

SHORT TAKES

HC FINDS PARALLEL POWER CENTRES CHARGE TRUE

From page 1

The court also found provisions of AP Panchayat Raj Act, 1994 and the Rules made thereunder were violated by AP.

The court said, “The contention of the petitioner that the state government with an intention to create parallel power centres in villages by establishing village secretariats appears to be true. It is also the considered opinion of the court that by taking away the powers of sarpanch and panchayat secretary, they will not have any control on the functional assistants of the village secretariat and it will have a severe impact in implementing different types of programmes and schemes at the gram panchayat level. This will defeat the objective of the 73rd amendment of the Constitution of India.”

“If such action is permitted, it would render the gram panchayat not as an institution of self-government but as a puppet in the hands of the respondents, as held by this high court in Gollapalli Gangadhara Rao and others vs. state of Andhra Pradesh and others.”

“The court is prima facie of the opinion that the impugned GO Ms 2 is issued in violation of articles 40, 243-G of the Constitution of India, section 4(2) of AP Panchayat Raj Act, 1994 and against the aims and objects mentioned in GO Ms No. 110 and GO Ms No.149 of panchayat Raj and rural development.”

Advocate general Sriram submitted that though the VROs were made the cheque-disbursing officers of the functional assistants, whose leave applications were also processed through the VROs, the GO in question was the policy basis of the government. “It should be allowed to learn and evolve based on its experiences without the courts interference at the stage.”

He said the state government had no intention to create parallel power centres and the village secretariats with the functional assistants were merely meant for the last level delivery of various welfare schemes.

FLAT OWNERS LOST 1,953 SQUARE YARDS

From page 1

On the other side of the Silicon County, the driveway was shown as 24 feet as per agreement, but practically it was only 16 feet.

The second accusation is that though total land set apart by the accused for Jayabheri Silicon County was 18,521 sq yds, the actual existing area is only 16,568 sq yds and thereby the flat owners have lost 1,953 sq yds. The accused have allegedly usurped this.

The third allegation was about the common maintenance charges of the building complex.

Complaints were made against the developers and promoters in 2008 before the Madhapur court, the FIR was registered and chargesheet submitted under Sections 406, 420 IPC read with several sections of the AP Apartments (promotion of constructions and ownership) Act.

Challenging it, Murali Mohan and others filed a discharge petition before the trial magistrate court of Cyberabad, Kukatpally, located at Miyapur. The trial court discharged them. Challenging it, the complainants approached Hyderabad High Court in 2014, which then directed the trial court to continue the trial against the promoters and developers.

Challenging it, Murali Mohan and two others approached the apex court, which rejected their plea two days ago.

BOAT OPERATIONS SUSPENDED FOR THREE DAYS

DC CORRESPONDENT KAKINADA, JULY 12

Due to bad weather, the boat operations were suspended for three days and the famous Gandhi Posamma Temple in Gonduru village in Devipatnam mandal in East Godavari has been temporarily closed.

According to sources, East and West Godavari districts experienced rains for the past two days and the Godavari Waters entered Gandhi Posamma Temple.

It's the time to picnic



Tourists flock to Undavalli caves following relaxation of Covid-19 lockdown restrictinos near Tadeipalli in the Guntur district on Monday. — C. NARAYANA RAO

AP to move SC against TS on sharing of water

Claims neighbour state not following directions of KRMB

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JULY 12

Andhra Pradesh would file a petition in the Supreme Court on the “violation” of rules by Telangana government in drawing water “illegally” from River Krishna “without following KRMB directions”.

According to reliable information, the AP government has prepared a petition on Telangana irregularities vis-a-vis sharing of Krishna water and violation of KRMB norms and would file the petition at the apex court in a day or two.

The AP government would plead that the projects on interstate rivers and associated power plants should be recognized as national projects.

According to officials, construction of new irrigation projects without any permission and using excess water by violating the water sharing agreement has turned into a big problem for AP. Hence the state government is seeking a permanent resolution in the Supreme Court.

The government said the Constitution of India gave responsibility of resolving

● **THE TAKING-OVER** of reservoirs and associated power plants by the Union Government would end disputes between states.

● **AP IS** urging the Supreme Court to give orders to the central government to take over reservoirs and associated power projects in its control and distribute Krishna river water among Telangana and AP state.

water disputes to the Union Government. Hence, all projects on interstate rivers and associated power plants should be in the control of the central government.

According to the Bachawat Award, drinking water and irrigation are the first priority. Power generation can be done only when water is released for irrigation purposes, and water should not be released for power generation.

Further, the upper state (Telangana) cannot adamantly release water for power generation going waste into the sea without considering the necessities of the lower state (AP) and this is a violation of human rights.

Ever since the announcement of the Bachawat Award, all the states have been strictly following this protocol and this policy has legitimacy. Over time,

tribunals and courts have ruled on a number of disputes, legitimizing the Bachawat policy.

“AP is forced to knock at the Supreme Court doors as the upper state violates the water sharing agreements and KRMB direction without caring about the laws.

The AP government is mentioning about the adverse impact of releasing of water for power generation by TS, on lakhs of farmers and cultivation activity.

Further, AP is highlighting the infringement of fundamental rights of water and food of AP people, which is allegedly done without any regard to KRMB directions.

The taking-over of reservoirs and associated power plants by the Union Government would end disputes between states.

A conditions of clashes between police and irriga-

tion officials of AP and TS had been created, and AP lodged a complaint with KRMB, saying Telangana did not bother to consider the KRMB orders.

Apart from this, the AP state will also report to the apex court on the knee-jerk reaction to the finalization of the KRMB procedures, making it unsustainable, and the Centre's failure to take drastic action on issues such as the finalization of the procedures, officials said.

AP claimed that the responsibility of protection rights of farmers and people of the state is on the shoulders of the state government. Hence, it is knocking the doors of the apex court, seeking justice.

The AP government is seeking immediate finalization of the KRMB procedures and jurisdiction.

Further, AP is urging the Supreme Court to give orders to the central government to take over reservoirs and associated power projects in its control and distribute Krishna river water among Telangana and AP state according to the agreements of the duo states.

AP will continue its fight for water sharing: Anil

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JULY 12

Water resources minister P. Anil Kumar Yadav has asserted that Andhra Pradesh is using its lawful share of water and it is Telangana that is violating all directives of Krishna River Management Board.

In this context, he accused Telugu Desam Chief N. Chandrababu Naidu of trying to create differences among people of various districts within AP. On Naidu's prompting, TD legislators from Prakasam district are demanding stoppage of work on the Rayalaseema Lift Irrigation Scheme (RLIS), he charged.

Speaking to media at the party central office here

● **MINISTER SAID** while all political parties in Telangana have come on one platform on Krishna water issue, Naidu in Andhra Pradesh has been making his district leaders take different stands for political gains.

On Monday, the Minister pointed out that TD leaders of Prakasam district have written a letter seeking dropping of proposal for increasing the capacity of RLIS at Srisailem from 44,000 cusecs to 80,000 cusecs.

“This is only to create a rift among people of different regions,” he remarked.

Terming the TDP as Telangana Desam Party,

REFORM | WISE

Decentralised accommodation makes it convenient for pilgrims

All praise for TTD room booking system

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUPATI, JULY 12

The new accommodation allotment system TTD introduced a month ago has reduced waiting time for visiting pilgrims in getting accommodation at Tirumala.

Accommodation at hill-top is the first and most difficult task for devotees before having darshan of Lord Venkateswara.

Since inception of the new system, as many as 70,148 pilgrims have availed the accommodation facility in the hill town, 35,418 of them under ARP and 34,730 in current booking.

To avoid delay in allotment of accommodation to pilgrims, TTD decentralised the registration system from June 12. New registration counters have been opened at six loca-

tions in Tirumala, instead of being done only at CRO.

Devotees who book accommodation online through advance reservation can scan their receipts at Alipiri tollgate, apart from Alipiri and Srivarimettu footpath routes. By the time they reach Tirumala, they will get an SMS to their registered mobile number about the sub-enquiry office they must approach

YSRC says it will unveil corrupt deeds of TD govt

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JULY 12

Endowments Minister Vellampalli Srinivas Rao asserted that YSR Congress government will not spare anyone indulging in corruption and illegalities. As part of it, he announced, they will expose corrupt deeds that took place during the five-year rule of TD govt.

Srinivas Rao charged that TD regime showed development only on paper, while YSRC government's welfare and development projects are there for all to see. He was speaking while touring the 44th Division of Vijayawada city and inter-

● **MINISTER DIRECTED** officials to speed up the two works, so that Vijayawada could soon turn into a clean and green city.

acting with people to know the problems they are facing.

The Minister maintained that the previous TD government did not put in any efforts to develop Vijayawada, even though it also held power in the Vijayawada Municipal Corporation. He alleged that the erstwhile government laid only foundation stones, which never materialised during TD's five-year tenure. At the same time,

there was considerable corruption, which the YSRC government will expose in the times to come.

Responding to requests of Bhavanipuram residents about construction of a municipal stadium, Srinivas Rao assured that it will be constructed in the coming days. He promised to rehabilitate displaced families of LD colony area.

Questioned about the slow pace of water pipeline and underground drainage works, the minister directed officials to speed up the two works, so that Vijayawada could soon turn into a clean and green city.

YSR FOOD BANKS IN AP TAKE OFF FROM GUNTUR

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JULY 12

The first of its kind in Andhra Pradesh, YSR Food Banks have been started at six places in Guntur to help the needy get food. Under this, leftover food from hotels and various functions will be collected and given to the needy.

Advisor to the government on public affairs Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy hailed the efforts of Guntur Municipal Corporation and proposed that this service could be extended all over the state.

Ramakrishna Reddy, Rajya Sabha member Venkataramana Rao, MLC Janga Krishnamurthy, Mayor Sivanaga Manohara Naidu and Municipal Commissioner Challa Anuradha inaugurated the YSR Food Banks at the Gandhi Park in Guntur city on Monday.

Sajjala said food banks are likely to get a good response from NGOs. Guntur should be a model on this for other areas and states. “Taking inspiration from Chief Minister Jagan's welfare schemes, GMC corporators and officials came up with the food banks scheme,” he said.

Rajya Sabha member M o d i d e v i Venkataramana promised to provide financial assistance through MPLADS funds to these food banks.

Guntur Mayor Manohar Naidu said the YSR food banks were set up to help the poor from other parts of the city for various purposes.

He said food banks were started in the busiest Gandhi Park, bus stand, railway station, GGH and lodge center in the city. Such a facility will be provided in more areas.

A toll-free number would be set up for those who provide food to food banks. The responsibility of managing food banks would be handed over to NGOs.

HC DIRECTS AMARA RAJA TO TAKE STEPS TO CONTROL LEAD

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JULY 12

The AP High Court has directed the Amara Raja Batteries Limited to take steps to control the levels of lead in the air, water, land and also in the blood of its workers while issuing an interim order.

The High Court held hearing in the case on Monday and observed that the reports of Hyderabad-based Environment Protection Training and Research Institute and the Andhra Pradesh Pollution Control Board (APPCB) confirmed the presence of high levels of lead in the air, water, land and also in the blood of the workers of the firm and directed the management of the ARBL to take steps to control it.

The court observed that if the management failed to take necessary action to control lead levels, it would take a decision on the issue.

State strikes pacts with 14 firms to empower women

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JULY 12

The Andhra Pradesh government has entered into a memoranda of understanding with 14 firms under YSR Cheyutha scheme to empower women and help them get sustainable income in the state, on Monday.

Under the scheme, the state government provides financial aid of ₹75,000 in four phases to the women belonging to BC, SC, ST and minorities from rural areas to help them set up small businesses so that they would be trained in skill enhancement besides getting capital support and market linkages.

Minister for panchayat raj and rural development PRR Reddy said Chief Minister Jagan had taken up the YSR Cheyutha scheme in order to help poor women have financial sustenance. Under it, each woman would be given ₹75,000 in four phases.

So far, 24 lakh women were given ₹8,000 crore, he said.

In addition to the state's financial aid, several financial institutions have extended loan worth of ₹15.07 crore to 2.67 lakh women in the current fis-

cal.

He explained how these women started business in their villages and became financially strong. A command and control room was set up in order to provide advice and suggestions to the women on how to go about with their business.

Minister for municipal administration Botsa Satyanarayana said women aged between 45 and 60 were availing financial support under the scheme in order to start a business and start earning on their own.

Agriculture Minister Kannababu called upon firms dealing with horticulture, agriculture, food processing etc to have partnership with these women to help them take up business.

He hoped that the MoUs entered therein would help the farmers and women and yield good results.

Minister for animal husbandry, Seediri Appalaraju, said the state government's move on entering into MoUs with several firms would ensure that women would not suffer due to financial hardships. The scheme would enable them become financially self-sustainable.

IF WATER LEVEL DIPS, POWER GENERATION NOT LIKELY

From page 1

Srisailem right bank power plant superintendent engineer M. Srinivas said, “As water is depleting in the Srisailem reservoir due to withdrawal of water by Telangana state for power generation and with no inflow of water, it is operating only one unit out of five and generating nearly 130-140 mw of power at present and this exercise will continue just for a few days until water level dips to 805 ft at the dam as it cannot draw water below that level.”

Meanwhile, water resources authorities say that Srisailem reservoir received surplus water for nearly 60 days during August and September last year causing them to release 600 tmc ft of water downstream by lifting the dam gates following good rainfall in catchment areas of the Krishna river.

They say that unless there is good rainfall in the Krishna river catchment areas in the days to come and Telangana state projects on the river filled

up to the capacity, Andhra Pradesh may not be able to get water into its projects and help farmers to take up cultivation of crops especially in parts of Rayalaseema area and also in the entire command area along the river course.

Srisailem dam superintendent engineer S. Venkata Ramanaiah said, “Telangana is drawing nearly 0.5 to 0.6 tmc ft of water from Srisailem dam for power generation per day even as the water level is very low and is getting depleted with no inflow of water. Unless there is good rainfall in the Krishna river catchment area, it becomes difficult for Telangana state projects to get filled up so that it can release water downstream for Andhra Pradesh projects to get filled up in the days ahead.”

On the other hand, the Telangana state government stopped power generation from its plant from Nagarjunasagar project on July 10th and the same status remains unchanged as of now.

IN BRIEF

EAST GODAVARI DIST. RECEIVES HEAVY RAINS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JULY 12

Routhulapudi in East Godavari district received the state's highest very heavy rainfall of 127 mm on Monday followed by other areas in West and Visakhapatnam district under the influence of the Low Pressure that formed on July 11.

The state registered 168.6 mm of rainfall against its 147.9 mm normal rainfall as on Monday during the southwest monsoon season that annually begins on June 1.

A release from the AP Disaster Management Authority stated that there would be no likelihood of the low pressure further upgrading into the depression, but the rainfall activity would continue to prevail across the state for the next few days under the influence of the existing system.

Strong wind speeds reaching 40 to 50 kmph gusting to 60 kmph likely over South Bay of Bengal, along and Westcentral Bay of Bengal along and off Tamil Nadu. The fishermen were advised not to venture into the sea areas till further advice from the government.

PRODUCT MARKET FACILITIES TO THE FARMERS

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, JULY 12

Steps are being taken to facilitate farmers to dispose of the vegetables and other farm produce at the Rythu Bazaars across the district. Nellore district Collector K.V.N. Chakradhar Babu said that he would hold a review meeting with all marketing committees to ensure that farmers are allowed to market their products at the Rythu Bazaars.

He was addressing farmers while taking part in Rythu Chaitanya Yatra at Jandadibba village in Sangam mandal on Monday.

Referring to 1.36 crore financial assistance given to 2.45 lakh farmers under Rythu Bharosa scheme, he advised the farmers to register the crops they are raising under the e-crop system to obtain government subsidies and compensation in case of crop damage.

Pointing to seven lakh MTs of paddy purchased from the farmers last year, he urged the farmers to cultivate the paddy varieties suggested by the government as they have been supplying fine rise varieties to the ration cardholders.

According to the Chakradhar Babu around 79 lakh working days were provided under National Rural Employment Guarantee Act and a massive plantation programme has been taken up under the scheme.

Construction of 50 per cent of village secretariat buildings have been completed in the district, Collector said that funds would be released to clear the pending bills to the extent of ₹78 crore for the construction of these buildings.

He expressed his satisfaction over the works taken up under Naadu-Nedu programme in Mandal Praja Parishad school in Penuballi village.

TD SENIOR LEADER DIES OF CARDIAC ARREST

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, JULY 12

Telugu Desam Party Senior leader and former Chairman of Srikalahastheeswara Devasthanams P.R. Mohan died of cardiac arrest on Monday. Mr Mohan, the former chairman of Sports Authority of Andhra Pradesh, suffered a heart attack around midnight and died at his residence, before he was shifted to a nearby hospital by his family members.

Upon learning about the demise of the senior leader, TDP Chief Chandrababu Naidu rushed to Srikalahasti and consoled the family members of Mohan. Speaking to media persons after paying floral tributes to the departed leader, Naidu said, "Mohan had rendered invaluable service to the Telugu Desam Party and that his death was a great loss to the party and it is sad to lose a good leader."

Several politicians including TDP leaders Nara Lokesh, K. Atchannaidu, M. Sugunamma paid tributes to the departed leader.

Registrations for Covid-19 vaccine



People aged below 45 fill documents to get registered for Covid-19 vaccination at the District Cold Storage Vaccine Centre in Visakhapatnam on Monday.

— DC

State ups vigil for 'third wave'

A fine of ₹100 will be imposed if the mask is not worn in public places

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JULY 12

The state government has geared up for a possible Covid-19 third wave hitting after the third week of August by arranging nearly 70,000 beds with oxygen supply at designated private and government hospitals across the state, recruiting additional staff with walk-in facilities and facilitating quick production of drugs.

Srikakulam collector Shrikrish B. Lathkar said, "Oxygen cylinders or concentrators should be set up in all government hospitals with more than 50 beds. The government is going to increase the

- 1,578 positive cases reported in 24 hours; 3,041 discharged; 22 deceased
- Active cases 27,195; R-naught value rising alarmingly
- Third wave may possibly appear after August 15
- Nearly 70,000 beds with oxygen supply ready; Third wave may peak in Oct-Nov
- Health officials expect 20 lakh cases in third wave, including 25% among children

number of ventilators in hospitals by 50 per cent. In 100-bed government hospitals, 20 per cent should be allocated as ICU beds and 80 per cent as non-ICU beds."

Speaking to *Deccan Chronicle*, Andhra Medical College principal Dr P.V. Sudhakar, who is the North Andhra Covid-19 special officer, said, "We have kept nearly 7,000 beds with oxygen

supply in Vizag for possible third wave after August 15. Nearly 25 per cent of the cases may be reported from children due to incomplete vaccination and opening of educational institutions by August."

Dr C. Prabhakara Reddy, former state Covid-19 control centre special officer, said the rising value of R-naught (reproduction number)

from the past few days indicated the chances of the third wave coming.

"If the R-naught value increases beyond one, it means the rate of spread of disease increases rapidly," Dr Prabhakara Reddy said.

On the other hand, the police was also instructed to take strong action against the violators of Covid-19 protocols. The state police said the new

curfew timings would be effective from July 13.

"Citizens travelling during the curfew will have to apply for an e-pass," a police official told *Deccan Chronicle*.

A fine of ₹100 will be imposed if the mask is not worn in public places. Even in commercial outlets like shopping malls, cinema theatres, hotels, and restaurants, masks must be worn by everyone. Huge penalties will be slapped in case of violations.

A WhatsApp number will be created for strict implementation of the enforcement measures. The curfew relations were rescheduled from 6 am to 9 pm.

BEAR ENTERS RAYAPURAM IN SEARCH OF FOOD

DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, JULY 12

A bear entered closer to human habitations at Rayapuram village in Rolla mandal in the district on Monday morning. The bear came from a nearby reserve forest and entered closer to the residential area in search of food at orchards and standing crops closer to Rayapuram village in the Rolla mandal. The villagers alerted and shouted at the animal to deviate its route. The bear however returned to the hill area of the forest. The forest officials recently protected a 45 days old leopard cub in Kalyandurgam area in the district when its mother ran away in fear. The cub was sent to Tirupati zoo.

People closer to hillock areas and reserve forests in the district are in a fear of frequent visiting of leopards and bears closely towards human habitations in search of food.

Tension as demolition of encroachments begin

DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, JULY 12

A tense situation prevailed at Tadipatri in this district following removal of encroachments at RDT Colony on Monday. MLA Pedda Reddy of the YSRC led the demolition while party state secretary Ramesh Reddy backed the victims.

Heated arguments erupted between the two and additional forces have been posted at the colony to avert violence.

Municipal and revenue authorities in the town had identified some 70 houses built illegally in places where land was sanctioned to beneficiaries during the recent house plot allotments in the RDT area. The civic authorities say they had issued demolition notices against unauthorised constructions but the residents hadn't responded.

On Monday, a team of revenue and municipal

- When 10 out of the 70 houses were demolished, YSRC state secretary rushed the spot and resisted the work as his close aide's home was also being removed. When the MLA reached the spot, Ramesh Reddy picked an argument with him and blamed the revenue and municipal authorities

authorities rushed to the spot along with JCBs and started removal of the encroachments.

When 10 out of the 70 houses were demolished, YSRC state secretary rushed the spot and resisted the work as his close aide's home was also being removed. When the MLA reached the spot, Ramesh Reddy picked an argument with him and blamed the revenue and municipal authorities for having allowed the constructions.

MLA Pedda Reddy explained that unauthorised constructions on the house sites allotted to genuine beneficiaries of the housing scheme need be removed. "The house sites for

the poor were occupied by a group of people. All of them will be demolished. Our government's intention is to provide houses for all eligible people under the Nava Rathnalu," Pedda Reddy said.

He said genuine beneficiaries need not worry and their houses will not be removed.

The MLA firmly took the stand that unauthorised constructions would be demolished irrespective of the party affiliation of those who occupied these lands.

When Ramesh Reddy sought a day's time, officials agreed to this and stopped the demolition works. Police rushed to the spot and dispersed the crowd.

Varsity sets up separate rooms for Covid-19 students

TESTING | TIME

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, JULY 12

As cases of Covid-19 have started declining, Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University Kakinada (JNTUK) is preparing to conduct its BTech, MTech, BPharmacy, MPharmacy, MCA and MBA examinations in a phased manner.

JNTUK will first hold from July 19 to July 26 its BTech final year examinations, so that students can appear for job placements or enrol themselves for higher studies. Later, the second and third year exams will be conducted.

- If any Coronavirus patients are writing their exams, they will be accommodated in a separate room. Their answer sheets will be kept in a safe custody for three days before being processed further.

- MTech, MBA, MCA and M. Pharmacy first year examinations will start in July end.

- Exams have been so planned that they will all be completed by end of August. The dates of second and third year exams will be announced after completion of fourth year and first year first semester examinations.

The final year mid examinations started on Monday and will end on Thursday.

Only two students could not write the examinations on Monday, as they had been hospitalised due to Coronavirus.

JNTU-K Controller of Examinations Venkata

Reddy said students who are unable to write their examinations due to Covid-19 can appear for them again. He said the first-year

BTech, BPharmacy, MCA and MBA first semester examinations will start by end of July. The third year second semester

exams will commence from the first week of August.

MTech, MBA, MCA and M. Pharmacy first year examinations will start in July end. Exams have been so planned that they will all be completed by end of August. The dates of second and third year

exams will be announced after completion of fourth year and first year first semester examinations.

The controller of exams said all engineering, pharmacy and management colleges affiliated to JNTU-K have been directed to follow all Covid-19 protocols while conducting examinations.

If any Coronavirus patients are writing their exams, they will be accommodated in a separate room. Their answer sheets will be kept in a safe custody for three days before being processed further.



Health department to issue guidelines

FROM PAGE 1

Besides wearing masks, hand sanitization is mandatory for all staff and the general public. The additional guidelines will be issued by the health department.

As for testing, Jagan asked officials to conduct this in a focused manner, limiting this only to those who have fever and other symptoms. If tested positive, they should receive proper medical attention, he said.

About oxygen supply, he advised officials to complete the works of oxygen generation plants. Officials told the CM that work was in progress at 134 oxygen generation plants at 97 locations, and these shall be completed by August end.

The CM asked officials to focus attention on vaccination for teachers and complete it before the reopening of schools. He said both government and private school teachers should get the jabs, based on vaccine availability.

Consider vaccinating Degree students through vaccination camps in colleges, he said.

Jagan asked officials to be vigilant towards non-covid diseases and be prepared during the present monsoon season. There is a possibility of an increase in snake bites, mainly in Machilipatnam and Avanigadda regions, he said and told officials to equip all PHCs with required medicines.

Also, as diseases like dengue are likely to spread in the agency areas during the monsoon season. Officials must arrange the required medicines at PHC level and ensure that these

drugs meet WHO and GMP standards. Also, focus on the Nadu-Nedu initiative and complete the pending works, he told officials.

The CM asked officials to brace up for the possible third wave. Studies are showing that children would be affected in the third wave.

The officials informed the CM that there were 28,680 active Covid cases in the state at present. Of these, 5,695 patients are being treated in hospitals and 4,976 in Covid care centres.

The recovery rate has increased to 97.83 per cent and positivity rate to 2.91 per cent. The positivity rate is less than three per cent in seven districts. Some 92.91 per cent of the patients in Network hospitals are being treated under Aarogyasri scheme.

As many as 3,876 black fungus cases were registered till date in the state, of which 324 persons died and 2,500 were discharged.

On vaccination, officials said 1,31,43,873 people have been vaccinated, whereas 96,83,544 got single dose vaccination and 34,60,329 have completed the two-dose vaccination.

Deputy chief minister Alla Kali Krishna Srinivas (Nani), minister Botsa Satyanarayana, chief secretary Adityanath Das, DGP Gautam Sawang, Covid command and control chairman Dr KS Jawahar Reddy, health principal secretary AK Singhal, health secretary Ravi Chandra, health commissioner Katamaneni Bhaskar, the 104 call centre in-charge Babu, Aarogyasri CEO Dr Mallikarjuna and APMSIDC VC and MD Vijayarama Raju were among those present.

AP sees steep fall in Covid-19 cases

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JULY 12

AP has witnessed steep fall in fresh Coronavirus infections to 1,578 with 22 deaths in the last 24 hours.

The state reported 2,224 cases on June 28 and 2,100 cases on July 5 while in other days, the average caseload was nearly 4,000 in the last week of June and 3,000 in the last few days in July.

The state health authorities reported here on Monday that out of 62,657 samples tested, 1,578 persons were found infected with the virus. Out of a total number of 2,30,48,945 samples tested, 19,24,421 persons were found infected with the virus and of them,

18,84,202 were recovered, while 27,195 are still active with the virus.

With a dip in fresh cases of Coronavirus except for six districts, the remaining districts reported two digit cases. East Godavari topped the state with 305 followed by 257 in Chittoor, 179 in Nellore, 173 in Prakasam, 152 in West Godavari, 117 in Kadapa, 97 in Guntur, 92 in Krishna, 68 in Visakhapatnam, 37 in Anantapur, 35 each in Kurnool and Vizianagaram and 31 in Srikakulam.

Among total active cases, East Godavari reported the highest at 4,756 followed by 3,793 in Chittoor and 3,005 in Prakasam, 2,918 in West Godavari, 2,824 in Krishna and 2,475 in Nellore.

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SHORT TAKES

SC TO HEAR BIHAR'S PLEA ON SENARI MASSACRE

PARMOD KUMAR | DC
NEW DELHI, JULY 12

The Supreme Court on Monday agreed to hear Bihar government's appeal challenging the Patna High Court verdict acquitting all the 13 accused — allegedly linked to banned Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) — who were convicted by the trial court for their involvement in 1999 Senari massacre in which 34 upper caste people were killed.

A bench comprising Justice S. Abdul Nazeer and Justice Krishna Murari while admitting the appeal by Bihar government against High court order asked it to serve notice on all 13 acquitted accused persons. The High Court in May 2021 had set aside the judgment of a lower court while acquitting the 13 accused and ordered their immediate release.

In 1999, extremists allegedly linked to the MCC executed 34 people belonging to an upper caste in the open field in Senari. On November 18, 2016, the Jehanabad district court had sentenced 10 persons to death and awarded life imprisonment to three others. The district court had acquitted 23 others for lack of evidence.

JAISHANKAR TO ATTEND SCO MEET IN TAJIKISTAN

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 12

With Afghanistan descending into chaos and anarchy following the withdrawal of US troops, India on Monday said external affairs minister S. Jaishankar would visit Tajikistan on July 13-14 to take part in the meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Council of Foreign Ministers and would also attend the SCO Contact Group on Afghanistan that will meet on July 14 with the participation of the Afghan Government.

As reported by this newspaper last week, the meeting is expected to be attended by Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi as well. Both neighbours along with Russia, China, and most of the Central Asian Republics are members of the SCO. The meetings in the Tajik Capital Dushanbe are expected to discuss the fluid situation in Afghanistan.

In a statement, the MEA said, "The meeting will discuss the achievements of the organisation as it celebrates the 20th Anniversary of its formation in this year. It will also assess the preparation for the upcoming SCO Council of Heads of States on 16-17 September 2021 in Dushanbe and exchange views on current international and regional issues."

TN ALL-PARTY DELEGATION TO VISIT DELHI

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR
& D. SEKAR | DC
CHENNAI, JULY 12

Reflecting the collective sentiments of the people of Tamil Nadu, an all-party delegation would go to New Delhi and put pressure on the Union government to refrain from giving permission to Karnataka to build a dam across the Cauvery at Mekedatu.

A meeting of leaders of all legislative parties in the state passed a resolution to that effect, besides extending support and cooperation of the government in all its efforts to stop Karnataka from going ahead with its plans on building the dam and also expressing their united opposition to the project.

The first of the three resolutions urged the Centre not to give permission for the Mekedatu project as it would impinge the share of Cauvery water for the farmers of the State and had also thrown a big challenge to the Constitution.

Attended by leaders of all political parties having representation in the Assembly, the meeting expressed concern over Karnataka attempting to build the dam when the Supreme Court had made it clear that no work on the river system could be undertaken without permission from the riparian states.

Of the three sources of water flow into Tamil Nadu, only one did not have the control of Karnataka government and that was from the catchment area downstream of both the Kabini and Krishnarajasagar dams, Stalin said in his address at the meeting.

VACCINE DRIVE NOT HELD IN 25 RAJ. DIST. DUE TO SHORTAGE

Jaipur, July 12: Covid-19 inoculation sessions were not conducted in at least 25 of Rajasthan's 33 districts on Monday due to vaccine shortage, an official said.

"The state had only 10,000 doses on Monday. So, vaccination sessions could not be conducted in about 25 districts of the state," health secretary Siddharth Mahajan said.

Rajasthan will receive eight lakh doses on Monday night and this will be consumed in the next two days, he said.

Mahajan said that the state had demanded 1.5 crore anti-Covid vaccine doses for July, but the Centre allocated 65 lakh doses. The officials said that a large number of people need to be vaccinated for the second dose in July for which adequate supply is required.

Rajasthan has also written to the Centre to give the vaccine doses allocated to private hospitals to the state government, Mahajan said.

According to the health department, from June 21 to July 8, the state had received 31.63 lakh vaccine doses from the Centre.

During this period, 48 lakh people were vaccinated against the coronavirus and among the doses administered, were also those which the state had purchased on its own expense.

On July 9, Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot in a letter to the Union health minister had urged the Centre to not only increase vaccine allocation, but also to allocate Rajasthan's full quota, which also includes vaccines for private hospitals, to the state government.

Currently, daily vaccination is limited to the extent of supplies received from the central government, he said.

The daily average of vaccine doses received, since the start of the vaccination drive for 18 years and above, has been around two to three lakh only, Gehlot said.

In Rajasthan, over 2.63 crore people have already received their first dose, and out of these, over 46 lakhs have received the second dose. —PTI

Different strokes



Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's son Raihan Rajiv Vadra during his first exhibition 'Dark Perception: An Exposition of Light, Space and Time', at Bikaner House in New Delhi on Monday. The 20-year-old said, "I would never say yes or no to anything. But photography is going to be definitely one of the things that I would like to do for a long time."

— PTI

Over 47,000 pvt. schools in MP suspend online classes

Schools demand waiver of annual recognition fee, restarting physical classes

DC CORRESPONDENTS
BHOPAL, JULY 12

Over 47,000 private schools in Madhya Pradesh on Monday suspended online classes demanding waiver of annual recognition fee and resumption of physical classes for students from standard nine to 12.

Around 45,000 private schools in the state are affiliated to Madhya Pradesh Board of Secondary Education and 2,800 others are affiliated to the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE).

"We are constrained to suspend online classes for students from class 1 to 12 indefinitely from today since our demands evoked no response from the state government", Ajit Singh, president of MP private

schools association said here.

He said the association's major demands include revision of the present rule of according recognition to schools by MPBSE for one year. The recognition should be given for five years to save the management of the private schools from unnecessary harassment.

Besides, the state government should also seriously consider resuming classes from standard nine to 12 in view of slowing down of Coronavirus cases in the state.

The schools and colleges in the state have remained closed since April, 2020 when the Coronavirus pandemic caused havoc in MP, killing many people.

The state government, however, was yet to

respond to the development.

The association has also disapproved of the recent order by Chief Minister Shivrav Singh Chouhan not to collect tuition fees from students since they did not attend classes in the schools.

Sources, however, said the association may withdraw the decision to suspend online classes very soon following opposition to the move by a section of managements of private schools.

Meanwhile, India reported 37,154 new cases of Covid-19 and 724 deaths in the last 24 hours. However, at the same time, 39,649 patients were discharged from medical care and India's Recovery Rate increased to 97.22 per cent.

Country's active caseload

is currently at 4.51 lakh which constitutes 1.46 per cent of the total cases and its daily positivity rate is 2.59 per cent.

Delhi recorded 45 cases on Monday, which was the lowest ever in a day while Mumbai reported less than 500 cases for the third time in July. Maharashtra reported 7,603 new cases, Haryana 28, and Telangana 696, Kerala 7,798 and Manipur reported 890 new cases.

Uttarakhand, which is witnessing a huge surge of tourists reported 51 new cases. The state government has extended Covid-19 curfew till July 20 and 50 people will be allowed in weddings as well as funerals.

The Indian medical Association (IMA) has warned that going by the

global trend a third wave is "inevitable and imminent" and that tourism, pilgrim travel and crowding at public places should wait for some more time.

On the vaccination front, several centres remained shut in Delhi and other places due to shortage of jabs. However, the Union health ministry said more than 1.54 crore balance and unutilised vaccine doses are still available with the states/UTs and private hospitals to be administered.

So far more than 38.86 crore vaccine doses have been provided to states/UTs and a further 63,84,230 doses are in the pipeline, the ministry said. The ministry said India's cumulative vaccination coverage has exceeded 38 crore as on date.

Head of Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church passes away at 74

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
JULY 12

Supreme head of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church Moran Mor Baselios Marthoma Paulose passed away at Parumala in Pathanamthitta district of Kerala early on Monday after a prolonged illness. He was 74.

The Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church said the Catholicos breathed his last at a private hospital in Pathanamthitta at 2.35 am. He was undergoing treatment for lung cancer



Moran Mor Baselios Marthoma Paulose

since December 2019.

According to hospital authorities, the Catholicos had contracted Covid-19 infection in February which had aggravated his lung condition. Though he recovered from Covid, his

overall condition especially lung complications took a turn for the worse.

The mortal remains of the Catholicos was kept for ceremonial public exhibition at the Parumala Church till 7 pm. The funeral ceremony would be held at Devalokam, the headquarters of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Catholic Church in Kottayam at 5 pm on Tuesday.

Baselios Mar Thoma Paulose II was the eighth Catholicos of the East in Malankara and 91st Primate on the Apostolic Throne of St Thomas. He was enthroned as the

Catholicos of the East and Malankara Metropolitan in November 2010.

Baselios Marthoma Paulose was born on August 30, 1946 as K.I. Paul to Kollannur Iype and Pulikkottil Kunjeetty at Kunnamkulam.

He did his post-graduation from CMS College Kottayam.

After completing his schooling at government school in Pazhanji and higher education at the St Thomas College, he enrolled at the Orthodox Theological Seminary in Kottayam for theological studies in 1969.

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, JULY 12

Acting Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court Rajesh Bindal on Monday reassigned West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's election petition to Justice Shampa Sarkar, for its hearing after Justice Kausik Chandra recused himself last week from hearing the Trinamul Congress supremo's plea following her high voltage allegations against him of bias to the BJP.

Unlike Justice Chanda, who is an additional

● **JUSTICE SHAMPA SARKAR** is a permanent judge against whom allegations of political bias have not surfaced so far.

judge, Justice Sarkar is a permanent judge against whom allegations of political bias have not surfaced so far.

In her letter to the acting CJ earlier, the Chief Minister, apart from her complaint of political bias, had also objected to the assignment of her election petition to an additional judge which later left Justice Chanda anguished.

TALIBAN CAN TARGET INDIAN ASSETS, WARNS ADVISORY

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 12

Indian assets and personnel working in Afghanistan could be targeted by the Taliban in the coming days and thus need to be put on high alert "with strict security protocols." This specific advisory has been given by country's premiere external intelligence agency Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW), which is closely monitoring the "evolving security situation in Afghanistan."

Sources said there was considerable concern among New Delhi's security and intelligence top brass over increased Taliban activities in Afghanistan as they feel this could adversely impact Indian assets there in the coming days.

The R&AW advisory specifically mentions that "Indians were at a high risk of kidnapping in Afghanistan by terrorist groups, particularly Taliban as they would use this to seek ransom as they are in desperate need to generate financial resources. So Indians should not travel out of safe zone."

"With US pulling out of Afghanistan the Taliban will start looking for soft targets to foment further trouble and India along with some other countries could be potential targets. India has a fairly large presence in Afghanistan in terms of diplomatic staff or those involved in construction and development activities. So we need to keep a very close watch on court citizens and other assets in Afghanistan in the next few weeks," a senior security official said.

In fact, sources said the Government's decision to evacuate more than 50 diplomats and other staff members at the consulate in Kandahar was also taken in view of the R&AW advisory.

Government had used special Air Force aircraft to evacuate Indian staff from the consulate and others in Kandahar. So while Kandahar consulate has been shut down temporarily, the one in Mazar-e-Sharif remains functional but security cover there has been considerably enhanced.

Permanent judge to hear election plea of Mamata

LOW-KEY | FESTIVITIES

Around 500 servitors of the temple along with the security personnel pulled the 3 chariots

9-day Rath Yatra starts on colourful note sans devotees

AKSHAYA KUMAR
SAHOO | DC
PURI, JULY 12

Lord Jagannath's annual nine-day Rath Yatra festival on Monday began on a colourful note, despite the absence of lakhs of devotees who throng the pilgrim city during this period every year to participate in the grand event.

As the devotees stayed away due to Covid-19 restrictions and watched the festival on television screens for the second year in a row, hundreds of servitors of Srimandir, the abode of Lord Jagannath pulled the chariots of the deities.

All the servitors had undergone strict Covid-19 tests to check infection in the city. "We cannot express the pain in our

heart as the Covid-19 situation keeps lakhs of devotees away from Lord Jagannath. The Rath Yatra is meant for devotees who gather here to see the deities on the chariots with a belief that such a darshan will pave the way for Moksha or liberation of soul from rebirth. It is also meant for people of other sects and faiths who on normal days do not have access to Srimandir for darshan. They come here to see the deities but also pull the chariots," said Pandit Suryanarayan Rath Sharma, a priest at Srimandir and Jagannath cult researcher.

The process of the Rath Yatra began with the priests conducting all the morning rituals after which Lord Jagannath and two His siblings — elder brother Lord Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra — were led on a procession to the chariots amidst playing of drums cymbals.

After the deities were mounted on the chariots, Sankarcharya Swami Nischalananda Saraswati offered his prayers following which Gajapati King Dibyasingha Deb performed the customary Chheraphanra or cleaning of chariots with a gold-coated broomstick.

Around 500 servitors of the temple along with the security personnel pulled the three chariots — Nandighosha of Lord Jagannath, Taladhwa of Lord Balabhadra and Darpadalan of Devi Subhadra — to Gundicha Mandir, a temple located at distance of two km from Srimandir.

Gudicha Mandir is the

place of the deities. During their nine-day sojourn at Gudicha temple, the deities also offer darshan to common people. However, as prohibitory order has been issued on the entry of people from outside to the city during the festival, there shall be no congregation at the place this time.

Earlier in the morning, President Ram Nath Kovind, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik extended warm greetings to the people of the country, seeking blessings of the Holy Trinity for healthy and prosperous life to all.

The President, in a tweet in Hindi, extended Rath Yatra wishes to every Indian. He also sought blessings of the Almighty

for healthy life during the time of the pandemic.

Modi tweeted, "Greetings to everyone on the special occasion of the Rath Yatra. We bow to Lord Jagannath and pray that His blessings bring good health and prosperity in everyone's lives. Jai Jagannath!"

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, while wishing the citizens of the state, shared a message through a video clip. In his tweet, he stated "May the state be Covid-free with the blessings of Lord Jagannath."

Patnaik had earlier appealed to the people of Odisha to celebrate the mega festival in strict adherence to Covid protocols, thereby setting an example of a disciplined and sacred life before the world.

No Rath Yatra in J'khand this year

Ranchi, July 12: Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren has requested people in the state to worship Lord Jagannath at their homes as Rath Yatra will not be taken out this year due to the prevailing Covid-19 situation.

Soren said that Rath Yatra could not be allowed for the second consecutive year as the Coronavirus threat is still looming large in the state.

"It pains me to not allow Rath Yatra but many stern steps have to be taken to

secure our tomorrow. Celebration of many festivals had to be subdued due to Coronavirus pandemic. Seek blessings of Lord Jagannath from the safety of your homes," the Chief Minister said in a statement issued late on Sunday night.

Meanwhile, Jharkhand's Coronavirus tally stands at 3,46,279, of which 423 are active cases, while 3,40,737 people have recovered from the disease and 5,119 patients have succumbed to the infection to date. —PTI

SHORT TAKES

ARMED ATTACK
NEAR NIGER-MALI
BORDER KILLS 49

Niamey, July 12: Five civilians, four soldiers and 40 armed attackers were killed Sunday in a clash in Niger's restive southwest region near the border with Mali, the government said. Around 100 heavily armed "terrorists" riding motorcycles attacked the Tchoma Bangou village, Niger's Ministry of Defence said in a statement read on public television that did not identify who it suspected was behind the incident. The "prompt and vigorous reaction" by the Defense and Security Forces, "made it possible to repel the attack and inflict heavy losses on the enemy", the ministry said.

PRO-EUROPEANS'
RESOUNDING POLL
WIN IN MOLDOVA

Chisinau, July 12: Moldova's main pro-European party has won a resounding victory in parliamentary polls, results showed Monday, strengthening the hand of President Maia Sandu as the former World Bank economist pushes to reform her ex-Soviet country. Sunday's snap election — called by Sandu in April to shore up her position against pro-Russia forces — saw her centre-right Action and Solidarity (PAS) party take 52.80 per cent of the vote. PAS will get 63 seats in the 101-seat parliament for four-year terms, according to the Central Election Commission. A coalition of socialists and Communists, led by former Kremlin-backed president Igor Dodon, came second with 27.17 per cent, the commission said Monday, with all votes counted.

MYANMAR VIRUS
CASELOAD HITS
SUU KYI TRIAL

Naypyidaw, July 12: Myanmar's spiralling Coronavirus count struck the trial of ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi on Monday, her lawyers said, with a witness for the prosecution failing to testify after becoming infected. Cases are spiking in Myanmar, with the State Administration Council reporting more than 3,400 new cases Sunday, up from fewer than 50 per day in early May.

Suu Kyi was deposed by the military in February, sparking a mass uprising and a brutal crackdown. More than 890 civilians have been killed by the junta's forces.

A second witness gave testimony on the same charges, and the court also heard evidence on separate charges that Suu Kyi illegally imported and possessed walkie talkies, he said.

EGYPT UPHOLDS
LIFE SENTENCES
FOR 10 ISLAMISTS

Cairo, July 12: Egypt's highest appeals court on Sunday upheld the life sentences of 10 leaders of Egypt's outlawed Muslim Brotherhood, including the group's head, the state-owned MENA news agency reported. In 2019, a Cairo criminal court had convicted all 10, including the group's leader, or supreme guide, Mohamed Badie, of charges related to killing policemen and organising mass jail breaks during Egypt's 2011 uprising.

That revolt culminated in the ouster of longtime autocrat Hosni Mubarak. The defendants were found guilty of helping around 20,000 prisoners escape, and of undermining national security by conspiring with foreign militant groups — the Palestinian Hamas and Lebanon's Hezbollah.

RIOT INTENSIFIES,
S. AFRICA TO
DEPLOY MILITARY

Johannesburg, July 12: The South African government is all set to deploy troops to control the violence that has erupted in various parts of the country over the jailing of former president Jacob Zuma for contempt of court. Initially, soldiers will be deployed in two provinces — Guateng and KwaZulu-Natal, the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) announced on Monday.

KwaZulu-Natal is Zuma's home province. Zuma is currently imprisoned in the Estcourt Correctional Centre for failing to obey a court order to testify at a judicial commission that is investigating allegations of corruption during his term as South Africa's president from 2009 to 2018.

The 79-year-old politician, who denies corruption, handed himself in to police on Wednesday last week to begin his 15-month sentence.

Appoint Deuba PM: Nepal SC

Apex court reinstates the lower house second time in five months

Kathmandu, July 12: In a landmark verdict, Nepal's Supreme Court on Monday directed President Bidya Devi Bhandari to appoint Nepali Congress chief Sher Bahadur Deuba as prime minister by Tuesday and reinstated the House of Representatives for a second time in five months.

A five-member Constitutional Bench of the Supreme Court led by Chief Justice Chandra Shumsher Rana issued the verdict stating that President Bhandari's decision to dissolve the lower house upon a recommendation of Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli was an unconstitutional act, delivering a major blow to the veteran Communist leader who was preparing for snap

polls. The bench issued a mandamus to appoint Deuba as the Prime Minister by Tuesday. Deuba, 74, has served as the prime minister on four occasions; first from 1995 to 1997, then from 2001 to 2002, again from 2004 to 2005, and from 2017 to 2018.

Currently, he is the Leader of the Opposition in the House. The court also ordered summoning a new session of the House of Representatives at 5 PM on July 18.

Chief Justice Rana also said that the bench has concluded that party whip does not apply when lawmakers take part in the voting to elect new Prime Minister as per Article 76(5) of the Constitution. The bench comprising four other senior most jus-

● **A CONSTITUTIONAL Bench of the Supreme Court stated that President Bhandari's decision to dissolve the lower house upon a recommendation of Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli was an unconstitutional act.**

tices — Dipak Kumar Karki, Mira Khadka, Ishwar Prasad Khatriwada and Dr Ananda Mohan Bhattarai — had concluded hearings in the case last week.

President Bhandari had dissolved the 275-member lower house for the second time in five months on May 22 at the recommendation of Prime Minister Oli and announced snap elections on November 12

and November 19.

Last week, the Election Commission had announced the schedule for mid-term elections despite the uncertainty over polls. Welcoming the apex court verdict, senior leader of the Nepal Communist Party-UML Madhav Kumar Nepal said that the judgement was commendable.

"The Supreme Court has done a commendable job. This has saved the political system that is in place. Since the court has directly asked to appoint Deuba as new prime minister, we have no role to play now," he said.

Under Madhav Nepal's leadership, 23 lawmakers of UML had put their signature in favour of Deuba's claim to the prime ministership.

Madhav Nepal also said that Parliament will now take all the decisions.

"Parliament has been reinstated. We will now go to Parliament. All the decisions will be taken from Parliament now," he said. "The court's verdict has also raised moral questions on Oli's actions."

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Oli's supporters, including youths and students affiliated to the ruling CPN-UML, took to streets here to protest against the apex court's verdict against the 69-year-old Communist leader. Cadres of the National Youth Force affiliated to CPN-UML gathered in Maitighar Mandal near the court premises chanting slogans against the verdict.

— PTI

Choksi gets bail
from Dominica
for treatment

New Delhi, July 12: In a major setback to India, the Dominica High Court has granted bail to fugitive diamondaire Mehul Choksi, allowing him to travel to Antigua and Barbuda for treatment of his neurological condition, local media there reported.

The high court granted a consent order by Choksi's legal team and the state's lawyer, permitting him to go to Antigua, where he has been staying as a citizen since 2018 after he left India, after depositing Eastern Caribbean Dollars 10,000 (approximately Rs 2.75 lakh as per exchange rate) as bail money to seek medical attention from a specialised neurologist, *Antigua Breaking News* reported. The court has also stayed the ongoing trial before a magistrate for his alleged illegal entry into Dominica on May 23 till his return, it said.

"Dominica courts finally upheld the rule of law and rights of a human to be treated in the medical facilities of his choice. And, all attempts by various agencies did not bear fruits. There is a solace in saying that all clever foxes end up as fur coats," Choksi's lawyer Vijay Aggarwal said. The order has come as a major jolt to Indian efforts to bring back Choksi, who is want-



Mehul Choksi

ed in the ₹13,500 crore scam in the Punjab National Bank, from Dominica where he was held for illegal entry after his mysterious disappearance from Antigua and Barbuda.

His lawyers had alleged that he was abducted from Antigua and Barbuda in an elaborate plot hatched by men of Indian origin and a mystery woman named Barbara Jabarica who had befriended him during last six months. After news of Choksi being held in Dominica surfaced, India rushed a team of officials led by Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) DIG Sharda Raut to make every effort to bring Choksi back on the basis of a Interpol Red Notice against him. The effort was unsuccessful as Choksi's lawyers moved to file a Habeas Corpus petition.

— PTI

EU puts digital
tax plan 'on hold'

Brussels, July 12: The European Commission said Monday it would delay its plan to propose an EU digital tax in order to not jeopardise efforts to secure a global deal on fairer taxation.

After an "extraordinary" breakthrough at G20 talks on Saturday, "we have decided to put on hold our work on a proposal for a digital levy", an EU spokesman said, a day after Washington asked Brussels to delay its tax plan. Meeting in Venice, G20 finance ministers on Saturday endorsed a plan agreed by 132 countries to overhaul the way multinational companies, including US digital giants, are taxed.

The G20 ministers of finance called on negotiators to swiftly address the remaining issues and finalise the agreement by October.

They approved the result of negotiations at the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) for a global minimum corporate tax rate of at least 15 per cent, and to allow nations

● **THE G20 finance ministers approved a global minimum corporate tax rate of at least 15 per cent, and to allow nations to tax a share of the world's biggest companies.**

to tax a share of the profits of the world's biggest companies regardless of where they are headquartered. The European Commission has insisted its new levy plan, that was due to be unveiled later this month, would conform with whatever is agreed at the OECD and would hit thousands of companies, including European ones.

Money raised from the digital tax is intended to help pay for the bloc's 750-billion-euro post-pandemic recovery plan.

Three European Union countries — including Ireland, which has become a European base for a raft of US companies thanks to low tax rates — have yet to sign up to the OECD agreement.

— AFP

COMPENSATION
FOR FISHERMEN
HIT BY SHIP FIRE

Colombo, July 12: The Sri Lankan government on Monday said it has started the process of paying compensation to local fishermen affected by the fire aboard a Singapore-flagged container ship that was carrying tonnes of hazardous chemicals and sank off the country's coast.

MV X-Press Pearl was carrying 1,486 containers of chemicals and cargo when it went up in flames on May 21 near the Colombo Port. The Sri Lankan Navy, Airforce and the Indian Coast Guard jointly doused the fire in an operation that took days. However, the ship sank off Colombo's coast on June 17.

The state minister of fisheries, Kanchana Wijesekera, said the payment for the compensation has been made possible by an interim claim laid on the insurance company of the ship's owners. "The fishermen's activities were badly affected since May 20, in addition to the environmental damage. Our interim claim was in respect of expenditure incurred in assessing the damage," Wijesekera said. — PTI

Digging up the past in Israel



Israeli students excavate at the site of Khirbat er-Rai near the southern Israeli city of Kiryat Gat on Monday, where a 3,100-year-old pottery fragment bearing a rare inscription was found. It dates from around 1,100 BCE.

— AFP

2 Jordanians jailed over coup

Amman, July 12: A Jordanian state security court on Monday sentenced two former officials to serve 15 years in prison over an alleged plot against the Western-allied monarchy involving the half-brother of King Abdullah II.

Bassem Awadallah, who has US citizenship and once served as a top aide to King Abdullah II, and Sharif Hassan bin Zaid, a member of the royal family, were found guilty of sedition and incitement charges.

They are alleged to have conspired with Prince Hamzah, the king's half-brother, and to have sought foreign assistance. They denied the charges, and Alaa

● **BASSEM AWADALLAH, who has US citizenship and once served as a top aide to King Abdullah II, and Sharif Hassan bin Zaid, a member of the royal family, were found guilty of sedition and incitement charges.**

al-Khasawneh, a lawyer for Sharif, said they would appeal the verdict. He declined to comment further. They two men were swept up in a wave of arrests in April and Hamzah was placed under house arrest.

The rare public rift at the highest levels of the monarchy sent jitters across the region, with coun-

tries racing to express support for Abdullah.

Hamzah denied the allegations in video statements released in April after he was placed under house arrest, saying he was being silenced for speaking out against corruption and poor governance by the ruling system. The palace drama exposed deep-rooted economic and social challenges in the country, which has long been seen as a bastion of stability in a volatile region.

The royal family says it resolved the dispute with Hamzah, whose exact status is unknown but was never formally charged. Awadallah's US lawyer says his client alleged he was

tortured in Jordanian detention and fears for his life. Abdullah is expected in Washington on July 19, when he will be the first Arab leader to meet with President Joe Biden at the White House.

Jordan is a close US ally in the Middle East and is seen as a key partner in eventually reviving the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Lt. Col. Muwafaq al-Masaeed, a military judge, announced the verdict following a closed-door trial that consisted of just six hearings. The two were sentenced to 15 years for each of two felonies, but the judge said only one sentence would be imposed on them. — AP

Rare anti-govt protests erupt in Cuba

HEAR PROTESTERS, BIDEN URGES CUBAN AUTHORITIES

Washington, July 12: President Joe Biden on Monday urged Cuba's communist government to "hear" protesters demanding an end to "repression" and poverty.

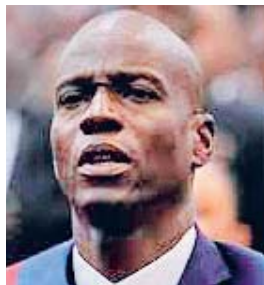
"We stand with the Cu-

ban people and their clarion call for freedom and relief from the tragic grip of the pandemic and from the decades of repression and economic suffering to which they have been subjected by Cuba's authori-

tarian regime," Biden said in a statement. "The United States calls on the Cuban regime to hear their people and serve their needs at this vital moment rather than enriching themselves." — AFP

began, and Diaz-Canel later visited the town himself surrounded by party activists as residents heckled him, according to videos posted online.

The president lashed out in a television address, saying: "The order to fight has been given — into the street, revolutionaries!" "We call on all revolutionaries of the country, all communists, to go out in the streets where these provocations occur, from now on and in the next few days, and to face them in a decisive, firm and courageous way." — AFP



Jovenel Moise

NORMS | BREACHED

Concern as changes will give FB access to more information on users

WA faces EU consumer complaint over privacy

London, July 12: Facebook's WhatsApp faces a complaint from European Union consumer groups who say the chat service has been unfairly pressuring users to accept a new privacy update in what it calls a breach of the bloc's regulations.

The European Consumer Organisation, or BEUC, filed a complaint Monday over the way WhatsApp has brought in changes to

its terms of service and privacy policy, saying they aren't transparent or easily understood by users. Many WhatsApp users switched to other chat apps like Signal and Telegram because of privacy concerns when the update was rolled out earlier this year because of concerns the changes would give Facebook access to more information on users.

"WhatsApp has been

bombarding users for months with aggressive and persistent pop-up messages to force them to accept its new terms of use and privacy policy," BEUC Director General Monique Goyens said.

"They've been telling users that their access to their app will be cut off if they do not accept the new terms. Yet consumers don't know what they're actually accepting," BEUC

and consumer rights groups from eight member countries filed the complaint to the EU's executive Commission and the bloc's network of consumer authorities. WhatsApp said the complaint is based on a misunderstanding of the update's purpose and effect and would welcome the opportunity to explain it to the BEUC.

"Our recent update explains the options people

have to message a business on WhatsApp and provides further transparency about how we collect and use data," WhatsApp said in a prepared statement.

"The update does not expand our ability to share data with Facebook, and does not impact the privacy of your messages with friends or family, wherever they are in the world." — AP

● They've been telling users that their access to their app will be cut off if they do not accept the new terms. Yet consumers don't know what they're actually accepting.

MONIQUE GOYENS, Director General, European Consumer Organisation

DECCAN Chronicle

13 JULY 2021

Make space accessible to all as a new age dawns

The safe conduct of a flight for space tourists, including Virgin Galactic boss Richard Branson, to the edge of space and back is another triumph of the spirit of human endeavour. This opens up an opportunity for ordinary people who are not trained astronauts to be able to handle microgravity, high G forces and Mach 3 speeds in the sky. They can travel in a capsule while detached from the mother aeroplane to be fired by a hybrid rocket engine to 86 km above the earth in order just to gaze at our home planet and its curvature and then glide back to the ground.

Man has always been fascinated by heights, be it Mount Everest or flying at altitude and much like Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay, who were the first to climb to the roof of the world. Virgin's septuagenarian Branson will be best remembered for beating the world's richest man Jeff Bezos by nine days to go to space first. After spaceship *VSS Unity*'s flight we may be a baby step closer to man's ultimate dream of colonising the moon or even Mars someday if only because Planet Earth might become too hazardous to reside in considering how its resources are being depleted and inviting climate change catastrophe.

It is possible to be cynical about rich patrons paying up to ₹1.82 crore for a ticket for about three minutes of weightlessness before floating back to their seats near the threshold of space. It can be argued that a few million people on the ground are starving while the rich enjoy space in joyrides. The human race cannot be considered a form of life intelligent enough to explore the limits of wondrous possibilities without science and engineering being harnessed with such precision to satisfy man's unquenchable curiosity and test the limits of ingenuity.

The perils of technology going wrong cannot, however, be discounted as Virgin's own experience portrayed when it lost a flight with the plane breaking apart during a test flight with disastrous consequences in 2014, leaving at least one co-pilot dead. *The Unity*'s "feathering" twin tails have been designed to swing upwards at 60 degrees to create drag and make the capsule drift down to Earth. Branson joked that like James Bond he had a "licence to thrill", which might be true considering the adventurous life he has led. It is in advancing this dawn of space tourism that he has contributed most to the human race.

Aeronautical engineer and researcher Sirisha Bandla, with roots in Andhra's Guntur, was on the pioneering flight on merits whereas 600 budding space tourists have been queuing up with tickets for seven years for the space experience. There is more to come from the world's tech billionaires of the new economy as Bezos' Blue Origin intends sending space tourists beyond the Karman line, which is said to lie 100 km above Earth and Elon Musk's SpaceX which will keep tourists in space for days but at ticket prices running into millions of dollars. Bezos and Musk's flights will be based on space capsules being lifted by rockets unlike Virgin's reusable space plane.

Tennis greatness personified

Chasing Grand Slam tennis titles is his calling in life. The Serbian star Novak Djokovic is already being spoken of as the greatest in tennis history, the world's best ever hard court player with an envious Wimbledon record of six golden trophies on grass and a couple of French Opens. With 20 Grand Slam titles, he is abreast of his contemporary greats Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal, whose votaries rate them as supreme all-time greats. At 34, age favours Djokovic, and he is feeding his insatiable hunger in his golden year of 2021 when a US Open triumph and a calendar slam can put him on an even higher pedestal than yesteryear greats Don Budge and Rod Laver.

A curious aspect of Djokovic's all-court game is he can suffer extreme anxiety as the weight of history seems to sit on his shoulders. He lost the opening set to a rising grass court star in the Italian Matteo Berrettini, who was adopted by the Wimbledon crowd with a strong anti-Djokovic bias. But the Serb, who as a kid was whisked away to Germany when bombs were falling round their home, is not the one to try and win popularity contests. His extraordinary skills come wrapped in a unique understanding that his best game will come together when he most needs it. Returning Berrettini's 240 kmph serves is itself a challenge but Djokovic broke his serve six times to show who is the champion.

The absence of Naomi Osaka had thrown open the distaff side of the draw. Emerging champion with a powerful game backed by craftiness and a spirit of competition to match was the Australian Ashleigh Barty, who as a woman of indigenous heritage from the Ngaragu tribe, wins one for diversity. To make it even more memorable, Barty wore a replica of Evonne Goolagong's dress from the 1980 final. The two native Aussies are not just title winners in a sport dominated by whites. There were slices of history too in young Samir Banerjee of USA, born to Indian parents, winning the boys title in just his second attempt at a major tournament and Marija Cicack becoming the first woman in 144 years to officiate in a men's singles final.

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Subhani



Liberty and rights for all: Myth of the Magna Carta



Mohan Guruswamy

We now take our liberties and rights for granted, and the way of life it guarantees us as inherent. But what we now have has come after a long process of evolution, and many a time they flowed out of something else quite unintended. The Magna Carta is a case in point. In June, the entire English-speaking world celebrated the 806th anniversary of the Magna Carta, or Great Charter, that is synonymous with the fundamental rights and rule of law which are considered the cornerstones of modern democracy. Much of the world now believes that the Magna Carta came out of an eruption of a long-suppressed yearning among the common people for protection against the caprices of the monarch and the nobility. But it is not so.

It came out of the intralite struggle between 40 barons and their King. England's King John had emptied the royal treasures in a fruitless war with France, and the barons were no longer willing to meet his demands for higher taxes. The consequence was the Magna Carta to protect the barons from the King's demands.

The demand to be judged by their peers was another protection. It was not meant for the ordinary people, but only for the barons. Thus, the Magna Carta was not quite a grand demand for equality, the basic freedoms and rule of law but just a narrow demand for restricting the ruler's powers to ring fence the interests of the elite.

But the myth of the Magna Carta has endured, and it is often invoked whenever and

wherever people struggled against injustice and freedom.

Mahatma Gandhi invoked it in South Africa when he fought for racial equality, and emancipators and freedom fighters like Nelson Mandela, Jawaharlal Nehru, Ho Chi Minh, Fidel Castro and Martin Luther King Jr have invoked it when they were being tried for sedition by oppressive rulers. Like those English barons, they too were arguing for limiting the oppressive and unjust powers of oppressive regimes, but now not just for themselves and their peers, but for all their fellow citizens. The story of modern democracy is about the long journey from the rights of a few to the rights of all.

Another myth that endures is that the twin notions of "democracy" and "the rule of law" somehow originated with the Magna Carta and its acceptance. The fact is that the King rejected the Magna Carta soon after it was presented to him. But King John avoided the consequences of the barons' indignation by helpfully dying and thereby perpetuating the myth.

The first democracies long preceded the Magna Carta of 1215. Even as early as the sixth century BC, several "independent republics" existed in India as "sanghas" and "ganas". The main characteristics of these sanghas and ganas were a raja, elected or hereditary, and a deliberative assembly. These assemblies met regularly and passed laws pertaining to finances, administration and justice. The raja and other officials obeyed the decisions of these assemblies. While these assemblies were mostly comprised of the nobility and

landowners, in some cases they included all free men. But the Brahminical system prevailed in the sense that the monarch always had to be a Kshatriya. While the Licchavis, who held sway over the Kathmandu Valley in present-day Nepal and a major part of northern Bihar, were governed by an assembly of about 7,000 rajas who in turn were the heads of all the major families, others like the Shakyas, the clan to which Gautam Buddha belonged, had assemblies open to all people, rich or poor, and noble or common.

The greatest contribution to the evolution of democracy as a philosophy was in Athens, where great philosophers like Socrates, Plato and Aristotle lit up the public discourse with their brilliance and original thinking. Socrates and his pupil, Plato, deliberated and expounded on the role of a citizen within a community and laid down the foundations of the political philosophy that flourished in Athens and spread to most of the world over the next two and a half millennia. Aristotle, who counted among his students Alexander the Great, dwelt more on systems of government and who first qualified liberty as the fundamental principle of democracy.

This principle that "whatever is decided by the majority is sovereign" has always had to contend with the rights of the individual. In the United States of America, which was formed after a great debate among the founding fathers as a democracy, it was by majority will

that slavery had flourished till the Civil War. It took another century before equal rights for black people became the majority will. This constant struggle for individual rights against the will of the collective has been the central story of the evolution of the modern democratic state.

Free India by contrast provided for all these rights and liberties from the beginning in its Constitution. The Magna Carta, because it sought to limit the powers of the ruler, perhaps still has a place in our hearts and minds, because of just that. To most of us citizens in democratic states, our life is also a constant struggle against the assertion of collective will to trample individual liberties or the rights of smaller groups.

The rise of democratic and elected parliaments in England and Scotland just 50 years after the Magna Carta is not a coincidence but the consequence of that demand to share power. It is from the Magna Carta that the English writ of habeas corpus evolved, safeguarding individuals and their freedoms against unjust and unlawful imprisonment with the right to appeal. It is from this emergence of petitions for the production of the body that parliaments in due course became to be increasingly used as a forum to address all the concerns and grievances of ordinary people.

Thus, whatever be the first intent of the Magna Carta, its consequences greatly expanded over the centuries into a charter, which guarantees individual liberties, equality and justice to all, irrespective of their race, religion and class. But that struggle is far from over. It goes on and only its forms change as human values and means change.

The writer, a policy analyst studying economic and security issues, held senior positions in government and industry. He also specialises in the Chinese economy.

LETTERS

SIRISHA'S FEAT

Bandla Sirisha's sojourn to space should by now read like a fairy tale. She has done the impossible by hopping onto the space plane. Even though the trip lasted around 15 minutes, it is no small achievement for a girl who had eyesight issue. Luckily the private business venture provided the opportunity.

Govardhana Myneedu
Vijayawada

AFGHAN STAKES

In 1996 India refused to recognise the Taliban-led Afghanistan but now the Indian government has opened doors for talks with them with the help of. However, this version of Taliban was formed through an unholy alliance between Jaish and Lashkar e Mohammad. It speaks a lot about what Taliban is prepared to do and how it sees its future. India should fill the vacuum left by the US and send a strong message to both Taliban and rest of the world, especially Pakistan and China..

Ratnaraj Jain
Rajahmundry

I-T PORTAL

It is distressing to read that a month after its launch, the much hyped income-tax portal continues to malfunction and is a pain in the neck for the taxpayers and CAs. The authorities need to pay attention to the issue and make an all out effort to remove the snags decisively as the time limit for filing the ITR is round the corner.

Dr C. Ghanshyam
Visakhapatnam

50 YEARS AGO IN

DECCAN Chronicle

Moroccan King executes ring leaders

RABAT, JULY 12.

The principal ring-leaders of the abortive military coup against King Hassan were executed by a firing squad early today, official sources said.

The names of the officers executed after a summary court martial would be formally announced later. They said the executions were still continuing. It was not immediately clear whether all the six leading conspirators reportedly arrested have already been shot. King Hassan told that the officers who led the abortive coup would all be dead by this evening.

Aakar Patel



The weak case that kept Stan Swamy in jail, where he died

Stan Swamy, who died around a week ago after being denied bail in the Bhima Koregaon case, was a Tamil priest who spent decades working with adivasis in Jharkhand. Before that he was director of the Indian Social Institute in Bengaluru. Why was he in jail for an event in Pune? The Bhima Koregaon case is five separate and unrelated things. The first was an event called Elgar (or Yalgar, meaning battle cry) Parishad on December 31, 2017 in Pune. The speakers there included former high court judge B.G. Kolse-Patil and P.B. Sawant, a former Supreme Court judge. Jignesh Mewani, Independent MLA from Gujarat, and JNU activist Umar Khalid also spoke. Members of Kabir Kala Manch, who are artists-activists, participated too.

The second event was next day, January 1, 2018. This was the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Koregaon Bhima, a Pune suburb on Bhima river, where on January 1, 1818, the British defeated the remnants of the Maratha empire. The British side had many dalit Mahar soldiers who overpowered a larger army led by the Brahmin Peshwa.

Since 1927 when B.R. Ambedkar visited the village to speak of the vic-

tory, hundreds of thousands of dalits came to Koregaon Bhima each year to gather at the obelisk raised to mark the battle. But in 2018, there had been tension due to events in the neighbouring village of Vadhu Budruk. This had to do with who had cremated Sambhaji, Shivaji's son, who was executed by Aurangzeb in 1689 near Koregaon Bhima. The Mahars claimed it was one of them, Gopal Govind, who cremated the Maratha in defiance of Aurangzeb's orders. This offended the Marathas, who claimed two of their community had performed the rituals. Govind's tomb in Vadhu Budruk was in the same village square as Sambhaji's. On December 28, a board was placed over Govind's tomb, claiming the feat of his cremation of Sambhaji. The next day Govind's tomb was desecrated — the board was removed and the umbrella structure over the tomb was damaged. A complaint was filed by dalits under the Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes Prevention of Atrocities Act. The Koregaon Bhima panchayat asked its residents to boycott the January 1 event and called for shops to remain shut. That morning violence erupted between dalits, who said they were attacked by a group carrying saffron flags, and

the local Marathas, who said they were attacked by dalits. One Maratha was killed. The violence spread to other towns in western Maharashtra and 300 dalits, including children, were held by the Mumbai police.

The third event was a police complaint, filed a few days later, by a man who said the Elgar Parishad's agenda was "to mislead the dalit community, to convert them to Maoist thought... and adopt the path of violence", and that "through their publications, books and speeches, they wanted to increase enmity in society". The man who filed the complaint, Tushar Damgude, said he followed a "simple" rule for his Hindutva: "We should keep things which are helpful for Hindus; the rest should be abandoned".

It was on the basis of this complaint that the police began arresting the activists, many of whom had nothing to do with, and weren't present in Bhima Koregaon. The fourth event was a report produced by an RSS outfit called the Forum for Integrated National Security, whose secretary general, Seshadri Chari, was on the BJP's national executive committee. This report said there was a Maoist strategy to lure people into joining "mass organisations" concerned

about issues like caste, justice and equality, which would then help the Maoists recruit for the final armed struggle against the State. This report was released on March 9, 2018.

Another report by the same author was submitted to Maharashtra chief minister Devendra Fadnavis in April. In May, the UAPA law was added to the Bhima Koregaon case. On June 6, the Maharashtra police arrested five people including Dhawale of the Republican Panthers, lawyer and dalit activist Surendra Gadling, scholar Mahesh Raut, who worked on adivasi rights, assistant professor of English at Nagpur University Shoma Sen and Rona Wilson of JNU, who worked with the Committee to Release Political Prisoners. They were described by the police as the "top brass of the urban Maoists".

The police claimed it found a letter in Wilson's house dated July 2017 which said: "Comrade Kisan and few other senior comrades have proposed concrete steps to end Modi Raj. We are thinking along the lines of another Rajiv Gandhi-type incident."

On the basis of this, the police arrested Sudha Bharadwaj, who studied mathematics at IIT Kanpur and gave up her US citizenship at age

18; Gautam Navlakha, who also wrote for *Economic and Political Weekly*; Anand Telumbde, assistant professor at Goa Institute of Management and married to a granddaughter of Ambedkar; Arun Ferreira, a lawyer defending the accused in this case; Vernon Gonsalves, a professor of business management and economics at Ruparel College and HR College of Commerce and Economics; Varavara Rao, an author and poet who was a lecturer on Telugu literature; Hany Babu, a professor of linguistics at Delhi University. Three members of the Kabir Kala Manch — Sagar Gorkhe, Jyoti Jagtap and Ramesh Gaichor — were arrested, and Father Stan Swamy, 83-year-old Jesuit and theologian.

None of them had anything to do with the Bhima Koregaon violence, and weren't even present there. The case is said to be sensitive because of the assassination plot allegation, but the trial hasn't started.

Last year, the BBC carried a report on Stan Swamy headlined: "The oldest person to be accused of terrorism in India".

The writer is a columnist and a senior journalist

quick BITES

INDICATORS

		%
Sensex	52372.69	-0.03
Nifty 50	15692.60	0.02
S&P 500*	4,377.84	0.19
Dollar (₹)	74.58	0.08
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.35	-0.36
Euro (₹)	88.39	0.09
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	46,796▼169	0.36
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	74.77	-1.03
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.220	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.365	0.009

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Biz activity back to pre-2nd wave levels: Nomura

Business activity has rose to the pre-second wave levels, with the seventh consecutive week of surge in levels as new Covid infection cases fall. The Nomura India Business Resumption Index accelerated to 95.7 for the week ending Sunday, from 91.0 the previous week, it said, adding that it is only 4.3 percentage points below the pre-pandemic levels of March 2020 and back to pre-second wave levels from mid-March.

Maruti hikes prices of Swift, all CNG models



Maruti Suzuki India said it has hiked prices of hatchback Swift and CNG variants of other models by up to Rs 15,000. The price change for Swift and all CNG variants is owing to an increase in various input costs, Maruti Suzuki aid in a regulatory filing. "Increase in ex-show-room prices (Delhi) is up to Rs 15,000 on the above models. The new prices are effective from today i.e. July 12," the filing further said.

Airtel records over 1,000 Mbps speed in 5G trial

Bharti Airtel recorded a speed of over 1 gigabit per second during a 5G field trial in Mumbai using Nokia's network gear, sources said. Airtel is running a live 5G trial in Mumbai's Phoenix Mall in Lower Parel. "Airtel is conducting the trial in the 3500 MHz band using 5G gear from Nokia as per DoT guidelines. The trials have delivered speeds of over 1 Gbps with ultra-low latency," one of the sources said.

MobiKwik files draft papers for ₹1,900-crore IPO

Digital payments startup One MobiKwik Systems filed preliminary papers with the Sebi to raise Rs 1,900 crore through an initial share sale. The IPO comprises fresh issuance of shares worth Rs 1,500 crore and an offer for sale of up to Rs 400 crore by promoters and existing shareholders, says its draft red herring prospectus. Those offering shares include promoters Upasana Rupkrishan Taku and Bipin Preet Singh.



Q1 preview: Expect a better quarter YoY A consolidation phase for banks

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, JULY 12

The second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, coupled with localised lockdowns, is likely to impact the asset quality performance of banks, but to a lesser extent compared to the first lockdown.

Analysts expect bad loan formation for the April-June quarter (Q1FY22) to remain moderate—also reflected in the lower cheque bounce rate of 30 per cent versus a peak of 38 per cent last year—partly offset by restructuring and the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS).

Within retail loans, stress remains elevated, mainly in commercial vehicle loans, personal loans, loan against property, two-wheeler loans and microfinance loans, which should lead to higher stress formation for banks with higher exposure to these segments such as HDFC Bank, IndusInd Bank, RBL Bank, Bandhan Bank, AU SFB and Ujjivan, analysts said.

Bad loans in credit cards could be limited as banks and customers have explored the EMI option. Similarly, SME stress could largely be suppressed via ECLGS/restructuring option. Overall credit cost too could be elevated due to upfront stress recognition, partly offset by some contingent provision buffer usage by select banks. "We expect overall pre-



provisioning operating profit (PPoP) growth to be soft due to subdued growth/continued softness in Net Interest Margins accentuated by non-NPA recognition, moderate treasury support, and lack of large one-off gains such as recovery from Bhushan Power in Q4 (though partly offset by recovery from Kingfisher Airlines)... Among large banks, we expect ICICI to report healthy profitability led by better NIMs/moderate credit cost, while Axis may have the option to claw back provisions to boost profitability. HDFC Bank's growth trajectory remains moderate, but it should be able to deliver around 20 per cent YoY profit growth. IndusInd, RBL should report slightly weaker numbers," said Anand Dama, analyst at Emkay Global.

"IndusInd Bank, in particular, may look to strengthen provisioning buffers, leading to elevated credit cost. Bandhan should continue to reel under MFI pain. PSBs, in general, may report moderate PPoP due to soft

treasury performance, but limited credit cost and lower tax incidence for select banks (Indian, Union Bank) should boost profits. SBI and Indian Bank will be outliers," added Dama.

The momentum in recovery gained over 4QFY21 was impacted by the second Covid wave, with the asset quality outlook deteriorating once again. Business activity was impacted by the second wave over April to May 2021. As a result, systemic growth moderated to 5.8 per cent as of June 18, 2021 (1 per cent decline over FY22 year-to-date).

While economic activity has started to pick up since June, business growth may remain modest over 1QFY22, said Motilal Oswal in a report.

According to Gaurav Jani of Centrum, "Midcap banks could see loan growth at 6.8 per cent year-on-year, largely led by Federal Bank and City Union Bank. Being SME-focused, asset quality impairment could be more pronounced for City Union Bank and DCB Bank."

ABBOTT LAUNCHES HOME TEST KIT FOR COVID-19

FC BUREAU HYDERABAD, JULY 12

Medical devices company Abbott on Monday said it has launched an affordable Covid-19 home test kit in the country for detecting the Sars-CoV-2 virus infection.

The kit, priced at Rs 325 for a single test pack, can be used in adults and children with or without symptoms.

In a statement, Abbott said it will deliver millions of Panbio Covid rapid antigen tests.

In alignment with the current ICMR advisory on self-use, these tests will be made available to ramp up testing of symptomatic and asymptomatic individuals and contacts of confirmed coronavirus cases, the statement added.

"Scaling access to easy, accurate, and fast testing can speed up the country's preparedness and curb community contagion," ICMR's former director-general Nirmal Kumar Ganguly said. Self-testing is the first line of protection against disease transmission, he added.

There is also the issue of congestion in servers or networks experienced by some market participants during popular IPOs, driven by high demand during a short time span. —PTI

RETAIL INVESTORS CAN SOON BUY GOVT BONDS FROM RBI

FC BANKING BUREAU MUMBAI, JULY 12

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Monday issued a 'RBI Retail Direct' scheme, which is a one-stop solution to facilitate investment in government securities by individual investors.

Under the scheme, retail investors (individuals) will have the facility to open and maintain the 'Retail Direct Gilt Account' (RDG Account) with the RBI, the central bank said.

Also, the RDG Account can be opened through an 'online portal' provided for the purpose, it said. The 'online portal' will also give the registered users facilities like access to primary issuance of government securities, the RBI said, adding, the date of commencement of the scheme will be announced at a later date.

No fee will be charged for opening and maintaining 'Retail Direct Gilt account' with the RBI. However, a fee for payment gateway, as applicable, will be borne by the investor.

Non-Resident retail investors eligible to invest in government securities under the Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999 can also invest under the scheme.

The RDG account can be opened singly or jointly with another retail investor who meets the eligibility criteria, the RBI said.

Walmart's Flipkart investment more than doubles in value

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JULY 12

Ahead of a proposed IPO, Walmart-owned Flipkart has raised \$3.6 billion from a group of investors at a valuation of \$37.6 billion. Japanese SoftBank, which had sold its stakes to Walmart in 2018, has once again invested in the company.

The investment values the group at \$37.6 billion post-money, which is 130 per cent higher than the \$16 billion valuation it got during Walmart's acquisition of the home-grown e-com company in 2018.

Flipkart Group had raised \$1.2 billion from investors and its parent Walmart in July last year. The valuation of the company then stood at \$24.9 billion.

Flipkart Group has raised \$3.6 billion in the latest funding round participated by global investors, including sovereign wealth funds and private equity funds as well as Walmart.

The funding was led by



Singapore's sovereign wealth fund GIC, Canada Pension Plan Investment Board (CPP Investments), SoftBank Vision Fund 2 and Walmart. Sovereign funds DisruptAD, Qatar Investment Authority, Khazanah Nasional Berhad and marquee investors Tencent, Willoughby Capital, Antara Capital, Franklin Templeton and Tiger Global also participated.

CPP Investments later said it has invested \$800 million (about Rs 5,968 crore) in the Flipkart Group.

SoftBank had sold its 20 per cent stake in the company in 2018. SoftBank's first Vision Fund had

invested \$2.5 billion in Flipkart in August 2017.

Flipkart will use the funding to invest in new categories and leverage made-in-India technology to transform consumer experiences and develop a world-class supply chain, said Kalyan Krishnamurthy, CEO of Flipkart Group.

According to Walmart officials, Flipkart might get listed in the bourses, most probably next year.

Flipkart is also offering buyback of employee stock options worth about Rs 600 crore.

In an e-mail to employees, Krishnamurthy said the group will buyback 5 per cent of the past three years' vested options.

INFLATION REMAINS HIGH, IIP JUMPS ON BASE EFFECT

FC BUREAU NEW DELHI, JULY 12

Consumers have reason to worry as the country's retail inflation as measured by Consumer Price Index or CPI remained high at 6.26 per cent in the month of June as compared to 6.09 per cent reported in the year-ago period. While industrial output, as measured by the Index of Industrial

Production (IIP), recorded 29.3 per cent growth in the month of May as compared to 88.4 per cent in the year-ago period, the two separate government data showed on Monday.

Though the retail inflation eased slightly to 6.26 per cent from 6.3 per cent in June, it still remained above the Reserve Bank's comfort level of 6 per cent for the second straight month. During the month,

prices of eggs, edible oils, fruit, pulses accelerated in double digits. Fuel inflation also grew 12.7 per cent with rising petrol and diesel prices.

The sharp rise in factory output was due to the base effect, as the country was under a strict lockdown in May last year: Six out of the eight core sectors that constitute 40 per cent of the whole IIP recorded positive growth in May.

Brokers see listing gains from Zomato IPO

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, JULY 12

While retail investors are enthused about Zomato's initial public offering for the high visibility the food delivery firm enjoys, brokerages are not very upbeat about the issue considering the high valuation. However, they do believe that the equity shares may offer listing gains to investors.

The Zomato public issue is opening on July 14.

The mega public issue of Rs 9,375 crore will allocate only 10 per cent shares to

the retail individual investors and 15 per cent to high net worth investors, with 75 per cent going to the institutional investors, including mutual funds and insurance companies.

However, the IPO priced in the price band of Rs72 to Rs 76 per equity share of Re 1 face value is seen as a risky bet given the company is the first of its kind, with no peer to compare its valuation, and is yet to turn profitable.

Retail investors have to keep in mind that at Rs 10 face value, the share would cost between Rs 720 and Rs

760 per share.

"The company is financially making losses, which remains a concern however the management has strong growth plans going ahead which will aid revival. Considering its financial performance, it would be prudent to wait for a meaningful turnaround to change the long-term stance. However, investors may consider subscribing for the listing gains," Ajit Mishra, VP-research, Religare Broking said.

"Subscribe for listing gains," said Motilal Oswal

Financial Services in its review, adding, "Strong consumer brand equity with widespread network: Zomato enjoys the first mover advantage and has built a strong brand name and recall across India."

ICICI Direct, in a report, cautioned investors that "Demand for a food delivery platform is highly sensitive to a range of factors, including, delivery charges charged by delivery partners, incentives given to delivery partners and the commissions charged to restaurant partners."

Kitex chief blasts Kerala govt, hails Telangana approach

Kochi, July 12: Dubbing the Kerala Industries Department as a 'frog in the well', unaware of the investor friendly atmosphere in other states, Kitex Group chairman Sabu Jacob on Monday said Telangana has offered many incentives for his venture and promised him freedom from 'inspections.'

The Telangana government has offered cheap land, water and electricity for investors, which was

unlike the attitude of the Kerala Industries Department, he told reporters here. "They are like a frog in the well and unaware of the investor-friendly atmosphere in other states," he said.

On apprehensions of inspections, like 11 carried out in his units in Kerala in 30 days, he said the Telangana government assured him that no official would trouble any industry with inspections.

Inspections would be held once in two or three years and that too with the knowledge of the principal secretary or the minister concerned, he was told.

"Even that will be informed well in advance after getting our permission and as per our convenience only," Jacob said.

He was told that even if any lapses were found during the inspection, steps would be taken to rectify it at the governmental level

and not publish it to "defame and let the business run into losses".

Jacob termed his discussions with Telangana Industries minister K. T. R. Rama Rao as "like a talk with the CEO of the state".

Jacob said the main allegation against his business was that it was a polluting industry. But the Telangana minister told him not to worry about waste water treatment, as the state would handle it. —PTI

COSTLY | NET-ZERO Adequate climate finance needed for India to meet clean energy goals

India wants rich nations to pay more for green shift

VRISHTI BENIWAL & RAJESH KUMAR SINGH JULY 12

India can't prioritise eliminating greenhouse gas emissions without sufficient financing from richer nations to help offset the high cost of transitioning to clean energy, according to a senior government official.

In laying out its position ahead of key global climate talks later this year, the top bureaucrat in India's environment ministry also said the country doesn't plan to tighten its emissions goals unless more money is promised from developed economies under the United Nations-sponsored climate change agreement.

"Every policy decision has a cost to the economy. Going net-zero or using less carbon also has a cost," environment secretary Rameshwar Prasad Gupta said in an interview at his New Delhi office. "We are not anti-net-zero. But without adequate climate finance being definitively available, we can't commit on that part."

The stance by India, the world's third-biggest emitter, highlights a top challenge global leaders will face when they meet at the UN Climate Change Conference, which starts in late October in Glasgow. While cutting net global carbon emissions to zero by 2050 is key to meet the goals of the Paris



Agreement, aimed at avoiding catastrophic damage from climate change, figuring out how to pay for the transition toward clean energy has been a sticking point.

Gupta also said the current \$100 billion-a-year pledge by richer nations to help developing nations -- a target they haven't even met yet -- is insufficient to

make the shift. "We have our own developmental imperatives," Gupta said. "If you want that I don't emit carbon, then provide finance. It will be much more than \$100 billion per year for developing nations."

As well, until negotiations are finalised around funding help, India likely won't upgrade the emissions targets it committed to in 2015, known as a Nationally Determined Contribution, which under the Paris Agreement were expected to be revised by 2020.

"This is not the final decision, but most probably we won't file a revised NDC," he said. "Let there be a decision on climate finance first."

While the government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi discussed setting a 2050 net-zero emissions goal earlier this year, policy makers have resisted, citing the outsized role fossil fuels play in powering its growing population out of poverty, and the progress it's made on earlier climate commitments.

But India risks looking like an outlier among other developing economies. While still seeking more funds from richer states, more than 100 countries including large emerging economies like Mexico, as well as neighbouring Pakistan and Bangladesh, have publicly committed to zero carbon by mid-century

—Bloomberg

CCEA green signals LIC disinvestment

New Delhi, July 12: The Union Cabinet has cleared disinvestment of the country's largest insurer LIC and a panel headed by the finance minister will now decide on the quantum of stake dilution, a senior official said on Monday.

The Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (Dipam) had in January appointed actuarial firm Milliman Advisors LLP India to assess the embedded value of LIC ahead of the initial public offering, which is touted to be the biggest public issue in Indian corporate history.

The Budget amendments to the LIC Act has been notified and the actuarial firm is expected to finalise the embedded value of the life insurer. Under the

embedded value method, the insurance company's present value of future profit is also included in its present net asset value.

"The Cabinet Committee for Economic Affairs last week cleared the proposal of initial public offering of LIC. The alternative mechanism on disinvestment will now decide on the quantum of stake to be divested by government," the official said.

The government expects to come out with the LIC IPO by the end of current fiscal, the official added.

Up to 10 per cent of the LIC IPO issue size would be reserved for policyholders. The government has already brought in legislative amendments in the LIC Act for the proposed IPO. —PTI

SHORT TAKES



N. Ramesh

Coach Ramesh makes Tokyo side

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JULY 12

Hyderabad-based athletics coach N. Ramesh is among the coaches and support staff who will accompany the 26-member Indian athletics team for the Tokyo Olympics.

Ramesh has mentored sprinter Dutee Chand, who has qualified for the Games.

The coaching team will be headed by chief coach Radha Krishnan Nair and consists of 13 coaches, eight support staff and two officials, according to the list released by the Athletics Federation of India.

THE LIST

Coaches: Radha Krishnan Nair, Galina Bukharina, Dr Klaus, Mohinder Singh, Uwe Hohn, Rajmohan, Amrish Kumar, Alexander, S Murali, N. Ramesh, Alexander Sinitsyn, Rakhi Tyagi and Gurmeet Singh.

Support staff: Elmira, Abhishek Pandey, Ishaan Marwaha, Dr Andrei, Simoni Shah, Chandrej, Pawan Kumar, Ketan Hulawale.

Team Doctor: Dr Brajesh Koushle. **Team Leader:** Dr Madhukant Pathak.

Hyderabad FC sign medio Garcia

Hyderabad: Indian Super League side Hyderabad FC have completed the signing of Spanish player Eduardo Edu Garcia ahead of the 2020-21 season. The experienced attacking mid-fielder, who can operate in multiple roles, joins Manolo Marquez's side from last-season's runners-up ATK Mohun Bagan. "I promise to give my best and help the club grow with my experience and my work," said Garcia after penning a one-year deal with Hyderabad FC. Born in Zaragoza, Spain, Garcia spent three seasons with the Real Zaragoza's 'B' side before going on to represent the senior side in the 2016-17 season of the Spanish Segunda Division. He moved to India for the first time with Bengaluru FC in 2017, making 14 appearances in the ISL. — PTI

Ex-SAAP chairman Mohan no more

Hyderabad: P. R. Mohan, former Andhra Ranji Trophy cricketer and chairman of erstwhile Sports Authority of Andhra Pradesh, passed away due to cardiac arrest, in Sri Kalahasthi of Chittoor district on Monday. He was 72 and is survived by his wife, son and daughter. A hard hitting batsman and agile fielder, he was also a yoga expert and fitness fanatic. He served the Andhra Cricket Association in different capacities as selector and coach of various teams during the 1980s. "I am very sorry to hear about the sad demise of Sri P. R. Mohan garu. He served ACA in various capacities as player and administrator. He also worked hard for the development of sports and games as chairman of SAAP. My sincere condolences to his family members. May his soul rest in peace," said MSK Prasad, former India cricketer and chairman of the national senior selection committee. The Hyderabad Cricket Association too paid tributes to Mohan. "Sad to hear this. May God embrace his soul, rest in peace sir," said secretary R. Vijayanand on behalf of the HCA and Apex Council members.

TCA tournaments from next month

Hyderabad: The Telangana Cricket Association is conducting age-level tournaments from the second week of August at various venues. The U-19 Inter Districts (two-day format) will be held from August 10 to 31 in Nizamabad, Bhadradi, Godavarikhani, Miryalaguda; U-23 Inter Districts (two-day format) from August 27 to September 17 in Adilabad, Warangal, Gajwel, Ranga Reddy; Seniors Inter Districts (one-day format for men & women) from September 12 to October 10 in Mahabubabad, Kamareddy, Mahbubnagar, Sangareddy and the U-16 Inter Districts.



The Italian team celebrates with the Euro trophy after beating England in the penalty shootout at Wembley stadium in London on Sunday. — AP

ROMEANCE

Italy win Euro Cup on penalties to wreck England party

London, July 12: Italy wrecked England's Euro 2020 party at Wembley on Sunday, winning a tense final on penalties to plunge the host nation into despair and prolong their 55-year wait for a second major title.

Roberto Mancini's men recovered from the shock of conceding the quickest goal ever in a European Championship final to equalise and held their nerve to claim a 3-2 shootout victory after a 1-1 draw following extra-time.

It is the second time Italy have been crowned European champions and comes after the embarrassment of failing even to qualify for the 2018 World Cup in Russia.

Three players fluffed penalties for England, extending their poor record in shoot-outs and

leaving the hosts waiting for another major trophy after the 1966 World Cup.

Italians spilled on to the streets from Milan to Palermo to celebrate their side's triumph, pushing aside thoughts of the coronavirus pandemic which has gripped the nation.

Earlier, a partisan crowd of more than 67,000 mostly England fans at Wembley was whipped into a state of fever pitch by rousing renditions of "Three Lions" and "Sweet Caroline" before kick-off.

Garth Southgate's team raced out of the blocks and were ahead in just the second minute when defender Luke Shaw finished coolly at the back post after an inviting cross from Kieran Trippier. Italy grew stronger as the match went on and equalised

Italy	1
(Leonardo Bonucci 67)	
England	1
(Luke Shaw 2)	
Italy won 3-2 in penalty shootout	

with 23 minutes remaining when Leonardo Bonucci scrambled the ball into the net from close range.

With four minutes remaining of normal time a pitch invader stopped the action and stewards struggled to catch him, adding to a sense of chaos at the stadium after ticketless fans earlier forced their way in. Normal time finished goalless despite a flurry of substitutions and the sides were still locked at 1-1 after extra

time. England goalkeeper Jordan Pickford saved spot-kicks from Andrea Belotti and Jorginho but Marcus Rashford hit the post and Gianluigi Donnarumma kept out Jadon Sancho and Bukayo Saka, sparking scenes of delirium from the players and the small pocket of Italian fans.

UNBEATEN ITALY

Italy had been arguably the team of the tournament heading into the final, sweeping through the group stage with a perfect record before knocking out Austria, top-ranked Belgium and Spain to reach the final.

Revitalised since Mancini took over after their failure to qualify for the 2018 World Cup, the Azzurri are now unbeaten in 34 matches.

The four-time world

champions' lone previous European Championship triumph came in 1968. They were beaten finalists in 2000 and 2012.

England fans will have to come to terms with a painful defeat just when it seemed they were on the brink of ending their tournament drought.

Southgate urged England to use the pain to fuel success in the future, accepting the blame for the heartbreaking penalty shoot-out defeat.

Southgate has revolutionised the national side since taking charge in 2016, leading his team to the semi-finals of the World Cup in Russia three years ago.

The manager urged England to use the pain to fuel success in the future, accepting the blame for the heartbreaking penalty shoot-out defeat. — AFP

SPORTS AWARDS SELECTION AFTER TOKYO OLYMPICS

New Delhi, July 12: The process of picking this year's national sports awards winners is set to be postponed until after the Olympic Games to ensure that medal winners in Tokyo are duly considered by the selection panel, which is yet to be constituted.

The awards are given away each year by the country's president on August 29, the National Sports Day which is also the birth anniversary of hockey legend Major Dhyan Chand. The Olympics will run from July 23 to August 8.

"We have already received nominations for this year's National Sports Awards. The dates of nominations are closed as of now. But in our last meeting we have discussed about including Olympic medalist, if any, for consideration in this year's awards," a sports ministry source said.

"The Olympic ends on August 8 so the process for selection of awardees might get delayed," he added.

The ceremony itself could also be delayed if the selection panel is unable to finalise names of the awardees within 10 days of the Games' end.

"We will take a final call on this issue soon. If any of our athletes win an Olympic medal, he or she will definitely be considered. If we can conduct the meeting within a week or 10 days after the Olympics, then the awards will given on August 29 otherwise it might be postponed by a few days," the source said. — PTI

ICC PLAYER OF MONTH

Sophie pips Indian duo to win award

Dubai, July 12: England spinner Sophie Ecclestone edged out India's teen batting sensation Shafali Verma and all-rounder Sneha Rana to become the ICC Player of the Month for June, while New Zealand opener Devon Conway bagged the honour in the men's category.

Left-arm spinner Ecclestone thus became the second English female to win the award after Tammy Beaumont, who was crowned in February.

Ecclestone, a winner of the annual ICC Emerging Player of the Year award in 2018, was the most successful bowler in the one-off Test against India in Bristol, where she finished with an eight-wicket haul. She also grabbed three wickets each in the two ODIs which followed.

"It's really nice to win this award. It's after a period in which we've played all three formats so it feels good to be recognised for my performances in the Test and the white-ball series," Ecclestone said in an ICC release.

"It's all crucial preparation for the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup in New Zealand, when we'll be defending the title we won in 2017, and we feel in a decent place as a team,"

Left-arm spinner Sophie Ecclestone became the second English female to win the award after Tammy Beaumont, who was crowned in February.

she added. Big-hitting opener Verma had been nominated for her Player of the Match effort of 96 and 63 on her Test debut in the one-off fixture against England and some useful runs in the two subsequent ODIs.

In men's cricket, Conway became the maiden New Zealand player to win the award after an astounding first month in Test cricket.

The left-hander had cracked a solid double century on debut against England at Lord's, following it up with two half-centuries in his next two games, including in the World Test Championship final against India in Southampton. Conway won the award ahead of team-mate Kyle Jamieson, who was the Player of the Match in the WTC final, with South Africa's Quinton de Kock the other nominee for his fine performances on their tour of the West Indies. — PTI

AUSSIE HANDSCOMB TESTS POSITIVE FOR COVID-19

Melbourne, July 12: Out of favour Australia batsman Peter Handscomb was forced to miss his county match against Leicestershire in England after testing positive for Covid-19.

The 30-year-old, who has been captaining Middlesex this season, couldn't play their Championship Group Two game on Sunday after being forced into isolation following a positive test result.

"Irishman Tim Murtagh stepped up to fill in for Handscomb as skipper as Middlesex ended day one of the clash with

Leicestershire at 3-280," a report in *The West Australian* said.

Handscomb is going through a poor run of form as he failed to cross the 50-run mark in 13 innings for Middlesex.

He has fallen out of the radar of the national selectors and last played a Test against India in Sydney in January, 2019.

His last T20I was also against India at Bengaluru in February, 2019.

His last international match was an ODI against England at Birmingham in July, 2019. — PTI



Milwaukee Bucks forward Giannis Antetokounmpo (34) scores against Phoenix Suns during the second half of NBA Finals in Milwaukee on Sunday. — AP

Bucks trim Suns' lead in NBA Finals

Milwaukee (United States), July 12: Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 41 points and grabbed 13 rebounds on Sunday to lead Milwaukee over Phoenix 120-100, reviving the Bucks' chances to win their first NBA title in 50 years.

The 26-year-old Greek forward joined Shaquille O'Neal in 2000 and LeBron James in 2016 as the only NBA Finals players with back-to-back 40-point, 10-rebound performances.

Antetokounmpo, who had 42 points and 12 rebounds in a game-two loss, sparked the Bucks to a victory that pulled them within 2-1 in the best-of-seven championship series that continues Wednesday at Milwaukee.

"To give ourselves an opportunity to win this series, we've got to stay aggressive," Antetokounmpo said. "It's all going to be mental from here."

Antetokounmpo hit 14-of-23 shots from the floor and 13-of-17 from the free throw line to lead the Bucks to a crucial victory, as no team has ever rallied from 3-0 down to win an NBA playoff series. "We knew what type of game it was going to be," Antetokounmpo said.

Jrue Holiday added 21 points and nine assists while Khris Middleton had 18 points, seven rebounds and six assists. — AFP

Hawgood all praise for women's hockey coach

New Delhi, July 12: Former chief coach Neil Hawgood believes the current Indian women's hockey team has become a mentally tough unit under incumbent Sjoerd Marijne which augurs well for its upcoming Tokyo Olympics campaign.

Hawgood, who was in charge of the Indian women's team in two separate stints between 2012 and 2016, acknowledges the growth of Rani Rampal and Co. under Marijne.

"Sjoerd (Marijne) has done an amazing job in elevating the team's level. The current team is mentally tougher than previous years," the Australian was quoted as saying in the latest episode of *Hockey TV Charcha*, a podcast series initiated by Hockey India ahead of

NRAI LOOKS TO ADD COACHES

New Delhi, July 12: The National Rifle Association of India is trying to get approval for two more coaches to accompany the seven permitted to travel with the country's Olympic shooting team to Tokyo, at the expense of office-bearers.

The 13 Olympic-bound Indian shooters in pistol and rifle, seven coaches, five physiotherapists and a two-member video crew had left for Zagreb on May 11, for an 80-day training-cum-competition tour of the Balkan nation. "The NRAI has already started processing and is working with IOA on this," secretary Rajiv Bhatia said. — PTI

the Tokyo Games.

"Earlier, if the team conceded an early goal then it created a worrying situation which could lead to a heavy defeat. In a similar situation now, the team is calm and confident knowing that they can come back into any game. I am delighted to see that the team has

kicked on and reached another level since my time," he added.

Hawgood feels lack of matches leading up to the Olympics due to the Covid-19 pandemic might be a cause of concern for teams like India, Australia and Argentina unlike their European counterparts. — PTI

Handball week



Players and officials of the Hyderabad District Handball Association pose after inauguration of the International Handball Week on Monday at Chintal Basti grounds (Ram Leela Ground) in Hyderabad on Monday. Celebrations will continue till Sunday during which various matches will be held at grounds across the city.

— AFP