

IN BRIEF

EdCET application last date extended

Hyderabad: The last date for submission of TS EdCET 2021 online applications has been extended till June 22, due to the current Covid-19 pandemic conditions, the Osmania University College of Education, announced on Tuesday.

SCR to cancel two trains

Hyderabad: The South Central Railway has said that it would be cancelling Trains No. 0263/0264 on the Chennai Central-Hyderabad route from Wednesday till the end of the month owing to poor occupancy. The SCR also said Trains No. 0624/0623 between Tirupati and Chennai Central stood cancelled from Wednesday till further notice.

Illegal seeds worth ₹5 crore seized

Hyderabad: The Hyderabad police busted a seeds racket on Tuesday and seized paddy and maize seeds worth of ₹5 crore from the accused. The North Zone police along with agriculture officers hit upon the seeds during a search at a warehouse at Noothankallu village in Medchal mandal. Police took into custody two persons identified as H. Ravindra and P. Srinivas Rao. Police seized 834 metric tonnes of unauthorised paddy seeds worth of ₹4.9 crore and 5,760 kg of unauthorised maize seeds worth of ₹25 lakh. The seized material has been handed over to the agriculture department, samples have been collected and sent for lab test.

TS GOVT EXTENDS VACATION IN SCHOOL, COLLEGES

Hyderabad: The summer vacation for schools, junior colleges, and the District Institute of Education and Training (DIET) colleges have been extended till June 20, the state government announced on Tuesday. The scheduled reopening was on June 15. With a lot of confusion on whether teaching will be online or in classrooms, the government, which is yet to take a decision on this issue, said it was extending the summer vacation by five more days. The extension of the vacation will apply to schools and junior colleges, whether they are government or privately owned, and to the District Institute of Education and Training colleges.

TECHNICAL GLITCH DELAYS ETALA'S RETURN TO HYD

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JUNE 15

BJP leader Etala Rajendar's return to Hyderabad on Tuesday was delayed after a technical problem was reported on his special aircraft at Delhi.

Apart from Rajendar, the aircraft was carrying, among others, Dubbak MLA M. Raghunandhan Rao and former MP Vivek Venkataswamy. They were returning to Hyderabad after Rajendar joined the BJP along with some other former TRS leaders on Monday.

At the time of take-off, reports said, the pilot noticed a technical problem and returned to the airport. Rajendar and his team shifted to another aircraft and reached Hyderabad.

IS SHRC SUPERIOR TO HC, ASKS JUDGE

From Page 1

"The government has not challenged the SHRC order before the private persons approached the court," Justice Vijayen Reddy pointed out.

Further, the division bench observed that the SHRC has exceeded its jurisdiction in this particular case. "Moreover the matter is sub-judice as cases are pending in different courts. It appears the Telangana SHRC became a superior authority over the High Court, Court of Wards and other judicial institutions," the bench observed.

Special counsel informed the court that he had argued the case before SHRC also and so far the order copy had not been served on the respondents. "The chairman of the SHRC announced on April 12 that orders would be pronounced later, but the order copy was given to some parties on the same day," he said.

Crowded job centres

People wait in queues for Covid-19 vaccination, during a drive at the GHMC function hall in Bhoiguda, Hyderabad on Monday.

— S. SURENDER REDDY

Cong. slams TS over decision to sell land

Accuses KCR of pushing the state into debt trap

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JUNE 15

The Congress has come down heavily on the state government for its decision to sell land parcels to raise money and the ongoing over-come financial crunch. The Opposition leaders condemned the ruling party's statements over sale of lands in Telangana state.

Former minister and MLA D. Sridhar Babu on Tuesday slammed the state government over the decision and he accused Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao of pushing the state, which was a surplus budget state at the time of formation, into a debt trap.

Addressing the media at the Congress Legislature Party office in the Assembly, Sridhar Babu said the Chief Minister was ruling the state in an incompetent manner and alleged that decision of selling the government lands was ridiculous instead of reducing wasteful spending and generating revenue while saving. He expressed dissatisfaction over the sale of the 30,000 acres of land and said it did not make sense. He demanded that the government withdraw GO 13 and suggested that it would create a problem in future to acquire land for public use.

He condemned finance minister T. Harish Rao's comments on Monday that the Congress had sold land parcels earlier. He recalled that Telangana Congress leaders also protested

Aruna says govt should protect lands in state

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JUNE 15

The BJP leaders lashed out at the state government on its decision of sale of lands. BJP vice-president D.K. Aruna pointed out that the government should protect the lands rather than sell it.

In a media statement on Tuesday, the BJP leader demanded that Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao speak out about the decision and explain the reason behind the sale of lands.

She criticised that the Chief Minister had looted the state under the

name of Bangaru Telangana and demanded that the government take over the illegal properties of ministers and MLAs instead of selling public lands.

Aruna demanded that the government take back the decision and withdraw the GO 13 to protect the lands for future generations. She asked Chandrashekar Rao to recall his statements about Andhra people looting Hyderabad lands and questioned how he could sell lands in Hyderabad now.

Meanwhile, former MP and BJP senior leader Vijayashanti

questioned the Chief Minister why the government was selling lands as it was one of the richest states in the country, stated by the Chief Minister himself.

She alleged that the finance minister's statement was absurd about the land sale issue and asked him to apologise to people over whether the Chief Minister had made false statements about its wealth. She asked Harish Rao why the government was spending crores of rupees on vehicles and why it was demolishing jails and secretariat if the state was in debts.

the decision of sale of lands in earlier periods. He alleged that Chandrashekar Rao was Union minister in 2004 and Harish Rao was a minister in the Congress Cabinet and they were also part of selling lands at that time.

Sridhar Babu made it clear that he was not in the PCC race and stated that he had no interest in that position. He said he would continue to work as per the direction of AICC.

Meanwhile, in a statement issued on Tuesday, former MP V. Hanumantha Rao condemned the state government's decision to sell public lands. He expressed concerns that

if the government lands were sold, there would be no space for graveyards in the future. He stated that it would be a problem for future generations. He questioned whether there would be lands today, if past governments had sold all the lands. They demanded that all parties work together to fight the government's decision.

AICC spokesperson D. Sravan, addressing a media conference, recalled that minister K.T. Rama Rao and himself participated in several dharnas against sale of lands in united Andhra Pradesh and he criticised the Telangana government for going in a same way to sell its lands.

He accused the TRS government of running up a ₹4 lakh crores debt and alleged that the Chief Minister ruled the state like a dictator, and not in a constitutional way.

Dr Sravan questioned the government about the liquor and petrol taxes and also IT export income. He asked how the TRS, which was a small regional party, became a rich political party across the country.

He also recalled that the previous Congress government distributed 50 lakhs acres to poor people and questioned what the TRS government did in its seven years of regime other than sale of lands.

Adilabad youth pairs up with bull to plough field

PILLALAMARRI SRINIVAS | DC
ADILABAD, JUNE 15

An Adivasi farmer's family is using one of its members, along with a bull to balance the plough while doing agricultural operations, much to the chagrin of civil society.

The family is said to be distressed with sudden death a bullock and left with a single bovine to plough the fields. However, since the ploughing cannot be done with a single bullock, the family is using one of its men to balance the plough in Dongargam village in Indravelli mandal in Adilabad district.

The farmer, Kova Abhiman, has been using his son Kova Avinash, 18, in place of a second bullock to balance the plough in agriculture operations for sowing cotton in their six-acre agriculture field. Avinash said one of the bullocks pair died of ill health while ploughing their agriculture fields for sowing in the Kharif on Sunday evening.

"They had left with no



Kova Avinash, 18, in place of a second bullock to balance the plough in agriculture operations.

option except using their son as a bullock to balance the plough to complete the ploughing," said Abhiman and added that their neighbour and villagers were also busy ploughing their own agriculture lands with their cattle with the onset of rains.

Abhiman said they were desperate to plough their land and hence using their son as a bullock to complete

the work.

Otherwise, the soil would lose moisture if there was any delay, he said.

He said they had no money to purchase a bullock for ploughing right now and appealed to the officials of Integrated Tribal Development Agency, Utnoor, to provide a bullock to their family so that they could continue agriculture operations for this Kharif.

Bharat Biotech justifies vax cost in pvt hospitals

BALU PULIPAKA | DC
HYDERABAD, JUNE 15

Bharat Biotech, which manufactures Covid-19 vaccine Covaxin, said the price at which it supplied Covaxin to the Centre — ₹150 a dose — was 'non sustainable' in the long run, and was 'non-competitive'. The company, under fire of late from several quarters for Covaxin price — particularly the ₹1,200 per dose for private hospitals — said in light of the price at which it sold the vaccine to the Indian government, "a higher price in private markets is required to offset part of the costs."

The company also said after supplying more than 4 crore doses of Covaxin, the vaccine had built an "excellent safety record" and against this background, Bharat Biotech "has not sought indemnity from the government of India for any adverse events from Covaxin." Bharat Biotech's stance on this issue comes in the wake of other Covid-19 vaccine makers, notably

WE RECEIVED support from Indian Council of Medical Research which provided SARS-CoV2 virus, animal studies, virus characterisation, test kits and partial funding for clinical trial sites. In return for this valuable support, Bharat Biotech will pay royalties to ICMR and the National Institute of Virology (NIV), based on product sales. Royalties are also payable to Virovax towards the licensure of IMDG agonist molecules.

— BHARAT BIOTECH

Pfizer with which the Indian government has been negotiating import of its vaccine, seeking indemnity in India from any adverse events from use of its vaccine. Following this, Serum Institute of India, which manufactures in India the Oxford-AstraZeneca developed Covishield vaccine, too had sought similar assurances.

Covaxin, Bharat Biotech said, was more expensive for

the private sector, and the pricing arises purely due to fundamental business reasons, ranging from low procurement volumes, high distribution costs and retail margins among others.

Covaxin's supply price to the Central government at ₹150 a dose, was a non-competitive price and clearly not sustainable in the long run, Bharat Biotech said, adding that in view of this, a higher price in private markets was required to offset part of the costs. The average price realisation per dose for the company was less than ₹250 per dose, it said.

"In our view, the question of product pricing is only of extraneous interest to all concerned, especially when the same vaccine is made available free of cost," the company said, adding that it had so far invested over ₹500 crore at risk from its own resources for product development, clinical trials and setting up of Covaxin manufacturing facilities.

Covid vaccination for underprivileged begins

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JUNE 15

The Hyderabad police organised a vaccination drive on Tuesday for underprivileged people like beggars, vagabonds, migrants and others apart from transgenders on Tuesday. The drive was launched by home minister Mohd Mahmood Ali.

According to the Hyderabad police, about 6,000 people will be inoculated with Covishield during the drive.

The beneficiaries will be registered on the spot. Officials have set up 25 counters.

Minister Mahmood Ali said that Coronavirus cases had reduced in the state due to the efforts of the police. "The service of the police in enforcing the lockdown properly are commendable," he said.

He asked people not to believe rumours about the Covid-19 vaccine, and said that everyone should get vaccinated.

"We will take action against those who spread false propaganda regarding the vaccine," he said.

Police commissioner Anjani Kumar said, "For the last one-and-a-half years, we have been providing all kinds of services to the community.

Today we have identified those who are eligible for vaccination. In addition to providing them transportation to come to take the vaccine, accommodation has also been provided for them."

Police said 35 street volunteers and nearly 65 traffic 'Faristey' volunteers are supporting this event by mobilising people in the specific categories.

Among those present there were legislators Danam Nagender and Maganti Gopinath, P.V. Krishna Reddy, MD Megha Engineering, and Dr Ramesh of Rainbow Hospitals along with several senior police officials.

Nalgonda has the most micro containment zones

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JUNE 15

Nalgonda has the highest 111 micro-containment zones in Telangana due to constantly high cases of Coronavirus in the region since last 15 days.

Despite lockdown restrictions and limitations on movement of people in markets, Nalgonda still has a high number of cases in the district.

Experts say this clearly indicates that safety protocols of masks and social distancing are not being followed in the region.

They said such a surge in number of Covid-19 cases in different pockets of the state will impact the overall situation, as economic activity has resumed during relaxation

hours.

In Hyderabad too, there has been a slight increase in Coronavirus cases. Their number has increased by 15 compared to the caseload of 173 on Monday.

These small spurts in cases in Hyderabad and Nalgonda indicate that safety protocols are being comprised.

Even small gatherings could increase instances of Covid-19.

Unfortunately, vaccination centres are also being seen as another hub for spread of Coronavirus due to large crowds at these places.

Experts maintain that identifying such vulnerable places and ensuring proper social distancing at these centres is very important.

YOU CAN'T SHUT ALL STREETS FOR PROTESTS: HC

From Page 1

Based on the assessment of the facts, a bench of Justices Siddharth Mridul and Anup Jairam Bhambhani said: "In our opinion, the court must be careful in employing the definitional words and phrases in Section 15 in the absolute literal sense or use them lightly in a manner that would trivialise the extremely heinous offence of 'terrorist act', without understanding how terrorism is different even from conventional, heinous crime. The words 'terrorist act', including conspiracy and act preparatory to the commission of a terrorist act, were brought within the purview of UAPA by the amendment of 2004, on the heels of Parliament repealing POTA in 2004 and TADA having already been repealed in 1995," the court said.

On the "right to protest", the court said the government may prohibit public meetings, demonstrations or protests on streets or highways to avoid nuisance or disturbance of traffic, "but it cannot close all streets or open areas for public meetings, thereby defeating the fundamental right that flows from Article 19(1)(a) 19 (1)(b) of the Constitution".

Ms Narwal and Ms Kalita, both JNU Ph.D. scholars linked with women's rights group Pinjra Tod Collective, and Mr Tanha were arrested in May 2020. They were accused of being "masterminds" of the February 2020 violence in northeast Delhi and denied regular bail by the trial court.

SHORT TAKES

19 MAOISTS
SURRENDER
BEFORE SP

Kothagudem: Nineteen Maoist militants including three women surrendered before Bhadradi district superintendent of police, Sunil Dutt in Kothagudem on Tuesday. The surrendered militants were working for the party in Dummugudem and Charla mandala. The militants are including Noopa Dharmalah, V. Sitaramiah, Kaniti Pullaiah, Sodi Satyam, Mallan Raju, Sodi Dharmalah, Midium Krishna, Payam Rajesh, Kanithi Sriramulu, S. Srinu, P. Amala, Vetti Jyothi, M. Ungi, K. Abhilash, M. Devaiah, M. Idamaiah, M. Pandu, M. Chukkaiah and Madakam Devaiah.

HAJ CANCELS ALL
APPLICATIONS
FOR THIS YEAR

Hyderabad: The Haj Committee of India on Tuesday cancelled all applications for Haj 2021 as Saudi Arabia has barred foreigners for the pilgrimage this year as well, in the wake of the the Coronavirus pandemic.

Dr Masood Ahmed Khan, Chief Executive Officer, Haj Committee of India, issued a circular on Tuesday stating that the ministry of Haj and Umrah of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) had issued a statement stating that it has decided to allow only its citizens and residents to perform Haj 1442 in limited numbers. Due to this, all Haj applications stand cancelled.

SPECIAL COVID-19
BUSES REACH
SEVEN DISTRICTS

**DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JUNE 15**

Specially designed buses launched for transportation of Covid-19 patients in the state have begun making their way to various districts. Thirteen of the 30 such vehicles reached Wanaparthy, Mahabubnagar, Nalgonda, Khammam, Badrachalam, Vikarabad and Warangal districts.

According to Rev Raj Prakash Paul, pastor of The Lords Church in Bowenpally, the vehicles are already being put to use. The rest of the vehicles will be dispatched from the city to various destinations in the next few days.

Each of the specially designed medical emergency buses can accommodate eight patients at a time and is equipped with centralized oxygen supply, video conferencing facilities for consultation with specialists by the onboard doctor or nurse and emergency medical equipment.

The buses were formally launched by minister K.T. Rama Rao and minister Talasani Srinivas Yadav on June 3 at the PV Narasimha Rao Marg (formerly Necklace Road). They were lying in a parking lot since then. The wait was for required permissions from the government.

The church, which has readied 30 buses and rolled some of these out to the districts, plans to add another 33 vehicles for treating Covid-19 patients. "When we realized that all hospital beds were getting filled up and patients were searching for beds, we launched this project. Our church wants to extend its support to the people during these testing times," Rev Raj Prakash Paul said.

This project was launched in collaboration with VeraSmart Health Care.

GOOD RETURNS

Increasing prices of edible oils lure farmers to soya

Interest in soya cultivation soars

**DC CORRESPONDENT
ADILABAD, JUNE 15**

The skyrocketing prices of edible oils and good price for the soya in the open market are inducing farmers to go more for soya cultivation in great extent in the old Adilabad district. Besides soya, there is growing interest to take up red gram in Kharif and Bengal gram and sesame in Rabi as intercrop.

Soya was cultivated in 70,000 acres during last Kharif and the acreage of soya may touch 1 lakh acres this Kharif in the district. Traders are purchasing red gram for up to ₹7,800 per

● **SOYA WAS** cultivated in 70,000 acres during last Kharif and the acreage of soya may touch 1 lakh acres this Kharif in the district.

● **ADILABAD DISTRICT** in-charge joint director of agriculture (JDA) N. Ramesh said there was a possibility of rise in the area of soya cultivation this Kharif with more farmers showing interest in soya cultivation.

● **RYTHU SWARAJYA** Vedika Adilabad district president Sangepu Boranna said many farmers are keen on soya this Kharif and the area may cross one lakh acres in the Adilabad district in the wake of skyrocketing prices of edible oil.

quintal as against ₹6,880 minimum support price (MSP) in the market. Soya farmers got up to ₹4,500 per quintal against the ₹3,880 MSP last year.

This is drawing even traditional cotton growers to take to soya cultivation in view of greater risks and higher investment for cotton cultivation.

Etala's entry causes chum
in Huzurabad BJP leaders

Party ignoring leaders who have been with it for long, say seniors

**PULI SHARAT
KUMAR | DC
KARIMNAGAR, JUNE 15**

With former minister Etala Rajendar joining Bharatiya Janata Party, groupism has emerged within the Karimnagar district unit of BJP and Huzurabad constituency in particular.

There is an internal war on within BJP amid senior and junior leaders, apart from traditional workers and newcomers into the party. Separate meetings are being held by various groups within BJP in this regard, with one group meeting at mandal headquarters of Jammikunta in Huzurabad constituency recently.

At the Jammikunta meeting, held under leadership of national general secretary of BJP Kisan Morcha P. Sugunakar Rao, different leaders

● **EARLIER, BJP leadership** had asked Peddi Reddy to prepare ground for contesting the by-poll, but the entire scenario has changed with former minister Rajendar quitting TRS and joining BJP.

expressed their disappointment with party leaders for not considering them while taking important decisions. The basic feeling here is party giving more importance to those who have joined from other parties and ignoring leaders who have started their political career with BJP and strictly adhered to party principles.

Relatively junior-level leaders too organised another meeting in Jammikunta town on the same day with BJP district unit president

Gangadi Krishna Reddy presiding over this meeting. Here, Krishna Reddy stressed on strengthening the party at grass-root levels. He, however, did not allow anyone to speak about groupism within the party. He went on to assure junior leaders that those who work hard for BJP will be given suitable posts in days to come.

While this is so, former minister Enugula Peddi Reddy, who opposed joining of ousted minister Etala Rajendar into BJP, has announced an action plan to strengthen his own ground in Huzurabad constituency, which is currently represented by Rajendar in the assembly. From Tuesday onwards, he will be touring the constituency for three days till Thursday.

In the past, Peddi Reddy had won twice as MLA from Huzurabad con-

stituency. He has even openly stated that he will not support Rajendar if the latter joins BJP and asserted it is he who will contest the Huzurabad by-election on behalf of BJP. Peddi Reddy is also sore that BJP leadership did not consult him on the recent developments in Huzurabad and roping in of Rajendar into BJP.

Earlier, BJP leadership had asked him to prepare ground for contesting the by-poll, but the entire scenario has changed with former minister Rajendar quitting TRS and joining BJP.

Reddys are the strongest in Huzurabad constituency after BC community. Peddi Reddy has decided to go forward with his own strategy. He is expected to announce his future plans after holding discussions with his followers and supporters, it is said.

BHAINSA RIOTS:
HINDU YOUTH
BEING TARGETED,
ALLEGES BJP

**DC CORRESPONDENT
ADILABAD, JUNE 15**

Senior BJP leader Bhosle Mohan Rao Patel if Bhainsa on Tuesday appealed to the Minister of state for Home Affairs G. Kishan Reddy to take steps to set up a fast track court to give justice to the innocent victims being targeted in Bhainsa communal riots.

Mohan Rao Patel met the Kishan Reddy in Delhi and submitted a memorandum stating that the state government and police are targeting only Hindu youth in connection with the Bhainsa communal riots and registered cases against them under PD Act and non-bailable cases. Mohan Rao Patel criticized the state government for its vote bank politics.



Kalvakuntla Kavitha

which are useful for students in preparing for various competitive examinations.

The meeting marked Dr. Chandrasekhar Goud becoming the new chairman of libraries department. Kavitha expressed confidence that with this, a new model library system, including an e-Library, will be established at various district headquarters at a cost of ₹50 crore.

Stressing the need for establishment of new BC, SC and ST study circles in the district, the MLC asserted that the state government is committed to development of BC community in the state. In this regard, she said political equations are going to change in the days to come.

People will witness some interesting politics ahead. But whatever changes occur, they will be for the benefit of TRS party, she stated.

Welfare minister Koppula Eshwar and MLAs Dr Sanjay Kumar and Sunke Ravi Shankar were among those present on the occasion.

There are libraries present in 15 mandals of Jagtial district. With establishment of three more libraries in remaining mandals, the district will have libraries in all its mandals.

AIMIM distributes four
oxygen concentrators

**DC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, JUNE 15**

In part of the call given by the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimin (AIMIM) party chief, Asaduddin Owaisi, several social service activities are taken up to help the poor families who are facing problems in the lockdown period and to the poor Covid patients, said the district unit president, Gulam Ahmed Hussain.

The leaders of the district unit AIMIM party distributed four oxygen concentrators to the family members of Covid patients donated by the district unit president Gulam Ahmed Hussain in a programme held in the party office at Darussalam in Karimnagar on Tuesday.

Speaking on the occasion, Ahmed Hussain said that the AIMIM party is taking up several pro-



AIMIM district president Gulam Ahmed Hussain distributes the O2 concentrators to the Covid patients in Karimnagar on Tuesday.

—BY ARRANGEMENT

grammes to help the poor Covid patients. In part of it and with the directions received from the party chief Asaduddin Owaisi, four oxygen concentrators machines were donated to the family members of Covid patients.

If the family members of the poor Covid patients approach with their medical report and identity

cards either to the party office or to the respective division corporators, the AIMIM party is ready to provide necessary help to them, he informed.

Ahmed Hussain appealed to the people to follow precautionary steps strictly to protect themselves from being infected with the deadly Coronavirus.

BHEEMGAL MUNICIPALITY WILL BE
GREENERY HUB SOON: MINISTER

**DC CORRESPONDENT
NIZAMABAD, JUNE 15**

Special plan will be implemented to make Bheemgal municipality as a greenery hub soon. Municipal, forest and other department officials will take up initiative in this regard. In addition, an urban park will come in this newly set up municipality.

Reviewing the ongoing civic works in Bheemgal municipality on Tuesday, minister for roads and buildings, legislative affairs and housing V. Prashanth Reddy directed officials to speed up the works.

He said that civic works worth ₹19 crore were

Efforts are on to set up
agro hub in Khammam

**RAVINDRA SESHU | DC
KHAMMAM, JUNE 15**

Efforts are on to make full use of the increase in farm production in Khammam district by setting up food processing units here. The district is a hub for paddy, chilli and cotton production apart from having palm oil groves.

The civil supplies, marketing and agricultural officials are having difficulty to find a space for the paddy, chilli and cotton storage in kharif and rabi. There are many rice and parboiled rice mills in the district.

The government used to lift 5.5 lakh quintals of paddy every year apart from another two lakh quintals by private agencies. This is 1.5 lakh quintals more compared to the yield four years back.

About 60 mega rice mills and 20 para-boil rice mills are required to address

the demand, apart from the existing one. There exist 125 rice mills and eight para-boil rice mills in Khammam and Bhadradi districts.

The capacity of these mills is below 80 tonnes. The husk coming from the mills can be used in biomass power units. Such a unit can be set up near to the food processing unit.

The farmers used to produce 6.2 lakh quintals of chilli every year and there is no unit in the district basing itself on chilli. There is massive demand for chilli powder and oil in the country and abroad. The Khammam brand products can sell in national and international markets if agro-based units are set up.

Likewise, there is heavy demand for palm oil. Farmers are raising the crop on 60,000 acres in the two districts and the production target is 1.5 lakh acre by 2024.

There are two palm oil units in Bhadradi district and another unit is proposed for Khammam district.

Keeping all these advantages in view, the government is searching for land in Khammam district to an extent of 250 acres.

Additional collector Madhusudan said officials inspected various lands in Raghunathapalem mandal for the agro-processing units. Khammam district rice-millers association president Bomma Rajeswara Rao said the setting up an agro-based hub in Khammam is a good proposal.

"The government should consider making use of the full capacity of farm produce. It should keep in mind the setting up of godowns within the unit. Not only chilli powder, chilli oil can also be produced in the agro-hub."

Drain works begin



Karimnagar Municipal Mayor Y. Sunil Rao along with corporator A. Saritha launching drain works in 25th division in Karimnagar on Tuesday.

—DC

COVID TESTS
CROSS 4L MARK
IN NIZAMABAD

Nizamabad: Covid-19 tests number has crossed four lakh mark in Nizamabad district. Medical and health department officials conducted 4,02,686 tests so far since March 2020. Rapid antigen tests 3,92,702 and RTPCR tests 9,984 were conducted across the district in rural and urban areas.

Covid-19 positive cases number reached 36,222 on Tuesday. The officials conducted tests for 2,578 persons on Tuesday, in which only 23 persons tested positive for coronavirus. During the first and second wave of Covid-19, the district medical and health officials conducted intensified tests in 42 centres in Nizamabad district.

Interestingly, of 4,02,686 tests only 36,222 (8.99 percent) persons tested positive for Covid-19 in first and second waves. The death toll is not officially declared in the district.

COVID VACCINATION DRIVE IN FULL
SWING IN KHAMMAM, SAYS AJAY

Khammam: Minister for Transport Puvvada Ajay Kumar said that the officials have administered Covid-19 vaccination to 25,000 super-spreaders in Khammam town itself so far. He said that vaccination programme is in full swing at the district and the people of other categories are also being vaccinated.

"The officials are conducting vaccination with what-

ever the vaccines the officials receive every day", he said, adding that the people should make use of the programme and keep themselves away to get contracted by covid. He said that the government will be constructing a complex cost of ₹37 lakh for the street-vendors in Khammam town. He laid foundation stone to such a complex in ninth division in Khammam.

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SHORT TAKES

ODISHA SEES A DIP IN CASES, DAILY TOLL AROUND 40

AKSHAYA KUMAR
SAHOO | DC
BHUBANESWAR, JUNE 15

The daily cases of Covid-19 dipped further on Tuesday as the state witnessed 3,405 new cases, 934 less than Monday's figure. With this, the positive tally in the state climbed to 8,59,526.

However, despite the fall in the new cases, the fatalities due to Covid continue to surge in the state. At least 42 patients undergoing treatment for Covid have succumbed to the disease in the last 24 hours taking the death toll to 3,388.

Khurda district with 500 fresh infections in the last 24 hours has the maximum cases among all districts followed by Jajpur (391), Balasore (296), Cuttack (230), Mayurbhanj (187), Angul (183), Bhadrak (179), Puri (141) and Jagat-singhpur (129).

The active cases in the state now stood at 51,104 while 8,04,981 patients have recovered from the disease, state health department said. The state has so far tested a total of 1,27,20,932 samples including 68,535 on Monday. The overall epidemic situation analysis by the state health department brings two contrasting facts. While Kendrapara becomes the only district to post a rise in positive rate in the week ended on June 14, Jharsuguda cuts the test positive rate to around 2 per cent from 12 per cent a week ago.

FAMILY ALLEGES HOSP. NEGLIGENCE, ATTACKS STAFF

PRANMOY
BRAHMACHARI | DC
BERHAMPORE, JUNE 15

Family members of a Covid patient went on rampage at a private hospital in Murshidabad of West Bengal and beat three of its staff following death of the patient on Monday night due to alleged medical negligence even after a payment of ₹10 lakh for her treatment.

The deceased, Santana Mondal (36), was from Bharatpur in Berhampore. She died of suffocation, according to her family members who later erupted in protests and attacked the hospital staff.

Mondal's elder sister Rani claimed, "My sister was admitted at the hospital 28 days ago after she tested positive. She was suffering from suffocation and was on the ventilator. But we came to know that the ventilator was useless which pushed her to death." She added that though ₹10 lakh was paid to the hospital on demand for her sister's treatment, oxygen was not given to the patient.

Hospital official, however, denied the allegations. He said, "The patient died despite our best efforts to save her. But her kin turned violent. Instead of paying heed to us, they ransacked the hospital furniture and assaulted our staff when they tried to resist them."

IB STARTS DRIVE TO CURB ONLINE FRAUD

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 15

With a sharp increase in usage of online medium for financial and business transactions following outbreak of Coronavirus, the Cyber Unit of the Intelligence Bureau has started a drive along with Cyber Cell of various state police to further strengthen their mechanism to check online frauds.

Sources said since the country went into lockdown in March last year following Covid-19, there has been on an average a 20 to 30 per cent increase in cases of financial cyber crime across the country.

As a large number of people are still avoiding going to banks or other financial institutions there has been a sharp increase in usage of online banking and the financial transactions. This is in addition to increase in online shopping of essential commodities and other stuff also as most states have been imposing some form of lockdown since last March.

Taking advantage of this "cyber criminals" have been using different modus operandi to cheat users of their money. For instance messages are being sent on WhatsApp and SMS to update this vaccination status or KYC or apply for loan. Once a users clicks on the links the entire data from a smart phone or computer gets transferred to the unknown servers of these cyber criminals.



A beneficiary receives a dose of Covid-19 vaccine during a vaccination camp for students and citizens at a polyclinic in Gurugram on Tuesday.

India confirms 1st death following vaccination

Docs warn of worse crisis than 2nd wave if norms not followed

VINEETA PANDEY | DC
with agencies input
NEW DELHI, JUNE 15

A government panel studying Covid-19 vaccine side effects has confirmed the first death due to anaphylaxis following vaccination.

The causality assessment of 31 reported Serious Adverse Events Following Immunisation (AEFI) cases following Covid-19 vaccination was carried out by the panel.

"It is the first death linked to Covid vaccination due to anaphylaxis. It re-emphasises the need to wait for 30 minutes after receiving jab. Most of the anaphylactic reactions occur during this period. Timely treatment can prevent deaths," said Dr N.K. Arora, Chairman, of Covid working group.

The Union health ministry in a statement said any death or hospitalisation cannot be automatically assumed to be due to vaccination though states have been directed to make causality assessments to understand whether the "Adverse Event Following Immunisation" was caused directly due to vaccine.

"The number of deaths reported following Covid-19 vaccination in the country is only 0.0002% of 23.5 crore doses administered which is within the expected death rates in a population...It is also important to note that the mortality rates for those testing positive for Covid-19 disease is more than 1% and Covid-19 vaccination can prevent these deaths. Therefore, the risk of dying following vaccination is negligible as compared to the known risk of dying due to Covid-19 disease," the ministry said.

Meanwhile, India recorded 60,471 daily new



A beneficiary shows the money that she received as Covid relief provided by the state government in Kanyakumari district on Tuesday.

Mumbai's Dharavi, for the second consecutive day, did not report a single case of Covid. The area has since January 2021 reported 6,861 cases and 359 deaths and has at present 13 active cases. The cases were much less in Mumbai too with 575 new detections. Delhi that too has seen a major dip on Tuesday recorded 228 new cases.

However, a major challenge for these cities that are now opening up is to control the next wave which looks inevitable given the crowd that s out on roads and number of people seen defying social distancing and masks norms. The latest to ease up curbs is Bihar from June 16 to 22 during which government and private offices will function till 5 pm, and shops will remain open till 6 pm. Night curfew will be in place from 8 pm to 5 am. Uttar Pradesh has reduced night curfew timings by two hours from next week while allowing restaurants and malls to function at 50 % capacity.

Doctors have warned that a situation 'worse than the second wave' may erupt if people do not adhere to safety norms and lower their guards. The remarks from many doctors have come after visuals of various crowded markets surfaced.

Dr Suranjit Chatterjee, a senior consultant at Delhi's Apollo Hospitals warned that if safety norms are not followed by people and if there is no strict enforcement in case of violations, then "we are in for a trouble again". He said if people show laxity then possibly the next wave could be worse than the second wave situation.

Dr Richa Sareen, consultant of pulmonology at Fortis hospital said, "The threat of the third wave hitting is quite real and not a hypothesis. We hoped that people will learn lessons from the second wave, but seems we are not being wise as common people. Situation will be worse than during the second wave if we do not wise up."

The Centre is hoping that with more vaccines available now, the pace of vaccination should pick up from next week. Till now less than 4% Indians have been fully vaccinated. Dr V.K. Paul said trial results of new vaccines Novavax are encouraging, and the vaccine is safe and efficacious.

Drwividy of Mundla panchayat said. Almost the entire population of Fatehpur Dabra panchayat in Bhopal district has turned away the mobile vaccine teams following rumours that the vaccine causes serious illness. The panchayat has around 5,000 inhabitants.

The local administration has taken the help of the local Muslim cleric to ensure vaccination of his community. Accordingly, the local cleric Abdul Kalam Qasmi issued a fatwa asking people of his community to

in future". Naresh Kushwaha (69) of Ratibad, nearly 35 km from here told this newspaper on Tuesday.

The four panchayats have a population of around 20,000.

Of them, hardly 4,000 people have so far received at least the first dose of vaccine.

According to Kushwaha, rumours on the negative impact of the vaccine have turned many villagers away from vaccines.

"We had held no less than half a dozen meetings of villagers to convince them to get vaccinated. But, they started arguing against vaccination forcing us to take the tough decision to keep them away from the social and religious functions in the interest of safety of other villagers", Nandan

ASSAM SCHOOLS TO CONTINUE TO REMAIN SHUT

MANOJ ANAND | DC
GUWAHATI, JUNE 15

Despite the failure of the state education department in facilitating online education to the students enrolled in government schools for various reasons during the first Covid lockdown in 2020, the Assam government on Tuesday decided to extend the closure of schools further after preponed summer vacation and directed the authorities to conduct online classes for students.

In an official order issued on Monday evening the principal secretary of the secondary education department B. Kalyan Chakravarty directed officials of district administrations to arrange for online classes so that there is continuity in students' learning process. The summer vacation, which was postponed due to Covid lockdown, ended on June 14.

He asked directors of secondary and elementary education, all inspectors of schools, other officials of the department and heads of government and private educational institutes to take steps to conduct online classes until further orders or till the reopening of these institutes.

The order which was issued on Monday came into force with immediate effect.

The government had advanced the one-month summer vacation in schools from May 15 amid a raging second wave of Covid-19.

get vaccinated in the interest of their health. In fact, local sub-divisional magistrate (SDM) Jameel Khan had approached the cleric seeking his help for vaccination of people of his community, leading the latter to issue the fatwa.

Similar tactics being employed by leaders of societies in other villages in the districts of Indore, Chhatarpur, Tikamgarh, Damoh, Alirajpur, Dhar, Betul, Raisen, and Chhindwara have started paying dividends, official reports reaching state health department here said.

Besides the initiatives by the locals, intervention by the state government has helped remove vaccine hesitancy in many villages in the state, a senior health department officer

said. "We have developed a mechanism to tackle vaccine hesitancy among some people in the rural pockets of the state. We have prepared modules of rumours making rounds and how to act on them", state vaccine coordinator

Dr Santosh Shukla told this newspaper. The crisis management committees constituted at the village level have been effectively dealing with the challenge, he added.

Besides, the state government has launched 'Yuva Shakti Corona Mukti' campaign to generate awareness among the people on vaccination.

"We are going to deploy 16 lakh college students in the state after imparting them training to give a big push to the vaccination", Dr Shukla said.

Galwan 2020: The night that changed the neighbourhood

PROBAL DAS GUPTA

A year has passed since Colonel Santhosh Babu and his band of gallant men from 16 Bihar Regiment laid down their lives in the Galwan clash against the PLA, the Chinese army. The fateful night, a year ago, which claimed their lives will not go down in history as yet another night of betrayal by a bete noire whose characteristic reliance on deceit and denial is well known.

Instead, on this occasion, Col Babu's bravehearts decided to not let the enemy's surprise moves stun them. They acted fearlessly and inflicted upon an armed enemy a number of casualties they had never expected. These brave soldiers set into motion the template of India's actions to follow in Ladakh against an enemy that had broken a soldier's code of conduct. The Indian Army redoubled the aggression and vigil against China along the LAC.

Through their brave actions, they exposed Chinese doublespeak about honour and patriotism. PLA soldiers who died in Galwan clash were never recognised by China or given honour by their country, as the fallen Indian soldiers received. Col. Babu, in his death, showed that a courageous leader on ground can expose the machinations of a powerful nation known for its doublespeak.

The fateful incident was followed by action in August when the Indian Army outpaced the Chinese to dominate heights of Kailash ranges in eastern Ladakh and put China at a disadvantage.

On a strategic level, two countries slid down a path farther away from normalcy. The PLA increased its presence along the LAC and reinforced a robust rear infrastructure to support the forward troops. India too ramped up troop deployment and infrastructure on high priority. Galwan began a clamour for India to widen its sphere of rivalry with China and take advantage of the oceans.

It opened up Chinese insecurity about India's advantage in the region, especially the Indian Ocean region. Thus, China rebooted its influence in Sri Lanka, Nepal and Myanmar. India finally shed its inhibitions about expressing closeness to the US and finally threw its lot with the QUAD club.

American interests had traditionally aroused suspicion in India, but in 2020, China made sure it was a choice thrust upon India in the face of medieval hostilities and unconcealed belligerence. Indians are sometimes misled by history to often quote that this Indian Army is no longer the Army of 1962. Such an analogy is misplaced and ludicrous.

History has had two battles and standoffs between India and China since 1962. Those were in 1967 and 1987: India triumphed over China both times,

Sonia asks govt to come clean on Galwan incident

New Delhi, June 15: Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Tuesday asked the government to come clean on the Galwan Valley incident in which 20 Indian soldiers lost their lives a year ago and sought to know the progress made in restoring status quo ante at the border.

In a statement, she said no clarity is yet available on the Chinese transgressions at the border, which Prime Minister Narendra Modi has denied.

Gandhi said the Congress has patiently waited for the government to come clean and inform the nation about the circumstances in which the unprecedented incident happened and reassure the people that the sacrifice of our brave jawans was not in vain.

"The Congress party reiterates its concern that no clarity is yet available and the prime minister's last word on the subject a year ago was that no transgression had occurred," she said.

"We have repeatedly sought details of the episode in light of the PM's statement, as well as details of what progress

has been made towards restoring the status quo ante prior to April 2020," she also said.

The Congress chief said that the disengagement agreement with China "appears to have worked entirely to India's disadvantage so far".

"The Congress party urges the government to take the nation into confidence and ensure that their performance is worthy of the commitment of our soldiers who are standing bravely and resolutely at the borders," she said in her statement.

Gandhi also said, "As we approach the first anniversary of the tragic loss of 20 brave soldiers of the Bihar Regiment, including their commanding officer, in the confrontation with PLA troops of China on the night of June 15-16, 2020, the Congress party joins a grateful nation in remembrance of their supreme sacrifice."

The 20 Indian soldiers lost their lives in clashes with PLA troops at the India-China border in the Galwan Valley in eastern Ladakh on the intervening night of June 15 and 16, 2020.



Maj Gen Akash Kaushik, Officiating GOC Fire and Fury Corps laid a wreath at Leh War Memorial and paid homage to martyrs who laid down their lives at Galwan on June 15, 2020.

I FEEL PROUD OF MY HUSBAND: PALANI'S WIFE

Chennai, June 15: A year after the Galwan skirmish, Vanathi Devi, widow of Havildar K. Palani, still remembers her beloved was not able to keep his promise of returning home but his final moments and heroic sacrifice in the fight with Chinese troops makes her feel proud of him.

Not only his sacrifice in the mountainous Galwan Valley, but also those of others besides the lives of soldiers guarding the frontiers in high altitude region speak volumes of the untold sacrifices of the country's army men, she said. "Even after a year, my life continues to be gloomy due to his demise."

The columnist is the author of 'Watershed 1967: India's Forgotten Victory Over China, who retired as a Major in the Indian Army and is a visiting faculty at Columbia University

VACCINE | HESITANCY

Local initiatives, intervention by state govt help create awareness among people on vaccine

In MP villages, social boycott, fatwa counter 'jab fears'

RABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, JUNE 15

Elders and religious leaders have joined the campaign to overcome vaccine hesitancy particularly among the rural population in Madhya Pradesh by issuing social boycott calls and fatwas.

Village elders in four panchayats, Ratibad, Sarvor, Sikandarabad and Mundla, in Bhopal districts met in Khekra village, nearly 35 km from here last week to find a way to remove vaccine hesitancy among the locals.

"We have decided to deny the people who refuse to get vaccinated to participate in any social and religious functions in our villages since they have the potential to turn spreaders

in future". Naresh Kushwaha (69) of Ratibad, nearly 35 km from here told this newspaper on Tuesday.

The four panchayats have a population of around 20,000.

Of them, hardly 4,000 people have so far received at least the first dose of vaccine.

According to Kushwaha, rumours on the negative impact of the vaccine have turned many villagers away from vaccines.

"We had held no less than half a dozen meetings of villagers to convince them to get vaccinated. But, they started arguing against vaccination forcing us to take the tough decision to keep them away from the social and religious functions in the interest of safety of other villagers", Nandan

● **BESIDES, THE** govt has launched 'Yuva Shakti Corona Mukti' drive to help generate awareness among the people on vaccination in the state.

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Almost the entire population of Fatehpur Dabra panchayat in Bhopal district has turned away the mobile vaccine teams following rumours that the vaccine causes serious illness. The panchayat has around 5,000 inhabitants.

The local administration has taken the help of the local Muslim cleric to ensure vaccination of his community.

Accordingly, the local cleric Abdul Kalam Qasmi issued a fatwa asking people of his community to

KERALA ALL SET TO LIFT LOCKDOWN RESTRICTIONS FROM THURSDAY

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC
with agency inputs
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
JUNE 15

The Kerala government on Tuesday decided to lift lockdown restrictions in the state from Thursday.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan while addressing his daily news conference said the restrictions would be lifted in a planned manner. However, curbs would continue in areas which still have high number of cases and increased test positivity rates.

The following factors led to the decision to relax lockdown restrictions — on May 15 the active cases in Kerala were 4,45,333. As

on Tuesday the number stood at 1,12,361. Test positivity rate on May 15 was 27.8 per cent and on Tuesday it was below 15 per cent.

Meanwhile, the Jharkhand government on Tuesday extended Covid-related lockdown-like restrictions till June 24 with some relaxations, including opening of shopping malls and departmental stores till 4 pm, an official said.

Inter-state and Intra-state bus transport shall remain prohibited except for the buses specifically used by the district administration till June 24 morning, the state government said.

SHORT TAKES

4 DEAD, 4 HURT IN CHICAGO SHOOTING: COPS

Chicago, June 15: An argument in a house on Chicago's South Side early Tuesday erupted into gunfire, leaving four women dead and four other people injured, police said.

The shooting happened at 5:42 a.m. in the city's Englewood neighbourhood, police said, and no arrests were immediately made. Police had few details about the victims, but it appeared that none of them were juveniles. Detectives were still trying to determine if there was more than one gunman and that they were still trying to find witnesses, police spokesman Tom Ahern said. A young child was removed safely from the house and placed in protective custody, he said.

FIVE KILLED AS AFGHAN POLIO TEAMS ATTACKED

Kabul, June 15: Gunmen on Tuesday targeted an anti-polio drive in eastern Afghanistan, killing at least five members of two vaccination teams in separate attacks, officials said. No militant group immediately claimed responsibility for the attacks that took place in the city of Jalalabad, as well as in the nearby districts of Khogyani and Surkhrod, according to Attaullah Khogyani, spokesman for the governor in Nangarhar province. Jalalabad is the provincial capital.

Along with the five killed, at least four members of the polio vaccination teams were wounded, said Dr. Jan Mohammad, who coordinates the anti-polio drive for the country's east.

Khogyani added that two of the wounded were in critical condition.

FIRE HYDRANT PLANT WORKER KILLS TWO, SELF

Albertville, June 15: A worker who killed two people and wounded two more at an Alabama fire hydrant plant early Tuesday has been found dead, apparently after killing himself in a car, a police chief said. "The person was deceased from what appears to be a self-inflicted gunshot wound," Police Chief Jamie Smith told Al.com. The gunfire — among the latest in a spate of shootings across the U.S. — broke out about 2:30 a.m. at a Mueller Co. plant in Albertville, Smith told reporters.

The gunman then got in a vehicle and left the factory. His body was found hours later inside a car in Guntersville, about 15 miles (24 kilometres) away, Smith said. Smith says it wasn't immediately clear what prompted the shooting.

SECOND ARREST MADE IN DEADLY AUSTIN SHOOTING

Austin (US), June 15: Police made a second arrest in a weekend shooting that killed a man and left more than a dozen more people wounded after gunfire rang out on in a busy, downtown Austin entertainment district.

Officers arrested a 17-year-old boy at Harker Heights High School in Harker Heights on Monday, according to statements from Austin police and the Killen Independent School District. He is facing a charge of aggravated assault.

Austin police are working closely with the Killen Independent School District and its police department in the investigation.

A spokesman for Killen school police confirmed the arrest of the 17-year-old and referred further questions to the school.

SUICIDE BOMBER KILLS AT LEAST 15 IN SOMALIA

Mogadishu, June 15: Police in Somalia say at least 15 people were killed and more than 20 others wounded when a suicide bomber attacked a military training centre in the capital, Mogadishu, on Tuesday.

Police spokesman Sadiq Ali Aden said that the bomber, wearing an explosives-packed vest, impersonated a trainee to enter the camp in the city's Medina District.

The al-Qaida-linked al-Shabab extremist group claimed responsibility.

The training centre is used by the Somali National Army for new recruits. All of the dead and wounded were rushed to the Medina hospital, where health officials said at least 14 were seriously wounded.

Hundreds of people gathered at the hospital to check whether loved ones were among the victims.

Lancet study says Pfizer, AZ vaccines protect against Delta

Researchers say 2 doses offer better shield against the strain than one dose

London, June 15: The Delta variant of Coronavirus, first identified in India, doubles the risk of hospitalisation compared with the Alpha variant first found in the UK, but Pfizer and AstraZeneca vaccines provide good protection against the strain, says a study published in The Lancet journal.

Researchers at Public Health Scotland and the University of Edinburgh, UK, found that the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine offered better protection against the Delta variant compared to the Oxford-AstraZeneca preventive, known as Covishield in India.

The analysis covered the period from April 1 to June 6, 2021, for the demographic distribution of cases. The team analysed 19,543 confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infections over the period of interest, of whom 377 were admitted to hospital for Covid-19 in Scotland.

Around 7,723 community cases and 134 hospitalisations were found to have the Delta variant of Coronavirus. The study found that the Pfizer vaccine offered 92 per cent protection against the Alpha variant and 79 per cent against the Delta strain two weeks after the second dose.

For AstraZeneca's vaccine, there was 60 per cent protection against Delta compared with 73 per cent for Alpha variant, the researchers said.

They also found that two doses of vaccine provide much better protection against the Delta variant compared to a single dose.

"Risk of Covid-19 hospital admission was approximately doubled in those with the Delta variant of concern (VOC) when compared to the Alpha VOC, with risk of admission particularly increased in those with five or more relevant comorbidities," the authors of the study noted. "Both the Oxford-Ast-



Nearly 11,000 graduates, including more than 2,000 students who could not attend the graduation ceremony last year due to the Covid-19 outbreak, attend a graduation ceremony at Central China Normal University in Wuhan, in China's central Hubei province.

California reopens, bids adieu to most Covid curbs

San Francisco, June 15: California, the first state in America to put in place a Coronavirus lockdown, is now turning a page on the pandemic.

At the stroke of midnight, California is lifting most of its Covid-19 restrictions and ushering in what has been billed as the state's "Grand Reopening". Starting Tuesday, there will be no more state

rules on social distancing, and no more limits on capacity at restaurants, bars, supermarkets, gyms, stadiums or anywhere else. And masks — one of the most symbolic and fraught symbols of the pandemic — will no longer be mandated for vaccinated people in most settings, though businesses and counties can still require them.

Just in time for summer, California wants to send the message that life in the Golden State is getting much closer to normal. The economy is fully reopening for the first time in 15 months and people can largely return to pre-pandemic lifestyles. Fans can cheer mask-less at Dodgers and Giants games. Disneyland is throwing its doors open. — AP

IN OMAN, FATAL FUNGAL INFECTION IN SOME PATIENTS

Dubai, June 15: Oman announced on Tuesday that its doctors have detected a potentially fatal fungal infection afflicting some Coronavirus patients, the first such known cases on the Arabian Peninsula as the sultanate faces a surge in Covid-19 infections that has swamped its hospitals.

The country's Health Ministry reported that three Covid-19 patients in Oman have become infected with mucormycosis, a life-threatening condition commonly known as "black fungus", which has spread quickly among virus patients in hard-hit India. Although relatively rare, the disease has raised alarm. — AP

China gas blast toll rises to 25 Beijing says no radiation after N-power plant leak

Beijing, June 15: The death toll from a powerful gas explosion in central China's Hubei province has more than doubled to 25, according to the local authorities. The explosion ripped through a residential neighbourhood in Zhangwan district of Shiyang city on Sunday, killing at least 12 people and trapping a large number of people under the rubble of their homes.

The blast rocked a two-storey trade market building in a residential community. China's state-run Xinhua news agency reported on late Monday night that the death toll has risen to 25. Rescue and debris cleaning are still underway, the information office of the provincial government of Hubei told the media. A team has been set up to investigate the blast, and Hubei will launch a province-wide blanket inspection to root out potential work safety hazards, said Shi Zheng, the head of the provincial emergency management department.

The Chinese government has ordered an inspection of all commercial and domestic gas pipelines. Chinese President Xi Jinping had called for a thorough probe into the cause of the blast and ordered to

rescue the injured. "In light of numerous accidents at companies and on campuses, all must work together to shoulder their responsibilities, strengthen their political comprehension and root out the

causes of such hazards," Xi had said.

Gas explosions occur in various parts of China every year. The worst being the 2015 explosions in Tianjin port in which 173 people were killed and hundreds injured. Sunday's explosion came a day after eight people died and three were injured when toxic methyl formate leaked from a vehicle at a chemical handling facility in Guiyang. — PTI

LAM CONCERNED ABOUT CHINESE NUCLEAR PLANT

Hong Kong, June 15: Hong Kong's leader said Tuesday that her government is "highly concerned" about the situation at a nearby nuclear power plant in mainland China, following media reports that the plant could be experiencing a leak.

Still, data from the Hong Kong Observatory and other departments showed that as of Monday night the radiation levels in the city were normal, leader Carrie Lam said.

— AP

Sedition charge against Suu Kyi on day 2 of trial

Bangkok, June 15: The trial of Myanmar's deposed leader Aung San Suu Kyi entered its second day Tuesday, with the prosecution presenting arguments that she incited public disorder and flouted Coronavirus restrictions, part of a package of charges the ruling junta is seen as using to discredit her and consolidate its control. Suu Kyi and other members of her government and party were arrested by the military after the February 1 coup, with criminal charges brought against some of the top figures on litany of charges that both their supporters and independent observers say are bogus.

The coup reversed years democratic reforms in Myanmar after decades of military rule and sparked widespread protests and international condemnation. Suu Kyi and her National League for Democracy party had been due to start a second five-year term of office after winning a landslide victory in a general election last November. Suu Kyi has not been seen in public since her arrest and her lawyers say they don't know exactly where she is currently being held.



Aung San Suu Kyi

She has also had only limited time to consult with her legal team. Tuesday's session was to cover a sedition charge brought against Suu Kyi, along with a second count of violating Covid-19 restrictions. The sedition charge, which is sometimes described as incitement, calls for up to two years' imprisonment for anyone found guilty of causing fear or alarm that could cause an offence against the state or public tranquility. The offence has been law since Myanmar was a British colony, and has been criticised as a catch-all statute that infringes on freedom of speech and is used for political repression. The trial, which is closed to the public and media, opened Monday in the capital Naypyitaw, with police outlining several of the cases against her. — AP

Taiwan reports China incursion

Taipei, June 15: Taiwan said a record 28 Chinese military aircraft including fighter jets and nuclear capable bombers flew into its defence zone on Tuesday, as Beijing hit out at international criticism of its military posturing. The incursion came a day after Nato said China's increasingly aggressive military goals threatened international order — and after G7 leaders issued a landmark statement urging peace in the Taiwan Strait.

Taiwan's defence ministry said it scrambled its own aircraft to broadcast warnings and deployed missile batteries to track the Chinese jets after they entered the island's southwest Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ).

The flights occurred the same day Beijing accused Nato of exaggerating the threat from China and "creating confrontation" after a vow from the

Western allies to work together to counter the "systemic challenges" posed by its policies.

Nato leaders made the commitment on Monday, as US President Joe Biden renewed Washington's trans-Atlantic ties at his first summit with the allies. In a broad statement of intent, the leaders said China's increasingly assertive actions in building a nuclear arsenal and space and cyber warfare capabilities threatened the international order.

Democratic and self-ruled Taiwan lives under the constant threat of invasion by China, which has vowed to one day seize the island, by force if needed.

The two sides are separated by the narrow Taiwan Strait and some Chinese jets had crossed over the de facto border or so-called "median line" of the strait in previous incursions. — AFP

Canadian faces terror charge

Ottawa, June 15: Canada is pressing terrorism charges against a man accused of mowing down a Muslim family with a pickup truck, killing four, prosecutors said Monday.

Five members of the Afzaal family were out for a walk in London, Ontario — around 125 miles (200 kilometres) southwest of Toronto — on June 6, when a truck driver struck them on purpose, according to authorities.

Salman Afzaal, 46, his wife Madiha, 44, their daughter Yumna, 15, and Salman's mother Talat, 74, were all killed. The couple's nine-year-old son Fayed survived, but was seriously injured.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau previously said the killings were "a terrorist attack, motivated by hatred." Prosecutors revealed in a brief hearing Monday that they were adding terrorism charges to the four counts of premeditated murder and one of attempted murder levelled last week against 20-year-old Nathaniel Veltman. "The federal and provincial attorneys general provided their consent to commence terrorism proceedings, alleging that the murders and the attempted murder also constitute terrorist activity," the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) said. — AFP

PAST | DISPUTE Counter China's non-market practices, says US Trade Representative Tai

Biden eases EU trade friction ahead of Putin meet

Brussels, June 15: President Joe Biden on Tuesday moved to end a long-running dispute with the European Union over subsidies for aircraft manufacturers, a major breakthrough in the US-EU trade relationship that comes on the eve of his highly anticipated meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The announcement that the two sides reached resolution in a 17-year dispute over how much of a government subsidy each can

provide for its aircraft manufacturing giant — Boeing in the United States and Airbus in the EU — came as Biden met with European Council President Charles Michel and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen.

With the move, Biden eases a major point of tension in the trans-Atlantic relationship at a moment he's seeking to marshal widespread European support for his efforts to counter Russia prior to his

Wednesday meeting in Geneva with Putin.

US Trade Representative Katherine Tai said that the agreement calls for a five-year suspension of the aircraft tariffs, and stressed that it was time to put aside the fight and focus on China's economic assertiveness.

"Today's announcement resolves a longstanding trade irritant in the US-Europe relationship. Instead of fighting with one of our closest allies, we are finally coming together

against a common threat," Tai said.

"We agreed to work together to challenge and counter China's non-market practices in this sector in specific ways that reflect our standards for fair competition."

She added that the tariffs could be reimplemented if the US determines US companies are not able to "compete fairly" with the EU's. The tariffs had been temporarily suspended on March 11 for four months, and the new agreement

will officially go into effect on July 11.

To be certain, the US-EU relationship faces other trade-related friction. The continent's leaders are becoming impatient that Biden has not yet addressed Donald Trump's 2018 decision to impose import taxes on foreign steel and aluminum. Even without resolving all trade disputes, White House officials expressed confidence that they can build more goodwill with Europe ahead of the face-to-face

meeting with Putin. The White House on Tuesday announced the creation of a joint US-EU trade and technology council.

The council will work on coordinating standards for artificial intelligence, quantum computing and biotechnologies, as well as coordinating efforts on bolstering supply chain resilience. Biden is appointing Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo and Tai to co-chair the US side of the effort. — AP

DECCAN Chronicle

16 JUNE 2021

G-7 endorses US plans to target China, Russia

The G-7 summit, the gathering of the leaders of the seven richest capitalist economies (the US, UK, Canada, Japan, France, Germany, Italy), in Cornwall (June 11-13) might have passed as another deliberative exercise to smoothen the pathways of the international market system, but it turned out to be a lot more, conceptually.

The practical aspects of the agenda of action outlined in the communiqué are for the future as it elaborates high-order political concerns. These ideas will necessarily have to be considered at the summit of the G-20 countries, the top 20 most consequential nations, which is not far away. In this group are China and Russia, which were at the receiving end in the G-7 deliberations. Fighting the pandemic, reviving the world economy, and climate change topped the agenda in Cornwall, but upholding democratic values seemed the real thing.

Leaders of the G-7 began to meet annually in the 1970s when the combined GDP of the member countries was around 80 per cent of the world GDP. The GDP of the G-7 is now only around 40 per cent of that of the world. The 47th summit due in 2020 had to be cancelled on account of the Covid pandemic, which has ravaged the international economy.

India backed the summit on free expression, and the need for democracies to take responsibility that pandemics don't strike the world again. It is the company that will matter, not the substance.

Besides, the US, the driving force in G-7, had a close shave as a political system early this year when authoritarian forces associated with former President Trump nearly overturned the American system.

These key issues, seen through the prism of US foreign policy, appeared to hold primacy in Cornwall. Besides fighting the pandemic, working to arrest greenhouse gas emissions, imposing a minimum 15 per cent tax on international companies, and modernising the rules of the world trading system, the all-too-clear focus was building of an open society and its obverse — to check the authoritarian countries. In a loose sort of way, authoritarianism seems the new Communism, and fighting it is the new mantra. In this context, China and Russia, more so the former, were flagged as posing a danger to the world.

This was President Joe Biden's first international outing and he was keen to flag that he prioritised the re-building of ties with trans-Atlantic allies, which his predecessor had junked, and announce the return of America as leader. The G-7 communiqué had paragraphs on regions, countries, and issues of particular interest to US foreign policy, not all of which may be shared with the same intensity by other member countries.

At the Nato summit, held in Brussels just a day after the G-7 meet, Russia was characterised as a "threat" to Nato, but serious concern was raised about the rapid military rise of China, whose military expenditure is now surpassed only by the US. Held in sequence, the two events seemed like a twin-act, the first underlining politics, and the second security matters.

A key takeaway from G-7 was the concept of B3W (Building Back a Better World) to build infrastructure in poor and middle income countries. A counterpoint to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), this evidently seeks to limit China's geostrategic space.

India had been invited along with Australia, South Africa and South Korea as a G-7 "guest". PM Narendra Modi attended virtually. His slogan was "One Earth, One Health". India backed the summit on free expression, and the need for democracies to take responsibility that pandemics don't strike the world again. It is the company that will matter, not the substance.

New era dawns in Israel

It is not so much a change of Prime Ministers in a country inured to being ruled amid fractious politics of a coalition of parties as a turn of a whole era with Benjamin Netanyahu, whose uninterrupted 12-year regime ended abruptly and reduced his role to that of a combative Opposition leader.

The new Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett's reign began with an immediate challenge as a nationalist march commemorating the capture of Jerusalem in 1967 was to run through the historic city on Tuesday and air defences were put on alert in case Hamas launches retributive action from Gaza in the form of incendiary balloons, if not quite the explosive rockets that had triggered an 11-day war.

The tests to come will be many for the leaders of a wildly disparate and precarious collection of eight parties, including an Islamic party representing Palestinians of Israel and secular as well as religious parties, which assumed power on Monday. The longest serving Prime Minister Netanyahu's Likud party had led coalitions over the years even as Israel transformed economically into a modern country with a security apparatus to be envied in a region filled with uncertainties, conflicts and eternal religious tensions.

While checks and balances are not new to a country that once saw Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres share power, what is unique about the new arrangement is the veto power that rests with foreign minister Yair Lapid, who will replace Mr Bennett as PM in two years if the coalition lasts long enough. Mr Netanyahu, who recently achieved startling diplomatic success in setting right ties with four more Arab countries, has vowed to bring down Mr Bennett's government.

With the change in regime, years of tension with the Democratic Party led by US President Joe Biden may, however, be a thing of the past. But what will not change is the approach to the Palestinian statehood issue because the new rulers will continue to treat Palestinians as a security threat and will aim to perpetuate control over most of the occupied West Bank. It will be fraught with interest how Iran responds to changes in Israel.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

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Subhani



India must back Dalai's choice on his successor



Claude Arpi

The issue of the Dalai Lama's succession has been in the news for quite some time, especially after the Tibetan diaspora elected Penpa Tsering as the new "Sikkyong", or president; incidentally, this election must have irritated no end Communist China that always proclaims its "superior", though undemocratic, system of governance to the world, especially on the occasion of the centenary of the Communist Party of China in July.

During an interaction with the Tibetan media, the Sikkyong, who heads the Tibetan government-in-exile based in Dharamsala, said after taking the oath on May 27 that he already had three video audiences with the Dalai Lama, who "expressed his wish to visit China and Tibet. He has this wish for a long time", Mr Tsering told Tibetan journalists.

Visiting China may not be a great idea now, but it's up to the Tibetan supreme leader and for his people to decide. The question of succession was apparently not discussed though it is vital in the present context of China becoming more authoritarian and belligerent, using every occasion to reaffirm that it's the Communist leadership who will decide the present Dalai Lama's successor.

The recently published white paper "Tibet Since 1951: Liberation, Development and Prosperity" states: "In 1793, the Qing [Manchu] government restored order in Tibet and promulgated the Imperially Approved Ordinance for Better Governance of Tibet (the 29-article ordinance) ...[which] stipulated that the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama and other grand Living Buddhas had to follow the procedure of drawing lots from the golden urn."

Though the Golden Urn procedure was rarely used thereafter, the fact is the Manchus realised the weakness in Tibet's system of governance, that is rule by reincarnation, and were quick to exploit it.

In the eighteenth century, on three occasions, Manchu troops marched into Tibet, each time at the request of the Tibetan government — once to defend Tibet against the Gurkha invasion (1792), and twice to restore civil order after internal troubles (1728 and 1751).

Each time, the special relationship, known "Choe-yon" (priest-patron), was invoked by Lhasa: the Dalai Lamas and other lamas were the gurus (or priests) while the Manchus were the "patrons", or protectors of the Buddhist state.

The instability of the rule by incarnation can be attributed to the gap between the time a Dalai Lama passes away and when his successor is old enough and able to practically assume power. The 20 crucial years in between the two have always been used by incompetent regents or the Ambans (Chinese ambassadors in Lhasa) to influence Tibetan politics.

It was even murmured that the Chinese Ambans had found the trick: during the nineteenth century, four Dalai Lamas died before reaching majority: Luntok Gyatso, ninth Dalai Lama (1805-1815); Tsultrim Gyatso, tenth Dalai Lama (1816-1837); Khedup Gyalsto, eleventh Dalai Lama (1838-1855); and Trinley Gyatso, twelfth Dalai Lama (1856-75). They never ruled.

Later, with the decline of the Manchus, there was no protector to look after the "priests", this until the thirteenth Dalai Lama assumed power and asserted Tibet's independence.

When one studies the history of modern Tibet,

one realises just how unstable what the British officials called the "minority" was; most of the time, no decision was taken by regents too cautious that they could be criticised at a later stage.

Many concrete examples can be given; it would show that it is probably the main reason why Tibet lost its independence.

After the thirteenth Dalai Lama passed away in 1933, two regents ruled over Tibet; but soon, a dispute between the Reting and Taktra Rinpoches ended in a near civil war, with the Tibetan Army supporting Taktra and bombarding Sera Monastery, Reting's alma mater. The least that could be said is that most of the regents were not up to the mark.

One solution to avoid the past situation after the present Dalai Lama's departure has been mentioned by the Tibetan leader himself in 2011, in an elaborate statement about his succession.

The Dalai Lama spoke of the origin of the custom of recognising "Emanation Bodies", or "tulkus"; and he elaborated: "The main purpose of the appearance of a reincarnation is to continue the predecessor's unfinished work to serve Dharma and beings. In the case of a lama who is an ordinary being, instead of having a reincarnation belonging to the same mind-stream, someone else with connections to that lama through pure karma and prayers, may be recognised as his or her emanation."

The Tibetan leader continued with his esoteric description: "Alternatively it is possible for the lama to appoint a successor who is either his disciple or someone young who is to be recognised as his emanation. Since these options are possible

in the case of an ordinary being, an emanation before death that is not of the same mind-stream, is feasible."

He cited great nineteenth century master Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo, who said: "Reincarnation is what happens when someone takes rebirth after the predecessor's passing away; emanation is when manifestations take place without the source's passing away."

Another problem linked to incarnations is finding a new reincarnation is a rather unscientific process which can be manipulated at will; for example, doubts have been raised about the authenticity of many "high tulkus" such as Gyaltsen Norbu, the Chinese-selected Panchen Lama, as well as other "high" lamas like Reting Rinpoche, the regent's incarnation during the Dalai Lama's minority, Samding Dorjee Pagmo, the senior-most female "tulku", Tsemoling, reincarnation of another former regent, or Phaggala Delek Namgyal, head lama of Chamdo monastery; all of whom live in Tibet today and are actively collaborating with Communist China. Are they genuine tulkus?

Viewed from a political angle, many issues would be solved if the Dalai Lama decides to go for an "emanation". First, he himself would select the next Dalai Lama and the Chinese will have no say in the process; further, it would bring a far greater stability to the political scene in exile.

Ultimately, of course, it's the Dalai Lama's choice and India, a secular republic, cannot intervene in his decision. But New Delhi must officially declare that the Indian government will stand by the Dalai Lama's decision, while he should keep in mind the Indian population on the borders with Tibet.

In the meantime, one can only wish the new Sikkyong good luck to keep the flock together in these tumultuous times.

The writer is based in South India for the past 42 years. He writes on India, China, Tibet and Indo-French relations.

LETTERS

SENSEX FOR WHO?

The Sensex has increased crossed the 52,000 mark. But the gap between the rich and the poor is increasing rapidly.

Unemployment and poverty are increasing in urban as well as rural areas. The lifetime of earnings are being forcibly spent for Covid-19 treatment as well as to make up for loss of wages due to disability and lockdowns. The government should come out with a solution for this.

M. Mohan Rao
Hyderabad

REDUCE FUEL PRICES

It is unfair on the part of the government to hike fuel prices (*City motorists seek Centre's intervention, June 15*). The government says the Covid-19 pandemic has led to a fall in revenues but continues to hike fuel prices, without considering how the common man can bear the expenses. This second wave has hit everyone badly both financially and economy, as everyone had to bear the added expenses on healthcare. Indirectly the government is taking money for their schemes for next few years.

Dr Syed Ataullah Hussaini
Secunderabad

MOB LYNCHING

Every day, mob lynching is observed in India. Why is the state government concerned ignoring it and not taking stern action against such inhuman acts? It becomes the responsibility of the Centre to save lives.

S.M. Arif Hussain
Hyderabad

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

Heavy rush for B.Com., B.Sc.

HYDERABAD, JUNE 15 There has been heavy rush for admission to the First Year of B.Com. and B.Sc. (both general) in the Osmania University constituent colleges in the City.

With the shifting of B.A., B.Sc. and B.Com. (general courses), except some rare combinations in B.A. and B.Sc., from the campus colleges to constituent colleges, the pressure of admission to the latter is likely to increase.

For 120 seats in B.Com. First Year in Nizam College and Secunderabad Arts and Science College, 1,660 applications have been received. This large number of applications make one feel that only those who secured very high marks (more than 60 per cent) stand a chance of getting selected.

Dilip Cherian
Dilli Ka Babu



EC & UP: All 3 commissioners from state; Arora yet to find a role

Senior about-to-retire babus of two BJP-ruled states are a miffed lot with the appointment of former Uttar Pradesh chief secretary Anup Chandra Pandey as the new Election Commissioner of India having been done and dusted in a surprise move. But it was clearly in the works in Delhi, long before the skirmishes between UP chief minister Yogi Adityanath and the Big Two split out into the open. Thanks to the need for surprise, even babus in his home cadre were left gasping.

Many see the appointment of Mr Pandey as the Centre's initial steps to focus on retaining Uttar Pradesh and remote central control on the coming Assembly polls.

But the incumbents will walk on eggs since the ghost of election commissioners past still lurks over Nirvachan Bhavan. This because an appropriate landing spot has not yet been found for former Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sunil Arora.

Mr Pandey has joined Sushil Chandra and Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar at the poll panel. Not surprisingly, given Mr Pandey's background questions are being raised about his appointment. Some point out the significance of the fact that all three election commissioners are from UP! Current CEC Sushil Chandra did a long stint in the state's revenue department and EC Rajiv Kumar is a former finance secretary of the state. Besides his tenure as the state chief secretary under chief minister Yogi Adityanath until 2019, Mr Pandey was also the state's industrial development commissioner.

Prepare for more babu surprises to emerge in and around UP as the polls draw near.

A TWIST IN THE AIR INDIA TALE?

The Air India disinvestment has got stuck between a rock and a hard landing! The second wave of the Covid pandemic has now delayed it

further. It is beginning to seem that the government may have been a trifle too ambitious and optimistic about closing this chapter. While there is no dearth of suitors of the beleaguered carrier, the civil aviation ministry babes have come up against a new stumbling block — the potential seizure of Air India's assets by Cairn Energy, after India lost the tax dispute case against the company in an international arbitration tribunal.

Civil aviation secretary Pradeep Singh Kharola actually now has a new headache to deal with, even as the government is still to finalize the timeline for completion of the stake sale or the valuation of the airline and its assets. Too many loose ends!

The loss to Cairn is a major blow and loss of face for the Modi sarkar. Of course, the Centre says that it will defend any attempt by Cairn to take over the airline's assets and has in fact challenged the arbitration award, but until the case is resolved and the award overturned

in India's favour, Kharola and his cohorts in the Civil Aviation Ministry cannot rest easy. In fact, as a result of this new threat, civil aviation babes are now scurrying between their ministry and the Law Ministry to deal with this legal threat. This saga may have a few more seasons left to go.

BABU CRISIS AT THE CENTRE

There is a crisis of babus in the Modi sarkar. The department of personnel and training (DoPT) secretary Deepak Khandekar has informed his multiple bosses that despite the government repeatedly requesting the states to depute more officers at the Centre nothing is moving, and nobody is willing. It has reportedly asked for more officers at the deputy secretary, director and joint secretary levels. Most states however say they are dealing with their own shortage of officers, leading to senior state officials holding several portfolios in many states. Though both Karnataka and Himachal have promised to help

recently, this to-ing and fro-ing has been going on for several months now, with the states' response to the Centre being seen as decidedly poor.

Sources say that the department of personnel and training (DoPT) has made a fresh request to the states last week stating that their lack of appropriate response to the Centre's request is creating a cadre management problem for the Centre. But sources say there is a veiled new warning in the Modi sarkar's latest missive to the states on the issue. Apparently, the letter from DoPT says that the cadres who have not sent adequate nominations for the central staffing scheme at various may find that they have to settle for fewer additional senior duty posts in the future. Will the states take note? Is this a babu pushback or due to political masters unwilling to allow their best to migrate to Delhi?

Share a babu experience! Follow [@dilipthecherian](https://twitter.com/dilipthecherian) on Twitter.

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	52773.05	0.42
Nifty 50	15869.30	0.36
S&P 500*	4,245.70	-0.22
Dollar (₹)	73.31	-0.04
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.19	0.06
Euro (₹)	88.90	-0.15
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	47,853▼303	0.63
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	73.97	1.52
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.040	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.504	0.003

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Coal India to close down 23 unviable mines

Coal India Ltd will close down 23 unviable mines, which would help it save around Rs 500 crore, officials said. The world's largest miner has shut down 82 such mines in the last four years. Those 23 mines, comprising open cast and underground ones, to be closed were identified in the last fiscal. Some 158 underground mines employ 43 per cent of the workforce but contribute only 5 per cent of the total production, they said.

74% insurance FDI under auto route notified



The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade has notified the government's decision to increase the foreign direct investment limit in the insurance sector under the automatic route to 75 per cent from 49 per cent. A press note said the decision will take effect from the date of FEMA (Foreign Exchange Management Act) notification. The Insurance (Amendment) Bill, 2021, was passed in March.

HDFC Bank mobile app was down for 1 hour

The mobile banking app of the largest private sector lender HDFC Bank, which has been under the regulatory lens for network outages, was down for an hour on Tuesday due to unspecified issues. The bank said the issues were faced for an hour late in the morning on Tuesday and the same was resolved in an hour. It urged customers to use the net banking alternative to transact in the interim.

BMW Motorrad rides in S1000R naked superbike

BMW Motorrad India launched the all-new BMW S 1000 R naked sports bike in India with price starting at Rs 17.90 lakh. BMW S1000R is a rival to the recently launched Ducati Streetfighter V4 naked sports bike. The second-generation BMW S 1000 R is being imported as a completely built-up unit (CBU). The roadster is fitted with a newly developed water cooled 4-cylinder in-line engine with a displacement of 999 cc.



■ Sharp dip in jobless rate in June 2nd week Job numbers signal economy on mend

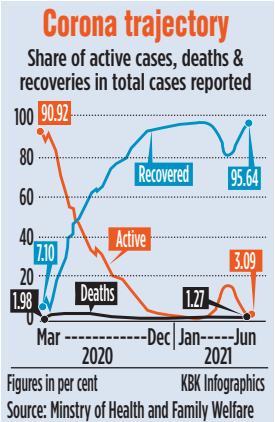
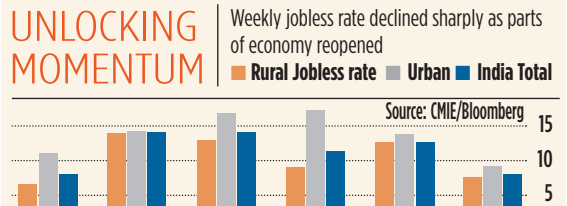
SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, JUNE 15

The unemployment rate dropped sharply last week from a week ago, in the first sign that the economy may be on the mend, as the second wave of the coronavirus outbreak subsides. While exports were already growing in May, power consumption, mobility and industrial activity have improved in June, as the unlocking process started in several states.

As per the data from the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), in the second week of June unemployment rate has eased sharply to 8.7 per cent from 13.6 per cent in the first week of June. In the week ended May 23, the jobless rate was as worse as 14.7 per cent. There was a slight improvement at 12.2 per cent in the week to May 30. The recovery is visible both in the rural and urban markets. Rural unemployment rate has eased to 8.2 per cent from 13.5 per cent. Urban jobless rate too has come down to 9.7 per cent from 17.9 per cent.

"We have just received the data. We will have to analyse the data to understand the factors that have triggered this improvement on the job front," Mahesh Vyas, founder and CEO of CMIE told *Financial Chronicle*.

In the first week of June, CMIE had expected a recovery of sorts in employment. "This relentless loss of employment



can be expected to abate somewhat in the coming weeks as many parts of the country that were under a lockdown have started announcing cautious relaxations," it had said. Most of the states, including Tamil Nadu, Delhi, Maharashtra, Kerala and Karnataka have relaxed their restrictions while getting into the unlocking process.

Monster.com has also found growth in job postings in several sectors. Around 45 per cent of the industries indicate positive month-on-month growth in May against

April in job postings, with retail, home appliances and telecom showing the highest growth, it said. Other industries that are doing well compared to the previous month include IT hardware & software, banking & financial services, insurance, office equipment & automation, healthcare, biotechnology & life sciences and pharmaceuticals.

Further, the Google Mobility report released recently too has indicated improvement in activity in Indian public places and offices, denoting more relaxation in states under lockdown.

Power consumption too had grown by 12.6 per cent in the first week of June, indicating improved industrial and manufacturing activity.

Merchandise exports grew both yearly as well as sequentially in May. Exports in May 2021 were 67 per cent higher than the low base of the lockdown-hit May 2020. The exports were also 7.93 per cent higher than May 2019. Most importantly, exports continued to grow sequentially by 6.6 per cent over April 2021.

AstraZeneca's antibody cocktail fails to prevent Covid

SUZI RING
JUNE 15

AstraZeneca Plc's antibody cocktail was found to be only 33 per cent effective at preventing Covid-19 symptoms in people who had been exposed to the virus, failing the study's main goal and dealing a setback to the drugmaker.

The study, named Storm Chaser, looked at whether the long-acting antibody combination could protect people who had recently been in contact with the Sars-CoV2 virus in places like care homes.

The outcome is a blow to Astra for a drug that was hoped to be a bright spot in the company's pandemic efforts following the mixed success of its vaccine with the University of Oxford. One of the first shots to be authorised, the vaccine has since faced issues with take-up after a link emerged with rare

blood clots. The study looked at about 1,121 unvaccinated adults in the US and UK. As many as 23 volunteers who got the drug cocktail developed symptomatic Covid-19 after exposure, compared with 17 cases in the group that got a placebo, Astra said in a statement on Tuesday.

The antibody trial is one of six advanced-stage studies Astra is running to test its drug against different endpoints. Another study called Provent, looking at whether the cocktail can prevent infection in people at high risk of catching Covid or with compromised immune systems, is also expected to readout soon. The US has ordered up to 700,000 doses of the medicine for delivery in 2021, while the UK was already reconsidering an earlier order for one million.

— *Bloomberg*

RBI BANS DHFL FROM TAKING DEPOSITS UNDER PIRAMAL FOLD

Mumbai, June 15: The Reserve Bank has revoked the deposit-taking status of Dewan Housing Finance (DHFL) and has reclassified it as a non-deposit taking housing finance company, before approving the Piramal Group's bid to take over the firm towards the end of the resolution process.

The revelation comes in the June 7 NCLT Mumbai order that has approved the Rs 35,250-crore bid for the once second largest mortgage lender by Piramal Capital & Housing Finance, forcing over 65 per cent haircut on the creditors and just Re 1 to its NCD holders to whom it owes more than Rs 45,000-crore.

On the 14th page of the 86-page NCLT order by H.P. Chaturvedi and Ravikumar Duraisamy, it says DHFL no longer is a deposit taking NBFC but a non-deposit taking one.

The changes were made in February 2021, after the RBI gave a non-objection to the January 25, 2021 application by R.Subramaniakumar, the DHFL administrator, citing Rule 5 of its FSP (financial services providers) Rules.

In the concluding part of the NCLT order, the bench reiterates that the resolution is subject to the fact that RBI's non-objection, based on the condition that "the status of the corporate debtor (DHFL) is changed from a deposit-taking company to a non-deposit-taking housing finance company.

— *PTI*

MF industry equity assets cross ₹11L cr

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, JUNE 15

Equity assets of the mutual fund industry reached a new high of Rs 11 lakh crore in May, aided by a 6.5 per cent rally in the Nifty-50 Index and robust inflows in equity funds and other funds with equity as a component.

Redemption from equity funds also fell, helping the equity assets swell.

"Equity assets under management (AUM), including ELSS and index funds of mutual funds,

increased 7.7 per cent month-on-month (MoM) to Rs 11.1 lakh crore in May 2021. This was on account of a rise in market indices (Nifty up 6.5 per cent MoM) and an increase in equity scheme sales, which was up 15 per cent MoM to Rs 27,700 crore," said the Fund Folio report by Motilal Oswal Financial Services. The total equity value of the top 20 AMCs increased 7.2 per cent MoM in May '21 versus a rise of 6.5 per cent MoM in the Nifty. Among the top 10 mutu-

al funds, the highest MoM increase was seen in Kotak Mahindra Mutual Fund (8.1 per cent), SBI Mutual Fund (7.7 per cent), Mirae Asset Mutual Fund (7.6 per cent), HDFC Mutual Fund (7.6 per cent), and DSP Mutual Fund (7.5 per cent).

MF's top picks in May were PSU banks, oil & gas, automobiles, capital goods, insurance, and private banks.

Healthcare, metals, consumer, technology, telecom, chemicals, durables, and cement reported MoM decline in weights.

Draft on revising WPI base year issued

New Delhi, June 15: The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) has issued a draft technical report of a working group, which suggests revising wholesale price index base year from 2011-12 to 2017-18 and proposes addition of about 480 new items such as medicinal plants, pen drive, lifts, gymnasium equipment, and certain motorcycle engines in the new series.

Revising the base year to 2017-18 for computation of wholesale inflation would help in presenting a more realistic picture of the price situation, the report has suggested. In the case of agriculture commodities, new items such as medicinal plants like isabgol, aloe vera and menthol; fennel seed and methi seed, mushroom and watermelon were proposed to be added in the new series subject to availability of data. Currently, the index has a total of 697 items, includ-

ing primary articles (117), fuel and power (16) and manufactured products (564).

In the new series, a total of 1,176 items in these three categories have been proposed—primary articles (131), fuel and power (19) and manufactured products (1,026).

"No items have been dropped at this stage. The items of the current series would be dropped only after consultation with the stakeholders," it added.

— *PTI*

Auditors are grappling with managing quality in WFH phase

PwC to add 100,000 jobs in \$12 bn revamp

BELLA GENG & ROXANNE HENDERSON
JUNE 15

PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP is investing \$12 billion across its global business in an overhaul targeting better audits, digitization of services and greener operations.

The professional-services provider will hire 100,000 employees and develop the skills of existing staff over the next five years as it seeks to respond to the post-pandemic operating environment, it said in an emailed statement on Tuesday.

"We will continue to evolve our ways of working, and expand our capabilities in the areas that



matter most for the future, while remaining steadfast in our commitment to quality," PwC chairman Bob Moritz said. "We want our people to be the most sought

after in the market."

Auditors are grappling with managing quality amid a shift in ways of working introduced by the Covid-19 pandemic. The International Auditing

and Assurance Standards Board has revised standards for auditors, coming into effect in 2022, to boost technology use, help manage new risks, and improve quality management.

PwC is also seeking ways to address growing calls for transparency in the profession from stakeholders after several accounting scandals among the Big Four auditing firms knocked public trust. In South Africa, for example, KPMG has put in place a variety of reforms after it came under fire in 2017 for work done for a politically connected family accused of plundering the government's coffers. The South African unit

of PwC will add at least 2,500 new employees over the next five years, chief executive officer in the region Dion Shango told reporters in a conference call. Across Africa, where it has a presence in 34 countries, the firm plans to bulk up its operations with a \$400 million investment. The company is also interviewing for non-executive directors to strengthen audit oversight.

PwC has also set aside \$3 billion of its total global investment to help double the scale of its Asia-Pacific operations, it said. The firm's spending will also focus on responding to environmental, social and governance trends across its operations.

— *Bloomberg*

Jewellery hallmarking must in 256 districts from today

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, JUNE 15

The government has announced that mandatory hallmarking will be implemented in 256 districts which have hallmarking centres. There will be no coercive action against jewellers till September 1.

After a meeting with jewellers and trade representatives, the minister of commerce and industry Piyush Goyal said that mandatory hallmarking will come into effect from Wednesday in these 256 districts. The jewellers will have to sell hallmarked jewellery and get their entire inventory hallmarked by September 1. Till then, the government officials will not take any coercive action against the jewellers for stocking non-hallmarked jewellery.

In the remaining districts, steps will be taken to set up hallmarking centres at a fast pace. As and when the centres are set up, jewellers will have to get the Bureau of Indian Standards licence and get their inventory hallmarked. There will be more than 450 districts which do not have hallmarking centres, said a traders' association.

Mandatory hallmarking has been exempted for jewellers with less than Rs 40 lakh turnover. Kundan and polka jewellery, and jewel-studded watches are also exempt from hallmarking.

The fee for BIS registration has been withdrawn. In future hallmarking will be the responsibility

US RETAIL BOON FOR G&J EXPORTS

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, JUNE 16

With the US retail market projected to grow in double-digits in 2021, Indian gems and jewellery exports are expected to rebound. Over 200 per cent growth in US jewellery sales has already lifted exports of studded gold jewellery and polished diamond sales above pre-Covid levels in April-May.

The National Retail Federation of the US has issued its revised annual forecast for 2021, anticipating that retail sales will grow between 10.5 and 13.5 per cent against the initial projection of 6.5 per cent.

"The combination of vaccine distribution, fiscal stimulus and private-sector ingenuity has put millions of Americans back to work", NRF president and CEO Matthew Shay said.

This is good news for Indian gems and jew-

ellery exporters, who have been witnessing stagnant growth in shipments for the past few years. US retail jewellery sales grew 203 per cent in May 2021 compared to May 2020 and grew 44.7 per cent compared to May 2019, according to the Mastercard Spending Pulse monthly macroeconomic report.

The positive momentum is already visible in the April-May exports from India. Studded gold jewellery saw a growth of 41 per cent in April-May 2021 compared to pre-Covid April-May of 2019. Cut and polished diamond exports too have witnessed an increase of 21 per cent. "The revival of exports has happened due to the opening of international markets, resurgent demand and strong unstinted support from the Government of India on various issues," said Colin Shah, chairman, GJEPC.

of the manufacturer. Over 37,000 jewellers have already registered their business with the BIS and another 63,000 are expected to get their registration done.

Meanwhile, the Nagpur bench of the Bombay High Court has adjourned the hearing of the case on hallmarking to June 28. Earlier, it had given a relief from coercive action till June 14th. This relief will also get extended till then.

"BIS reports find that around 5 crore jewellery pieces were hallmarked last year and this can come to almost two-thirds of the annual consumption, or around 400 tonnes. An additional 200 tonnes need to be hallmarked every year and this can be done at the 25 to 30 per cent of hallmarking centres which are under-utilised," said James Jose, managing director, CGR Hallmarkers.

JLR PLANS TO TEST PROTOTYPE HYDROGEN LAND ROVER



NICK CAREY
LONDON, JUNE 15

Jaguar Land Rover will begin tests later this year on a hydrogen fuel-cell prototype model based on its Land Rover Defender vehicle as the carmaker looks to expand its zero-emission car options, the company said on Tuesday. JLR, owned by India's Tata Motors, earlier this year said that its luxury Jaguar brand will be entirely electric by 2025, and the more rugged, off-road Land Rover brand will launch six pure electric models over the next five years, read more.

Most of the auto industry is focusing its efforts on developing battery-electric cars to meet tightening emission standards in Europe and China.

But JLR is one of a small number of carmakers that sees possibilities for the mass adoption of hydrogen fuel cells, which emit only water as they produce electricity, and has said it believes hydrogen has a future role in the auto industry.

Hydrogen fuel cells "provide high energy density and rapid refuelling, and minimal loss of range in low temperatures, making the technology ideal for larger, longer-range vehicles, or those operated in hot or cold environments," JLR said.

The hydrogen Land Rover Defender will undergo tests to "verify key attributes such as off-road capability and fuel consumption," the company said in a release.

As well as offering the prospect of harmless emissions, hydrogen fuel cells also provide greater range than battery-electric cars. But there is little fuelling infrastructure currently in place to support mass adoption of the technology.

— *Reuters*

SHORT TAKES

Nurse was told not to disturb Diego

Buenos Aires: A nurse accused of neglect in Diego Maradona's death told Argentine prosecutors on Monday that he was following orders "not to disturb" the football icon while he slept.

Ricardo Almiron, 37, was Maradona's nighttime carer and was one of the last people to see the World Cup winning captain alive. He is suspected of lying when he claimed Maradona was sleeping and breathing normally hours before he died. An autopsy revealed he was dying at that time. Almiron is one of seven people under investigation for manslaughter after a board of experts looking into Maradona's death found he had received inadequate care and was abandoned to his fate for a "prolonged, agonising period".

— AFP

Ollie to return for Sussex 2nd team

Sussex: Suspended England pacer Ollie Robinson, who had taken a short break last week from international cricket, will return to action with Sussex's second team on Tuesday, the county announced. Robinson was suspended by the ECB for his offensive racist and sexist tweets, dating back to 2012-13 when he was 18 and 19. Robinson missed Sussex's Vitality Blast T20 fixtures against Gloucestershire and Hampshire Hawks last week as the pacer decided to take a break to spend time with his family. Robinson has already apologised for his tweets and he got support from his teammates even as a few said the ECB did the right thing. — PTI

IOC VP arrives in Tokyo for Games

Tokyo: International Olympic Committee vice-president John Coates arrived in Japan on Tuesday, as organisers ramp up final preparations with just over five weeks until the pandemic-postponed Games open. Ahead of his arrival, several dozen people protested against the Games in Tokyo, though recent opinion polls suggest public opposition may be weakening. Organisers will release the final version of their virus countermeasures for athletes in a so-called "playbook" that they say will keep the event safe. They have already announced measures including daily testing for athletes and GPS tracking of journalists coming from abroad, in an attempt to reassure a sceptical public. — AFP

India, Afghanistan play out 1-1 draw

Doha: India benefitted from an own goal by Afghanistan goalie as they ended their World Cup Qualifiers campaign with a 1-1 draw to book a berth in the next qualifying round of the Asian Cup here on Tuesday. A howler by Afghanistan goalie Ovays Azizi handed India a 1-0 lead in the 75th minute but Hossein Zamani equalised in the 81st minute in a match marred by poor refereeing. The two sides had also played out a 1-1 draw in the first leg match in Dushanbe in 2019. — PTI

Anand to feature in Croatia leg of GCT

Chennai: Former world champion Viswanathan Anand will participate in the Croatia Grand Chess Tour Rapid and Blitz tournament to be held in Zagreb from July 5 to 12. The tournament will be the third leg of the 2021 Grand Chess Tour. Apart from the Indian Grandmaster Anand, the event will also see former world champion Garry Kasparov, who will feature in the blitz section. It will be the first across-the-board event for Anand (ELO rating 2753) in over a year as sporting schedules across the world have been hit owing to the Covid-19 pandemic and the travel restrictions. — PTI

Live on TV

EURO

Group Stage: Finland vs Russia from 6.30 pm; Turkey vs Wales from 9.30 pm; Italy vs Switzerland from 12.30 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

RED CHILE BITE

Messi on target, but spicy Chile frustrate Argentina in Copa

Rio De Janeiro, June 15: Argentina superstar Lionel Messi scored a stunning freekick but Chile hit back to earn a 1-1 draw in the Copa America on Monday.

Messi's magical left foot gave dominant Argentina a deserved first half lead but Eduardo Vargas equalised in the second half after Argentina goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez saved veteran midfielder Arturo Vidal's penalty.

Despite Argentina's dominance, Messi lamented that "we weren't calm, we didn't have control of the ball."

His coach Lionel Scaloni saw things differently, though.

"We deserved to win but in the end we drew. In any case, it's only the start of a very tough tournament," said Scaloni.

Before the Group A game started in the Nelson Santos stadium in Rio de Janeiro, there was a light and effects tribute to Argentina legend Diego Maradona, who died in November aged 60, although the ground was empty due to coronavirus restrictions.

The first chance fell to Messi on eight minutes as Leandro Paredes picked out Nicolas Tagliafico on the left and the fullback nodded the ball down for his captain, who sent a volley wide. Minutes later, Giovanni Lo Celso crossed from the left but a sliding Lautaro Martinez could only spoon the ball over the bar from inside the six-yard box. Argentina were in total command and Lo Celso picked out Nicolas Gonzalez to shoot from 20 yards but goalkeeper Claudio Bravo got down well to his right to tip the ball around the post.

From Messi's corner

Gonzalez headed over the bar and moments later he was released by Lo Celos but shot straight at Bravo. It would be a frustrating night for Gonzalez.

Argentina got the goal their domination deserved on 33 minutes, and inevitably it was Messi who scored, curling a free-kick from 25 yards out just beyond Bravo's dive.

They should have had a second soon afterwards but teed up by Gonzalo Montiel 10 yards out, Martinez screwed his shot horribly wide.

"I would be worried if the team wasn't creating chances. The important thing is we are, we're getting lots of players in the box. And it will go in," said Scaloni.

Chile started the second half with more intent and Erick Pulgar played Vargas into the area but his shot on the stretch was saved by Martinez.

However, Vidal stormed in to try to fire home the rebound and was caught by Tagliafico as he shot.

ROMEROS DO IT FOR PARAGUAY

Paraguay lead group A after a 3-1 win over Bolivia at the Olimpico stadium in Goiania. Bolivia scored first via Erwin Saavedra's first-half penalty, but Paraguay changed its fortunes after the break with goals by Alejandro Romero and a brace by Angel Romero. Argentina's next match is against Uruguay on Friday. — AFP

Paraguay	3
(Alejandro Romero 62, Angel Romero 65, 80)	
Bolivia	1
(Erwin Saavedra 10-pen)	



Argentina's Lionel Messi in action during a group game against Chile in Copa America on Monday.

— AP

Swiss ready for Italian challenge

Rome, June 15: A 74-year-old chain-smoking Czech coach might have made just as much of an impact on this Italy squad as Roberto Mancini has.

Ciro Immobile, Lorenzo Insigne and Marco Verratti each had break-out seasons under Zdenek Zeman in Serie B nearly a decade ago at Pescara, where they learned an attacking philosophy that they're currently employing at the European Championship.

Italy's third goal in their 3-0 win over Turkey in the Euro 2020 tournament opener was a case in point, as Immobile hardly even looked when he slotted a pass between two defenders to set up Insigne for one of his preferred curled shots.

Having missed the game against Turkey as he works his way back from a right knee injury, Verratti is expected to take a spot on Italy's bench for Wednesday's second

Group A game against Switzerland.

FINLAND FACE RUSSIA

Lost, perhaps, in the drama surrounding Christian Eriksen's collapse during Denmark's game against Finland at the Euro was the result after play resumed.

The Finns, playing in their first ever game at a major soccer tournament, won 1-0 in Copenhagen.

It will likely go down as one of the most over-

looked scorelines in the history of the tournament, given what had happened to Eriksen. Indeed, Finland captain Tim Sparv said there were barely any celebrations in the dressing room.

"It was very quiet," Sparv said, "and understandably so."

TURKEY SEEK WIN

Turkey will be expecting a big boost from a supportive crowd in Baku, and they might just need it.

After a 3-0 loss to Italy without even a shot on target, Turkey will face a Wales team looking to build on their opening draw when the teams meet Wednesday at the European Championship.

"Hopefully we can feed off the negative energy of the Turkey fans as opposed to the positive one. We can try and have the game on our terms, which is always the objective," said Wales midfielder Joe Morrell. — Agencies

UMESH PIPS SHARDUL IN INDIA SQUAD

Southampton, June 15: Veteran speedster Umesh Yadav pipped Brisbane Test hero Shardul Thakur as the 15th member of the Indian squad that will take on New Zealand in the World Test Championship final starting here on June 18. Umesh, along with Mohammed Shami, and Hanuma Vihari all of whom got injured during the Australia tour, were back in the 15 that needed to be announced as per ICC squad protocol.

Apart from Shardul, the notable names to miss out were Mayank Agarwal, and Washington Sundar. England series hero Axar Patel also missed out.

WILLIAMSON TO LEAD KIWIS

Kane Williamson will be available to lead New Zealand against India in the World Test Championship final, head coach Gary Stead announced. — Agencies

India squad: Virat Kohli (c), Shubman Gill, Rohit Sharma, C. Pujara, Ajinkya Rahane, Rishabh Pant (wk), R. Ashwin, Ravindra Jadeja, M. Shami, Jasprit Bumrah, Ishant Sharma, Mohammed Siraj, W. Saha, Umesh Yadav and Hanuma Vihari.

NZ squad: Kane Williamson (C), Tom Blundell, Trent Boult, Devon Conway, Colin de Grandhomme, Matt Henry, Kyle Jamieson, Tom Latham, Henry Nicholls, Ajaz Patel, Tim Southee, Ross Taylor, Neil Wagner BJ Watling and Will Young.

EURO | FOOTBALL

Spain & Sweden in dull 0-0 draw

Seville (Spain), June 15: Spain's new team struggled with the familiar problems on Monday as a string of missed chances allowed Sweden to hang on for a goalless draw in their Euro 2020 opener in Seville.

Alvaro Morata wasted the best opportunity of a dominant first half, in which Spain churned out 419 passes, the most of any team on record in the opening 45 minutes of a European Championship fixture.

But Luis Enrique's team lost their rhythm after the interval and Sweden might even have won it, the excellent Alexander Isak hitting the post before his strike partner Marcus Berg missed a sitter from two yards out.

A goalless draw leaves Spain playing catch-up in Group E after Slovakia earlier pulled off a shock 2-1 victory over Poland, raising the stakes for the game between Spain and Poland on Saturday, when a loser would be left struggling to qualify.

Another failure to convert possession into chances was reminiscent of recent disappointments for Spain, most notably when they were frustrated by Russia at the 2018 World Cup, before going out on penalties.

In the wake of that

defeat, Luis Enrique was tasked with launching a new era as coach, a project that involved promoting a fresh crop of players but also a more direct, penetrative style.

SKRINIAR FIRES SLOVAKIA PAST POLAND

Inter Milan defender Milan Skriniar fired Slovakia to a 2-1 victory over neighbours Poland on Monday in their opening game in Saint Petersburg. An own goal from Poland goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny handed Slovakia the lead on 18 minutes, but Karol Linetty equalised for Poland right at the start of the second half.

Poland were reduced to 10 men on the hour when midfielder Grzegorz Krychowiak picked up a second yellow card, and Slovakia made their advantage count as Skriniar drove in a well-taken winner at a corner. "We're delighted to start the competition with a win. It was a difficult game, Poland are a quality team," said Skriniar. — AFP

Slovakia	2
(Wojciech Szczesny 18-own goal, Milan Skriniar 69)	
Poland	1
(Karol Linetty 46)	

Quick passes

Eriksen thanks supporters

Christian Eriksen sent his first public message from the hospital on Tuesday, thanking supporters for their "sweet and amazing" well-wishes after his collapse at the European Championship. Eriksen remains in the hospital after suffering cardiac arrest during the game against Finland on Saturday, when he had to be resuscitated with a defibrillator on the field.

"Big thanks for your sweet and amazing greetings and messages from all around the world. It means a lot to me and my family," Eriksen wrote in a message that was shared by the Danish association on Twitter.



Christian Eriksen

Ronaldo shuns Cola bottles

Ronaldinho built a reputation as one of the hardest workers in the game, taking his fitness obsessions to another level in order to push his top playing days well into his late 30s. In a move likely to anger the Euro sponsor, the Juventus and Portugal forward glanced to the side before moving two glass bottles away from his position and saying "drink water" to the media while his microphone was still turned off before disapprovingly saying: "Coca-Cola!"

Swedes sound out police

The Swedish football federation filed a police report on Tuesday after striker Marcus Berg was subjected to a flood of social media abuse and threats from fans after missing a late chance against Spain at the Euro. Berg couldn't connect cleanly with the ball and missed the target when he had an open net in the second half of the 0-0 draw in Seville. He received a torrent of abuse online after the game and team officials said some of the posts contained illegal threats that have been reported to Swedish police. Berg said he turned off his social media channels but had been told about the threats. "It was tough. What happens on social media is really sad," Berg said.

INDIA VS ENGLAND | ONE-OFF TEST

Seven-year wait ends for women

Bristol, June 15: A favourable record in England and "positive mindset" despite inadequate preparation time will spur the Indian women when they take on the seasoned hosts in their first Test engagement in nearly seven years here from Wednesday.

After multiple quarantines in India and UK, the Mithali Raj-led squad got little over a week to prepare for their first red ball game since November 2014.

Mithali was among the seven current players, who were a part of that victorious eleven against South Africa in Mysuru. While experienced players like the skipper, her deputy Harmanpreet Kaur, Smriti Mandhana and

Shubman Gill have not played red ball cricket at all in recent times, it will be a tougher test for the younger lot who don't get to play first-class matches in domestic cricket. Unlike the men's squad, which played intra-squad

games in Southampton ahead of the WTC final, the women prepared only in the nets which might hurt them in the four-day game.

Mithali said she would not want rookie players to be burdened with expectations and would advise them to enjoy the game.

"Well, we did brief them (players) about how the long format is played and clearly for someone who is making a debut, you don't want to burden them with expectations and responsibility."

"So, it is just that I would brief together as a team, support them on the field and they should just enjoy playing this format," the skipper added.

Mithali also batted for having all three formats in a bilateral series going ahead, saying the away Tests against England and Australia are just the beginning. India will also play a Test, a day-night match, when they tour Australia. — PTI

ADVANTAGE INDIA

Sachin expects fast bowlers to deliver knockout blow

New Delhi, June 15: Cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar said New Zealand will be well prepared for this week's World Test Championship final but warned that India's fast bowlers could deliver the "knockout blow".

In an interview, the record-breaking batsman said India can draw on their stunning Test win in Australia as they prepare to take on the Kiwis.

While New Zealand thumped England by eight wickets to clinch a 1-0 Test series win on Sunday, Virat Kohli's team last played in March and are coming out of a stint in quarantine.

But India upset the odds to beat Australia in January, and Tendulkar pointed to their wealth of pace options for the inaugural championship's title clash starting Friday in Southampton.

Swing bowler Bhuvneshwar Kumar did not make the squad, but India can call on Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Shami, Mohammed Siraj, Umesh Yadav and Ishant Sharma.

"All these guys are talented bowlers and successful bowlers," Tendulkar said.

"They would go out and do their best and are fully capable of launching a knockout blow."

Tendulkar said it would be a toss-up between the veteran Ishant and the up-and-coming Siraj, who



India skipper Virat Kohli during an ICC photoshoot ahead of the World Test Championship final against New Zealand. — ICC

starred in Australia, for a place in the starting XI.

"It will be a nice challenge for the team management to have in front of them where you have more bowlers who are capable of playing and delivering," he said.

"All these bowlers are terrific bowlers. I have not seen their practise sessions and don't know who is in good rhythm or not. I feel it is going to be between Ishant and Siraj."

Siraj, 27, played a key

role in India's triumph in Australia as they recovered from a heavy loss to win the four-match series 2-1, sealed with a memorable victory by their second-stringers in Brisbane.

But despite India's pace stocks, Tendulkar also expected spinners Ravichandran Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja to make the team with their ability to bat in the middle order.

"I see a high probability there because both spin-

ners can bat," Tendulkar said, when asked about India's chances of playing two spinners.

"And if the wicket starts assisting spinners they can win the game. And if the wicket does not offer much to fast bowlers, for some reason, then we have the option of spinners who can bat."

PUJARA AWAITS WATERSHED MOMENT

If India go on to win the inaugural World Test Championship title, it could prove to be the watershed moment for the revival of the longest format just like the 2007 World T20 triumph did for the popularity of the shortest format, feels Cheteshwar Pujara.

"Yes of course, I think Test cricket needs to survive and with this WTC Final, it will definitely help," Pujara said.

"If we win, more young players in India will want to play Test cricket. And overall, even across the world, Test cricket needs to survive and this is a very good way to do it, having this WTC," said India's dependable No 3.

"Personally, it means a lot as I play just one format (Tests). This is the first time we are playing this WTC Final. As a team, we have worked hard over a period of time. You have to win so many series away and at home. To be at top, it does require a lot of hard work," said Pujara.

— PTI