It's not just about the mindset but also about good results. Against Argentina, I showed them that we entered more in their circle and created more opportunities but they scored more."

"I am not making things up, only showing them the reality that we were creating more chances than Argentina. Their confidence has grown and there is belief that we are going to the Olympics not just to participate but to



Sjoerd Marijne. ■ FILE PHOTO

"At the same time, if we do not make the quarters, I will not be disappointed in the girls. I will be only disappointed for them because I see how much they put in every day," he said.

## Staying calm

Asked about handling the pressure of Olympics, captain Rani Rampal said the team had got used to it.

"Pressure is always there, even on those who may have already won Olympic medals, but now we have learnt to handle it. Janneke (Schoorman) has been working with us to stay calm and in control and it has helped a lot," she said.

Marijne was also categorical about his team selection. "Picking a team for the Olympics is not about the last 3-4 months, but the past four years. I don't think a few extra matches would have done much to change my mind about the team."

## England has it easy in first T20I

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
CARDIFF

Jos Buttler saw England to a comfortable eight-wicket win in the first Twenty20 International against Sri Lanka here on Wednesday.

Sri Lanka was restricted to a modest 129 for seven after deciding to bat.

Only Dasun Shanaka with 50 off 44 balls really threatened England.

England won with 17 balls to spare. Buttler thrashed eight fours and a six and shared an opening stand of 80 with Jason Roy.

**The scores:** Sri Lanka 129/7 in 20 overs (Kusal Perera 30, Dasun Shanaka 50, Sam Curran 2/25, Adil Rashid 2/17) lost to England 130/2 in 17.1 overs (Jason Roy 36, Jos Buttler 68 n.o.).

**Toss:** SL; **MoM:** Buttler. England won by eight wickets, leads three-match series 1-0.

# Williamson & Co. soak up the top-of-the-world feeling

Great to end up on the right side of a final for a change, says the New Zealand captain

WTC  
S. DIPAK RAGAV

After leading his side to its first ICC Trophy in 21 years, Kane Williamson said it was finally good to end up on the right side of a final after losing the last two 50-over World Cup finals in 2015 and 2019.

"2019 was a great occasion and a brilliant game of cricket, as well. But obviously, a slightly different feeling being on the right side of the result for us. Also, a part of a great game of cricket and a great occasion where it was the first, I suppose, official World Test Championship, and this is a really good feeling," said Williamson.

**Praise for Taylor**  
On his partnership with Ross Taylor, Williamson, who made an unbeaten half-century,

said, "... fantastic to be part of a contribution and a partnership like that. Obviously, with Ross, our most experienced player and leader in the group, it was nice that we were able to soak up some of the pressure and then sort of score a few together, although it was really difficult to come by. But having an experienced hitter like Ross out there was certainly helpful.

"You know, a really special feeling to be there at the end together and tick those runs off. Even though it was 130-odd on that surface, you never felt comfortable. It was nice to soak up some of that pressure and put together a partnership," he said.

During the post-match presentation, Williamson also credited his team for sticking to its beliefs and style of cricket.

"We know we don't always



Reverie time: Kane Williamson with the first WTC champion's mace at the site of Hambledon CC, known as the 'Cradle of Cricket'. •PTI

have the stars and we rely on a few other bits and pieces players to try and stay in games and be competitive.

And I think we saw that in this match, we saw a lot of heart, a lot of commitment, what's important to our

group and the commitment to the style of cricket we held strong, which was great," he said.

## Making a mark AT THE WTC

The top performers in the inaugural World Test Championship (WTC) which began in 2019 and culminated in the final between New Zealand and India at Southampton

BATTING						
	M	Inns	N.O.	Runs	HS	Avg.
Marnus Labuschagne (Aus)	13	23	0	1675	215	72.82
Joe Root (Eng)	20	37	2	1660	228	47.42
Steve Smith (Aus)	13	22	1	1341	211	63.85
Ben Stokes (Eng)	17	32	3	1334	176	46.00
Ajinkya Rahane (Ind)	18	30	3	1159	115	42.92

BOWLING						
	M	Inns	Wkts.	BBI	Avg.	SR
R. Ashwin (Ind)	14	26	71	7/145	20.33	46.4
Pat Cummins (Aus)	14	28	70	5/28	21.02	47.6
Stuart Broad (Eng)	17	32	69	6/31	20.08	43.4
Tim Southee (NZ)	11	22	56	5/32	20.82	46.2
Nathan Lyon (Aus)	14	27	56	6/49	31.37	67.5

SOURCE: ESPNCRICKINFO

# Kohli expresses reservation on format

India skipper says it needs more than one Test to decide the champion

ASHWIN ACHAL

India captain Virat Kohli believes that the World Test Championship (WTC) final should ideally be contested over the course of a three or five-Test series.

Speaking after India lost to New Zealand in the one-off WTC final at Southampton on Wednesday, Kohli stated that the current format does not accurately reveal a true champion.

"I'm not in absolute agreement with deciding the best Test side in the world over the course of one game. It has to be a test of character over three Tests - which team has the ability to come back into the series, or totally blow away the other team.

**Hard grind**  
"It can't just be pressure applied over two days of good cricket. It has to be a hard grind. At the end of three matches, there's effort, ups and downs, situations changing throughout the course of the series, a chance to rectify



Not true index: Kohli, congratulating Williamson, says the final was not a measure of his team's ability. •AFP

things you've done wrong in the first game... Then you can really see who's the better side," Kohli said at the post-match media interaction.

"If you saw the way this game went, why wouldn't you want to see two more Tests of the teams battling it out to eventually win the WTC?"

"Historically, all the great Test series' are remembered for being three or five match-

es long. I think this definitely has to be brought in. I'm not saying this because we're not on the winning side. For this (WTC final) to be absolutely memorable, I think it has to happen over three games at a minimum," said the Indian skipper.

"We are not too bothered by this result because we understand what we've done over the last three-four years as a Test side. This (WTC fi-

## Captain Kohli in ICC tournaments

- 2017 Champions Trophy: Lost to Pakistan in the final
- 2019 World Cup (50-over): Lost to New Zealand in the semifinals
- 2021 WTC final: Lost to New Zealand in the final

**The one-off factor does bring a unique dynamic and makes it [final] exciting. On any given day, anything can happen**

WILLIAMSON

nal) is not a measure of who we are as a team, and the ability and potential we have had for so many years," he said.

On the team's batting struggles in the summit clash, Kohli said, "We definitely need to work out better plans in terms of understanding how to score runs. We have to stay in sync with the momentum of the game, and not let the game drift away too much."

# No wasted motion, no needless surround-sound

New Zealand's cricket is pure, smart and flexible, its behaviour poised and fuss-free

K.C. VIJAYA KUMAR

India's losing streak in Tests at Southampton got its third extension when Ross Taylor struck New Zealand's winning runs on Wednesday evening. If the previous two defeats came in series involving host England (2014, 2018), the latest meltdown happened in a bigger contest invested with a larger meaning - the World Test Championship final.

New Zealand had also stymied India's World Cup ambitions in the 2019 edition with a stunning triumph in the semifinal at Manchester and it still remains a festering wound.

**Skilled unit**  
Virat Kohli's men again ran into the same opponent thriving on the eternally calm Kane Williamson, a set of handy batsmen ranging from fresher Devon Conway to veteran Taylor and an array of swing bowlers pitching in on a penny and also using the elements as a wonderful ally.

## Saluting the BLACK CAPS

Better team won in the conditions. Deserved winners after the longest wait for a World title. Classic example of big things don't come easy. Well played, New Zealand. Respect

Good things happen to good people. Congrats, Williamson

Absolutely worthy champions. Happy for Williamson and Taylor

## Quality performance. Deserved win

A humble, hard-working and outstanding Test team - worthy champions

Humility, hard work, dedication to the team and the fans. World champions in so many ways

Once Williamson won the toss and the fickle English weather kept ushering in a damp curtain, Indian batsmen never felt at ease, even if in the first dig openers Rohit Sharma and Shubman Gill strung a 62-run partnership. New Zealand maximised its advantage and with Kyle Jamieson bowling with seductive precision, edges were taken.

New Zealand played the percentages better and with Williamson being the batting glue in both outings, the eventual champion always stayed ahead of India. And when the chase commenced on the sixth and final day, the sun was out, the outfield dried up and shots carried to the fence unlike the previous days when the ball seemed

The winning side also had the advantage of having played two Tests previously against England while Kohli's men only had intra-squad warm-ups. It was brave of India to step in with five bowlers while expecting Rishabh Pant, Ravindra Jadeja and R. Ashwin to serve as a bridge between the top-order and a weak tail. India needed runs on the board but what emerged proved inadequate and there was not much cushioning for the bowlers when they stepped out with their boots.

India ran into a better side and there is no running away from that fact. Williamson has shaped a unit that works with rigour, is quick to change strategy and all done with remarkable finesse while the on-field behaviour is always one of poise. This was cricket without needless surround-sound but it had a purity and smartness that would have made the late Martin Crowe proud, obviously watching his wards from the skies.

# A pace battery firing on all cylinders

S. DINAKAR CHENNAI

In his heyday, he earned the sobriquet Sultan of Swing. Now, in the evening of his life, his words carry immense wisdom.

The second Test of the 2019-20 India-New Zealand series was in progress at Christchurch, Sir Richard Hadlee's eyes scan the ground, his steely gaze picking up little things.

In the middle, the Indians were crumbling, and the man doing the damage was Kyle Jamieson, all of 6'8".

"We never had someone like him before. Perhaps in the '50s, but none after that. Nobody with his height and natural bounce," Hadlee was speaking to *The Hindu*. "He adds another dimension to the New Zealand bowling," said Hadlee.

The legendary bowler's

words were ringing in the ears when Jamieson pinned the batsmen on the back foot with his lift and, with their footwork disrupted, consumed them with fuller length and swing to scalp five in the Indian first innings of the ICC World Test Championship final at Southampton.

And then he opened up the Indian batting on the final day, setting Virat Kohli up with deliveries moving into him and taking him out with one that left the right-hander. Soon, he had Cheteshwar Pujara snapped up in the slips.

New Zealand's pace was always probing, but Jamieson has lent it the cutting edge with his pace, lift, off-stump line, seam movement and swing. And, he changes his length so adeptly.

With the arrival of Jamie-



The four musketeers! The firepower generated by Jamieson, Southee, Boult and Wagner was too much for the Indians to handle. •INSTAGRAM/ICC

son, New Zealand's pace attack is complete. After all, you have the left-right combination of Trent Boult and Tim Southee, who between them, have over 600 Test wickets. They come from varying angles, pitch the ball up, allow it to swing and dare

the batsmen to go after them. So confident are they of defeating the batsmen with their movement.

The ever-evolving Southee has added the delivery that straightens and holds its line or comes in, to his trademark outswingers. Ask Rohit

Sharma who was bamboozled by one such delivery in the second innings.

And, Boult is a bag of tricks. The left-armed bowler with equal control from over and round the wicket, can take the ball away from the left-hander from over the wicket and angle it across the right-hander and bring the odd one back.

The talented Boult can get the ball to deviate both ways from round the wicket. He is a serial scalp-hunter.

Then there is the never-say-die Neil Wagner, all heart, effort and commitment, whose barrage of accurate short-pitched bowling is mixed cleverly with fuller length left-armed swing whether angling it across or bringing it back. New Zealand, clearly, has the pace attack to be at the acme of Test-playing nations.

# Ramkumar fights hard, but falls in the final qualifying round

WIMBLEDON  
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA LONDON

A spot in the main draw of a Grand Slam eluded Ramkumar Ramanathan yet again, as he lost to Australia's Marc Polmans 3-6, 6-3, 6-7(2), 6-3, 9-11 in the final qualifying round at the Wimbledon championships, here on Thursday.

Showing nerves of steel, Ramkumar saved four match points but eventually fell at the end of a three-hour, 30-minute contest.

After the duo split the first two sets, Ramkumar had multiple opportunities to break at the start of the third but squandered all, before losing the set in a tie-break. The 26-year-old, however,



Ramkumar... playing his heart out. •FILE PHOTO: R. RAGU

raced to a 3-0 lead in the fourth set and kept his level up to take it 6-3 and even the match.

In the decider, he was down a match point while serving at 4-5, but survived. Three more match points in game 12 were also saved as he stretched the contest. But the Australian broke his tenacious rival in the 20th game and punched his ticket for next week's main draw.

**Thiem pulls out**  
World No. 5 Dominic Thiem withdrew from Wimbledon on Thursday after suffering a wrist injury in Mallorca earlier this week.

"I'm sorry for pulling out of the upcoming three tournaments I had in my calendar - Wimbledon, Hamburg and Gstaad," the 27-year-old Austrian wrote on Twitter. "I am determined to come back stronger."

## How they finished

	P	W	D	L	GD	PTS
<b>GROUP A</b>						
Italy (Q)	3	3	0	0	7	9
Wales (Q)	3	1	1	1	1	4
Switzerland (Q)	3	1	1	1	-1	4
Turkey	3	0	0	3	-7	0
<b>GROUP B</b>						
Belgium (Q)	3	3	0	0	6	9
Denmark (Q)	3	1	0	2	1	3
Finland	3	1	0	2	-2	3
Russia	3	1	0	2	-5	3
<b>GROUP C</b>						
The Netherlands (Q)	3	3	0	0	6	9
Austria (Q)	3	2	0	1	1	6
Ukraine (Q)	3	1	0	2	-1	3
North Macedonia	3	0	0	3	-6	0

	P	W	D	L	GD	PTS
<b>GROUP D</b>						
England (Q)	3	2	1	0	2	7
Croatia (Q)	3	1	1	1	1	4
Czech Republic (Q)	3	1	1	1	1	4
Scotland	3	0	1	2	-4	1
<b>GROUP E</b>						
Sweden (Q)	3	2	1	0	2	7
Spain (Q)	3	1	2	0	5	5
Slovakia	3	1	0	2	-5	3
Poland	3	0	1	2	-2	1
<b>GROUP F</b>						
France (Q)	3	1	2	0	1	5
Germany (Q)	3	1	1	1	1	4
Portugal (Q)	3	1	1	1	1	4
Hungary	3	0	2	1	-3	2

Note: For teams tied on goal difference, head-to-head results decided the placings

## ROUND OF 16 LINE-UP

- JUNE 26: Wales vs Denmark, Italy vs Austria
- JUNE 27: The Netherlands vs Czech Republic, Belgium vs Portugal
- JUNE 28: Croatia vs Spain, France vs Switzerland
- JUNE 29: England vs Germany, Sweden vs Ukraine

# Hungary makes Germany work hard

France tops group; record-equalling Ronaldo keeps Portugal in the mix

EURO 2020

REUTERS MUNICH

A late Leon Goretzka goal salvaged a 2-2 draw for Germany against Hungary on Wednesday night, in a seesaw Group F contest that sets the Germans up for a round of 16 match against England at Wembley on June 29.

Meanwhile, Cristiano Ronaldo kept Portugal alive with two penalties to cancel out a brace from France's Karim Benzema in an enthralling 2-2 draw that sent both sides into the last 16.

The Germans were teetering on the brink after Adam



Rescue act: Leon Goretzka, right, fired Germany into the last-16 with a late equaliser against Hungary. •AFP

Szalai's diving header in the 11th minute put Hungary in front. Kai Havertz eventually drew Germany level in the 66th minute, only for Hun-

gary to retake the lead seconds after the re-start as Andras Schaefer ran onto a pass and headed in. Goretzka bagged the cru-

cial equaliser in the 84th minute to send Germany through in second place behind France in Group F on four points.

Benzema confirmed his return from international exile with his first goals for France for more than five years after being recalled for the tournament, while Ronaldo equalled the world record 109 international goals scored by Iran's Ali Daei.

**The results:**  
**Group F:** Germany 2 (Havertz 66, Goretzka 84) drew with Hungary 2 (Szalai 11, Schaefer 68); Portugal 2 (Ronaldo 31-pen, 60-pen) drew with France 2 (Benzema 45+2-pen, 47).

## TV PICKS

**Golf:** Women's PGA championship: Eurosport (SD & HD), 9 p.m.  
**NBA:** SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 6 a.m. (Saturday)

## IN BRIEF

**Atlanta Hawks snatch a narrow win**

WASHINGTON  
Atlanta's Trae Young scored a career playoff high 48 points and the Hawks edged host Milwaukee Bucks 116-113 in Wednesday's opening game of the NBA Eastern Conference finals.  
**The result: Eastern Conference finals:** Milwaukee Bucks 113 lost to Atlanta Hawks 116 (*Hawks lead series 1-0*).

**Bopanna & Divij lose in quarterfinals**SPORTS BUREAU  
EASTBOURNE

Rohan Bopanna and Divij Sharan were beaten 6-3, 7-6 (3) by the top seeds Nikola Mektic and Mate Pavic of Croatia in the doubles quarterfinals of the €609,065 ATP tennis tournament here on Thursday.  
Sania Mirza and Bethanie Mattek-Sands of the US were beaten 6-3, 6-4 by the American alternate entrants Christina Mchale and Sabrina Santamaria in the first round of the WTA event in Eastbourne.  
**The results: €609,065 ATP, Eastbourne, Britain: Quarterfinals:** Nikola Mektic & Mate Pavic (Cro) bt Rohan Bopanna and Divij Sharan 6-3, 7-6(3). **\$565,530 WTA: Eastbourne, Britain: First round:** Christina Mchale & Sabrina Santamaria (USA) bt Bethanie Mattek-Sands (USA) & Sania Mirza 6-3, 6-4.

# Last chance to punch a ticket to Tokyo

Annu Rani will be aiming to qualify in javelin; spotlight on relay squads also

## ATHLETICS

UTHRA GANESAN  
PATIALA

The 60th National Inter-State athletics championships starting here on Friday will be the last chance for Indian athletes to book a ticket to the Tokyo Olympics and quite a few would be hoping to either attain the elusive qualification standard or improve their ranking.

Among those aiming for automatic qualification at the five-day meet will be javelin thrower Annu Rani, who has been consistently improving over the last one year and is within sight of the 64m mark. Her personal best of 63.24m is not too far off and the reigning National champion will be hoping to go the distance this time around.

**Sprint showdown**

On the track, the much-anticipated showdown between Dutee Chand and Hima Das



**Consistent:** Annu Rani has the wherewithal to make it to the Olympics. \*FILE PHOTO

in the 100m and 200m sprints will be the highlight although the duo has managed to avoid it so far with either withdrawing from at least one event over the past one year.

While Dutee came agonisingly close to the 100m qual-

ifying time at the recent Grand Prix 4, she is comfortably placed in the rankings which is not the case with Hima, who has to clock 22.80s in the 200m to qualify.

The spotlight will also be on the women's 4x100m and the men's 4x400m relay

squads with the former hoping to better its National record and the latter aiming to consolidate its position in the rankings, placed precariously at 16th and final qualification spot.

Also hoping to improve his position on the Road to To-

kyo rankings will be high jumper Tejaswin Shankar, competing at home after almost two years and coming with a series of NCAA wins under his belt in USA.

Tejaswin has also entered in triple jump in keeping with his recent attempts at multiple events and it will be interesting to see how the youngster measures up here.

Shot-putter Tajinderpal Singh Toor and discus thrower Kamalpreet Kaur will be high on confidence after their impressive performances in IGP 4 couple of days ago but the pressure will be on veteran thrower Seema Antil who skipped the Grand Prix.

Javelin thrower Shivpal Singh, unable to fly abroad for training or competition, will also be in action for the first time since March but steeplechaser Avinash Sable and quartermiler Dharun Aiyasamy have given the event a miss.

## Saurabh bags bronze

## SHOOTING WC

KAMESH SRINIVASAN  
NEW DELHI

Asian Games gold medallist Saurabh Chaudhary lifted the sagging spirit of the Indian camp by winning the air pistol bronze in the shooting World Cup in Osijek, Croatia, on Thursday.

Yashaswini Singh Deswal and Manu Bhaker made the women's air pistol final with scores of 578 and 577 respectively, but the 8s and 9s saw them bow out quickly.

In fact, it was the trend for the Indian shooters in action on the day, as none of them made the women's air rifle final.

**The results:**  
**Men: 10m air pistol:** 1. Javad Foroughi (Iri) 243.0 (584); 2. Damiir Mikec (Srb) 241.7 (584);

3. Saurabh Chaudhary 220.0 (581); 5. Abhishek Verma 179.3 (581).

**10m air rifle:** 1. William Shaner (US) 250.5 (628.3); 2. Vladimir Maslennikov (Rus) 249.2 (630.5); 3. Petar Gorsa (Cro) 227.7 (631.9); 7. Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar 143.9 (628.0); 14. Deepak Kumar 626.0; 25. Divyansh Singh Panwar 624.7.

**Women: 10m air pistol:** 1. Antoaneta Kostadinova (Bul) 240.0 (579); 2. Carina Wimmer (Ger) 237.5 (574); 3. Yulia Koroistylova (Ukr) 216.8 (575); 7. Manu Bhaker 137.3 (577).

8. Yashaswini Singh Deswal 117.1 (578); 13. Rahi Sarnobat 572.

**10m air rifle:** 1. Eszter Meszaros (Hun) 250.6 (628.3); 2. Ziva Dvorsak (Slo) 249.8 (628.4); 3. Sofia Ceccarello (Ita) 226.6 (629.2); 24. Apurv Chandela 624.2.

## Kshatriya wins under-12 title

## CHESS

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Maharashtra's Kshatriya Vekhande won the National under-12 open online rapid chess title due to superior tie-break score, after being tied at 9.5 points with Assam's Minmoy Rajkhowa, on Thursday.

In the 11-round competition, Rajasthan's Yash Bhadradiya took the third spot after topping a 11-way tie at nine points.

These placings are subject to change after the Fairplay report is received from the online platform, Tornelo, and the decision of the five-man Fairplay committee.

## Uzbekistan Open results annulled

## SWIMMING

## SPORTS BUREAU

World swimming's governing body FINA has invalidated the results from the Uzbekistan Open Swimming Championship held in April in Tashkent, two months after India swimmer S.P. Likhith had alleged that timings were tampered with to suit home swimmers.

The competition was an Olympic qualification event where two Uzbek swimmers were declared to have sealed their berths for Tokyo 2020.

India's Srihari Nataraj had clocked 54.07s in the 100m backstroke event, a

best Indian performance, just 0.22s short of the mark for Tokyo.

His timing of 25.11s in the 50m backstroke was also a new high.

**Rich haul**

Indians, in general, had come away with a rich haul of medals (18 gold, seven silver and four bronze), including two in the breaststroke events for Likhith.

On Thursday, Monal Chokshi, Swimming Federation of India (SFI) secretary, confirmed that the timings clocked in Uzbekistan were annulled after objections from various quarters. But he said that the SFI had no role in this.

## Atanu, Deepika ensure mixed team medal

Abhishek Verma makes the semifinals in men's individual compound event

## ARCHERY

SPORTS BUREAU  
PARIS

The Indian recurve mixed team, consisting of the husband-wife pair of Atanu Das and Deepika Kumari, booked a berth in the final to ensure a medal in the Archery World Cup Stage-3 here on Thursday.

The Olympic-bound duo, who got a first round bye, defeated Great Britain's Bryony Pitman and James Woodgate 6-0 and Casey Kaufhold and Brady Ellison 6-0 to reach the semifinals.

In the last-four, Atanu and Deepika edged past Inse de Valesco and Daniel Castro of Spain 5-3.

India will meet the Netherlands in the final.

The compound mixed team, comprising Abhishek Verma and V. Jyothi Surek-

ha, lost to Elizaveta Knyazeva and Anton Bulaev of Russia 155-154 in the second round.

Verma was the lone Indian compound archer to make it to the semifinals in the men's individual event.

Verma beat Matthew Wong of Great Britain 147-134, Sergio Pagni of Italy 148-145, Jean Pizarro of Puerto Rico 148-143 and Martin Laursen of Denmark 146-146 (tie-breaker 10-9) to reach the last four.

Aman Saini and Rajat Chauhan exited in third and first rounds respectively.

Jyothi lost in the quarterfinals while Saanchi Dhalla, who beat Pragati in the first round, lost in the second round among women compound archers.

Akshita crashed out in the opening round.

## Mane to join Lahiri in Tokyo

## GOLF

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

Indian golfer Udayan Mane is all set to make the cut for the Tokyo Games as the withdrawal of Argentine Emiliano Grillo will push him inside the playing field.

The top-60 golfers as per rankings and the qualification criteria will compete in Tokyo and the vacant spot will now be grabbed by Mane, who was reserve player behind Grillo.

Grillo, world number 74 was the lone Argentine in the Olympic list. The next best Argentine is Fabian Gomez at 404 and Mane is 354th.



Udayan Mane. \*FILE PHOTO

Mane was the leading Indian at one point but the pandemic delayed the Olympic Games.

"I am thrilled but am still waiting for the official communication. I hope it comes soon," said Mane.

That means India will have two men and at least one woman like in 2016.

MARUTI SUZUKI

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