

SHORT TAKES

BJP PROTESTS
FOR FAIR DEAL
TO FARMERSDC CORRESPONDENTS
VIJAYAWADA/KAKINADA,
JUNE 8

The BJP staged a state-wide agitation in virtual mode on Tuesday demanding that the AP government resolve the farmers' problems and ensure them a fair deal.

Addressing party leaders and farmers via online video, BJP senior leader and MP GVL Narasimha Rao said farmers raised paddy on nine lakh hectares and produced 60 lakh metric tonnes. The state government had promised them to purchase 40 lakh metric tonnes but failed to buy even half this quantity.

Though the farmers were waiting for several weeks, they were not getting paid via deposits into their bank accounts.

He criticised minister for civil supplies Kodali Sri Venkateswara Rao for his failure to intervene in the issue and wondered why Chief Minister Jagan was keeping quiet about this. Though the state promised the setting up of 1,500 paddy procurement centres, there was no monitoring on the part of the government as to whether these were functioning or not, Rao said.

BJP's AP affairs in-charge Sunil Deodhar alleged that the state government backstabbed the farmers by not purchasing even half of the quantum of paddy it had promised to buy. Though the Centre was ready to bear 40 per cent of the cost involved for promoting drip irrigation at a cost of ₹400 crore, the state government failed to allocate even a single rupee in the last two years.

TD COMPLAINS TO
GOVERNOR OVER
COPS' HARASSMENTDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 8

Telugu Desam chief Nara Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday requested Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan to intervene and restrain the state police from "harassing" frontline warriors and the general public in the name of the Covid-19 restrictions.

In a letter to the governor, Naidu said Dalit girl Lakshmi Aparna working in a private hospital was subjected to humiliation and harassment by cops in full view of the public in Visakhapatnam.

"It has been a little more than a year that the state has been grappling with the Covid pandemic. Frontline warriors and the general public have been struggling their way through the Covid-induced lockdown. All the while, it appears the government of Andhra Pradesh is turning a blind eye to the difficulties being faced by the frontline warriors and the general public and to the overall pandemic situation," the former CM said. Naidu recalled how injustice was meted out to Dr Sudhakar, a dalit government doctor in Visakhapatnam in May last year. "Now, a dalit girl was harassed by the police when she was returning home in the evening after the end of the lockdown relaxation hours. The police questioned her near the Rama Talkies and subjected her to undue harassment." The TD leader said incidents like these were only reminiscent of the Colonial Raj and a gross violation of the fundamental rights.

RAJU ASKS GOVS
TO SEEK REPEAL
OF SEC. 124 ADC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 8

The YSR Congress rebel MP K. Raghu Ramakrishna Raju has written to Governors and Lieutenant Governors, seeking their support for repeal of the Section 124 A of IPC dealing with sedition.

The MP in his letter stated that as the President would be addressing the Governors and Lieutenant Governors from all States and UTs shortly, he wanted their support to take up the issue with the President the need to repeal the IPC section. He alleged that as he raised the failures of YSR Congress government, he was targeted and implicated in cases out of revenge by Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy. He said that never before was a sitting MP booked on charges of sedition and subjected to custodial torture under the supervision of AP CID Additional Director General.

No Covid Fear



People in large numbers stand in a queue without maintaining physical distance to get their Aadhaar cards updated on the last day to apply for Jagananna Cheyuta programme, outside an Aadhaar centre at Dwarakanagar in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday

— P. NARASIMHA MURTHY

CM striving hard for
welfare of the poor

Kannababu, Krishna list out schemes for empowerment

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, JUNE 8

The welfare schemes introduced by Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy are helping to achieve empowerment of the poor by securing their livelihoods in the state, said Molleti Saraswathi from Kirlampudi village in East Godavari district.

Interacting with the Chief Minister during the launch of Jagananna Thodu scheme which credited ₹10,000 each as interest-free loans to small traders, Saraswathi said she was running kirana business and she used to borrow money towards working capital at high interest rates.

Burdened by high-interest rate, she even contemplated closing it down and that was when Jagananna Thodu scheme came as a godsend.

The beneficiary said that during the Covid-19 pandemic period, the assistance would be of great help to the small-time traders. She also said she bought a sewing machine under the YSR Asara scheme which has given ₹13,000

BANKS ASKED TO RELAX CONDITIONS
TO SANCTION LOANS TO PETTY TRADERSDC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, JULY 8

Banks have been asked to relax conditions for sanction of loans under the Jagananna Thodu scheme in Prakasam district to extend financial assistance to a greater number of petty traders and artisans.

District Collector Pravin Kumar said they sanctioned loans to 28,846 beneficiaries on Tuesday and the amounts would be directly credited to their accounts. Admitting a decline in the number of beneficiaries this year, he attributed it to the CIBIL (Credit Information Bureau (India) Limited) score. He expressed confidence that the numbers would go up during the next round of loan mela.

Education Minister Adimulapu Suresh under-

to her, and her mother-in-law gets YSR Cheyutha, her father-in-law gets a pension, and

lined the need to cover all the eligible under the scheme to protect small traders from the clutches of loan sharks. He called for setting up help centers to assist beneficiaries in the documentation for bank loans.

Meanwhile, SPSR Nellore District Collector K.V.N. Chakradhar Babu said around ₹23,68,10,000 was transferred to the accounts of 23,681 beneficiaries under Jagananna Thodu scheme in the district on Tuesday.

He said the government decision to relax the curfew timings from 6 am to 2 pm would be very useful to the small traders.

He said they were making arrangements to provide vaccination to all the petty traders, hawkers, vegetable vendors, and auto-rickshaw drivers.

her two children are studying in government English medium school. Her family is getting

● AN AMOUNT of ₹23.24 crore was deposited in the accounts of 23,241 beneficiaries in the district in all categories.

other benefits also. She said Jagan Mohan Reddy was making the dreams of poor people like her come true.

District Collector D. Muralidhar Reddy said that interest-free loans under the scheme would help poor families.

An amount of ₹23.24 crore was deposited in the accounts of 23,241 beneficiaries in the district in all categories.

Agriculture Minister K. Kannababu said that the CM had been implementing 29 welfare schemes for the benefits of the poor for the past two years without diluting his poll promise.

BC welfare minister Ch. Srinivasa Venugopala Krishna said that the CM was striving for the empowerment of the poor in the state by implementing welfare schemes with a calendar mode. Joint Collectors G. Lakshmi and G. Rajakumari were present.

YSRC leader's photos on
containers lead to rumpusDC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, JUNE 8

Chandragiri MLA Chevreddy Bhaskar Reddy distributed Anandaiah herbal medicine for Covid treatment in a container with photographs of Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, former Chief Minister late Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy and the MLA himself to the people of his constituency on Monday.

This stirred up a controversy with Opposition parties accusing YSRC leaders of 'self-promotion' at the time of crisis and also it created a hullabaloo on social media with many netizens trolling the MLA.

After the state government gave green signal, Anandaiah and his team resumed distribution of herbal concoction on Monday. While the herbal medicine maker himself was engaged in preparing and distributing the concoction for the people of Sarvepalli constituency, his son Sridhar and Anandaiah's followers were involved in the same at Chandragiri constituency.

On Monday, the ruling party MLA Chevreddy Bhaskar Reddy officially



Anandaiah Medicine container sporting stickers of YSRC leaders.

started the distribution of Anandaiah's concoction in his constituency. The concoction supplied here was packed in containers sporting the photographs of the Chief Minister, his father and the local MLA.

Questioning the decency of YSRC leaders still meddling with distribution of Anandaiah medicine even after the High Court issued orders against interference, TDP politburo member Yanamala Ramakrishnudu said even Bhaskar Reddy started his own distribution of Anandaiah medicine and the packets he was distributing were printed with the labels of YSRC leaders.

He found fault over the decision of YSRC leaders in fixing their pictures on Anandaiah medicine and accused the latter of creating problems for patients instead of helping with the distribution of the herbal medicine.

The TDP's official twitter handle also pointed fingers at the YSRC leaders using their pictures on herbal medicine containers. "Though it was announced that Anandaiah's medicine would be distributed free of cost to the people of the state, there were no records of distribution so far," but Chandragiri MLA Chevreddy Bhaskar Reddy (YCP) distributing Anandaiah's medicine — sporting YCP stickers on it — to his constituency people is strange. The Telugu Desam Party is demanding that the government immediately distribute Anandaiah medicine free of cost to the people of the state", the TDP tweeted on its official handle.

Meanwhile, there was a new meme-fest on microblogging sites soon after the photos of the herbal medicine containers with YSRC leaders' pictures affixed on them appeared on social media platforms.

SALARY HIKED
FOR RESIDENT
DOCTORS IN APDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 8

The state government has enhanced remuneration/honorarium to resident doctors in three categories with effect from September 1, 2020.

The government issued GO MS No. 58 here on Tuesday, enhancing the pay to resident special degree (PG) to ₹70,000 per month from ₹45,000, while for resident dentist (PG) pay has been raised to ₹65,000 from ₹42,000 and resident super specialist will get ₹85,000 a month instead of ₹55,000 earlier.

The government revised honorarium for these categories earlier by issuing GO MS No. 18 dated 05-03-2018 with effect from 01-08-2017.

The GO on Tuesday mentioned that following a requisition from AP Senior Resident Doctors Association for enhancement of hike in honorarium to senior resident doctors working in government hospitals as they were getting less stipend than the final year postgraduates, their present honorarium was enhanced.

On the other hand, the junior doctors stuck to their boycott notice served earlier and would start their stir by wearing black badges while attending duty on June 9. They are invited for talks by the director of medical education, health minister and health principal secretary to resolve their demands amicably.

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Flurry of calls
for Anandaiah's
herbal mixDC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, JUNE 8

The police and the revenue department officials apart from media persons working in Nellore city and Krishnapatnam region are increasingly under pressure from relatives and friends and acquaintances to arrange Anandaiah's herbal mix. They are harried by calls from across the state.

"Though I knew Anandaiah, how can I ask him for the concoction every day that too when the preparation was halted for the last two weeks?" said a senior police officer.

The pressure is such that police officials in Krishnapatnam and Muthukurru areas even stopped answering calls from new numbers.

Not only revenue and police, even employees of Krishnapatnam Port are flooded with requests for the preparation as it is being produced on the premises of the security academy at the port.

The officials of many departments are so much vexed by requests that their first response has become "Ask me anything except Anandaiah's preparation." Similar is the case with media persons, especially those working in Krishnapatnam.

With confusion still prevailing on the availability of the medicine and a few politicians making their own arrangements for making the concoction for the people in their constituencies, the general public are unsure how to secure it, in spite of the fact there is no proof of its efficacy.

A person who has recovered his smell after using both allopathy and Anandaiah preparation is not sure which helped him.

With courts giving credibility to the concoction, there is a huge demand for the herbal mixture. Its efficacy will be known only after some time.

Unesco in 2018, Rani-kivav at Patan in Gujarat in 2014 and the historic city of Ahmedabad in 2017 were among the 30 cultural sites listed.

Historian Dr Appireddy Harinath Reddy stressed the need to recognise Lepakshi and Gandikota as world heritage sites.

YSR Steel Corporation Limited, AP Airports Development Corporation, Corridor Development and Concept Cities are the mainstay. For the development of industries and commerce, the government would frame policies and business reform action plans, and take up handlooms and allied sectors development.

Gowtham Reddy said a special focus was being laid on the construction of Ramayapatnam, Bhavanapadu and Machilipatnam ports along with the construction of four fishing harbours which began in July.

PEOPLE NOT
COVERED CAN
STILL APPLY

From Page 1

He said if any eligible person is not covered in this scheme, they can still apply through volunteers, and upon verification, they will be provided with the scheme benefits in a month or two. They can also call '1902' toll-free number to get help in getting enrolled.

Panchayat Raj and Rural Development Minister Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy, Chief Secretary Adityanath Das, Municipal and Special Chief Secretary (Urban Development) Y. Srilakshmi, Special Chief Secretary (Village and Ward Secretariats) Ajay Jain, Special Chief Secretary (Panchayat Raj, Rural Development) Gopalakrishna Dwivedi, Village and Ward Secretariats Commissioner Narayana Bharat Gupta, SERP CEO Rajababu, MEPMA MD Vijayalakshmi, SLBC Convener Brahmananda Reddy, Shreenidhi MD Nancharayana, APCOB MD Sreenadh Reddy and other senior officials were present.

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JUDA strike to affect
Covid care servicesDC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL, JUNE 8

With junior doctors deciding to abstain from hospital services from Wednesday, the Kurnool Government General Hospital (KGGH), with about 650 Covid patients, is in for serious disruption of services.

The junior doctors have given a call for strike to press their demands for health insurance benefits, cancellation of tax deducted at source in salaries, and other monetary incentives.

AP Junior Doctors Association president Dr Praneeth Reddy has sent a strike notice to Kurnool Medical College

(KMC) authorities. KGGH Deputy Superintendent Dr Bhagawan said 200 house surgeons, 400 medical students in their final years are likely to abstain from work.

A meeting has been held with the Hospital Superintendent on how to tackle the situation. He said that the 70 duty medical officers who have been recruited recently would be allocated duties to monitor the condition of patients in the wards.

Assistant and Associate professors would also be roped in to tide over the medical services crisis in case the JUDA strike continues.

Meanwhile, the hospital

has witnessed a declining rate of admission of Covid patients. "We are admitting 50 to 60 Covid patients per day as opposed to 150 during the peak of the Covid infection," Dr Bhagawan said.

On the complaints of patients that duty doctors are not available in wards and also that experienced senior doctors are not visiting them, he said the concerns would be attended to.

He informed that KGGH has earmarked a medical ward with around 200 beds exclusively for pediatric patients, as the impending third wave is expected to hit children hard.

POSITIVE | NEWS

State is pursuing ambitious targets on both welfare and development fronts

AP eyes 10% of India's exports by 2030

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 8

Industries minister Mekapati Gowtham Reddy said it is the vision of Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy to see Andhra Pradesh leap to the top slot in industrial growth by 2030 and contributing 10 per cent of national exports.

Speaking to media persons here on Tuesday, the minister said that though there was a slump the world over, Andhra Pradesh carried out welfare and development works in a balanced manner. The government gave

thrust to infrastructure, industries and commerce, IT, skill development and YSR AP One.

Gowtham Reddy said the state registered a growth rate of 1.58 per cent even during the Covid times due to the foresight of the Chief Minister. The government is specially focusing on protecting lives and livelihoods of various sections of society. Towards this end, it grounded several welfare schemes such as YSR Cheyutha, Aasara, zero-interest loans, MSME packages, women empowerment. Andhra Pradesh is the only state that has come up with welfare cal-

endar, rolling out schemes on time and implementing every promise listed under the Navaratnalu.

The Minister said that after the government was formed, between June 2019 and May 2021, as many as 65 mega and large industries set shop in the state with an investment of ₹29,780.86 crore, providing employment to 45,049 people. Similarly, in the MSME segment, 13,885 units were set up with an investment of ₹4,220.71 crore, employing 88,516 people. At present, there are 62 projects under implementation with a total investment of

₹36,384.29 crore with a potential to create employment to 76,916 people. Also, in the offering are five public sector units with an investment of ₹96,400 crore with a potential to create employment for 79,700 people.

Further, the minister said that investments to the tune of ₹1,032 crore have been achieved in this financial year, where projects worth ₹18,000 crore are in progress. He stated that Andhra Pradesh was ranked first in the Ease of Doing Business in 2020 by DPIIT, GOI and World Bank. Also, the state was conferred the 'Best State

in Skill Development' award by ASSOCHAM. Similarly, APSSDC was accredited with ISO:9001:2015 due to quality parameters in implementing skill development programmes and it also received the Genius Booking of World Records for the progress achieved through virtual skilling during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Soon, 30 skill development colleges would be established across the state to enhance employment of the youth.

The Minister said that on the infrastructure front, ports, fishing harbours,



CAPITAL ISSUE

Lightning kills
6-yr-old boy

Visakhapatnam: Lightning killed a six-year-old boy and seriously injured his mother at Nallaquarry in Pendurthy mandal in

Visakhapatnam on Tuesday evening. The boy was identified as Rohit and his mother as Pavani. Neighbours said after the rain started in the evening, Pavani took her son Rohit to the terrace to get some clothes that hung out for drying.

SOUTH CENTRAL RAILWAY
Follow us on @SCRailwayIndia
Details of the Tender Notices of S.C Railway can be seen on our website : www.scr.indianrailways.gov.in

Open e-Tender Notice No. DRM/ Works/BZA/14/2021
dt.07-06-2021

For and on behalf of the President of India, the undersigned invites E-Tenders for the following works upto to 15-00 hours and the date mentioned against each.

S.No.1. Tender No. E-17-North-2021. **Name of work:** Vijayawada Division-Vijayawada-Visakhapatnam section: Proposed construction of RUB in lieu of LC No.471 at km/712/2-4 between NRP-REG stations by open cut method (RCC BOX size 1X5.0X4.50m). **Period of completion :** 6 (Six) months. **Tender value:** Rs. 5,48,88,306/-. **Earnest Money Deposit :** Rs. Nil. **Date of closing:** 25-06-2021.

S.No. 2. Tender No. E-17-South-2021. **Name of work:** SW-I: Deep screening of 1in12 & 1in16 - 52kg/60 kg Points and crossings with BCM Machine and tamping with UNIMAT in Sr.DEN/South/BZA Jurisdiction. **SW-II:** Lowering of track in approaches of Girder bridges & Provision of Engineering Indicator Boards in SSE/P.Way/KVZ and SSE/P.Way/OGL Sections in ADEN/OGL Sub-Division in view of increasing of 110 Km/h to 130Km/h. **Period of completion :** 6 (Six) months. **Tender value:** Rs. 2,52,01,721/-. **Earnest Money Deposit :** Rs. Nil. **Date of closing:** 29-06-2021.

S.No.3. Tender No. E-Zone-East-08-2021. **Name of work:** Annual Zonal Contract -All the staff quarters and Service buildings East of the road from Prakasam Statue to Level Crossing No.1 including the roads and all works in Wynchipet colony, Up yard colony, Mineral siding, Krishna River pump house and attached staff quarters and Service buildings, West of the road from Prakasam Statue to Level Crossing No.1 in SSE/ Works/ East/BZA & SSE/Works/West/BZA under ADEN/Bldgs/BZA jurisdiction for the period from 01-07-2021 to 30-06-2022. **Period of completion :** 12 (Twelve) months. **Tender value:** Rs.1,32,17,904/-. **Earnest Money Deposit :** Rs. Nil. **Date of closing:** 24-06-2021.

S.No.4. Tender No. E-Zone-East-09-2021. **Name of work:** Annual Zonal Contract- Sathanarayanaapuram Railway Colony, Gopernpet Railway Colony and All India Radio Station Colony roads and buildings and Rayanapadu Staff Quarters, Roads etc., in Staff Colony of WWS/Guntupalli in SSE/ Works/G. Pet/BZA, SSE/Works/ STPM & SSE/Works/RYP under ADEN/Bldgs/BZA jurisdiction for the period from 01-07-2021 to 30-06-2022. **Period of completion:** 12 (Twelve) months. **Tender value:** Rs.1,64,73,312/-. **Earnest Money Deposit :** Rs.Nil. **Date of closing:** 24-06-2021.

S.No.5. Tender No. E-Zone-East-10-2021. **Name of work:** Annual Zonal Contract- Repairs and maintenance of water supply system of all staff quarters, service buildings under SSE/Works/ WA/BZA section including Staff quarters and service buildings at Rayanapadu and Kondapalli Stations in the sub-divisions of ADEN/Buildings/BZA and ADEN/BZA for the period from 01-07-2021 to 30-06-2022. **Period of completion:**12 (Twelve) months. **Tender value:** Rs.45,41,328/-. **Earnest Money Deposit :** Rs. Nil. **Date of closing:** 24-06-2021.

S.No.6. Tender No. E-Zone-East-11-2021. **Name of work:** Annual Zonal Contract- Alongside the Railway track yard from Krishna Bridge (i.e.) Km.425/27-A for West line and Km.425/27-A for East line to Km.431/6&7 for both slow & fast lines towards Visakhapatnam side and upto Km.569/01 towards Secunderabad side including all service buildings, staff quarters alongside the track and Rayanapadu including, West Booking Office, Supervisors and Officers Rest Houses, RRI cabin all cabins and Goods shed within the yard and Mineral siding and road leading to ELS from Mineral siding and all track works upto Km.569/01 in ADEN/BZA Jurisdiction for the period from 01-07-2021 to 30-06-2022. **Period of completion:**12 (Twelve) months. **Tender value:** Rs. 98,56,464/-. **Earnest Money Deposit :** Rs. Nil. **Date of closing:** 24-06-2021.

S.No.7. Tender No. E-Zone-East-12-2021. **Name of work:** Annual Zonal Contract- Ramavarappadu (inclusive) to Machilipatnam, Nidadavolu (Exclusive) to Narsapur and Bhimavaram Town to Gudivada in ADEN/BVRM Jurisdiction for the period from 01-07-2021 to 30-06-2022. **Period of completion:**12 (Twelve) months. **Tender value:** Rs.1,07,82,552/-. **Earnest Money Deposit :** Rs. Nil. **Date of closing:** 24-06-2021.

The prospective tenderers are advised to visit website "www.ireps.gov.in" before the date of tender closing to note any changes/corrigenda for any tender.

Divisional Railway Manager (Works), A0536 Vijayawada.

For further tender conditions / details and for downloading the tender documents, Please visit website at <https://www.ireps.gov.in> or www.scr.indianrailways.gov.in

No care for safety



People are busy purchasing vegetables without maintaining physical distance at AS Raja Grounds in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday.

— K. MURALI KRISHNA

AP's mom-kid plan to counter third wave

Third wave of pandemic is expected to mainly target children

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 8

Andhra Pradesh government has ordered its health machinery to prepare a location-wise list of nearly 35 lakh mothers with children below five years of age for administering Covid vaccines to such moms. This is part of the government's strategy to deal with the expected third wave of Coronavirus pandemic, which is projected to mainly target children.

A senior state health official disclosed, "We are making all necessary arrangements for giving Covid-19 jab to mothers with kids aged less than five years following a directive from the state government. This will ensure that mothers do not to get infected with the virus in case their kids contract Coronavirus in the impending third wave and are hospitalised. Mothers will obviously at the bedside of their virus-affected kids to take care of them," the official pointed out.

Authorities say they already have a list of children aged from zero to five years PHC-wise, along with details of their mothers, for taking up the routine immunisation programmes. They will utilise this list to identify the eligible mothers for Covid-19 vaccination.

Once Coronavirus doses are available and state

7,796 NEW CORONAVIRUS CASES;
77 DEATHS IN AP IN LAST 24 HOURS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 8

Andhra Pradesh has registered 7,796 fresh Coronavirus infections and 77 deaths, according to a health bulletin on Tuesday.

The health authorities stated that out of 89,732 samples tested, 7,796 persons were found infected with the confirmed Coronavirus. Out of a total number of 1,99,46,253 samples tested so far in the state, 17,71,007 persons were found infected with the virus and of them, 16,51,790 were recovered while 1,07,588 are still active with the virus.

The authorities said that as the daily Covid-19 cases were registering dip in the last few days, the total recovery rate was pegged at 93.25% while that of active cases at 6.08%. The Covid-19 positivity rate registered at 8.7%.

Among daily cases of infection, East Godavari

topped the state with 1,302, followed by 1,210 in Chittoor, 918 in Anantapur, 755 in West Godavari, 672 in Visakhapatnam, 518 in Guntur, 499 in Prakasam, 410 in Kadapa, 379 in Krishna, 376 in Srikakulam, 311 in Nellore, 299 in Vizianagaram and 147 in Kurnool.

East Godavari continues to register the highest number of total active cases at 24,060 followed by 14,704 in Chittoor, 12,039 in Prakasam, 9,248 in Nellore, 8,529 in Krishna, 7,644 in West Godavari, 7,172 in Visakhapatnam, 6,980 in Guntur, 5,093 in Srikakulam, 3,705 in Kadapa, 2,952 in Kurnool, 2,783 in Anantapur, 2,679 in Vizianagaram.

Chittoor has again registered the highest deaths at 12, followed by 10 in West Godavari, eight each in Anantapur and Nellore, seven in Srikakulam, six each in East Godavari and Visakhapatnam, five in Vizianagaram.

government gives its nod, they will issue advance tokens to all eligible mothers one day before the vaccination programme. Services of ANMs and ASHA workers will be utilised to ensure that ben-

eficiary mothers reach their allotted Covid vaccination centres as per the time and date allotted to them. The vaccination will be in strict compliance with Covid-19 protocols.

PCC CHIEF SLAMS
MODI ON VACCINE
BUNGLING

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL JUNE 8

Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) Chief Sake Sailajanath blamed Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his failure in tackling the Covid crisis that has led to the death of innocent people in the country. He said the flip flops in vaccine policy have derailed the management of the Covid-19 pandemic and the country is now paying a heavy price for the short-sighted policies of the Union government.

Addressing the media at Kurnool on Tuesday, Sailajanath deplored the attitude of AP Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy who was not in a position to demand the legitimate share of state's resources from the central government putting the state's interests in jeopardy. The lackadaisical attitude of the centre in allotting vaccines to the state was discriminatory and cost thousands of lives, he rebuked.

He urged the chief minister to ensure vaccination to all people in the state and protect them from the impending third wave.

User privacy
aids Clubhouse's
appeal

FROM PAGE 1

A regional head for a popular private firm, he has been hosting debates on topics ranging from politics, gender, sexuality, international relationship and Indo-China wars, among others.

"Since I have to communicate with people from diverse backgrounds professionally, the Clubhouse chat rooms are of help to me. I feel confident and learn a lot when great speakers talk on a topic and provide it a new dimension."

Kaali Sudheer, art curator and film producer, among the first from Hyderabad to join this, started a club called Hyderabad adda. He along with his friend Anuj has been hosting several debates around the city's culture, food etc and said, "Clubhouse is nostalgia and addictive. It is like good old radio, where each one of us can run our own station. People listen, speak, meet and become friends. Just speak or just listen."

Many users say the rapidly rising popularity was due to its user privacy. "Conversations are not recorded and vanish immediately after any meeting gets over. Absence of face-time enables even introverts to communicate easily and put their point across."

Political parties too are quickly realising the immense possibilities the platform provides. Users are already

discussing politics and in all languages. There are several Telugu rooms where everything from the politics of Telangana and AP are being discussed, besides food and Tollywood.

Congress leader Dr Sravan Kumar Dasoj, arguably Telangana's first politician on Clubhouse, said, "It is a fascinating app, which allows politicians to listen to people across the social spectrum and geography, with varied professions, age and political views. It can be a great feedback tool."

The tool saw its popularity soar in the lockdown atmosphere. Several Hyderabad users participated in serious discussions to light-hearted banter.

Teenagers, vexed with the ongoing pandemic, binge-watching and other platforms, created rooms like 'just shut up', 'I love Chiru', 'I hate Covid19' and 'How many licks does it take?' etc.

"The magic of this app, which will be a giant soon, is its human voice. Text is impersonal, while voice holds magic and touches humans.

Unlike zoom, you don't have to put on your makeup and have a lovely background," adds Sudheer. "The app brings a greater sense of emotional to connect than any other."

"In the days to come, most significant political debates will be on Clubhouse.

Fortified rice for
mid-day meal

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, JUNE 8

Prakasam District is gearing up to distribute fortified rice to schools to serve the special rice under the mid-day meal scheme henceforth.

The old practice is that paddy procured from the farmers was polished in the mills and distributed to schools.

Now, the rice will be fortified by adding the necessary vitamins and minerals.

The key nutrients being added include iron, folic acid, vitamin B-12 and the main purpose of the

fortification is to address malnutrition among children and women.

Explaining the process during a review at Ongole on Tuesday, Joint Collector (RB&R) of Prakasam District, J. Venkata Murali said that one kg of fortified rice will be mixed with 100 kg of ordinary rice for the well-being of the students.

Referring to the procurement of fortified rice from other districts, he directed the rice millers and officials concerned to produce the fortified variety in the district itself by the end of June.

Pastors told to
apply for pay

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 8

The Christian pastors should apply for honorarium at the Navasakam portal with all required documents by June 13, said. The AP Christian Joint Action Committee (APJAC).

APCJAC chairman Dr Yalamanchili Praveen said that Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy had promised monthly honorarium to religious

priests including pastors during his padayatra and fulfilled the promise after becoming the CM. An amount of ₹5,000 per month will be paid by the government to every beneficiary under the scheme.

Dr Praveen said if anyone faced any inconvenience in getting any required documents from the secretariats, they can lodge complaints to the '1902' call center and seek resolution.

MLC MADHAV'S PLEA
FOR FRESH PROBE
INTO DEATHS AT MH

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM JUNE 8

Senior leader of the BJP and MLC from north Andhra graduate constituency PVN Madhav on Tuesday urged the state government to conduct a fresh probe into the death of two Covid patients suspectedly due to an oxygen pipe leak at the Maharaja Hospital in Vizianagaram on April 26.

Madhav made the plea to ministers attending the district review committee meeting in Vizianagaram on Tuesday. It was participated by minister Botsa Satyanarayana, district in-charge minister Vellampalle Srinivas and deputy chief minister Pamula Pushpa Srivani.

The Ruia Hospital oxygen leak incident had killed 11 Covid patients and the government has paid cash compensation. A similar compensation could be paid to the patients who died in the Maharaja College, Madhav proposed.

He also complained that not a single irrigation project was taken forward in the district during the last two years of the YSRC rule.

Another MLC, Pakalapati Raghuvarma, urged the government to give priority to children of teachers who died due to Covid-19, while providing employment. Some 48 teachers died due to Covid-19 in Vizianagaram district so far, he said.

Deputy chief minister Pamula Pushpa Srivani pulled up district health officer Ramana Kumari for ignoring the case of some people drawing pension by producing fake health certificates.

She cited the name of the wife of a government employee who has been drawing pension in relation to filaria disease. She asked the joint collector to inquire into the fake certificates issue.

TWO KILLED IN
HYDROGEN CYLINDER
EXPLOSION

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, JUNE 8

Two people died and one was injured after a hydrogen cylinder accidentally exploded on Tuesday at a private industrial unit, located in the industrial estate area of Madanapalle in Chittoor district. The hydrogen cylinder accidentally exploded when technicians were installing a gas chromatography machine, which is used to examine the quality of eucalyptus oil, at Turf Pearl AgriTech Pvt Ltd.

According to the local police, a technical team from Bengaluru were installing the gas chromatography machine at the godown of this private industrial unit when the cylinder accidentally exploded which led to the death of a technician T. Lingappa (42) on the spot.

The ayurvedic oil and perfume manufacturing unit's owner Siva Mahesh and a worker Nayaz Basha were also on the spot during the explosion and they sustained injuries. They were rushed to the district hospital at Madanapalli town. The factory worker, who sustained grievous injuries, died while being shifted to Tirupati midway and the factory owner was under treatment. The Madanapalli police registered a case and are further

● The cylinder accidentally exploded when technicians were installing a gas chromatography machine.

AGRI | STRIFE

RARS has over 100 years of existence as premier agri research institute

PIL opposes RARS land for med college

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL, JUNE 8

A fresh controversy is raging over the alienation of 50 acres of fertile land used for research purposes at Rayalaseema Agriculture Research Station (RARS) at Nandyal to the proposed medical college. Consequently, the RARS would be shifted to Tangadanche near Nandikotkur.

The government has accorded permission to transfer an extent of 50 acres of available at the NSC block of Thandancha State Seed Farm, Kurnool, to the Registrar, Acharya N.G.

● **THE GOVERNMENT** has accorded permission to transfer an extent of 50 acres of available at the NSC block of Thandancha State Seed Farm, Kurnool, to the Registrar, Acharya N.G. Ranga Agriculture University, to relocate the Farmer Training Centre and RARS.

● **THE RSS** questioned how the government could alienate the lands in favour of DME. It said the order of re-establishing RARS at Tangadanche is in violation of the Court's status quo order.

Ranga Agriculture University, to relocate the Farmer Training Centre and RARS.

Further, orders have been issued for the alienation of land to an extent 50 acres at Noonepalli village Nandyal mandal in favour of the Director of

Medical Education (DME) free of cost for the establishment of a new medical college.

RARS has over 100 years of existence at Nandyal as a premier agri research institute and the seed varieties developed here have been

recognised across the world. Particularly, paddy, and cottonseed research, chickpea seed development have earned global acclaim.

Challenging the act of government in relocation of RARS by Poonam Malakondiah, Special Chief Secretary (Agriculture and Cooperation), the Rayalaseema Saguneeti Sadhana Samithi (RSSS) has filed a public interest litigation (PIL) in the AP High Court.

It questioned how the government could alienate the lands in favour of DME.

It said the order of re-establishing RARS at

Tangadanche is in violation of the AP High Court's status quo order dated 3-2-2021.

Meanwhile, ANGRAU Registrar has stated that the land to an extent of 50 acres under the RARS would be handed over for new medical college after obtaining the orders from the government for an equivalent and suitable land to the same extent along with the allocation of sufficient financial budget to re-establish the presently available infrastructure facilities such as office building, seed godown, seed processing unit, cold storage unit etc.

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SHORT TAKES

CORRECTION

TMC MP Abhishek Banerjee was inadvertently referred to as Abhiijeet in June 8, 2021 edition. The error is regretted. — Editor

J&K HAMLET 1ST TO GET 100% ADULTS JABBED

Srinagar, June 8: A remote hamlet in Bandipora district of Jammu and Kashmir has become the first village in India to vaccinate all its adult population against Covid-19, officials said on Tuesday.

The credit goes to the healthcare workers whose strenuous efforts shot Weyan hamlet, with an adult population of 362, to national fame, they said.

"The village is located only 28 kilometres away from Bandipora district headquarters, but a distance of 18 kilometres has to be covered by foot as there is no motorable road," an official of the health department said.

He said the task of vaccinating all the residents was even more difficult as the village consists of nomadic families who go to higher reaches for grazing their livestock. "There is no internet access in the village. So it was not possible for the residents to get appointments for vaccination like the way people in urban areas do," Bashir Ahmed Khan, Chief Medical Officer, Bandipora said while explaining the difficulty faced by the healthcare workers.

The vaccination in the village was covered under 'J&K model', which is a 10-point strategy to vaccinate entire eligible population at accelerated pace.

Despite initial vaccine hesitancy, Jammu and Kashmir has achieved 70 per cent vaccination in the 45+ age group, almost double the national average, the official said.

Commenting on the achievement, Yatish Yadav, media advisor to Jammu and Kashmir government, said the Union territory was raising the bar in the Covid-19 vaccination drive.

MAHA BJP SEEKS ₹7K-CR PACKAGE TO HELP PEOPLE

SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC MUMBAI, JUNE 8

The BJP on Tuesday demanded that ₹7,000 crore kept aside by Maharashtra government to buy Covid vaccines should be used to give a financial package to common people suffering due to lockdown. On May 1, Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray had said that the state government has kept the money to pay for 12 crore doses of Covid vaccines in a single payment.

The BJP said that since the Centre is now going to provide free vaccines, the money kept by the state for the same to provide financial assistance to people.

Maharashtra BJP spokesperson chief Keshav Upadhye said that the MVA government should provide a financial package to downtrodden people and farmers from ₹7,000 crore, which were kept aside for vaccines.

He said, "The MVA government has issued a global tender to purchase jabs for vaccination for citizens in the age group 18 to 44 years. The Chief Minister had said that the state government had earmarked ₹7,000 crore for the vaccination programme. The state government did not get any response for the tender. Since Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the free vaccination, the funds kept for buying vaccines should be used to provide a relief package for farmers, small entrepreneurs, hairdressers, vegetable sellers, rickshaw-taxi drivers and the poor."

'Unlock' in Bihar begins as Nitish eases Covid-19 curbs

Malls, educational institutions, religious places to remain closed

NAYEAR AZAD | DC PATNA, JUNE 8

After almost 35 days of lockdown, the Bihar government on Tuesday decided to ease restrictions in the state. The announcement was made by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar after he held a review meeting with the crisis management group.

Announcing his decision on social media Kumar said that, "since there has been a decline in Coronavirus cases we have decided to end lockdown in Bihar. But night curfew would remain in place from 7 pm to 5 am. The government and private offices would be opened with 50 per cent attendance till 4 pm but malls and other educational institutions, religious places, and cinema halls would remain closed".

The state government has also allowed the movement of private vehicles during the day.

"Teams have been formed to keep a tab on those who violate Covid guidelines during the relaxation of lockdown. Cases have gone down but to wipe out the Covid infection people should strictly follow the guidelines", officials said after the government announced the lifting of lockdown.

On May 5, when the lockdown was imposed the Covid cases had exceeded one lakh. However, the latest data shows a significant fall in the number of cases and the recovery rate has also increased.

On Monday, 762 new Covid cases and 43 deaths were recorded. Reports suggest that active cases have declined to 8,230.

Bihar government's decision to ease lockdown restrictions was welcomed by the BJP and other NDA partners. BJP state president Sanjay Jaiswal in a statement said, "we have managed to pass the biggest Covid wave. In

K'taka to take call on unlock soon

Bengaluru, June 8: Amid talks that Karnataka may start the unlock process by lifting restrictions after June 14, Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa is likely to hold a meeting in a day or two, to discuss the matter and take a call.

The state is currently under lockdown till June 14, and there are indications that the government is likely to go for graded relaxation of restrictions, in districts that have less positivity rate to

begin with.

"The Chief Minister, after discussing with everyone, will take a decision on what measures need to be taken in this regard, by taking everyone into confidence," deputy chief minister C.N. Ashwath Narayan said on Tuesday in response to a question on unlocking.

Speaking to reporters here, he said, the Chief Minister is likely to call a meeting (with experts, ministers and officials), in a day or two, during which

all aspects will be discussed and the outcome will be made known.

"In most of the districts, other than a few, the numbers have come down. We will also have to ensure that the cases don't increase again, it will also be looked into," he added. Yediyurappa had earlier said that the state will start its unlock process only in those districts where the Covid-19 positivity rate drops below 5 per cent.

The Karnataka govern-

ment had initially announced 14 days "close down" from April 27, but subsequently imposed a complete lockdown from May 10 to May 24, as the Covid cases continued to spike.

Citing lockdown yielding results and experts advice, it was further extended till June 7 and then again till June 14. Karnataka on Monday had reported 11,958 fresh cases and 340 fatalities, taking the tally to over 27 lakh and the toll to 31,920.

— PTI

UP extends relaxation in all 75 districts as cases dip

Lucknow, June 8: The Uttar Pradesh government on Tuesday extended relaxation in Covid restrictions to all 75 districts of the state, with the active cases coming down to the 600-mark in each of these districts.

The night curfew from 7 pm to 7 am and weekend curfew (for the entire day) will, however, continue throughout the state, an official spokesman said.

By Monday, the relaxation was extended to 72 districts barring Meerut, Lucknow and Gorakhpur.

"There will be relaxation in Coronavirus curfew in all the districts of the state from Wednesday onwards, from 7 am to 7 pm, for five days as the active Covid cases have come below 600," the spokesman said.

In a high-level meeting

convened through virtual medium on Tuesday, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath reviewed the Covid-19 situation and decided to give the relaxations in the Covid curfew.

The spokesman said in view of the decreasing infection rate, a standard of 600 active cases was set for having curfew effective in the districts.

"Only 797 new cases were reported in the state in the past 24 hours. Now, there are 14,000 active cases in the state," he said.

"On Monday, 2.85 lakh Covid tests were done. The positivity rate of the state is 0.2 per cent, while the recovery rate has gone up to 97.9 per cent," he added.

In an order issued in this regard by additional chief secretary, Home, Awaniish Kumar Awasthi said the curfew will be relaxed as

per the conditions mentioned in the government order issued on May 30 by chief secretary R.K. Tiwari. According to the order issued by Tiwari, shops and markets outside containment zones would be allowed to open for five days (Monday to Friday). Instructions were issued that over the weekend, cleanliness, sanitisation and fogging campaigns will be carried out.

Shopkeepers and their employees will have to wear masks, maintain two-yard distance with each other and customers, and ensure the arrangement of hand sanitisers.

While there would be full attendance for frontline workers, for the rest of the government employees, there would be 50 per cent attendance on rotation.

— PTI

LOCKDOWN IN PUDUCHERRY TO CONTINUE

Puducherry, June 8: The Puducherry administration has extended its ongoing lockdown by another week from June 7 midnight to June 14 and announced easing of several restrictions. The announcement comes following a decline in Coronavirus cases in the Union Territory.

An order issued late on Monday night by the secretary (relief and rehabilitation) and member secretary of state executive committee of Puducherry said the corona curfew adopted all along would continue to be in force from 10 pm to 5 am the next day.

The present order permits functioning of retail units of liquor shops, including arrack shops from 9 am to 5 pm every day by strictly adhering to Covid safety norms.

— PTI



Mukesh Ambani, chairman and managing director of Reliance Industries Ltd., and his wife Nita Ambani have always adopted an employees-first policy.

Accordingly, the company has announced a slew of relief measures for the family members of those RIL employees who succumbed to Covid-19 and also for the employees who are battling the disease.

The company will fund education of the children of the deceased employees upto graduation level. It will also provide medical coverage for the spouse and children of the employee. Also, 5 years of salary of the employee will be given to the family. Similarly, ₹10 lakh will be given to the families of the off-roll employees. The company is also providing vaccines to the employees and their family members.

Odisha announces spl aid for vendors

DC CORRESPONDENT BHUBANESWAR, JUNE 8

Bringing a sigh of relief to thousands of street vendors in the 164 urban areas of state, Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Tuesday sanctioned a financial assistance of ₹26.29 crore for them.

The livelihoods of the street vendors have been seriously affected due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The aid will be provided from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund (CMRF). The decision will benefit as many as 87,657 street vendors in the state. Each street vendor will get an assistance of ₹3,000.

Odisha Uthadokani Mahasangha, an organisation of the street vendors, welcomed the decision and appealed to the Chief Minister to extend the assistance to those who have been left over.

"There are nearly two lakh street vendors in Odisha. In fact, the Odisha government was carrying out a survey before the pandemic period set in. It was stopped

mid-way because of the pandemic situation. As a result, nearly 1.20 lakh street vendors could find a place in the government's list. We appeal to the Chief Minister to order for resumption of the enumeration process so that the interest of the street vendors could be saved," said Pratap Sahu, president of Odisha Uthadokani Mahasangha.

Meanwhile, the Covid-19 single-day cases on Tuesday continued to dip in Odisha for the sixth consecutive day with the state recording 5,896 new cases.

With this, the positive tally in the state surged to 8,25,110. However, with at least 45 patients undergoing treatment for Covid-19 succumbing in the last 24 hours, the death toll has surged to 3,080 in the state.

Of the fresh cases detected across 30 districts of the state on Tuesday, a total of 3,332 cases were reported from quarantine centres, while the rest 2,564 were local transmission cases.

Newly-wed seeks help for ailing husband

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, JUNE 8

A newly-wed woman in Odisha has appealed to the people for financial assistance to take her critically Covid-19 infected husband to a hospital in Kolkata for better treatment.

Mousumi Mohanty, the woman, said around ₹1 crore is required to treat her husband Abhishek Mohapatra. Abhishek requires urgent ECMO (Extracorporeal Membrane Oxygenation) treatment. He will be shifted to Kolkata from Bhubaneswar by road as funds crunch has posed hindrance for his airlifting to West Bengal.

Abhishek will be taken to Kolkata through a special ambulance with ECMO support on Tuesday evening, said his family members seeking help from the public for the costly treatment. Hospital sources said his treatment will cost around ₹1 crore.

"We belong to a middle class family. We can't arrange such a huge amount for the expensive treatment of my husband. I have arranged as much as I can. We can't

afford airlifting him to Kolkata and planning to take him there by road tonight. I request all brothers and sisters to extend some financial assistance so that I can treat my husband. Your small assistance can help my husband's safe return home," Mousumi pleaded to the public.

Noted Odia cine artist Bobby Mishra also appealed to people to extend a helping hand to Abhishek. "Abhishek is currently undergoing treatment at a private hospital in Bhubaneswar. As his condition is deteriorating he needs ECMO treatment. I request all of you to help him as per your ability," Bobby said.

Those who want to lend financial assistance for the youth can visit MILAPORG/FUNDRAISERS / SUPPORT-ABHISEK-MOHAPATRA. People can also donate through PhonePe/GooglePay with Mobile no 9583596886.

Abhishek had married only a month ago. Eight days after his marriage, he was found infected with Covid-19 and subsequently admitted to a private hospital in Bhubaneswar after his health condition worsened.

'Panic' alert



Police force deployed after many patients died during a mock drill at Paras hospital in Agra on Tuesday. The Agra administration ordered an enquiry after a video clip surfaced in which the owner of a private hospital was purportedly heard saying that he conducted a "mock drill" during which oxygen supply was cut off for Covid patients for five minutes. The owner was also heard saying that bodies of some patients started turning blue after the oxygen supply was cut off.

— PTI

GOOD | WORK

Girl says how 'happy, proud' she felt to see SC's intervention

CJI lauds 10-year-old's letter hailing SC

PARMOD KUMAR | DC NEW DELHI, JUNE 8

Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana has lauded a 10-year schoolgirl from Kerala for her "beautiful letter" to him that has "a heart-warming illustration of the judge at work."

Lidwina Joseph, a class V student, wrote to the Chief Justice about how "happy and proud" she felt to see the Supreme Court make vital interventions

to alleviate the sufferings of her fellow citizens in the grip of the pandemic. "I am happy and feel

proud your honourable court has moved orders for supply of oxygen and saved many lives. I understood your honourable court has initiated effective steps in bringing down Covid-19 and the death rate in our country, especially in Delhi. I thank Your Honour for this. Now I feel very proud and happy," Joseph, a resident of Thrissur in Kerala, wrote in her letter that the Supreme Court

received towards May-end. Joseph was "much worried" about the deaths caused by the virus, says the hand-written letter, in the form of a scroll, accompanied by a colourful illustration showing a bespectacled judge using his gavel to give the Coronavirus a knock on its head. A portrait of Mahatma Gandhi hangs on the wall behind the judge.

The Chief Justice wrote

back to Joseph, saying that he was impressed by the way she kept track of the happenings in the country, particularly her concern for the well-being of her compatriots.

"I am sure you will grow up into an alert, informed and responsible citizen who will contribute immensely towards nation-building," Chief Justice Ramana wrote in his reply and sent her a signed copy of the Constitution of India.

Assam CM advises Rahul to not 'knit-pick' like an immature kid

MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, JUNE 8

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma who took on Congress leader Rahul Gandhi by disclosing as to how he was busy feeding his dog when Assam government wanted to discuss urgent issues with him in 2015, on Tuesday told him to not "knit-pick like an immature kid" while referring to his remark on Prime

Minister Narendra Modi's announcement on free universal vaccination.

While many Opposition leaders lauded Prime Minister Narendra Modi's announcement of free universal vaccination for all adults in India and centralisation of vaccine procurement, some also accused the government of "wasting crucial time".

However, Rahul Gandhi in his reaction on twitter said he had, "one simple question -

If vaccines are free for all, why should private hospitals charge for them?"

Sarma took to twitter and hit back at the Wayanad MP, telling to not 'knit-pick like an immature kid. Sarma in his tweet said, "One simple answer — Every 18+ Indian will be given free vaccines by PM @narendramodi. Govt at public hospitals, those who want to pay can opt for a private. Don't knit-pick like an immature kid." (sic)

SHORT TAKES

SECURITY FORCES KILL 3 AFGHAN PROTESTERS

Kabul, June 8: Security forces opened fire Tuesday on dozens of demonstrators in northeastern Afghanistan demanding clean tap water and electricity, killing three and injuring 42 others, protesters and provincial authorities said. Some 200 people rallied in the city of Faizabad outside the offices of the governor of Badakhshan province demanding clean drinking water, the immediate inauguration of a new power plant and an end to insecurity in the province.

Protester Sebghatullah Andeshmand said the demonstrators wanted Gov. Mohammad Zakarya Sawda, to respond to their demands but that guards at his office building fired on them with live rounds.

DAUGHTER ACCEPTS NAVALNY HR AWARD

Geneva, June 8: The daughter of jailed Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny accepted a human rights award on her father's behalf on Tuesday for his courage in facing down President Vladimir Putin's government. Daria Navalnaya, a 20-year-old student at Stanford University in California, said her father was dedicating the courage award given by the Geneva Summit for Human Rights to all political prisoners in Russia and Belarus.

"You really should be looking at my father instead, but he's in a Russian prison right now simply because of what he says, does and believes in — and because he didn't die when the Russian government wanted him to," Navalnaya said in a video message.

6/1 ATTACK: SENATE REPORT DETAILS FAILURES

Washington, June 8: A Senate investigation of the January 6 insurrection at the US Capitol has uncovered broad government, military and law enforcement missteps before the violent attack, including a breakdown within multiple intelligence agencies and a lack of training and preparation for Capitol Police officers who were quickly overwhelmed by the rioters.

The Senate report released Tuesday is the first — and could be the last — bipartisan review of how hundreds of former President Donald Trump's supporters were able to violently push past security lines and break into the Capitol that day, interrupting the certification of President Joe Biden's victory.

RUSSIA HITS 9 CANADIANS WITH SANCTIONS

Moscow, June 8: Russia targeted nine Canadian officials with sanctions in retaliation to Canada's restrictions against Russian officials accused of involvement in the imprisonment of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny.

Those indefinitely barred from entering Russia are David Lametti, Canada's justice minister and attorney general, Brenda Lucki, the Canadian police commissioner, Anne Kelly, the commissioner of Correctional Service, Dominic LeBlanc, minister for intergovernmental affairs, Marci Surkes, policy director for PM Justin Trudeau, Jody Thomas, deputy minister of the national defence department, Lt. Gen. Mike Rouleau of the Canadian armed forces, Rear Adm. Scott Bishop, the head of the military intelligence command, and Brian Brennan, a deputy police commissioner.

KIDNAP, RAPE OF WOMAN: UK COP PLEADS GUILTY

London, June 8: A British police officer has pleaded guilty to the kidnap and rape of a woman as she walked home in south London and whose body was found a week later in the woods.

A court at London's Old Bailey heard Tuesday that Wayne Couzens, 48, accepted responsibility for the death of Sarah Everard though he was not asked to enter a plea to a charge of murder. Medical reports into the former Metropolitan Police officer, who appeared by video link from Belmarsh prison, are being prepared. A further hearing before the judge, Adrian Fulford, will take place July 9. Everard, a 33-year-old marketing executive, went missing as she walked home from a friend's house in Clapham, south London, on March 3.

Charles 'back to' college



Britain's Prince Charles, Prince of Wales meets student and staff as he visits Somerville College on its 140th anniversary in Oxford on Tuesday.

— AFP

Death toll rises to 65 in Pak's train tragedy

Oppn for probe into reasons behind one of worst accidents

Karachi, June 8: The death toll in Monday's train collision in Pakistan's Sindh province rose to 65 on Tuesday, according to an official, even as the Opposition parties demanded an immediate probe into the reasons for one of the country's worst train accidents. At least 65 people were killed and over 100 others injured in the twin accidents between Reti and Daharki railway stations where eight carriages of Millat Express derailed just before Sir Syed Express rammmed into them near Dharki, a city located in the Ghotki district of upper Sindh early Monday morning.

The rescue operation was completed and the track has been cleared after retrieving 17 coaches that had been damaged by the crash and the engine of the train, *Geo News* quoted as saying Divisional Superintendent, Railway Sukkur Tariq Latif.

"The up and down track has been restored. We have received orders to resume train service," he said. Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Ghotki, Umar Tufail, told reporters that the death toll rose to 65 after more bodies were retrieved. He said that over 100 people were also injured, some of them seriously.

Minister for Railways Azam Swati said if his resignation meant the deceased can come back to life, he was ready to do so even as he promised a comprehensive inquiry.

Van falls into Pak river; 17, including 16 of a family, die

Islamabad, June 8: All 17 people on a van, including 16 members of a family, were killed when their vehicle plunged into the Indus River in Pakistan's mountainous Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province, according to a media report on Tuesday. The vehicle was heading from Chilas to Rawalpindi when it fell into the Indus River in the Paniba area of Kohistan district on Monday, *Dawn News* reported.

He said that train tracks in the Sukkur Division were in poor condition. "We have to find out now who is responsible for this accident," he said.

The deadly accident occurred when the Sir Syed Express headed from Rawalpindi to Karachi, coming from the other direction, smashed into derailed coaches of the first train in the adjacent track, a spokesperson of Pakistan Railways said.

"The driver tried to apply emergency brakes but the locomotive hit the infringing coaches," the railways said in an initial report. Rescuing trapped passengers for the rescue officials who had to employ heavy machinery to free people.

— PTI

The van was privately hired by the family for a visit. Dasu-Kohistan Control Room officials said besides a driver, the van had 16 passengers from the same family, including women and children, the report said, adding that the driver also died in the accident. The accident took place when the driver

lost control of the vehicle while negotiating a sharp turn. It veered off into the Indus River and got submerged soon after, the police said, adding that 17 people have died in the incident. Rescue teams were trying to locate the missing passengers but faced hurdles due to the difficult terrain and depth of the river.

— PTI

Pak-origin family's killing saddens Imran

Islamabad/Toronto, June 8: Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan on Tuesday denounced the killing of four members of a Pakistani-origin Canadian family in Canada, saying this "act of terrorism" reveals the growing "Islamophobia" in Western countries.

On Sunday, a 20-year-old man, wearing a vest like body armour, slammed a pickup truck into a Pakistani family of five, killing four of them, in what police allege was "a planned, premeditated act motivated by hate", according to media reports from Canada. The incident happened near the intersection of Hyde Park Road and South Carriage Road when the Muslim family was out for a walk in the evening, the *Toronto Star* reported. A black pickup truck driven by Nathaniel Veltman mounted the curb of a busy London intersection and struck a family of five as they waited to cross the street. The driver sped off, leaving a scene of chaos and tragedy, the report said. Veltman was arrested five minutes later.

— PTI

Will act if UK doesn't honour Brexit deal: EU

London, June 8: The European Union's chief Brexit negotiator says the bloc is ready to act "firmly and resolutely" if the UK fails to honour its commitments under the divorce deal that was supposed to keep trade flowing after Britain left the EU.

Maros Sefcovic's comments, published Tuesday in the *Daily Telegraph* newspaper, came a day before he holds talks with his UK counterpart on implementing the deal. The relationship between the two sides has grown tense amid concerns over the so-called Northern Ireland protocol, which was designed to protect the peace process in Northern Ireland while preserving economic links with the Republic of Ireland, an EU member state. The protocol has sparked anger in Northern Ireland because it creates a customs border between the region and the rest of the UK, but the EU says the provisions are needed to protect the bloc's single market.

The UK angered Brussels earlier this year when it unilaterally extended a grace period delaying the inspection of many sup-

● THE UK angered Brussels earlier this year when it unilaterally extended a grace period delaying the inspection of many supermarket items shipped to Northern Ireland from England, Scotland and Wales.

ermarket items shipped to Northern Ireland from England, Scotland and Wales. The *Telegraph* reported that the UK may extend this action to include chilled meats such as sausages and ground beef. Sefcovic cautioned against such action, saying negotiators should strive to achieve "mutually agreed compliance paths." "If this does not happen, and if the UK takes further unilateral action over the coming weeks, the EU will not be shy in reacting swiftly, firmly and resolutely to ensure that the UK abides by its international law obligations." While Sefcovic didn't specify what those actions might be, the *Times of London* quoted an unidentified EU official as saying the bloc was ready to impose trade sanctions, retaliatory tariffs. — AP



Ashish Lata Ramgobin

GANDHI'S GREAT GRANDDAUGHTER GETS 7 YRS' JAIL

Johannesburg, June 8: A 56-year-old great-granddaughter of Mahatma Gandhi, who was accused in a six-million rand fraud and forgery case, has been sentenced to seven years in jail by a Durban court.

Ashish Lata Ramgobin was found guilty by the court on Monday.

She was accused of defrauding businessman S.R. Maharaj after he advanced R6.2 million to her for allegedly clearing import and Customs duties for a non-existent consignment from India. He was promised a share of profits.

Lata Ramgobin, who is the daughter of noted rights activists Ela Gandhi and late Mewa Ramgobind, was also refused leave to appeal both the conviction and the sentence by the Durban Specialised Commercial Crime Court.

— PTI

S'pore lecturer suspended for race rant at Sino-Indians

Racial tweets to Indians: Man jailed

Singapore, June 8: A Singapore polytechnic lecturer of Chinese-origin has been suspended from teaching duties for allegedly making racist remarks towards an interracial couple of a half-India and a half-Chinese descent, local media reported on Tuesday. The incident was captured on a video that was widely circulated online over the weekend.

A spokesperson for Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) said the Chinese-origin lecturer has been suspended. The polytechnic is aware of the video, the *Channel News Asia* quoted an NP spokesperson on Monday.

"We regret that the individual in question is a member of our staff. We take a very serious view of the matter as the remarks made by the individual are highly offensive, disrespectful and goes against our staff Code of Conduct and values as a community," said the spokesperson. "We are investigating this matter internally, including considering the appropriate disciplinary action to be taken. Meanwhile, the staff in question has been suspended from his teaching duties."

The polytechnic cannot comment further as police investigations are ongoing, said the spokesperson.

Singapore, June 8: A 35-year old senior executive at a software company in Singapore, who made racially offensive tweets in April last year, including slurs to Indians and condemning Indian immigrants about Covid-19, was jailed for three weeks on Tuesday, a media report said.

Zainal Abidin Shaiful Bahari, a Malay, pleaded guilty to two charges each of committing acts he knew were prejudicial to the maintenance of harmony between different racial groups in Singapore. Another two similar

charges were considered in sentencing, *Channel News Asia* reported. A member of the public called the police in April 2020 after seeing a tweet by the user "sharonliew86" condemning Indian immigrants about Covid-19. Zainal, a senior director at a software company, used the pseudonym "Sharon Liew" (Chinese name), had sole control of the account.

In March 2020, he also posted that "smart Chinese" women have done social distancing inside the Mass Rapid Transit subway trains. — PTI

son. The police said that a 60-year-old man was assisting with investigations, after confirming that reports had been lodged and investigations were ongoing. In the video uploaded by Dave Parkash, a man in a red polo shirt with the word "Singapore" across it can be heard telling Parkash and his girlfriend to date people of their "own race".

The man in red, who

acknowledged he is a "Chinese Singaporean", then added: "I've got nothing against you personally, but I think it's racist that the Indian prey on a Chinese girl." When Parkash, 26, called him a racist, the man in red agreed that he was. In the video, Parkash said he is "half Indian, half Filipino", while his girlfriend is "half Singaporean Chinese, half Thai". — PTI

Biden forms unit to clear supply chain bottlenecks

Washington, June 8: The Joe Biden administration has completed a 100-day review of supply chains and will now form a task force to address the bottlenecks in the semiconductor, construction, transportation and agriculture sectors. Administration officials said their goal is to increase domestic manufacturing, limit shortages of vital goods and reduce a dependence on geopolitical competitors such as

China. The officials, speaking before the release of the 250-page review Tuesday, noted that the goal is to get ahead of crises such as the computer chip shortage that has hurt automakers this year.

"More secure and resilient supply chains are essential to our national and economic security, and our technological leadership," the report said, noting how the pandemic and subsequent economic turmoil

il exposed the US supply chain vulnerabilities.

A shortage of raw materials has made it harder for the US economy to recover from the pandemic-induced recession. The supply bottleneck has helped fuel a bout of inflation that the administration believes will be temporary, though it has provided Republican lawmakers and some economists with grounds for criticising Biden's \$1.9 trillion Coron-

avirus relief package. The new task force will be led by the secretaries of Commerce, Agriculture and Transportation to focus on parts of the economy where there is a mismatch between supply and demand.

Besides the task force, the administration will take several other steps to bolster supply chains, with an effort spread across the government. The Department of Health and Human Services will use

the Defence Production Act to create a public-private partnership for manufacturing essential pharmaceutical drugs.

It will also commit \$60 million to increase the production of pharmaceutical ingredients. The Energy Department will release a blueprint to develop supplies for lithium batteries, in addition to providing roughly \$17 billion in loans for advanced batteries that would help shift

the country to electric vehicles. The Interior Department will create a working group to determine where critical minerals can be produced and processed in the United States.

The Commerce Department plans to increase cooperation and investments within the semiconductor industry, while the Labour Department will announce \$100 million in grants for state-led apprenticeship programmes. — AP

MAHATMA'S | MESSAGES

Event could not be observed at Pietermaritzburg station due to Covid

Gandhi train ejection commemorated in S. Africa

Johannesburg, June 8: The seed for Satyagraha (non-violent resistance) was planted in South Africa's Pietermaritzburg on the night of June 7, 1893, when a young barrister, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, was ejected from a train for being a non-white.

David Gengan, Chairman of Pietermaritzburg Gandhi Memorial Committee, reminded this once again on Monday while commemorating the incident and sending out Mah-

atma's messages to the world, especially at a time when the global Covid-19 pandemic is wreaking havoc.

The Pietermaritzburg Gandhi Memorial Committee decided some years ago that the story of June 7, 1893, and its impact on young Gandhi would be told every year on the anniversary of the event, said Gengan.

Every year, the Gandhi memorial committee had been observing the event at the very station; howev-

er, it had been unable to do so since last year because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

This year, various speakers from across the world spoke about the relevance of the messages of India's Father of the Nation for the world today.

Gengan said Gandhi's 21 years in South Africa shaped his philosophy, especially as it relates to peace and non-violence.

Gandhi's granddaughter Ela Gandhi, 80, who heads the Gandhi Development Trust, which oversees the

Phoenix Settlement that he started during his stay in Durban, said that during the course of his life, Mahatma discovered many truths.

"These truths I believe are of great relevance for us today as we face the challenge of dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic.

As we struggle with the Covid-19 realities, we are becoming aware of the need for a change in our perception and behaviours to create a new normal," she said.

Ela added that in this context, Gandhi's seven observations have attained even greater significance. Sello Hatang, Chief Executive of the Nelson Mandela Foundation, said Gandhi's observations were something that was attainable by all human beings.

"It is when we try our best to be better humans that we build a world that (Mandela and Gandhi) dreamt of, one that cares about the downtrodden, the forgotten, those who feel that they are the out-

casts," Hatang said.

Javie Ravjee of the Mahatma Gandhi Remembrance Organisation in Johannesburg, which has revived the Tolstoy Farm commune started by Gandhi during his stay in the city after it had been left derelict for several decades, called for all similar organisations across the globe to form an association.

Dr Sriram Sonty from Chicago agreed with this idea.

— PTI



DECCAN
Chronicle

9 JUNE 2021

A welcome shift in vaccine policy, but hurdles remain

The Union government's decision to rework its "liberalised vaccine policy" and return to centralised procurement of vaccine doses for all people aged above 18 years is welcome. This is perhaps for the first time that the government has chosen to reverse its policy seeing its adverse impact on the people. It is no secret that the Supreme Court's tough stance that it will have to subject the government decision to exclude a section of people from its vaccination policy to judicial review based on Articles 14 and 21 which guarantee the right to equality and the right to life, respectively, which led to this crucial policy change.

The court's decision to call for files that led to the questionable decision must have rung alarm bells in the corridors of power, though the court has repeatedly assured the government that it had no plans to interfere with its executive functions. The court's insistence that the government produce an account of the ₹35,000 crores earmarked in the 2021-22 Union Budget for vaccine purchase might, too, have forced the Centre's hand. Credit must be given to the political Opposition, led by Kerala chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan, who first suggested that the Union government should procure the vaccine for the states, too, which was endorsed by several other chief ministers including Tamil Nadu's M.K. Stalin and Odisha's Naveen Patnaik.

The job is half done now, and the governments at the Centre and in the states have a lot of distance to cover to secure Indian people. We are into the sixth month of the "world's largest vaccination programme" but have been able to fully inoculate only 3.3 per cent of the population; the figure for the share of population who have been given at least one dose is below 12 per cent. This is not a satisfactory pace by any reckoning. Given that a third wave could hit the children, too, and they also need to be given the jabs, the figures fall to pathetic lows when the number of children eligible for vaccination becomes part of the denominator. Added to this is the issue of digital divide, which the Supreme Court has flagged: This could deprive the most marginalised sections of society of vaccination. As per the government's own records, there are about 13,000 villages in the country where there is not a single common service centre through which the people there can register themselves on the CoWin app

The challenges are formidable but not insurmountable. The government has taken some baby steps to address them, which included the agreement it recently signed with Hyderabad-based Biological E. for the purchase of 30 crore doses of the vaccine which is in the advanced stages of clinical trials and the upfront payment of ₹1,500 crores. It is also getting Covaxin produced in more facilities. The government has now to prepare a workable schedule on the procurement and administration of the vaccine to meet the deadline of December 31 which it itself has fixed for the universal vaccination before it gets back to the Supreme Court on June 30 for the next hearing.

Winning new frontier in space

The founder of Amazon who revolutionised the way people shop in the new millennium will be beating fellow billionaires Richard Branson and Elon Musk to blast off into space, fly 105 km up, spend three breathtaking minutes of weightlessness in about 10 minutes or so at the apogee of the flight and return to planet earth. The race to create space tourism 60 years after Yuri Gagarin became the first man to travel into space may be heralded by the seeming vanity of a rich owner of a spacecraft taking a thrilling ride into the sky along with his brother Mark, besides the highest bidder in an online charity auction which is now at \$2.8 million, and two pilots.

Non-astronaut civilians have flown into space before but if the world's richest man is prepared to do it while possessing some \$200 billion of assets on the ground it might just signal increasing confidence in man's mastery over space flights just as an expensive tourism industry is set to expand. What we do for science in terms of spacecraft exploring Mars and space probes flying a lot further may be a lot more productive. But it is in taking untrained civilians along for up-and-down flights that earth will resonate with stories from space to rekindle the imagination. When Armstrong stepped on the man, the whole of humanity was figuratively with him.

The flight will usher in the crossing of a frontier signalling human capabilities in engineering safety and reliability in space. Several astronauts who have enjoyed the thrill of viewing our planet from way above have waxed eloquent about their experience. The Bezos brothers and others will have even better viewing seats in the roomy Blue Origin's New Shepard capsule with very large windows. What opening the door for rich civilians to tag along means is that the human endeavour to explore space would get a fillip and further propel the human race towards a long stated ambition of colonising Mars and other planets that seemed way beyond reach in billions of years.

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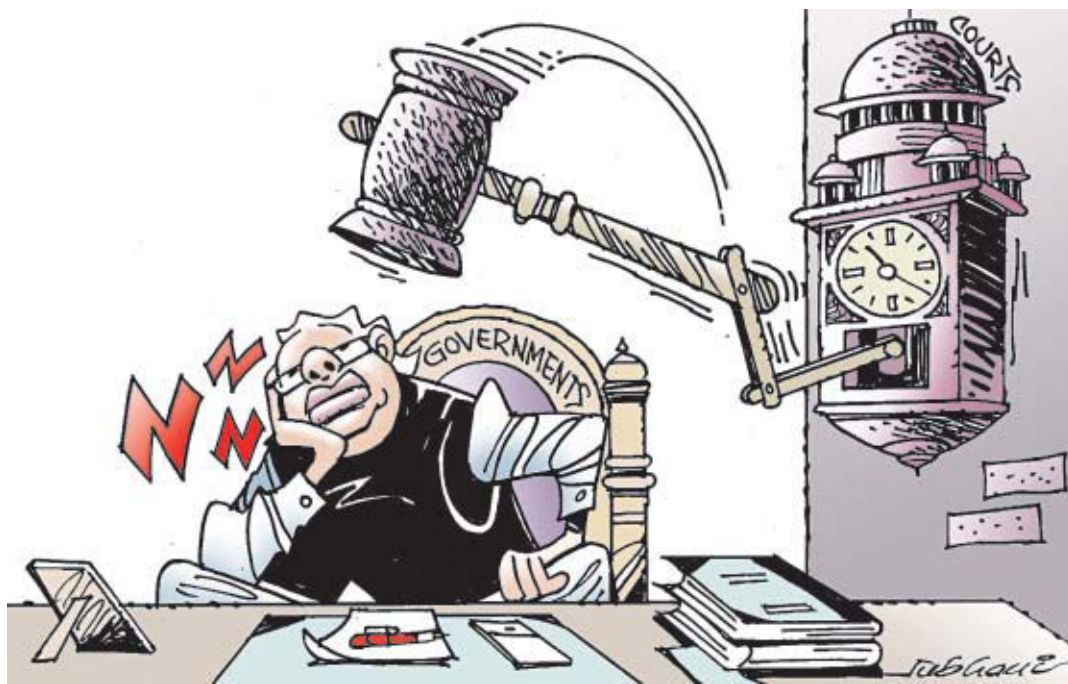
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Subhani



Turbulent Afghanistan could impact Kashmir



Syed Ata Hasnain

One feels glad to see Jammu and Kashmir drop steeply in the hierarchy of India's security concerns. I am not going to spoil the party by suggesting that the current situation is just a smokescreen behind which lie many scheming ideas and thoughts to take it all back to 2001. Why 2001? It is simply because that is a landmark year recorded as the one with the highest terrorist casualties (2,100 killed); or, in other words, the year with a disproportionately high number of engagements, contacts, gunbattles. It was also the year when we saw the beginning of the Nato onslaught into Afghanistan (then usually referred as AfPak) after 9/11. Afghanistan and J&K have a long association; I am not alluding to their deep history but only to recent times. It's the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan at the end of 1979 that brought the mercenaries, often called jihadis, to Afghanistan under the sponsorship of the United States and Saudi Arabia. The rise of Islamic obscurantism can be traced back mostly to the 1980s when the refugee camps on the Pak-Afghan border became the centres of conversion to more radical beliefs of Islam. Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence gained much of its experience in handling tricky intelligence and operations related situations in Afghanistan. As soon as the war ended with the Soviet defeat, the mercenaries were available for a song and became the new jihadis in J&K. People unaware of the nuances of the issues in J&K over the last 30 years need to be informed that the original separatist movement of 1989 was largely indigenous and may have been controlled, but for the sudden availability of the merce-

nary jihadis freed from the war in Afghanistan. The ISI got them together with funds, weapons and military wherewithal no one had control over. They were then infiltrated into Kashmir from every conceivable direction to add to the growing footprint of terror. Many of them were Afghans who had no love lost for Kashmiris. The Indian Army and its fledgling anti-terror force, Rashtriya Rifles, neutralised hundreds as intelligence on them was never far, with them getting on to the wrong side of many in the local population, especially women. The pipeline of so-called jihadis dried up by 1996, when the remnants of the mercenaries who fought the Soviet Army in Afghanistan had either met their end or returned to do service with the Taliban when it came to power. The infiltration of foreign terrorists from 1996 onwards was mainly that of Pakistanis who flooded North Kashmir, in particular in the Bandipur, Sopore, Lolab and Handwara tracts.

Kashmir's proactive media repeatedly queried me in 2010-12 about the then situation in Afghanistan and how it would affect Kashmir if the US troops withdrew. Those were the days when Gen. David Petraeus was in charge of the US Central Command and the principles of the "COIN" (counterinsurgency) doctrine were in full flow in Afghanistan. I always answered with the stock reply that almost became a byline: "When you throw a stone into water there are ripples in every direction. Ripples from the conflict in Afghanistan will invariably travel to J&K." I usually left it at that, and if someone persisted, I would usually say: "Let no one imagine that 2011 is 1989, we are far superior in deployment and even

more in experience." All these words are coming back to me in bits and pieces to create a picture for the region once the Americans are out of Afghanistan. That is expected largely by July 2021, without waiting for President Joe Biden's September 11, 2021 deadline.

So, is a resurgence of extremist violence in the region likely after July? The American presence being sought at some Pakistani airbases to afford drone operations and possibly other forms of aerial warfare including Special Forces is with a view to ensure that Afghan territory, and maybe some Pakistani territory as well, is not used to conduct activities that are detrimental to US interests. It's to keep a vigil over these areas which have provided much sorrow to the world in the last two decades. Of course, this will never be sufficient to have full regional coverage, but the US can always be advised to include India in its coverage too, simply as emerging strategic partners, and Pakistan is in no position to resist that, given its precarious financial position.

The current 2021 season has thus far seen minimal activity in Kashmir. The infiltration season began almost two months ago but attempts have been few and far between. Obviously, the flavour for jihadism is low at present, but it would be incorrect to assume it is all over. In 2011 too, the infiltration picked up in the July-October period. Pakistan's attention is focused on Afghanistan, where mistakes can cost

We should make the best of the current situation, focus on development activity, and outreach to people with sufficient messaging that India's stable climes are far better than the turbulence of the neighbouring region

it dearly. On the J&K front, a season of low-profile activity can be accepted, and the separatist infrastructure can remain intact with infusion of money and wherewithal through some routes which are extremely difficult to neutralise. What really makes the difference is the absence of human resources. If enough rebels are not being recruited locally, there won't be sufficient resources for guidance, logistics and overground work. 2021 is not 1989 either as far as the Line of Control is concerned. The counter-infiltration layout and network is smart, extensive, integrated and efficient. Twenty per cent attempting infiltration could yet get through, but unless huge resources are deployed for this by the ISI, the impact will be low. That big effort is difficult in view of the visibility today and efforts by outfits like FATF to keep vigil internationally. It won't be easy for Afghan or any other foreign terrorists to function in Kashmir, especially with dilution of the extensive OGW networks. Besides, no one really trusts these jihadist elements in Kashmir nowadays, especially in the urban areas.

Diplomatically, India like all other interested nations have to address the situation of having to deal with an Afghan leadership other than the current one. Back channels would have been established by some nations and exchange of information would be in practice. What one really fears is bloodshed and civil war-like conditions in Afghanistan which could persist for some years. In such a situation it would become extremely unpredictable on what the fallout on Kashmir could be. We should make the best of the current situation, focus on development activity, and outreach to people with sufficient messaging that India's stable climes are far better than the turbulence of the neighbouring region.

The writer, a retired lieutenant-general, is a former GOC of the Srinagar-based 15 Corps

LETTERS

FUEL, GAS PRICES

After many states asked the Centre to reconsider its vaccine strategy, it is now made free to all states (*Centre will give vax free to states: Modi, DC, June 7*). In a similar manner if many states ask the Centre to reconsider its petrol/diesel/gas strategy, perhaps all people may get relief from the spiralling fuel charges.

K. Sarath Chandra Babu
Visakhapatnam

FREE VACCINE

At long last, it is encouraging and uplifting to read that the Centre will be reverting to the old system where it can procure up to 75 per cent of the doses of vaccines and it will provide them free to state governments and also private facilities will be allowed to procure 25 per cent of vaccines from manufacturers (*Centre will give vax free to states: Modi, DC, June 8*). This is welcome and appreciated.

Dr C. Ghanshyam
Visakhapatnam

VACCINE DRIVE

It's really most unfortunate that Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's 'ghar ghar ration yojana' has been scuttled on five occasions already by the Centre on one pretext or the other. It seems the whole programme will be shelved finally with Prime Minister Narendra Modi announcing during the TV address to the nation that 80 crores of the people shall continue to get their free rations till November '21.

K. Nehru Patnaik
Visakhapatnam

50 YEARS AGO IN

DECCAN
Chronicle

Cosmonauts steer space lab into higher orbit

MOSCOW, June 8. Three Soviet Cosmonauts steered their space laboratory into a higher orbit today to halt temporarily its gradual drop back to Earth, Moscow Radio reported.

The manoeuvre, effected by firing rockets aboard the craft, was needed in order to keep the station aloft for a longer period of time.

The Space Station, called Salyut, has been in Earth orbit since April 19 and has been gradually drifting down into the upper reaches of the Earth's atmosphere, where friction could disintegrate it.

Rod Liddle



Big Tech now turning into a Big Brother: Will world act?

The Big Tech social media giants are having to rethink their policy of censoring anybody who suggests that Covid-19 originated from a lab near Wuhan. This is because it now seems quite possible, if not probable, that the virus was kindly bestowed upon us by Chinese scientists. I don't know either way, but I would suggest that a suspicion that the virus was man-made, given the proximity of the Wuhan Institute of Virology, scarcely qualifies as a lunatic conspiracy theory to be banned from public utterance. But that's what the Big Tech companies decided — almost certainly for political reasons.

By and large major liberal institutions concurred: the utterly hopeless World Health Organisation refused to entertain the suggestion that the virus had leaked from the WIV and the major liberal broadcasters in the United States scarcely covered the suggestion at all. A couple of leftist American journo were invited into the WIV and marvelled at how clean everything was, what nice space suits everyone wore and how people defi-

nately weren't throwing chunks of Covid-19 out of the windows every few minutes, and thus gave it a clean bill of health. The idea got pushed into the conspiracy theory dungeon, a realm of racists and reactionaries. The banning of this idea, that the virus was man-made and leaked from a Chinese lab, was not because it was wrong, necessarily, but because it came from the political right and challenged the liberal view. How kind it is of them, then, to think again.

This perpetual, shameless, censorship on purely political grounds by the likes of Facebook, Google, Twitter and Instagram worries me rather more than the pandemic does, because there seems to be no readily available vaccine for it. If you had thought that Twitter and Facebook's deliberate suppression of stories regarding Hunter Biden's lucrative dealings in Ukraine, along with a serving US President's astonishing removal from all social media sites because they didn't like what he was saying, was simply the consequence of a peculiarly fraught US election, think again. They are still at it now, even more so. Theories which

they do not like because of their political consequences, or provenance, are banned under the heading "false news". It is increasingly the case that "false news" is simply news that liberals do not wish you to hear about. Nor do facts count for very much when these dweebs are deciding what you can and can't say. Try advancing the strictly scientific point of view regarding the correct gender of a man who has transitioned into being a "woman" — and see how long before you are banned too.

But it is Covid-19 which has given the liberals the greatest scope for their authoritarianism. Quite a lot of what has happened in these past 12 months or so — from the official adulation of the Black Lives Matter movement and footballers "taking a knee", to the hilarious "decolonisation" projects — has happened under the shroud of disease, and therefore not subject to public scrutiny. But it is the disease itself which has provoked the most injurious acts of censorship — which have occurred ever since the pandemic was politicised into a left versus right argument.

It is surely not a conspiracy theory nor an expression of "false news" to have one or two doubts on being zapped by a vaccine which has received nothing like the usual longitudinal testing procedures and is, basically, a clever, perhaps brilliant and lifesaving, experiment on the entire world. I'd go further and suggest that if you do not have one or two doubts, then you must be a bit thick. By this I do not remotely mean to say that we should all refuse our vaccines — I have had mine and I'm no worse than usual, so far. But in lieu of the usual testing procedures, it would be nice to think that questions raised by worried members of the general public and opinions from scientists which run counter to the apparent majority might be listened to and debated and discussed.

The opposite, though, has happened. Express one or two doubts about the vaccine, perhaps citing the number of people who have died from blood clots as a consequence of receiving it, and Twitter has your card marked. According to its protocol, any comments which "make false claims that have been widely debunked" will be

deleted. What, such as a worry that the virus may be man-made? Or — and think back to when the AstraZeneca rollout began — that there may, just may, be a link between the vaccine and blood clots. Denied outright at the time — and now entirely accepted, which is why people under 40 in Britain are being offered alternative jabs.

Meanwhile, leaked emails from Facebook have revealed that it is using an algorithm to censor those who are merely "vaccine hesitant". Amazon had a head start on this: a couple of years ago it pulled from its roster a film called *The Greater Good* in which a bunch of perfectly respectable scientists question the efficacy of mass vaccination programmes. Urged to take ever more censorious action by the left, these companies gladly succumb; it is their equivalent of taking a knee.

We need a law such as the one they are pushing through in Poland right now. If any social media company censors someone for saying anything not prosecutable under state law, they get fined. That would be a start.

By arrangement with the Spectator

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	52275.57	-0.10
Nifty 50	15740.10	-0.07
S&P 500*	4,229.93	0.08
Dollar (₹)	72.89	-0.10
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.04	-0.06
Euro (₹)	88.74	-0.22
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	49,113₹30	0.06
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	71.90	0.57
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.006	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.533	-0.037

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Vedanta firm Twin Star to take over Videocon

NCLT allowed Anil Agarwal's Twin Star Technologies to take over Videocon Industries Ltd for about Rs 3,000 crore. Twin Star, part of the Vedanta Group, will pay around Rs 500 crore within 90 days as upfront payment and the rest as non-convertible debentures over a period. A two-member Mumbai bench of the National Company Law Tribunal approved the resolution plan by Twin Star Technologies.

CCI clears Byju's buyout of Aakash Educational



The Competition Commission of India has approved ed-tech startup Byju's proposed acquisition of Aakash Educational Services Ltd (AESL). The \$1 bn deal, which will bolster Byju's presence in the test preparation segment, was announced in April this year. The CCI said it has approved the proposed combination relating to Think & Learn Pvt Ltd (Byju's) acquisition of certain stake of AESL and thereafter their merger.

ReNew Power merger with RMG II approved

The proposed merger of ReNew Power with blank-check company RMG Acquisition Corporation II (RMG II) has received clearance from the Competition Commission of India. An official release said the CCI has approved exchange of equity shareholding by shareholders of ReNew Power Pvt Ltd with shares of ReNew Global Ltd, along with a reverse triangular merger of subsidiary of ReNew Global with RMG II.

Ocugen pays BB \$15 mn for Canada rights of Covaxin

Ocugen Inc, the US partner for Bharat Biotech's Covid-19 vaccine, has announced the payment of \$15 million upfront to the Indian firm for extending the vaccine rights to Canada. Ocugen said it has agreed to pay another \$10 million to Bharat Biotech within a month from the commercial launch of Covaxin in the North American country. Bharat Biotech earlier said it has agreed to expand the agreement with Ocugen.



460 claims cleared for ₹50 lakh insurance cover Over ₹200 cr death claims paid for Covid warriors

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO NEW DELHI, JUNE 8

With increasing fatalities of health workers fighting Covid-19, the government has fast-tracked settlement of Covid death claims under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package (PMGKP), which provides an insurance cover of Rs 50 lakh to Covid frontline warriors. India's largest non-life insurer, New India Assurance Company Ltd (NIACL), has so far settled 419 claims under the scheme, disbursing around Rs 210 crore to the claimants. The PMGKP covers almost all healthcare workers, including doctors, nurses, paramedics, community health workers and even daily wage staff engaged in Covid duty. This scheme covers loss of life due to Covid-19 and accidental death in the line of duty. This is scheme managed solely by the NIACL, with the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare paying the entire premium for over 22



lakh health workers covered under the scheme. According to Atul Sahai, chairman and managing director of NIACL, "The NIACL has received over 1,100 claims intimations approximately, though only 600 claims were supported by the documents. Of this, we have paid a sum of Rs 209.5 crore for 419 claims as on the date, and 41 more claims stand approved awaiting either nomination documents or claimants' bank details. Some 140 claims have been turned down as the same were not covered under the policy, like the claimant wasn't a frontline healthcare worker or the death wasn't due to Corona." "We have already

received Rs 350 crore from the government in three tranches in the form of premium for the scheme so far. A total of 22.12 lakh health workers across the country are covered under the scheme by NIACL," Sahai added. Though the claim documents were simple to access-like a laboratory test report and death summary by the hospital-getting them approved through the competent state authority was proving to be time-consuming. So, the government has from this month further simplified the claims procedure by routing them through the district collector. This is expected to improve the claim settle-

ment ratio, which is now less than 55 per cent. "Now, the government has decided to ease the claims procedure that was finalised between the concerned company and MoH&SW, and the district collectors have to verify that claim documents, counter verified by the state health nodal agencies in just one single page document. The documents shall remain carefully recorded at their office. It's a welcome step for speedy settlement of the claims," Sahai said. However, health workers are concerned that the scheme does not cover death from post-Covid complications. Explaining, a senior doctor from Faridabad's Escort Heart Institute said, "Insurers now ask for all Covid-19 related documents immediately after the patient's death. So, there is no question of claim settlement from insurers if the patient dies of post-Covid-19 complications. Besides, any type of treatment or quarantine cost is not covered."

FM ASKS INFOSYS TO FIX TECH GLITCHES ON NEW INCOME TAX E-FILING PORTAL

New Delhi, June 8: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday asked Infosys and its chairman Nandan Nilekani to fix technical glitches being encountered on the income tax department's new e-filing website, after users flooded her Twitter timeline

with complaints. Infosys was in 2019 awarded a contract to develop the next-generation income tax filing system to reduce processing time for returns from 63 days to one day and expedite refunds. The portal went live Monday evening. Early on Tuesday morning, Sitharaman took to Twitter to announce the launch of the new portal, www.incometax.gov.in, saying that the "important milestone to make the compliance experience more taxpayer-friendly" went live at 2045 Hrs on Monday.

But, soon, her timeline was flooded with user complaints. "I see in my TL grievances and glitches. Hope @Infosys & @NandanNilekani will not let down our taxpayers in the quality of service being provided," she tweeted later.

SHYAM METALICS' ₹900-CRORE IPO OPENS ON JUNE 14

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, JUNE 8

Steel products maker Shyam Metals and Energy's Rs 909-crore initial public offering opens on June 14. The company on Tuesday announced the price band for the public issue as Rs 303 to Rs 306 per share of Rs 10 face value. The public issue comprises a fresh issue of equity shares, aggregating up to Rs 657 crore and an offer for sale of equity shares aggregating up to Rs 252 crore by the selling shareholders. Shyam Metals proposes to utilise the net proceeds from the fresh issue towards repayment of up to Rs 470 crore of its debt and that of its subsidiary, Shyam SEL and Power Limited and for general corporate purposes. Shyam Metals' manufacturing plants are located at Sambalpur in Orissa and Jamuria in West Bengal. The plants are strategically located to benefit from nearby iron ore mines for steel manufacturing. It also has a captive power plant.

Global economy to expand 5.6% in 2021: World Bank

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JUNE 8

The World Bank expects the global economy to expand 5.6 per cent in 2021, the fastest post-recession pace in 80 years. Despite the recovery, global output will be about 2 per cent below pre-pandemic projections by the end of this year. The World Bank also finds that services sector and private consumption will offset pandemic effects in India. The global economy's expansion will largely be on strong rebounds from a few major economies, fsays WB's latest edition of Global Economic Prospects. Among major economies, US growth is projected to reach 6.8 per cent this year, reflecting large-scale fiscal support and the easing of pandemic restrictions. Growth in other advanced economies is also firming, but to a lesser extent. China is anticipated to rebound to 8.5 per cent this year. Despite the recovery, global output will be

about 2 per cent below pre-pandemic projections by the end of this year. Per capita income losses will not be unwound by 2022 for about two-thirds of emerging market and developing economies. "While there are welcome signs of global recovery, the pandemic continues to inflict poverty and inequality on people in developing countries around the world," said World Bank Group president David Malpass. Emerging market and developing economies as a group are forecast to expand 6 per cent this year, supported by higher demand and elevated commodity prices. However, the recovery in many countries is being held back by a resurgence of Covid-19 cases and lagging vaccination progress, as well as the

withdrawal of policy support in some instances. In the case of India, the World Bank projected 8.3 per cent growth in FY22 followed by 7.5 per cent in FY23. This is supported by plans for higher spending on infrastructure, rural development, and health, and a stronger-than-expected recovery in services. Better growth prospects since January, however, masks significant damage to economic activity from Covid-19. The economy is expected to follow the same, yet less pronounced, collapse and recovery seen during the first wave. Growth in FY23 is expected to slow to 7.5 per cent, says the Bank. South Asia's growth is projected to rebound to a stronger-than-expected 6.8 per cent in 2021, with India accounting for most of the upgrade as strong services sector activity more than offsets the economic effects of the worsening pandemic. The outlook is underpinned by a rebound in private consumption.

Privatisation-bound banks may come out with VRS

New Delhi, June 8: Two state-owned banks being picked up for privatisation by the government are likely to come out with an attractive voluntary retirement scheme (VRS) to get rid of the extra flab, sources said. Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman while unveiling Budget 2021-22 on February 1 had announced that the government proposed to take up the privatisation of two public sector banks (PSBs) and one general insurance company. An attractive VRS will make them lean and fit for takeover by the private sector entities that are keen to enter the banking space, the sources said.



Banks asked to keep CCTV recordings of DeMo period

Mumbai, June 8: The RBI on Tuesday asked banks to preserve the CCTV recordings of their branches and currency chests from November 8, 2016, to December 30, 2016, till further orders with a view to assisting the enforcement agencies to take actions against persons involved in illegal activities during the demonetisation period. The government had demonetised the then in circulation high value currency notes of Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 on November 8, 2016. As part of the exercise, the government gave the opportunity to the people to exchange junked currency notes or deposit them in their bank accounts. Huge crowds were witnessed at bank branches across the country for exchanging or depositing the demonetised currency. On the basis of various inputs, the investigative agencies also started probing matters relating to illegal accumulation of new currency notes. In order to facilitate such investigations, the RBI has asked the banks not to destroy the CCTV recordings of the period of demonetisation till further orders. The present order is a continuation of an earlier advisory issued to the lenders in December 2016 to preserve the CCTV footage of operations at bank branches and currency chests. Of the Rs 15.41 lakh crore worth Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 notes in circulation on November 8, 2016, when the note ban was announced, notes worth Rs 15.31 lakh crore have been returned.

Following clearance from the Core Group of Secretaries, the finalised names will go to the Alternative Mechanism

(AM) for its approval and eventually to the Cabinet headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the final nod.

Changes on the regulatory side to facilitate privatisation would start after the Cabinet approval.

RBI buys 61 tonne gold since January 2020

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JUNE 8

The Reserve Bank of India bought 61 tonnes of gold since January 2020 in staggered purchases. The World Gold Council says central banks will continue to be positive on gold in 2021 as well, though their purchases might be lower than in 2020. During the pandemic year of 2020, the RBI purchased 41 tonnes of gold. Its gold reserves stood at 635 tonnes at the end of 2019 and expanded to 676.6 tonnes at the end of the year. The central bank continued its staggered purchases in 2021 as well by accumulating 20 tonnes till May. At the end of May 2021, the gold reserves stood at 696.2 tonnes. The World Gold Council's central bank gold reserves survey found that central banks will continue to be positive on gold, with roughly the same number of central banks expected to buy gold compared to last year. Around 21 per cent of central banks intend to increase their gold reserves over the next 12

months. Central banks are also increasingly valuing gold's performance during periods of crisis. Though the Bank of Russia had announced to halt its regular purchases, 52 per cent of respondents believe that global central bank gold holdings will grow in the coming year. However, 75 per cent of respondents believed so last year. At the same time, only 11 per cent do not know their plans for gold this year compared to 20 per cent last year. Further 32 per cent of respondents say that global central bank gold holdings will remain unchanged while 5 per cent say that they will decrease. These results may reflect the slowdown in central bank gold buying in 2020 when net purchases declined to 326 tonnes compared to 668 tonnes in 2019. Post-Covid economic recovery, negative interest rates, continuation of expansive monetary and fiscal policies combined with the prospect of rising inflation will likely be at the forefront of central bankers' concerns for the foreseeable future.

LARGE STEEL FIRMS RAISE MARKET SHARE

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JUNE 8 Rising steel prices helped large steel-makers more as they have grabbed a part of the market share from small and mid-sized companies. Five large steel makers, including Tata Steel, JSPL, JSW and Sail and AMNS, increased their market share to 58 per cent in FY21 from 53 per cent in FY20. As a result, the market share of small and medium steel companies came down to 42 per cent from 47 per cent, says a CSMI report. While 17 steel makers saw their revenues shrinking by 4 per cent and Ebitda by 2 per cent in FY21, the top steel-makers registered a 10 per cent growth in revenues and 60 per cent growth in Ebitda. The top four steel-makers also reduced their net debt in their Indian operations by 16 per cent or by Rs 34,000-35,000 crore. The improvement in financials was driven by supply-chain efficiencies, higher exports and captive mines.

Franklin to appeal Sebi ruling

RAHUL SATIJA & KARTHIKEYAN SUNDARAM JUNE 8

Franklin Templeton plans to appeal a ruling by India's markets regulator after the money manager's local unit was barred for two years from offering new debt funds. The Securities and Exchange Board of India said it had found "several irregularities" following a probe into Franklin Templeton Asset Management (India) Pvt Ltd's actions last year in winding up six debt funds that held about \$4.2 billion of assets. The Sebi also ordered the unit to refund management and advisory fees levied from June

2018 to April 2020 on the frozen funds and imposed a penalty of Rs 5 crore, according to its order on Monday. The regulator separately barred Franklin's Vivek Kudva and Roopa Kudva from accessing the securities market for one year, and imposed a combined penalty of Rs 7 crore. "We strongly disagree with the findings in the Sebi order and intend to file an appeal with the Hon'ble Securities Appellate Tribunal," Padmanaban Nair, a spokesman at Franklin Templeton India, wrote in an emailed comment. "We place great emphasis on compliance and believe that we have always acted in the best interest of

unitholders and in accordance with regulations." Franklin Templeton shuttered the funds last year, citing drying up of liquidity in some parts of the nation's corporate bonds market. At the time it was the biggest-ever forced closure of Indian funds and the move and fuelled worries of a renewed wave of withdrawals from similar products. The Sebi tightened rules covering the industry since the closure of the funds, imposing limits on some mutual fund debt investments and mandating stress tests. The Sebi said it found several irregularities in the running of the debt funds closed by Franklin.

LOSING | PROPOSITION Suit says creditors should get recovery benefit

63 Moons to challenge DHFL order

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, JUNE 8

DHFL debenture-holder and market infrastructure provider 63 Moons Technologies plans to challenge the order of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) permitting Piramal Group to take over DHFL under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC). Tech firm 63 Moons holds more than Rs 200 crore of non-convertible debentures (NCDs) of DHFL. Jignesh Shah-promoted 63 Moon believes the current resolution plan is contrary to law and against the interest of DHFL creditors, including NCD-holders. The company had filed an



application in the NCLT-Mumbai seeking that recovery benefit of approximately Rs 45,000 crore filed by the DHFL administrator under section 66 of IBC should come to creditors, including debenture-holders. "The current resolution

plan is disappointing for NCD-holders in as much as they stand to bear the greatest loss as opposed to any other party involved. Other members of the Committee of Creditors, who comprise mainly of banks, have recourse to personal guarantees of promoters whereas NCD-holders do not have any such contractual recourse," 63 Moons said, adding: "NCD-holders will be left high and dry with a massive 65 per cent to 75 per cent haircut if in future such recoveries from fraudulent transactions are allowed to pass through to the resolution applicants, instead of the creditors." "The current DHFL resolution plan allows the

Piramal Group to buy the company by paying mere Rs 37,500 crore as against the outstanding debt of Rs 85,000 crore. Also, in addition to this, the benefits of claims of over Rs 45,000 crore are to be appropriated by Piramal fully," the petition said. "The Resolution Plan is drafted in such a way that it favours the resolution applicant (buyer), in this case Piramal Group, allowing it to reap the benefits of recoveries from the promoters," 63 Moons said. "Ascribing a value of Re 1, to the recoveries of fraud where claims are in excess of Rs 45,000 crore creates unjust enrichment of the buyer (Piramal) at the cost of creditors," it alleged.

SHORT TAKES

Refugee team picked for Tokyo

Lausanne: The refugee team for the Tokyo Olympics has 29 athletes competing in 12 sports.

The team selected by the International Olympic Committee on Tuesday was drawn from 55 athletes who fled their home countries and got scholarships to train for the games in a new home country. The 29 — a rise from 10 in the inaugural refugee team at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympics — are originally from Afghanistan, Cameroon, Congo, Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Iran, Iraq, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Venezuela. They will compete in swimming, athletics, badminton, boxing, canoeing, cycling, judo, karate, shooting, taekwondo, weightlifting, and wrestling. The refugee athletes will compete against 206 national teams with identifier EOR, for the French acronym of the team name. — *AP*

Deepak pulls out of Poland Open

Warsaw: Olympic-bound Indian wrestler Deepak Punia on Tuesday pulled out of the Poland Open here to avoid aggravating his left-hand injury that he carried into the last Ranking Series event before the Tokyo Games. Punia was to take mat for the 86kg event but forfeited his quarterfinal against American Zahid Valencia. It has been learnt that the 2019 World championships bronze-winner had suffered the injury two-three days before leaving for Warsaw during practice. “He did not want to aggravate the injury and had informed the Federation that he will take a call on competing after reaching. After assessing his hand this morning, he decided not to take the mat,” a source in the Indian camp said. — *PTI*

English FA gets 1st female leader

London: The English Football Association nominated Debbie Hewitt on Tuesday to be its first female leader of soccer's original national body created 158 years ago. The experienced businesswoman is set to join the English FA in January, 14 months after Greg Clarke resigned in fallout from making offensive comments on race, gender and sexuality at a parliamentary hearing. Hewitt said in an FA statement she would “relish the opportunity to chair an organisation that has the potential to be a very positive force for good throughout the game and across society.” The FA said its ruling council will be asked to formally ratify Hewitt's appointment at a July 22 meeting. — *AP*

ISL teams to field 7 Indian players

Mumbai: The Indian Super League's 2021-22 season will witness an increase in local players' on-field participation thanks to a new set of guidelines that mandates clubs to field a minimum of seven footballers at one time from the previous six. A rise in the number of Indian players means one spot less for foreign stars which will now be capped at four. “Hero Indian Super League 2021-22 season will witness an increase in number of Indian players in the playing XI, as the new Coach & Player Selection Guidelines of Football Sports Development Limited (FSDL) now mandates clubs to have a minimum of seven (7) Indian players on the field at any point of time,” the ISL said in a release on Tuesday. — *PTI*

Nets crush Bucks to take series lead

Los Angeles: Kevin Durant had 32 points and six assists as the Brooklyn Nets rolled to their largest playoff win in franchise history on Monday with a 125-86 beat down of the Milwaukee Bucks in game two of their NBA series. Kyrie Irving finished with 22 points and four threes while Joe Harris and Bruce Brown each scored 13 for the Nets, who seized a 2-0 lead in the best-of-seven Eastern Conference series. Durant said he didn't want to settle for anything less than a championship. “We still got a long ways to go,” he said. “When we play hard together, good things happen.” “I think we're capable of greatness every single night,” Irving said. The series now switches to Milwaukee for game three on Thursday. — *AFP*

SLOVE & STEADY

Zidasek first woman from Slovenia to reach Slam semis

Paris, June 8: Tamara Zidasek's breakout display at the French Open is the latest in a long line of outstanding sporting accomplishments by athletes from Slovenia, an Alpine nation of just over two million people.

The world number 85 became the first woman representing the country to reach the semi-finals of a Grand Slam on Tuesday when she battled to beat Spain's Paula Badosa 7-5, 4-6, 8-6.

She will play Russian 31st seed Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova for a place in Saturday's final, and a chance to emulate Maribor-born Mima Jausovec, who won Roland Garros in 1977 while competing for Yugoslavia. With just three wins from eight previous Slam appearances, Zidasek arrived in Paris a virtual unknown, but she could soon join household names such as Dallas Mavericks star Luka Doncic and Tour de France champion Tadej Pogacar.

“It feels overwhelming. It's hard to take it in like this fast,” said a beaming Zidasek following her quarter-final win.

“Winning the first round was a big breakthrough for me. I got a lot of confidence from that,” she added.

PAVLYUCHENKOVA IN AFTER 52 ATTEMPTS

Pavlyuchenkova reached her first Grand Slam semifinal at the 52nd attempt on Tuesday with a three-set win over doubles partner Elena Rybakina at the French Open. “There are so many emotions to reach a Grand Slam semifinal for the first time,” said 29-year-old Pavlyuchenkova who had fallen at the quarter-final stage at the majors on six previous occasions since her 2007 debut. — *AFP*



Slovenia's Tamara Zidasek celebrates her 7-5, 4-6, 8-6 win over Paula Badosa of Spain in the French Open quarterfinal in Paris on Tuesday. — *AP*

‘Baffled’ Nadal reaches quarters

THE RESULTS

Women's singles quarterfinals: Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova (RUS x31) bt Elena Rybakina (KAZ x21) 6-7 (2/7), 6-2, 9-7; Tamara Zidasek (SLO) bt Paula Badosa (ESP x33) 7-5, 4-6, 8-6.

Paris, June 8: Rafael Nadal reached the French Open quarter-finals for the 15th time on Monday to stay on course for a 14th title and record-setting 21st Grand Slam with his biggest challenge posed by blinding stadium lights.

Third seed Nadal downed 19-year-old Jannik Sinner 7-5, 6-3, 6-0 and goes on to face 10th-seeded Diego Schwartzman of Argentina who he defeated in the semi-finals last year.

Nadal has now won 104 matches at Roland Garros

against just two defeats since his 2005 debut while Monday's victory extended his run of consecutive sets won to 35.

Despite Monday's match being played in bright sunshine and in temperatures of 25 degrees Nadal was baffled as to why the lights inside Court Philippe

Chatrier were switched on. “I don't know why they put the lights on that early. We have been playing without lights here in Roland Garros for forever,” said Nadal.

“At 4:00 or 5:00 in the afternoon we have been playing tennis until 9:00 in the evening without lights.”

“They say it's because of TV. But my answer is we

used to have TV before we had the lights on. I saw plenty of matches here, and from the TV the quality of the image was great without the lights.”

“I started well but was a little too defensive. I gave him the chance to come inside the court and play his best shots. That was a mistake,” added Nadal. “I broke back at 5-4 in the first set and the match changed after that. I played at a great level.”

Nadal had beaten Sinner in the quarter-finals in Paris in 2020 as well as at this year's Italian Open. — *AFP*

MUELLER ON THE MARK AS GERMANY EASE PAST LATVIA

Düsseldorf (Germany), June 8: Thomas Mueller scored his first international goal for three years on Monday as Germany crushed minnows Latvia 7-1 in their final warm-up friendly before the Euro 2020 finals.

Latvia, ranked 138th in the world, rarely got out of their half as Germany tuned up for their opening game of the European Championship against world champions France in eight days time in Munich. After a two-year exile from international football, 2014 World Cup winner Mueller got on the scoresheet while Premier League stars Ilkay Gundogan and Timo Werner also found the net in the rout.

“The result wasn't the most important thing, it was more about the way we wanted to play football and implement things,” said Mueller, who claimed his first Germany goal since March 2018.

Germany captain Manuel Neuer was applauded onto the pitch by his team-mates before kick-off as he became the first goalkeeper to make 100 appearances for the national team. — *AFP*



Sunil Chhetri

Chhetri above Messi in goal list

Doha, June 8: Indian football talisman Sunil Chhetri has surpassed Argentina's global superstar Lionel Messi to become the second-highest active international goal-scorer with 74 strikes, adding another feather to his illustrious career.

The 36-year-old Chhetri achieved the staggering feat with his brace against Bangladesh in the joint preliminary qualifying round match for 2022 FIFA World Cup and 2023 AFC Asian Cup here on Monday night.

The seasoned striker, who helped India register their first win in six years in World Cup qualifiers, now stands only behind Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo (103) in the active international goal-scorer list.

Chhetri leads Barcelona star Messi by two goals and sits a place above Ali Mabkhout of the UAE, who is third on the list with 73 strikes to his name.

Messi scored his 72nd international goal in a World Cup qualifier against Chile last Thursday, while Mabkhout added to his tally against Malaysia,

also last week.

At the Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium on Monday, Chhetri broke the deadlock in the 79th minute when he headed in Ashique Kuruniyan's cross from the left, and then sealed the victory by curling in a shot from long range in added time.

The India captain is also just goal away from entering world football's all-time top-10.

He is behind Hungary's Sandor Kocsis, Japan's Kunishige Kamamoto, and Kuwait's Bashar Abdullah, who all have 75 goals. — *PTI*

BANGLADESH COACH IN AWE OF SUNIL'S SCORING SKILLS

Doha, June 8: Talismanic Sunil Chhetri won't miss if you give him the opportunity to score, says Bangladesh coach Jamie Day after the Indian captain led his side to a 2-0 win in the 2022 FIFA World Cup and 2023 AFC Asian Cup Qualifying contest.

The 36-year-old Chhetri scored a second-half brace against Bangladesh to hand India their first win in the joint preliminary qualifying round match on Monday night.

“For a long period, we did well, we had a couple of half-chances. But if you give Chhetri a chance, he scores like he showed tonight. He had two chances in the last 20 minutes, and he took them,” Day was quoted as saying by *goal.com*. — *PTI*

Manu feels Croatia tour ‘perfect’ before Oly

New Delhi, June 8: One of India's strongest Olympic medal hopes, ace shooter Manu Bhaker feels preparations “can't get better” than the ongoing training-cum-competition tour of Croatia as she works on her consistency ahead of the Tokyo Games.

Thirteen Olympic-bound pistol and rifle shooters are currently training in Zagreb after having participated as guest invitees in the European Championship recently in Osijek. They will also compete in the ISSF World Cup, also scheduled in Osijek from June 22 to

July 3. The Croatia tour was arranged after the National Rifle Association of India realised that it was not possible to hold camps in India amid a deadly second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic.

“The tour is very helpful. We are well looked after, our health and fitness needs are taken care of and, most importantly, we are getting to train at a very good shooting range and with some good competition as well,” Bhaker said from Zagreb.

“So, I believe it cannot get better, leading up to the Olympic Games.” When Bhaker says she

The tour is very helpful. We are well looked after, our health and fitness needs are taken care of and, most importantly, we are getting to train at a very good shooting range and with some good competition as well.

— MANU BHAKER
Tokyo Olympics-bound shooter

wants to live up to her own expectations, the remark can be interpreted as a burning desire to win the gold medal, and it has often panned out that way in a stellar career seeking its zenith in a few weeks' time.

In an ominous sign for her challengers ahead of the Tokyo Games, the champion Indian shooter

says she is wants to avoid being weighed down by expectations. “I just want to meet my own expectations. I am not thinking about anything else but focusing on giving my best for India in the Games.”

The 19-year-old pistol ace will enter Tokyo as one of India's biggest medal hopes having won almost everything one can after a

sensational start to her career.

According to the champion shooter, many of her teammates stand a chance of finishing on the podium in Tokyo and given the Indian shooters' form in recent years, she is not far-fetched in her thought.

“I don't think I am the biggest medal hope... that is unfair. In our shooting team itself, I don't see anyone who is not the biggest medal hope. Then there are world class athletes in other sports as well for example badminton, weightlifting, wrestling, archery, boxing and the like,” she said. — *PTI*

ENGLAND CRICKET | RACISM ROW

Second player under scanner

London, June 8: One more current England player is being investigated by the country's cricket board for his allegedly racist remarks on Twitter as a teenager after Ollie Robinson was suspended for similar conduct.

The old tweets of the player in question were unearthed by *wisden.com*, which did not reveal the identity of the cricketer since he had not reached the age of 16 at that time.

The website posted screenshots of the tweet without revealing the player's identity.

“.....Your going out with a asian,” the player seem to have posted with hashtags of #asianthroughhand-through # hweollo #chinky.

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) is now investigating the matter. “It has been brought to our attention that an England player has posted historic offensive material on their social media account. We are looking into it and will make a further comment in due course,” an ECB spokesperson was quoted as saying by the website. The offensive posts came to fore hours after the ECB

● **The offensive posts came to fore hours after the ECB suspended Ollie Robinson pending a investigation into his racist tweets in 2012 and 2013. The player's identity has not been revealed as he was not 16 at that time.**

suspended Robinson pending a investigation into his racist tweets in 2012 and 2013.

Robinson, who scored 42 runs and took seven wickets on his Test debut against New Zealand, has already apologised for his behaviour after his old tweets emerged.

England's Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden, however, criticised the ECB's decision to suspend Robinson, calling it “over the top”. The country's Prime Minister Boris Johnson also agreed with him.

Dowden contended that Robonson's tweets were a decade old, “written by a teenager” but agreed that they were offensive and wrong. — *PTI*

KOHLI & CO TO GET 3-WEEK BREAK AFTER WTC FINAL

London, June 8: The Indian team management has decided to give a three-week break to its players after the World Test Championship final in a bid to address the mental fatigue that might be triggered by lengthy spells in a bio-bubble.

The WTC final against New Zealand will be held from June 18 to 22 at the Ageas Bowl in Southampton and the members of the Indian squad will disperse for close to three weeks (20 days) before regrouping on July 14 to prepare for the five-match series against England starting in Nottingham from August 4.

“As skipper Virat Kohli and coach Ravi Shastri had told the media at the pre-departure press conference, there will be a break. There is a six-week gap between WTC final and opening Test against England, so we had to address the issue of players' well-being. Within UK, they can disperse off, go for a holiday, meet friends and family,” a senior BCCI official said.

Obviously, there could be some team get-togethers also but players would be free to choose how they want to spend their time.

“Most of them have come to UK for multiple times and have friends and acquaintances around the country. It's only fair that they can switch off,” said the source. — *PTI*



Virat Kohli and Ravi Shastri in the file photo.

SL to tour England amid contract row

Colombo, June 8: The Sri Lankan cricketers have agreed to compete against England on a tour-specific contract but would not sign the annual contracts unless governing body SLC explains the evaluation process.

Sri Lanka are scheduled to tour England for three Twenty20s and as many ODIs between June 18 and July 4.

Following a stormy round of talks, the players were told by the management that they would either call off the England tour or send a third string side.

The players told the management they would sign a tour-specific contract but need more time to sign the annual contracts.

The players had defied a June 3 deadline to sign the contracts, citing lack of transparency in the process.

While defying the dead-

line the players said they were willing to play for the country even if the administration decided not to pay salaries due to their refusing to enter contracts.

At the height of the dispute and negotiations last month, the players said remuneration proposed to players were more than 3-fold lower than payments made to players of other counties.

The SLC had by then announced that 24 of the leading players had been offered contracts under four categories and they had been given a deadline until 3 June to sign them.

In the categories released only six players featured in the category 'A' and their annual pay ranges between \$70,000 to 100,000.

The batsman, Dhananjaya de Silva draws highest — 100,000 with the rest of them were to receive \$70-80,000. — *PTI*