

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

ANANTAPUR | TUESDAY | 15 JUNE 2021

WEATHER

 Max: 37.0°C
Min: 19°C
RH: 43%
Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: Cloudy sky. Misty morning. Max/Min temp. 37/19 °C

ASTROGUIDE

Plava: Uttarayana
Tithi: Jyeshtha Shuddha Panchami till 10.53 pm
Star: Ashlesha till 9.38 pm
Variyam: 9.55 am to 11.35 am
Durmuhurtam: 8.21 am to 9.14 am; 11.10 pm to 11.54 am
Rahukalam: 3 pm to 4.30 pm
HIJRI CALENDAR
Zeeqad 3,1442 AH
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.08 am
Zohar: 12.05 pm
Asar: 4.11 pm
Maghrib: 5.47 pm
Isha: 7.02 pm
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.08 AM
SUNSET TODAY 6.33 PM
MOONSET 10.57 PM
MOONRISE 10.44 AM

COUNTER POINT



This is the record of undercounted Covid deaths...

SHORT TAKES

ACTIVE COVID CASES DECLINE BELOW 10 LAKH

New Delhi: Daily cases of Covid-19 in India saw a big dip on Monday with 70,421 new detections. This was the lowest after 74 days. Though such low numbers are often due to reduced testing on Sundays, the Union health ministry said a total of 14.92 lakh tests were conducted in the last 24 hours in the country. Officials said India's active caseload has dropped below the 10 lakh-mark after 66 days and daily recoveries continue to outnumber the daily new Covid cases for more than a month now. India's Recovery Rate is 95.43 per cent at present while daily Positivity Rate stands at 4.72 per cent. However, the death toll still remains a cause of concerns as nearly 4,000 deaths were reported in one day. Since cases have started coming down, many States and Union Territories have started easing Covid-19 restrictions. However, West Bengal has extended curbs till July 1 but is opening up restaurants and manufacturing units.

43% Indians skip China products

New Delhi: A half of Indian consumers surveyed said they did not buy made-in-China products in the past 12 months as an aftermath of the border tensions with China, a report by online firm LocalCircles on Monday said. The report is based on a survey, which was conducted during June 1-10 and covered 17,800 citizens. Imports from China, however, increased 42 per cent during January-May 2021, due to Covid cases.

RBI to regulate microfinance

Mumbai: The Reserve Bank on Monday proposed a uniform regulatory framework for the microfinance sector, wherein MFIs can provide collateral-free loans to households at board-determined interest rates. Microfinance is a form of financial service which provides small loans and other financial services to poor and low-income households.

WORLD | 5

Biden ready to talk to China and Russia

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SPORTS | 8

Brazil begin Copa campaign in style

TABLOID

Huma makes a splash again



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India to restore 26m acres of degraded land, says PM

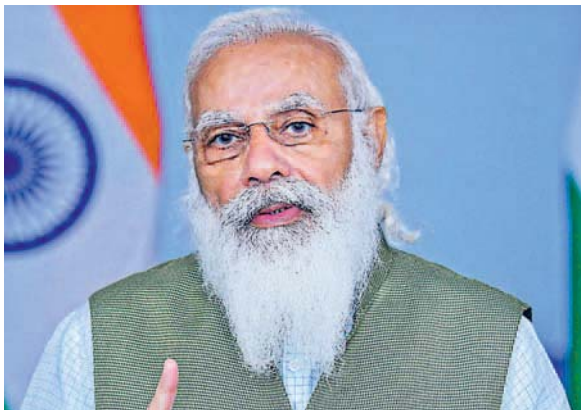
DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 14

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday evening told the United Nations that India is “on track to achieve its national commitment of land degradation neutrality and ... working towards restoring 26 million hectares of degraded land by 2030”.

This, he said, would “contribute to India's commitment to achieve an additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent”.

He was delivering his keynote address in virtual format at the UN “High-Level Dialogue on Desertification, Land degradation and Drought”.

“Land is the fundamental building block for supporting all lives and livelihoods. All of us understand the web of life functions as an inter-connected system. Sadly, land degradation affects over two-thirds of the world today,” Mr Modi said, adding: “If left unchecked, it will erode the very foundations of our societies, economies, food security, health, safety and quality of life. Therefore, we have to reduce the tremendous pressure on land and its resources. Clearly, a lot of work lies ahead of us. But



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses the UN ‘High-Level Dialogue on Desertification, Land degradation and Drought’, through video conferencing, in New Delhi on Monday.

— PTI

we can do it. We can do it together.”

Said Mr Modi: “It is mankind's collective responsibility to reverse the damage to land caused by human activity. It is our sacred duty to leave a healthy planet for our future generations.”

The Prime Minister added: “Land degradation poses a special challenge to the developing world. In the spirit of South-South cooperation, India is assisting fellow developing countries to develop land restoration strategies. A centre of excellence is being set up in India to promote a scientific approach towards

land degradation issues.”

He further said: “In India, we have always given importance to land and considered the sacred Earth as our mother. India has taken the lead to highlight land degradation issues at international forums. The Delhi Declaration of 2019 called for better access and stewardship over land, and emphasised gender-sensitive transformative projects. In India, over the last 10 years, around three million hectares of forest cover has been added. This has enhanced the combined forest cover to almost one-fourth of the country's total area.”

Be prepared for 3rd wave, Jagan directs officials

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 14

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy held a review meeting here on Monday on the prevailing Covid situation, as also the measures to be taken for treatment of infants and children in the event of a third wave and on the setting up of health hubs at district headquarters.

The Chief Minister directed the health officials to ensure treatment for the post Covid health problems of children under the AarogyaSri scheme.

During the review meeting, the officials explained to the Chief Minister about the data from June 6 to 12 and said the number of cases in the state has dropped significantly.

The positive cases' rate had decreased to 6.58 per cent while it was 25.56 per cent on May 16. The positivity rate in all districts is less than 17.5 per cent, the officials said.

The positivity rate in seven districts is less than nine per cent and it's between 10-19 per cent in six districts Chittoor,

Anantapur, Prakasam, Krishna, East Godavari and West Godavari). Active cases reduced to 85,637 and the recovery rate rose to 94.61 per cent.

Five lakh calls were made to 104 Call Centre from April 15 while 6,41,094 outgoing calls were made. Some 2,700 calls were being made at present on a daily basis.

As many as 2,303 black fungus cases were registered till June 14, from which 157 patients died. A GO was released as per the advice of the CM to support the families of health department staff who succumbed to Covid19, they said.

The CM directed the officials to ensure these personnel received financial assistance soon. He also spoke of a plan to provide financial assistance to health staff of private hospitals who died while treating Covid patients.

The officials informed the Chief Minister about treatment facilities for children in government hospitals.

LOVE | ALL

Tennis ace gifts his historic French title winning racquet to courtside kid ‘coach’

Djokovic's gesture to young fan wins hearts

Paris: Novak Djokovic said he gave away his French Open winning racquet to a young boy watching courtside for “giving me the right tactics”.

The world number one claimed a 19th Grand Slam title and became the first man in 52 years to win all four majors twice when he came from two sets down to beat Stefanos Tsitsipas 6-7 (6/8), 2-6, 6-3, 6-2, 6-4.

At the end of the four-hour and 11-minute final, the 34-year-old Djokovic handed his racquet to the youngster who was then pictured on TV jumping

for joy and in shock at the gesture.

“He was in my ear the entire match basically, especially when I was two sets to love down. He was encouraging me. He was actually giving me tactics, as well,” said Djokovic.

“He was like, ‘Hold your serve, get an easy first ball, then dictate, go to his backhand.’ He was coaching me literally. “I found that very cute, very nice. So I felt like giving the racquet to the best person was him after the match. That was kind of my gratitude for him sticking with me and



Tennis world No.1 Novak Djokovic gives away his racquet to a young boy after winning the French Open on Sunday.

He was in my ear the entire match, especially when I was two sets to love down. He was encouraging me. He was actually giving me tactics, as well. He was like, ‘Hold your serve, get an easy first ball, then dictate, go to his backhand.’ He was coaching me literally. I found that very cute, very nice.

— NOVAK DJOKOVIC
on why he gave his racquet to the boy after winning a historic French Open title

supporting me,” said Djokovic, who is now just one Grand Slam title away from equalling the all-time record of 20, jointly held by Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal.

It was a second French crown for Djokovic after

his 2016 victory and adds to his nine Australian Opens, five Wimbledon titles and three at the US Open. The 34-year-old is the first man since Rod Laver in 1969 to win all four Slams on multiple occasions and just the third in history. — AFP

Welfare, development guide AP's annual plan

Jagan asks banks to give priority to tenant farmers

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 14

The annual 2021-22 loan plan for Andhra Pradesh is of the order of ₹2,83,380 crore. Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, while announcing this, has urged bankers to cooperate with the government in the implementation of welfare schemes and development activities along with providing agricultural loans.

The Chief Minister conducted a review meeting with 215th State-Level Bankers Committee (SLBC) on Monday and released the 2021-22 annual loan plan. He directed the banks to concentrate on providing loans to tenant farmers.

Jagan Mohan Reddy said unpredictable situations arose around the world and even across the country and restrictions like curfew were imposed to contain the Covid-19 pandemic. Though the curfew was extended, stipulated targets were crossed in loan disbursement, he said, and added that 105 per cent of targets were achieved in priority sectors and 114.16 per cent in agriculture sector.

The CM said the role of banks in achieving this growth rate was commendable. They have exceeded the stipulated targets in loan disbursements. Yet, the efficiency of banks needed to be increased in certain areas like agriculture infra,



Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy presents Lord Venkateswara Swami's photo to Governor B.B. Harichandan at Raj Bhavan in Vijayawada on Monday.

— DC

other agriculture allied sectors, housing and education.

Schools and hospitals are being revamped under the Nadu Nedu scheme and focus is laid on developing infrastructure facilities in the agriculture sector, he said. English is introduced as a medium of instruction in government schools and CBSE affiliation is completed. As a result, “children are coming back to government schools.”

The CM said schools are being revamped under the

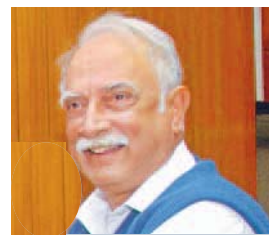
second phase of Nadu Nedu scheme. There are no tier-1 cities in Andhra Pradesh. People are going to Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Chennai for treatment. Medical infrastructure is being developed from Village Clinics to Teaching hospitals across the state. Sixteen new medical colleges are being set up in the state and AP is moving forward to ensure a teaching hospital in every parliamentary constituency.

He said revolutionary

changes were made in the agriculture sector and RBKs were introduced — with one RBK for every 2,000 population. These RBKs will support farmers in all aspects — from providing certified quality seeds to selling the crop.

Agriculture infrastructure is being developed at RBK level and godowns, cold storages and all other facilities are being provided to farmers, he said.

■ Page 2: Steps were taken to empower women: CM



P. Ashok Gajapati Raju

HC CANCELS SANCHAITA'S APPOINTMENT

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 14

The Andhra Pradesh High Court has struck down appointment of Sanchaita Gajapati Raju as chairperson of Maharaja Alak Narayan Society of Arts and Science (Mansas) and Simhachalam temple trusts. Further, the court restored former minister and TD politburo member P. Ashok Gajapati Raju as chairman of both these trusts.

While cancelling GO No. 74 issued in March 2020 appointing Sanchaita Gajapati Raju, HC judge Justice N. Venkataramana upheld the appointment of Ashok Gajapati Raju made in 2016.

Urmila Gajapati Raju, second daughter of Ananda Gajapati Raju who is the elder brother of Ashok Gajapati Raju, was nominated but disqualified as she was below 30 years of age. Sunita Prasad, sister of Ashok and Anand, did not take oath. It is mandatory to take oath within 30 days of the nomination. Sanchaita is the daughter of Anand Gajapati Raju.

Ashok Gajapati Raju had filed two petitions in the High Court challenging the appointments made under Government Order 74.

■ Page 2: HC dismisses state govt. GO

SHORT TAKES

CM TO RELEASE FUNDS FOR YSR VAHANA MITRA

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 14

The Chief Minister will release a financial assistance of ₹10,000 under the third phase of YSR Vahana Mitra scheme on Tuesday for eligible auto rickshaw and taxi drivers, a month in advance, by crediting a total of ₹248.47 crore into the accounts of 2,48,468 beneficiaries.

In view of the ongoing pandemic crisis, the state government decided to extend a helping hand to the auto and taxi drivers by providing the YSR Vahana Mitra scheme a month in advance. As many as 42,932 beneficiaries have applied for the scheme this year, wherein a total of 2,48,468 will be receiving the aid. Over two lakh persons have benefitted from the scheme in the previous year.

As part of this scheme, financial assistance will be provided to drivers who have their own auto, taxi and maxi cabs. Out of the total 2,48,468 beneficiaries under the scheme, 59,692 are SCs, 1,38,372 are BCs, 9,910 are STs and 40,494 are OCs. A majority of the beneficiaries are from backward classes and other weaker sections.

PROTECT SCHOOL PLAYGROUND, NAIDU TELLS COLLECTOR

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, JUNE 14

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) Supremo Nara Chandrababu Naidu wrote a letter to Chittoor district collector M. Harinarayanan, alleging that the YSR Congress party leaders are attempting to illegally occupy land in Palakuru village in Puthalapattu assembly segment in Chittoor district.

In his letter, Naidu said that a piece of land to an extent of 1.25 acres, which is currently being used as a school playground in survey no. 805 and 2.05 acres of village common grazing land in survey number 788/2 has been targeted by the ruling YSRC leaders. He alleged that the supporters of the YSRC leaders are in the process of erecting huts and other structures to illegally grab the school playground and the panchayat land.

"In the connection with the issue, the High Court of AP, in its order, has categorically said that the panchayat land cannot be alienated from the gram panchayat," Naidu mentioned in his letter.

RAJU WILL BE SUSPENDED SOON: REDDEPPA

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, JUNE 14

Coming down heavily on MP Raghu Ramakrishna Raju for commenting against YSRC's interests and even mocking the party chief Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, Chittoor MP N. Reddeppa said that the party high command is working on to suspend the rebel MP from the party as he lacks loyalty.

Speaking to media persons in Chittoor on Monday, MP Reddeppa alleged that Narsapuram MP Raju was hatching a conspiracy to pull down the YSRC government even when CM Jagan Mohan Reddy called him into the party and gave him a ticket to contest the elections.

"MP Raju lacks loyalty to the party. The BJP and TDP was using the Narsapuram MP as a pawn in his plot against our party. It was, however, his own fault to provoke the party and he will get suspend soon", the MP said.

MP Reddeppa accused Raghu Ramakrishna of swindling hundreds of crores of money in the name of power projects in AP, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. He demanded the MP Raju and those who have instigated him must not be spared and strict action should be taken against them as per law.

● **HYDERABAD:** YSRC rebel MP Raghu Ramakrishna Raju filed a rejoinder petition on Monday to deny the allegations made against him by AP Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy in the special court for CBI cases. The Chief Minister had filed a counter-affidavit to Raju's original petition seeking cancellation of bail in the quid pro quo cases. In his turn, Raju levelled a series of allegations against the Chief Minister.

Employees stage protest



AP Ward and Village Secretariat employees protest outside the District Collectorate in Visakhapatnam on Monday, demanding that the government fix work timings for them and ensure that their work only at the Ward and Village Secretariats. — K. MURALI KRISHNA

Registrations along NH stalled, farmers worried

Sources say govt put registrations on hold to cut compensation

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, JUNE 14

Farmers and plot owners are in dire straits as the state government has suspended land registrations adjacent to the proposed Rajampet-Renigunta National Highway 716 since past year.

It is learnt centre's ministry of surface transport has proposed construction of a straight national highway without crossing the railway line from Vontimitta to Renigunta in Kadapa district. The highway, costing ₹2,800 crore, will be a four-lane road with a length of about 120 km and width of 150 metres.

Necessary land acquisition has also been completed in this regard. 215 hectares of land has been acquired for construction of the proposed road from Kanumalopalle Cross to

● **SPEAKING TO the Deccan Chronicle,** Rajampet tahsildar Ravi Shankar Reddy said land acquisition for the national highway has been completed in their area.

Bhakarapeta, Vontimitta, Nandalur, Rajampet and Railway Koduru. Last year, a meeting had been arranged at the Kadapa collector's office with owners of private lands with regard to compensation to be paid for the acquired lands.

Following the announcement of the centre with regard to the highway, real estate business on Rajampet-Rayachoti route in Rajampet town has been booming. An acre of land here is already priced at ₹2-3 crore. Most of the lands in the area are being bought and sold for residential purposes. As the new national highway is adjacent to the railway track, the demand for these lands has further increased.

However, farmers who have given land as per requirements of the national highway, are unable to sell rest of their land as government has suspended land registrations in Rajampet, Railway Koduru, Pullampeta and other areas.

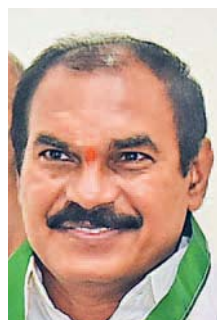
It is rumoured that the government is withholding land registrations here to reduce compensation. Information is that if registrations are allowed, the value of the land will increase. Farmers may then go to court demanding compensation based on the current value of lands.

For example, if a farmer with five acres of land in a survey number loses 50 cents of land in construc-

tion of the national highway, he will be unable to sell the remaining four and a half acres even if he is in dire need of money. This way there is a lock-down on sale of hundreds of acres of land in Rajampet mandal alone.

Leave alone realtors and big landlords; middle class people who had bought just 3-5 cents of land are having trouble registering their lands. They all want the government to respond and grant permission for registration of lands next to the national highway.

Speaking to the *Deccan Chronicle*, Rajampet tahsildar Ravi Shankar Reddy said land acquisition for the national highway has been completed in their area. He said they cannot do anything about registrations, as the state government is yet to take a decision on the issue.



THOTA TRIMURTHULU



LELLA APPI REDDY



K. MOSHEN RAJU



R. V. S. RAMESH YADAV

CM meets Governor, gets nod for four MLC names

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 14

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy and his wife Y. S. Bharati paid a courtesy visit to the Governor B i s w a b h u s a n Harichandan and his wife at the Raj Bhavan here on Monday. Jagan Mohan Reddy explained his recent Delhi tour details to the Governor and further explained the measures initiated by the government towards containment of Covid-19.

The meeting lasted for 45

minutes and according to sources, Jagan Mohan Reddy sought approval for names of YSRC leaders for four MLC seats under Governor's quota.

Earlier Jagan Mohan Reddy had selected K. Moshen Raju, Lella Appi Reddy, R.V. Ramesh Yadav and Thota Trimurthulu for the recently vacated four MLC posts under Governor's quota and sent the same to the Governor for approval.

The Opposition Telugu Desam Party objected to the names claiming they were ineligible as they were fac-

ing cases. So, approval for the names also was not given by the Governor hence the Chief Minister met Harichandan on Monday. Sources informed that Jagan informed about the four leaders and the Governor approved them for vacant MLC posts.

Meanwhile, Guntur Municipal Corporation Mayor Kavati Manohar Naidu with YSRC leaders met Lella Appi Reddy on Monday night and congratulated him for getting MLC post under Governor's quota.

Blame Naidu for land grab in Vizag: Avanti

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 14

Taking advantage of loopholes in the abolished estate and inam acts, TDP leaders have encroached valuable government lands, tourism minister Muttamsetti (Avanti) Srinivas has alleged.

Addressing a press conference in Visakhapatnam on Monday, the minister said all parties must support the state government in reclaiming encroached lands from the illegal occupation TDP leaders.

Avanti Srinivas explained that TDP leaders with active support from former chief minister N. Chandrababu Naidu grabbed huge chunks of land in Visakhapatnam during TDP's rule. He asserted that it is the responsibility of the government to keep Visakhapatnam safe from such encroachers.

"Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy does not discriminate between him, us, party and caste. Soon, the SIT report on Vizag land scam will be made public. Action will be initiated against all

TD LEADER ADMITTED LAND GRABBING, SOUGHT PROBE, SAYS AMARNATH

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 14

Official spokesperson of YSRC and Anakapalli MLA Gudivada Amarnath pointed out that Chandrababu Naidu had been forced to constitute an SIT on insistence of Ayyanna Patrudu.

Addressing a press conference, he pointed out that a former collector had pointed out that land documents pertaining to one lakh acres of govern-

ment land had disappeared during the super cyclone Hudhud that hit Visakhapatnam in 2014. "There was only a wind but no rain. Chandrababu Naidu must explain how the documents disappeared," Amarnath stated.

He went on to allege that as Naidu had slept in a bus in collectorate for over a week after Hudhud hit the coast, he will have a better knowledge about the missing documents.

those involved in the land scam," the minister declared.

He alleged that Chandrababu keeps himself busy only with conspiracies and intrigues against YSRC government to destabilise it. While the government is making efforts to reclaim encroached lands, the TDP chief and his son Lokesh are making false allegations that the YSRC leaders are grab-

bing lands.

Avanti Srinivas said Telugu Desam leadership cannot deny that its leaders indulged in large-scale grabbing of government lands in Visakhapatnam. Even former minister and present politburo member Ch. Ayyanna Patrudu publicly came out against his own ministerial colleague and asked Chandrababu Naidu to initiate a probe into land encroachments.

HC dismisses state govt. GO

From Page 1

Ashok Gajapathi Raju counsel argued that elders should be trustees in their old age, as they are hereditary trustees. He thus contended that AP government's appointment of chairpersons of these trusts had been against rules. The government, however, contended that the appointment was made in accordance with rules.

The High Court agreed with arguments submitted by Ashok Gajapati Raju and struck down the GO issued by the AP government.

Sanchaita had said that since her father Ananda Gajapathi Raju had been the chairman of 104 temples as a member of erstwhile royal Vizianagaram family she urged that she should also be recognised as legal heir and family member.

"I am yet to see the copy of the High Court order. I

am not the kind of woman to give up the fight so easily," Sanchaita Gajapati Raju told *Deccan Chronicle* soon after the court order.

Ashok Gajapathi Raju told reporters in Vizianagaram that the decree proved that the Constitution and courts are still intact.

"I have to check what all damages have been done to the temple during my absence," Raju told reporters.

Meanwhile, sources said the state government has decided to approach the Supreme Court against the High Court orders. Endowments minister Vellampalli Srinivas met Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy soon after the court verdict and briefed him about the judgment. The CM reportedly advised Srinivas to appeal against the High Court orders in the apex court, sources added.

GOVERNMENT TO GO FOR APPEAL ON MANSAS VERDICT

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 14

Minister for endowments Vellampalli Srinivas Rao said that the government is likely to go for appeal objecting to the AP HC verdict on MANSAS Trust. He stated that the government issued orders to the MANSAS Trust according to the law hence now would thoroughly go through the Court orders to challenge the directions.

The High Court on Monday dismissed the government order pertaining to replacement of chairman of MANSAS Trust and Simhachalam Devasthanams Trust. Earlier the government removed P. Ashok Gajapathi Raju from the chairman post and appointed his brother Ananda Gajapathi's daughter Sanchaita Gajapati Raju. The order was challenged by Ashok in the High Court and it gave its verdict on Monday cancelling the

earlier GO and ordering the government to reinstate Ashok.

After meeting the CM Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, the minister spoke to the media persons and made it clear that they would go for appeal against the HC order in MANSAS Trust case. He said that they are going through the High Court order and would continue the legal battle.

Minister Srinivas Rao said that there was no development to the Trust during the Telugu Desam regime. Rubbishing the comments of TDP MLC Nara Lokesh, the minister said that Lokesh is neither a grownup child nor a kid to understand these issues. He said that if a court gives an order that is not the end of the case, there are many courts to fight legal battles. He said that they found a few irregularities in the Trust that took place and are legalising everything and all things will be done legally as per the law.

CM WANTS FOCUS ON PAEDIATRIC HEALTHCARE

From Page 1

An action plan on increasing ICU beds and providing oxygen to infants and children was being implemented, and a plan to increase ICU beds to 1,600 and oxygen beds to 3,777 for children was also being put in place. Plans were on to recruit pediatricians, staff nurses and other supporting staff, officials noted.

The Chief Minister asked them to complete the recruitment in one month's time. He asked the officials to be prepared for any contingencies and provide training to nurses and staff in pediatric services.

The officials said children are facing post-Covid-19 health problems related to lungs and kidneys. It was then that the CM asked them to provide treatment to them under Arogyasri. Fix rates under Arogyasri so that hospitals won't suffer, he said, and added that Arogyasri bills are being paid to network hospitals within three weeks.

The CM told officials that health hubs should be setup nearby habitations and ensure hospitals are setup at all directions in towns and cities. The main objective of health hubs is to introduce modern treatment techniques, and ensure that the facilities similar to those of multi-specialty hospitals in Bangalore, Chennai and Hyderabad are available in AP as well.

He said districts should attain self-sufficiency in providing health-related treatment services through these health hubs. Prepare guidelines regarding health hubs within two weeks, the CM asked officials.

Dy CM Alla Krishna Srinivas, Covid-19 command control chairman Dr Jawahar Reddy, additional DG Ravi Ayyanar, health principal secretary A.K. Singhal, Covid task force committee chairman Krishna Babu, were among the officials present.

₹1,96,982 crore in loans were disbursed and the target for agriculture sector was ₹1,28,660 crore, but ₹1,46,879 crore in loans was given.

He said the MSME sector has received ₹40,312 crore as loans while the target was ₹39,600 crore and the non-primary sector has received ₹60,652 crore while the target was ₹60,050 crore.

He requested the Chief Minister to give priority to bank employees in Covid-19 vaccination programme.

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SHORT TAKES

ANDHRA VARSITY
SIGNS MOU
WITH IPTSEDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 14

Andhra University and Intellectual Property Talent Search Examination (IPTSE) academy signed an MoU to promote IP culture in all educational institutions across the State.

The MoU was signed by the AU registrar Prof V. Krishna Mohan and the IPTSE's Sourabh Sachdeva.

Sachdeva said that IPTSE and Andhra University act as a state IPR nodal agency organise workshops, seminars, webinars, organise training programs to faculty members and students and prepare the students for the IP Olympiad Examination and offer internships to students.

While delivering the inaugural address in the IP literacy drive webinar, the AU vice-chancellor Prof P.V.G.D. Prasad Reddy highlighted the various initiatives taken by the university to promote IP. He has also mentioned that the University is making it mandatory to file IP applications for PhD students particularly to start with who registers for PhD from industry.

HERD OF
ELEPHANTS
CREATE PANICDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 14

A herd of elephants allegedly created panic among the residents of villages in Bhamini mandal of Srikakulam district on Monday. The locals alleged that the elephants came out of the forest into residential areas during the day.

When contacted, Srikakulam district forest officer Sandeep K. Gundala told this newspaper that the elephants keep roaming in the border cover of Andhra and Odisha in Bhamini mandal. The herd did not create any panic situation in the mandal on Monday.

"I personally visited the spot along with my supporting team from Parvatipuram range. We have alerted our cracker team also in the mandal. Since the Covid-19 induced curfew was going on, there would be no chances of man-animal conflict," Sandeep said.

The Parvatipuram range officer Routhu Rajasekhara said that the herd were spotted at Talada and Kosali in Bhamini mandal, along the river Vamsadhara on Monday.

PARTS OF
VISAKHAPATNAM
RECEIVE RAINSDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 14

Many areas in Visakhapatnam received rains on Monday. Narsipatnam received 15 mm of rainfall, highest in the state, while agency areas like Paderu received 10 mm of rainfall. The cloudy weather conditions would continue to prevail for the next two days.

The rains were attributed to the presence of the low pressure system over north coastal Odisha and adjoining Gangetic West Bengal. The IMD Amaravati Centre officials said that monsoon would be active in the state with light to moderate rains in isolated places in the next few days.

FOUR RED SANDERS
SMUGGLERS
ARRESTEDDC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, JUNE 14

District SP Karur Karunapathi Nagendra Kumar Anburajan said that a total of four red sanders smugglers have been arrested and 27 logs weighing 725 kg were seized under the Koduru and Vontimitta police stations limits in the district.

The district SP held a press conference at the district police office premises in Kadapa on Monday. Vontimitta police got a tip-off from reliable sources about the red sanders transportation and raided the spot near Sarvakatipalle village and arrested three smugglers. The police seized seven red sanders logs from them, which are kept there for transportation.

The arrested were Takkolu Ravi Kumar Reddy (38), Duladula Srinivasulu (35) and Choppa Murali (32). In another incident, Railway Kodur police arrested Gundala Sankara (37) near Upparapalli village, and 20 red sander logs seized from the accused.

More Covid tests



Healthcare workers collect swabs from people for Covid-19 tests at a primary health centre at Akkayyapalem in Visakhapatnam on Friday. —DC

First city to have highest
no. of solar street lamps

GVMC plans to set up 10,000 solar street lights in the city

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 14

Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC) is planning to set up 10,000 solar street lights in the city. Once that happens, Vizag will be the first city in the country to have the highest number of solar street lamps, thus contributing to environmental protection in its own way.

GVMC's electrical wing is preparing a detailed project report in this regard, which will be placed before the council for approval.

The estimated cost of the project will be around ₹20 crore. The lamps will be set up along the beach road, covering nearly 10 km from the Fishing

- 10,000 solar street lights over 10 km of beach road.
- Project will cost ₹20 crore.
- Vizag has nearly 1.2 lakh street lights.

Harbour junction to Visalakshinagar beach. Areas to come under solar street lighting include RK beach, Kursura Submarine Museum, The Park Road Junction, VMRDA Park, Tenneti Park and Appughar.

Confirming this project proposal to *Deccan Chronicle*, a senior GVMC official said, "In fact, the project was first proposed in December 2020. But it could not move forward due to various reasons, including Covid-19 and elections to GVMC. Now, we are on the job of preparing a fresh project report to place it before the council led by the mayor."

Once the mayor approves the project, its implementation will gather momentum. The corporation can approach corporate entities for funding, said the GVMC officer, who does not want to be quoted.

At present, a pilot solar street lamp project is being taken up under the Smart City Mission in Pandurangapuram and surrounding areas. But it is not linked to GVMC's project, the officer added. The corporation spends

nearly ₹2 crore a month to pay its electricity bills, including those of its offices and street lights. Nearly 30-40 per cent of power charges are for street lights. The corporation is responsible for nearly 1.2 lakh street lights in the city from Anakapalli to Bheemili, catering to the needs of nearly 25 lakh population.

When DC brought this solar street light project to the notice of GVMC mayor Golagani Hari Venkata Kumari, she said "I have so far not received any file regarding this project from my officials. However, I will discuss it with technical experts and council members to check the possibility of implementing the solar street light project."

The corporation spends

State school kids to get
English dictionariesDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 14

Nearly 24,000 government students from Class VI to Class X in the state will get compact Oxford English-English-Telugu dictionaries in the present academic year. This is the first such provision by the government, said the state education officials.

The state government accorded permission to procure the dictionaries for supply to the children studying the government schools like MPP, municipal, residential schools, welfare

schools, ashram, aided, model, KGBVs and registered Madrasas.

A total of 23,59,504 students would get the dictionaries under the Jagananna Vidyalakshana, keeping in view of the present and future English learning requirements of the children studying in the government schools, a G.O. on this regard stated on Monday.

The government launched Jagananna Vidya Kanuka on October 8, last year, to supply Student Kits before the start of every

academic year consisting of three pairs of uniforms cloth, textbooks, set of notebooks, a pair of shoes and two pairs of socks, a belt and school bag to all the students studying from classes I to X in all government schools, on par with their counterparts attending private schools.

It is to enhance the self-confidence of the students coming from BPL households and thereby reduce dropout rate and improve learning outcomes, said an educational officer in Visakhapatnam.

Cocktail jab cures Covid-19

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, JUNE 14

The newly introduced monoclonal antibody cocktail injection has come as a blessing in disguise to Covid-19 patients, going by the marked improvement in their condition without any need for hospitalisation. Doctors administering the drug said antibodies are proteins that the body generates to defend itself against any disease. Monoclonal antibodies are artificially created in a laboratory and devised to fight a particular disease.

The antibody cocktail drug being administered

to the patients now is a combination of two injections known as casirivimab and imdevimab, which are distributed by popular drug firm Cipla.

The antibody cocktail can be administered for adult patients with mild to moderate symptoms if they are at high risk of developing severe Covid-19 infection, said Dr MCS Reddy, consultant physician at Apollo Hospitals in Nellore, a designated Covid Hospital.

Dr Reddy said doctors gave the cocktail injection to 10 patients at their hospital in Nellore and all are doing fine

sans complications. One of the beneficiaries is the mother of a senior official.

The injection was administered to the 70-year-old woman with comorbidities on June 3, shortly after she was detected Covid-positive. She was tested negative by June 8.

Notably, all the 10 patients were treated on a daycare basis and no side-effect has been noticed.

Dr Reddy said the therapy would reduce chances of hospitalization by 70 per cent vis-a-vis patients with mild to moderate Covid-19 symptoms.

EX GRATIA TO
MEDICAL STAFF
DYING WHILE
ON COVID DUTYDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 14

State government has issued an order paying ex gratia to regular employees of health, medical and family welfare (HM&FW) department deployed in management of Covid-19, who have succumbed to the disease while being on duty.

As per GO RT No. 299 signed by principal secretary Anil Kumar Singhal, ₹25 lakh will be paid to next of kin of doctors who have lost their lives to Coronavirus. Nurses will get ₹20 lakh, MNOs / FNOs ₹15 lakh and all other staff ₹10 lakh.

Dependents of deceased employees awaiting declaration of their probate are also eligible for the ex gratia.

Collectors of respective districts have been asked to sanction ex gratia immediately to families or dependents of the deceased staff of HM&FW department who had been drafted on Covid duties.

The ex gratia shall be sanctioned subject to eligibility conditions like deceased employee should have died due to Covid-19 after getting exposed to Covid environment while posted for management of Coronavirus inside a Covid hospital or a Covid Care Centre or while visiting houses of Covid positive patients.

The kin of deceased must mandatorily produce a Covid-19 positive certificate and death certificate. Other documents include valid employee identity card issued by the competent authority, Aadhaar card and other relevant documents, which will be verified.

This ex gratia will be in addition to any other benefits from insurance companies, organisations and institutions, apart from other statutory payments announced by central and state governments. For example, the ex gratia announced by state government will be in addition to the benefit under Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package Insurance Scheme.

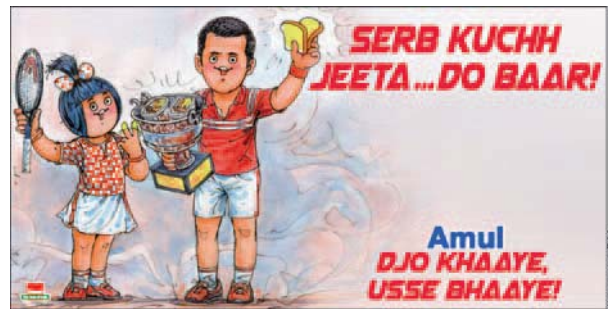
District collectors shall verify all relevant documents before sanctioning the ex gratia to dependents of deceased employees.

MD PROMISES
APSRTC STAFF
BETTER CAREDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 14

APSRTC MD Thirumal Rao has assured its employees that their problems will be resolved expeditiously. The promise was made while he visited the facilities like the bus depot, the zonal workshop, tyre retreading division, the training academy and the zonal training college in Vidyadharapuram here on Monday.

The MD planted saplings on the depot premises and went round various departments. He also visited the RTC hospital at the depot.

Addressing the depot staff, the MD said that after the APSRTC employees are absorbed by the state government, they are expected to discharge their duties with more commitment.

Covid on decline;
4,549 new cases,
59 deaths in stateDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 14

The single day Covid-19 new infections further dropped in Andhra Pradesh on Monday with the registration of 4,549 cases and recoveries improved with the discharging of 10,114 patients from various hospitals.

As many as 87,756 samples were tested in the past 24 hours in which 4,549 found infected and the state has conducted a total 2,05,38,738 Coronavirus tests in the 13 districts of the state.

The total Covid-19 infections in 13 districts were 18,14,393 in which total recoveries were 17,12,381. A total of 59 new deaths were registered, increasing the death toll to 11,999.

Chittoor district is on top with highest daily new infections of 860 followed by East Godavari 619, West Godavari 529, Kadapa 412, Guntur 322, Anantapur 272, Visakhapatnam 263, Vizianagaram 247, Srikakulam 228, Krishna 210, Prakasam 207, Kurnool 198 and least number of 182

new cases registered in Nellore district.

Chittoor district reported 12 new deaths, eight in Prakasam district, six in West Godavari, five in Krishna, four each in Anantapur, East Godavari and Srikakulam districts, three each new deaths in Guntur, Kurnool, Visakhapatnam and Vizianagaram districts and two each in Kadapa and Nellore districts.

East Godavari is on top in total Corona cases with a total of 2,48,466 infections followed by Chittoor 2,08,978, Guntur 1,57,563, West Godavari 1,51,187, Anantapur 1,49,866, Visakhapatnam 1,45,286, Nellore 1,23,512, Kurnool 1,19,703, Prakasam 1,15,285, Srikakulam 1,14,697, Kadapa 1,02,02, Krishna 95,853 and Vizianagaram is on the last place with a total of 78,075 Coronavirus cases.

Meanwhile, addressing a press meet on Monday night, Anil Kumar Singhal, principal secretary, medical & health, said Covid positive cases were on the decline in the state.

Measures to strengthen liquor
retail outlet system in stateDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 14

The state excise department and AP State Beverages Corporation Limited (APSBCL) to strengthen APSBCL Retail Outlet System and issued instructions on Monday. According to the orders, the government vowed to implement prestigious Navaratnalu as contemplated in the manifesto under which Prohibition of Liquor in three phases in the state as promised to the society especially to the women.

The Excise department and APSBCL decided to further strengthen the retail outlet system under which it is decided to install a CC TV camera surveillance through setting up of control room in every district with access to every government outlet. To get two sureties from sales staff working in liquor outlets to infuse responsibility. Setting up of separate professional audit team to conduct monthly audit.

Major discrepancies are occurring due to manual sales (Non-scanning of Excise Adhesive Labels) hence to prevent this, strict instructions should be given to distillery officers about the supervision of label affixing process. Display boards at every shop mentioning local Excise officers' phone numbers as this will strengthen intelligence inputs.

Shuffling and transfers of all doubtful sales personnel should be taken up immediately.

RELEASE 'ASHA ENCOUNTER' ONLY AFTER
15 DAYS, TELANGANA HC TELLS FILMMAKERSDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JUNE 14

Film director Ramgopal Varma (RGV), no stranger to controversies, has changed his strategy in making 'Disha Encounter' that is based on the gruesome rape and murder of a 25-year-old old veterinary doctor on the outskirts of the city in 2019.

The Telangana High Court was told that Varma was not the director of the film but had only provided its storyline. Durga Prasad, counsel for the producers, on Monday explained to the court that Varma has no other role in making the film.

The court was dealing with a petition filed by the parents of Disha (name changed), who urged the court to stop the release of 'Disha Encounter', as a judicial inquiry by the Supreme Court-appointed commission was pending completion.

Counsel for the producers submitted that the film was directed by Anand Chandra and it has obtained the Censor Board certificate on April 16 and would be released soon. He added that the name of the film has been changed to 'Asha Encounter'.

As the censor certificate was issued, the court was not inclined to stop the release. However, Disha's parents were given two weeks time to challenge the censor certificate and stated that the film should not be released within 15 days.

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SHORT TAKES

ASSAM STUDENTS
MOVE SC OVER
BOARD EXAMSMANOJ ANAND | DC
GUWAHATI, JUNE 14

Students of Assam have moved the Supreme Court pleading cancellation of Class 10 and Class 12 board examination on the lines of Central Board of School Examination.

The plea filed by a group of students stated that they are being compelled to appear in the HSLC and HS exams amid a threat to their life. The petition says, "In the interest of the safety of lakhs of students and their parents it is better to cancel the exams."

The move came after Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on June 10 announced that the exams will be conducted only if the Covid-19 positivity rate drops below 2 per cent. "The two education boards — Board of Secondary Education Assam (SEBA) and the Assam Higher Secondary Education Council (AHSEC) — will try to hold the exams in mid-July," Sarma stated.

Class 10, 12 board exams would be held between July 15 and 20 for two to three papers. Male and female students would be writing the exams on separate dates to ensure social distancing, Sarma said.

The students in their plea before the apex court said that the Chief Minister's announcement to hold exams between July 15 and July 20 has created panic among students and parents. "The government's statement that Covid positivity rate below 2 per cent has no relevance," the students said in its plea.

STALIN: LIQUOR
SALES RESUMED
TO PREVENT HOCHG. BABU JAYAKUMAR
& D. SEKAR | DC
CHENNAI, JUNE 14

The Tasmac shops were opened again as part of the relaxations to the lockdown on Monday only with a view to preventing the flow of hooch, Chief Minister M.K. Stalin said and warned that the liquor outlets would be closed again if the Covid-19 protocols were not followed.

Illicit liquor would ruin the state and the government wanted to avoid that, Stalin said in his address to the people, even as the new set of relaxations were brought in, and urged the people to show responsibility in stopping the spread of Coronavirus.

Since schools and colleges would have to be opened soon and public transport had to be resumed, he sought the people's cooperation and help, which alone can bring down the numbers further.

The government's efforts had so far yielded results in bringing the pandemic under control, he said, recalling that the daily infections at one point were at 36,000 with the doctors fearing that it could touch 50,000. But today the numbers had not only come down to 15,000 but were also declining by the day due to the various steps taken by the government, he pointed out.

STATES TO GET
MORE VACCINE
DOSES SOONDC CORRESPONDENT
with agencies input
NEW DELHI, JUNE 14

The daily cases of Covid-19 in India saw a big dip on Monday with 70,421 new detections. This was the lowest after 74 days. Though such low numbers are often due to fewer testing on Sundays, the Union health ministry said a total of 14.92 lakh tests were conducted in the last 24 hours in the country.

Officials said India's active caseload has come below 10 lakh mark after 66 days and daily recoveries continue to outnumber the daily new cases for more than a month now. India's Recovery Rate is 95.43 per cent at present while daily Positivity Rate stands at 4.72 per cent. However, the death toll still remains a cause of concerns as nearly 4,000 deaths were reported in one day.

Meanwhile, the Centre has said it is making available more vaccines to the states and UTs.

The Union health ministry said more than 96,490 vaccine doses are in the pipeline and will be delivered to the states/UTs within the next three days.

Union Health Ministry officials said more than 1.40 crore vaccine doses are still available with the states/UTs to be administered.



Crowd at Sadar Bazar market in New Delhi after authorities eased lockdown restrictions on Monday.

— PTI

L'dweep observes
black day as Khoda
returns to islandGILVESTER ASSARY | DC
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
JUNE 14

Lakshadweep administrator Praful Khoda Patel skipped Kochi airport to reach Lakshadweep on Monday to avoid protests from people in Kerala.

Congress MPs, MLA and other elected representatives had gathered at the Kochi airport to submit memorandum to Khoda against the controversial decisions taken by him in island. However, Patel went to Kavaratti straight from from Goa.

Meanwhile, people in Lakshadweep observed black day against Patel's arrival. People hoisted black flags atop their houses and raised slogans against the administrator. The Lakshadweep police asked people to remove the black flags. The cops also photographed and took pictures of houses that displayed black flags.

"He may have evaded us but Khoda will face strong protests from people of Lakshadweep," said Congress MP T.N. Prathapan in Kochi. Khoda who is a former minister of state for home Gujarat and a close confidante of Prime Minister Narendra Modi returned to the island almost a month after the protests began over his controversial decisions.

Reacting to the ongoing protests he told media

that the campaign against him was being organised by people based in Kerala.

Most political parties in the island including CPM, Congress, prominent people have termed many of the decisions as part of the BJP led Central government's agenda to safonise the island. A section of BJP leaders of Lakshadweep have also opposed these decisions.

The administrator, however, claimed that he aimed at the fast paced development of the island. There is plan to increase the length of airstrip, open coconut processing units, increase tuna fish catch to 25,000 metric tonne. He said the people are being misled by vested interests.

Meanwhile, filmmaker Aisha Sultana against whom a sedition case has been registered following her "bio weapon" remark against the central government, moved Kerala High Court challenging the stringent sections invoked against her.

During a recent television prime time debate she had alleged that the government had unleashed bio weapon against people of island by lifting the Covid restrictions.

She said that her remark was taken out of context. The filmmaker stated that she had even expressed regret on social media.

Kerala says will ease restrictions

DC CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
JUNE 14

Kerala which has been under lockdown since May 8, will witness major relaxation in the curbs from this week.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said the government would formally announce the relaxation in lockdown in specific sectors on Tuesday. The decision to relax restrictions has been taken in view of the decline in number of Covid cases from 30,000 last month to less than 10,000. On Monday the state reported 7,719 new cases of Covid 19. Even the TRP rate which was hovering around 28 in May has now dropped to less than 12 and is expected to go down further.

The number of active cases too has come down from over 3 lakh to 1.15 lakh. With lockdown creating serious livelihood problems for the daily wagers and economically weaker sections besides adversely affecting small and medium businesses, pressure has been mounting on government to lift the restrictions. The Opposition Congress-led UDP also demanded lifting of curbs on Monday.

Transport buses, autorickshaws, taxi and other public carriers have been allowed to operate partially. Automobile workshops, salons, shops and business establishments selling raw materials and essential materials for construction sector including plumbing, paint and electrical shops have been allowed to function.



Teacher takes online class of 1st standard students after schools reopened on Monday, in Mumbai.

— Rajesh Jadhav

The government offices will function with 50 per cent strength.

Joggers, morning walkers have already been allowed between 5 am and 7 am, evening walkers between 7 pm and 9 pm, banks and financial institutions till 5 pm, only parcel services at hotels and restaurants between 7 am to 7.30 pm, stationary shops, outlets selling school text books.

Only those making purchases for wedding would be allowed to shop at jewellery outlets, textile and footwear shops.

Only 20 persons would be allowed in weddings and cremations.

The government will also allow electrical goods repair shops, optical shops.

Service centres of gas stove, mobile phones, computers and other electronic gadgets will be allowed to function. The government will come out with a detailed order on Monday on the restrictions that are to be lifted.

India, China, Pak
N-arsenal grows

India adds 6, Pak 5 and China 30 warheads

PAWAN BALI | DC
NEW DELHI, JUNE 14

India, China and Pakistan continued to grow their nuclear arsenal in the region in 2020, a report by Stockholm-based think tank SIPRI has claimed.

Among the three countries, China saw the highest addition of 30 nuclear warheads in 2020, taking its total nuclear stockpile to 350. India added six and Pakistan five nuclear warheads. However, China and Pakistan continue to have more nuclear weapons than India.

Pakistan has 165 nuclear warheads against 156 with India, according to the SIPRI report.

"China is in the middle of a significant modernisation and expansion of its nuclear arsenal, and India and Pakistan also appear to be increasing the size of their nuclear weapon inventories," said the report.

Overall, Russia leads the pack with 6,225 nuclear warheads followed by the US with 5,550.

There was a decrease in the number of nuclear weapons in the world from 13,400 in 2019 to 13,080 in 2020 as the USA and Russia continued to reduce their overall nuclear weapon inventories by dismantling retired warheads.

However, despite this overall decrease, the estimated number of nuclear weapons currently deployed with operational forces increased to 3,825 from 3,720 last year. Around 2,000 of these —

● **OVERALL, RUSSIA LEADS the pack with 6,225 nuclear warheads followed by the US with 5,550.**

nearly all of which belonged to Russia or the USA — were kept in a state of high operational alert, said SIPRI.

The report said that while initially India's nuclear systems were focused on Pakistan, the country now appears to place increased emphasis on China, with the development of longer-range missiles capable of targeting all of China.

It said that India has assigned its nuclear weapons to a maturing nuclear triad of aircraft, land-based missiles and ballistic missile submarines.

The report said that the remarks in recent years by Indian defence ministers have created doubts about India's commitment to the no-first-use policy.

"Recent scholarship and government statements have called that policy into further question, with some analysts suggesting that 'India's NFU' [no-first-use] policy is neither a stable nor a reliable predictor of how the Indian military and political leadership might actually use nuclear weapons," said SIPRI. It said that there are suggestions that some portions of India's arsenal, particularly those weapons and capabilities designed for retaliation against Pakistan, "are now kept at a much

higher state of readiness, capable of being operationalised and released within seconds or minutes — not hours, as has been previously assumed".

The report said that aircraft are the most mature component of India's nuclear strike capabilities. "It is estimated here that approximately 48 nuclear bombs are assigned to aircraft. The Indian Air Force (IAF) has reportedly certified its Mirage 2000H fighter-bombers for delivery of nuclear gravity bombs. It is widely speculated that the IAF's Jaguar IS fighter-bombers may also have a nuclear delivery role," said the report.

It said that the Indian Army's Strategic Forces Command operates four types of mobile nuclear-capable ballistic missile: the short-range Prithvi-II (250 kilometres) and Agni-I (700 km); the medium-range Agni-II (>2,000 km); and the intermediate-range Agni-III (>3,200 km). Two new and longer-range land-based ballistic missiles are in development: the Agni-IV (>3,500 km) and the Agni-V (>5,000 km). A variant with an even longer range, the Agni-VI (6,000 km), is in the design stage of development.

Unlike the other Agni missiles, the Agni-V is designed to be stored in and launched from a new mobile canister system, which will reduce the time required to place the missiles on alert in a crisis.

NOW, A MASK
THAT INACTIVATES
VIRUS PARTICLES

New Delhi, June 14: A Pune-based start-up has integrated 3D printing and pharmaceuticals to develop a mask which inactivates viral particles that come in contact with it, the Department Science and Technology said on Monday.

Developed by Thincr Technologies India Private Limited, these masks are coated with anti-viral agents known otherwise as virucides. The coating has been tested and shown to inactivate the SARS-CoV-2, the DST said, adding the material used in it is a Sodium Olefin Sulfonate-based mixture, a soap-forming agent.

In contact with enveloped viruses, it disrupts the outer membrane of the virus. The ingredients used are stable at room temperature and are widely used in cosmetics. The DST said that as part of the fight against Covid-19, the virucidal mask initiative was among the earliest projects to have been selected for commercialisation by the Technology Development Board (TDB), a statutory body under the Department of Science and Technology.

Thincr Technologies India works in development of Fused Deposition Modeling (FDM) 3D-printers to discover new pharmaceutical formulations and drug-loaded filaments of different types.

"We sensed that use of face masks will become nearly universal as the most important tool to prevent infection. But we realised that most masks which were then available and within the reach of common people were homemade and of relatively low quality. It is this need for high-quality masks which led us to undertake a project to develop and commercialise cost-effective and more efficient virucidal coated masks, as a better approach to reduce the spread of infection," said Shitalkumar Zambad, the Founder-Director of Thincr Technologies India.

Thincr Technologies India Pvt Ltd has applied for a patent for this product. Commercial scale manufacturing has also started, he added.

— PTI

AGE-OLD | PROBLEM

Most elderly have to depend on family care, which makes them vulnerable

73% elderly face increased abuse during lockdown

New Delhi, June 14: About 73 per cent of the elderly population experienced increased abuse during the lockdown imposed amid the second wave of Covid-19, according to a new report.

The report by the Agewell Foundation, based on responses from 5,000 elderly, released ahead of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day said 82 per cent of the respondents claimed that their life has been affected adversely due to the cur-

● **IT WAS found that 65 per cent elderly respondents were facing neglect in their life while approximately 58 per cent of the respondents said they are suffering abuse in their families and society.**

rent Covid-19 situation.

The report found that 73 per cent of the respondents reportedly said cases of abuse against them increased during and after the lockdown period, and among them 61

per cent claimed that interpersonal relationships was the main factor responsible for fast increasing incidences of elder abuse in families.

During the survey, it was found that 65 per cent elderly respondents were facing neglect in their life while approximately 58 per cent of the respondents said they are suffering abuse in their families and society.

The report also found that approximately every third elderly (35.1 per cent)

claimed that older people face domestic violence (physical or verbal) in old age.

Himanshu Rath, Chairman, Agewell Foundation said though the Covid-19 situation and related lockdown rules and restrictions have affected almost every human being, older persons are the most vulnerable so far as the coronavirus threat and its impact is concerned.

"There is an urgent need to sensitise the entire com-

munity about the growing incidences of elder abuse. Older persons also need to be educated about support systems, legal provisions and non-formal support network, accessible and available to them," he said.

The report said most elderly have to depend on family care, which makes them vulnerable and incidences of elder abuse, mistreatment, and harassment of elderly occur primarily within their respective families are on

rise due to vulnerability of older people.

Elderly women are worst affected due to their poor financial status, increased level of dependency, and even due to longer lifespan comparatively to elderly men.

Elderly hardly report incidences of abuse to concerned stakeholders due to various factors like lack of awareness about their rights, poor physical health and lack of social support system, the report said.

— PTI

SHORT TAKES

MAN, 25, DIES
AFTER DOWNTOWN
AUSTIN SHOOTING

Austin (US), June 14: A man has died from his injuries following a mass shooting on a crowded downtown Austin street that left more than a dozen people injured, police said Sunday.

Douglas John Kantor, 25, who was hospitalised with critical gunshot wounds following the early Saturday morning shooting, died Sunday at 12:01 pm, the Austin Police Department said in a news release that also was confirmed by Lt Brian Moon. Interim Police Chief Joseph Chacon said the shooting happened around 1:30 am Saturday on a street packed with bars and barricaded off from vehicle traffic. He said investigators believe the shooting began as a dispute between two parties.

PAK COPS DENIED
FREE BURGERS.
DETAIN 19 STAFF

Lahore, June 14: A group of police officers in Pakistan flipped out when a takeaway joint refused to hand over free burgers, detaining all 19 staff at the branch.

Workers at the trendy chain Johnny & Jugnu in the eastern city of Lahore were rounded up and held for seven hours overnight on Saturday, leaving behind unattended kitchens and hungry customers.

"This is not the first time something like this has happened with our kitchen teams at our restaurant, but we want to make sure this is the last," the fast food chain said in a statement published on social media. It started when staff at the restaurant refused a "request from a very high profile special guest".

Restaurant staff said that most of those arrested were young people.

B'DESH ACTRESS
CRIES RAPE, ASKS
PM FOR JUSTICE

Dhaka, June 14: Prominent Bangladeshi film actress Shamsunnahar Smriti, popularly known as Pori Moni, has sought justice from Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in a Facebook post alleging that a businessman attempted to rape and murder her at a club here.

After making the allegations in a Facebook post without naming the suspect on Sunday, she held a media briefing later in the night and accused businessmen Nasir U. Mahmood, entertainment and cultural affairs secretary of Dhaka Boat Club, of assaulting her, *bdnews24* reported.

The 28-year-old actress alleged that Nasir assaulted her at the club in Dhaka's Uttara four days ago. The businessman could not be reached immediately for comments, the news website said. A founding member of the Dhaka Boat Club, Nasir is involved with real estate business.

TWO AMERICANS
STAND TRIAL IN
GHOSN'S ESCAPE

Tokyo, June 14: Two Americans suspected of helping former Nissan chairman Carlos Ghosn flee Japan while he was out on bail go on trial Monday in Tokyo.

Michael Taylor, a former Green Beret, and his son Peter Taylor are suspected in the Houdini-like operation where Ghosn hid in a box for music equipment that was loaded onto a private jet that flew him to Lebanon, via Turkey in December 2019. Unlike the US, Lebanon has no extradition treaty with Japan.

Ghosn has French, Lebanese and Brazilian citizenship. The Taylors were arrested in Massachusetts in May last year and extradited in March on charges of helping a criminal. The authorities say Ghosn hired the Taylors for at least \$1.3 million. Ghosn led Japanese automaker Nissan Motor Co. for two decades before his arrest in November 2018. He was charged with falsifying securities reports in under-reporting his compensation and of breach of trust in using Nissan money for personal gain.

Ghosn says he is innocent. At Monday's court session, the Tokyo District Prosecutors will outline the allegations against the Taylors before Presiding Judge Hideo Nirei and two other judges. The Taylors will also likely make statements. They have been held in a Tokyo detention centre since arriving in Japan and were not available for comment.

Peter Taylor said in a statement to a Massachusetts court in January that he met Ghosn in 2019 in Japan to pitch his digital marketing company to repair Ghosn's tarnished reputation.

Will better India ties, says Bennett

Israeli foreign minister Yair Lapid says he hopes to welcome PM Modi to Israel soon



Naftali Bennett

upgradation of diplomatic ties next year.

"Thank you Mr. Prime Minister @narendramodi, I look forward to working with you to further develop the unique and warm relations between our two democracies," Bennett tweeted from his official handle. Bennett took oath of office on Sunday after the Knesset (Parliament) elected him as the 13th Prime Minister of Israel.

Alternate Prime Minister and foreign minister Yair Lapid also said that Israel's new government will work to "advance strategic relations" with India. "I look forward to working together to advance the strategic relations between our countries and hope to welcome you to Israel soon," Lapid tweeted on Monday in response to a congratulatory message from External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar.

Jaishankar earlier in a tweet congratulated his new Israeli counterpart. "Congratulate APM & FM @yairlapid of Israel on his appointment. Look forward to working closely together to further advance our multifaceted strategic partnership," Jaishankar wrote. Lapid, the head of the Yesh Atid party, would take over premiership in September 2023 under a

power-sharing deal with Bennett, serving for two years till the end of the term. In his tweets, Modi also conveyed his "profound gratitude" to Netanyahu, whose long tenure as Israeli prime minister ended on Sunday.

Modi thanked Netanyahu for his "personal attention" to India-Israel strategic partnership. "As you complete your successful tenure as the Prime Minister of the State of Israel, I convey my profound gratitude for your leadership and personal attention to India-Israel strategic partnership @netanyahu," Modi tweeted.

The personal chemistry between the two leaders has often been talked about in the Israeli media and Prime Minister Modi got a royal welcome during his historic trip to the Jewish state in July 2017. — PTI

Bibi ouster ends worst conflict, says Palestine

Ramallah, June 14: Benjamin Netanyahu's ousting as prime minister of Israel closes the chapter on one of the "worst periods" of Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Palestinian prime minister Mohammed Shtayyeh said on Monday.

"The departure of the Israeli ex-prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu after 12 years in power marks the end of one of the worst periods in the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict," Shtayyeh said ahead of the Palestinian Authority's weekly cabinet meeting.

But Shtayyeh also said he was under no illusions about the new government

or its likelihood of advancing a peace agreement with the Palestinians.

"We do not see this new government as any less bad than the previous one, and we condemn the announcements of the new Prime Minister Naftali Bennett in support of Israeli settlements," the Palestinian premier said, referring to Israeli construction activity in the occupied West Bank.

"The new government has no future if it does not take into consideration the future of the Palestinian people and their legitimate rights," Shtayyeh added.

— AFP

Suu Kyi on trial
but critics say
charges bogus

Bangkok, June 14: Myanmar's ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi was set to go on trial Monday on charges that many observers have criticised as attempt by the military junta that deposed her to delegitimise her democratic election and cripple her political future.

Suu Kyi's prosecution poses the greatest challenge for the 75-year-old and her National League for Democracy party since February's military coup, which prevented them from taking office for a second five-year term following last year's landslide election victory. Human Rights Watch charged that the allegations being heard in a special court in the capital, Naypyitaw, are "bogus and politically motivated" with the intention of nullifying the victory and preventing Suu Kyi from running for office again.

"This trial is clearly the opening salvo in an overall strategy to neuter Suu Kyi and the National

League for Democracy party as a force that can challenge military rule in the future," said Phil Robertson, the organisation's deputy Asia director.

The army seized power on Feb. 1 before the new lawmakers could be seated, and arrested Suu Kyi, who held the post of special counsellor, and President Win Myint, along with other members of her government and ruling party. The coup reversed years of slow progress toward more democracy for Myanmar.

The army cited the government's failure to properly investigate alleged voting irregularities as its reason for seizing power — an assertion contested by the independent Asian Network for Free Elections and many others. Junta officials have threatened to dissolve the National League for Democracy for alleged involvement in election fraud and any conviction for Suu Kyi could bar her from politics. — AP

US checking leak
at China N-plant

Beijing, June 14: The US government is assessing a report of a leak at a Chinese nuclear power plant, after a French company that partly owns and helps to operate it warned of an "imminent radiological threat", a media report said on Monday.

The warning included an accusation that the Chinese safety authority was raising the acceptable limits for radiation detection outside the Taishan Nuclear Power Plant in Guangdong province in order to avoid having to shut it down, the *CNN* quoted a letter from the French company to the US Department of Energy. There is no reaction yet in Beijing by the Chinese government or officials on this report, it said. The media report said despite the alarming notification from Framatome, the French company, the Biden administration believes the facility is not yet at a "crisis level".

While US officials have deemed the situation does not currently pose a severe safety threat to workers at the plant or Chinese public, it is unusual that a foreign company would unilaterally reach out to the American government for help when its Chinese state-owned partner is yet to acknowledge a problem exists.

The scenario could put the US in a complicated situation should the leak continue or become more severe without being fixed, the report said.

However, concern was significant enough that the US National Security Council held multiple meetings to discuss the situation, it said. The Biden administration has discussed the situation with the French government and their own experts at the Department of Energy, the report said, adding that the US has also been in contact with the Chinese government. — PTI



Luxury yachts are moored at the Dubai Marina Beach in the Gulf emirate. Charter companies said they have seen an increased interest in yachting after Coronavirus measures eased, especially among those who want to spend time with friends and family. — AFP

UK curbs may lift by July 19
over Delta variant case spike

London, June 14: UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson is expected to announce a four-week delay to an end to all legal lockdown restrictions in the country when he makes a statement later on Monday in relation to so-called "Freedom Day", which was set for June 21.

The last and fourth stage of the lockdown roadmap is now expected around July 19 instead amid a worrying spike in cases of the Delta variant, which experts fear will result in greater hospitalisations in the coming weeks. On Sunday, the UK recorded 7,490 new cases of Covid-19 and eight deaths, with the seven-day average for cases up 49 per cent compared with the seven days before. Scientists and health officials have called for a delay in lifting all social distance norms in order to allow the vaccination programme to gain further ground, with second doses for the older age groups and first doses for the younger population cohorts of over-25s now eligible for jabs.

"It is one last heave. It is a straight race between the vaccine and the virus," a senior government source was quoted as saying after Johnson met his Cabinet ministers and scientific advisers to assess the latest data. Johnson is

Novavax shot
90% effective

Washington, June 14: Vaccine maker Novavax said Monday its shot was highly effective against Covid-19 and also protected against variants in a large, late-stage study in the US and Mexico.

The vaccine was about 90 per cent effective overall and preliminary data showed it was safe, the company said. While demand for Covid-19 shots in the US has dropped off dramatically, the need for more vaccines around the world remains critical.

The Novavax vaccine, which is easy to store and transport, is expected to play an important role in boosting vaccine supplies in the developing world. That help is still months

away, however.

The company says it plans to seek authorisation for the shots in the US, Europe and elsewhere by the end of September and be able to produce up to 100 million doses a month by then. "Many of our first doses will go to ... low- and middle-income countries, and that was the goal to begin with," Novavax Chief Executive Stanley Erck told *The Associated Press*. While more than half of the US population has had at least one Covid-19 vaccine dose, less than one per cent of people in the developing world have had one shot, according to Our World In Data.

— AP

expected to blame the delay on the third wave of Covid-19 infections and say it will allow millions of more people to be vaccinated and more to receive a second jab by the end of July. As well as a delay in lifting restrictions to allow scientists more time to monitor the Delta variant,

the UK Prime Minister is also likely to announce a drive to accelerate the vaccination programme. The extension will be put to a House of Commons vote this month and could trigger a backbench rebellion from Johnson's own Conservative Party MPs.

— PTI

NEPAL PLANT TO
CUT DOWN INDIA
OXYGEN IMPORT

Kathmandu, June 14: Nepal's Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli on Monday virtually laid the foundation stone of Nepal's first-ever liquefied oxygen plant in the Lumbini Province which will help cater to growing domestic demand and reduce oxygen imported from India, amidst the second wave of Covid-19 pandemic.

The plant is being set up at Simarhawa of Rupandehi district in the province. The country has been facing a shortage of oxygen and oxygen cylinders as the second wave of Covid-19 hit Nepal, Prime Minister Oli noted while laying the foundation stone from his official residence Baluwatar. It was an unprecedented event of happiness at a time when the country had been reeling under an acute crisis of oxygen, he noted.

The government was compelled to import oxygen and other essential medical equipment, he said. "Later, the government thought that it would be appropriate to set up an oxygen plant on its own," he added.

— PTI

PAK SC STOPS
DEMOLITION OF
DHARAMSHALA

Islamabad, June 14: Pakistan's Supreme Court has ordered the Karachi administration to stop the demolition of a Hindu dharamshala and leasing out the heritage property located in the heart of the city.

A three-judge bench led by Chief Justice of Pakistan Gulzar Ahmed issued the order on Friday while hearing a case regarding the implementation of a 2014 judgment on minorities' rights. During the hearing, Dr Ramesh Kumar a co-opted member of a one-man commission on minorities stated that the property at Saddar Town-I in Karachi measuring about 716 square yards was a dharamshala, *The Express Tribune* reported on Sunday.

Kumar also placed before the court photographs of the building. He said the Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB) leased out the property to some private person, who was demolishing the dharamshala to construct a commercial plaza. Kumar said the ETPB chairman contended that the Sindh High Court (SHC) has allowed the ETPB to lease the place out, have it demolished and raise a new building there.

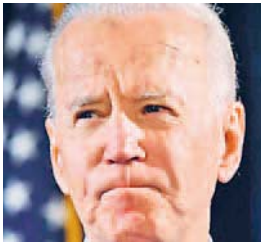
— PTI

BIDEN-PUTIN
MEET UNNERVE
SOME US ALLIES

Kyiv, June 14: Central and Eastern European nations are anxious about the coming summit meeting between US President Joe Biden and Russian President Vladimir Putin, wary of what they see as hostile intentions from the Kremlin.

Some in the countries that once were part of the Soviet Union or the Moscow-led Warsaw Pact during the Cold War worry that Washington could scale down support for its allies in the region in a bid to secure a more stable and predictable relationship with Russia.

"I think there have been doubts as to the resoluteness of the present administration to face Russian aggressive actions in a decisive manner," said Witold Rodkiewicz, chief specialist on Russian politics at Warsaw's Center of Eastern Studies, a state-funded think tank that advises the Polish government. Both Russia and the US have sought to moderate expectations about Wednesday's summit in Geneva, ruling out any breakthroughs amid the worst tensions between the two powers. — AP



Joe Biden

AT NATO, BIDEN
READY TO TALK
CHINA, RUSSIA

Brussels, June 14: President Joe Biden makes his entrance at a Nato summit aiming to consult European allies on efforts to counter provocative actions by China and Russia while highlighting the US commitment to the 30-country alliance that was frequently maligned by predecessor Donald Trump.

The summit Monday comes as Biden tries to rally allies for greater coordination in checking China and Russia, two adversaries whose actions on economic and national security fronts have become the chief foreign policy concerns in the early going of the Biden presidency.

Biden will use his time at the summit to underscore the US commitment to Article 5 of the alliance charter, which spells out that an attack on one member is an attack on all.

— AP

US MILITARY | DOCUMENTS

Ultra-nationalists were looking to glorify ex-PM, 6 more as martyrs

Mystery of war criminal Tojo's remains solved

Tokyo, June 14: Until recently, the location of executed wartime Japanese Prime Minister Hideki Tojo's remains was one of World War II's biggest mysteries in the nation he once led. Now, a Japanese university professor has revealed declassified US military documents that appear to hold the answer.

The documents show the cremated ashes of Tojo, one of the masterminds of the Pearl Harbor attack, were scattered from a US Army aircraft over the

Pacific Ocean about 30 miles (50 kilometres) east of Yokohama, Japan's second-largest city, south of Tokyo. It was a tension-filled, highly secretive mission, with American officials apparently taking extreme steps meant to keep Tojo's remains, and those of six others executed with him, away from ultra-nationalists looking to glorify them as martyrs.

The seven were hanged for war crimes just before Christmas in 1948, three years after Japan's defeat.

The discovery brings partial closure to a painful chapter of Japanese history that still plays out today, as conservative Japanese politicians attempt to whitewash history, leading to friction with wartime victims, especially China and South Korea.

After years spent verifying and checking details and evaluating the significance of what he'd found, Nihon University Professor Hiroaki Takazawa publicly released the clues to

the remains' location last week. He came across the declassified documents in 2018 at the US National Archives in Washington.

It's believed to be the first time official documents showing the handling of the seven war criminals' remains were made public, according to Japan's National Institute for Defence Studies and the Japan Center for Asian Historical Records.

Hideotoshi Tojo, the leader's great-grandson, told *The Associated Press* that

the absence of the remains has long been a humiliation for the bereaved families, but he's relieved the information has come to light. "If his remains were at least scattered in Japanese territorial waters ... I think he was still somewhat fortunate," Tojo said.

"I want to invite my friends and lay flowers to pay tribute to him" if further details about the remains' location becomes available. Hideki Tojo, prime minister during much of World War II, is a complicated

figure, revered by some conservatives as a patriot but loathed by many in the West for prolonging the war, which ended only after the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the United States.

About a month after Aug. 15, 1945, when then-Empress Hirohito announced Japan's defeat to a stunned nation, Tojo shot himself in a failed suicide attempt as he was about to be arrested at his modest Tokyo home.

— AP

DECCAN Chronicle

15 JUNE 2021

A year after Galwan, a lot of questions still remain

Exactly a year ago, on June 15-16, 2020, in eastern Ladakh's Galwan Valley area, soldiers of China's People's Liberation Army attacked a body of Indian soldiers of 16 Bihar Regiment and other units which had gone there to ensure the Chinese had adhered to the agreement reached on June 6 at a meeting of corps commanders from the two sides to facilitate the disengagement of forces at friction points.

The Chinese had to dismantle their camp in parts of the Galwan riverbed near the point where this river meets the Shyok. In an ambush late at night, the Chinese soldiers used iron rods and heavy clubs with steel spikes embedded in them. Twenty Indians, including their commanding officer, a Colonel, were killed. They fought back with bare hands but pushed the Chinese back that night, although the PLA would return later with China claiming it always had "sovereignty" over the Galwan area, which is an outlandish distortion of the facts.

June 15 is an anniversary of bravery and betrayal. To this may be added national humiliation, for Prime Minister Narendra Modi told Opposition parties on June 19 last year that the Chinese "had not intruded, were not intruding, and were not in occupation" of Indian territory." This is at variance with the ground situation.

The Indian troops were carrying firearms as per protocol, but did not use them at Gal-wan, again as per border stabilisation protocols in force since 1987 and aimed to be confidence-building measures on the Line of Actual Control, the perceived boundary line. Such protocols were created to ensure "pe-ace and tranquility" on the border so that bi-lateral relations could continue unmolested in other areas. It is this process which has received a jolt from which it is yet to recover.

Acknowledging this at a public platform last month, external affairs minister S. Jaishankar noted that India-China relations were at a "cross-roads". He also observed that the ongoing relationship had been violated. The Chinese military is yet to vacate the areas where it intruded April 2020 onward. These add up to thousands of square kilometres in strategic regions, including areas where Chinese and Pakistani troops can potentially come together against India.

Numerous rounds of technical meetings between military officials, in some of which diplomats were included, have only produced homilies from China's side. Repeated Indian requests to the Chinese government to disengage, de-escalate and normalise ties have fallen on deaf ears. Beijing seeks a return to normal without first vacating the encroached Indian territories. How matters go from here is not clear.

Strangely enough, the country's military brass has not been above parrotting the damaging narrative that no encroachments have occurred, and that India will "not give away an inch". Evidently, they feel protected by the PM's on-record June 19, 2020, observation, of which Beijing has taken full advantage. Baffled Indians naturally ask what the boundary negotiations are then all about. They also wonder about the relevance of the external affairs minister's observations. Is the government speaking to its own people in different voices?

In all areas where China has violated the LAC, its troops are in Ladakh well to the west of the 1960 Chinese claim line, whose map coordinates were given to India by the Chinese four decades ago. But the government seems afraid to point this out to Beijing. India did not accept the claim line and adhered to its historical claim to Aksai Chin.

Undisputed champ of Grand Slams

No one in 52 years has won the four tennis Grand Slams multiple times since Rod Laver did it just after tennis was thrown open, and Roy Emerson. He was down two sets and seemingly out of the contest when Novak Djokovic returned from a toilet break re-energised like a cellphone coming to life after a recharge and wore down his young opponent, Stefanos Tsitsipas, the most talented of the emerging brigade, to win his 19th Grand Slam.

The Serb was in another fluctuating four-hour battle within 48 hours of having jousted with Rafael Nadal in the greatest duel of the era that contained more shades of art than the raw power of modern tennis. He emerged winner against a player with an unsurpassable record on the red shale of Roland Garros. So fiercely locked in their gladiatorial contest were they that the tennis authorities, prompted by President Emmanuel Macron, overruled curfew rules to allow the crowd to stay to the end on the night of the semi-final.

Djokovic may not win popularity contests against contemporary greats Roger Federer and Nadal, both of whom have just one more Grand Slam title than his 19. But, when it comes to tennis on the varied surfaces of the four Grand Slams, he has a record — nine Australian, two French, five Wimbledon and three US Opens — that is superior to that of the legends, of whom Federer has only one French Open win and Nadal a solitary Australian Open title among 20 Grand Slams.

Djokovic's athleticism is backed up by an array of strokes, including laser-like crosscourt backhands. Such weapons from his armoury come with uncanny anticipation and decisiveness in volleys and drop shots at extreme angles played with amazingly deft touch. Power and subtlety flow from his racket in equal measure and to metronomic accuracy in trading shots from the baseline. Tennis has been known to lament the seeming inability of the younger generation to take over from the three musketeers who are in their 30s but Tsitsipas appears ready to challenge the kings.

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Subhani



Ladakh standoff: Can Galwan occur again?



Syed Ata Hasnain

What happened in the Galwan Valley on June 15 last year cannot be easily forgotten. Twenty Indian soldiers led by the valiant Col. Santosh Babu, MVC (Posthumous), commanding officer of 16 Bihar, were killed in action. A deceptive enemy who hid behind the veil of 45 years of trust turned upon these unsuspecting soldiers who were on a mission to verify what had been agreed by their senior commanders just 10 days ago.

Perhaps nowhere in the world has occurred an incident in such bad taste and against all ethics of soldiering. You can take counteraction against adversary soldiers who threaten you or deceive you but targeting those on a verification mission after an agreement was something new in the world of military ethics. The PLA had transgressed to ostensibly dominate the Shyok-DBO Road. Not known to be followers of any rule-based order, the PLA took its time in disengaging from the transgression. When pressured to do so, it chose to get aggressive and turned upon those who were verifying the vacation, with weapons which were straight from the Stone Age, to pulverise, shred and tear human flesh. The PLA came prepared with these weapons and perceived that their employment could be projected as non-lethal in today's age.

What was clear from the incident was the fact that the Indian Army worked on a principle of trust. Forty-five years without loss of life at the Sino-Indian border, 22 meetings to resolve the border through a civilised format, dignified campaign at the highest political level to progress economic and people-to-people relations and regular delegation visits to each other's

military establishments, should count for a justified level of trust. Professional armies do not work on assumptions, but yet an element of human compulsion exists, forcing all implausible contingencies out of the consideration and settling for those within the realm of perceptual reason. Even more important, Galwan exemplified camaraderie and team spirit of an extreme kind when soldiers of different units, arms and services all joined the fight for the sake of their comrades, their countrymen and the honour of their nation.

Much water has already flown down the Shyok River through 2020-21, since Galwan, with a lot happening at the Line of Actual Control. From partial mobilisation to staying put in freezing winter conditions with rustic habitats, lifting and transporting stocks of an unimaginable quantum and the virtual conversion of the LAC to a LoC, we have also witnessed the professional Indian riposte via the quid pro quo operation at the seven heights of the Kailash Range in south Pangong Tso. Through negotiations stretching into the eleventh round, a partial de-escalation and disengagement has been executed but restricted to north and south Pangong Tso. It can safely be assumed that the occupation of the Kailash Range heights caused much consternation in PLA ranks as its major war centre in Ladakh was under direct threat. We could force the PLA vacation of north Pangong Tso transgression because of this. However, some other key transgressions, including the one at Depsang, continue and await the outcome of further talks which could be indefinitely delayed.

So is a Galwan likely to be repeated, and for that

matter should one expect a deterioration of the situation in Ladakh anytime soon. It is easy to dismiss Galwan as a one-off event brought on by cascading out of control circumstances. Situations in an environment with troops at close quarters to each other (although a separation exists here larger than at the LoC) can always be unpredictable and response to awkward situations may find escalation. The feasibility of China deliberately triggering tension appears less likely as it should be viewing its actions in Ladakh as a misadventure which failed to deliver. China had reasonable clarity in the politico-strategic domain of aiming to make India realise that it was alone in the high Himalayas even as it may be among future partners in strategic arrangements that it is seeking under the American umbrella in the Indo-Pacific region. The misadventure in Ladakh, effectively thwarted by India, had a flawed military strategy. The occupation of some pressure points, transgressions across some of them and the refusal to vacate, awaiting more negotiations, are being perceived by some as a victory for China. Victories are measured against the attainment of the politico-strategic aim and not bits and pieces of occupation of territory which was vacant. What we in India have failed to capitalise upon is the ethical aspects of functioning between nations. China may have aspirations for superpower status, but it lacks the ability to build a larger perception of itself beyond that ambition; powerful nations show better ethics in international functioning. President Xi Jinping's recent

directions to remove "wolf warrior" diplomacy from China's ways of international dealings and build a more positive external perception about China is proof enough of its failure in pursuance of effective international relations. Notwithstanding what success it may perceive for itself through the Belt and Road Initiative outreach and attempts at cultivating influence in India's near abroad, the world's image of China remains one of a predatory nation which refuses to be bound by rules and agreements and therefore untrustworthy. The outlay of China's external aid remains at a quarter of what the US dishes out although the Chinese economy is just over half the US economy and growing at a much faster speed.

Given all these circumstances and the ongoing transition in the global order, what one should reasonably expect is some change in China's approach. How much this will impact Sino-Indian relations and the Ladakh standoff is difficult to say, being already a theatre of recent and ongoing tension. The fact that China couldn't attain its aims in coercing India even under pandemic conditions and its decision to negotiate at the field level are pointers to a possible change in strategy. The PLA will play hard to get, it will display reluctance to negotiate and for the foreseeable future will effect no change in the LAC's status. A campaign-like operation appears remote but even coercion operations which China experienced as having potential to go out of control may not take place. However, cyber threats should be expected to escalate, also campaigns in the information domain. Yet a Galwan could always happen as a spinoff from other circumstances, given the unpredictability of the LAC. It is something we should be prepared for even as the tone and tenor of the relationship at the highest levels improves to far greater levels.

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

The fact that China couldn't attain its aims in coercing India even under pandemic conditions and its decision to negotiate at the field level are pointers to a possible change in strategy.

LETTERS

LAND GRAB

About 430 acres of government land worth ₹4,291 crore was seized by the government in Visakhapatnam district till date as part of the special drive launched last year to take back encroached land (*State acts on TD men's land grab, DC, June 14*). But are the land grabbers being booked for the said crime? Many of the land grabbers are evidently TD leaders/men (read benamis of TD leaders). They earned crores of rupees by leasing such land to industries and corporate houses. Will the authorities close their eyes to such activities by a common man?

Govardhana Myneedu
Vijayawada

NATIONALISE HOSPS

Return of turncoats has been a mockery of democracy in West Bengal (*WB BJP divided over defectors, DC, June 14*). No law has been as abused as the so-called anti-defection law in India. The irony is that the leader of Opposition in the WB Assembly is talking about and raising the provisions of the anti-defection law which is akin to pot calling the kettle black. It is time to take drastic steps to reform the anti-defection law by the apex court in order to save Indian democracy.

Dr C. Ghanshyam
Visakhapatnam

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

Price-rise on soaps to be checked

NEW DELHI, June 14.

Finance Minister Y.B. Chavan today corrected a statement he made during his reply to the debate on the Union Budget about prices of Lux, Rexona and Lifebuoy soaps.

Mr. Chavan said his statement that the prices had not been increased and that the manufacturers had absorbed the incidence of duty of Rs. 2.54 a gross was "based on incorrect information supplied to me". He said, he had not been informed that the prices of all the three varieties of soap have been raised by two paise a standard cake.

"We are taking up this matter with the manufacturers," he added.—UNI.

Aakar Patel



Civil society & NGOs: Why they matter in run-up to 2024

We have entered the third year of the Narendra Modi government and in the months to come the discussion will inevitably turn to the general election of 2024. Some of the recent political activity around Uttar Pradesh is being seen in this light. In India what the government does is left generally to the political parties, especially by the middle class which, once it has voted, does not engage with the State. But there is a part of our country which does engage and does not remain aloof.

The term "civil society" refers, according to the World Health Organisation, to a wide array of organisations: community groups, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), labour unions, indigenous groups, charitable organisations, faith-based organisations, professional associations, and foundations".

In India we usually use the term "civil society" almost exclusively for the NGOs and activists, because professional associations are quite afraid of confronting the government. There are some exceptions, but these are very few. It is the NGOs, activists and

indigenous groups who represent the people and their interests outside the framework of politics. In India, when we say indigenous groups, we mean Adivasis. The model of development that India has adopted is to extract from Adivasi lands the resources that are used for the rest of the country. You and I do not get displaced by the government from our homes. It is the Adivasis who must leave the homes and settlements that their ancestors have lived in for thousands of years because we need to build a dam or because we have found coal underneath.

The Adivasis have protested against India's government and its policies for over a century. The rebellion of Birsu Munda, the man whose statue Amit Shah once wanted to garland (but he wrongly garlanded someone else's) forced the British to introduce the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act, which banned the transfer of adivasi land to non-Adivasis. The BJP wanted to garland Birsu Munda's statue but it also passed a law to undo the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act in 2016. This produced such a backlash from the Adivasis that the BJP retreated from the law and

was defeated in the next state election. This is why Mr Shah was garlanding what he thought was Birsu Munda's statue in 2020.

Adivasi resistance to the Indian State is not understood and it is not very widely covered in the media. This month has seen at least two places where adivasis have been holding protests. In Gujarat 11 Adivasis were arrested for protesting against the proposed parking lot near the Statue of Unity. They said the land acquired by the Sardar Sarovar Narmada Nigam for the development project belonged to them and had been taken illegally.

The strength of the emotion can be understood by knowing that the women among them removed their clothes in public. An FIR was filed against 20 of them under various sections of the Indian Penal Code, including 143 (unlawful assembly) and 294 (singing obscene song, ballad or words near a public place). In Chhattisgarh, which has a Congress government, thousands of Adivasis have been on protest against a Central Reserve Police Force camp erected on their land without their permission. The government opened fire on them,

killing three, but the Adivasis are still there in the open in Bastar, demanding their rights and insisting that the camp be removed.

On the outskirts of Delhi, tens of thousands of farmers are continuing their protest, having gathered in November and spent the entire winter and now the summer in the open along the highways. The laws that they are protesting against were passed without a division vote in the Rajya Sabha. The laws have been suspended indefinitely by the Supreme Court and the Narendra Modi government itself has offered to suspend them for 18 months. There is extreme disaffection against the laws, including by groups supporting the BJP in Uttar Pradesh, and it is unlikely that the laws will ever be implemented. The Modi government itself has lost interest in them and does not speak about their implementation. But it has allowed the protests to continue because it does not want to be seen as retreating, though it appears to have already retreated.

Similarly, though the Citizenship Amendment Act was passed by Parliament more than a year and a half ago, it has not been implemented.

One reason is the widespread protests against it in India, the other is the widespread condemnation against it globally, including in the European Parliament.

Civil society action in Gujarat has resulted in the setting up of fast track courts to hear atrocities against dalits and adivasis. This came after the protest against the assault on dalits in Una over a cow's carcass. The civil society action was led by a former journalist, Jigmesh Mewani, who was then elected to the Gujarat Assembly.

A lot of action has taken place in civil society since 2014. A weakening of the government, meaning a Central government with no party having an absolute majority, or a change in government, will give civil society groups additional leverage. Laws that are unacceptable to civil society groups will not be easy to pass and implement. And laws that are in outright violation of international human rights standards will come under pressure to be repealed. It is a most interesting time that is leading up to 2024.

The writer is a columnist and a senior journalist

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	52,551.53	0.15
Nifty 50	15,811.90	0.08
S&P 500*	4,237.13	-0.24
Dollar (₹)	73.27	0.27
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.25	0.12
Euro (₹)	88.76	0.06
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	47,705	▼464 0.97
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	73.18	0.67
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.004	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.484	0.022

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Government clips powers of cashew council

The government suspended the power of the Cashew Export Promotion Council to issue or renew RCMCs (registration-cum-membership certificate) for cashew kernels, cashewnut shell liquid and kardanol and authorised the Apeda for the same. However, RCMCs already issued by the council would remain valid for the rest of their validity period, the DGFT said in a public notice.

IOB Q4 profit rises more than 2-fold to ₹350 cr



Indian Overseas Bank reported a more than two-fold jump in net profit at Rs 349.77 crore in Q4 against Rs 143.79 crore in the year-ago quarter. Total income in Q4FY21 rose to Rs 6,073.80 crore against Rs 5,484.06 crore in Q4FY20. Provisions for bad loans and contingencies rose to Rs 1,380.46 crore from Rs 1,060.38 crore. For the full year, IOB reported a net profit of Rs 831.47 crore against a net loss of Rs 8,527.40 crore in 2019-20.

Palm oil imports jump 48% at 7.69 LT in May

India's import of palm oils rose by 48 per cent to 7,69,602 tonne in May this year against 4,00,506 tonne a year ago on higher shipments of crude palm oil, industry body Solvent Extractors Association (SEA) said. Total vegetable oil imports rose by 68 per cent to Rs 12.49 lakh tonne in May this year compared to 7.43 lakh tonne in May 2020. The share of palm oil is over 60 per cent in India's vegetable oil imports.

CAI cuts cotton output estimate to 356 L bales

The Cotton Association of India (CAI) reduced its cotton crop estimate for 2020-21 by 4 lakh bales to 356 lakh bales, due to lower output expected in southern and central zones. The crop estimate for the southern zone has been reduced by 3 lakh bales to 91.50 lakh bales. In Telangana, the estimates are lower by 3 lakh bales based on the data provided by the Telangana Cotton Millers and Traders Welfare Association.



■ Shares tumble up to 25% intraday Hot Adani stocks turn freezing cold

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD with agency inputs MUMBAI, JUNE 14

Adani Group companies shares fell between 5 per cent and 25 per cent intraday on news that the National Securities Depository Ltd (NSDL) has frozen accounts of three foreign portfolio investors' (FPIs), which own over Rs 43,500 crore worth of shares in four of the group's firms.

According to reports, the market-cap of Adani Group Companies took a \$6-billion hit after media reports emerged about the suspension.

Group flagship Adani Enterprises lost 25 per cent as shares plunged to a low of Rs 1,201.10 on the BSE compared to the previous close at Rs 1,601.45. Later the stock recovered most of the day's losses to close at Rs 1,501.25, still down 6.26 per cent.

Adani Ports & Special Economic Zone ended the day with a loss of 8.3 per cent at Rs 768.70, after plunging 18.75 per cent to a low of Rs 681.50, compared to the previous close at Rs 838.80.

Adani Power and Adani Transmission closed 4.99 per cent and 5 per cent lower, respectively, as both stocks hit the 5 per cent lower circuit and remained locked till the close of the market.

Adani Green Energy, which has risen sharply since August last year and commands a higher market cap than even Adani



Enterprises at Rs 1,83,920 crore, fell 4.13 per cent.

Adani Total Gas fell 5 per cent and hit the lower circuit and was locked in the lower circuit till day's end. It has also risen sharply since mid-October and commands a market cap of Rs 1,69,871.17 crore.

Reports said that NSDL has frozen the accounts of Albula Investment Fund, Cresta Fund and APMS Investment Fund due to insufficient disclosure of information regarding beneficial ownership.

The funds are based out of Mauritius and registered at the same address in Port Louis and the frozen accounts, as of May 31, won't be able to sell or buy new securities, reports said.

However, the Adani Group said it has written confirmation that accounts of three foreign funds that are among its top shareholders are not frozen and reports to the contrary are "blatantly erroneous and misleading". In identical filings to the stock exchange, some group companies said, "This is causing irrepara-

ble loss of economic value to the investors at large and reputation of the group."

A sharp rally in the shares of Adani Group companies had added over \$40 billion to the wealth of Gautam Adani this year.

The quick surge in these stocks, largely held by overseas funds and with very little public float, had also led some analysts to flag the risks involved.

The group's stocks, especially Adani Total Gas, Adani Enterprises and Adani Transmission, "look extended," Bloomberg Intelligence analysts Gaurav Patankar and Nitin Chanduka wrote in a June 10 note after analyzing technical indicators.

"Among the biggest foreign investors are a few Mauritius-based funds holding over 95% of assets in these companies," the analysts wrote. "Such concentrated positions, along with negligible onshore ownership, create asymmetric risk-reward as large investors conspicuously avoid Adani," they said.

SEBI SLAPS ₹15 CR FINES ON FRANKLIN BOSSES, TRUSTEE

New Delhi, June 14: The Sebi on Monday imposed a penalty totalling Rs 15 crore on senior officials of Franklin Templeton AMC and its trustee for violating regulatory norms in the case of winding up six debt schemes in 2020.

A fine of Rs 3 crore has been levied on Franklin Templeton Trustee Services Pvt Ltd and Rs 2 crore each on Franklin Asset Management (India) Pvt Ltd president Sanjay Sapre and its chief investment officer Santosh Kamat, according to a Sebi order.

In addition, the regulator imposed a penalty of Rs 1.5 crore each on Kunal Agarwal, Sumit Gupta, Pallab Roy, Sachin Padwal Desai and Umesh Sharma, who were the fund managers at the time of violation, and Rs 50 lakh on Saurabh Gangrade, who was the chief compliance officer at that time.

They have been directed to pay the penalty within 45 days.

Sebi noted that the trustees of Franklin Templeton Mutual Fund (MF) are thorough professionals and these officials are experts in their respective domain, and yet they failed to avert certain lapses in the functioning of a mutual fund.

"The acts and deeds committed by them while discharging their duties are not in the interest of the unitholders in specific and the investors in general," the Sebi said.

—PTI

RBI set to lift pricing cap on micro loans

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, JUNE 14

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Monday proposed to do away with pre-payment penalty, requirement of collateral and provide greater flexibility in repayment frequency for all microfinance loans. For the lenders, the central bank proposed removing the pricing caps on micro loans introduced after the 2010 microfinance crisis.

The proposals are part of a consultative document on uniform regulation for companies engaged in microfinance business released by the central bank. The proposed recommendations aim to ensure a level-playing field between banks, non-banks and microfinance firms, all of which do micro lending but have different regulations.

The suggestions include a common definition of

microfinance loans for all regulated entities, capping the outflow on account of repayment of loan obligations of a household to a percentage of the household income and a board approved policy for household income assessment.

The paper has proposed to align the pricing guidelines for NBFC-MFIs with guidelines for NBFCs, introduce a standard simplified fact sheet on pricing of microfinance loans for better transparency, besides displaying the minimum, maximum and average interest rates charged on microfinance loans on the websites of regulated entities.

At present the maximum interest charged by an NBFC-MFI has to be lower of (i) the cost of funds plus a margin cap of 10 per cent for MFIs with loan portfolio of Rs 100 crore or above and 12 per cent for others; (ii)

The average base rate of the five largest commercial banks by assets multiplied by 2.75. The average base rate of the five largest commercial banks is announced by RBI at the end of each quarter, which determines the interest rate for the ensuing quarter. These pricing restrictions were introduced in 2014 by the regulator in line with the Y.H. Malegam committee recommendations.

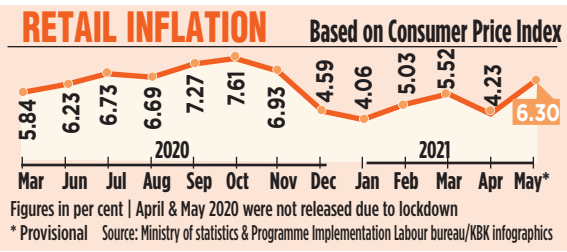
The current regulations are applicable only to 30 per cent of the microfinance loan portfolio NBFC-MFIs whereas other lenders, which comprise around 70 per cent share in the microfinance portfolio, are not subjected to similar regulatory conditions. The emerging dynamics in the microfinance sector as well as the concerns of customer protection call for a review of the regulations, it said.

Inflation spikes above comfort zone in May

New Delhi, June 14: Rising prices of edible oils and protein rich items pushed the retail inflation to a six-month high of 6.3 per cent in May, breaching the RBI's comfort level and thus rendering reduction in interest rates a difficult proposition in the near-term.

The government has asked the Reserve Bank to keep the retail inflation at 4 per cent with a margin of 2 per cent on either side.

CPI inflation has breached the upper band of



the inflation target about 10 times since the first meeting of the monetary policy committee in October 2016. Wholesale price-based inflation too accelerated to

a record 12.94 per cent in May on account of rising prices of crude oil, manufactured goods and the low base of last year due to the Covid-19 lockdown. —PTI

Amara Raja plans \$1 bn capex in new green tech

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, JUNE 14

Automotive and industrial battery manufacturer Amara Raja Batteries (ARBL) has a \$1 billion capex plan for investment in new green technologies, including lithium-ion batteries, to capitalise on the evolving trends in the energy and mobility sectors.

"It's a moving capex as EV (electric vehicle) batteries technologies are changing fast and we may need to keep revisiting our capex requirements," Jaydev Galla, vice chairman, ARBL, told *Financial Chronicle* after the company's board meeting.

"The technology in this space is emerging rapidly...The ACC (advanced chemistry cell) PLI scheme announced recently by Government of India for Rs 18,000 crore provides a significant impetus for building a domestic supply chain for lithium and other advanced cell chemistries to serve the fast-growing EV and



Jaydev Galla

renewable energy sectors.

"ARBL plans to invest in a bouquet of products and services to accelerate its transformation to an Energy and Mobility solutions provider," Galla said.

Jaydev Galla will be taking charge as the chairman of ARBL after the company's annual general meeting in August from his father and ARBL founder, Ramchandra Galla, who has been at the helm for 36 years.

ARBL will also be expanding the core business of lead acid batteries production as Galla feels they will be used for at least two more decades by commercial and heavy vehicles.

PE/VC EXITS MOVE UP AHEAD OF UNICORN IPOs

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JUNE 14

PE/VC-funded companies have entered a major exit phase with May being the second-best ever in terms of exit values. With some of the unicorns getting ready for IPOs, exit activity is expected to heat up in the coming months.

May 2021 recorded 18 exits worth \$12 billion, almost 42 times the value of exits in May 2020 at \$286 million and nearly four times the value in April 2021 at \$2.7 billion.

Till May this year, there have been \$19.3 billion worth exits and this is three times the total exit value of last year. Large well-funded corporations have been taking advantage of the current environment to consolidate businesses or acquire online capabilities to enhance the value proposition of their existing brick and mortar businesses, says a IVC-A-EY report.

Going ahead, PE/VC funds will see a heightened activity. Several PE/VC-funded firms, including Paytm, Nykaa, and Policy Bazaar have announced IPO plans.

Rishi Sunak drawn into tax query on Murthy-funded Cloudtail

London, June 14: Cloudtail India Pvt Ltd—the online retailing joint venture of Infosys co-founder N. R. Narayana Murthy's firm and Amazon.com—faced a 5.5 million pounds demand, including interest and penalties, from tax authorities after it paid "meagre" taxes over the past four years, a media report said on Monday.

Amazon reportedly developed independent sellers such as Cloudtail, as 'special merchant' which enjoyed over 35 per cent of total sales on the platform until 2019.

While Murthy's Catamaran Ventures indirectly holds 76 per cent in Cloudtail and Amazon the remaining 24 per cent, the firm's two top posts—chief executive and finance director—were with the US retailer. Cloudtail's holding company, Prione is also run by a former Amazon manager, the report in *The Guardian* newspaper said.

The report said it is not known precisely what the tax dispute is about and the company said that it was contesting the bill, adding that since the "matter is



Rishi Sunak

sub judge, we are unable to comment any further.

Following the report, the office of UK chancellor of the exchequer Rishi Sunak, who is son-in-law of Murthy, was forced to comment.

The revelations come just days after Sunak led the G7 finance ministers' charge to agree to a global deal designed to make tech companies pay more tax.

"Reaching an international agreement on how large digital companies are taxed has been a priority for the chancellor since he took office," said a spokesperson for his UK Treasury office.

"The chancellor's consistent position has been that it matters where tax is paid, and any agreement must ensure digital businesses pay tax in the UK

that reflects their economic activities. That is what our taxpayers would expect and is the right thing," the spokesperson said.

Sunak has been dubbed the UK's richest minister, largely as a result of his wife Akshata Murthy's family wealth. The latest *Guardian* report claims that an analysis of Cloudtail's accounts and activities shows that it is one of the largest sellers on Amazon.in, as part of a 76-24 per cent joint venture with Amazon.

"The company has received a show cause notice in the current year from Directorate General of Goods and Service Tax Intelligence amounting to Rs 5,455 lakh (5.5 mn pound) along with interest and penalties for service tax-related matters, it quotes Cloudtail's most recent accounts as saying.

It claims that the annual report further reveals that Cloudtail which only sells via the Amazon platform paid Amazon fees of 95 million pounds last year, almost 10 times more than the Indian business reported in profit.

—PTI k

REGULATORS TO VET PNB HOUSING FINANCE PLAN TO RAISE ₹4K CR FROM CARLYLE



New Delhi, June 14: Reserve Bank of India and Sebi will look into various regulatory issues related to the proposed Rs 4,000-crore investment by US-based private equity firm Carlyle and others in PNB Housing Finance, sources said on Monday.

Last month, the board of PNB Housing Finance cleared a proposal to raise up to Rs 4,000 crore by issuing preference shares and convertible warrants to Carlyle Group firms and other entities.

According to the sources, concerns of minority shareholders, corporate governance and others regulatory aspects would be looked into by the RBI and the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi).

Earlier this year, the RBI had shot down a Punjab National Bank (PNB) proposal to infuse capital into its subsidiary PNB Housing Finance through a rights issue on concerns of the lender's financial health.

About the proposed deal, PNB managing director and CEO S. S. Mallikarjuna Rao, earlier this month, said the bank will neither be investing nor divesting its stake but because of investment from other sources, its shareholding could come down to around 21 per cent.

Currently, PNB as a promoter holds 32.64 per cent stake in PNB Housing Finance.

PNB Housing Finance's extraordinary general meeting (EGM) is scheduled to be held on June 22 to seek shareholders' approval for the preferential allotment of shares on a private placement basis to Carlyle and other entities, besides other proposals. —PTI

