



# leisure



## 'MONEY HEIST FINAL SEASON FULL OF TENSION, ACTION'

As the final season of global hit *Money Heist* draws closer, lead star Alvaro Morte has teased that the last chapter is filled with loads of action and tense moments. The final season of the smash hit Netflix show, titled *La Casa De Papel* in Spanish, will be released in two parts.

## LANA PARRILLA REVEALS HER ROLE IN WHY WOMEN KILL 2

Actress Lana Parrilla has opened up about her role in the second season of *Why Women Kill*. "I play Rita, a sardonic wife, married to this elderly man, and she has waited long enough for her husband to die so she can live her best life," Parrilla said.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

GaneshSpeaks.com  
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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

**ARIES**  
Today people will actually drag you into altercations, so flash the peace sign if you must. You may face some sort of legal troubles from peace-loving groups. Therefore, Ganesh advises you to meditate, take a walk or just seek out the company of your near and dear ones.

**TAURUS**  
This all matters are likely to revolve around the opposite sex. Women are going to feature prominently and significantly in everything that you do. So says Ganesh. That is good. But you will be inclined to be lazy and laid back and may thus reduce the effect and impact of efforts. Keep your sluggishness away and you will find that everything that you have been striving for is falling in your lap.

**GEMINI**  
Today, you may decide to get a little more conscious about your your health. Filled with positive drive, you may even plan to join a gymnasium or start taking a hard look at your calorie intake. Don't go overboard, though! You don't want to do it only today, and forget it tomorrow - plan and execute in a step-wise manner, so it doesn't get a bit too much.

**CANCER**  
You will spend your day reflecting on your past and thinking what went wrong, predicts Ganesh. But keep in mind that your mistakes won't lead to the end of the world, unless you are a nuclear scientist. So get your act together, and stop brooding over your mistakes.

**LEO**  
You will get good co-operation from your colleagues and subordinates. In your personal life also you will gain the support of your spouse and your friends. Other people will be accommodating of your problems and will try to solve them for you. Your expenses may increase, leading to some financial worries, says Ganesh.

**VIRGO**  
You are quick-witted, sharp and artistic to the core, says Ganesh, so you may go ahead and enrapture people with your special abilities, perhaps at a social gathering. However, Ganesh says it would be better if you could conserve some of that enthusiasm in order to focus your attention on issues of greater importance.

**LIBRA**  
Monotonous is the word to describe the way things have been till now, but no more, says Ganesh. It might be a very good idea for you to take a break from things around you and go on a small trip. Invigorate yourself with a small picnic with family and friends. It shall go a long way in boosting your energy and enhancing your awareness and wisdom in the coming future. In any case, the stars predict satisfying results to private affairs. Also, you will impress the opposite sex.

**SCORPIO**  
According to Ganesh, it's a good day for long term and real estate investments. It may lead to benefits and profits in long run. Sit back, relax and enjoy the pleasures of life before you miss out on them. Welcome all the opportunities with open arms.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
The wheel of fortune turns towards you today, says Ganesh. Make a wish and it's bound to come true. However don't be over-confident when it comes to decision-making. In case of disappointments, 'this too shall pass' would be the best remedy.

**CAPRICORN**  
You comparatively less experienced than others in the office, but the boss will choose you with a hope to get the company out of the existing troubles. Trusting your intelligence, skills, and potential, you will assigned some crucial matters. It is a great deal to live up to such high expectations, but you will be able to do so and win the hearts of many, predicts Ganesh. Personally, you will express your deep emotions to your sweetheart.

**AQUARIUS**  
You will be on a spending spree today. But, make sure that your desire to enjoy life doesn't burn a hole in your pocket. Watch your words and steps, as people are observing your every move. You have put all of your eggs in one basket, so make sure that you don't mess up and lose everything that you have, advises Ganesh.

**PISCES**  
You will feel very emotional about those who are close to your heart. Those people who know you will endear you because of this quality of yours. But Ganesh adds a word of caution; take care of those people whom you hold close to your heart because in your sentiments for them you might not notice their bad qualities or forgive their mistakes. You might feel fastidious today and spend time to groom yourself in a saloon or beauty parlour.

## 'Thriller genre has high binge quotient'



**MUMBAI:** South star Tamannaah Bhatia feels choosing a role in a thriller can always be an advantage for an actor because the genre has a high binge quotient.

This year, Tamannaah made her digital debut in April with the Telugu web series *11th Hour*, a crime thriller that also features Adith Arun and Vamsi Krishna.

In May, she returned to OTT space again with the Tamil whodunit drama *November Story* alongside Pasupathy, GM Kumar, Aruldass and Vivek Prasanna.

"A thriller, if done well, has the ability to let you binge-watch. Now that is essentially what everybody who makes a show wants you to do. So, when you choose a genre like the thriller, if it is done well, it has a high potential of reaching that goal of being a binge-watchable show," she says.

*11th Hour* streams on Aha while *November Story* is on Disney+ Hotstar VIP.

## Alaya's revelation for fans



**MUMBAI:** Actress Alaya F had a revelation for fans Thursday. She admitted she finds it difficult to diet around vada pav and jalebis.

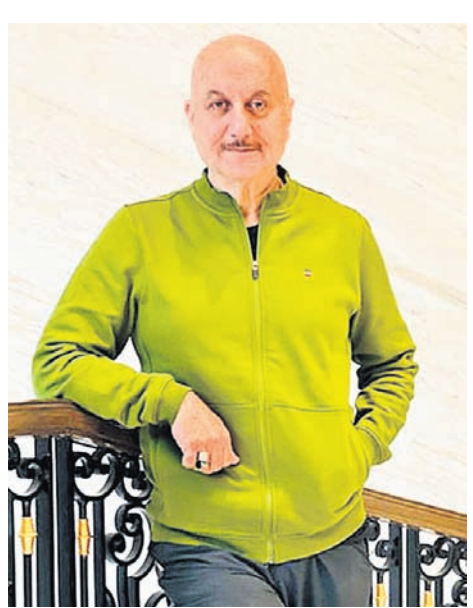
The svelte actress posted a throwback video clip on Instagram where she is seen asking her crew not to give her jalebis and vada pavs being served on set.

Moments later, she is caught sneakily tucking in on the delicacies.

"What can I say? It's hard dieting around vada pav and jalebis #throwback to some fun behind the scenes moments on set," she wrote as caption.

Alaya made her Hindi film debut with *Jawaani Jaaneman* last year. She was recently seen in the music video *Aaj sajeya*, directed by Punit Malhotra.

## Anupam dreams of making Saaransh 2 as an action thriller



**MUMBAI:** If *Saaransh*, his debut film of 1984 had a sequel, veteran actor Anupam Kher would want it to be an action film high on thrills.

"If part two is made, usmein bhi main hi kaam karunga. (I would work in it). I dream of making part two as an action film. He was a principled man and won hearts. Not action in terms of beating people up, but as a thriller," says Anupam.

*Saaransh* is considered one of Kher's best works. The Mahesh Bhatt film cast the actor, then 28, as a 58-year-old man who is heartbroken after the tragic loss of his young son. However, he doesn't let go of his morals when faced with an adverse situation. The actor, now 66, has completed 37 years in Hindi film industry and has essayed over 500 roles.

## Rajkummar narrates series on local Covid heroes

Titled '*Ruk Jaana Nahi*', the limited edition original audio and video series, highlights the stories of ordinary people doing extraordinary things

Stories of good Samaritans have emerged as rays of hope and positivity in these grim times. Spotting a number of these real-life superheroes through his narration is actor Rajkummar Rao, who has recited a moving Hindi poem written by lyricist Swanand Kirkire as part of an eight-episode Spotify series.

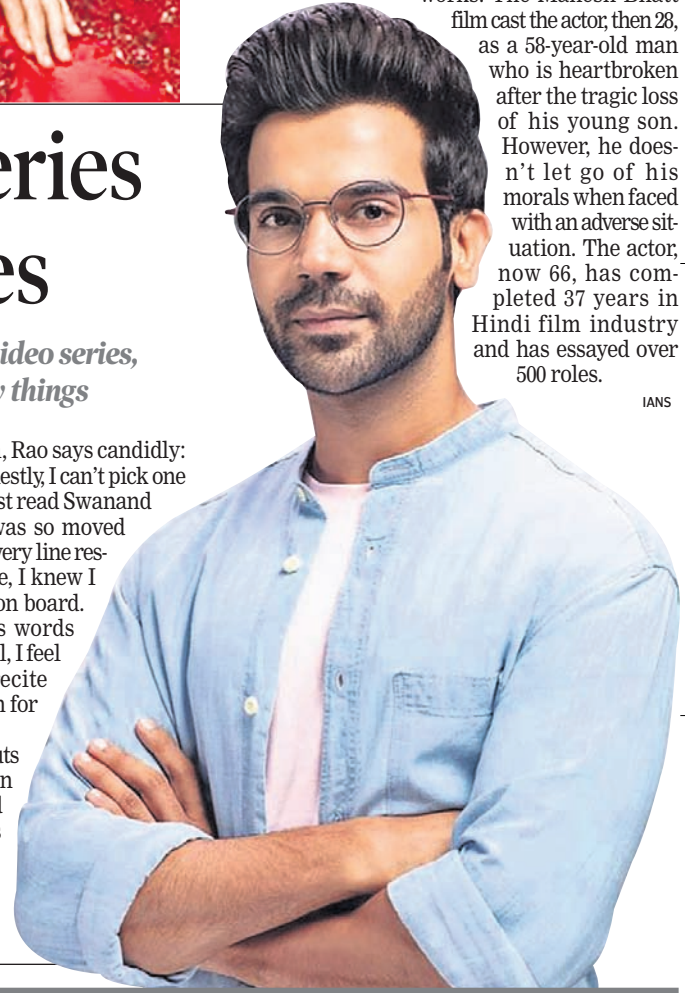
Titled *Ruk Jaana Nahi*, the limited edition original audio and video series highlights the stories of ordinary people doing extraordinary things - from frontline workers to doctors. It launched the first episode's teaser last week, and will be followed by an original podcast on similar lines.

"Of course, there are some great organisations that are doing some brilliant work towards COVID relief, but I was so touched by the strong will and the kindness of a common man. Having noticed stories of people helping others in need without any motive and from the sheer kindness of their heart on an almost daily basis on social media, I knew that these were stories that had to be told so that we remember their strength and sacrifices and that we are not alone in this fight against the pandemic. Spotify reached out to me to help share these stories of hope with a larger audience and I was very impressed with the initiative," said Rao.

Asked about his favourite line from the two-minute-long recital of

Kirkire's poem, Rao says candidly: "You know honestly, I can't pick one line, when I first read Swanand sir's poem, I was so moved by the words, every line resonated with me, I knew I just had to be on board. Swanand Sir's words are so beautiful, I feel honoured to recite them on screen for everyone."

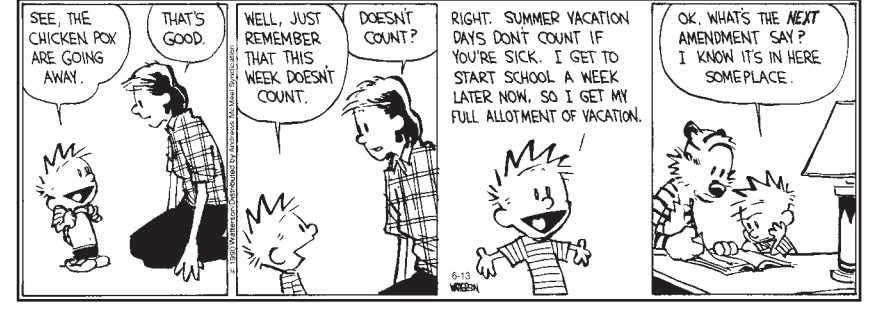
The series puts the spotlight on young India and the sacrifices they are making to help other people in need.



### PEANUTS



### CALVIN AND HOBBS

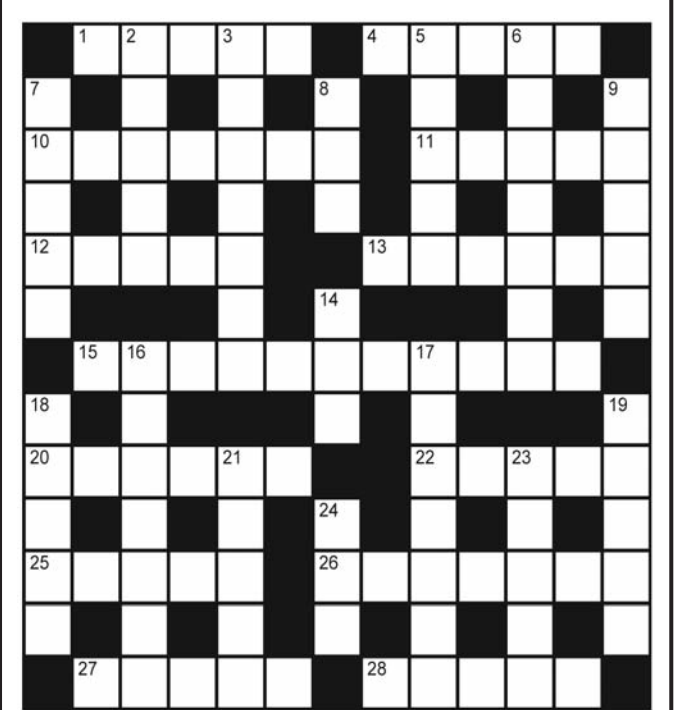


### BREVITY



### FUN post

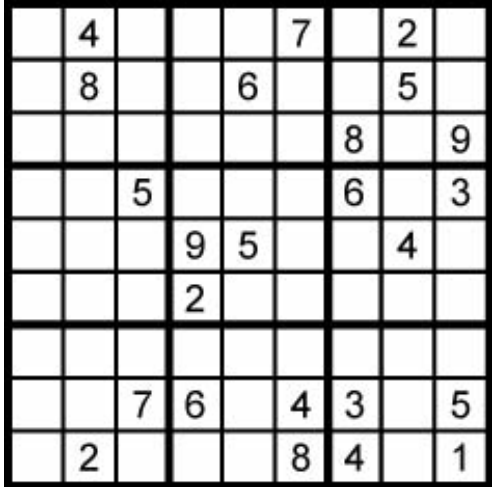
### CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Rubbish
  - 4 Feather in one's cap
  - 10 Intensify
  - 11 Bolivian capital
  - 12 Hooded snake
  - 13 Jumping rodent
  - 15 Red gun dog (5,6)
  - 20 Appetizer
  - 22 Frigid
  - 25 Staircase post
  - 26 Agitated
  - 27 Gastric woe
  - 28 Antiquated
  - Down**
  - 2 Post-op time
  - 3 Certain correspondents
  - 5 Fine thread
  - 6 Ghastly
  - 7 Park feature
  - 8 Morning moisture
  - 9 Tooth trouble
  - 14 Petition
  - 16 Magazine purchase
  - 17 Emblematic
  - 18 Bloodhound's clue
  - 19 Fuddy-duddy
  - 21 Throb
  - 23 Carpenter's machine
  - 24 Knowledge

### SUDOKU

To solve the Sudoku puzzle, fill in the boxes in such a manner that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9, without repeating any.

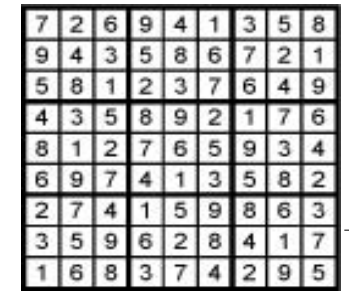


### SOLUTIONS



CROSSWORD

SUDOKU



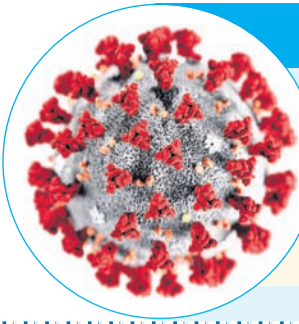
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

# downtown



## PARCHED THROATS

Youths quench their thirst from a water tanker installed by Commissionerate Police at Kalpana Square in Bhubaneswar, Thursday



## COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	17,25,59,002	15,52,34,632	37,09,084
India	2,84,41,986	2,63,90,584	3,37,989
Odisha	7,90,970	7,13,055	2,873

## Excise officials attacked by liquor mafia; 4 nabbed

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, June 3:** The Commissionerate Police Thursday arrested four people on charges of assaulting and injuring a team of Excise department officials, including a woman constable.

Police sources said that a case (171/21) has been registered on the basis of a complainant lodged by the Excise officials.

A team of Excise officials carried out a raid in a house at Haraparavati slum in Bharatpur area.

While they tried to seize the liquor, around 10 people, including the family members of the illegal liquor traders, attacked the Excise officials with sticks and iron rods. They also damaged the vehicle of the raiding team. The team members sustained injuries.

When Bharatpur police reached the spot to rescue the Excise officials, they were also attacked by the miscreants.

However, police managed to control the situation and arrested four people in connection with the incident. The accused were identified as Arun Nayak, 29, Dhusha Nayak, Sunita Nayak, 20 and Anil Nayak, 45 of Nayagarh.

# Tender for black fungus drug finds no bidders



**ANOTHER JOLT**  
 THE HEALTH DEPARTMENT THROUGH OSMCL HAD FLOATED A TENDER TO PROCURE AMPHOTERICIN-B INJECTIONS DIRECTLY FROM THE MANUFACTURERS, INSTEAD OF RECEIVING PARTIAL AND SHORT CONSIGNMENTS OF THE DRUG FROM THE UNION GOVERNMENT

MANISH KUMAR, OP

**Bhubaneswar, June 3:** An attempt by the state Health department to procure Amphotericin-B injections, touted as the most effective drug for treatment of mucormycosis (black fungus) directly from the manufacturers, seems to have received a setback.

The department through the Odisha State Medical Corporation Ltd (OSMCL) had floated a tender to procure Amphotericin-B injections directly from the manufacturers, instead of receiving partial and short consignments of the drug from the Union government.

HOWEVER, NO MANUFACTURER IS SAID TO HAVE EVINCED INTEREST TO DEAL WITH THE STATE GOVERNMENT DESPITE THE OPEN TENDER

However, no manufacturer is said to have evinced interest to deal with the state government despite the open tender. Sources in the state Health department said that the selected manufacturers told the Odisha government that it was dealing only with the Union government and not with states due to high demand from the Union government.

The Health department also admitted that the state is struggling with the short supply of the essential drug and that it didn't get any supplier of the same.

"We had floated a tender for procurement of Amphotericin-B injections and some other drugs

used as alternatives for the treatment of mucormycosis. We have not received any response from the manufacturers for giving us Amphotericin-B," Bijoy Mohapatra, Director, Health Services told **Orissa POST**.

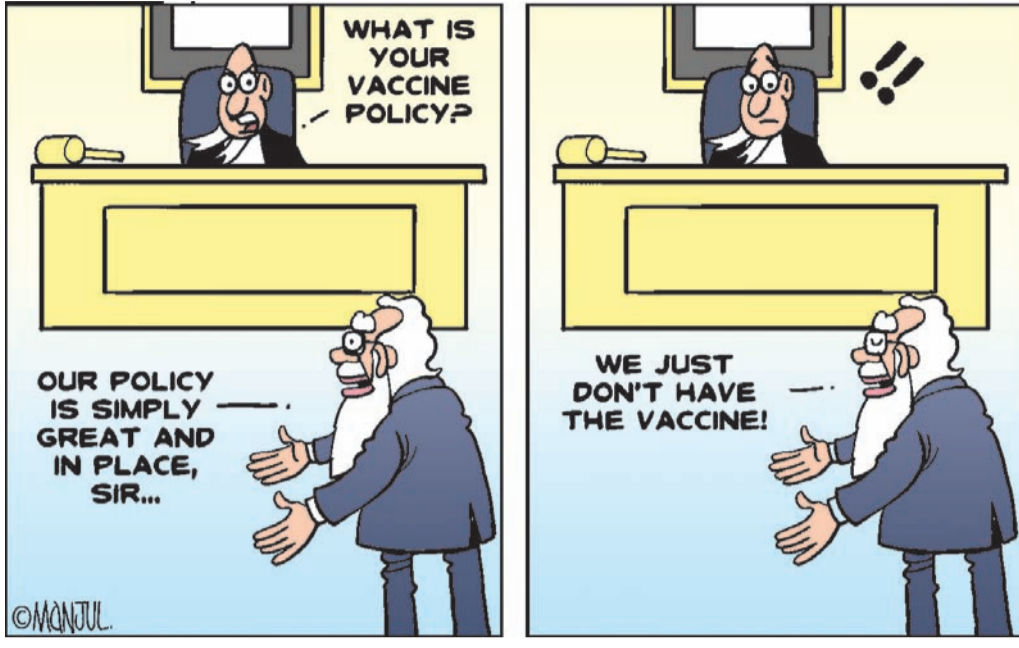
He also said, "However, another tender for alternative drugs is still open and the technical bids are likely to be completed in next 2-3 days. We will get to know more about the response from the manufacturers of alternative drugs then. For Amphotericin, most manufacturers are dealing with the Union government only and the problem is for all Indian states not only Odisha."

Mohapatra admitted to the shortage of the drug in the state for treatment of black fungus. The state government has now been getting fragmented supplies of the drug from the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers which is dispatching only 50 vials at a time to the state while around 40 vials are required for the treatment of one infected person.

Marred by lack of the life-saving drug, several frantic appeals are now being made on social media from the patients and their relatives wherein help is sought from several celebrities, social workers, ministers and others but mostly in vain. According to the self-admission of the state government, more than 40 patients in the state have been infected with the disease in the past few days while four of them have also succumbed to the infection.

However, the state government has not been attributing such deaths to the fungal infection.

## POLITICKLE by MANJUL



## Critical Covid patient airlifted to Chennai

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, June 3:** The Commissionerate Police once again facilitated green corridor like facility for the emergency airlifting of a 24-year-old critically-ill Covid patient to Chennai for advanced treatment. The Covid-19 patient has been identified as Amrit Pradhan.

Amrit, a resident of Berhampur, was admitted to AIIMS, Bhubaneswar after being tested positive for Covid-19 May 2. He had been put on ventilator as his health condition deteriorated since May 12. Later, he developed severe complications in lungs due to Covid pneumonia. He also suffered deadly septicemia infection of blood stream.

Doctors later advised his family that Amrit requires treatment on

AMRIT, A RESIDENT OF BERHAMPUR, WAS ADMITTED TO AIIMS, BHUBANESWAR AFTER BEING TESTED POSITIVE FOR COVID-19 MAY 2

HE HAD BEEN PUT ON VENTILATOR AS HIS HEALTH CONDITION DETERIORATED MAY 12



the support of Extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO) system which is not available at AIIMS, Bhubaneswar. The family was informed by the doctors that they need around Rs 2 crore as the cost for a probable lung transplant and advanced treatment at Apollo hospital in Chennai.

His sister soon appealed through social media and other aid generating sites seeking monetary help from people across the country.

Soon, help started pouring in from various parts of the country.

Though the family had not applied for green corridor, the commissionerate police took suo motu action and alerted its staff to facilitate the ambulance carrying Amrit from AIIMS a hassle-free passage to the Biju Patnaik International Airport Thursday afternoon. The ambulance took just 13 minutes to reach the airport.

## Ulaka now Cong's Ch'garh in-charge

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, June 3:** Congress MP from Koraput Saptagiri Ulaka has been appointed as the in-charge of Chhattisgarh Congress, in a recent reshuffle of the age-old party.

The All India Congress Committee (AICC) Thursday announced his appointment.

The information was shared by KC Venugopal, General Secretary of the AICC. In the notification, issued by the party, the AICC said that while Ulaka will be appointed as AICC secretary and the AICC in-charge of the party for Chhattisgarh, four others were given leadership responsibilities in Bihar, Uttarakhand, Delhi and Himachal Pradesh.

Ulaka, however, was not available for his comments.

## Adieu to edupreneur par excellence

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, June 3:** Bijaya Kumar Sahoo, who breathed his last at a hospital in Hyderabad Thursday due to post-Covid complications, was the founder of SAI International Educational Group comprising four institutions--SAI International School, SAI Angan, SAI International Residential School and SAI International College of Commerce.

Sahoo had been elevated to the status of a Minister of State by Odisha government for his appointment as the advisor-cum-working president to Odisha Adarsha Vidyalaya Sangathan, Department of School and Mass Education.

He was a chartered accountant, a cost accountant and a graduate in law. This apart, he had a Master's Degree in Business Administration with specialisation in Finance and Treasury, and a Doctorate Degree in Commerce.

The renowned educationist, in his pursuit for academic excellence and to build a better India through education, had attended training programmes at several prestigious institutions including Harvard Graduate School of Education in USA, National College for School Leadership in UK and Asian International College in Singapore.

Sahoo had been invited by the Planning Commission of India as an advisor on Model Concession Agreement for public-private partnership (PPP), to establish 2,500 Rashtriya Adarsha Vidyalayas. He firmly believed that leadership and learning are indispensable to each other.

Acknowledging his relentless passion for education, Sahoo was conferred with 'Honoris Causa' by Utkal University. This apart, he had been conferred with the coveted QCI Quality Champion Award-2020 for his dedication to quality education and contribution towards innovation, digital technology and scientific temperament.

Sahoo had received lifetime achievement award for 'Bringing Innovation



## WHEELS OF FAITH

A Srimandir priest places the 'Agyan Mala' of Lord Jagannath on a wheel of Nandighosa chariot as part of a ritual at Rath Yardi in Puri, Thursday

OP PHOTO



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Sahoo had been elevated to the status of a Minister of State by Odisha government for his appointment as the advisor-cum-working president to Odisha Adarsha Vidyalaya Sangathan

in Learning' by Brain Feed, 'Odisha Living Legend Award' by Odisha Diary, 'Achiever of Odisha' by Times of India and Business Eminence Award by **Orissa POST** and Dharitri.

Moreover, he had received commendation from the British Council and won Corporate Odisha Award for steering Leadership and Entrepreneurial Values. Condoling his untimely demise, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik tweeted, "Deeply saddened to know about the passing away of noted educationist and entrepreneur, Dr. Bijaya Kumar Sahoo. As Advisor of Odisha Adarsha Vidyalaya Sangathan, he had a pioneering role in transforming Govt School education.

My condolences to his family, friends & students."

Taking to Twitter, Union Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said, "As an advisor to Odisha Adarsh Vidyalaya, his role in bringing about qualitative changes in the state's public education system was unparalleled. As an educator, he encouraged students to take part in their special presentations."

Born in Khurda June 1, 1963, Sahoo completed his Bachelor of Commerce with Honours and Distinction from Utkal University, 1982 and Bachelor of Law from the varsity, 1986. He is survived by his wife, two sons and a daughter.

Jald se jald apne PAN aur Aadhaar Card ko link karna zaroori hai.

Link karne ki aakhari taareekh hai, June 30, 2021.

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**of the day quote**

I believe the central leadership will take a decision about Sonawal

**HIMANTA BISWA SARMA** | ASSAM CM

Alapan Bandyopadhyay knew many improper acts of the TMC government. He was privy to those acts and he did not take any remedial action. Hence, there is a desperate bid by the chief minister of West Bengal to shield Bandyopadhyay. Hence, there is a desperate attempt by Bandyopadhyay to cling to the CM

**SUVENDU ADHIKARI** | BJP LEADER

Rahul Gandhi should say if he supports the Punjab government's move to force the common man to pay Rs 1,560 per dose

**SUKHBIR BADAL** | SAD PRESIDENT



**Covid-19 contagion is declining in West Bengal following the imposition of restrictions**

**MAMATA BANERJEE** | WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER

**FERTILIZER SCAM: RJD MP SENT TO 10-DAY ED CUSTODY**

A Delhi court Thursday sent RJD Rajya Sabha MP Amarendra Dhari Singh, arrested in a money laundering case related to an alleged fertiliser scam, to 10-day custody of the Enforcement Directorate (ED), saying it was necessary for fair investigation



**2nd Made-in-India vax soon**

**AGENCIES**

**New Delhi, June 3:** In another landmark move in the fight against Covid-19 pandemic, the Central government has booked 30 crore doses of another Made-in-India vaccine to be manufactured by Hyderabad-based Biological-E's Covid vaccine, which is still in final phase of clinical trials.

Biological-E's vaccine is currently in Phase-3 clinical trials after showing promising results in Phase 1 and 2, and it is likely to be available in the market in next few months, said a Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) statement.

The Ministry is learnt to have made an advance payment of Rs 1,500 crore to the firm - the second made-in-India vaccine manufacturer after Bharat Biotech's Covaxin.

"The doses will be manufactured and stockpiled by Biological-E from August to December and is likely to be available "in the next few months," the Ministry said.

The move is expected to be a sigh of relief for the Centre facing wide criticism amid shortage of



Covid vaccine during the second wave of the pandemic.

Biological-E's shot, the Ministry said, was given Rs 100 crore in financial assistance by the Department of Biotechnology, which also partnered with the company to conduct various studies.

This is part of the government's mission to support five or six new COVID-19 vaccine candidates, said the statement.

Biological-E's indigenous vaccine was recommended for approval by the National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration for Covid-19 or National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration for Covid-19.

Biological-E also has a separate

**1.34L fresh cases**

With 1,34,154 fresh cases, India's Covid-19 tally has climbed to 2,84,41,986, while the daily positivity rate has further dropped to 6.21 per cent, the health ministry said Thursday. The death toll due to the viral disease has climbed to 3,37,989 with 2,887 more people succumbing to it, while the number of active Covid-19 cases was recorded below 20 lakh for the third consecutive day, according to the ministry's data updated at 8 am. Also, 21,59,873 tests were conducted on Wednesday to detect COVID-19, taking the total number of such tests conducted so far in the country to 35,37,82,648, while the daily positivity was recorded at 6.21 per cent. It has been less than 10 per cent for 10 consecutive days now, the ministry said.

the government to encourage indigenous vaccine manufacturers" by providing them support in research and development and costs, the Centre said.

**LAC ROW**

**Disengagement process remains unfinished: India**



**AGENCIES**

**New Delhi, June 3:** The process of disengagement along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) remains unfinished and its early completion in the remaining areas could lead to de-escalation of forces in eastern Ladakh, which could pave the way for full restoration of peace and tranquillity, India said Thursday.

Responding to a question on China increasing its military deployment and raising new infrastructure at friction points along LAC, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said, "The process of disengagement remains unfinished."

India and China have agreed that in the interim they would maintain stability on the ground and avoid any new incidents, he said.

"It is our expectation, therefore, that neither side should do anything that is not in keeping with these understandings."

"An early completion of disengagement in the remaining areas could lead to de-escalation of forces in eastern Ladakh, which would hopefully lead to full restoration of peace and tranquillity in the border areas and enable overall progress in the bilateral relationship," Bagchi said.

India and China reached a five-point agreement to resolve the east-

ern Ladakh border standoff during talks between External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi at a meeting in Moscow on September 10 on the sidelines of a Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) conclave.

The pact included measures like quick disengagement of troops, avoiding action that could escalate tensions, adherence to all agreements and protocols on border management and steps to restore peace along the LAC.

India and China are locked in a military standoff at multiple friction points in eastern Ladakh since early May last year but they have completed withdrawal of troops and weapons from the North and South banks of Pangong lake in February following a series of military and diplomatic talks.

The two sides are now engaged in talks to extend the disengagement process to the remaining friction points.

There was no visible forward movement in disengagement of troops in the remaining friction points as the Chinese side did not show flexibility in their approach on it at the 11th round of military talks with the Indian Army April 9.

There were reports of China further strengthening its positions in some of the friction points.

**SHORT TAKES**

**K'taka extends lockdown**

**Bangalore:** Karnataka Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa Thursday announced extending lockdown for a week from June 7 to June 14 to contain the Covid-19 spread. "We had earlier announced stringent restrictions from May 24 to June 7 to contain the spread of Coronavirus. Though the infections have reduced, the spread of the disease is still on." "It has been decided to extend the restrictions by a week following the recommendation of experts till June 14 morning," Yediyurappa told a press conference. The curbs are in effect since April 27 but from May 10, the Chief Minister announced a shutdown till May 24 morning.

**Meghalaya coal mine owner held**

**Shillong:** The owner of the illegal coal mine in Meghalaya's in East Jaintia Hills district, in which five miners were trapped for four days, was arrested, a police officer said Thursday. The owner, Shining Langstang, was arrested from Sutnaga village near the mine. The rat-hole mine at Umpleng, about 20 km from Khliehriat, the district headquarters of East Jaintia Hills District, was flooded after a dynamite explosion Sunday. Hazardous rat-hole coal mining is not permitted in Meghalaya after the National Green Tribunal (NGT) banned it in 2014.

**Leopardess, cub found dead**

**Nagpur:** A female leopard and a four-month-old cub were found dead Thursday in Khapa forest range in Nagpur division of Maharashtra, an official said. The carcasses were found at Mouza Mohgaon in Pendhri Nullah beat, a statement issued by the Khapa range forest officer said. All the body parts of the deceased animals- the four- and-a-half year old leopardess and her cub- were found to be intact and they might have died due to starvation and dehydration, it said.

**Over 2,800 prisoners get interim bail**

**New Delhi:** Over 2,800 prisoners have been released on interim bail or emergency parole from three Delhi jails, including Tihar, to decongest the prisons during the second wave of the coronavirus infection, officials said Thursday. These include inmates who were released last year and then surrendered with no adverse report and also new prisoners who were eligible for such interim bail or emergency parole in view of the pandemic under the criteria laid down by a high-powered committee in its meetings on May 4 and 11.

**Maha U-turn: Lockdown curbs continue in state**

**Mumbai, June 3:** In an abrupt U-turn, the Maharashtra government on Thursday said that lockdown restrictions have not been lifted in half the state from Friday, hours after Relief and Rehabilitation Minister Vijay Wadetiwar earlier in the day announced partial relaxations.

"The lockdown has not been lifted (from Friday). The proposal is still under consideration," said an official statement.

The state is still not completely free of the Covid-19 infection, with cases still on the rise in many rural areas and the proposals would be considered and implemented after a detailed review of the departments concerned in all districts, it said.



Volunteers participate in a bicycle ride at Grove beach to mark the World Bicycle Day in Thiruvananthapuram PTI PHOTO

**PADDLING FOR HEALTH**



Volunteers participate in a bicycle ride at Grove beach to mark the World Bicycle Day in Thiruvananthapuram PTI PHOTO

**Hooch tragedy hits Aligarh again**

**Aligarh (UP), June 3:** Five people died and 22 more were hospitalised after consuming spurious liquor in a village here, days after another hooch tragedy resulted in the death of at least 35 in the district, police said Thursday.

On Wednesday night, some brick kiln labourers fell sick after consuming country-made liquor dumped in a canal near Rohera village in the Jawan area, they said. "It appears that some persons involved in the spurious liquor trade dumped their entire stock in the canal fearing a raid," Senior Superintendent of Police Kalanidhi Naithani told reporters.

This is the second hooch tragedy reported in the district in recent days. In the earlier case, at least 35 people died after consuming illicit liquor, while autopsies were conducted on a total of 87 victims.

**WILL MAINTAIN STAND ON POLICY: WHATSAPP**

**THE COMPANY SAID THAT IT WILL MAINTAIN THIS APPROACH "UNTIL AT LEAST THE FORTHCOMING PDP LAW COMES INTO EFFECT"**

**INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE**

**New Delhi, June 3:** Facebook-owned WhatsApp Thursday reiterated that privacy of users remains its highest priority and it will maintain its stand till the Personal Data Protection (PDP) Bill becomes a law in India, after the Centre told the Delhi High Court that WhatsApp was obtaining "trick consent" from its users for its updated 2021 privacy policy ahead of the pending PDP Bill.

The company said that it will maintain this approach "until at least the forthcoming PDP law comes into effect".



The reaction came after the Centre claimed that WhatsApp is indulging in anti-users practices by obtaining "trick consent" from its users for its updated privacy policy, under a game plan to transfer the existing users committed to its policy.

"We reiterate that we have al-

ready responded to the Government of India and assured them that the privacy of users remains our highest priority. As a reminder, the recent update does not change the privacy of people's personal messages," a WhatsApp spokesperson said in a statement.

"We will not limit the functionality of how WhatsApp works in the coming weeks. Instead, we will continue to remind users from time to time about the update as well as when people choose to use relevant optional features, like communicating with a business that is receiving support from Facebook," the spokesperson said.

**CLASS XII EXAM CANCELLATION**

**SC gives Centre 2 weeks to decide evaluation criteria**

**INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE**

**New Delhi, June 3:** The Supreme Court Thursday said, it is happy that the board exams have been cancelled and emphasized that the interest of students will be protected, as it asked the Centre to submit the objective criteria to assess Class XII students in two weeks.

At the beginning of the hearing, the Attorney General K.K. Venugopal submitted he had circulated a letter by the government in the matter. A bench comprising Justices A.M. Khanwilkar and Dinesh Maheshwari told the AG, "We are happy with the Centre's decision to cancel the board exam (CBSE and ICSE boards). But what is the objective standard principle you will apply? The criteria

have not been given in the letter." The AG replied to the bench that the objective criteria will be determined by CBSE and sought time to place it on record before the court. The AG submitted the petition seeking cancellation of board exams may be disposed and an application could be filed in the matter. The bench replied that it will only dispose off the matter after the objective criteria is placed on record.

Declining to give four weeks to both CBSE and ICSE, the bench said: "If you want, you can do it overnight, but we are giving you two weeks. All interactions are happening online, do it in two weeks. You should act overnight."



Justice Maheshwari said: "Last year they have taken the decision, why they are asking for more time." The bench said the decision in the matter has to be taken early, as there are many students who want

to take admission in foreign universities. Declining to give four weeks' time, the bench reiterated: "it will delay, urgent decision should be taken."

Petitioner advocate Mamta Sharma pointed out that some state boards are still going ahead with the exams. Asking the lawyer to be patient, the bench replied: "We have interest of the students in our minds, irrespective of the board. Let this be resolved first and then we will consider the other state board exams."

The top court in its order said: "What remains is only to devise well-defined objective criteria for assessment of performance of the candidates, which decision will be taken by them within two weeks, as aforesaid. List the matter June 17."

**PM interacts with students**

In a surprise interaction with Class 12 students and their parents, Prime Minister Narendra Modi Thursday asked them to utilise their time in a productive and creative manner following the cancellation of their exams and said they should never feel stressed about any examination.

Joining the online interaction organised by the Education Ministry, Modi asked them how they are feeling following the cancellation of the board exams in view of the pandemic and what are they planning to do now. Several students shared their experiences with the PM about how the announcement brought relief to them and ended a long spell of uncertainty.



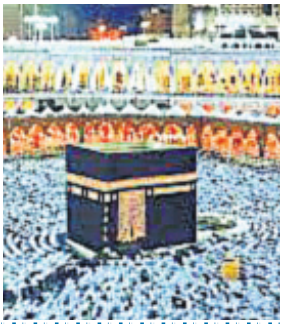


# international



**We are more vulnerable than Bangladesh due to the melting of our glaciers. It is not our fault. There are giants that contribute to carbon emissions but countries like us face the consequences**  
IMRAN KHAN | PRIME MINISTER, PAKISTAN

**HAJ PILGRIMAGE CANCELLED**  
Indonesia has cancelled the haj pilgrimage for people in the world's largest Muslim-majority nation for a second year in a row due to concerns over the Covid-19 pandemic, the religious affairs minister said Thursday



## of the day quote

**Spoke today afternoon with Medtronic CEO Geoff Martha on their support in India's fight against the pandemic including through supply of ventilators along with other partners**  
TARANJIT SINGH SANDHU | INDIA'S AMBASSADOR TO THE US

**China's vaccine diplomacy is creating divisions among countries in Central and South America, giving Beijing an opportunity to exert its influence in the Western Hemisphere**  
JOSEPH WU | FOREIGN MINISTER, TAIWAN

**Our main issues with the United States in these negotiations have been resolved, and there are only a few minor issues left, on which we will negotiate and produce results**  
HASSAN ROUHANI | PRESIDENT, IRAN

## China launches new-gen meteorological satellite

**THE NETWORK WILL BE ABLE TO CONDUCT DYNAMIC MONITORING AND TRACKING OF A VARIETY OF DISASTER ELEMENTS INCLUDING FLOODS, COLD FRONTS, DROUGHTS AND SAND STORMS**

a new generation meteorological satellite into planned orbit, which will be used in the fields of weather analysis, environmental and disaster monitoring.  
The satellite, Fengyun-4B (FY-4B), was launched by a Long March-3B rocket in the early hours from the Xichang Satellite Launch Centre in Sichuan Province, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.  
The FY-4B satellite which is the first of China's new-generation meteorological satellites will be used in the fields of weather analysis and forecasting, and environmental and disaster monitoring, the report said.  
The new satellite will further strengthen China's observation and response capability of small and



medium scale disaster events and provide information security services for a range of sectors including meteorological, agricultural, aviation, marine and environmental protection, the China National

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Beijing, June 3: China Thursday successfully launched the first of

## US announces global vax sharing scheme



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, June 3: The White House Thursday unveiled President Joe Biden's plans to share Covid-19 vaccines with the world, including its intent to direct 75% of excess doses through the UN-backed Covax global vaccine sharing program.

The White House has previously stated its intent to share 80 million vaccine doses with the world by the end of June. The administration says 25% of doses will be kept in reserve for emergencies and for the US to share directly with allies and partners.

The long-awaited vaccine sharing plan comes as demand for shots in the US has dropped significantly as more than 63% of adults have received at least one dose, and as global inequities in supply have become more glaring.

As part of its purchase agreements with drug manufacturers, the US controlled the initial production by its domestic manufacturers. Pfizer and Moderna are only now starting to export vaccines produced in the US to overseas customers.

The White House also announced Thursday that it is lifting restrictions on sharing vaccines produced by AstraZeneca, as well as Sanofi and Novavax, which are also not authorized in the US, allowing the companies to determine themselves where to share their doses.

## Officials confirm 136 students abducted from Nigeria school

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lagos, June 3: Authorities have confirmed that 136 students were abducted by gunmen in northern Nigeria earlier this week, including some as young as 5 years old, the school's owner said Thursday.

Gunmen on motorcycles targeted Salihu Tanko Islamic School, killing one person and abducting three teachers as well, school owner Umar Idris told The Associated Press. Idris said the number could be higher, though, because school officials have not been able to reach all of the parents to confirm whether their children are back home.

"We have sent out a message asking parents who have not yet reported to the school to do so," Idris said, adding that three teachers also were kidnapped.

Other preschoolers were left behind as they could not keep pace when the gunmen hurriedly moved those abducted into the forest.

The 11 children were mainly aged between 3 and 4 and they lacked the stamina to keep pace with the gunmen, so they were abandoned on the way, Idris said, adding that the preschoolers were found hours after the attack.

Earlier this week, 14 students and staff from Greenfield University in Kaduna state were released after spending more than a month in captivity. The gunmen who demanded hundreds of thousands of dollars in ransom had earlier killed five other students to compel the students' parents to raise the money.

## Oppn reach coalition to unseat Netanyahu

Under a rotation arrangement, the head of the right-wing Yamina party, Naftali Bennett, 49, would serve as the Prime Minister first before handing over to Yair Lapid

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jerusalem, June 3: Israel's Opposition parties have finally clinched a last-minute agreement to form a new national unity government and oust Benjamin Netanyahu, the longest-serving prime minister in the Jewish nation's history.

Yair Lapid, leader of the centrist Yesh Atid party, announced an eight-party coalition had been formed.

Lapid, 57, officially informed President Reuven Rivlin and Knesset (Parliament) Speaker Yariv Levin about the deal late Wednesday night, barely half an hour before the Wednesday midnight deadline.

The announcement came after a series of back-to-back meetings with the leaders of the anti-Netanyahu camp in the Knesset.

In accordance with Clause 13(b) of the Basic Law: The Government - I am honoured to inform you that I have succeeded in forming a government. The government will be an alternate government in accordance with Clause 13(a) of the Basic Law: The Government, and MK (Member of Knesset) Naftali Bennett will serve as a prime minister first," Lapid told Rivlin.

"I commit to you Mr President that this government will work to serve all the citizens of Israel including those who aren't members of it, will respect those who oppose it and do everything in its power to unite all parts of Israeli society," the Yesh Atid party leader said.

Lapid will serve as foreign minister until the two men swap roles halfway through the term.

There still needs to be a parliamentary vote before the govern-



### FRIENDS TURNED FOES

Yesh Atid	Yamina
Kahol Lavan	New Hope
Labor	Yisrael Beiteinu
Meretz	United Arab List

ment is sworn in.  
The Israeli president thanked Lapid saying, "I congratulate you and the heads of the parties on your agreement to form a government. We expect the Knesset will convene as soon as possible to ratify the government, as required."

The development, seen by some as historic as it includes an Arab party in the coalition, will break an ongoing political impasse that has seen Israel go through four polls yielding inconclusive results in less than two years.

Netanyahu holds the record of being the longest-serving Israeli PM, surpassing founding father Ben-Gurion, as he also served a term between 1996 and 1999.

## ₹1 CRORE BLOOD MONEY

## Indian national in UAE saved from death row

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Abu Dhabi, June 3: A 45-year-old Indian, who was on death row in the United Arab Emirates for killing a young Sudanese boy in a road accident in 2012, can't believe that he will be a free man and can return to the country to be with his family.

Becks Krishnan was saved by prominent NRI businessman and philanthropist M A Yusufali who helped to pay his "blood money" amounting nearly Rs 1 crore.

Krishnan, who hails from Kerala, was sentenced to death by UAE Supreme Court after he was found guilty of killing a young Sudanese boy when he recklessly drove and rammmed his car into a group of children in September 2012.

Ever since, his family and friends have been trying hard for Krishnan's release without any success, especially as the victim's family had already gone back and settled in Sudan, putting an end to any discussion or pardon.

The Krishnan family then approached Yusufali, Chairman of Lulu Group, who went about getting the details of the case and got in touch with all stakeholders.

Ultimately in January 2021, the victim's family in Sudan agreed to pardon Krishnan. Subsequently, Yusufali paid 500,000 Dirhams (Rs one crore approximately) as com-



pensation in the court to secure the man's release, the Lulu group said here in a statement.

Talking to the Indian embassy officials yesterday in Al Watba Jail in Abu Dhabi, a highly emotional Krishnan could not believe the turn of events.

"It's a re-birth for me, as I had lost all hope of seeing the outside world, let alone a free life. My only wish now is to see Yusufali once before flying to my family," Krishnan was quoted as saying in the statement.

When asked for his comments Yusufali simply thanked almighty for the release of Krishnan and the benevolence of visionary rulers of UAE for the release of Krishnan, and wished him a happy and peaceful life ahead.

## Covax secures \$2.4B for jobs to needy countries



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Washington, June 3: Covax programme has received \$2.4 billion aid for providing equitable vaccinations in low-income countries.

The funds were pledged by wealthier countries, foundations and private companies after a virtual summit hosted by the Japanese government and Gavi, the Vaccine

Alliance Wednesday, the New York Times reported.

Belgium, Denmark, Japan, Spain and Sweden also announced plans to share a total of 54 million doses from their domestic supplies with countries in need. Japan has pledged \$800 million. It has also committed to share 30 million doses of locally produced vaccines.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Mastercard and the Visa Foundation were among institutions committing funds, and the European Investment Bank announced additional financing to support cost-sharing with African Union countries, the report said.

## CHEMICAL CATASTROPHE



Smoke rises from a fire onboard the MV X-Press Pearl vessel as it sinks while being towed into deep sea off the Colombo Harbour, in Sri Lanka

REUTERS

## UK Royals barred 'coloured' from office jobs in 60's

THE OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS SHOW BRITAIN'S LONGEST-SERVING MONARCH COORDINATED WITH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS ON THE WORDING OF NEW RACIAL AND SEXUAL EQUALITIES LAWS IN THE 1970's

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

London, June 3: Senior aides to Queen Elizabeth II barred the hiring of "coloured immigrants or foreigners" in office roles at Buckingham Palace until at least the late 1960's, a media report said Thursday.

The Queen and Britain's royal household also negotiated an exemption from 1970's-era laws on race and sex discrimination that still exists today, The Guardian reported. Citing historical papers it unearthed at the National Archives, the newspaper said that in 1968, the Queen's chief financial manager

told government officials of the hiring policy towards ethnic minorities.

"It was not, in fact, the practice to appoint coloured immigrants or foreigners" to clerical and other office posts, one document quoted the royal courtier as having stated.

"Coloured applicants" were considered only for "ordinary domestic posts", it added.

It is unclear when the policy ended, but Buckingham Palace has said its records show people from ethnic minority backgrounds being employed in the 1990's, The Guardian noted.

The palace added it did not keep



records on the racial backgrounds of employees prior to that, according to the paper.

A palace spokeswoman said in a statement: "Claims based on a second-hand account of conversations from over 50 years ago should not be used to draw or infer conclusions about modern-day events or operations." The exemption secured for the royal household meant a government board, rather than the courts, has since dealt with allegations of discrimination within the royal household.

The disclosures are likely to renew focus on allegations of historical and more recent racism

with the British royal family.

In a bombshell interview earlier this year, Prince Harry and his wife Meghan Markle revealed a family member had expressed concern about their expected child's skin colour.

Shock at the claim prompted Prince William, second-in-line to the throne and Harry's elder brother, to tell reporters in March that the family was "very much not" racist.

The revelations are the latest in an ongoing investigation into the royal family's use of an arcane parliamentary procedure - known as Queen's consent - to influence British legislation.



# Tough return for Benzema

FRENCHMAN MISSES PENALTY ON HIS COMEBACK AFTER FIVE-AND-HALF YEARS OF ABSENCE IN THE NATIONAL SQUAD, WHILE ALEXANDER-ARNOLD'S INJURY PUTS ENGLAND IN A SPOT OF BOTHER

# Top-ranked Barty retires with injury

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Paris, June 3: Top-ranked Ash Barty retired from her second-round match at the French Open Thursday because of a left hip injury that had flared up during training just before the clay-court Grand Slam.

The 2019 champion trailed 6-1, 2-2 when she signaled that she couldn't continue against Polish rival Magda Linette on Court Philippe Chatrier. "It's heartbreaking," Barty said.

The Australian started the match with her left thigh bandaged and it was immediately clear she could not move properly Barty called for a medical timeout at the end of the opening set, then briefly left the court for treatment. She stopped after Linette hit an ace. Barty then walked to the net to shake the 45th-ranked player's hand.

Last year's runner-up Sofia Kenin advanced to the third round with a 7-5, 6-3 win over Hailey Baptiste in a battle of Americans. Fifth-seeded Elena Svitolina also progressed by defeating French Open debutant Ann Li of the United States 6-0, 6-4.

Among others, USA's Sloane Stephens outplayed ninth seed Karolina Pliskova of Czech Republic 7-5, 6-1 to move into the third round, while Coco Gauff and 13th seed Jennifer Brady got the better of Wang Qiang 6-3, 7-6(7-1) and Fiona Ferro 6-4, 2-6, 7-5 respectively.

In the men's draw, eighth seed Roger Federer had to toil hard be-

fore beating Marin Cilic 6-2, 2-6, 7-6(7-4), 6-2. However, World No.1 Novak Djokovic had a comfortable outing as the Serb overwhelmed Pablo Cuevas 6-3, 6-2, 6-4 to enter the third round.

Ninth seed Italian Matteo Berrettini defeated Argentina's Federico Coria 6-3, 6-3, 6-2 to enter the third round Thursday. Berrettini will face Korean Kwon Soon-Woo who beat Italy's Andreas Seppi 6-4, 7-5, 7-5.

In another match, 10th seeded David Schwartzman of Argentina beat Aljaz Bedene of Slovenia 6-4, 6-2, 6-4 to enter third round while 14th seed Gael Monfils crashed out losing 0-6, 6-2, 4-6, 3-6 to Mikael Ymer of Sweden in the second round.

Earlier late Wednesday night, second seed Daniil Medvedev defeated American Tommy Paul 3-6, 6-1, 6-4, 6-3 to enter third round. The 25-year-old will play American Reilly Opelka for a place in the fourth round.

In other matches on the day, fifth seed Stefanos Tsitsipas and sixth seed Alexander Zverev progressed to third round with straight-set wins. Tsitsipas beat Pedro Martinez 6-3, 6-4, 6-3 while Zverev overcame Russian qualifier Roman Safiullin 7-6(7-4), 6-3, 7-6(7-1).



Ash Barty in action during her match against Magda Linette



UNFORTUNATE: Karim Benzema sees his penalty thwarted away by the Wales custodian as (inset) he reacts with a disappointing smile, Wednesday



Referee talks to England right-back Trent Alexander-Arnold (R) regarding his injury in the presence of another English player, Wednesday

Williams was sent off for a goal-saving handball to set up the penalty that Benzema missed in the 27th. Ousmane Dembele added a third with a 79th-minute effort which came after Benzema struck the

post with a shot on the swivel.

### ENGLAND JEERED

England and Austria players took a knee before their warm-up match and it was met with a mixture of loud boos and applause. It was the first time an England side has made the anti-racism gesture in front of a home crowd.

"I did hear it," Southgate said of the jeers. "It's not something on behalf of our Black players that I wanted to hear because it feels as though it's a criticism of them."

"I think we have got a situation where some people think it's a political stand that they don't agree with. That's not the reason we are doing it. We are supporting each other."

Bukayo Saka scored his first international goal to earn the win for England. Jordan Henderson, picked by England for Euro 2020 despite having not played since February

because of a groin injury, didn't feature because he felt some discomfort early Wednesday

### LOEW HAPPY

Germany coach Joachim Loew felt the returns of the experienced Muller and Hummels, who both played the full game against Denmark, improved the communication in the team.

"Of course, maybe a game or two to refine the connection a bit," Loew said. "We haven't been here for a while and haven't always played with some of the others like that. What was better was communication, talking to each other. It was louder on the pitch. The commands were better; it wasn't as quiet as it was before."

Florian Neuhaus' 48th-minute opener for Germany was cancelled out by Yussuf Poulsen, who plays in the Bundesliga for Leipzig, in the 71st.

# Conway breaks Ganguly's 25-yr record at the Lord's

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, June 3: New Zealand batsman Devon Conway has broken former India captain Sourav Ganguly's 25-year-old record of registering the highest Test score on debut at Lord's when he went past the stylish southpaw's 131 during the first Test against England.

Conway, who is also a left-handed batsman, remained unbeaten 136 as New Zealand finished the first day at a solid 246/3. With his opening day exploits, the South African-born 29-year-old became the sixth cricketer to hit a hundred on debut at the iconic venue.

Ganguly, who is now the BCCI president, had scored 131 on his Test debut at what is referred to as the Mecca of cricket in 1996. Interestingly, both Conway and Ganguly share their birthday - July 8 - but are separated by nearly 20 years in age.

Speaking to Sky Sports at the end of the day's play, Conway said, "I'll have some time to let that settle in. The job's not done but I'm very happy. I had a conversation with (skipper) Kane (Williamson) a couple of days ago and asked him what it feels like to go on that honours board; the first thing he said to me was: now you're on it, boy."

With his century, Conway became only the third non-English batsman to score a century on Test debut at Lord's. Australian batsman Harry Graham had scored 107 against England on his debut in 1893.



# ROBINSON APOLOGISES FOR ABUSIVE TWEETS

LONDON: For Ollie Robinson, the day should have been all about the joy of taking two wickets on his test debut for England at Lord's. Instead, he'll remember the biggest moment of his cricket career for the wrong reasons. Soon after stumps on Day 1 of the first Test against New Zealand, the 27-year-old fast bowler was close to tears as he apologized for a string of sexist and racist messages that he posted on Twitter from 2012-14 and which surfaced over social media while the game was being played. "I deeply regret my actions, and I am ashamed of making such remarks," Robinson said in a statement. "I was thoughtless and irresponsible, and regardless of my state of mind at the time, my actions were inexcusable." Robinson said the tweets were sent during a tough period in his life after he'd been fired by English county Yorkshire as a teenager. "I didn't know they were still there," he told a news conference. "I just want to apologize to everyone. I regret it hugely." The old tweets were shared online while he was on the field at the home of cricket. "Today should be about my efforts on the field and the pride of making my test debut for England, but my thoughtless behavior in the past has tarnished this," Robinson said.



# SPORTS MINISTER RIJJU UNVEILS OFFICIAL OLYMPICS KITS FOR INDIA 190-strong contingent likely for Tokyo

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 3: The Indian contingent for the upcoming Tokyo Olympics is expected to be around 190, including over 100 athletes, IOA president Narinder Batra said Thursday as Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju unveiled the official kits for the country's participants.

So far, 100 athletes have qualified for the Tokyo Games, including 56 men and 44 women. The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) expects another 25 to 35 to make the cut for the Games, which open July 23.

"We are estimating to touch 125 to 135 (qualified athletes) by the next two to three weeks when the qualification process is over," Batra said during the online ceremony which also marked 50 days to the Games. "This means the Indian contingent, including officials and support staff, is likely to be around 190," he added. The number of officials cannot be more than one-third of the athlete group as per the Sports Ministry rules. The ministry can, however, allow additional officials at no cost to the government.

Batra also reiterated that India's medal haul can touch the double-digit mark in Tokyo, which will be an unprecedented achievement. India's best medal haul came in the 2012 London Olympics, where the country snared six medals, including two silver and four bronze.

IOA chief said that all the athletes who have qualified for the Olympics have received the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine except for a few who have recently contracted the virus.

He requested Rijiju to ensure



Kiren Rijiju (centre right) and Narinder Batra pose with the unveiled Indian Olympics kits, Thursday

that all the Indian athletes are fully vaccinated before they head to Tokyo. "The IOC will issue a Playbook (latest version) this month but there will be only minor changes (from earlier version). We have to follow all the health and safety protocols in view of the pandemic."

Unveiling the official kits of the Indian contingent, Rijiju said the whole country is behind the athletes. "Olympics is the platform where the best in the world will compete. I hope our athletes will make their

best effort and make the country proud by winning medals," he said.

"Today, the Prime Minister took a review of the country's preparation for the Olympics and assured the participating athletes that the entire country is behind them," he added.

He said his ministry has provided all kinds of support - financial and logistical - to the athletes amid the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The official kits are sponsored by Li Ning while the official ceremonial kits are sponsored by Raymonds. "We could have organised a big event to mark the occasion but for this pandemic..." the minister lamented.

IOA Secretary General Rajiv Mehta said that four sets of official kits will be given to each athlete and more than 100 kits have been kept aside as contingency.

Six Olympic-bound athletes, including Neeraj Chopra, Bajrang Punia, Ravi Dahiya, Sumit Malik and Seema Bisla, were present. Chef de Mission of the Indian contingent B P Baishya and his deputy Prem Chand Verma were also present.

# Indian teams land in England

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, June 3: The Indian men's cricket team arrived here on Thursday for the upcoming World Test Championship final against New Zealand and the subsequent Test series versus hosts England.

The men's team was accompanied by the women's side which is touring England for three ODIs and as many T20s besides the one-off Test, starting in Bristol on June 16.

"Touchdown," top-order batsman KL Rahul tweeted with a picture of the chartered flight in the background, confirming their safe arrival in London.

Both the teams will now travel to Southampton, where they will complete their mandatory quarantine. Upon completion of the quarantine period and subsequent COVID-19 test, the Virat Kohli-led men's team will take on New



Zealand in the maiden WTC final starting here from June 18.

Following the WTC final, the men's team will face England in a five-match Test series starting August 4 in Nottingham.

India are travelling with an extended 20-member squad for WTC final and subsequent series against England keeping the COVID-19 pandemic in mind. The women's team's tour ends July 15.

# VIDIT QUALIFIES FOR CHESS WC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, June 3: India No.3 Vidit Gujrathi has qualified for the FIDE chess World Cup 2021, to be held in Sochi, Russia from July 10 on the basis of his rating. With this, Grandmaster Gujrathi becomes the fourth Indian man to qualify for the upcoming World Cup, a press release said Thursday.

The Nashik-based player joins Grandmasters P Harikrishna, Aravindh Chidambaram and P Nityan as the Indian men to have qualified for the World Cup. Meanwhile, Koneru Humpy, D Harika, Bhakti Kulkarni, R Vaishali and Padmini Rout have qualified for the women's event at the World Cup.

This will be Gujrathi's third World Cup appearance, having previously featured in 2017 and 2019. The Indian said he is confident of putting up a nice show in the tournament.