





## SHORT TAKES

## TSRTC CELEBRATES FORMATION DAY AT BUS BHAVAN

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 2

Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TSRTC) celebrated the seventh State Formation Day with corporation's managing director Sunil Sharma hoisting the national flag at the Bus Bhavan here.

Addressing media, Sunil Sharma said TSRTC had formulated different schemes to generate revenue of about Rs. 14 crore per day before the second wave of Coronavirus. But the virus attack has pushed the corporation into difficulty.

He appreciated that despite the adversity, TSRTC employees are working hard with full commitment and without fear. This has come to notice of the state government, which has arranged for vaccination of all corporation employees.

The managing director hoped Covid pandemic will end soon and all buses run as usual, thereby earning good revenue and achieving a very good occupancy ratio.

On the occasion, all executive directors pooled in money and distributed one month's dry rations to all outsourced contract workers of TSRTC.

## HC SEEKS INFO ON TEACHERS, COPS WHO DIED OF COVID

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 2

The Telangana High Court on Wednesday directed the state education department to file an affidavit explaining how it assisted the families of teachers who succumbed to Covid, after they were forced to perform duties during elections, which were conducted in Telangana State in the month of April.

The court sought details from the department if the families had been given death benefits marked for Covid warriors. The data should be submitted precisely. Earlier, the court had directed the government to consider the teachers and police personnel, who succumbed to the Covid after they participated in the election duty as Covid warriors.

The court also directed the civil supplies corporation to explain how it was providing grains and rice to the 90 lakh BPL families in Telangana during the pandemic. Counsel Chikkudu Prabhakar said to the court that all the 9 million population belonging to BPL were starving for food and were dying of hunger.

## KCR: CREATE AWARENESS ABOUT SURVEY

From Page 1

The survey should be conducted in a mixed bunch of villages where there are no disputes and where there are disputes and get the field level experience on the matter.

After this, the Chief Minister wanted total guidelines prepared for the total survey in the state. He discussed with survey agencies the guidelines for the survey. He also enquired with them about the proposed action plan in depth. He suggested to them that state-of-the-art technology should be utilised so that there should not be any dispute over even an inch of land.

The Chief Minister said that it would be the responsibility of agencies to conduct the survey perfectly and if there was any laxity on their part, the government would not hesitate to take action against them. He wanted them to conduct the digital survey based on the traditional method of the "Tippan survey". He also suggested that gram sabhas should be conducted to create awareness among people on the survey. He said the government would extend its cooperation in this regard from time to time. District collectors, MLAs, MPs and other public representatives would be available to cooperate with the survey. He reiterated that the entire responsibility of the survey rested with the agencies.

● **THE CHIEF MINISTER** said that it would be the responsibility of agencies to conduct the survey perfectly and if there was any laxity on their part, the government would not hesitate to take action against them. He wanted them to conduct the digital survey based on the traditional method of the "Tippan survey".

## On Formation Day, Governor urges unity for state growth

Tamilisai celebrates birthday recalling services made by martyrs

ATHER MOIN I DC  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 2

Telangana Governor Dr. Tamilisai Soundararajan on Wednesday called upon people to join hands in the progress and prosperity of the state, which she said was marching forward towards all-round development.

Addressing the Telangana Formation Day celebrations here on Wednesday, she said, "We all need to strive to transform Telangana, the youngest state of the country, into the number one state in the country in different sectors." Expressing happiness over Telangana making a special mark of its own in agriculture, information technology and pharmaceutical sectors, Soundararajan said it should be our common resolve that Telangana be the number one state in all the sectors.

Referring to her birthday coinciding with that of the Telangana State Formation Day, the Governor termed it as a divine coincidence. Speaking on the prevailing pandemic situation, she said, "Mask is everyday protection. The vaccine is permanent protection. Public education and adherence to preventive norms are the ways to end the spread of the Covid pandemic. This second wave must be the end of all waves and we all must prevent any further waves."

On the occasion, the Governor remembered those who laid down their lives in the fight for the formation of the separate state and paid rich tributes to them. She also expressed gratitude and saluted the frontline warriors for their continued service and sacrifices during the pandemic.

The Governor felicitated commissioners of police of Hyderabad, Rachakonda and Cyberabad.

Anjani Kumar, Mahesh Bhagwat and VC Sajjanar respectively for their exemplary services and blood donation activities during the Covid-19 pandemic. Military officers A Joshi, Inderdeep Singh and Indian Red Cross Society representative Dr K Pitchi Reddy, superintendents of Gandhi Hospital, King Koti Hospital and Ayurvedic Hospital were also honoured by the Governor for their invaluable services in treating Covid patients in their hospitals.

## Aruna: TRS failed to achieve the basic aims

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 2

BJP national vice president DK Aruna made it clear on Wednesday that the objectives of formation of Telangana State were not achieved due to the "failed" rule of the TRS in the state.

Addressing the media marking Telangana Formation Day at the BJP state office, she said that statehood for Telangana was achieved with a view for the new state to have the right over water, funds and jobs. But, the TRS government has failed to ensure these for the people though it ruled the



Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao wishes Governor Dr. Tamilisai Soundararajan on her birthday and exchanges greetings on the occasion of Telangana State Formation Day in Hyderabad on Wednesday.

— BY ARRANGEMENT



TPCC Chief N. Uttam Kumar Reddy hoists the national flag in Gandhi Bhavan on the occasion of 7th Telangana State Formation Day in Hyderabad on Wednesday.

— P. ANIL KUMAR

## BJP at Centre, TRS in state have failed: TPCC president

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 2

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee president N. Uttam Kumar Reddy on Wednesday made it clear that the entire credit for formation of Telangana state goes to Congress president Sonia Gandhi.

He was addressing party leaders and workers on the occasion of Telangana Formation Day at Gandhi Bhavan. Those present on the occasion included former PCC presidents Ponnala Laxmaiah and V. Hanumantha Rao, AICC secretary Madhu Yashki, former union minister Balaram Naik, former

● **THE TPCC** chief underlined that by forming the state, Sonia Gandhi had recognised the aspirations of Telangana people who had fought for six and a half decades for statehood.

CLP leader in council Shabbir Ali, and party leaders Anjan Kumar Yadav and Nerella Sarada.

The TPCC chief underlined that by forming the state, Sonia Gandhi had recognised the aspirations of Telangana people who had fought for six and a half decades for statehood.

Accusing Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao of misrule,

Uttam Kumar Reddy said the CM does not have the courage to question the central government on its failure to keep the promises made people of Telangana under the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act (APRA), whether establishment of steel factory at Bayyaram, coach factory at Kazipet or the tribal university. Neither has the BJP-led government at the centre bothered to fulfil the promises made under the APRA in the last seven years of its rule.

The TPCC president called upon Congress cadre to work hard and bring the party to power in the 2023 assembly elections for doing justice to Telangana.

## BJP PROBING CHARGES AGAINST KCR DURING UPA REGIME: BANDI

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 2

BJP state president Bandi Sanjay Kumar disclosed that Bharatiya Janata Party is inquiring into allegations against Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao when the latter was union minister during the UPA regime.

"KCR can go to jail at any time. We have a strategy on when he must be sent to jail," he declared in a chat with media on Wednesday. Sanjay announced that key documents related to Sahara and ESI scam wherein KCR faced allegations are being examined since last 10 days.

He further stated that their legal team is also inquiring into corrupt activities of TRS ministers and MLAs. It has filed RTI petitions on involvement of these people in issues like land grabbing and settlements in their jurisdictions.

On Eatala Rajender, the BJP state president said the senior TRS leader will join the Bharatiya Janata Party in another week. According to his party's rules, Eatala will have to resign from TRS before joining the BJP. Legal advice is being taken in this regard.

Sanjay said the TRS leader will meet BJP national general secretary (organisational) Santosh for discussions with regard to his resignation from the State Legislative Assembly.

The state BJP president clarified that Eatala is joining the BJP without the party giving him any assurances. He is choosing to join BJP because of its ideology and belief in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership.

Bandi Sanjay condemned as "fake" news on social media and asserted that his party will have no tie up with TRS in future. He underlined that BJP will continue its agitation against failures of KCR government in the state.

● **SANJAY SAID TRS** leader will meet BJP national general secretary Santosh for discussions with regard to his resignation from the State Legislative Assembly.



A circular halo is seen around the sun in Karimnagar on Wednesday. Experts called it a natural phenomenon that occurs depending on the clarity in the sky.

— Yelabaka Radhakrishna

## Halo around sun makes an opera in the sky

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 2

Hyderabadis were in for a surprise when a sun halo was formed in the peak noon hours, on Wednesday, an unusual solar spectacle, called a '22-degree circular halo'.

Several people in the city stopped work and rushed outside to click pictures of the rare sight. However, astronomy experts say it is a natural occurrence depending on the clarity in the sky.

Ali Mohammed, a nutritionist in Hyderabad said, "It was 30 minutes past noon when I was engrossed in my usual work and my phone buzzed. My friend had shared an image. It looked like a circular rainbow. I rushed to check it out and was thrilled to see a real halo around the glazing sun. I kept watching the rare sight."

Explaining the phenomenon, Dr. Nagaratna, head scientist at IMD Hyderabad said, "The halos can appear in any season and are reported several times a year in parts of the world, depending on the position of the sun, presence of dark clouds and the refraction of light through ice crystals present in the upper atmosphere."

Halos are formed when light from the sun or moon is refracted by ice crystals associated with thin upper-

level cirrus clouds. Typically, these cirrus clouds are found at heights greater than 20,000 feet (6,000 meters). "These clouds are composed of ice crystals that originate from the freezing of supercooled water droplets, and generally occur in fair weather," explained Dr. Shanti Priya, head of department of astronomy, Osmania University. It is a ring of light 22 degrees from the sun (or moon) and is the most common type of halo observed and is formed by hexagonal ice crystals with diameters less than 20.5 micrometres, she added.

An astronomy enthusiast in the city, Praveen Suryavanshi, said this was in fact one of many sightings he has seen in the past. "Moon halos are more frequent occurrences, but a sun halo isn't also a rare sighting. A perfect setting in the sky causes this sun halo to occur, just like a rainbow. Only difference is the changes in the upper atmosphere are not visible to the eye, unlike in the case of a rainbow," he said.

He added that he was happy to see this time around, how this phenomenon caught the curiosity of the general public. "Several people clicked photos and even wondered what it was when I shared my clicks on social media," said Praveen.

## Book hosps for overcharging, HC tells govt

From Page 1

Considering the proposals put forward by counsel N.S. Arjun Kumar, the court suggested the government initiate criminal proceedings against the private hospitals which overcharge the patients and impose a penalty 10 times higher than the overcharged amount, instead of cancelling their licenses.

The bench was dealing with PILs related to the management of Covid-19 in Telangana. The Director of Public Health appeared virtually before the court and replied to several queries posed by the court. He explained that a total amount of around Rs 3 crore had been returned by the private hospitals to some of the victims of exorbitant charges. He also submitted that Telangana had enough medicines to deal with the black fungus cases and post-Covid complications. Apart from the ENT Hospital, Gandhi Hospital, MGM Hospital in

Warangal and the Government Hospital in Nizamabad have been designated to give treatment to black fungus.

Senior counsel L Ravichander brought to the notice of the court the discrepancies in government websites on bed availability. He explained that even after several hospitals were delisted from the Covid designated hospitals list, the number of beds were appearing in the website.

He also pointed out the non-constitution of a state-level experts committee to monitor cases, despite the court orders.

Concerned over a possible third wave, and anticipating its impact on children, Justice Kohli said our future generations, on which we were all going to depend, should be safeguarded from the third wave. She directed the government to file a counter, explaining how it could enhance the paediatric services.

## DON'T PUT CURBS ON LAWYERS: HC TO TS

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 2

Justice K. Lakshman of the Telangana High Court on Wednesday directed the Telangana Police and the government to not restrict the movement of advocates, their clerks and stenographers across the state during the periods of lockdown, so as to enable them discharge their duties.

This is provided that the advocates shall produce their identity card issued by either the Bar Council

or any of the associations of advocates that are registered with the council.

The advocate clerks and stenographers shall produce a certificate with photograph, issued by the concerned advocates as regards their identity. The court also issued directions to the Telangana police to also not restrict the advocates practicing in this state as also Andhra Pradesh while entering into Telangana from Amaravathi.

DAILY COVID BULLETIN DATA		Update: Cases   Deaths	
		May 30, 2021	
Fresh Cases	2384		
Deaths	17		
Tests Done	1,08,696		
Active Cases	33,379		
Total Cases	5,83,228		
Total Deaths	3,313		
Highest New Cases		Lowest New Cases	
GHMC (Hyderabad)	307	Nirmal	9
Ranga Reddy	135	Kamareddy & Narayanpet	13
Mechal-Malkajigiri	116	Adilabad	11
Nalgonda	170	Nizamabad	21
Khammam	167	Komaram Bheem-Asifabad	15



## OTHER STORIES

## TAKE CARE OF ORPHANS, DLSA TELLS BABUS

**Khammam:** District Legal Services Authority Judge M.A Javed Pasha said that the officials of the welfare department should visit the state government's orphan and old age centres often and give proper advice and suggestions to the organisers of it. He said that the organiser of these centres will concentrate more on the inmates and their health. Javed Pasha, who visited various centres in Khammam district recently, addressed a meeting with the welfare officials in the district. He said that every centre had its own service agenda. He asked the officials to take up vaccination to the old age persons in the centres and it is the need of the hour to them.



Warangal commissioner of police, Tarun Joshi shows the photo of arrested Maoist Gaddam Madhukar.

## MAOIST CADRES DEPRIVED OF COVID-19 CURE

DC CORRESPONDENT  
WARANGAL, JUNE 6

Warangal commissioner of police, Tarun Joshi on Wednesday said that it came to their notice that several Maoists suffering from Covid-19 were not being allowed to leave forest to get treatment until their condition deteriorated.

The police cited the case of one Gaddam Madhukar alias Sobrai was found at Mulugu road. He was coming from Chhattisgarh by a car to Warangal for better treatment. He was admitted in a private hospital immediately. The police learnt from him that a number of senior Maoist cadres were suffering from Covid-19, the leadership was not allowing them to go outside for better treatment, unless their health condition became the worst.

It was also learnt that a guard of Damodar, a Telangana state committee member, also contracted Covid-19. He was apprehended and taken back to the forest when he tried to run away from the party to get medical treatment.

"These developments reveal that the CPI (Maoist) is violating basic human rights of the cadres and behaving inhumanly by not allowing the ailing cadres to go out for better treatment.

We appeal that all leaders and cadres who are suffering from Covid-19 or any other health issues can freely and confidently come out and the state will provide them best available treatment," the Commissioner assured.

Warangal police registered a case under section 10, 13 and 20 of UAPA Act 1967 at Matwada police station against Gaddam Madhukar, one minor and Nellutla Naresh (couriers) for supporting his activities.

Both Gaddam Madhukar and Minor were arrested but Nellutla Naresh is absconding.

## Covid treatment: Boon to some, bane to many

Covid spread turned out to be season of outright loot

DC CORRESPONDENT  
ADILABAD, JUNE 2

The season of Covid spread also turned out to be a season of outright loot. This was more so during the current second wave of the pandemic. This two-month period since the start of April has proven to be a boon to many sharks and a bane to patients and their families in the old Adilabad district.

Those like political leaders, health officials, private doctors, diagnostic centres and labs that were involved directly or indirectly in the Covid treatment have shamelessly shared what is termed in discussion circles here as the "covid booty".

Many private hospitals had appointed managers to deal with the Covid patients and their attendants, and doctors were not coming onto the scene out of a concern for their personal safety. At the same time,

these hospitals got hyper-active in the matter of over-charging the patients for their services.

Medical and health department officials as also politicians backed the private hospitals during this damning phase, which gave these entities the courage to exploit the Covid patients with huge fees and inflated charges for two months from April.

Many private hospitals violated the Covid protocol in the treatment and charged lakhs of rupees as fees, with no regard to the rates prescribed by the state government. This, it turned out, was harvest time for these hospitals and its managements laughed their way through huge earnings.

Curiously, the Adilabad health department officials served show cause notices to four private hospitals in recent days, following complaints that they collected huge fees in

violation of the rates fixed by the government.

Some diagnostic centres and labs also collected huge fees for tests and CT scans by ignoring the rates prescribed by the state government.

A question that remained unanswered was how private hospitals could so blatantly exploit the Covid patients in these times of an unprecedented national health crisis and misery. Opinion is strong that they dared to do so with the support of the medical and health department officials and local politicians who hang around like vultures feeding on the misery of the people.

Notably, it was after the pandemic situation improved in recent days that the medical and health department officials are showing their concern about the violations by private hospitals, and are issuing notices, while they kept quiet in

the last two months, the worst phase.

In one case, Sidam Vaman Rao, a government employee with the health department, has lodged a complaint with the medical officials against a hospital where his wife got the treatment for Covid infection.

Media too played along. A section of the media tried its best to save the skin of the private hospital managements and doctors. Allegations are that they did so because the doctors belonged to the same community of these media personnel.

News is making the rounds of political circles that leaders of Adilabad branch of the Indian Medical Association (IMA) have also made hay when the Sun was shining harsh on the Covid-hit. They collected funds from the private hospitals saying that it will be used to help poor Covid patients in Adilabad town.

## CALL TO SET UP WELFARE BOARD FOR TS FIGHTERS

**Khammam:** Telangana Udyamakarula Forum of Khammam and Bhadradi district chairman, K.V Krishna Rao demanded the government to constitute Telangana Udyamakarula Welfare Board for the development of people who fought for the separate state. "No effort is taken by the TRS government for the welfare of T-fighters though a separate state was achieved seven years back. The families of T-fighters are still in struggle", he said. Telangana turned out as 'Dorala Rajyam' and the government is filing cases against them who question their rule.

Krishna Rao, who garlanded Telangana Martyr's memorial, said that a major contracts in irrigation and roads are being given to Seemadhra contractors. Did Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhara Rao forget the remarks he made against Seemadhra contractors during the agitation he questioned.

On the impact of the second wave of Covid-19, he said the government managed to reduce the spread of infections by effectively implementing the lockdown. The fever survey was yielding good results and testing had been ramped up.

bond paper. They also prepared them so no one suspected. These currency notes were circulated in several shops in Warangal and Hanamkonda.

On receiving several complaints regarding receiving fake notes from shopkeepers, the police formed teams to crack the case.

Acting on reliable information, they raided the house of the accused Ramesh and Saraswathi.

They found 376 ₹2000 notes, 204 ₹500 notes, 420 ₹200 notes, 471 ₹100 notes, 471 ₹50 notes, 62 ₹20 notes and seven ₹10 notes in their possession.



AIFB councillors stage protest at the Ambedkar statue in Bhupalpally on Wednesday.

—BY ARRANGEMENT

was promised, Mission Bhagiratha water is yet to be provided at the crematorium," he added. Another councillor Kurmilla Rajitha demanded that the number of test kits increased and more camps set up for Covid testing. Even those who join queues at 5 am are not getting their turn even by afternoon, she rued. "The TRS leaders should really go to the public to find out about their problems instead of blindly making statements that the area has seen a lot of development in separate Telangana. There is an

acute shortage of water and those who are affected by Covid are unable to step outside to get water. When we call up the Commissioner regarding the issue, there is no response," she stated. The councillors demanded that the state government immediately provide drinking water, spray bleaching powder in streets, provide a hearse and look into the issuing in the area. They said that they are ready to resign if they are proved wrong and challenged the local TRS legislator to resign otherwise.

## Bhupalpally lacks development even in Telangana state: AIFB

DC CORRESPONDENT  
WARANGAL, JUNE 2

Even seven years after the formation of separate Telangana state, the Bhupalpally area is still mired in several issues, complained the All India Forward Bloc (AIFB) councillors of the Bhupalpally municipality.

After submitting a petition on the long-pending issues to the statue of Dr B.R. Ambedkar on Wednesday, they staged a protest at the Ambedkar centre. The TRS leaders claim Bhupalpally had been developed a lot in Telangana but, in reality, people were facing many problems, said Datla Srinivas.

"No arrangements are available to carry out final rites for Covid victims. The cemetery lacks minimum facilities. There is no JCB to dig graves and fill it up after burial. Permanent bathing facilities should be made. There are also no changing rooms for women. A year after it

## FAKE | NOTE Facing financial crisis, they decided to print fake notes

## Couple held with fake currency

DC CORRESPONDENT  
WARANGAL, JUNE 2

The Taskforce and Intezargunj police under the Warangal police commissionerate arrested a couple who have been printing and circulating fake Rs 2000, 500, 100, 50, 20, 10 notes. Police recovered fake currency of Rs 10,09,960, a colour printer, bond paper and a cutter on Wednesday.

According to Warangal commissioner of Police Tarun Joshi, the couple, Vangari Ramesh and Saraswathi, used to run a chicken centre and a fancy centre in Kashibugga



Police display the fake notes printed by the couple.

Warangal.

Facing financial difficulties, they decided to print fake currency and circulate them in crowd-

ed areas.

They procured new currency notes of various denominations, scanned and printed them on



BC welfare minister Gangula Kamalakara paying tributes to Telangana Thalli statue on the occasion of state formation day celebrations, in Karimnagar on Wednesday.

—DC

## TS achieved progress in several sectors, says Ajay

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KHAMMAM, JUNE 2

Minister for Transport Puvvada Ajay Kumar said that Telangana has witnessed a lot of progress in several sectors including agriculture, irrigation, power, industries and information technology for the last seven years after the formation of a separate state. Ajay hoisted the National flag at police parade grounds on the occasion of Telangana Formation Day on Wednesday.

"The agriculture sector has been developed massively and the farmers of Telangana produced three crore tonnes of foodgrains in last kharif and 58 lakh tonnes in rabi. Telangana also stood at second place after Punjab in foodgrains production," he said, adding that the government transferred ₹7,500 crore under Rythu Bandhu into the accounts of farmers. He said the farmers who came under Part-A from Part-B would get money under Rythu Bandhu soon.

They should apply before June 10 to seek the benefit. He also said that power was being supplied 24x7 free to the farmers unlike in the past. The government completed a number of irrigation projects and the pending ones would be completed soon. As much as 12 lakh acres in Khammam, Bhadradi, Mahabubabad districts would be brought under irrigation with the completion of Sitarama Lift Irrigation Project.

On the impact of the second wave of Covid-19, he said the government managed to reduce the spread of infections by effectively implementing the lockdown. The fever survey was yielding good results and testing had been ramped up.

## FERVOUR MARKS TELANGANA STATE FORMATION DAY FETE

DC CORRESPONDENT  
ADILABAD, JUNE 2

People and all the political parties have celebrated the Telangana Formation Day and paid rich tributes to Telangana martyrs across the old Adilabad district on Wednesday. The Telangana state has been officially formed on June 2, 2014.

Local MLAs and leaders of TRS, Congress and BJP hoisted the national flag marking the Telangana Formation day at their party offices.

In Adilabad, MLAs Jogu Ramanna, Rathod Bapurao, government whip Gampa Goverdhan, ZP Chairman Rathod Janardhan participated in the flag hoisting event in the Adilabad town while leaders also paid rich tributes to late Prof

Jayashankar on the occasion.

On the other hand, Congress leaders hoisted the national flag at the former minister Ramchandra Reddy's office and anoint the Sonai Gandhi's photo with milk on the occasion. Later, they paid rich tributes to the Telangana martyrs.

Ramachandra Reddy and district incharge DCC Sajid Khan, TPCC state general secretary Gandrath Sujatha, ZPTC Ganesh Reddy, youth congress leaders Charan Goud and others were present.

On the otherhand, BJP leaders led by the district president Payal Shankar celebrate the Telangana Formation Day and hoisted the nation flag at the party office.

## MANIFOLD RISE IN CULTIVATION AREA, SAYS HOUSING MINISTER

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NIZAMABAD, JUNE 2

Minister for roads and buildings, legislative affairs and housing V .Prashanth Reddy said that crop cultivated area increased 2.15 crore acres in Telangana state. During united Andhra Pradesh, only 1.40 lakh acres cultivated in Telangana region, he said. Telangana state yielded many results in crop cultivation area, harvest and irrigation sectors, he added.

Minister hoisted tricolour flag here on Wednesday to mark the Telangana state formation day.

He also paid rich tributes

to the Telangana martyrs at Vinayaknagar. Speaking on the occasion, Mr Prashanth Reddy said that integrated development visible in Telangana state due to able leadership of Chief Minister K.Chandrasekhara Rao.

Minister also visited district education office, tahsildar office and construction site of integrated market complex. Nizamabad urban MLA Bigala Ganesh Gupta, MLCs D. Rajeshwar Rao, V. Gangadhar Goud, Akula Lalitha, mayor Dandu Neethu Kiran, district collector C. Narayana Reddy, commissioner of police, Kartikeya and others were present.

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## SHORT TAKES

## PLEA TO REMOVE BODIES FLOATING IN GANGA

PARMOD KUMAR | DC  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 2

The Youth Bar Association of India on Wednesday moved the Supreme Court for an immediate removal of the human bodies floating in the Ganga and other rivers and give them dignified cremation or burial. The petition claimed that these bodies were of Covid-19 victims whose families did not have the resources for their disposal.

The petitioner has sought directions to the Centre, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Bihar, and West Bengal, to issue guidelines or formulate a standard operating procedure for proper disposal of the bodies.

The plea filed through advocate Manju Jaitley said floating of corpses in the river would cause environmental hazards besides violation of the guidelines of the National Mission for Clean Ganga.

It has sought directions to the chief secretaries of the four states and the district magistrates to ensure no corpse is allowed to be thrown in the river on any ground and stern action be taken against the culprits. It has referred to an earlier verdict of the top court that the dignity of a dead person must be maintained and respected.

## HC ASKS MAHA TO SUBMIT INFO OF FIRs DURING COVID

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC  
MUMBAI, JUNE 2

Hearing a suo motu PIL on the issue of increasing number of Covid cases, the Bombay High Court on Wednesday directed the Maharashtra government to submit details of all FIRs registered and arrests made during the pandemic and the present crime rate in the state. The direction came after the state's counsel, advocate general Ashutosh Kumbhakoni, told the HC that while orders of the state high-powered committee were being followed on granting emergency parole to eligible inmates in a bid to decongest prisons during the pandemic, jails across the state were still crowded.

On Wednesday, the bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice G.S. Kulkarni reiterated that the state must address the issue of overcrowding in prisons.

Advocate Kumbhakoni informed the court that following the HC's orders passed over the last two months on decongesting prisons and following Covid safety protocols in prisons, 2,168 inmates from seven prisons in the state had been released on interim bail as per the high-powered committee's guidelines.

He, however, said that many inmates who were eligible for the release were not applying for temporary bail.

## WHY START VAX CENTRES WITH POMP: HC TO DELHI

**New Delhi, June 2:** The Delhi High Court on Wednesday said if the Delhi government could not ensure that people get both the doses of Covaxin within the stipulated time, then it should not have started so many vaccination centres with "much pomp and splendour".

Justice Rekha Palli issued notice to the Delhi government and sought its stand on whether it can provide the second dose of Covaxin to those who got the first jab, before expiry of the incubation period of six weeks between the two doses.

The court also issued notice to the Centre on two pleas to make the second dose of both vaccines against Covid-19—Covaxin Covishield—available in the national capital.

"Why did you (Delhi government) start it (vaccination) if you were not sure you can provide the second dose also? You should have stopped. Maharashtra stopped when it found it cannot provide second dose. You opened so many vaccination centres everywhere with so much pomp and splendour and now you say you don't know when the second dose stock would be available," the court said while hearing the two petitions.

One of the petitions has been moved by a lawyer, Ashish Virmani, who received the first dose of Covaxin on May 3 and since May 29 has been unable to book a slot for receiving the second jab which has to be taken within six weeks of the first.



An old woman sells Indian blackberry (jamun) and vegetables during lockdown at a market in Coimbatore on Wednesday.

— PTI

## Mob assaults doc, ransacks hospital in Assam; 24 held

The young doctor was kicked and thrashed with brooms, utensils

MANOJ ANAND | DC  
GUWAHATI, JUNE 2

In what has created anger in the medical fraternity as well as civil society of the state, a mob brutally assaulted Seuj Kumar Senapati, a young doctor, and other staff of a Covid Care Centre (CCC) at Udali in central Assam's Hojai district. The assault, recorded on a mobile phone, showed the young doctor being kicked and thrashed with brooms and utensils by the mob on Tuesday afternoon. The video triggered a sharp protest from doctors and others.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma who was in New Delhi said, "24 culprits involved in this barbaric attack have been arrested and a charge sheet will be filed at the earliest. I am personally monitoring this investigation and I promise that justice will be served."

The incident took place after Giasuddin, a Covid-19 patient from Udali area, died at the hospital on

## 32 die of black fungus at Indore hospital in 20 days

**Indore, June 2:** As many as 32 patients have died of mucormycosis in the last 20 days at a government-run hospital in Madhya Pradesh's Indore city, an official said on Wednesday. Of late, several cases of mucormycosis, also known as the black fungus, a serious infection, have been found in people who have recovered from Covid-19.

The Maharaja Yeshwantrao Hospital (MYH) in the state's industrial hub Indore has been treating a number of black fungus patients not only from here, but also from various other districts.

"The first patient of black fungus was admitted in the MYH on May 13 and since then, a total of 439 patients have been admitted till now in the hospital. Out of them, 84 people were discharged after treatment, while 32 patients have died so far," MYH superintendent Pramendra Thakur said.

The present black fungus mortality rate in the hospital is 7.29 per cent, he said, claiming that the fatality rate was lower than other hospitals in the state. "We have carried out more than 200 surgeries in the last 20 days to save the lives of patients

suffering from the black fungus," he said.

At present, 323 patients are undergoing treatment for the fungal infection in the hospital, the official said. Out of them, 14 contracted the fungal infection along with Covid-19, while 301 people got mucormycosis after recovering from Covid-19, he said.

The eight other patients suffering from the black fungus have no record of contracting Covid-19, he informed. The statistics show that 93 per cent of the patients contracted the black fungus after recovering from Covid-19.

— PTI

that unless all the culprits involved in the attack are arrested by 7 am on Wednesday, all doctors of Hojai would boycott all out-patient duty services.

It also asked the government to provide all hospitals and CCCs with security cover, CCTV cameras and round the clock electricity. "Instructions have been given to superintendent of police Hojai to arrest all persons involved in the assault," the special Director General of Police G.P. Singh said.

The Indian Medical Association wrote to Union home minister Amit Shah, stating that there was a "barbaric attack yesterday...and it was an extremely inhuman attack", and requested for "immediate strict action on culprits".

Meanwhile, the Assam State Branch of the IMA on Wednesday called for all doctors in the state to abstain from outdoor patient services. The body has demanded that all culprits be booked immediately and there should be a speedy trial.

mob damaged the building and also ransacked instruments at the CCC besides "brutally assaulting" the doctor. The IMA unit said

## MP, U'Khand, Guj. cancel state exams

DC CORRESPONDENTS  
with agency inputs  
BHOPAL, JUNE 2

Taking a leaf from the Centre, Madhya Pradesh government on Wednesday decided to cancel the class 12 state board examinations in the interest of safety of the students amid the raging Covid-19 pandemic. Chief Minister Shivrang Singh Chouhan took to Twitter to announce his government's decision to not hold this year's class 12 board exam in the state.

"The class 12 board examinations (conducted by MP Board of Secondary Education) for the year 2020-21 have been cancelled. The life of students is precious for us. We can take care of their career

later. We have constituted a committee of ministers who will consult experts and decide on students' evaluation", he said.

The Gujarat government also decided to cancel the state board exams for class 12. "The state government decided to scrap the exams for class 12 of the Gujarat Secondary and Higher Secondary Board after taking into consideration the Centre's decision to scrap the exams for class 12 students of the CBSE given the pandemic," state education minister Bhupendrasinh Chudasama said.

Uttarakhand intermediate board examinations were also cancelled in view of the prevailing Covid-19 situation in the state.

## TN, Maha to take call on exams soon

DC CORRESPONDENT  
with agency inputs  
CHENNAI, JUNE 2

The Tamil Nadu government will make known its decision on holding the plus two board exam in the state in two days' time, after conferring with experts, state school education minister Anbil Mahesh Poyyamozhi said.

Chief Minister M.K. Stalin will take the final call on the issue after the views of education and medical experts and teachers among others were elicited, besides considering the stand of other states in this pandemic times, he said.

"Children's health and safety is equally important as their future, as our Chief Minister had said. Echoing this view, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced cancellation of

the CBSE exam on Tuesday," the minister said on Wednesday.

Addressing reporters here after attending a meeting with Stalin, Poyyamozhi said during a meeting convened by Union defence minister Rajnath Singh earlier, several states opined that the board exam could be conducted with precautionary measures in place.

Maharashtra school education minister Varsha Gaikwad on Wednesday said a proposal has been sent to the disaster management authority regarding the state board exams for Class 12 students and a decision on the issue will be taken in a couple of days.

She said the issue was discussed at a meeting of the state cabinet here, a day after the Centre cancelled the CBSE Class 12

## Maha launches 'corona-free villages drive'

BHAGWAN PARGI | DC  
MUMBAI, JUNE 2

In order to curb the spread of Coronavirus in rural areas, the Maharashtra government on Wednesday launched 'Corona-Mukta Gaon' (Corona-free Village) competition, which will reward the successful villages with handsome cash prizes. The scheme has been inspired by the feat of five villages in the state, which have managed to eradicate the virus from their jurisdiction.

The competition shall be held in all the six revenue divisions of the state with top three villages in each division getting cash prizes worth ₹50 lakh, ₹25 lakh, and ₹15 lakh each, as incentives for various development works.

"The corona-free village competition has been launched with an aim to encourage the efforts to chase the virus away from the rural areas and make the entire state free of coronavirus at the earliest," said state rural development minister Hasan Mushrif.

The competition has been announced against the backdrop of Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray's appeal to people in rural areas to strive hard for making their villages corona-free. In his address, he had also praised the efforts of villages, which have attained Covid-free status in the state.



People wait in a long queue to buy liquor from a wine shop after the ease in the ongoing lockdown restrictions in Jammu on Wednesday. Policemen were deployed outside wine shops to maintain order and ensure adherence of Covid-19 guidelines.

— PTI

● **THE COMPETITION** shall be held in all the six revenue divisions of the state with top three villages in each division getting cash prizes worth ₹50 lakh, ₹25 lakh, and ₹15 lakh.

● **COMPETITION HAS** been announced on the backdrop of Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray's appeal to people in rural areas to strive hard for making their villages corona-free.

Rural areas in Maharashtra have been hit hard by the second Coronavirus wave than the urban parts of the state.

More Covid-19 cases have been recorded as villages compared to cities, prompting the state machinery to concentrate more on rural areas.

The total prize money for the corona-free competition will be ₹5.40 crore, said Mushrif. "Every village in the state will be asked to form five teams to implement various initiatives for the eradication of Coronavirus. Villages shall be judged on the basis of 22 different criteria by a special committee of experts for their work during the period June 1, 2021 to March 31, 2022," he added.

According to state officials, five villages in the state—Hivare Bazaar and Bhoyare Khurd in Ahmednagar district, Bhosi in Nanded district and Antroli and Ghatane villages in Solapur district have become Coronavirus-free by undertaking various initiatives in their areas.

## BOARD | EXAMS

## Experts hail the decision to cancel the board exams in view of the pandemic

## Challenge to decide fair evaluation criteria: Experts

**New Delhi, June 2:** Education experts and stakeholders believe the bigger challenge before the CBSE now is coming up with a fair evaluation criteria for class 12 students whose exams have been cancelled and demanded that the policy is notified soon.

The experts hailed the decision to cancel the board exams which were earlier postponed in view of the second wave of Covid-19 pandemic. Given the current situation, it is the right decision to cancel the CBSE Board exams.

There is no way we could have held exams without compromising the safety of children. While we welcome the decision, we hope the modalities would be worked out quickly in consultation with stakeholders, they said.

"Since class marks are important factor that affects students' career, we expect CBSE to ensure students don't get affected with the methodology of awarding marks," said Praveen Raju, Co-Chair, FICCI ARISE, a collegium of stakeholders aimed at promoting quality educa-

tion.

In a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday, it was decided that the CBSE will take steps to compile the results of class 12 students as per a well-defined objective criteria in a time-bound manner.

"The next step is equally critical and crucial in terms of deciding the process and criteria based on which the children's performance will be gauged. This should be done keeping in mind that many of them make that extra effort during the last

mile and hence, should be given due advantage," said Charu Wahi, Principal, Nirmal Bhartia School.

According to Vishnu Karthik, CEO, The Heritage Schools, the decision on cancellation of board exams has provided some clarity and assuaged stress levels among students and parents but the challenge now is for the CBSE to arrive at an alternative criteria to determine grade 12 marks.

"Any delay or any confusion on the new grading criteria will lead to more confusion and stress

among students. Clear directions should also be provided to Indian universities to modify their admissions criteria so meritocracy and fairness are not compromised," he said.

Shishir Jaipuria, Chairman of Seth Anandram Jaipuria Group of Educational Institutions believes deserving students must be allocated grades or marks corresponding to their yearly performance.

"It's a challenge that will require a great deal of meticulous thinking for arriving at a just criterion

for academic assessment. I'm sure the schools and boards will rise to the challenge and deliver what's best for the students," he said.

Rajiv Bansal, Director-Operations - Global Indian International School (GIIS), said admission in undergraduate courses, across India and internationally, are dependent on class 12 results, therefore, the sooner these details are announced, the better it would be for the students, their parents, and the entire academic community.

— PTI



SHORT TAKES

23 MIGRANTS MISSING, TWO DEAD OFF TUNISIA

**Zarzis, Tunisia, June 2:** At least 23 migrants were missing and two bodies recovered from the sea off Tunisia, the Red Crescent reported Wednesday, after the military said more than 100 migrants were intercepted.

The Tunisian navy said a boat headed for Europe from Zuwara in Libya was intercepted on Tuesday near Miskar oil platform, some 67 kilometres (52 miles) off the coast.

The migrants -- 37 Eritreans, 32 Sudanese and an Egyptian, aged between 15 and 40 -- were handed over to the Red Crescent and International Organization for Migration in the southern port Of Zarzis.

POLISARIO LEADER LEAVES SPAIN, FLIES TO ALGERIA

**Madrid, June 2:** The leader of Western Sahara's independence movement, whose presence at a Spanish hospital sparked a diplomatic row with Rabat, left Spain overnight and flew to Algeria, a government source said Wednesday.

He's "in Algeria," the source told AFP.

Late on Tuesday, Spain's foreign ministry said Polisario Front leader Brahim Ghali would be leaving from Pamplona airport but did not say where he would be going.

Ghali's departure came hours after he was quizzed by a Spanish judge over allegations of torture and genocide, which he denied, in a video hearing from the hospital in northern Spain where he spent six weeks recovering from Covid-19.

REMAINS OF U.S. KU KLUX KLAN HEAD TO BE MOVED

**Washington, June 2:** A project to disinter a Ku Klux Klan leader and move his remains to a museum started Tuesday, local US media reported, adding the work would be funded by \$200,000 of anonymous donations.

Nathan Bedford Forrest was a leading pro-slavery Confederate army general during the American Civil War, and the first "Grand Wizard" of the racist Ku Klux Klan organization from 1867 to 1869.

A pedestal on top of his grave in a park in Memphis, Tennessee, will be removed first, before his remains -- along with those of his wife -- are taken to the new National Confederate Museum, WMC5 news said.

BELARUS ACTIVIST STABS SELF, RETURNED TO JAIL

**Moscow, June 2:** A Belarusian activist who was hospitalised after stabbing himself in the neck in court has been returned to prison following surgery, the Viasna rights group said Wednesday.

Stepan Latypov, 41, on Tuesday rammed a pen into his neck on the first day of his trial on several protest-related charges during a hearing seen by government critics as part of a sweeping crackdown on political opposition.

Viasna, citing Latypov's relatives, said Wednesday the activist was returned to prison and that family had been able to deliver him a parcel there.

Latypov was detained last September and went on trial in the capital Minsk on several charges including creating protest symbols and resisting law enforcement.

PAK JOURNALIST SUMMONED FOR 'DEFAMING' ARMY

**Islamabad, Jun 2:** A Pakistani journalist recently beaten by unidentified men in his apartment said Tuesday he was summoned by authorities to answer allegations he defamed a key national institution, a term often used for the military. Asad Ali Toor, who works for the Aaj News Pakistani TV channel, said he was consulting his lawyer to decide whether to appear before the Federal Investigation Agency on June 4.

The development comes a week after three armed men forcibly entered Toor's apartment in the capital Islamabad, saying they were from Inter-Services Intelligence. The assailants repeatedly slapped Toor, accusing him of criticising the agency. However, the ISI has distanced itself from the attack, saying it was not involved. Pakistan Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmad has said authorities are close to arresting the assailants.

Trump Hotel for lease



The Trump Organisation is trying to lease out the The Trump International Hotel, after it failed in the 2019 presidential election before the Covid-19 pandemic hit the world.

— AFP

Iran warship on fire, sinks in Gulf of Oman

Blaze began around 2.25 am, efforts to save Kharg failed

**Tehran, June 2:** The largest warship in the Iranian navy caught fire and later sank Wednesday in the Gulf of Oman under unclear circumstances, semi-official news agencies reported.

The Fars and Tasnim news agencies said efforts failed to save the support warship Kharg, named after the island that serves as the main oil terminal for Iran. The blaze began around 2:25 a.m. and firefighters tried to contain it, Fars said. The vessel sank near the Iranian port of Jask, some 1,270 kilometers (790 miles) southeast of Tehran on the Gulf of Oman near the Strait of Hormuz -- the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf.

Photos circulated on Iranian social media of sailors wearing life jackets, evacuating the vessel as a fire burned behind them. State TV and semi-official news agencies referred to the Kharg as a "training ship." Fars published video of thick, black smoke rising from the ship early Wednesday morning. Satellite photos from Planet Labs Inc. ana-

Burning ship with chemicals sinking off Sri Lanka port

**Colombo, June 2:** A fire-stricken Singapore-flagged cargo vessel laden with chemicals started to sink on Wednesday off Sri Lanka's main port, a senior navy official said, fuelling severe environmental concerns as the container ship still has several hundred tonnes of oil in its fuel tanks.

Water submerged the MV X-Press Pearl's rear end a day after firefighters

from Sri Lanka and India climbed onto the vessel and extinguished a blaze that had been burning for 12 days.

"The rear end of the vessel is being submerged. This was at the same time as the rescue team got on board in order to facilitate the towing of the vessel to deeper seas for safety reasons," Sri Lanka Navy spokesman Indika de Silva said.

"The ship is under water, the water level is above the deck. The ship is going down," de Silva said.

On Wednesday morning experts were trying to tow the ship farther out to sea, some 9 nautical miles away from the Colombo port where it had been anchored since May 20, to prevent its sinking at the current position which would have caused severe pollution.

— PTI

Russia adopts 'extremist' bill

Kremlin to exit overflight treaty

**Moscow, June 2:** Russia's upper house on Wednesday overwhelmingly backed legislation expected to be used to ban allies of Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny from running in elections, the latest move in a crackdown on the opposition.

The bill, overwhelmingly approved by the Federation Council, would make it impossible to run in parliamentary elections for leaders, sponsors and rank-and-file members of "extremist" groups.

A Russian court is considering whether to designate Navalny's political network an extremist organisation and could make a decision as early as next week. Critics of President Vladimir Putin say Russian authorities are widening a campaign against the opposition ahead of parliamentary elections in September.

After Navalny was jailed

**Moscow, June 2:** The Russian parliament's upper house voted Wednesday to withdraw from an international treaty allowing surveillance flights over military facilities following the U.S. exit from the treaty.

The vote comes after U.S. officials told Moscow last month that President Joe Biden's administration had decided not to reenter the Open Skies Treaty, which had allowed surveillance flights over military facilities before

President Donald Trump withdrew from the pact. As a presidential candidate, Biden had criticised Trump's withdrawal as "short-sighted."

Moscow has signalled its readiness to reverse the withdrawal procedure and stay in the 1992 treaty if the United States returns to the agreement. After the Russian upper house voted to leave the treaty, it would now come to Russian President Vladimir Putin for signing.

— AP

and many of his allies arrested, two more political activists, Dmitry

Gudkov and Andrei Pivovarov, were detained over the past two days.

Pivovarov, the former executive director of Open Russia, a just disbanded pro-democracy group, was pulled off his Warsaw-bound flight on Monday.

The 39-year-old faces up to six years in prison for his involvement in an "undesirable" organisation. A court was expected to decide whether to remand him later Wednesday. On Tuesday, police detained Gudkov after conducting raids on homes of his allies and relatives. The 41-year-old former opposition lawmaker faces up to five years in prison for allegedly failing to pay a debt under an old lease agreement. Gudkov is likely to be formally charged on Wednesday, said human rights association Agora whose lawyer represents him. Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the detentions were a purely legal matter.

— AFP

Pelosi rules out having Biden create Jan. 6 panel

**Washington, June 2:** House Speaker Nancy Pelosi is ruling out a presidential commission to study the January 6 insurrection at the Capitol, telling House Democrats on Tuesday that having President Joe Biden appoint a panel is unworkable even after the Senate blocked an independent probe last week.

Pelosi laid out possible next steps after Friday's Senate vote, in which Senate Republicans blocked legislation to create an independent, bipartisan panel to investigate the siege by former President Donald Trump's supporters. She proposed four options for an

investigation of the attack, according to a person on the private Democratic caucus call, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal conversations.

The first option, Pelosi said, is to give the Senate another chance to vote on the commission. Six Republicans voted with Democrats to move forward with the bill, and a seventh missed the vote but said he would have backed it.

That means Democrats would only need support from three additional Republicans to reach the 60 votes needed for passage. The commission would be modelled after a

highly respected panel that investigated the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

The other options involve the House investigating the attack, meaning the probes would be inherently partisan. Pelosi suggested that she could appoint a new select committee to investigate the siege or give the responsibility to a single committee, like the House Homeland Security panel, which wrote the original bipartisan bill to create the commission.

Alternately, Pelosi said committees could simply push ahead with the investigations that are already underway.

— AP

Cyberespionage: US seizes two domain names

WILL CONSIDER U.S. REQUEST ON CYBERATTACK, SAYS RUSSIA

**Washington, June 2:** The Justice Department said Tuesday that it has seized two domain names used in a cyberespionage campaign that targeted US and foreign government agencies, think tanks and humanitarian groups.

The campaign was disclosed last week by Microsoft, which linked it to the same group of Russian intelligence operatives responsible for the massive SolarWinds intrusion that breached federal agencies and private corporations. The company said over the weekend that it was "still not seeing evidence of any significant number of compromised organizations at this time."

The White House on Friday similarly downplayed the cyber assault as "basic phishing," in which hackers use malware-laden emails to access networks, and said US agencies had largely fended it off. Still, officials say the US government's action on Friday was aimed at preventing any further exploitation of victims, though the Justice Department also warned that the hackers may have used additional backdoor accesses to get into networks between when the hacking first began and the time that the domains were seized.

"Last week's action is a continued demonstration of the department's com-

**Moscow, June 2:** Russia said Wednesday it was open to considering any request from the United States for help in investigating the cyberattack on the US subsidiary of Brazilian meat processor JBS. "There are contacts through diplomatic channels," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

"If there are requests from the Americans they will be promptly considered," Peskov said he expected the issue of cybercrime to come up during the June 16 summit in Geneva between Russian President Vladimir Putin and US counterpart Joe Biden.

"It is quite clear that criminality and challenges in the cybersphere will be on the agenda one way or another," he said.

— AFP.

mitment to proactively disrupt hacking activity prior to the conclusion of a criminal investigation," Assistant Attorney General John Demers, the Justice Department's top national security official, said in a statement.

— AP

Firefighter kills colleague, wounds another at fire stn.

**Santa Clarita, June 2:** An off-duty Los Angeles County firefighter fatally shot a fellow firefighter and wounded another at their small community fire station Tuesday before going to his nearby home, setting it on fire and apparently killing himself, authorities said.

A 44-year-old fire specialist died and a 54-year-old firefighter was shot when the gunman opened fire shortly before 11 am at Fire Station 81, which is about 45 miles (72 kilometers) north of Los Angeles, Fire Chief Daryl Osby told reporters. The wounded man was in critical but stable condition at a hospital. The shooter was a firefighter specialist and

engineer, authorities said. The fire chief said he could not speak to the motive for the attack and doesn't know about any disciplinary actions.

He was not scheduled to work today. He came back and confronted the on-duty personnel, a visibly shaken Osby said.

I cannot speak to the mindset of the shooter. I can say that it's very tragic and sad that that would be a decision point of one of the members of the Los Angeles County Fire Department. The gunman, who was not identified, then went to his house less than 10 miles (16 kilometers) away, which authorities found engulfed in flames.

— AP

ASIAN OFFICER ATTACKED IN 'HATE' CRIME

**San Francisco, June 2:** A San Francisco police officer responding to a call about a man making threats to people in Chinatown was attacked by the suspect, who was later arrested on assault and hate crime charges, authorities said.

Surveillance video showed the female officer, who is of Asian descent, approach Gerardo Contreras on Friday and tell him to turn around and put his hands on his head.

— AP

RACIAL | VIOLENCE Last June, former President Donald Trump was greeted by protests during his visit

Biden marks Tulsa Race Massacre in graphic speech

**Tulsa, June 2:** An emotional President Joe Biden marked the 100th anniversary of the massacre that destroyed a thriving PoC community in Tulsa, declaring Tuesday that he had "come to fill the silence" about one of the nation's darkest -- and long suppressed -- moments of racial violence.

"Some injustices are so heinous, so horrific, so grievous, they cannot be buried, no matter how hard people try," Biden said. "Only with truth can

come healing."

Biden's commemoration of the deaths of hundreds of PoC people killed by a white mob a century ago came amid the current national reckoning on racial justice. "Just because history is silent, it does not mean that it did not take place," Biden said.

He said that "hell was unleashed, literal hell was unleashed." And now, he said, the nation must come to grips with the following sin of denial. "We can't just choose what we want

to know, and not what we should know," said Biden.

"I come here to help fill the silence, because in silence wounds deepen." After Biden left, there was a spontaneous singing by some audience members of a famous civil rights march song, "Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around."

The events on Tuesday stood in stark contrast to then-President Donald Trump's trip to Tulsa last June, which was greeted by protests. Or the former

President's decision, one year ago, to clear Lafayette Square near the White House of demonstrators who gathered to protest the death of George Floyd, a PoC man, under the knee of a white Minneapolis police officer.

In 1921 -- on May 31 and June 1 -- a white mob, including some people hastily deputised by authorities, looted and burned Tulsa's Greenwood district, which was referred to as Black Wall Street. On Tuesday, the President,

joined by top PoC advisers, met privately with three surviving members of the Greenwood community who lived through the violence, the White House said. Viola "Mother" Fletcher, Hughes "Uncle Red" Van Ellis and Lessie "Mother Randle" Benningfield Randle are all between the ages of 101 and 107.

Biden said their experience had been "a story seen in the mirror dimly" "But no longer," the president told the survivors. "Now your story will be known

in full view." Outside, Latasha Sanders, 33, of Tulsa, brought her five children and a nephew in hopes of spotting Biden. "It's been 100 years, and this is the first we've heard from any US President," she said. "I brought my kids here today just so they could be a part of history and not just hear about it, and so they can teach generations to come."

John Ondiek, another Tulsan in the crowd following Biden's speech on cellphones, said he was

encouraged that "There aren't just PoC people here. That tells me there's an awakening going on in this country." As many as 300 PoC Tulsans were killed, and thousands of survivors were forced for a time into internment camps overseen by the National Guard.

Burned bricks and a fragment of a church basement are about all that survive today of the more than 30-block historically PoC district.

— AP



## DECCAN Chronicle

3 JUNE 2021

### Targeting ex-chief secy to hit bureaucracy's morale

The way the Narendra Modi government is going about evidently trying to punish the recently retired chief secretary of West Bengal, Alapan Bandyopadhyay, is unlikely to fill the civil service with confidence or motivation.

Across the Union government bureaucracy, especially at senior levels where policies are grappled with, the Delhi Durbar under the present PM is widely thought to be hamstrung by signs of cliquishness, leaving the energetic and the hard-working demoralised. The Bandyopadhyay episode could deepen faultlines caused by favouritism.

Policymaking and policy implementation are apt to be a casualty in such a setting since civil servants hesitate to offer frank and unbiased assessments in the process of policy formulation for fear of falling foul of the regime and eventually be singled out for unwarranted disciplinary action on false pretexts. The example of Mr Bandyopadhyay has every potential to exacerbate such anxieties. This is bad for India. Because only a favoured few were consulted, major policy missteps such as demonetisation ensued.

**It is irrelevant how the Bandyopadhyay affair ends. What is pertinent is that the episode is malodorous. Its ramifications extend to weakening the structures of governance...**

Senior levels of the civil service and retired top civil servants appear to have been flabbergasted by the treatment being meted out to the former West Bengal chief secretary. It seems hardly believable that the topmost civil servant of a state should be sought to be punished for being 15 minutes late for a meeting called by the PM. This was the so-called PM-CM meeting to review the impact of the cyclone Yaas which was full of BJP leaders who had no place in such a discussion. To make matters more absurd, Mr Bandyopadhyay is being proceeded against under the Disaster Management Act.

In a major newspaper article, a former cabinet secretary has noted that the chief secretary was to retire from service on May 31, but at the state government's request was granted an extension as chief secretary. However, only four days later, he was asked to report for work in New Delhi on the day he was to superannuate. This is after the Kalaikunda incident, giving scope for the conjecture that the Centre's action has a political trigger and an upright civil servant finds himself caught in the crossfire.

The retired senior official has indicated that the move against Mr Bandyopadhyay was peremptory in nature as Mr Bandyopadhyay had not been cleared for "deputation" by the state. Nor had the Centre requested his services on deputation. Besides, he had not been empanelled for the post of secretary in GOI. In the event, the relevant rule that the Centre prevails over a state — when there is a difference over the release of an officer on deputation — does not apply in this particular case.

It is not unlikely that the ayatollahs of rule-making in New Delhi were only too aware of this aspect and therefore chose to summon the former chief secretary under the National Disaster Management Act to receive his punishment. (It is telling that the yoga teacher-entrepreneur Ramdev does not attract the penal provisions of NDMA for traducing the medical effort against Covid.)

In the final analysis it is irrelevant how the Bandyopadhyay affair ends. What is pertinent is that the episode is malodorous. Its ramifications extend to weakening the structures of governance and administration in India, besides casting in prejudice the valuable principles of Centre-state relations on which our federalism rests.

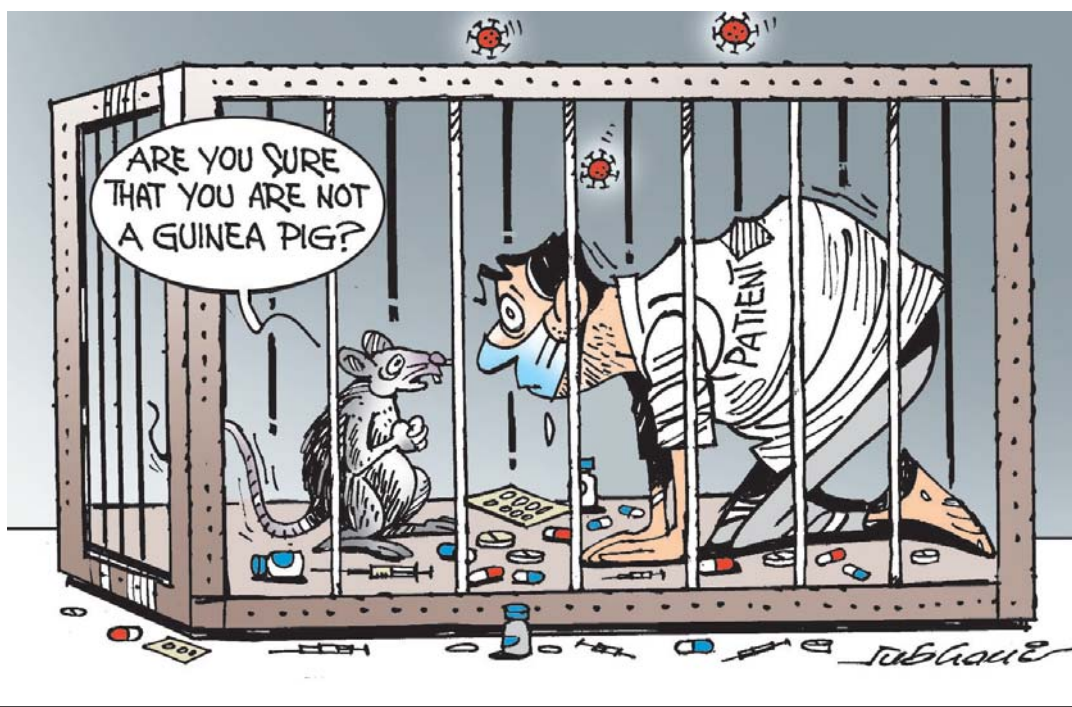
### Testing time for students

The cancellation of the CBSE and CISCE Class 12 board exams was, perhaps, the easier decision to make. It will resonate with the primary stakeholders who are students as anxiety levels were the highest among them and their parents amid the deadly second wave of Covid-19 pandemic. A spate of cancellations of state board exams is bound to follow though only four states among all states and UTs had expressed their opposition to the proposal to hold the exams. The decision to cancel emanated from the Prime Minister who, well aware of the nervousness in youth, may have lent an empathetic ear to the students' cause.

Simpler it may have been to choose cancellation over conduct of exams but the hard part begins only now as acceptable objective criteria have to be defined in the onerous task of judging students on merit for university. The future of over one crore Class 12 students in various streams, including 14 lakh in CBSE, is at a crossroads (about 1.43 crore students appeared for different school leaving exams in 2020). While performance in internal school assessments during Class 12 or Plus-2 may be used to determine the tabulation of marks, it might be altogether fairer if a student's performances from classes 9 to 12 were to be collated and weightage given to that too. Fixing the evaluation procedure is going to be an unenviable task.

The elite institutions in engineering and medical have their own entrance tests to determine admissions, but arts and science colleges have traditionally depended on marks in school finals. A common universities entrance test might be worth considering but there too the question remains of timing an objective test amid the pandemic whose third wave is expected later in the year. The intricate task of finding a level playing field is not going to be achieved without inviting complications. Beyond that lies a greater threat to a whole generation of students who have to put up with less than satisfactory Zoom education as opposed to the congeniality of real-world learning in classrooms among peers.

Subhani



## Protect vulnerable to heal fractures, revive economy



Patralekha Chatterjee

Dev 360

India's prisoners offer a telling insight into the state of the country's economy. In Uttar Pradesh, the country's most populous state, 21 jail inmates have recently written to the authorities saying they don't want parole. Their reason: staying in prisons is "safer and healthier" during the Covid-19 pandemic. They know that in the world outside, there won't be free food nor regular health checkups and they will have to struggle for a living.

The signs of economic distress are everywhere. Even as the Centre and state governments continue to weigh in on the grim maths between lives and livelihoods, it is becoming obvious that social protection for our vulnerable makes for a compelling moral argument as well as an economic and social one.

Without it, neither the pandemic-battered economy nor the fractured will gain normality any time soon.

India has begun to take baby steps to emerge from the lockdowns that were triggered by the sharp spike in coronavirus cases in the "second wave".

Currently, there are flickers of promise: the daily infections are falling in many places though Covid-19 deaths still remain high at around 3,000 every day. Worryingly, the virus continues to course through the countryside.

This week, manufacturing and construction work was allowed to resume in Delhi and some other areas, but with many roads remaining barricaded, transporting material is not easy and there is an acute shortage of labourers. Many have gone back home.

This time around, there was transport so there have been no long marches down national highways like last year, after the first nationwide lockdown. But clearly, many

labourers who come to big cities in search of livelihoods have little faith in their employers or the State to look after them during lockdowns.

"In the past year, we have not put in solid social protection mechanisms for migrant workers or those working in the informal sector. There is the odd relief scheme for limited periods or cash transfer through Jan Dhan, but these have limited reach," says Amit Basole, associate professor of economics at Azim Premji University, one of the key authors of a study, "The State of Working India 2021: One year of Covid-19", brought out by the university.

In the absence of a real social protection mechanism in the cities, people have gone back to their villages. This should surprise no one. Neither should it come as a surprise that this will impact attempts to unlock the economy.

"Overnight, we may not be able to formalise all informal workers, but we need to definitely start putting in place a more solid social protection mechanism as a matter of immediate priority," Prof. Basole stresses.

Why is not this a bigger issue? Perhaps the heart-breaking images of deaths, often without dignity, have something to do with it.

"The huge health crisis and graphic images of the dead have overshadowed the severe economic crisis across the country. Not only has the informal sector been rendered more precarious, many who earlier had salaried jobs are now being forced into odd jobs and errands just to survive as a result of the pandemic, lockdowns and various other restrictions," says Prof. Basole.

He speaks movingly about a school bus driver he knows who is trying to make a living ferrying vegetable from wholesale markets to retail shops.

"But this is not a stable way of earning a living. Admittedly this is only anecdotal, but it's not difficult to imagine many more such cases may be there."

The report says mobility restrictions, such as those caused by lockdowns, predictably lead to income losses due to decreased economic activity. "We find that a 10 per cent decline in mobility was associated with a 7.5 per cent decline in income. This number is useful to keep in mind when estimating the impact of future lockdowns," it cautions.

Predictably, the poor who lack cushions have been the worst-hit. Nearly half of formal salaried workers moved into informal work, either as self-employed (30 per cent), casual wage (10 per cent) or informal salaried (nine per cent) workers, between late 2019 and late 2020.

Women have been affected more and households have tried to cope by cutting back on food intake, selling assets, and borrowing informally from friends, relatives, and moneylenders.

Government relief measures have helped, but exclusions were also common. In a recent commentary, "The Covid-19 Crisis and People's Right to Food", development economists Jean Dreze and Anmol Somanchi note that relief measures helped, but they were patchy.

"A large majority of the population had access to PDS in 2020 (with enhanced monthly rations for eight months), and this played a critical role in averting the worst. But it's possible some of the supplementary rations got diverted, initially at least, and significant minority of poor households had no access to PDS at all for lack of a ration card. Other relief

**As Dreze and Somanchi put it: 'The Covid-19 crisis brings out once again that India needs a more reliable and comprehensive social security system'**

measures such as NREGA and cash transfers also had a patchy coverage."

Given the unpredictable trajectory of the virus, it's hard to forecast when lockdowns may be reimposed. All the more reason to invest in a solid social protection mechanism to minimise the damage due to disruption.

"The State of Working India 2021" suggests some urgent policy measures. These include extending free rations under PDS beyond June, at least till the end of 2021, cash transfer of ₹5,000 for three months to as many vulnerable households as can be reached with the existing digital infrastructure, including but not limited to Jan Dhan accounts, expansion of MGNREGA entitlement to 150 days, revising programme wages upwards to state minimum wages, expanding the programme budget to at least ₹1.75 lakh crores, launching a pilot urban employment programme in the worst-hit districts, possibly focused on women workers, increasing the Central contribution in old-age pensions, automatically enrolling all MGNREGA workers who do construction work, as registered workers under the Building and Other Construction Workers (BoCW) Act so that they can access social security benefits and a Covid hardship allowance for Anganwadi/Asha workers of ₹5,000 per month for six months.

All these measures together will cost money — approximately ₹5.5 lakh crores of additional spending and bring the total fiscal outlay on Covid relief to around 4.5 per cent of GDP over two years.

But what will be the cost of not having this large fiscal stimulus, given the magnitude of the distress?

As Dreze and Somanchi put it: "The Covid-19 crisis brings out once again that India needs a more reliable and comprehensive social security system."

*The writer focuses on development issues in India and emerging economies. She can be reached at patralekha.chatterjee@gmail.com.*

### LETTERS

#### LOCKDOWN RULES

The public has found an opportunity to crowd the roads with the government easing lockdown rules (*Hyderabad gets back to normalcy, DC, June 2*). The government must maintain strict rules while adhering lockdown.

**Paris Katherine**  
*Hyderabad*

#### FUEL PRICES

In Hyderabad, petrol cost ₹98.20 per litre on June 2 when the whole state is under lockdown. Fuel charges have come down across the world due to lack of demand and excess supply but in India why is it going up? Government talks about one nation one tax in GST but exempts fuel from it and charging exorbitant taxes from citizens in the name of different hidden charges. It reflects the double standards of the governments.

**T. Kailash Ditya**  
*Hyderabad*

#### JOBS GOING AWAY

Unemployment has crossed 11 per cent and a number of people pushed below the poverty line is estimated at 23 crore as inflation edges higher than last year in commodities. The figures are worrisome. When will the government wake up to get economy back on track?

**Vikas Panchareddy**  
*Hyderabad*

#### VIP CONVOYS

When people are forced to visit hospitals with various issues and others trying to book a slot for vaccination, where is the need for the Telangana Formation Day celebrations which made the Chief Minister come out and traffic came to a grinding halt between Paradise flyover and Begumpet?

**N. Nagarajan**  
*Hyderabad*

## 50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

### Thakur V. Hari Prasad arrested

HYDERABAD, JUNE 2. Thakur V. Hari Prasad, Honorary Secretary of the Andhra Pradesh Welfare Fund, was arrested today. He has been lodged in the Central Crime Station.

Mr. Hari Prasad who is being produced before a City magistrate tomorrow for remand, has been charged with misappropriation, cheating, falsification of accounts and forgery.

The Andhra Pradesh Welfare Fund has been conducting the raffles in the State, for utilising the proceeds for welfare schemes.

KAUSHIK MITTER

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Dilip Cherian  
Dilli Ka Babu



## Too much PMO! Ex-babus chide Modi on vaccine policy, state ties

In the context of the second Covid surge, a group of 116 former civil servants has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi accusing the government of not addressing the crucial issues at stake.

What makes this "open letter" significant is that the signatories include former Cabinet Secretary K.M. Chandrasekhar, former foreign secretary and national security adviser Shiv Shankar Menon, former health secretary K. Sujatha Rao, former adviser to the Prime Minister T.K.A. Nair, former chief information commissioner Wajahat Habibullah and former Delhi lieutenant governor Najeeb Jung, among others.

Now unfettered by civil service regulations and free to speak their mind, these former babus, who call themselves the Constitutional Conduct Group, have alleged that the Centre has botched the efforts to tackle the spread of the pandemic and urged Mr Modi to take urgent action, including centralising procurement and supply of vaccines which should be administered

free and universally to all Indians. They have also expressed concern about the "steady erosion of the Cabinet system of governance" (too much PMO!) and deteriorating ties with the states.

Of course, there is nothing new in the missive. The ordinary citizens, Opposition parties, and even the judiciary in several states have been raising these same issues. The "coalition" of the willing that Mr Modi seemed to have created since his ascent to power in 2014 is now beginning to crack. The government had managed the narrative adroitly so far, but in the face of the Covid pandemic, it now seems unable to contain the growing dissent in the country over its pandemic policy.

#### KHEMKA SETS OFF CENTRE-HARYANA TUSSELE ON POSTINGS

The unrelenting Ashok Khemka has struck again. The Haryana cadre IAS officer and whistleblower has brought to light blatant violations of the civil service rules by the Haryana government. It appears that the state

government has been appointing IPS, IFOs and IRS officers to IAS cadre posts such as principal secretary without the Centre's sanction.

Sources say that Mr Khemka had made a representation to Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba in December last year, but it has taken a while for the department of personnel and training (DoPT) to sit up and finally take notice.

The department has now called for a detailed report from the Khattar sarkar on the status of these postings. It has advised the state administration to stick to the IAS cadre rules and not appoint other all-India cadre officers to IAS cadre posts of principal secretaries and certainly not for a period beyond three months, without the department's prior approval. Some may recall that a similar situation had arisen in Nagaland where the government was appointing state service officers to IAS cadre posts.

Mr Khemka, the officer who flagged the issue, should be satisfied with the Centre's response since it is such a

rare thing!

#### EXTENSION RAJ

The Modi sarkar has given a year's extension for Intelligence Bureau chief Arvind Kumar and RAW chief S.K. Goel in the interest of "continuity". Both are IPS officers. Interestingly, these extensions come after the setback to plans when both senior IPS officers, Rakesh Asthana and Y.C. Modi, were left out of the race to become the CBI chief. This, only after the Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana objected to their names, citing a Supreme Court ruling which states that only officers who have more than six months left for retirement could be considered.

But the government lost no time in quickly approving extended terms, in the case of IB and RAW chiefs. Note, it is only an extension and not a new appointment. Insiders say that the extension to the two officers was given after relaxing the existing rules.

Similarly, there is buzz that the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) chief Pramod Chandra Mody is hoping

for another extension. This, after two extensions, one of six months and another of three months already!

Of course, it will be argued that it is the PM's prerogative to retain trusted officers in supra-sensitive posts such as the IB and RAW chiefs. It also doesn't hurt a bit, if you are also close to the national security advisor Ajit Doval.

Questions will, of course, be asked about the problems such extensions create within the next in line. While the line of succession at IB is not really affected much by Mr Kumar's extended term, but in the case of Goel, the extension will ensure that at least two senior RAW officers will retire before his extended term ends.

While this practice allows the favourites to continue for a bit longer, it does kill the hopes of officers hoping to retire at the top of their service. But that's the subject for another day... keep watching this space.

*Share a babu experience! Follow dilipthecherian@Twitter.com. Let's multiply the effect.*



## quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	51,849.48	-0.16
Nifty 50	15,576.20	0.01
S&P 500*	4,209.71	0.18
Dollar (₹)	73.08	-0.23
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.36	0.01
Euro (₹)	89.01	0.18
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,772*116	0.23
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	71.15	1.28
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.005	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.593	-0.022

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

## Assocham seeks wage support, interest subsidy

Assocham asked the government to extend relief measures such as regulatory easing, wage support, and interest subsidy for the MSMEs. As the states are in the process of easing lockdowns, the trade and industry would need support to pick up their business thread again, it said. It has suggested that the surplus funds of ESIC should be used for providing wage support measures/stimulus packages for the employees.

## Ruchi Soya enters nutraceuticals; to sell 10 products



Ruchi Soya Industries said it has made a foray into the nutraceuticals and wellness segment and initially will launch 10 products under the brand 'Patanjali' and 'Nutrala'. Ruchi Soya aims to have a range of products across various categories in the next one year, it said. To start with, the firm is launching 10 products, including vitamin B12, iron complex, vitamin D, vitamin C and zinc complex, daily energy and weight gain, among others.

## SMS alerts for IPO process via UPI only from next yr

Markets regulator Sebi gave time till January 1, 2022 for implementation of guidelines pertaining to SMS alerts under the UPI system for shares applied and allotted during an initial public offering. Earlier, the deadline for putting in place automated web portal with respect to IPOs through UPI system has also been extended to October 1. The framework was to come into force from May 1.

## Rossari Biotech to acquire Unitop Chem for ₹420 cr

Speciality chemicals manufacturer Rossari Biotech announced the acquisition of Unifop Chemicals, a supplier of surfactants, emulsifiers, and specialty chemicals, for Rs 421 crore. Rossari will buy 100 per cent equity capital of Unifop, with 65 per cent shares acquired upon closure of the transaction, and the balance 35 per cent over the next two years. The total consideration for 100% stake is Rs 421 crore.



## States will have to change rent laws Union Cabinet clears Model Tenancy Act

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JUNE 2

The Union Cabinet has on Wednesday approved the much-awaited Model Tenancy Act, which is expected to give a fillip to rental housing and property markets across the country.

The Act, the government said, will help overhaul the legal framework on rental housing, enable creation of adequate rental housing stock and enable institutionalisation of rental housing.

The states and Union territories can now adopt the law through fresh legislation or by amending existing rental laws.

As per the Act, the states can set up rent authorities in cities, and landlords and tenants will have to be present before the authority to get rent agreements registered. The Act will also enable setting up of rent courts or tribunals to address rent-related disputes. These courts will have to pass an order within 60 days of receiving a complaint.

Further, the Act has several provisions to safeguard the interests of both tenants and landlords. Tenants will be liable to pay double the rent for two months and four times the rent in the subsequent months if they stay after expiry of the rental agreement.

Landlords can approach the rent court asking for eviction, if the tenants fail to pay the rent for two months in a row.

Unless mentioned in the

### UNLOCKING VACANT PROPERTIES

- ▶ Tenants will be liable to pay double the rent for two months and four times the rent in the consequent months if they overstay in a property
- ▶ Landlords can approach the rent court asking for eviction, if the tenants fail to pay the rent for two months
- ▶ Landlords cannot ask for more than two months of rent as security deposit
- ▶ Landlords will have to give three months' notice to the tenant before raising the rent



rent agreement, the landlord cannot hike the rent during the agreement period. The landlord will have to give three months' notice to the tenant before increasing the rent.

Further, the landlord will be responsible for the structural maintenance of the property.

Landlords in states that adopt the policy will not be able to ask for more than two months of rent as security deposit.

The Act also stipulates that the tenant cannot sublet the whole or part of the accommodation without the landlord's permission.

Similarly, landlords need to give a written notice 24 hours in advance to visit the premises. They cannot make a visit before 7 am and after 8 pm.

Nareedco president Niranjana Hiranandani said the new law "would make things easier for all stakeholders tenants, landlords

and investors to transact in rental housing."

The model Act will facilitate unlocking of vacant houses for rental housing. "It is expected to give a fillip to private participation in rental housing as a business model for addressing the huge housing shortage," Hiranandani said.

The new act would bring in over 11 million vacant urban houses into the rental market and help address the country's massive housing shortage, said Pankaj Bhansali, COO, Equaro Guarantees, a surety solutions provider.

Samantak Das, chief economist and head-research & REIS, JLL, a global property consultant, said, "The Model Tenancy Act is going to give a guiding framework to all states to make their respective tenancy Acts contemporary. Current Acts will give way to the new ones where uniformity will prevail."

## BYJU'S, GOOGLE IN TIEUP TO OFFER SCIENCE, MATHS IN SCHOOLS

New Delhi, June 2: Education technology firm Byju's on Wednesday announced a partnership with tech giant Google to offer a learning solution' for schools.

With this, the simplicity, flexibility and security of Google Workspace for Education and Byju's content pedagogy come together on the 'Vidyaartha' platform to aid effective learning at school, according to a statement.

This integration of Google Workspace for Education with Byju's would offer a collaborative and personalised digital platform for classroom organisation, available for free to participating educational institutions, the statement added.

"With a commitment to digital education, Google Workspace for Education will combine Byju's unparalleled pedagogy to empower educators in their journey towards digital transformation," the statement said.

Built on the Vidyaartha platform, this partnership will provide direct access to Byju's math and science pedagogy and visually rich learning solutions, including chapter-wise slides, readymade assignments, data banks, summary docs, handouts, tests, among others.

The acceptance of online learning in the last one year has led to the swift digitisation of the education system, Byju's noted. —PTI

## Mercedes to sell cars directly to customers

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, JUNE 2

Mercedes-Benz, India's biggest luxury car maker, on Wednesday announced it will completely revamp its sales model in the country and sell its new cars directly to customers.

Through a new 'Direct To Customer' model, which the company terms as the 'Retail of the Future', the Pune-based German car-maker said it will start selling its cars directly to customers from the October-December quarter.

The dealers will remain an integral part but will not be involved in transactions with the customer or buy stock from Mercedes-Benz.

In this new circular sales model, customers will contact dealerships (now called franchise partners) to buy a Mercedes car. But the dealer's responsibility will rest on providing a suitable brand experience to the customer through showcasing Mercedes-Benz cars, offering sales consulting and test drives.

The dealer will facilitate the sale of the car as well but Mercedes-Benz India will own all the stock of its manufactured/ imported models. Customers will be invoiced directly by Mercedes-Benz and there will be no financial transactions with the dealer.

For customers, it means transparent prices, and an end to bargaining for a better price, Mercedes-Benz said, as the cars will be now sold directly to customers by the company itself.

The industry's first new retail service will be



implemented in India from Q4 2021 onwards, Mercedes-Benz said.

The Indian arm of the German carmaker will now own the entire stock of cars, sell them via appointed dealers, invoice the new cars to its customers directly, process the order and fulfill them, and offer one price and purchasing experience for customers.

The dealer, on the other hand, will handle establishing and maintaining customer contacts, developing the market, and facilitating the sale of Mercedes-Benz cars.

"A key reason for introducing 'Retail of the Future' is to create an enhanced luxury buying experience for our customers," Martin Schwenk, MD & CEO, at Mercedes-Benz India, said.

He said it also will deliver a win-win solution for both customers and our dealers, underscoring our clear vision for a future which is sustainable, empowering, and digital.

The changes to the 'Retail of the Future' strategy for the customer include one price directly offered by Mercedes-Benz, cars will be invoiced

directly by Mercedes-Benz India and not by the dealers, and a much-simplified purchase process that is hassle-free.

For the dealers, the new retail model will help them reduce inventory costs and allow them to cater to the specific needs of its customers with a single centralised system that gives access to a large pool of stock cars.

Mercedes-Benz India will be responsible for centrally managing the selling price of all new cars, owning and managing the entire stock of new cars, and processing and fulfilling the order, reducing delivery time.

Schwenk said dealers will continue as brand representatives, maintaining their connection with customers and strive to offer the best customer experience in the market.

The dealers will continue to cater to after-sales service, remain brand representatives in the market, will be responsible for developing customer relationships, will continue to manage operational handling of customer interactions, and will continue local retail marketing activities.

## MPC begins meet, likely to hold rates

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, JUNE 2

With the second phase of the Covid-19 pandemic impacting consumption and growth, the monetary policy committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is likely to maintain status quo on policy rates, continue with an accommodative policy stance and ensure adequate liquidity in the system in an effort to stimulate growth. The MPC, which is the rate setting panel, began its three-day deliberations on Wednesday and would announce its decision on Friday.

The MPC has kept key policy rates unchanged in the last five bi-monthly policy meets.

The RBI's annual report 2020-2021, released last week, has already made it clear that "the conduct of monetary policy in 2021-22 would be guided by evolving macroeconomic conditions, with a bias to remain supportive of

growth till it gains traction on a durable basis while ensuring that inflation remains within the target".

The report added that the central bank would ensure that the system-level liquidity remains comfortable during 2021-22, is aligned with the stance of monetary policy, and monetary transmission continues unimpeded while maintaining financial stability.

In the assessment of the RBI, the evolving CPI inflation trajectory is likely to be subjected to both upside and downside pressures. The food inflation path will critically depend on the temporal and spatial progress of the south-west monsoon in 2021.

While the country's GDP growth has sequentially improved, the near-term outlook for the economy remains clouded with extreme uncertainty and downside risks. Since the previous monetary policy review in April 2021, most of the states have

announced stringent lockdowns, reflected by a jump in Oxford's Stringency Index for India from 58 at the start of April to 74 during the month of May.

These restrictions have severely impacted business activities with the contact-intensive sector facing the highest strain while mobility dropped significantly compared with Q3 and Q4 of FY21.

M. Govinda Rao, chief economic advisor of Brickwork Ratings, said, "The better-than-expected GDP numbers provide much-needed comfort to the MPC on the growth outlook. However, with the imposition of partial lockdown-like restrictions to contain the virus spread in several parts of the country, the downside risk on growth recovery has intensified. Hence, the RBI is likely to continue with its accommodative monetary policy stance in the decision of the MPC meeting to be announced on June 4 2021."

## Biden targets tax break on property capital gains

DAVID KOCENIEWSKI &amp; CALEB MELBY JUNE 2

President Joe Biden is pushing to close a tax break that helped his predecessor amass a fortune.

The Democrat has proposed narrowing a tax code provision that allows real estate investors to avoid capital gains taxes when they sell property, as long as they use the gains to buy more. Former president Donald Trump's most valuable investment, which traces back to his \$95 million purchase of a west-side Manhattan development site, has benefitted from the rule.

In 2005, when Trump's partners agreed to sell the site for \$1.8 billion—a deal Trump resisted—his cut was about \$500 million. Because the partners then used the capital gains from the sale to purchase two office towers, they and Trump didn't owe any tax on their gains. Today, Trump's stake in the buildings is worth about \$1.2 billion before accounting for debt. Biden's plan would

eliminate that kind of manoeuvre for Trump and thousands of others with real estate investments.

The so-called 1031 like-kind exchange rule, named after a section of the tax code, was created a century ago to aid family farmers. It has evolved into a beloved tool of property moguls, *Fortune* 500 companies and real estate trusts that can use it to create a daisy-chain of tax avoidance.

It works like this: An investor buys a building for \$4 million and sells it later for \$10 million. By redeploying the proceeds into a new property within six months, she can defer paying taxes on her gains. She can repeat that process indefinitely. When coupled with another tax break that wipes out all capital gains at death, the 1031 provision can enable real estate investors to forgo capital gains taxes entirely, enabling family dynasties to pass on riches to heirs virtually tax-free. Some wealth managers call the strategy "swap 'til you drop." —Bloomberg

## MERCHANDISE EXPORTS JUMP IN MAY



SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JUNE 2

Despite the second wave of infections, merchandise exports grew both yearly and sequentially in May. With imports declining sequentially, the trade deficit shrunk to an eight-month low of \$6.32 billion in May.

Merchandise exports in May 2021 stood at \$32.21 billion—67.39 per cent higher than the low base of \$19.24 billion in the lock-down-hit May 2020. The exports were also 7.93 per cent higher than \$29.85 billion in the pre-pandemic May 2019. Most importantly, exports continued to grow sequentially by 6.6 per cent compared to \$30.21 billion in April 2021, despite the second wave.

In the case of imports of \$38.53 billion, there has been an increase of 68.54 per cent over \$22.86 billion in May 2020, but a decline of 17.47 per cent over \$46.68 billion in May 2019. Imports were also 15 per cent down sequentially compared to \$45.45 billion in April 2021.

This helped India cut its trade deficit to \$6.32 billion compared with \$15.24 billion in April 2021 and \$16.84 billion in May 2019. However, the trade deficit was higher than \$3.62 billion in the lock-down hit May 2020.

"The merchandise trade deficit shrunk to an eight-month low \$6.3 billion in May 2021 from \$15.2 billion in April 2021 as the state-wise restrictions widened, curbing domestic demand for both gold and oil. A predominant 63 per cent of the decline in the trade deficit in May 2021 relative to April 2021 was on account of the collapse in gold imports, with the balance led by a narrower oil deficit," said Aditi Nayar of Iera.

### FENDING OFF THE VIRUS

### Ginger, garlic, turmeric demand up globally

## 'Halo' crops reap pandemic profits

LIBBY GEORGE, SABRINA VALLE &amp; NIGEL HUNT JUNE 2

In a flowing cream hijab, Karima M. Imam walks through her fields in scrubland in northern Nigeria as workers harvest a gnarled brown root that has turned gold since Covid struck ginger.

"If I had the capital, I'd plant more. People are looking for ginger now, and there is not enough," she said at her five hectare farm on the outskirts of Kaduna.

As the pandemic rages, people around the world have sought to guard against illness by turning to so-called halo foods. While scientists have dismissed many claims on social media about how superfoods can fend off



the virus, their positive role as part of a healthy diet is widely acknowledged.

As demand for halo foods surges, prices for ginger in Nigeria and acai berries in Brazil have leapt while exports of Indian turmeric and Chinese garlic have jumped in the past year.

"The demand for ginger is high because they are using it as medicine," Imam said, adding that during the lockdown she

boiled ginger with turmeric and garlic to take as a remedy.

Increasingly health-conscious consumers have given an already buoyant global spice market a further boost during the pandemic, heightening investor interest in the sector.

Singapore's Olam International completed the purchase of major US spice manufacturer Olde Thompson last month while Norway's Orkla took a controlling stake in Indian spice exporter Eastern Condiments in March.

In Nigeria, a 50 kg bag of ginger, which can help the body ward off germs and is used as a cold remedy, now sells for 15,000 naira (\$39), up from 4,000 to 6,000 naira two years ago.

Thanks to the ginger

rush, Imam has been able to start building a new house in nearby Millennium City, with a small warehouse attached so she can store and sell fresh ginger.

Prices began rising last year but since January they have taken off due to pandemic-related demand, said Florence Edwards, national president of the Ginger Growers, Processors and Marketers Association of Nigeria.

She said there had been demand from all over the world, citing India, China and Europe among popular markets.

There has also been a surge in demand for acai, a fruit rich in antioxidants hyped as a superfood. The state of Para in Brazil is the world's largest producing region. —Reuters



## SHORT TAKES

## Will miss Marin at Games: Sindhu

**New Delhi:** Star Indian shuttler P. V. Sindhu on Wednesday wished Spain's Carolina Marin a speedy recovery after she was forced out of the Tokyo Games due to a freak knee injury and said she will miss the reigning Olympic champion at the quadrennial event.

Marin suffered a torn anterior cruciate ligament in her left knee during training and pulled out of the showpiece event on Tuesday. "So sorry to hear about your injury. Hoping that you will recover soon and come back stronger," Sindhu, who had settled for the silver medal at Rio Games after losing to Marn in the final, said in a video message posted on twitter. "I will miss you at the Olympic Games but hope we compete against each other soon, so come back fast and recover soon. Lots of love," Sindhu said. — PTI

## Pak departure to England delayed

**Islamabad:** The Pakistan cricket team's departure to England has been pushed back by two days after the Pakistan Super League final was rescheduled for June 24 in Abu Dhabi. The PSL was earlier scheduled to end on June 20 and the national team was due to leave for England on June 23 to play three ODIs and three Twenty20s. However, with the PSL final pushed back by four days, the national team will leave for England on June 25. The first ODI is scheduled for July 8 in Cardiff. Abu Dhabi will host the remaining 20 games of the PSL after Pakistan's premier domestic twenty20 league was postponed in March when several players and support staff tested positive for Covid-19. — AP

## Task cut out for Ind against Qatar

**Doha:** Their preparation was far from ideal but India would take inspiration from the draw against Asian champions Qatar in 2019 when they face the same opponents in the second-leg match of the joint World Cup and Asian Cup qualifiers, here on Thursday. India had held mighty Qatar 0-0 in September 2019 here, a result considered as one of the best for the side in recent times. But India are playing their home match here as the Qatari capital was chosen as the centralised venue for all the remaining Group 'E' matches after the qualifiers were halted last year due to the Covid-19 pandemic. India's performance, however, has gone south since then while Qatar, the group toppers, have come into Thursday match on a high. — PTI

## Ancelotti back as Real Madrid coach

**Madrid:** Carlo Ancelotti has rejoined Real Madrid as coach for the next three seasons, the Spanish club said on Tuesday. "Hello Madrid!" the 61-year-old Italian who succeeds Zinedine Zidane posted on *Twitter*. Ancelotti, who won the Champions League for Real Madrid during his first spell at the club between 2013 and 2015, will sign his contract and be presented to the media on Wednesday, the club said in a statement. It took less than a week for Real Madrid to turn the page on Zidane criticising the lack of confidence shown in him by the club hierarchy. Instead, Ancelotti is about to be reunited with the club president Florentino Perez who ruthlessly ousted the coach in 2015, just one year after he led the club to a 10th Champions League title. — AFP

## Booker leaves Lakers in lurch

**Los Angeles:** Devin Booker scored 30 points as the Phoenix Suns left LeBron James and the depleted Los Angeles Lakers facing elimination from the NBA playoffs on Tuesday with a crushing 115-85 victory. Phoenix took full advantage of the injury absence of the Lakers' Anthony Davis to dominate the Lakers from early in the first quarter before romping to a comfortable win. — AFP

## NADAL MODE ON

## Rafael, Djokovic start off with a winning note in French Open

**Paris, June 2:** Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal began their bids for Grand Slam history with comfortable wins on Tuesday.

World No.1 Djokovic kicked off his bid for a 19th Grand Slam title with a 6-2, 6-4, 6-2 win over Tennys Sandgren inside an empty stadium.

Nadal, the 13-time champion and chasing a record-setting 21st major, defeated Alexei Popyrin of Australia 6-3, 6-2, 7-6 (7/3).

The Spaniard now has 101 wins against just two losses at the tournament.

Djokovic saw off world number 66 Sandgren in straight sets for his fourth win in four meetings with the American.

Top seed Djokovic, the champion in Paris in 2016, is attempting to become the first man in more than 50 years to win all four Slams multiple times.

The Serb fired 33 winners and broke serve five times as he set up a clash with Pablo Cuevas of Uruguay for a place in the last 32. Nadal, meanwhile, has now won 26 sets in a row at the tournament.

## NAVARRO LOSES MATCH AFTER CANCER RECOVERY

A "proud" Carla Suarez Navarro came close to winning her first match back after recovering from cancer at the French Open on Tuesday, but bowed out in the first round with defeat by Sloane Stephens.

The Spaniard was told in September 2020 that she was suffering with Hodgkin's lymphoma.

But almost nine months later, Suarez Navarro is back after recovering following eight chemotherapy and 15 radiotherapy sessions. The 32-year-old served for the match against 2018 runner-up Stephens but lost 3-6, 7-6 (7/4), 6-4.

## OTHER RESULTS

**Men's singles second round:** Alexander Zverev (GER x6) bt Roman Safiullin (RUS) 7-6 (7/4), 6-3, 7-6 (7/1); Henri Laaksonen (SUI) bt Roberto Bautista Agut (ESP x11) 6-3, 2-6, 6-3, 6-2; Casper Ruud (NOR x15) bt Kamil Majchrzak (POL) 6-3, 6-2, 6-4; John Isner (USA x31) bt Filip Krajinovic (SRB) 7-6 (8/6), 6-1, 7-6 (7/5); Reilly Opelka (USA x32) bt Jaume Munar (ESP) 6-3, 6-2, 3-6, 7-5.

**Women's singles second round:** Elena Vesnina (RUS) bt Petra Kvitova (CZE x11) — walkover; Daria Kasatkina (RUS) bt Belinda Bencic (SUI x10) 6-2, 6-2; Polona Hercog (SLO) bt Caroline Garcia (FRA) 7-5, 6-4; Ana Bogdan (ROM) bt Naomi Osaka (JPN x2) — walkover; Victoria Azarenka (BLR x15) bt Clara Tauson (DEN) 7-5, 6-4.



Rafael Nadal of Spain returns the ball to Alexei Popyrin of Australia during their men's singles match at the French Open tennis tournament in Paris on Tuesday. Nadal won in straight sets at 6-3, 6-2, 7-6 (7/3). — AFP

## Questions won't stop for Osaka

**Paris, June 2:** Unfortunately for Naomi Osaka, the questions will keep coming. There's nowhere to run and certainly no place to hide when you're a superstar travelling the world and playing on the biggest stages in tennis.

Some of the questions may be repetitive. Some may even be a bit negative, though for the most part those in the tennis media tend to treat top players with kid gloves.

Regardless, it's part of her job to answer them. That's not going to change, even with Osaka's withdrawal from the French Open after refusing to appear at the news conferences every other top player accepts as part of the job.

Only now she'll have even more questions to answer.

That's not entirely Osaka's fault, though she did herself no favors by the clumsy way she handled her mini media revolt in Paris. She blew off her first post-match news conference, after declaring earlier in a posting online that she didn't want to



Naomi Osaka reacts to losing a point in this file photo.

hear the same questions over and over and saying that reporters tend to kick players while they are down.

In other words, she didn't want to answer questions about why she didn't play better on clay.

Osaka rebounded a bit in a second statement announcing her withdrawal, and that's where it gets tricky.

She revealed she had suffered long periods of depression after winning the U.S. Open in 2018 and that she suffers great anxiety when faced

with having to answer questions from journalists at news conferences.

We all can and should be sympathetic to that. Depression and anxiety can be devastating and debilitating, as anyone who has suffered from them or dealt with a family member who has them knows so well.

Nobody should begrudge Osaka's decision to withdraw from a major championship because she's having trouble coping with those issues. Indeed, we should all support her

efforts to improve her mental health.

But let's make this clear, this isn't a media problem. It isn't a news conference problem.

Frankly, until Osaka said she would not show up for her news conference and then blew off tournament organisers who wondered why, no one even knew there was a problem.

There's nothing inherently wrong with a system that requires athletes who are paid millions of dollars to perform to be asked about their play afterward. There's also nothing wrong with reporters asking an occasional question that may not fit the positive narrative Osaka wants when writing about the newest star in tennis.

It's part of the reason why tournaments like the French Open sell out expensive seats every year. It's a lot of the reason Forbes said Osaka made \$37 million in 2019, most of it in endorsements from companies that expect Osaka to generate lots of press for their products. — AP

## Virat charged up for WTC battle

**Mumbai, June 2:** India captain Virat Kohli is not too concerned about the limited preparation time that his team will get for the World Test Championship final against New Zealand as he believes that it has the requisite understanding of conditions from its past experience of playing in England.

India take on New Zealand in the marquee game at Southampton from June 18. Currently, New Zealand are engaged in a two-Test series against England, while India would be in quarantine after landing there, including three days of hotel quarantine.

"...look, in the past we have landed in places three days prior even in a proper schedule and have had a hell of a series and hell of competition, so it is all in the head," Kohli said in the pre-departure press conference.

Virat insisted that it was also about the mindset.

"...it is not the first time we are playing in England, we all know what the conditions are like," he said.

"And even if you are used to the conditions, if you don't enter the field in the right frame of mind, you are going to nick that first ball or you are going to find it tough to pick wickets," added the superstar.

According to Kohli, his side would not have any issues even if it gets just

**We don't have any issues even with four practice sessions heading into the WTC final, because we are absolutely sure of what we can do as a team and we all have played in England.**

— VIRAT KOHLI  
India cricket team captain

four practice sessions.

"...we don't have any issues even with four practice sessions heading into the game, because we are absolutely sure of what we can do as a team and we all have played in England.

"Whether it is with the Indian team or India A as well, for the likes of (Mohammed) Siraj...so we are not bothered by that at all and we just want to get there and make the most of the opportunity at hand," he added.

Kohli echoed coach Ravi Shastri's thoughts about the World Test Championship final holding a lot of value.

"All of us take a lot of pride in playing Test cricket, and the way, we have progressed as a side is an example of what Test cricket means to us. So, for all of us as a unit, those who have been part of the Test side for many years, this is like an accumulation of all the hard work," he said.

— PTI

## DOMESTIC PLAYERS PITCH FOR CENTRAL CONTRACTS

**New Delhi, June 2:** As the BCCI works out a compensation package and a formula to distribute it for the Covid-19 hit domestic cricketers, voices demanding central contracts for such players are getting louder with seasoned names like Jaydev Unadkat, Sheldon Jackson and Harpreet Singh Bhatia leading the chorus.

Last month, former India player and domestic veteran Rohan Gavaskar had also called for state associations to introduce contracts for players over and above their match fees, just like it is for the national team.

Majority of domestic players don't get to play IPL, don't have job security and rely heavily on match fees, which took a beating last season with Ranji Trophy being cancelled due to the pandemic.

Saurashtra captain and India player Jaydev Unadkat doesn't need the security of a contract but he feels it should be introduced for the top 30 cricketers of the state.

"Talks over central contracts were happening even before the pandemic. Even cricketers at the age group level should be compensated for the lack of cricket, it will keep them motivated and then hand contracts to senior players," Unadkat said.

— PTI

## Conway hits ton to bolster Kiwis

**London, June 2:** New Zealand's Devon Conway joined a select group of cricketers on Wednesday

by marking his Test debut with a splendid hundred (136 off 240 balls) at Lord's to lead New Zealand to 246 for 3 against England at the end of first Day's play.

The South Africa-born opener found himself thrust into the action straight away after New Zealand captain Kane Williamson won the toss and batted in the first of a two-match series against England.

But while star batsman Williamson and the experienced Ross Taylor both fell cheaply, the 29-year-old Conway pressed on to a 163-ball century, reaching the landmark with a flamboyant whipped legside

four, his 11th boundary off England debutant fast bowler Ollie Robinson.

Only five other batsmen had previously scored a Test debut hundred at

Lord's, with Conway the first New Zealand international to achieve the feat.

New Zealand had the better of the morning session to be 85-1 at lunch after Williamson won the toss.

But James Anderson, equalling retired former captain Alastair Cook's England record of 161 Test appearances, struck in the first over after the interval to remove star batsman Williamson for 13 as the runs dried up.

And fast bowler Robinson, who'd earlier dismissed Tom Latham, then had the 37-year-old Taylor lbw for 14.

Latham and Conway made a steady start against England new-ball greats Anderson and Stuart Broad after Black Caps skipper Williamson won the toss.

**Brief scores (Day 1):** New Zealand 246/3 in 86 overs (Devon Conway 136 batting; O. Robinson 2/50) vs England.

## AUSSIE PLAYERS TO RAISE FUNDS FOR COVID-HIT INDIA

**Sydney, June 2:** Top Australian cricketers including star pacer Pat Cummins will participate in a 12-hour gaming live stream on Thursday to raise money for UNICEF Australia's India Covid Appeal.

The brainchild of pacer Josh Lalor, the initiative will let fans watch the likes of Cummins, spinner Nathan Lyon and the pace duo of Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood on a live stream when they talk about cricket and showcase their gaming skills in a bid to raise AUD 100,000. The fundraiser will begin at 1:30 pm IST and will also see participation from Moises Henriques, women cricketer Alyssa Healy and South African Rilee Rossouw among others.

"Being a cricketer from Australia, we have a unique relationship with Indian people," Lalor told *cricket.com.au*.

— PTI

## Croatia, Armenia play 1-1 stalemate

**Paris, June 2:** World Cup runners-up Croatia were held to a 1-1 draw by Armenia on Tuesday in their first warm-up match for Euro 2020.

Inter Milan winger Ivan Perisic opened the scoring for the home side in the 24th minute, with coach Zlatko Dalic's team up against England, the Czech Republic and Scotland at the Euros.

But Armenia made the most of a rare sortie into Croatia territory when Wbeymar Angulo equalised in the 72nd minute.

Lazio striker Vedat Muriqi hit all four goals, including one penalty, as Kosovo outclassed San Marino 4-1.

Kosovo's neighbours North Macedonia came

close to claiming the scalp of Slovenia after Napoli midfielder Elif Elmas scored the opening goal.

But home hearts were broken as Domen Crnigoj snatched an equaliser for Slovenia in the seventh minute of injury time.

North Macedonia are drawn with Austria, the Netherlands and Ukraine at the June 11-July 11 Euros.

Slovakia, in Group 'E' alongside Poland, Spain and Sweden, were held to a 1-1 draw by Bulgaria.

In the only game pitching two Euro-bound sides against each other, the Poles played out a 1-1 draw against Russia, in Group 'B' with Belgium, Denmark and Finland. — Agencies

## Veda recalls Covid trauma in family

**New Delhi, June 2:** "Completely destroyed" after losing her mother and sister to Covid-19 recently, Indian women's team cricketer Veda Krishnamurthy says she is slowly learning to tune herself out of that grief and stressed on the importance of mental health assistance in crisis situations.

Nine members of Krishnamurthy's family battled the disease and her mother and sister passed away within two weeks of each other last month in Karnataka. "I'm a big believer in

what destiny holds for you, but I really hoped that my sister would come back home. When she didn't, I was completely destroyed. All of us were broken to pieces," Krishnamurthy told *ESPNews*.

"...I still had to put up a brave face for the rest of the family. What I had to do in those testing couple of weeks was learn to tune myself out of my grief. But it keeps coming back to haunt you," she said. The middle-order batter said she was the only one in the family not to contract the virus and



Veda Krishnamurthy

ended up coordinating all the medical needs at that time. It was then that she realised how difficult it would have been for several other people to access basic care. "Going through my *Twitter* feed

at the time, I felt a lot of people were struggling with something as basic as getting a doctor to

instruct them on what they should be doing — whether that was isolating at home or something else," she recalled.

Speaking about the mental aspect of dealing with a health crisis and the ensuing tragedy of such a magnitude, Krishnamurthy said her mother and sister also suffered from anxiety while battling the illness.

"Mental strength is important. My oldest sister, Vatsala, had panic

attacks before she passed away from Covid," the 28-year-old said.

Krishnamurthy also revealed that she has dealt with mental health issues of her own in the past and called for a structured support system for those in need.

"A lot of people who are playing cricket currently know what mental health is, but it is also important to accept that if the system is not doing anything to offer you mental-health assistance, you can and must find the support for yourself if you can afford it," she added. — PTI