

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | WEDNESDAY 30 | JUNE 2021

WEATHER



Max: 34°C
Min: 22°C
Rainfall: 6%

ASTROGUIDE

Pilava: Aani 16
Tithi: Sashti
Star: Poorattathi
Rahukalam:
12 noon to 1.30 pm
Yamagandam:
7.30 am to 9 am

PRAYERS

Fajar: 4.27 am
Luhar: 12.17 pm
Asar: 3.38 pm
Maghrib: 6.39 pm
Isha: 7.58 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.48 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.03 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 11.46 PM
MOONSET TOMORROW 11.58 AM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+45,641)	(+816)
3,03,61,699	3,98,484

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+4,512)	(118)
TN: 24,75,190	32,506

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

18,23,85,051

DEATHS

39,48,996

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES

219

worldometers.info

Rahul says 'no meeting' scheduled with Sidhu

New Delhi: A day after Punjab MLA Navjot Singh Sidhu's office claimed he has been called to Delhi for a meeting with Rahul Gandhi, the former Congress president said there is no such meeting. "There is no meeting. I don't know what fuss you are making..." Gandhi told reporters while leaving his Tughlaq Lane residence. He was asked if he was meeting Sidhu today, as claimed by the former Punjab minister's office.

Pawar meets Thackeray over differences in MVA govt

Mumbai: Nationalist Congress Party president Sharad Pawar on Tuesday met Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray amid speculation in state political circles over differences in Maharashtra's ruling Maha Vikas Aghadi government of the Shiv Sena-NCP-Congress alliance. The meeting came amid rumours that Shiv Sena is considering a patch-up with the Baratiya Janata Party.

COUNTER

POINT



Farmers' income will be doubled? Where is the income?

SC order bars TN study on NEET impact, says HC

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 29

The Madras high court on Tuesday ordered notice to the Union and Tamil Nadu governments on a public interest litigation, which sought to quash as illegal, a government order dated June 10 constituting a high-level committee chaired by Justice A.K. Rajan, a retired judge of the Madras high court, to study the impact of NEET on medical

admissions.

The first bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy issued notice on a PIL filed by BJP's Tamil Nadu unit general secretary K. Nagarajan.

Referring to the Supreme Court order on August 22, 2017 which said the state "shall not make any kind of distinction or discrimination between the examinations conducted by various

CLOSING THE DOOR

■ **THERE CAN BE** little room for the state to ascertain whether NEET-based admission process has affected socially backward students, the HC said

boards and admissions shall be effected as per the result of the NEET examination," the high court said

there can be little room for the state to set up a committee for the purpose of ascertaining whether the NEET-based admission process has prejudicially affected socially backward students.

The petitioner suggests that the setting up of the committee was an exercise in futility since any recommendation that such committee may make cannot be implemented in the light of the view taken by the Supreme Court.



Chennai Corporation gears up for potential third wave

CITY | 3



Urge Pak to act against ultras, India tells UN

WORLD | 5

SPORT | 8

Switzerland knock France out of Euro



Vol. 11 No.184 Established 1938 | 8 PAGES| 4.00

2000 MW BY 2027

Work on KKNPP phase-III begins

M. ARULOLI | DC
KUDANKULAM, JUNE 29

The nation's largest nuclear power park, the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Project (KKNPP) that stands a symbol of Indo-Russian partnership in the field of civil nuclear energy, entered its third phase with the commencement of the construction of two more reactors (units 5 and 6) at an estimated cost of Rs 49,631 crore in addition to the two reactors in the first phase under operation and another two of the second phase of KKNPP under construction on Tuesday.

Director-general of Rosatom, the state nuclear energy corporation of the Russian Federation, Dr Alexy Likhachev, and chairman of Indian Atomic energy commission and DAE secretary, Kamlesh Nilkanth Vyas, formally launched the project by pouring concrete for the units.

Dr Likhachev, who participated in the ceremony through video conferencing from Moscow, said the launch marked a milestone in the endeavour for providing clean and environmentally benign



power. Dr Vyas said KKNPP would be producing 6000 MW power from its six reactors by the completion of the units 5 and 6, expectedly in 2026, to significantly contribute to the growth of Tamil Nadu, the home state of the project.

The first two units each having 1000 MW generation capacity, under operation since October 2013 and October 2016, respectively, has till date produced more than 57 billion units and the third and fourth units under construction completed more than 50 percent of the civil works and is expected to be commissioned in the next two years, according to the chairman and Managing director of Nuclear Power Corporation of India limited (NPCIL), Satish Kumar Sharma. ■ **P4**



SYLENDRA BABU APPOINTED DGP AND POLICE CHIEF

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 29

C. Syendra Babu will take over as director-general of police (DGP) for Tamil Nadu and the head of the police force on July 1 following the retirement of incumbent J.K. Tripathy on June 30. A government order issued on Tuesday said Mr Syendra Babu, an IPS officer of the 1987 batch, was picked by the government after carefully examining the panel of names recommended by the UPSC and also looking into it independently along with service records. The UPSC had recommended the panel of names at the empanelment committee meeting at New Delhi on Monday. ■ **P3**

Centre may ban use of drones by public

PAWAN BALI | DC
NEW DELHI, JUNE 29

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday held a high-level meeting with defence minister Rajnath Singh, home minister Amit Shah, civil aviation minister Hardeep Singh Puri and national security advisor (NSA) Ajit Doval on the drone attack on Indian Air Force's Jammu Air base.

There was also discussion on making drone policy in the country more

tighter to avoid its misuse. A new policy on drone use by civilians in the country is expected to be released soon. It could ban use of drone by civilians in many sensitive areas.

"There were discussions on futuristic challenges in the defence sector and equipping the forces with modern equipment and aspects relating to the involvement of more youth, startups and strategic community were also discussed," said sources.

WEAPONISED DRONES TERROR TOOL, SAYS INDIA

United Nations, June 29: The possibility of the use of weaponised drones for terrorist activities against strategic and commercial assets calls for serious attention by the global community, India has told the UN General Assembly, a day after two explosives-laden drones crashed into the Indian Air Force (IAF) station at Jammu airport.

"Today, misuse of information and communication technology such as internet and social media for terrorist propaganda" India said.

LeT leader, Pakistani aide killed in firing after arrest

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC
SRINAGAR, JUNE 29

Nadeem Abrar, a "commander" of Lashkar-e-Tayyaba, whose arrest from a car he was travelling in along with another suspected militant through Parimpora, a Srinagar suburb, on Monday was described by the Jammu and Kashmir police as "a big success for us", was killed in an "encounter" in a neighbouring area overnight,

the police said Tuesday.

The incident has caused raised eyebrows in the Valley's political circles whereas many residents, some human rights activists and Abrar's family have termed his killing as an "extrajudicial murder".

But IGP (Kashmir range) Vijay Kumar sought to dispel this, saying that Abrar was killed in a gunfight that erupted Monday evening in Maloora area of Srinagar district.

Another Lashkar militant from Pakistan was also killed and two CRPF officers and a jawan injured in the clash, he said.

He claimed the slain militants were planning "two big attacks" along the Srinagar-Baramulla road, often used by the Army for carrying men and supplies to the Kashmir border.

He confirmed that Abrar, a resident of Narbal in central J&K's Budgam district. ■ **P4**

CM RELEASES ₹100 CR FOR LIQUID OXYGEN

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 29

Chief Minister M.K. Stalin released Rs 100 crore from the Chief Minister's Public Relief Fund on Tuesday for the purchase of liquid oxygen for government hospitals and to take preventive measures against the third wave of the Coronavirus.

While requesting for donations from the members of the public, industry and philanthropists, Mr Stalin assured the money would be spent only for Covid-19 relief work and nothing else.

With many people generously contributing, the relief fund received donations to the tune of Rs 353 crore till June 29, an official release said.

From the fund, money has been released thrice for undertaking various Covid-19 related measures.

Now Rs 100 crore has been released and the money would be utilized to buy liquid oxygen for government hospitals and to initiate measures to counter the impending third wave of the pandemic.

New Delhi, June 29: The Supreme Court on Tuesday directed states and Union Territories to implement the 'one nation, one ration card' scheme by July 31, while asking the Centre to provide dry ration for free distribution among migrant workers till the Covid-19 situation continues.

A bench of justices Ashok Bhushan and M.R. Shah issued a slew of directions on a plea of three activists seeking directions to the Centre and states to ensure food security, cash transfers and other welfare measures for migrant workers who faced distress again due to curfews and lockdowns in various parts of country during the second wave of Covid-19.

The bench has said the ONORC scheme is for welfare of poor citizens as it allows migrant workers to



get ration at the place of their work in other states as well where their ration cards are not registered.

The bench directed the Centre to develop a portal with the help of the National Informatics Centre (NIC) for registration of unorganised sector workers for granting them the benefits of welfare schemes by July 31.

It also directed the states, UTs to run community kitchens for migrant workers till the Covid pandemic continues.

It asked the Centre to

keep allocating foodgrains to the states, UTs for distribution among migrant workers for free till the pandemic situation exists.

The state governments and the UT administrations shall bring a scheme to provide dry ration to migrant workers by July 31 and such a scheme will remain till COVID situation continues, the top court said. The bench directed states and UTs to register all establishments and contractors under the Inter-state Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service Act) 1979.

Activists Anjali Bharadwaj, Harsh Mander and Jagdeep Chhokar had filed a plea seeking implementation of welfare measures for migrant workers and the judgement was reserved on June 11 by the bench. — **PTI**

FIR against Twitter over wrong map

Lucknow, June 29: The police in Uttar Pradesh's Bulandshahr district have lodged an FIR against two senior officials of Twitter India over the social media platform putting up a distorted map of India.

The FIR was lodged at the Khurja Nagar police station on Monday evening on the basis of a complaint by an officer-bearer of right wing Bajrang Dal.

The map, which showed the Union territories of Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir outside India, was noticed on Monday, leading to an uproar by netizens.

Twitter had removed that map on Monday evening.

"The world map does not show Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir as parts of India. This is not a coincidence. This act has hurt the sentiments of Indians, including me," Bajrang Dal's western UP con-

venor Praveen Bhati said in the complaint.

The FIR names Twitter India managing director Manish Maheshwari and news partnerships head Amrita Tripathi as accused who have been booked under Indian Penal Code section 505 (2) (public mischief).

Charges under Information Technology Act section 74 (publication for fraudulent purpose) have also been invoked in the case, according to the FIR.

The map's glaring distortion, which appeared on the career section of Twitter website under the header "Tweep Life", had triggered a heavy backlash from netizens on Monday as they demanded strict action against the microblogging platform that has flouted various rules on multiple occasions in the past. Earlier, Twitter had shown Leh as part of China. — **PTI**

SHORT TAKES

Saveetha Dental College launches dynamic navigation system

Chennai, June 29: Saveetha dental college becomes the first dental institute in India to have a dynamic navigation system. SDC signed a research MOU with the University of Glasgow, UK. Dr. Kalanidhi Veeraswamy, MP, digitally launched the dynamic navigation system in the presence of Dr. N.M. Veeraiyan, founder & chancellor SIMATS and Dr. Deepak Nallaswamy, director of academics SIMATS.

"The dynamic navigation system decreases the complication rates of difficult procedures. The MoU with the university of Glasgow will begin with research on dental implantology and will expand further into the other fields such as maxillofacial surgeries," said Dr. N.M. Veeraiyan.

Dynamic navigation systems force the surgeon to plan the surgery and placement of a virtual implant in terms of angulation, depth, location, size and depth thus allowing for a well-planned surgery. Placement of implant using dynamic navigation is more accurate compared with implant placement with free hand approach according to a press release.



Traffic was halted for a while at Marina beach in Kamarajar Salai on Wednesday when a mentally-ill person attempted suicide by climbing a lamp post there. He was later rescued by fire and rescue services personnel. Chief Minister Stalin's vehicle was also forced to take another route.

—DC

Family outing



Visitors at Egmore museum on Tuesday.

—DC

Vaccination for mentally-ill persons imperative: HC

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 29

The Madras high court has said it is imperative that a special vaccination drive be undertaken by whatever means that may be effective, to prioritize mentally ill persons and ensure that they are vaccinated.

The first bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthil Kumar Ramamoorthy made the observation while passing interim orders on a Public Interest Litigation filed by Cheer, an NGO, represented by its president R. Aswin Kumar.

In his PIL, Aswin Kumar sought a direction to the state government to effectively implement the state mental health policy across the state, by identifying the homeless persons with mental illness, rescuing them and rehabilitating them in accordance with law and consequently take effective measures to provide all the necessary healthcare facilities including Covid-19 vaccination to all the rescued homeless persons with mental illness within the state of Tamil Nadu.

The bench said the state, like the rest of the country, was recovering from the deadly second surge of

the pandemic. Several persons have not only lost their near and dear ones, but may also have lost their livelihoods and suffered in their businesses, particularly the small business and shop owners who were unable to function at all during the long stretches of the lockdown that was imposed. There was a lot of work immediately necessary for the government to provide relief and rehabilitate persons who have families which have lost their breadwinners, and persons whose business have been completely devastated or persons who have lost jobs in the private sector. "It is, however, necessary that just like the special drive undertaken by the State to protect persons with disabilities, a similar measure be adopted for persons, who are mentally ill, who may be homebound, or may not be aware of the need to protect themselves. It is imperative that a special vaccination drive be undertaken, by whatever means that may be effective, to prioritize mentally ill persons and ensure that they are vaccinated", the bench added.

The bench said the petitioner refers to a 10.5 acre campus at Tiruvallur which incurs a monthly

expense in excess of Rs 1.5 lakh for maintenance, to be used as a shelter or place where mentally ill patients who were destitute or may have been abandoned by their families to be kept together and a vaccination drive be undertaken upon maintaining the necessary hygiene requirements. The State should make every endeavour to make best use of such a facility since the maintenance costs were, in any event, being incurred. Personnel may be deployed, even on a temporary basis, so that mentally ill persons who may not be cared for by any other may be housed at such a facility and appropriate measures taken to vaccinate them, the bench added.

The bench said, "The state will do well to ensure that the immediate needs of, particularly the destitute who are mentally ill, are taken care of and the other mentally ill patients who may be homebound or are restricted in their movements are attended to in the next four weeks. A report in such regard should be filed by the department of health when the matter appears next, five weeks hence".

The bench posted to August 2, 2021, further hearing of the case.

Corpn gears up for potential third wave

T.SUDHEESH | DC
CHENNAI, JUNE 29

At a time when the number of active cases hit below 500 mark across the 15 zones of the Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC), the city is staring at a potential third wave.

According to the data provided by GCC, the city reported only 3,462 active cases with 291 fresh Covid-19 patients, which is a fall from numbers in the first week of June. On June 10, the number of active cases in the city was 12,210.

None of the zones in the GCC has over 500 active cases. The zone specific data provided by GCC on Monday shows that Adyar is on the top with just 406 cases that crashed from 1,134 on June 10. Likewise, Anna Nagar and Kodambakkam, which had reported 1,146 and 1,115 active cases on June 10, have ended up in little more than 300 cases on Monday.

Despite the drop in the active cases, the authorities are still vigilant as a third wave could make a sudden surge in the

daily cases.

According to health secretary J. Radhakrishnan, all preparations have been made to deal with the possible third wave that may affect children badly as they have not yet been immunized.

Health minister Ma. Subramanian, earlier in the month, had opened special pediatric wards in all five government medical college hospitals in the city. Following this, the health department has ensured such special wards to all the districts across

the state.

"Since public spaces have started witnessing increasing mobility after the government introduced more relaxations, the chances of virus spreading are very high. We have launched zone based, tele-counselling apart from a massive clean-up drive across the city as a preparation for the potential third wave. We have inoculated over 25 lakh people so far. We have also intensified tracking with 25,000-30,000 RT-PCR tests every day," said a GCC official.

Plea to set up committee to ramp up online education

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 29

The Madras high court has ordered notice to the state government on a petition, which sought a direction to the authorities to constitute a committee consisting of experts in the field of school education, parents representative, recognised social activists and private school authorities, to find out an alternative method to increase the efficiency in imparting education through online classes.

The first bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthil Kumar Ramamoorthy ordered notice, returnable by a week, on a petition filed by advocate K. Mahendran, which also sought to fix a nominal percentage of fees on the overall fees amount to be paid by the students for the academic year 2021-2022, by giving waiver to the arrears of fees pertaining to the academic year 2020-2021 by taking into consideration the impact of Covid-19 second wave and the continuing lockdown and to give sufficient time to the parents to pay the fees fixed by such Committee for the academic year 2021-2022.

The bench posted to July 8, 2021, further hearing of the case.

Metro water to increase drinking water supply

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 29

Chennai metro water will increase the quantity of drinking water supplied to households to 1,146 million litres a day (mld) from 850mld, said K. N. Nehru, minister for municipal administration, urban and water supply on Tuesday.

Chairing a meeting of officials at MRC Nagar in the city, the minister said increase in quantity will help metro water to address drinking water shortage on 8,600 streets facilitating pipe connection. Supply from desalination plant in Nemmell will be accelerated so that it can help to meet the demand from the extended areas including Mathuur,



K.N. Nehru, minister for municipal administration, urban and water supply, takes a look at the ongoing metro water project work along with Shiv Das Meena, secretary MAWS, and Metrowater Managing Director C. Vijayaraj Kumar, on Tuesday.

—DC

Madipakkam, and Uthandi.

Measures will be taken to prevent pollution in the water sources including Cooum, Beckingham canal and Otteri Nalla will be intensified. The water from these sources will be used for drinking

purposes after purification. The output of the sewage treatment plants in Koyambedu and Kodungaiyur will be stepped up as the demand for the treated water from the industrial sector is increasing, said the minister.

Gold worth ₹31.50 L seized

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 29

Chennai air customs seized gold worth ₹31.50 lakhs from a passenger and arrested him at the city airport.

According to the customs, based on intelligence, Fazuludeen (26) of Cuddalore who arrived from Dubai by Air India flight AI-950 was intercepted at exit.

On personal search, three bundles of gold paste weighing 707grams were recovered from rectum. On extraction 648 grams of 24k purity gold valued at ₹31.50 lakh was recovered and seized under Customs Act. The passenger was arrested. Further investigation is on.

Third accused in ATM theft case brought to Chennai

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 29

Chennai police on Tuesday brought another suspect involved in the series of thefts at various SBI ATMs to the city. The city police has arrested three persons in the case.

The suspect identified by the police as Nazim Hussain was arrested by a special police team in Haryana on Monday and he was brought to Chennai by a Vistara Airlines flight on Tuesday evening.

After receiving a series of theft s from the ATMs in the city and the suburbs, the city police formed special teams to nab the gang.

On June 23, Amir Harsh, one of the gang



members, who was hiding in Haryana, was arrested and brought to Chennai. The police said Amit had told them that nine other members from Haryana were involved in the theft. A special team headed by T. Nagar Deputy Commissioner went to Haryana and with the help of local police, arrested Virendra Rawat.

SC rejects pleas challenging 2019 TN land acquisition laws

New Delhi, June 29: The Supreme Court on Tuesday dismissed a batch of pleas challenging the constitutionality of the Tamil Nadu Land Acquisition Laws (Revival of Operation, Amendment and Validation) Act 2019, holding it to be a "legitimate legislative exercise".

The apex court noted that the 2019 Act was applied retrospectively from September 26, 2013, with the objective to validate all pending acquisitions on and

after that date under the state enactments, otherwise quashed by the Madras High Court. The petitioners before the apex court had claimed that the legislative tool adopted by state legislature to revive "unconstitutional enactments" was a direct attempt to overrule and nullify the high court's July 2019 verdict, which had quashed all pending acquisition proceedings under three enactments on or after September 27, 2013, and the same was

impermissible in constitutional scheme as it violates the doctrine of separation of powers. The apex court noted in its verdict that three Acts were earlier challenged before the high court which had found that the state enactments became repugnant to the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 and thus void, on September 27, 2013 when the law

received assent of the President.

"The petitioners have advanced lengthy arguments as to how the 2019 Act is repugnant to the 2013 Act. We are constrained to observe that the whole exercise of pointing out any repugnancy after a validating Act has obtained the assent of the President is otiose," said a bench of Justices A M Khanwilkar and Dinesh Maheshwari. The bench noted that the effect of the

2019 Act is to change the law retrospectively and not to overrule the judgment of the high court. "In light of the aforesaid discussion, we hold the 2019 Act to be a legitimate legislative exercise and find it to be consistent with and within the four corners of Article 254 of the Constitution of India and also of the high court judgment. Thus, we dismiss the present batch of writ petitions," the bench said in its 60-page verdict.

—PTI

Safety norms go for a toss



A huge crowd at the mango market in Vellore on Tuesday.

—K. Senthil Nathan

Ponkumar appointed welfare board chairman

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 29

Chief Minister M. K. Stalin appointed Ponkumar as the chairman of the Tamil Nadu Construction Workers Welfare Board, along with 26 other members, on Tuesday.

The board, set up as part of the pioneering efforts of the state government to provide security to those work-

ing in the disorganized sector, now has offices at the district level all over the State and has 13,41,494 registered workers attached to it.

Of the total 27 members nominated to the revamped board, 9 are government nominees, including the chairman, while nine others are representatives of employers and nine from workers' unions.



Vice President Venkaiah Naidu is welcomed by Governor of Tamil Nadu Banwarilal Purohit at Chennai airport on Tuesday.

More deaths in Covid second wave in Nilgiris

B.RAVICHANDRAN | DC
OOTY, JUNE 29

The daily count of new Covid-19 cases has come down to double digits in Nilgiris after two months. The hills have, however, recorded more deaths due to the coronavirus during the second

wave this summer.

The positivity rate was higher during second wave in the West Zone that started late April. Though the daily count was only 58 on April 30, things began to change for the worse with a steady increase in positive cases from the beginning of May when

the daily count began to

cross the three-digit mark. As many as 113 positive cases were reported on May 6 and the daily count began to soar and crossing the 500-mark it was as high as 587 on May 31. From then onwards it began to show a steady downward trend.

While the daily positive count was 308 on June 15, fatalities began to recede further

and on June 28 the daily count began to come down to the two digit mark with only 87 positive cases recorded. On June 29, the daily positive count further came down to 75.

The Nilgiris had recorded more deaths due to Covid-19 infection during the past two months. While the death figure stood at 51 by April end, 164 deaths were recorded by June 29, with as many as 113 lives lost in May and June during the second wave.

Tirukkural couplets to come back on buses

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR & D. SEKAR | DC
CHENNAI, JUNE 29

Transport minister R. S. Raja Kannappan made it clear that the government was not considering any hike in the price of bus fare despite the increase in diesel and petrol prices and the previous AIADMK regime leaving the transport department in a huge debt of ₹31,000 crore.

Speaking about the government's future plans to the media at the Secretariat on Tuesday, he said government buses would once again have a photograph of Tamil saint-poet Tiruvalluvar and a couplet from his globally acclaimed work, Tirukkural, printed prominently along with its summary.

Though the DMK government had introduced the practice soon after it came to power in 1967 and all government buses were fixed with a printed couplet and a photograph of Tiruvalluvar on top of the grill behind the driver's

seat by the next year, it became a thing of the past during the previous AIADMK rule.

When the long-distance express bus corporation was at one point named after Tiruvalluvar himself, couplets were affixed in every seat enabling the passengers to read even the verse as they travelled. But by 2019, the transport department gave up the practice slowly.

First, the couplets and photographs that came off were not refixed and soon new buses rolled out without the display at all, leading to a situation in which no buses had the Tirukkural couplet or the author's photograph and the people too totally forgot about it.

Now the new transport minister wants to bring back the practice and ensure that different buses had different couplets (there are totally 1330 couplets classified under 133 chapters) and also change the colour of the buses.

Though the minister did

not go into the details relating to the change of bus colours, saying that he would take a final call after discussing it with the Chief Minister, it was presumed that different colours would be given for different categories of buses.

Now commuters could not differentiate an 'ordinary' (popularly known as white board) bus from the special services from a distance and had to wait till the vehicle arrived at the stop to decide whether they had to board it or not.

By painting the buses in different colours, commuters would be able to identify the particular type of bus from a distance and prepare themselves to board it before it came closer. For example, in 'ordinary' buses (there are 6262 of them) the ticket rates are low and women and transgendered passengers are not charged any fare.

Talking on that issue, Raja Kannappan said that there was a plan to print tickets

with a distinguishing colour for issuing them to the women and transgendered passengers travelling free of cost rather than following the present practice of letting the beneficiaries enter as they liked and disembark as they wished.

On the resumption of bus services on Monday to the 27 districts with less rate of Covid-19 infections, he said 22 lakh passengers travelled to various destinations, adding that the number of bus services would be increased depending on the demand.

On future plans, he said 500 electrical and 2000 diesel buses would join the government fleet soon and that talks were on prior to placing the orders with the companies.

He lamented that the new government had to manage the department that had already incurred a heavy loss to the tune of ₹31,000 crore but was confident of coming out of the financial crisis.



Minister for forest K. Ramachandran and Corporation commissioner Raja Gopal Sunkara inspect Siruvani dam in Coimbatore on Tuesday.

—DC

Man gets 6-year RI for sexual assault on minor

DC CORRESPONDENT
PUDUKKOTTAI, JUNE 29

The district fast track Mahila court, on Tuesday at Pudukkottai, convicted and sentenced a 30-year-old man to undergo 6 years of rigorous imprisonment for sexually assaulting a 9-year-old girl.

According to the prosecution, the accused

V. Udhayachandran of Vadakkipatti in Pudukkottai district took the fourth standard girl to a hideout in the same village and sexually assaulted her on December 17, 2019.

Based on the victim's parents' complaint, Ponnamaravathi police arrested the accused under Pocco Act and filed a case in the Mahila

Court. judge Dr Mrs. R. Sathya convicted and sentenced the accused to undergo 6 years RI and also slapped a fine of ₹50,000. If he fails to remit the fine, he should undergo one more year imprisonment. The judge also directed the Tamil Nadu Government to pay ₹2 lakh as compensation to the victim.

White tiger, elephants test negative for SARS-CoV2

Chennai, June 29 : The Arignar Anna Zoological Park (AAZP) at Vandalur here which taken up measures to prevent the spread of coronavirus among the animals at the zoo, said on Tuesday that a 16-year old male white tiger and two elephants have tested negative for SARS-CoV2 virus. The AAZP had faced a setback when it lost nine-year-old lioness Neela and an Asiatic male lion named Pathbanathan, aged 12 years, to coronavirus on June 3 and 16 respectively. "The samples of two female elephants-Prakruti and

Rohini- both aged five years, housed in the elephant enclosure area, have tested negative for SARS-CoV2," AAZP's deputy director said in a statement here. The trunk and rectal swabs of both the elephants and the swab samples of the male white tiger, named Bishma, were sent to ICAR - National Institute of High Security Animal Diseases (NIHSAD), Bhopal, on June 18. "As per the test results communicated by the NIHSAD on June 25, all the samples have tested negative for SARS-CoV2 virus," he added.

—PTI

TN reports 4,512 fresh coronavirus cases

Chennai, June 29 : Tamil Nadu on Tuesday reported 4,512 new covid-19 cases, while the active cases dropped below the 40,000 mark.

The new infections pushed the caseload to 24,75,190 while the toll from the virus touched 32,506 with 118 new deaths, according to a government bulletin.

The deceased included 71 in government facilities. Two passengers who returned by road from Andhra Pradesh added to the 4,512 new infections today. With 6,013 patients getting discharged after treatment today, the total recoveries increased to 24,03,349, the bulletin said.

The active cases, including those in isolation, dropped to 39,335 from the 40,954 on Monday.

—PTI

EPS wants relief for lawyers

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 29

Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly Edappadi K. Palaniswami urged the government to extend financial aid to impoverished lawyers and clerks in law firms, whose livelihood, too, had been affected by the lockdown brought about by the coronavirus pandemic.

In a statement on Tuesday, Palaniswami said he was planning to make an announcement on paying relief to those working in courts like poor lawyers and clerks in law firms when he was Chief Minister after receiving memoranda from various sections of people in

February.

But the sudden declaration of elections to the Assembly prevented him from making that announcement in the House, he said.

Pointing out that the hearing of cases was now done through video conferencing and that most of the people were suffering financially, he urged the DMK government to announce financial aid for the people working in courts.

He recalled the various schemes launched by the AIADMK governments in the past and also wanted the present government to pay a compensation of Rs 50 lakh to the lawyers and clerks of lawyers who passed away due to Covid-19.

CM appoints Peter Alphonse as minorities commission chairman

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 29

Chief Minister M. K. Stalin appointed Congress leader S. Peter Alphonse as the chairman of the Tamil Nadu State Minorities Commission on Tuesday.

The commission was formed in 1989 by the then Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi with a view to protecting the rights and taking care of the welfare of

religious and linguistic minorities in the state.

Alphonse, a three-time MLA, elected from Tenkasi in 1989 and 1996 and from Kadayanallur in 2006, would take over as chairman of the reconstituted commission, an official press release said.

The educational, social and economic progress of the minorities has been the prime area of concern for the commission since its inception.

Winner of Prez, PM medals

From P1 A winner of the President's Medals for devotion to duty and for Distinguished Service, 59-year-old Sylendra Babu is a fitness freak. He has also won the Prime Minister's Medal for Life Saving, the Chief Minister's Medals for gallantry and Devotion to Duty among the plethora of honours during his long career in police force.

COFFEE-BREAK

Your day today By Dr C.V.B. Subrahmanyam



Aries: You should take advantage of any money-making opportunity that comes your way. Expect social activities to be lively and exciting.



Taurus: If you are planning to venture into a new business, seek assistance from individuals who are established and experienced. Romance is in the air.



Gemini: You need to focus on small yet important tasks, to reap long-term gains. Your participation in family functions will bring you pleasure and respect.



Cancer: Your ability to act as a leader will put you into strong position. Visit to a hill station or some recreation with your family would bring moments of happiness.



Leo: You need to discuss practical issues with your partner to avoid misunderstandings later. A spiritual leader or elder provides guidance.



Virgo: You might find yourself compromised at the professional front. Family responsibilities are likely to mount today. A timely loan would enable to improve your financial health.

You share your b'day with

Lizzy Caplan, an American actress and model. She is best known for her roles in Freaks and Geeks, Related, The Class, Party Down, Masters of Sex, Castle Rock, 127 Hours, The Interview and Extinction.



Libra: Make sure you put in best efforts to complete pending work on time. Keep a firm control over negative emotions. Spend time with your family.



Scorpio: Join hands with creative and like-minded people to achieve professional goals. It is not a good time to invest in real estate. Don't indulge in office gossip.



Sagittarius: Don't forget to communicate with people whom you rarely meet. This will benefit you in the long run. Positive thinking will help you to handle anything.



Capricorn: Make sure you don't allow minor setbacks to hamper long-term business interests. Sincere efforts help in finding true love. Your ability to help needy people will bring respect.

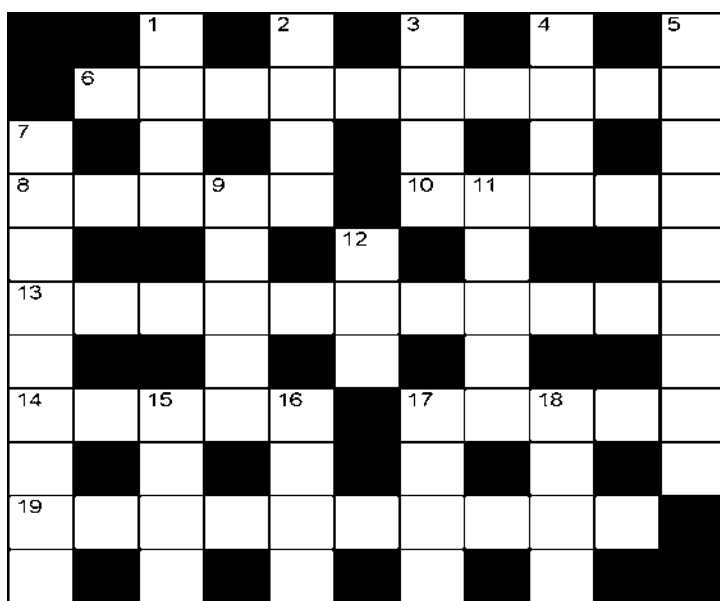


Aquarius: Restrain yourself from spending too much money on entertainment. Romance is in the air for some of you. On the professional front, your colleagues will look up to you.



Pisces: Tendency to be afraid of losing could make good opportunities slip from hands at work. Domestic tension is likely to put you in a dilemma today. Spend time with your partner.

QUICK CROSSWORD



Across

- Pasta in long threads (10)
- Turn away (5)
- Brief (5)
- Meteorological high (11)
- Compiles (5)
- Lizard type (5)
- To be decided, settled (10)

Down

- Bazaar (4)
- Give off (4)

- Play divisions (4)
- Singing voice (4)
- Motel site (anag) (9)
- Mail-order publication (9)
- Wet (5)
- Bisect (5)
- Cereal crop (3)
- Nobleman (4)
- Winner's ribbon (4)
- Deep wide chasm (4)
- Symbol on music (4)

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

Across: 1. Trendy, 3. Shed, 7. Rick, 8. Crease, 10. Retinue, 13. Asphalt, 16. Kindle, 17. Glue, 18. Tuba, 19. Cramps.
Down: 1. Tern, 2. Exceed, 4. Hoax, 5. Drench, 6. Drought, 9. Missile, 11. Pocket, 12. Slalom, 14. Knob, 15. Lens.

Word Mine

R
S A R
U L U G O

TODAY'S RATINGS: 9 AVERAGE; 10 GOOD; 11 OUTSTANDING

How many words of four or more letters can you make from the letters shown in today's puzzle? In making a word, each letter may be used once only. Each word must contain the letter at the top of the pyramid. There should be at least one nine letter word. Plurals, foreign words and proper names are not allowed.

jumble

OSBNI
LYNVI
ASYLIE
RRLEAG



Yesterday's Jumble: BUDDY OFTEN OUTAGE BISHOP
Answer: The baby bunny that was finally able to jump over the creek was — BOUND TO DO IT

CALVIN AND HOBBS | Bill Watterson



THE WIZARD OF ID | Parker and Hartsd



ARCHIE | Bill Henry Scarpelli & craig boldman



BLONDIE | Dean Young and John Marshall



ANDY CAPP | Reg Smythe



TARZAN | Edgar Rice Burroughs



bridge
PHILLIP ALDER
PLAY A DEAD CARD MORE QUICKLY

If you hold a trump honor that stands no chance of winning a trick, consider playing it earlier than necessary. Declarer might think that the trumps are breaking badly, but his attention to the side suits and later allow you a ruff with a low trump.

Today's deal was played in the match between Sweden and Spain at the 1974 European Championship. Both teams played in four spades. At the first table, West led a club to his part-

ner's ace, won the second trick with the club king and exited with a club to South's queen. Declarer cashed the spade king, led a second spade, picking up West's queen, drew the last trump, established the hearts and won 11 tricks.

At the other table, the Swedish West, Tjolle Floqvist, successfully deflected declarer from the winning course. The defenders began with three rounds of clubs, but when South

North		South	
♠ A J 5 4	♠ K 10 9 8 3 2	♠ A J 5 4	♠ K 10 9 8 3 2
♥ K 10 9 8 3 2	♥ A J 5 4	♥ K 10 9 8 3 2	♥ A J 5 4
♦ A J 5 4	♦ K 10 9 8 3 2	♦ A J 5 4	♦ K 10 9 8 3 2
♣ A J 5 4	♣ K 10 9 8 3 2	♣ A J 5 4	♣ K 10 9 8 3 2
Declarer: South		Defender: West	
♠ A J 5 4	♠ K 10 9 8 3 2	♠ A J 5 4	♠ K 10 9 8 3 2
♥ K 10 9 8 3 2	♥ A J 5 4	♥ K 10 9 8 3 2	♥ A J 5 4
♦ A J 5 4	♦ K 10 9 8 3 2	♦ A J 5 4	♦ K 10 9 8 3 2
♣ A J 5 4	♣ K 10 9 8 3 2	♣ A J 5 4	♣ K 10 9 8 3 2
Opening lead: ♠ A			

cashed the spade king, Floqvist dropped the queen. Floqvist, seeing that the queen couldn't take a trick, hoped to mislead declarer.

South was fooled. Thinking the trumps were breaking 4-1, he cashed the heart ace, played a heart to the king and ruffed a heart in hand. Disaster! Floqvist overruled with the spade nine, then led a club, promoting his partner's spade 10 as the setting trick.

True, declarer should have

drawn a second round of trumps just in case. If West does discard, South continues with three rounds of hearts, ruffing the last in hand if necessary. Then he leads a trump to dummy and runs the winning hearts. East is welcome to one trump trick. However, that doesn't detract from Floqvist's imaginative play.

Copyright
United Feature Syndicate
(Asia Features)

SHORT TAKES

CORBETT TO HAVE ROUND-THE-YEAR TOURISM

Rishikesh, June 29: The Corbett Tiger Reserve was opened on Tuesday for round-the-year tourism. Five ranges of the reserve including Garjia, Bijrani, Dhara-Jhirna, Dhela and Pakhron were opened on Tuesday afternoon for day visits for the whole year, Corbett's Director Rahul said.

Corbett's opening generated great enthusiasm among wildlife lovers with around 50 bookings made for the day safaris on the inaugural day, he said. Opening the reserve for round-the-year tourism will help people whose livelihoods are connected with it, Rahul said.

Corbett's revenues have been hit hard by the Covid pandemic and a measure like this will help offset the impact, he said. Uttarakhand's forest and environment minister Harak Singh Rawat had recently announced that Corbett and Rajaji tiger reserves will be opened for tourists for the whole year. Wildlife experts have been opposed to the move saying it will not be good for animals inhabiting the reserves.

MP MINISTER LISTS BENEFITS OF CYCLING

Indore, June 29: As the prices of petrol and diesel touch record highs, Madhya Pradesh energy minister Pradyuman Singh Tomar has highlighted the advantages of cycling and said the government was spending tax revenue earned from petroleum fuels for the benefit of the poor.

The minister was responding to a query by reporters on the skyrocketing prices of petroleum fuels. "I have been criticised for this earlier also. But, I am saying it again today, do we ever go to the vegetable market on bicycle? Cycling will keep us physically fit and also free from pollution," he said.

The minister was on a personal visit to Indore. "What is important for us — petrol and diesel or are the country's health services?" the BJP leader asked.

Tomar said the habit of cycling applies equally to him as well as common citizens. "If you look at my diary for the last 30 days, you will come to know how much I travel in car, how much I cycle and how much I walk," he said.

Asked about the impact of diesel price hike on the transport industry, Tomar said, "Is the money (tax revenue) generated from petrol-diesel going to the house of any particular person or leader? This money is being used for the poor people who are in need of treatment, education and ration."

TN: WORK ON 2 MORE NUCLEAR REACTORS BEGINS

M. ARULOLI | DC KUDANKULAM, JUNE 29

The nation's largest nuclear power park in the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Project (KKNPP), which stands as a symbol of Indo-Russian partnership in the field of civil nuclear energy, entered its third phase on Tuesday with the commencement of the construction of two more reactors (units 5 and 6) at an estimated cost of ₹49,631 crore. These are to come up in addition to two reactors of the first phase which are operational and another two of the second phase which are still under construction.

Chairman of Indian Atomic energy commission and DAE secretary, Kamlesh Nilkanth Vyas, ceremoniously unveiled the e-plaque through video conferencing along with the Director General of Rosatom, Dr. Alexy Likhachev and flagged off the first pour of the concrete for units 5 and 6 of KKNPP. He said this is a milestone event in the Indian nuclear power programme for providing clean and environmentally benign power.

The atomic energy commission chairman said that when units 5 and 6 are operational as expected in 2026, KKNPP would be producing 6,000 MW from its six reactors to significantly provide for the growth of Tamil Nadu, the home state of the power park and to the nation as a whole by supplying stable, clean and green power. The commencement of the construction work of units 5 and 6 of KKNPP, according to Vyas, was another step towards realising the dream of Dr. Homi Baba, the father of atomic energy in India and Vikram Sarabhai, who placed India among the front running nuclear energy producing countries of the world.

SC REFUSES TO POSTPONE CA EXAMS, SEEKS OPT-OUT SCHEME

PARMOD KUMAR | DC NEW DELHI, JUNE 29

The Supreme Court on Tuesday refused to pass any direction to postpone the Chartered Accountant (CA) exams slated in July but favoured the "opting out" scheme asking the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI), to spell out the scheme by Wednesday.

The court also sought the details of the Covid protocols to be followed in the examination halls.

A bench of Justice A.M. Khanwilkar, Justice Dinesh Maheshwari and Justice Aniruddha Bose said, "We are not stopping the exam. We are going to consider how opting out can be granted. In the midst of exams, out of five papers, if a student appears for three papers, he should be appearing in two papers only next time."

It posted for June 30 (Wednesday) the hearing on the candidates who want to opt out before and during the exam.

The ICAI offered the "opting out" scheme for the candidates unable to appear in the exam on account of the Covid restrictions. Senior advocate Ramji Srinivasan told the Court, "We have given in this cycle an opt out scheme. We have suggestions which we will put to the institute. The opt out facility will be available to people who are affected by Covid in one form or the other."

In a note filed on Monday, ICAI submitted that it is in best interest of students that exams are held as scheduled in July instead of postponing them as they were originally scheduled in May, but they were postponed to July due to increase in the Covid cases.

ICAI also submitted that since the Covid third wave is expected to peak in September-October, it has this narrow window of July 2021 to conduct the CA examinations.

Pending before the court are three petitions. One is to give extra chance/extension and allow opt out to those appearing for intermediate and final exams of CA under the old syllabus.

It also sought more exam centres to ensure one in every district of the country and not more than 50 students allotted to one centre.

'Power'ful approach



Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal with Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Punjab president Bhagwant Mann addresses a press conference in Chandigarh on Tuesday. Kejriwal promised 300 units of free electricity per month for each household in that state if AAP wins the polls. The AAP leader also promised round-the-clock power supply in Punjab and waiver of pending electricity bills. — PTI

Govt hands over probe into drone attack to NIA

FROM PG 1

Police and intelligence sources in Jammu said the areas which witnessed such activity include the Jammu, Rajouri, Samba and Kathua districts of J&K. The officials of the J&K police, Army and Border Security Force had on Monday said that six sorties with weapon payloads were found in the Samba sector, three to four in Hiranagar and two each in Nowshera-Rajouri and Arnia sectors.

On the intervening night of June 27-28, the movement of drones was noticed in the Kaluchak military zone, a day after the Air Force incident. But alert Army personnel fired at two drones flying near a military base. After heavy firing by the security personnel, both drones flew away.

Intelligence sources claimed that the J&K police has identified a suspect in connection with the drone attacks. The man, identified as Nadeem Ul Haq, was caught with some explosive material from the Narwal area of Jammu on Sunday morning. He is said to be from the Banihal region with possible links with Lashkar. "The suspect has given

LeT leader, Pakistani aide killed in firing after arrest

FROM PG 1

He was arrested by the police after intercepting the Maruti Alto car he was travelling in at a makeshift checkpoint laid at the Parimpora intersection of the road earlier on Monday. The police said the naka was laid jointly by it and the CRPF after specific inputs on militants planning an attack on the highway. Mr Kumar told reporters

that after arresting Abrar and seizing a pistol and a grenade from the car, he was booked under Section 27 of the Indian Evidence Act and taken to a nearby police station for a joint interrogation by the J&K police, Army and CRPF.

"During interrogation, Abrar made a disclosure that he had dumped more weapons in a house at Maloora but didn't reveal that his associate by the name of Muslim, a

Pakistani terrorist, was also hiding in the house". He said that soon after the security forces launched an operation to recover the weapons, the hidden militant opened indiscriminate fire, triggering an encounter in which Abrar was also killed. He added that two AK-47 rifles were recovered from the encounter site, besides the pistol and grenade seized from Abrar's possession earlier.

us vital clues but he will also be interrogated by the NIA to take the investigation forward. There is no doubt that Pakistan-based terror groups, most probably Lashkar, are behind these drone attacks, which are the first of its kind in the country," a senior intelligence official said.

The intelligence officials claimed there was a major threat to all defence installations close to the India-Pakistan border both in J&K and Punjab region and that they were now on maximum security alert.

Special Quick Reaction Teams have been deployed at all defence facilities in the border region with strict instructions that any suspected drones flying nearby should be shot down.

J&K's director-general of police Dilbagh Singh, said in the recent past drones have been used to drop weapons and narcotics consignments. He said the twin blasts at the Jammu Air Force Sation was a "terror attack" in which IED payloads were dropped using drones. A

security alert for all vital installations in the Jammu region was issued on Sunday itself.

IGP (Kashmir range), Vijay Kumar told reporters in Srinagar on Tuesday that security has been beefed up further around vital installations across the Kashmir Valley as well in view of the threat posed by possible drone attacks. He said he attended a meeting chaired by Lt. Gen. Devendra Pratap Pandey, commander of the Srinagar-based 15 (Chinar) Corps.

WEAPONISED DRONES TERROR TOOL, SAYS INDIA

FROM PG 1

"Today, misuse of information and communication technology such as internet and social media for terrorist propaganda, radicalisation and recruitment of cadre; misuse of new payment methods and crowdfunding platforms for financing of terrorism; and misuse of emerging technologies for terrorist purposes have emerged as the most serious threats of terrorism and will decide the counter-terrorism paradigm going forward," special secretary (internal security), ministry of home affairs V.S.K. Kaumudi said.

Speaking at the 'Global scourge of terrorism: assessment of current threats and emerging trends for the new decade', he said, "another add-on" to "existing worries" is the use of drones. "Being a low-cost option and easily available, utilisation of these aerial/sub-surface platforms for sinister purposes by terrorist groups such as intelligence collection, weapon/explosives delivery and targeted attacks have become an imminent danger and challenge for security agencies worldwide," he said.

Assam Oppn in quarantine during pandemic: Nadda

DC CORRESPONDENT GUWAHATI, JUNE 29

BJP president J.P. Nadda here on Tuesday said that Opposition parties in Assam were in quarantine with some in the ICU during the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Addressing the state BJP executive after the appointment of new Assam BJP president Bhabesh Kalita virtually, Nadda said that the Opposition parties emerge only during elections as political tourists but after that, they are nowhere to be seen. He said, "All the Opposition parties were in quarantine with some having reached the ICU. It was the BJP members who reached out to those in distress."

Asking the newly-appointed state unit president and Chief Minister

Himanta Biswa Sarma to take up vaccination of all eligible people in the state on a mission mode and to ensure implementation of Central schemes in the state, the BJP president also urged the Chief Minister to personally monitor the implementation of the Central schemes targeting at reaching out to the poor and marginalised sections of the society.

Nadda asked both party organisations and the government to ensure Covid-19 vaccination for all as the topmost priority. "Not even a single person should be devoid of vaccination. Take it as a movement. Both organisation and government ensure that the free ration scheme by Centre should reach the poor. Ensure Central government schemes to be implemented in the state.



BJP national president J.P. Nadda during Assam BJP state executive meeting via video conferencing from party headquarters in New Delhi on Tuesday. — PTI

Think of these as BJP's programmes," said the BJP chief. Nadda advised the Assam BJP president to personally visit hospitals and ensure oxygen plants in every district hospital before the third

Covid wave hits the country. He also hailed both present Chief Minister and former chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal for taking developmental works forward.

He also asked the Chief

Minister to ensure proactive implementation of all the central schemes. "I request the Chief Minister to engage the party and government with MSME groups more and more. Out of the ₹3 lakh crore

package announced by the government, ₹1 lakh crore has already been spent giving a boost to the sector," he added.

He also asked the Chief Minister to take forward establishing farmers producer organisations (FPOs). "FPOs should be promoted and help genuine farmers. Meet street vendors and implement the scheme meant for them," said the BJP chief.

Nadda also thanked the people of Assam for defeating the forces of communalism and corruption and putting their faith in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's development agenda.

It is significant Kalita, who is a sitting MLA in the Assam assembly, replaced Ranjeet Kumar Dass, who became a minister in the newly-formed government in the state.

MAHA ASKS PEOPLE TO KEEP GANESH FESTIVAL LOW-KEY AFFAIR

SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC MUMBAI, JUNE 29

The Maharashtra government on Tuesday asked the devotees to keep Ganeshotsav celebration low-key affair. The height of the Ganesh idols in public celebrations across the state is restricted to four feet. Idols in homes will be limited to only two feet this year in view of the Covid pandemic. The home department issued a circular in this connection on Tuesday. This is the second consecutive year, when the celebration of Ganeshotsav would be low key.

The 10-day festival will start from September 10. The circular was issued following the demands by the idol makers in Maharashtra as two months are left for the festival.

According to the circular, Ganesh Mandals would need to get proper permission from the local administration. The public organisers have been requested to make all the arrangements possible to provide online Ganesh Darshan via cable network, website, Facebook among others.

UTTARAKHAND EXTENDS CURFEW TILL JULY 6

Dehradun, June 29: Covid curfew in Uttarakhand has been extended by another week till July 6 with more relaxations. The extended curfew, which came into effect on Tuesday, will remain in force till 6 am on July 6, an order issued by Chief Secretary Om Prakash said.

Giving more relaxations, shops and business establishments have been allowed to open six days a week instead of five. They will remain open even on Sundays in the two popular tourist spots of Mussoorie and Nainital, the order said. Markets in these towns will remain closed on Tuesday.

Gyms and coaching centres for job aspirants have also been allowed to open with 50 per cent occupancy.

Work on KKNPP phase-III begins

FROM PG 1

After the commissioning of the units 5 and 6, KKNPP would have the distinction of being the country's largest clean power generation station, avoiding 30 million tonnes of CO2 emission annually.

The commencement of the third phase of the work to make KKNPP the largest nuclear park in the country on Tuesday, too has to face opposition from the community, said the noted anti-nuke and coordinator of the People's Movement Against Nuclear Energy (PMANE) Dr S. P. Udayakumar, who thanked the state government for its decision to withdraw all the cases registered against the anti-KKNPP protestors between 2011 and 2014, too petitioned the state fisheries minister.

CHILD | SAFETY

State to set up paediatric ICU in all medical colleges, major hospitals to face possible third wave

Assam: Over 34K kids infected by Covid during 2nd wave

MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, JUNE 29

Assam health department has started a special drive to set up paediatric ICU in all the medical colleges and major hospitals in the wake of possible third wave of pandemic as 34,606 children below the age of 18 tested positive for Coronavirus during the second wave of the pandemic in Assam.

This accounts for 12 per

cent of the total cases reported since April 1 this year.

Assam health minister Keshab Mahanta told reporters that in the first wave only 8 per cent of children were affected. Referring to the data of the state health department, he said that in the second wave a total of 5,755 cases belonged to below 5-year age category while 28,851 to 6-18 years age group.

● **THE ASCPCR** has also taken note of pandemic affecting children and sent letters to all district deputy commissioners and joint directors of health, asking them to strengthen paediatric ICUs, child-friendly wards.

Asserting that the government has taken note of the development, he said, "We are taking a number of steps including activat-

ing paediatric ICUs in all medical colleges in the state, as well as district hospitals."

The authorities in the National Health Mission said that out of the 34,606 positive cases, 34 have succumbed to the infection - 0.1 per cent of the total cases.

"It is mostly because of comorbidities such as congenital diseases affecting the heart, kidney, etc," he added.

The district with the highest number of cases among the under-18 age group is Kamrup (Metro), with 5,346 children infected.

"To stop the spread of infections among kids, we prefer that parents should opt for institutional quarantine," he said, adding since there was no vaccine for children yet, the need to follow Covid-appropriate behaviour was crucial.

Assam currently has 25,790 active cases, with a positivity rate of 2.01 per cent.

Informing that phase-3 of Assam Community Surveillance Programme was going on, he said that it has revealed that many children staying with Covid positive parents and guardians who opted for home isolation, were subsequently tested positive for the virus.

The Assam State

Commission for Protection of Child Rights (ASCPCR) has also taken note of pandemic affecting children and sent letters to all district deputy commissioners and joint directors of health, asking them to strengthen paediatric ICUs, child-friendly wards for Covid-positive kids, along with arrangements for mothers and caretakers as well separate delivery rooms in hospitals.

SHORT TAKES

XI HANDS OUT MEDALS AMID CELEBRATIONS

Beijing, June 29: Amid celebrations over the centenary of the ruling Communist Party, Chinese President Xi Jinping has awarded loyal party members with medals and called for adherence to Marxism.

Xi's speech at a ceremony Tuesday follows a lavish celebration at Beijing's Olympic stadium on Monday night emphasising China's rise to economic and political prominence following reforms enacted more than 40 years ago.

While unleashing private industry, the ruling party has maintained an iron grip on political power, along with preferential policies toward state-run companies.

RUSSIA TARGETS INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISTS

Moscow, June 29: Russian authorities on Tuesday morning raided the apartments of several investigative journalists and their family members, a move that comes amid mounting pressure on Russia's independent media outlets.

Police searched the apartments of Roman Badanin, chief editor of the *Proekt* investigative online outlet, and Maria Zholobova, one of its journalists.

Officers also raided the home of the parents of Badanin's deputy, Mikhail Rubin. Rubin was detained near Zholobova's residential building and brought to his parents' apartment. *Proekt* said in its account in the Telegram messaging app that the raids occurred after the outlet promised to release an investigation into Russia's interior minister, Vladimir Kolokol'tsev, and his alleged wealth.

BUSAN FORMER MAYOR JAILED FOR SEX ABUSE

Seoul, June 29: The former mayor of South Korea's second-largest city was jailed Tuesday on a three-year sentence for sexually abusing two city employees during his tenure. The lawyers of Oh Keo-don didn't immediately return calls and text messages asking whether they plan to appeal.

Busan's district court also ordered Oh to receive counselling and banned him from jobs at child welfare organisations and disability facilities for five years following the end of his jail term. Oh, who was seen as a key ally of Busan-raised President Moon Jae-in, stepped down as the city's mayor in April 2020 after admitting he had "unnecessary physical contact" with a female public servant who accused him of groping her in his office.

SUU KYI BID TO DISQUALIFY TESTIMONY DENIED

Bangkok, June 29: Myanmar's ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi suffered a legal setback Tuesday when a judge denied her lawyers' motion to disqualify prosecution testimony against her on a sedition charge, her defense team said.

The court, however, said it would allow the issue to be referred to the High Court and would suspend testimony until a ruling is issued. Ousted President Win Myint and the former mayor of Naypyitaw, Myo Aung, her close political allies, are co-defendants in the charge. The court will continue to hear prosecution testimony on other charges Suu Kyi faces: That she illegally imported walkie-talkies for her bodyguards' use and used those radios without a licence, and violated Covid-19 curbs twice during the 2020 election campaign.

JAIL TO ZUMA FOR CONTEMPT OF COURT

Johannesburg, June 29: The apex court in South Africa on Tuesday sentenced the country's former president Jacob Zuma to 15 months' imprisonment for contempt of court after he walked out of hearings of the Commission of Enquiry into State Capture in November last year and refused to return to it.

The court also said that the sentence could not be suspended. The Commission, which is investigation allegations of corruption and bribery at state and parastatal institutions, had asked that Zuma be sent to prison for two years.

Zuma has repeatedly said that he would rather go to jail than cooperate with the Commission.

Justice Sisi Khampepe of the Constitutional Court described Zuma's statements as "outlandish" and "intolerable".

US to spend big to counter China

\$250 bn to boost American competitiveness

Washington, June 29: The US plans a large spending plan to counter China. According to the senate, China is America's biggest geopolitical and geo-economic problem and handed the United States Innovation and Competition Act 2021 to spend greater than \$250 billion to be certain that the US stays on prime in phrases of technological analysis and manufacturing.

The invoice is an uncommon level of settlement between the Republicans and the Democrats. In a vote, 68 of the 100-member senate supported the measure, with 32 in opposition to. The senate is evenly divided between Republicans and Democrats and consultants say that the vote exhibits how the two political events are united on the necessity to counter Beijing's financial and army ambitions.

Supporters say the bundle is one of the biggest industrial payments in US historical past and the largest funding in scientific analysis that the nation has seen in many years.

The invoice geared toward bolstering American competitiveness with China with a spread of measures.

- According to the senate, China is America's biggest geopolitical and geo-economic problem.
- It handed the United States Innovation and Competition Act 2021 to spend greater than \$250 billion to be certain that the US stays on prime in phrases of technological analysis and manufacturing.

The key thought is that this, from part 3005, which reads: "The United States must ensure that all federal departments and agencies are organised to reflect the fact that strategic competition with the PRC is the United States' greatest geopolitical and geo-economic challenge."

To meet that problem, the senate licenced within the finances \$190 billion geared toward massively growing R&D at universi-

ties and different establishments and boosting improvements in synthetic intelligence, drones and different rising applied sciences. To create an American model of China's 'Special Economic Zones', \$10 billion are to be invested in "regional technology hubs". For the growth of home semiconductor manufacturing, \$52 billion has been provisioned. More than \$23 billion for area exploration and the event of area industries has been earmarked as effectively.

The invoice contains a number of China-specific provisions, together with the prohibition of the social media app "Tik Tok" from being downloaded on authorities units. The buy of drones manufactured and offered by Chinese state enterprises would even be blocked beneath the laws. Chinese organisations engaged in US cyber-attacks or theft of US mental property from US corporations would face sanctions too.

The invoice additionally requires sanctions over human rights abuses in Xinjiang province and abuses in opposition to Uighurs. — ANI

Urge Pak to act against ultras, India tells UN

United Nations, June 29: India has told the UN General Assembly that it is high time the international community called on Pakistan to take "effective and irreversible" actions against terror outfits operating on its soil, asserting that Islamabad should not take the "high road of morality" which is only laden with mines of falsehood.

Hitting out at Pakistan for its "vitriolic diatribe" against India, Special Secretary (Internal Security), Ministry of Home Affairs in the Government of India V.S.K. Kaumudi said: "As expected, the delegation of Pakistan has again resorted to peddling false narratives and making baseless allegations against India."

He was speaking at the 2nd High Level Conference of the Head of Counter Terrorism Agencies of the Member States in the

General Assembly on Monday. "For a nation that engages in sectarian violence against its own minorities and harbours a deep sense of insecurity and orchestrated hatred for India, there is nothing new that we could have expected from this delegation," he said at the session 'Global scourge of terrorism: Assessment of current threats and emerging trends for the new decade'. He noted that the 7th review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (GCTS) is over and Pakistan's false narrative was summarily negated by the UN membership.

"It's high time that the international community called upon Pakistan to take effective, verifiable and irreversible actions against terror outfits operating on the territory under its control and not take the high road of morality. — PTI

Two Americans apologise for role in Ghosn escape

Tokyo, June 29: Two Americans charged in Japan with helping Nissan's former chairman, Carlos Ghosn, jump bail and escape Japan for Lebanon apologised Tuesday in a Tokyo court.

"I deeply regret my actions and sincerely apologise for causing difficulties for the judicial process and for the Japanese people. I'm sorry," Michael Taylor, a former Green Beret said, bowing and holding back sobs.

Taylor, on trial in Tokyo District Court with his

son Peter, said in response to questioning by his lawyer and by prosecutors that he had been misinformed by Ghosn and his wife, Carole Ghosn.

Carole Ghosn told Taylor or her husband was tortured and grilled in solitary confinement, he said.

Ghosn also said he was being mistreated, Taylor said. Taylor said he has been well treated in Japan. "I didn't know much about Japan. All I know is that the Japanese are the friendliest people I've ever bumped into," he said.

At the outset of their trial earlier this month, the Taylors indicated they weren't fighting the allegations, in Japan's equivalent of pleading guilty. They were arrested in Massachusetts last year and extradited to Japan in March. Peter Taylor, who allegedly met with Ghosn to plan the escape, also apologised to the court for the trouble he had caused.

"I must apologise to the people of Japan," Peter Taylor said, bowing to a panel of three judges. — AP

IT'S IMMINENT

The Soviet Union had built the airfield back in the 1950s

After nearly 20 yrs US to leave Bagram

Bagram, June 29: For nearly 20 years, Bagram Airfield was the heart of American military power in Afghanistan, a sprawling minicity behind fences and blast walls just an hour's drive north of Kabul. Initially, it was a symbol of the US drive to avenge the 9/11 attacks, then of its struggle for a way through the ensuing war with the Taliban.

In just a matter of days, the last US soldiers will depart Bagram. They are leaving what probably everyone connected to the base, whether American or Afghan, consid-

ers a mixed legacy. "Bagram grew into such a massive military installation that, as with few other bases in Afghanistan and even Iraq, it came to symbolise and epitomise the phrase mission creep," said Andrew Watkins, Afghanistan senior analyst for the Brussels-based International Crisis Group.

US Central Command said last week that it's well past 50% done packing up Bagram, and the rest is going fast. American officials have said the entire pullout of US troops will most likely be completely finished by July 4.

The Afghan military will then take over Bagram as part of its continuing fight against the Taliban — and against what many in the country fear will be a new eruption of chaos. The departure is rife with symbolism. Not least, it's the second time that an invader of Afghanistan has come and gone through Bagram.

The Soviet Union built the airfield in the 1950s. When it invaded Afghanistan in 1979 to back a communist government, it turned it into its main base from which it would defend its occupation

of the country. For 10 years, the Soviets fought the US-backed mujahedeen, dubbed freedom fighters by President Ronald Reagan, who saw them as a front-line force in one of the last Cold War battles.

The Soviet Union negotiated its withdrawal in 1989. Three years later, the pro-Moscow government collapsed, and the mujahedeen took power, only to turn their weapons on each other and kill thousands of civilians. That turmoil brought to power the Taliban who overran Kabul in 1996.



Medical personnel tend to Covid-19 patients in a tent set up outside a hospital in Bogor on Tuesday, as infections soar in Indonesia. — AFP

Red Cross warns Indonesia faces Covid-19 catastrophe

AZ to Oz adults for rapid rollout

Jakarta, June 29: Indonesia needs to urgently increase medical care, testing and vaccinations as the number of new infections in the country has rapidly increased and left it on the edge of a Covid-19 catastrophe, the Red Cross said Tuesday.

The group said its Coronavirus hospital in Bogor, outside of Jakarta, was overflowing and emergency tents had been set up to be able to house more patients. It was a similar scene at other hospitals near the capital, including in at the Bekasi city hospital that had 90% of its beds filled.

"We are seeing record number of infections, but every statistic is a person who is suffering, grieving or struggling to support the people they love," Sudirman Said, secretary general of Indonesian Red Cross, said in a statement. "Our medical teams are providing lifesaving care, with hospitals full to the brim and oxygen supplies critically low."

The surge in Indonesia, the world's fourth most populous nation, is being blamed in part on the Delta variant of the virus, which was first spotted in India and is thought to be more contagious. Indonesia reported more than 20,600 new cases on Monday and more than 400 deaths.

Indonesia has seen more than 2.1 million cases since the pandemic began and more than 57,500 deaths, both the most in Southeast Asia. Less than 5% of adults in the nation of 270 million people have been fully vaccinated. The Red Cross called for global action so countries like Indonesia can get the vaccines they need.

Health authorities in Thailand on Monday announced 5,406 new Covid-19 cases, as the country struggles with how to cope with new Coronavirus variants and contain its rapid spread around the capital Bangkok and in southern provinces.

Nine of the new cases were in prisoners, while the others among the general public marked a record high for that category of patients.

Thailand has had 249,853 confirmed Covid cases since the pandemic began last year, more than 88% occurring in the third wave of the coronavirus that started this April. — AP

Canberra, June 29: Australia is offering AstraZeneca to all adults in a bid to rapidly ramp up sluggish vaccination rates as more of the country on Tuesday locked down against the spread of Covid-19.

The government late Monday agreed to indemnify doctors who administer the AstraZeneca vaccine that has been blamed for at least two fatalities from a rare blood clot complication in Australia since April.

That exceeds the single death from Covid-19 in Australia this year, and vaccine hesitancy has increased with only 5% of the population fully inoculated. Pfizer has been the recommended vaccine for people younger than 60 since a 52-year-old woman died in May of blood clots in the brain blamed on AstraZeneca.

But supply of Pfizer, the only alternative to Australian-manufactured Astra-

Zeneca, cannot keep up with demand.

There's a preference for Pfizer until the age of 60. That's a preference, Chief Medical Officer Paul Kelly said on Tuesday.

It's a discussion for doctors to have with their own patients and work through their own risk and benefit in relation to that, Kelly added.

The Queensland state capital Brisbane and surrounding cities will be in lockdown for three days from late Tuesday after the government reported two new Covid-19 infections. Sydney reported 19 new infections in that east coast city, Perth reported two new cases on the west coast and Darwin reported two new cases on the north coast. Those three cities and their surrounds are already in lockdown.

Australia has been relatively successful in containing clusters throughout the pandemic. — AP

Russia daily toll hits 652

Moscow, June 29: Russian authorities have reported 652 new Coronavirus deaths on Tuesday the highest daily tally in the pandemic. The new record comes as Russia struggles to cope with a surge in infections and deaths and low vaccine uptake.

Russia's state coronavirus task force has been registering over 20,000

new Coronavirus cases and around 600 deaths every day since last Thursday. On Tuesday, 20,616 new contagions were recorded.

Russian officials have blamed the surge, which started in early June, on Russians' lax attitude toward taking necessary precautions, growing prevalence of more infectious variants and lagged

vaccination rates. Although Russia was among the first countries to announce and deploy a Coronavirus vaccine, only about 14% of the population has received at least one shot.

Russia's Coronavirus task force has reported nearly 5.5 million confirmed Coronavirus cases in the pandemic and 134,545 deaths. — AP

CHINESE VAX EFFECTIVE IN CHILDREN, SAYS STUDY

Beijing, June 29: Two doses of the China-made Covid-19 vaccine, CoronaVac, are safe and produce a strong antibody response among children and adolescents aged 3-17 years, according to a study published in *The Lancet Infectious Diseases* journal.

The phase 1/2 trial on 550 young people found that over 96 per cent of children and adolescents

who received two doses of the vaccine, manufactured by Sinovac, developed antibodies against SARS-CoV-2. — PTI

EU ASYLUM APPLICATIONS DROP DUE TO COVID-19

Brussels, June 29: The European Union's asylum agency said Tuesday that the number of people seeking international protection in Europe hit its lowest level last year since 2013, but that the drop was due to Covid travel curbs. EASO said in a new report that 485,000 asylum applications were made in the 27 EU countries plus Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway.

PSPCL Punjab State Power Corporation Limited Regd. Office: PSER, Head Office, The Mall, Patiala 147001 Corporate Identity Number: U40109PB2010SGC033813 Website: www.pspcl.in (Contact No. 98461-22185)	
Tender Enquiry No. 235/2021	Dated: 21.06.2021
Dy. CE/Substation Design/ TS Organization, PSPCL, C-1, Shakti Vihar, PSPCL, Patiala invites E-tender For MANUFACTURING, TESTING, AND DELIVERY OF 210KL NAPHTHENIC BASED TRANSFORMER OIL. For detailed NIT & Tender Specification please refer to https://esproc.punjab.gov.in from 25.06.2021 (11:00 AM onwards). Note: Corrigendum and amendments, if any, will be published online at https://esproc.punjab.gov.in	
C-245/21	RO No PR-Advt. No : 76155/12/330/2021/5585

GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT - BUILDINGS (C&M) CIRCLE, COIMBATORE - 1. LUMPSUM CONTRACT (ITEM RATE TENDER SYSTEM) TENDER NOTICE No. NIT/06/BC/C&M/CBE/2021-22, Dt : 25.06.2021	
For and on behalf of the Governor of Tamilnadu, sealed Tenders will be received upto 3.00 pm on 23.7.2021 from the PWD Registered Contractors by the Superintending Engineer, PWD, Buildings (Construction & Maintenance) Circle, Coimbatore - 641 001 for (1) Construction of 4 class room and Higher Secondary Science Lab Building in Government Higher Secondary School at Melur Hosatty in Nilgiris District (2) Construction of 4 Class Room and Higher Secondary Science Lab Building in Government Higher Secondary School at Adigaratty in Nilgiris District and (3) Construction of Hostel Building for ITI at Uppatty in Gudalur in Nilgiris District at his office and Tender will be Opened on the same day at 3.30 p.m. All other details are available in the website www.tenders.tn.gov.in If any changes / corrections etc., to the tender, it will be published on the above website only. DIPR/1873/Tender/2021 Superintending Engineer, (i/c) P.W.D., Buildings (C&M) Circle, Coimbatore.	

DECCAN Chronicle

30 JUNE 2021

FM's stimulus timely, but poor need immediate aid

Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman has announced eight measures to support certain sectors, including small businesses and micro-lenders, which were affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. The stimulus is estimated to be worth ₹6.3 lakh crore, but most of it will be provided through credit guarantees to stressed sectors.

As manufacturing companies have more or less come out of the deadly second wave successfully, the current stimulus package focuses on supporting contact-intensive sectors, especially tourism. Tourism is one of badly affected sectors as people have drastically curtailed their travel plans.

Though there have been demands — including from captains of the Indian industry — for direct cash transfers to the poor and the middle classes to sustain demand, the government does not appear to be keen on this idea. In his speech to delegates in Hyderabad, chief economic advisor Krishnamurthy V. Subramaniam gave out the government's line of thought. Referring to some studies, he claimed that a rupee spent on capital expenditure would add ₹4.50

to the economy, while the same amount spent on freebies would add just 97 paise.

Though the government's preference of capital expenditure cannot be faulted, the finance minister should not forget that the worst-affected are the poor...

Though the second wave of Covid has been devastating for people's health, Mr Subramaniam argued that its impact on the economy has been milder than the first wave of infections last year. This interpretation appears to have led to the government's belief that the economy does not need a massive stimulus through direct cash transfers, and that the demand would return in the due course.

While the government's assessment of the macroeconomic situation is accurate, it should not rely too much on GST collection numbers. Sometimes, higher consumption by the rich could offset the low demand from the poor and may result in robust GST collections. The government should, therefore, not lose sight of the Covid pandemic's impact at the micro level. The infection has forced lakhs of Covid-infected people from the unorganised sector to lose out on their income. Similarly, lakhs of people from the lower middle class, who were hospitalised for the treatment, had accumulated debt, which they can't repay for the next few years. Months-long lockdowns since last March have pushed many families into poverty.

The government, therefore, cannot behave as if everything is normal just because macroeconomic indicators appear healthy. Though the government's preference of capital expenditure cannot be faulted, the finance minister should not forget that the worst-affected, as the chief economic advisor had admitted, are the poor and she cannot expect them to wait for the fruits of economic reforms trickle down.

Though the spending on the infrastructure projects and the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme have been immensely helpful in providing jobs to unskilled labour, the government needs to further increase capital expenditure and ensure the benefits of these initiatives reach the targeted people as fast as possible. Otherwise, it would be too late for many people.

Doctors, too, need protection

The recent advisory of the Union home ministry to the state governments to invoke the stringent sections of the Epidemic Diseases (Amendment) Act, 2020, against those who indulge in assault on doctors and healthcare professional is welcome. As per the Act, a person proved to have assaulted doctors or healthcare professionals can be jailed for up to seven years and fined up to ₹5 lakh. The advisory becomes all the more relevant in the backdrop of the series of attacks on healthcare professionals during the pandemic; the latest being reported from Assam.

It must, however, be remembered that there is no lack of deterrent penal provisions against attacks on hospitals and people employed there: as many as 19 states have enacted special laws for their protection. But the real issue is the lack of enthusiasm on the part of the law enforcers to use the legal tools. The latest is the police inaction against a constable who assaulted a surgeon in a government hospital in Alappuzha district in Kerala alleging that medical negligence led to his mother's death though a police investigation report said the patient had died before reaching the hospital. The police advanced one reason or the other not to arrest the assaulter until he was granted anticipatory bail by the high court.

The danger of the state apathy towards the medical fraternity is that it could turn to defensive practice, which would impact the poorest sections of society.

The government must design a two-pronged strategy to address the issue as a whole. First, it must ensure that healthcare professionals are given adequate security and violators of the law must be brought to book without fail. Two, it must put in place a fair, transparent, fast and credible mechanism to process complaints of medical negligence. The issue demands urgent government attention and action, not just advisories.

KAUSHIK MITTER
Editor

DECCAN CHRONICLE

R. MOHAN
Resident Editor

K. SUBHAKAR
Printer & Publisher

DECCAN CHRONICLE offices are located at:
Chennai: SP 3 Developed Plot, Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai 600032. Phones: (044) 22254747, 22254748.

Coimbatore: 77 Vivekananda Road, Ramnagar, Coimbatore 641009. Phone: (0422) 2231255, 2231256
Hyderabad: 36, Sarojini Devi Road, Secunderabad 500 003. Phone: (040) 2780393-4, Fax: (040) 27805256.

Bengaluru: 5th Floor, BMTC Commercial Complex, 80 Ft. Road, Koramangala, Bangalore-560095. Ph: 08043460500; Fax: 080-22960551/52/55

Visakhapatnam: Survey No. 1/3A Beach Road, Near Kailasagiri Ropeway, Sector-9 MVP Colony, Visakhapatnam - 530 017. Phones: (0891) 2552333/2552334, Fax: (0891) 2755285

Vijayawada: No. C 3 & 4, Patamata, Industrial Estate, Auto Nagar, Vijayawada (A.P.). Phones: (0866) 2555284/ 2555287, Fax: (0866) 2555234

Rajahmundry: Vemagiri, Dhawleswaram Rd. Rajahmundry 533125. Phones: (0883) 2417208, 2417618

Anantapur: Thapovan Colony, Bangalore Bye-Pass Road, Anantapur 515004. Phones: (08554) 276903, Fax: 08554-276904

Nellore: Survey No. 527/2, Burranpur Village, Venkatachalam (M), Chemudugunta Panchayat, Nellore. Phone: (0861) 2348581/52, Telefax: (0861) 2348580

Karimnagar: Survey No. 1341, Vavilalapally Colony, Jagityala Road, Karimnagar 505 001. Phone: (0878) 2228908; Telefax: (0878) 2220433

Kochi: No. 3-B, 3rd Floor, DD TRADE TOWER, Kaloor-Kadavanthara Road, Ernakulam, Ph: 0484-4039408

Kozhikode: No 6/1002 E, First Floor City Mall, Opp. YMCA Kannur Road, Kozhikode - 673 001
Fax: : 0495 4019018

Thiruvananthapuram: St Joseph Press Thycaud post, Cotton Hills, Thiruvananthapuram-14, Ph: 0471-2735105/6/7, Fax: 0471-4016112 Gram: CHRONICLE Postal registration no: No. HSD-348/2006-08ss

Subhani



In Covid crisis, SC forces Centre to share vital info



Parsa Venkateshwar Rao Jr

Along with the Central and state governments, the Supreme Court has been playing an important role in monitoring the management of the situation arising out of the six-week-long Covid-19 second wave between the middle of April and the end of May. Through its order of April 30, the Supreme Court bench of Justices Dhananjay Y. Chandrachud, L. Nageswara Rao and S. Ravindra Bhat had been actively directing the Central and state governments on the supply of liquid medical oxygen in the last week of April and the first week of May, and the availability of beds for critically ill patients in hospitals, as well as the availability of vaccines and their proper distribution across the country.

Though Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his government has claimed credit for its decision on procuring vaccines directly and then allocating them to the states, announced by the PM in a televised address on June 7, the suggestion actually came from the highest court after scrutinising the Centre's policy of acquiring 50 per cent of the vaccines at a set price and leaving the remaining 50 per cent to be negotiated by the state governments and private hospitals with the manufacturers.

The Supreme Court in its April 30 order had said: "Prima facie, there are several aspects of the vaccine pricing policy adopted by the Central government which require that policy to be revisited." The court went on to add: "Prima facie, the rational method of proceeding in a manner consistent with the right to life (which

includes the right to health) under Article 21 would be for the Central government to procure all vaccines and to negotiate the price with the vaccine manufacturers."

It concluded with a judicious note of warning: "While we are not passing a conclusive determination on the constitutionality of the current policy, the manner in which the current policy has been framed would prima facie result in a detriment to right to public health, which is an integral element of Article 21 of the Constitution."

The court also noted that individuals and communities had turned to the social media for help and that through the online networks people had tried to help those in distress either by finding the medicines or hospital beds needed. And here comes the acerbic observation: "However, it is with deep distress that we note that individuals seeking help on such platforms have been targeted by alleging that the information posted by them is false and has only been posted on the social media to create panic, defame the administration or damage the nation's image". It went on to say: "We do not hesitate in saying that such targeting shall not be condoned, and the Central government and state governments should ensure that they immediately cease any direct or indirect threats of prosecution and arrest to citizens who air grievances or those who are attempting to help fellow citizens to receive medical aid."

It is indeed a matter of shame that during a time of extreme distress, the Central and state governments had taken adversarial positions against the people, and the

Supreme Court was forced to tick off the authorities and warn them against intimidating people. This is a judgment that should become an integral part of any account of Covid-19 in India, and political leaders in positions of power should hang their heads in shame.

It was after this chastening tone by the Supreme Court that the Central government, through the solicitor-general and its other law officers, has been filing affidavits informing the court about the availability of vaccines, a crucial part of the fight against the pandemic. Most of the vital information on the availability of the vaccines has not been shared by the government with the people. The daily press conference that the health ministry officials hold are used as a propaganda forum to trumpet the number of vaccinations that had been administered that day, and the total figure of those vaccinated. The other key figures like the number of new infections, the total number of those who have been infected since January 2020, and the Covid-19 death toll are relegated to the background. There is a vague promise that there will be enough vaccines available and that by December 2021 the entire adult population of the country, which amounts to 93-94 crore people, would be vaccinated. On May 16, the Union health ministry told the court that 216 crore Covid-19 vaccines would be available, but in its affidavit filed on June 27, the government revised the figure to 135 crores, and details were given of the

share of each of the vaccines available or to be made available in the market.

The information about the availability of vaccines keeps changing simply because the government is still negotiating with foreign vaccine makers like Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson and Johnson, and there is no clarity as yet on the outcome. It is understandable that the foreign manufacturers are bargaining hard, which is a shameful thing, and the government is in a helpless situation. That is why it wants to do make do with the vaccines available in the country, which have been developed and manufactured in India like Covaxin, or those which have been developed outside the country like Covishield and Sputnik V and are manufactured in India. But transparency has not been a virtue of the Modi government. There has been a continuous attempt to paint a picture of normality in abnormally stressful and distressful times.

The Prime Minister might be under the illusion that he is keeping panic under control, but he is only adding to uncertainty and anxiety among the people. He should have used his monthly radio talk "Mann ki Baat" to share information about the Covid-19 situation in the country and the difficulties that the government and people are facing. Unfortunately, even democratically elected leaders in India have the bad habit of hiding the truth from the people. It is in this kind of dubious situation that the Supreme Court is performing the yeoman service of compelling the government to share facts, to share information, something that the government should be doing on its own. The Supreme Court is thus ensuring the flow of crucial information to the people in this time of crisis.

The info about the availability of vaccines keeps changing simply because the government is still negotiating with foreign makers like Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson and Johnson...

The writer is a Delhi-based commentator and analyst

LETTERS

DANGEROUS DRONES

While drones were used for the first time to drop explosive devices, they have been deployed regularly over the past two years by Pakistan-based outfits to smuggle arms, ammunition and drugs into Indian territory. The attack comes at a significant political moment. Last week saw the first meeting between the Centre and mainstream Jammu and Kashmir politicians after the 2019 abrogation of Article 370. Two low-intensity explosions left two IAF personnel injured at the Jammu Air Force station. The devices are suspected to have been dropped and detonated by unmanned aerial vehicles, or drones. This would mark the first-of-its-kind use of a new modus operandi for such an attack. The use of drones by Pakistan-based elements has been a major cause of concern. All tech-based solutions are being explored to counter it. Anti-drone jammers cannot be that effective in the border areas, but they can be deployed at security sensitive installations to prevent such attacks in future. Drones are a real threat.

M.R.Jayanthy, Coimbatore

CROP AMBULANCE

India pays more attention to agriculture and it yields more crops. But a sizable quantity of harvested items are getting wasted due to many reasons. Hence 'Crop ambulances' must be introduced to transport these goods to needy places and for timely and better utilisation. This may surely eradicate hunger to a sizable extent.

R. Ganesan, Chennai

JAI HIND!

The comments that the MLA Easwaran MLA had made about Jai Hind in the TN Assembly had created shock waves. The MLA may have been started by the angry comments of people. The MLA spoke something amiss. He had stirred a hornet's nest just to gain instant popularity without caring about the consequences. The only honourable course open to him to escape from the consequential action contemplated against him is to tender an unconditional open apology to the Speaker and / or the Governor of the State for his comments. The people of India, especially the Tamils, have fully understood the history of the slogan coined by Shenbagaraman and the effect is that most Tamils have started greeting each other with Jai Hind.

B S. Jayaraman Iyer, Coimbatore

A.G. Noorani



Modi's Kashmir plan: Present Pak with fait accompli post-delimitation

The conference of Kashmiri parties convened by the Indian government in New Delhi on June 24, 2021, proves once again that Kashmiris cannot be crushed into obedience. Jawaharlal Nehru imprisoned Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah for 11 years only to invite him to New Delhi as his guest for talks. In between, he had sent his Dr P. Subbarayan to the Jammu Central Jail to sound out Sheikh *sahib*. He discovered that the prisoner had not changed his convictions.

In 1965-66, Jayaprakash Narayan sent his emissaries to Kodaikanal to sound out Sheikh *sahib* who was in internment there with Mirza Muhammad Afzal Beg. Nothing came out of it. Released in 1968, it took Prime Minister Indira Gandhi seven years to conclude an accord with her former friend Sheikh Abdullah whose imprisonment in 1953 she had opposed vehemently.

Those who criticise Sheikh *sahib* for the 1975 accord with Indira Gandhi should remember that the ground had been cut under his feet by the Shimla Pact of 1972. It con-

gealed the status quo but also provided for talks on Kashmir to which she never agreed.

Insurgency erupted in 1989. At its peak, Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao said that the sky was the limit if violence was eschewed. On the India-Pakistan plane, two major developments took place. The Agra summit was aborted by L.K. Advani for spurious reasons. An agreed draft was ready but was rejected by India at the very last minute.

At the domestic level, the All Parties Hurriyat Conference was wrecked by its foremost leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani. His was an impossible formula — all or nothing. Coupled with this was the personal angle. He wanted to be the leader and was foolish enough to declare this ambition twice. On each occasion sharp reactions by his colleagues compelled him publicly to withdraw his demand. In truth, he wrecked the Hurriyat. Sadly, he is now a broken man in poor health and has all but withdrawn from politics. Two Presidents of Pakistan discovered

his limits. Farooq Laghari was taken aback at the residence of Pakistan's high commissioner to India in New Delhi by how Geelani reportedly offered him sharp criticism of the apparel of Pakistan TV's anchors. President Pervez Musharraf reprimanded Geelani when he took up Balochistan and North Waziristan.

On the wreckage of the Hurriyat, a diminutive Joint Resistance League was formed comprising Geelani, Yaseen Malik and Mirwaiz Umer Farooq, the most sensible of the lot. He is under house arrest still and was not invited to New Delhi.

Why has New Delhi taken the initiative now and what has it to offer to the Kashmiris after it wronged them in 2019?

Restoration of statehood had been offered by India since 2019. Restoration of Article 370 of the constitution, which was supposed to guarantee Kashmiris special autonomous status, is a different issue. Its abrogation had been demanded by the BJP. The government received public support in 2019 when it abrogated Article 370

though its action was shamelessly unconstitutional and the reasons for it were patently dishonest.

The Congress chief Sonia Gandhi has her ears transfixed to the ground and her eyes fixed on Hindu voters. She is desperate about retaining her diminishing flock. It is difficult to see how any Kashmiri with self-respect can possibly support the abrogation of Article 370.

But apart from Article 370, New Delhi's real concern is with fresh determinations of Assembly constituencies so that Jammu acquires a majority in the assembly. This is Narendra Modi's game — settle the Kashmir dispute once and for all "on the ground", as they use the expression. Next confront Pakistan with a fait accompli — "see it is all over. We have nothing to talk about now".

There is a fatal flaw in this cynical reasoning. There is a powerful pro-Pakistan constituency in Kashmir. Mufti Mohammed Sayeed could not resist paying tribute to Pakistan the day he took the oath of office as chief minister in December 2014 in the presence of Prime Minister

Narendra Modi. He was riled because Mufti Sayeed thanked Pakistan for allowing elections to be held in Kashmir. This revealed a lot more than he intended.

The question is: what result can an open conference of 14 parties possibly yield? The Centre has consistently kept its stooges in Kashmir well supplied with funds. Among the invitees to the New Delhi conference were at least two who are notorious as New Delhi's paid agents.

It may be recalled that the cruel blow which New Delhi inflicted on Kashmir had three dimensions — abrogation of Article 370, wipe out of Kashmir's identity and delimitation of Assembly constituencies.

It is the last which lies at the core of New Delhi's foul deed. On June 22, Mehbooba Mufti, president of the People's Democratic Party, said: "Delimitation is part of the same process used to break the state. This wasn't reorganisation, it was disorganisation. That way it is illegal and done with a certain purpose."

By arrangement with Dawn

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	52549.66	-0.35
Nifty 50	15748.50	-0.42
S&P 500*	4,295.83	0.12
Dollar (₹)	74.22	-0.02
Pound Sterling (₹)	102.82	0.40
Euro (₹)	88.39	0.19
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	46,167▼89	0.19
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	75.11	0.58
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.036	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.507	0.029

* As of 8:30 PM IST

RIL signs pact to join Abu Dhabi petchem hub

Reliance Industries has signed a pact to invest an undisclosed amount in a giant petrochemical hub being built in the UAE. The conglomerate will join the recently formed Ta'ziz joint venture of Abu Dhabi state energy giant Adnoc and state holding company ADQ for developing the Ruwais Derivatives Park in western Abu Dhabi. Unconfirmed reports put the investment at about \$1.5 billion.

New Range Rover Sport SVR comes at ₹2.19 crore



Tata Motors-owned Jaguar Land Rover introduced the most powerful Range Rover yet, the Range Rover Sport SVR, at a starting price of Rs 2.19 crore. The imported Sport SVR is powered by 5.0-litre supercharged V8 petrol engine. It can accelerate from 0-100 kph in 4.5 seconds. The Land Rover range in India includes the Range Rover Evoque starting at Rs 59.04 lakh and Range Rover at Rs 2.10 crore.

Electricity Bill may be tabled in monsoon session

The Electricity (Amendment) Bill 2021, which enables power consumer to choose from multiple service providers as in the case of telecom services, is likely to be introduced and pushed for passage in the monsoon session of Parliament beginning in July. At a Bloomberg virtual event, power and renewable energy minister R. K. Singh said the bill seeks to delineate distribution of electricity.

Standard Life sells ₹6,783-crore HDFC Life stake

HDFC Life Insurance Company's promoter Standard Life (Mauritius Holdings) offloaded shares worth over Rs 6,783 crore in the firm, through open market transactions. Standard Life (Mauritius Holdings) 2006 Ltd held 8.88 per cent stake in the firm. As per BSE data, the promoter sold 10 crore shares. The total deal value stood at Rs 6,783.59 crore. HDFC Life stock ended 1.39 per cent lower on the BSE, at Rs 686.35.



■ ₹10,000 for Reits and ₹15,000 for InvITs. Lot starts at 1

Minimum investment in Reits, InvITs relaxed

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, JUNE 29

In an attempt to deepen the market for new instruments Reits and InvITs, markets regulator Sebi on Tuesday decided to reduce the minimum subscription amount and trading lot size for such publicly listed investment trusts.

The minimum application value for Real Estate Investment Trusts (Reits) and Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InvITs) will be in the range of Rs 10,000-Rs 15,000 and the trading lot will be of one unit, the Sebi said. Currently the threshold investment is Rs 50,000-Rs 100,000 range.

For unlisted InvITs, the regulator has introduced the concept of minimum unit-holders requirement. "The minimum number of unit holders, other than sponsor, its related parties and its associates shall be five, together holding not less than 25 per cent of the total unit capital of the InvIT," the Sebi said in a release after its board meeting.

Real estate players hailed the Sebi's decision to reduce the minimum subscription amount and trading lot size for Reits, saying it will encourage retail investors to participate in the publicly traded instrument.

The Sebi board has approved amendments to Reits and InvITs Regulations on Tuesday.

"The revised minimum application value shall be within the range of INR 10,000-15,000 and the

‘ACCREDITED INVESTORS’ TO GET MORE INVESTMENT FREEDOM

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, JUNE 29

Capital market regulators Sebi on Tuesday approved the proposal to introduce a framework for 'accredited investors' in the securities market.

Accredited investors are a class of investors who may be considered to be well-informed or well advised about investment products

Accredited investors may eventually be offered benefits such as flexibility in minimum investment amount, flexibility and relaxation in regulatory requirements and access to products/ services offered exclusively to accredited investors.

According to the regulator, accredited investors may be individuals, Hindu undivided family (HUFs), family trusts, sole proprietorships, partnership firms, trusts and body corporates based on financial parameters.

"Eligible subsidiaries of depositories and specified stock exchanges, and any other specified institutions will be recognised as

revised trading lot shall be of one unit," the release said.

Under the current rules, while making an initial public offering and follow-on offer, the minimum sub-

accreditation agencies for these accredited investors," the Sebi said.

These agencies will grant accreditation status and issue accreditation certificate to the investors.

"Accredited Investors shall have flexibility to participate in investment products with an investment amount lesser than the minimum amount mandated in the Alternative Investment Funds (AIF) Regulations and Portfolio Managers Regulations," the Sebi said.

"Accredited investors who are clients of investment advisers will have the flexibility to determine the limits and modes of fees payable to the investment adviser through bilaterally negotiated contractual terms."

Investors welcomed the move. "The flexibility in investment decisions would allow AMCs & AIFs to work closely with the well-informed investors like family offices to create bespoke proposals," said Prateek Pant, chief business officer, White Oak Capital Management.

scription should not be less than Rs 50,000 for Reits and Rs 1 lakh for InvITs.

Allotment to any investor is required to be made in the multiples of a lot. At present, for initial listing, a

TIGHTER NORMS ON INDEPENDENT DIRECTORS

New Delhi, June 29: In efforts to bolster corporate governance, the Sebi on Tuesday approved various amendments to rules governing the appointment, re-appointment and removal of independent directors, including the requirement to disclose resignation letters of such individuals.

There will be a one-year cooling period for an independent director transitioning to a whole-time director in the same company/ associate company belonging to the promoter group.

Appointment, re-appointment and removal of independent directors should be done only through a special resolution passed by shareholders. Further, the process to be followed by the Nomination and Remuneration Committee while selecting candidates for appointment as independent directors has been made more transparent.

—PTI

trading lot should be of 100 units and during follow-on offer, each lot should consist of such number of units in its trading lot as it had at the time of initial offer.

States asked to monitor pulses stocks as prices go up

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JUNE 29, 2021

The Centre has directed states and union territories to ask millers, traders and importers to declare their stocks of pulses. They will also have to monitor pulses prices on a weekly basis.

The Ministry of Consumer Affairs says it has noticed a sudden spurt in prices of pulses, which may be due to hoarding by stockholders. Hoarding could lead to a situation of artificial scarcity and price rise. According to the trade, pulses have become dearer by about 10 per cent on an annual basis.

As per the Essential Commodities Act, 1955, the government can issue orders for collecting information and statistics to persons engaged in the production, supply or distribution or trade of any essential commodity, the letter issued by the ministry said.

Though the Essential Commodities Act, 2020, notified in September last year, stipulates that the supply of certain food articles, including cereals, pulses and oils, can only be regulated in extraordinary circumstances such as war, famine and natural calamity, the Act has not come into force yet due to a stay order by the Supreme Court.

"Stockholders like millers, traders and importers may be directed by the states/ UTs to declare the stocks of pulses and that may be verified by states/UTs. States/UTs are also



requested to monitor the prices of pulses on a weekly basis," the ministry said. The ministry has also created an online portal and provided the list of millers as per the Nafed data.

However, the trade argues that there is no hoarding happening and there is no major price rise at the wholesale level and that many pulses are trading at the minimum support price (MSP) level or below it.

"No hoarding is happening in pulses. At the wholesale level, moong and chana are trading below MSP, tur and urad around MSP and masoor above MSP. The MSP has gone up by 5 per cent after the recent revision and last year the pulses were trading below MSP. The price rise is at retail level as the retailers are taking a margin of Rs 50/60 a kg. The government should address the issue at the retail level," said Bimal Kothari, vice chairman, Indian Pulses and Grains

Association.

Earlier, the government had fixed an annual quota to import 4 lakh tonnes of tur and urad dal from Myanmar and Malawi for the next five years. It has also extended a quota to import 2 lakh tonnes of the pulses with Mozambique for five years. This annual quota will be imported through private trade. If there is any shortfall in the annual quota, that quantity will be imported from other countries. The quota system allows imports of the specified quantity even if the commodity falls into the restricted category.

After a gap of three years, India, the largest pulses producer and consumer, had moved import of tur, moong and urad from restricted to open category in May this year till November-end.

"This is an assurance given to the farmers of these countries by India as very few countries produce pulses like tur and India is the largest consumer."

Though India's production has been rising, the consumption is increasing faster. Apart from Myanmar and Malawi, we have also extended a similar agreement with Mozambique for next five years," said Kothari.

For decades, India has been producing 14-18 million tonnes of pulses. However, from 2016-17, the production crossed 23.13 million tonnes, 25.42 million tonnes in 2017-18 and 23.22 million tonnes in 2018-19. The total consumption of pulses is estimated at around 25 million tonnes.

PERSONAL LOANS GROW 13.5% IN MARCH QUARTER

Mumbai, June 29: Personal loans continued to grow at a robust pace and recorded a 13.5 per cent year-on-year rise in March 2021, while industrial loan growth remained negative during all quarters of the last fiscal, the Reserve Bank of India said on Tuesday.

As per the Quarterly Basic Statistical Returns (BSR)-1: Outstanding Credit of Scheduled Commercial Banks (SCBs), March 2021' released by the RBI, private sector banks registered a higher loan growth compared to the other bank group.

Their share in total credit increased to 36.5 per cent in March 2021 from 35.4 per cent a year ago and 24.8 per cent five years ago, it said.

Credit to the household sector rose by 10.9 per cent (YoY) and its share in total credit increased to 52.6 per cent in March 2021 from 49.8 per cent the year-ago period. Growth in credit to the private corporate sector, however, declined for the sixth successive quarter and its share in total credit stood at 28.3 per cent.

—PTI

RBI slaps penalties on Mahesh Co-op, 3 others

FC BANKING BUREAU MUMBAI, JUNE 29

The Reserve Bank on Tuesday said it has imposed penalties on four co-operative banks, including a Rs 112.50 lakh fine on Hyderabad-based Andhra Pradesh Mahesh Co-operative Urban Bank, for contravention of certain regulatory directions. A penalty of Rs 62.50 lakh has been imposed on The Ahmedabad Mercantile

Co-operative Bank, Ahmedabad; Rs 37.50 lakh on SVC Co-operative Bank, Mumbai; and Rs 25 lakh on Saraswat Cooperative Bank, Mumbai.

The penalty on Andhra Pradesh Mahesh Co-operative Urban Bank was for non-compliance with directions issued by the RBI contained in Master Directions on 'Interest Rate on Deposits' and 'Know Your Customer'.

The Ahmedabad Mercantile Co-operative Bank has been penalised for violation of norms contained in Master Directions on 'Interest Rate on Deposits'.

According to the RBI, it imposed penalty on SVC Co-operative Bank for non-compliance with directions on 'Interest Rate on Deposits' and 'Frauds Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism'. Saraswat Cooperative

Bank was penalised for non-compliance with directions on 'Interest Rate on Deposits' and 'Maintenance of Deposit Accounts'.

The penalties, the RBI said, have been imposed for based on deficiencies in regulatory compliance and are not intended to pronounce upon the validity of any transaction or agreement entered into by the banks with their customers.

Govt for new rating system for MSMEs

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JUNE 29

The government has suggested creation of a new ratings system for micro small and medium enterprises and a dashboard for effective monitoring of MSME schemes.

A simple and transparent methodology should be evolved to give ratings to MSMEs having good turnover and GST records to enable them to get finances from the banks and institutions, Minister for MSME Nitin Gadkari said. According to him, the

whole world now wants to invest in Indian industry and with an effective rating system MSMEs can get good investment from abroad.

The RBI already has a BLR rating for MSMEs with a loan exposure of Rs 5 crore and above. However, the MSMEs have not been happy with the rating as it applies the same model applicable to large companies. The MSMEs have been complaining about this rating system. "If the minister has now announced a rating system, I presume that



the ministry is talking about a new rating system that will take care of the concerns of the industry. If it does that, the rating will be useful for the MSMEs," said Anil Bharadwaj, secretary general of Fisme.

Gadkari also proposed setting up a dashboard for monitoring schemes to pre-

venting delays in decision making. The ministry already has such a dashboard, so it is not clear if the minister is looking for a real-time dashboard.

Gadkari asked Sidbi to take decisions within three months and provide support. It is time to make the system transparent, time-bound, result oriented and performance oriented and help appropriate entrepreneurs with a good track record, he said. Industry presumes the new dashboard might have details of newer schemes like the ECLGS.

Shrinkflation is a monster worth watching

STEPHEN MIHM JUNE 29

How will we know if inflation is making a comeback? Most economists are focused on the price of commodities, wages, and other basic goods and services. But history suggests they might want to keep an eye on a related phenomenon that often escapes notice: so-called "shrinkflation."

This practice became increasingly common in the 1960s and 1970s, when manufacturers confronting runaway inflation tweaked packaging rather than hike prices. At first, the practice attracted relatively little notice: It's difficult to discern changes in unit prices when they're camouflaged in different-looking boxes and bags.

In fact, it was the humourist Art Buchwald who was among the first to sound the alarm. In a column entitled "Packaged Inflation" published in 1969, he lampooned the growing tendency to conceal price increases. Tongue in cheek, he praised American industry for "devising new methods to make the product smaller while making the package larger."

This wasn't far from the truth. As inflationary pressures rose over the course of the 1970s, manufacturers pursued a number of methods to pass along price increases. The most basic of these was so-called "downsizing" - same package, same price, fewer goods.

In late summer of 1974, for example, Woolworth's offered a packet of pencils



at its back-to-school sale for 99 cents—same price as the previous year. But as a sharp-eyed reporter at The New York Times observed, the packages only contained 24 pencils, six fewer than the previous year. The same strategy affected packets of construction paper (24 sheets, not 30).

The grocery store offered numerous opportunities for downsizers. At the

beginning of the decade, that staple of postwar cuisine, Rice-A-Roni, sold boxes containing 8 ounces of the product. Soon, though, it shrank to 6.9 ounces, but the packaging and price remained the same.

This kind of sleight-of-hand became ubiquitous. Everything from cans of tuna fish to jars of spaghetti sauce contained less and less. Advocacy groups like the Consumers' Union (now Consumer Reports) inveighed against downsizing, but the practice remained widespread.

Gumball makers may have pulled off the most brazen act of shrinkflation. As the price of sugar climbed in the 1970s, they

couldn't easily raise prices—gumball machines were set up to accept a specific coin. And they couldn't make the gumballs smaller—the dispensers couldn't reliably handle any other size. So they created a hollow in the formerly solid gumball. Instead of sugar, kids got some air.

Many of these unit-pricing systems survive in 2021. But so, too, does shrinkflation. In the past year, there have been increasing reports of craft manufacturers whittling away everything from sheets of toilet paper to servings of cat food. These have intensified in recent weeks.

If the trend continues, beware: This may signal that inflation, long dormant, may finally be resurgent.

—Bloomberg

Column

SHORT TAKES

Dutee nominated for Khel Ratna

Bhubaneswar: Odisha government on Tuesday nominated ace sprinter Dutee Chand for the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna Award, the country's highest sporting honour. Apart from Dutee, the Odisha government also sent five other recommendations to the sports ministry, said an official here. "I'm thankful to Odisha chief minister Naveen Patnaik for nominating my name for the Khel Ratna Award. May your blessing always be upon me," Dutee said on Twitter.

The Indian sprint ace broke her own 100m national record, clocking 11.7 seconds at the Indian Grand Prix 4 in Patiala last week to miss the automatic Olympic qualification time by 0.02 seconds. She is, however, set to make it to the Tokyo Olympics on the basis of world rankings. — *PTI*

Jehan in race for Arjuna award

New Delhi: Indian motorsports' governing body FMSCI has nominated its own president Akbar Ebrahim for the Dronacharya Award besides sending Jehan Daruvala's name to the government for Arjuna Award after inexplicably ignoring him last year. Racer turned coach Ebrahim's name was also recommended for Dronacharya last year but none of FMSCI's nominations for the national sports awards was short-listed by the government appointed selection panel. India's biggest racing star at the moment, Jehan stands the best chance of getting the award. The 22-year-old is into his second year in F2 and has multiple podium finishes to his name. He won the sprint race in Bahrain last year and has scored two podiums. — *PTI*

Southee auctions jersey for a cause

Auckland: New Zealand pace spearhead Tim Southee is auctioning a shirt he wore during the inaugural World Test Championship final to raise funds for the treatment of an eight-year-old diagnosed with a rare form of cancer. The shirt is signed by the entire Black Caps squad. Southee, who played a crucial role in New Zealand's eight-victory over India in the marquee clash last week, has placed the memorabilia to raise funds for eight-year-old Hollie Beattie, who was diagnosed with a rare, aggressive form of cancer called neuroblastoma back in 2018. The 32-year-old said he learnt about Beattie's condition a couple of years ago and has been trying to help her ever since. — *PTI*

Mithali back in top five of ODI ranking

Dubai: India captain Mithali Raj has returned to the top five of the latest ICC Women's ODI Rankings for batswomen after top-scoring for India with 72 in the series opener against England in Bristol. The 38-year-old, who has completed 22 years in international cricket, rescued her side from a precarious 27 for two but India's total of 201 for eight was not challenging enough for England, who will be defending their World Cup title in New Zealand next year. Mithali has gained three slots to reach fifth position after the Bristol knock. — *PTI*

India aim to level series vs England

Taunton: India will have to shed their outdated batting approach and play more freely to bounce back against formidable hosts England in the second women's ODI here on Wednesday. India consumed as many as 181 dot balls on way to posting a below par 201 which England chased down rather comfortably to take a 1-0 lead in the three-match series on Sunday. Ahead of the World Cup in New Zealand early next year, India have got work to do in all departments as pointed out by skipper Mithali Raj herself. The game could see India making multiple changes in the playing eleven as the batters' inability to rotate strike is proving to be a big issue for the team. — *PTI*

CREDIT SUISSE

Spirited Switzerland pack off World champs France

Switzerland	3
(Haris Seferovic 15, 81, Mario Gavranovic 90)	
France	3
(Karim Benzema 57, 59, Paul Pogba 75)	
Switzerland win 5-4 in penalty shootout	

Paris, June 29: Kylian Mbappe missed the crucial penalty on Monday as world champions France were sent packing from Euro 2020 in a shoot-out against Switzerland, who go through to a quarter-final tie against Spain after an unforgettable day of drama which featured a total of 14 goals in two games.

Switzerland had never won a knockout tie at the European Championship and had never won a shoot-out, but they triumphed 5-4 on penalties against the World Cup holders after a remarkable 3-3 draw in Bucharest.

France, who came into the tournament as favourites to add the continental crown to the World Cup they won in Russia three years ago, had earlier come from 1-0 down to lead 3-1 and looked to be cruising through, only to concede two late goals.

The game in the Romanian capital followed a 5-3 extra-time win for Spain over Croatia in Copenhagen, and the 2008 and 2012 European champions will face the Swiss in the last eight in Saint Petersburg on Friday.

Switzerland went ahead early on when Haris Seferovic headed in a cross, but they looked set to rue the moment early in the second half when Ricardo Rodriguez's penalty was saved by Hugo Lloris.

By the hour mark the game — watched by a crowd of around 25,000 after coronavirus restric-



Switzerland goalkeeper Yann Sommer (right) celebrates after saving French forward Kylian Mbappe's penalty in the Euro Last 16 match on Monday. — *UEFA*

SIMILAR SCRIPT!

Spain vs Croatia	France vs Switzerland
20th min: ESP 0-1 CRO	15th min: FRA 0-1 SUI
38th min: ESP 1-1 CRO	57th min: FRA 1-1 SUI
57th min: ESP 2-1 CRO	59th min: FRA 2-1 SUI
77th min: ESP 3-1 CRO	75th min: FRA 3-1 SUI
85th min: ESP 3-2 CRO	81st min: FRA 3-2 SUI
92nd min: ESP 3-3 CRO	90th min: FRA 3-3 SUI

a knockout tie at a major tournament since the 1938 World Cup.

"It was an incredible evening. I am so proud of the team," said goalkeeper Sommer.

SPAIN EDGE CROATIA IN 8-GOAL THRILLER

Somehow the drama in Bucharest topped that in Copenhagen earlier, when Alvaro Morata netted an all-important goal as Spain prevailed in extra

time against the 2018 World Cup runners-up, but only after they also let slip a 3-1 lead.

Luka Modric's Croatia came back to force the extra half-hour but that was when Morata, the Atletico Madrid striker who has been panned for his performances by critics and subjected to abuse from fans, controlled a cross and volleyed home in the 100th minute.

Mikel Oyarzabal then

secured Spain's victory in what was the highest-scoring game at a European Championship since the opening match of the very first tournament in 1960, when Yugoslavia defeated hosts France 5-4.

Croatia had been gifted a first-half lead when Spain goalkeeper Unai Simon allowed Pedri's back-pass to slip under his foot and in. But Luis Enrique's side had been the better team prior to that and they levelled through Pablo Sarabia before appearing to run away with the tie in the second half.

Manchester City winger Ferran Torres crossed for Cesar Azpilicueta to head in his first goal for his country and Torres then made it 3-1.

However, Croatia substitute Mislav Orsic pulled one back. — *AFP*

T20 CUP FROM OCT. 17, FINAL ON NOV. 14

Dubai, June 29: This year's T20 World Cup, which has been moved to the UAE and Oman from India due to the Covid-19 pandemic, will be played from October 17 to November 14, the International Cricket Council (ICC) announced on Tuesday.

"The BCCI will remain the hosts of the event, which will now be held in Dubai International Stadium, the Sheikh Zayed Stadium in Abu Dhabi, the Sharjah Cricket Academy Ground, from 17 October to 14 November 2021," the ICC stated.

The first round of the tournament, comprising the eight qualifying teams, will now be split between Oman and UAE.

Four of these teams will then progress to the Super 12s round where they'll join the eight automatic qualifiers.

The upcoming edition will be the first men's T20 World Cup played since 2016. The eight teams competing in the preliminary stage are Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Ireland, Netherlands, Scotland, Namibia, Oman and Papua New Guinea, before the play-off stage and the Final on November 14. — *PTI*

Sterling carries England into QF

England	2
(Raheem Sterling 75, Harry Kane 86)	
Germany	0

England produced a gritty display capped by clinical finishes from Sterling, who now has three goals in the tournament, and Kane — who finally bagged his first of the competition.

England, yet to concede a goal in the tournament, head to Rome on Saturday for a quarter-final against the winners of Tuesday's other last 16 tie between Sweden and Ukraine.

Chasing a first major international trophy since 1966, England's side of the draw looks wide open, with a potential semi-final against Denmark or the Czech Republic unlikely to strike fear into their hearts. It was only England's second knockout stage win in Euro history. — *AFP*

England produced a gritty display capped by clinical finishes from Sterling, who now has three goals in the tournament, and Kane — who finally bagged his first of the competition.

England, yet to concede a goal in the tournament, head to Rome on Saturday for a quarter-final against the winners of Tuesday's other last 16 tie between Sweden and Ukraine.

Chasing a first major international trophy since 1966, England's side of the draw looks wide open, with a potential semi-final against Denmark or the Czech Republic unlikely to strike fear into their hearts. It was only England's second knockout stage win in Euro history. — *AFP*

COPA QF LINE-UP

July 3	Peru vs Paraguay at Goiania	2.30 am
	Brazil vs Chile at Rio de Janeiro	5.30 am
July 4	Uruguay vs Colombia at Goiania	3.30 am
	Argentina vs Ecuador at Brasilia	6.30 am

Messi sets record in Argentina win

Cuiaba (Brazil), June 29: Lionel Messi celebrated his record 148th international cap with two goals as Argentina trounced Bolivia 4-1 to clinch top spot in Copa America Group A on Monday.

Messi — who had equalled Javier Mascherano's Argentinian caps record of 147 last week — marked his 148th appearance in style, setting up the opening goal before bagging a brace of his own.

The victory at Cuiaba's Arena Pantanal stadium sees Argentina advance to a quarter-final on Saturday against Ecuador, the fourth placed finishers from Group B.

Bolivia, who had already been eliminated after three defeats in their opening three games, were outclassed from the outset by a rampant Argentina.

The Argentines almost took the lead after three minutes, only for Bolivia goalkeeper Carlos Lampe to pull off a remarkable double save from Sergio Agüero and Angel Correa in quick succession.

But Argentina did not have to wait long for the breakthrough, when Messi's delightful chipped

pass released Papu Gomez who volleyed past Lampe to make it 1-0 after six minutes.

Argentina doubled their lead on 33 minutes when Gomez was brought down in the area by Bolivia's Diego Bejarano.

Messi duly stepped up to convert the penalty to put Argentina firmly in control. Bolivia got their first shot on goal shortly afterwards, Jeyson Chura's ferocious long-range effort forcing Argentina goalkeeper Franco Armani into a diving save at full stretch. But Argentina reasserted their dominance and it was Messi who made it 3-0. — *AFP*

Argentina doubled their lead on 33 minutes when Gomez was brought down in the area by Bolivia's Diego Bejarano.

Messi duly stepped up to convert the penalty to put Argentina firmly in control. Bolivia got their first shot on goal shortly afterwards, Jeyson Chura's ferocious long-range effort forcing Argentina goalkeeper Franco Armani into a diving save at full stretch. But Argentina reasserted their dominance and it was Messi who made it 3-0. — *AFP*

Messi duly stepped up to convert the penalty to put Argentina firmly in control. Bolivia got their first shot on goal shortly afterwards, Jeyson Chura's ferocious long-range effort forcing Argentina goalkeeper Franco Armani into a diving save at full stretch. But Argentina reasserted their dominance and it was Messi who made it 3-0. — *AFP*

Olympic briefs

Manu off social media

Teen shooting sensation Manu Bhaker on Tuesday decided to switch off from social media till the end of Tokyo Olympics to focus on her preparation and performance in the Games, starting July 23. The 19-year-old Bhaker is currently training in Croatia along with other members of the Olympic-bound Indian team, which is taking part in the ISSF World Cup here. The shooters will directly fly to Tokyo before the Games.

Mary heads to Italy for training

Six-time world champion MC Mary Kom has decided to join the rest of India's Olympic-bound boxing team in Italy for training to avoid the added restrictions on those travelling to Tokyo from here amid the pandemic. Mary Kom will take off for Assisi in a day or two to join the eight other Olympic-bound boxers, who are set to leave for Tokyo from there itself. The London Olympics bronze-medallist was training at Pune's Army Sports Institute so far.

Wawrinka joins exit list

Former Olympic Games gold medallist Stan Wawrinka on Tuesday joined the growing list of players withdrawing from the Olympics. Wawrinka, who won an Olympic title in men's doubles alongside Roger Federer at Beijing in 2008, has undergone surgery on his left foot. The 36-year-old hasn't played on the tour since Doha in March. "He is very disappointed not to be able to play in the Games," said a statement by his management team.

Relay to be pulled off roads

Some stages of the Tokyo Olympic torch relay will be pulled off the roads of the Japanese capital because of fears about spreading the coronavirus, Japan's Kyodo news agency reported on Tuesday. Citing the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, Kyodo said the relay would not appear on public streets from July 9-16. Kyodo said organisers would decide on the format for the relay from July 17 until the opening ceremony on July 23.

Federer survives scare

London, June 29: Roger Federer survived a huge scare to reach the Wimbledon second round on Tuesday when French opponent Adrian Mannarino was forced to retire injured at the start of the fifth set.

Eight-time champion Federer was level at 6-4, 6-7 (3/7), 3-6, 6-2 when Mannarino called it quits after just one point in the decider.

The Frenchman, celebrating his 33rd birthday, suffered a bad fall in the seventh game of the fourth set.

Despite taking treatment from the trainer, he was hardly able to move and grimacing in pain had to retire.

Just five weeks shy of his 40th birthday, Federer faces either Richard Gasquet or Yuichi Sugita for a place in the last 32.

Germany's Alexander Zverev eased into the second round of Wimbledon on Tuesday beating Dutch qualifier Tallon Griekspoor 6-3, 6-4, 6-1 in just 89 minutes.

The 24-year-old French Open semi-finalist had lost to qualifiers at Wimbledon on two occasions — Ernests Gulbis in the third round in 2018 and to Jiri Vesely in the first round in 2019 — but he made no mistake this time round.

Not even a 15 minute break so the Court One



Venus Williams of USA in action during her first round match against Mihaela Buzarnescu of Romania in Wimbledon. — *AFP*

roof could be closed due to rain upset the fourth seed's rhythm.

VENUS' RECORD APPEARANCE

Venus Williams marked her record 90th Grand Slam appearance with a three-set victory over

Mihaela Buzarnescu of Romania at Wimbledon on Tuesday and revealed the secret to her longevity: "I'm good at what I do".

The 41-year-old American, who is a five-time champion at the All England Club, triumphed

7-5, 4-6, 6-3. Former world number one Williams first played Wimbledon in 1997 and is making her 23rd appearance at the tournament. Now at 111 in the world, she fired 10 aces and 33 winners to defeat her 160th-ranked opponent. — *AFP*

DISCUS THROWER PUNIA MAKES CUT

Veteran discus thrower Seema Punia qualified for Tokyo Olympics with a best effort of 63.70m while winning gold on the final day of the National Inter-State Athletics Championships in Patiala. The 37-year-old Punia, who had won a sil-

ver in the 2018 Commonwealth Games and a bronze in the 2018 Asian Games, breached the Olympic qualifying mark of 63.50m.

She will be taking part in her fourth Olympics after the 2004, 2012 and 2016 editions of the Games. Punia will be the second Indian woman to take part in the event in Tokyo after national record holder Kamalpreet Kaur. — *PTI*

Aditi qualifies for 2nd successive Games

New Delhi, June 29: India's top ranked woman golfer Aditi Ashok will take part in her second successive Olympic Games in Tokyo next month after finishing 45th on the qualifying list released on Tuesday.

Aditi thus joined Anirban Lahiri and Udayan Mane to make it a team of three to Tokyo. Lahiri also like Aditi, will be participating in his second straight Games after

Rio, 2016. Aditi and Lahiri, figured in the first list of 60 players, of whom some are likely to skip the Games.

"I still think of Rio 2016 like it was only yesterday. To have the honour of playing for India is beyond exciting. I am privileged to have the opportunity to represent my country and my sport at the Games again," the golfer tweeted.

Even as Aditi came

through in the first list, Diksha Dagar also figures in the second list as the fifth reserve in case of some specific pull-outs. Diksha, who trailed Ivesa Malik till last week overtook the latter with a tied-fourth finish at an event in the Czech Republic.

Mane made the cut following the withdrawal of Emiliano Grillo of Argentina. His entry will be confirmed on July 6 by the IGF and by then it will