

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

CHENNAI | SATURDAY 5 | JUNE 2021

## WEATHER



**Max:** 32°C  
**Min:** 25°C  
**Rainfall:** 2 mm

## ASTROGUIDE

**Pilava:** Vaikasi 22  
**Tithi:** Dhasami  
**Star:** Revathy  
**Rahukalam:** 9 am to 10.30 am  
**Yamagandam:** 1.30 pm to 3 pm  
**PRAYERS**  
**Fajar:** 4.23 am  
**Luhar:** 12.12 pm  
**Asar:** 3.30 pm  
**Maghrib:** 6.32 pm  
**Isha:** 7.50 pm

**SUNSET TODAY** 6.33 PM  
**SUNRISE TOMORROW** 5.42 AM  
**MOONRISE TODAY** 2.11 AM  
**MOONSET TOMORROW** 2.35 PM

## CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+1,12,301)	(+3,223)
2,86,85,804	3,43,954

covid19india.org

### STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+22,651)	463
TN: 21,95,402	26,128

### WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

17,31,16,035

**DEATHS**  
37,21,386

**COUNTRIES AREAS WITH CASES**  
219

worldometers.info

### Facebook suspends Trump's accounts for 2 years

**Washington:** Facebook suspends former United States President Donald Trump's accounts for two years, effective from the date of the initial suspension on January 7 this year.

### PM reviews vaccination drive; flags wastage

**New Delhi:** The government is helping vaccine manufacturers get more production units, financing and supply of raw materials, the Prime Minister's Office said on Friday after Prime Minister Narendra Modi reviewed the progress of the country's COVID-19 vaccination drive. While reviewing the status of vaccine wastage in various states, Modi said the wastage numbers are still on a higher side and that steps need to be taken to bring them down.

### Mamata to decide on return of defectors to TMC

**Kolkata:** The Trinamool Congress leadership is yet to take a call on ghar wapsi (return home) by former TMC leaders who had joined the BJP ahead of the recently concluded assembly elections which the Mamata Banerjee-led party swept.

## COUNTER POINT



## HC dismisses Juhi plea, imposes fine of ₹20 lakh

**New Delhi, June 4:** The Delhi High Court on Friday dismissed actress Juhi Chawla's lawsuit challenging the setting up of 5G wireless networks in the country and slapped a cost of Rs 20 lakh on her and co-petitioners by describing the plea as "defective", "abuse of process of law" and filed for "gaining publicity".

Justice J.R. Midha said the plaintiffs, Ms Chawla and two others, have abused

and misused the process of law and wasted the court's time.

The judge said the plaint in which questions have been raised about health hazards due to the 5G technology was "not maintainable" and was "stuffed with unnecessary scandalous, frivolous and vexatious averments" which are liable to be struck down.

The court said the suit filed by actress-environmen-



**G. BABU JAYAKUMAR, D. SEKAR | DC CHENNAI, JUNE 4**

## Opinion divided but TN may extend lockdown

■ **Chief Minister chairs meeting of senior officials, experts**

**G. BABU JAYAKUMAR, D. SEKAR | DC CHENNAI, JUNE 4**

The total lockdown now in force in the state is expected to continue for one more week with a few minor relaxations such as letting shops selling essential items open for a few hours in a day even as officials and experts deliberated on the merits and demerits on Friday.

The meeting presided over by Chief Minister M.K. Stalin was attended by most of the senior officials including chief secretary V. Irai Anbu, health secretary J. Radhakrishnan and director-general of police J.K. Tripathi besides medical experts and various health department officials.

Since the two week total lockdown had led to the number of cases coming down in most parts of the state, many were in favour of continuing it for at least another week with a view to enable the rate of infection to come under control.

A section of officials warned against it citing the state of the economy, pointing out the livelihood problems faced by the people mostly in the lower rung of society. Those in charge of finance were concerned over the fall in revenue and said that it could have a long term impact on the state's financial wellbeing.

Another suggestion was that more relaxations could be made in the dis-

## Lioness in Chennai zoo dies of Covid-19

**P.A. JEBARAJ | DC CHENNAI, JUNE 4**

A nine-year-old lioness housed at the Arignar Anna Zoological Park in Vandalur has died of suspected coronavirus infection on Thursday evening. Eight other lions have also been tested positive for SARS CoV-2. The deceased lioness named Neela had been asymptomatic and showed some nasal discharge only the day before her death and had been treated immediately.

According to the statement from the zoological park, five lions housed in animal house 1 of the Safari Park Area of Arignar Anna Zoological Park showed anorexia (loss of appetite) and occasional coughing on May 26.

The zoo veterinary team investigated the case and started treatment as per protocol. A team of experts from Tamil Nadu Veterinary and Animal Sciences

University also joined the team later. Later, 9 of the 11 lions tested positive in the examination conducted at Bhopal-based National Institute of High Security Diseases (NIHSAD). One of them died on Thursday evening.

Samples of the swabs have now been sent to the Indian Veterinary Research Institute Bareilly and the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology, Hyderabad on Friday to ascertain whether the reported findings are in the nature of false positives or the animal could have died of comorbidities.

All the lions that have tested positive are under close observation. "All animal keepers and helpers for these animal houses are vaccinated against Covid-19. A separate set of animal keepers is engaged for each group of lions. PPE kits are mandatory for the animal keepers, veterinary doctors and field staff visiting the area," the zoo has said in a statement on Friday.

istricts where the numbers had come down and the stringent norms could continue in the districts where Coronavirus is wreaking more havoc, particularly those in the western part of the state.

Suggestions were made

on opening big markets with restrictions and allowing businesses and commercial activities to resume in a small manner, though it was pointed out that such moves could turn risky and lead to spike in cases.

■ PTI

## Struggling for livelihood



A roadside vendor prepares a tent as unlocking of Covid-induced lockdown begins in Gurugram on Friday. Nine families from Gujarat, dependent on this livelihood, have been struggling to make ends meet due to coronavirus lockdown.

—PTI

## Two African women held with heroin worth ₹70 cr at airport

**DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, JUNE 4**

Chennai Customs on Friday arrested two African women and seized heroin worth Rs 70 crore being smuggled into the country from South Africa.

The duo who arrived at the Chennai international airport by Qatar Airways from Johannesburg via Doha was intercepted at the exit on a tip off.



talist and others was to gain publicity which was clear as Ms Chawla circulated the video conferencing link of the hearing on her social

media account which resulted in the repeated disruptions thrice by unknown miscreants who continued disruptions despite repeated warnings.

The court also issued show cause notice against those unidentified persons who disrupted the proceedings asking as to why proceedings for contempt of court be not initiated against them.

It asked the Delhi Police to identify the persons and

serve the notice on them and listed the matter for reporting compliance before joint registrar on July 5.

During the June 2 hearing on Ms Chawla's plea, a man started singing some of the hit songs of the actress' movies and caused repeated interruptions in the virtual proceedings. On the judge's directions the person was repeatedly removed from the hearing, but he kept on joining with different names

and started singing till the time the proceedings were locked.

Advocate Deepak Khosla, appearing for the actress and others, questioned the imposition of cost. However, the judge said "very sorry. Rejected. The matter is over. You gave your regal remedies. It would not be proper for a counsel to comment on the order. As a counsel you should know your limits."

—PTI



## RBI KEEPS RATES, LOWERS GDP GROWTH FORECAST

- The Reserve Bank of India kept repo rate unchanged at 4 per cent, and the reverse repo rate at 3.35 per cent.
- It lowers India's economic growth to 9.5 per cent for the current financial year from the previous estimate of 10.5 per cent.
- RBI to buy an additional Rs 1.2 lakh crore of bonds.

## Kerala budget allots ₹1,000 crore for vax

**Thiruvananthapuram, June 4:** Announcing a Rs 20,000 crore package to tide over the crisis induced by the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, Kerala finance minister K.N. Balagopal presented the maiden budget of the second Pinarayi Vijayan government here on Friday.

Besides the financial package, he also set aside Rs 1,000 crore to provide free vaccination for everyone aged above 18 years. An additional 500 crore

would be spent to ensure related equipment and facilities for free vaccination, he said.

The previous government had allotted Rs 20,000 crore which had been fully utilised to face the pandemic, he said.

Stating that the thrust of the new budget would be to ensure health and food for all, he said the effort would be to reduce the impact of the pandemic and ensure there is no third wave of the virus infection in the state.

—PTI

## LATEST STUDY

### Lancet: Pfizer vax weaker vs Delta variant

**People fully vaccinated with the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine are likely to have more than five times lower levels of neutralising antibodies against the Delta variant first identified in India compared to the original strain, according to research published in The Lancet journal.**

■ REPORT ON PAGE 5

## CBSE norms on marks in 10 days

**New Delhi, June 4:** The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) on Friday constituted a 13-member committee to work out an objective criteria for assessment of class 12 students after their board exams were cancelled in view of the pandemic.

The panel will submit its report within 10 days.

"In view of the uncertain conditions due to Covid and the feedback obtained from various stakeholders, it was decided that class 12 board exams of CBSE will not be held this year. It was also decided that CBSE will take steps to compile the results as per a well defined objective criteria in a time-bound manner," said CBSE Examination Controller Sanyam Bhardwaj.

"A 13-member committee has been constituted for the purpose. The panel will submit its report within 10 days," he added.

The members of the panel include joint secretary in ministry of education Vipin Kumar, Delhi education director Udit Prakash Rai, Kenridya Vidyalaya Sangathan commissioner Nidhi Pandey, Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti commissioner

Garg, Chandigarh School Education director Rubinderjit Singh Brar, CBSE director (IT) Antriksh Johri and CBSE director (academics) Joseph Emanuel.

The panel will also have one representative each from UGC and NCERT and two representatives from schools.

The government on Tuesday cancelled the CBSE class 12 board exams amid the continuing Covid-19 pandemic across the country with Prime Minister Narendra Modi asserting that the decision was taken in the interest of students and the anxiety among students, parents and teachers must be put to an end.

The decision was taken at a high-level meeting chaired by Mr Modi in which it was decided that the CBSE will take steps to compile the results of Class 12 students according to a well-defined objective criteria in a time-bound manner. It was also decided that in case some students desire to take the exams, such an option would be provided to them by the CBSE as and when the situation becomes conducive.

—PTI



### Olympic-bound wrestler Sumit fails dope test

**PAWAN BALI | DC NEW DELHI, JUNE 4**

In a mega make-in-India deal, the Defence Acquisition Council headed by defence minister Rajnath Singh on Friday approved the domestic production of six new-generation stealth submarines in collaboration with foreign players under Project P75(I) estimated at Rs 43,000 crores. The project was first initiated in 2007 and it will take nearly a decade before the first submarine is delivered.

The submarine deal was given the go-ahead amid reports that country's sole nuclear-powered attack submarine *INS Chakra* is on its way back to Russia as the agreement for its lease is coming to an end. The Navy will thus be without a nuclear-powered attack submarine for

## SECURING THE SEAS

**The project:** to build six conventional submarines domestically  
**The cost:** ₹43,000 crore  
**The route:** Strategic partnership between domestic and foreign companies  
**The period:** 12 years

**Indian docks:** Larsen & Toubro, Mazagaon Docks Ltd.

**Foreign docks:** Rosoboronexport (Russia), Daewoo (South Korea), ThyssenKrupp Marine Systems (Germany), Navantia (Spain) and Naval Group (France).

Decision was taken by Defence Acquisition Council headed by Rajnath Singh, defence minister

many years till another advanced version of the submarine, *Chakra III*, comes from Russia on a 10-year lease for which a \$3 billion deal was signed in 2019. *INS Chakra* is reported to be giving trouble as it was getting old and its lease, which was ending in January, was not sought to be extended. The DAC on Friday approved the issue of a

request for proposal (RFP) for the construction of six conventional submarines for Project P75(I) under the strategic partnership model. The RFP will be issued to defence shipyard Mazagon Docks and private sector giant Larsen and Toubro, who were selected as Indian strategic partners to bid for the submarine project by the DAC 2020 in January. ■ PTI

## PUNJAB CM MEETS AICC PANEL TO QUELL DISSIDENCE

**New Delhi, June 4:** Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Friday met the three-member panel set up by the Congress high command to resolve infighting in the party's state unit and apprised it of efforts to unite the party, as well as preparedness for the upcoming assembly polls, according to sources.

Capt. Singh met the panel headed by leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge at the party headquarters at Akbar Road here. AICC secretary general incharge for Punjab Harish Rawat and former MP J.P. Aggarwal are members of the panel.

Capt. Singh and his former cabinet colleague Navjot Singh Sidhu have been engaged in a bitter war of words. Mr Sidhu has publicly attacked the Chief Minister over an SIT report on the sacrilege issue in Punjab.

The Congress panel has already met. Mr Sidhu, party MPs, MLAs and former PCC chiefs.

—PTI



## OTHER STORY

**Lockdown extension for 6 more days: Pondy health dept**

Puducherry, June 4: Health authorities here have said the territorial administration could extend for six more days the current lockdown ending on June 7, as the number of fresh Covid cases would come down further.

In a video message on Friday, the Director of Health and Family Welfare Services S Mohan Kumar said already, the lockdown has started having a positive impact and brought down the number of new cases here.

He said the number has fallen to 712 from 815 on Thursday and on previous days, the cases stood at 867 (June 2) and 979 (June 1).

Kumar said the cooperation of the people in following safety norms was also a cause for the cases declining in Puducherry. The number of fatalities too has reduced, he said.

Although presently, there was no case of children suffering from Covid, the department was not leaving anything to chance, he said.

"We are getting ready the necessary infrastructure, including beds, exclusively for children to respond to the need if it arises", he said.

He said there was a fear that the third wave of Covid-19 would occur. "We are battle-ready to encounter any exigency," he said. —PTI

**Traders' bodies request for relaxation of lockdown in TN**

From P1 The government has also been receiving informal representations from various traders' bodies requesting the relaxation of the lockdown to enable them open their businesses, the closure of which had led to loss of livelihood for many people.

But the lack of discipline among the general people in following Covid-19 prevention norms has been a matter of concern for officials and also health experts, who feel that only a lockdown would ensure that people do not move around and spread the virus.

However, the government decided to form a task force, led by retired bureaucrat R. Poornalingam, to assist the expert committee for Covid-19 management, which is headed by the Chief Minister.

Apart from official members, who are secretaries and heads of various medical departments, the task force will have four non-official members. The task force would have an advisory role, conducting meetings periodically and monitoring the actions taken on the suggestions.

The non-official members are Dr P. Kuganathan, Dr Kolaradaswamy, Dr Manoj Murhekar (director of National Institute of Epidemiology, Chennai) and Dr Jayaprakash Muliyl (epidemiologist, CMC, Vellore).

**Desilting works on war-footing in Thanjavur**

G. SRINIVASAN | DC THANJAVUR, JUNE 4

With the announcement of the release of water for Kuruvaik cultivation from the Mettur dam on June 12, desilting works are being done on a war footing in Thanjavur district.

The water to be released from Mettur dam on June 12 is likely to reach Grand Anicut in four days and it may be released from the anicut into Cauvery, Vennar, Grand anicut, and Kollidam systems on June 17. PWD engineers said the date of release from anicut will be announced only after releasing from Mettur dam.

Meanwhile, V. Durai Manickam, general secretary of Tamil Nadu Vivasayi Sangam affiliated to the CPI, said that desilting works should be completed before June 15 so that water released from grand anicut may reach tail-end areas. Welcoming the opening of the dam on June 12, a traditional date fixed for opening the dam when the dam was completed in 1934, Durai Manickam said the date was fixed taking into account the monsoon predictions, storage at the dam, and three seasons of paddy cultivation, kuruvaik, samba and thaladi in a year in 1934. He said that the government should ensure enough water for the three paddy seasons.

Sundara Vimalanathan, secretary of Thanjai district Cauvery Farmers Protection Association, said that Chief Minister M.K. Stalin should come to Grand anicut for water release. He recalled that Stalin's father, former chief minister M. Karunanidhi, participated in the water release function at Grand anicut during his tenure as chief minister between 1996-2000.

# Decision on plus-2 exams expected only by Monday

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, JUNE 4

The question on holding public examinations for plus-2 students of the state board hung on fire on Friday as educationalists, experts and officials were divided on the issue and a final decision was expected only by Monday.

In the deliberations state minister for school education Anbil Mahesh Poyamozhi had with district education officers, government officials and experts, some wanted the conduct of the examinations after the coronavirus crisis was over while others favoured its cancellation.

The minister would hold a meeting with leaders of

In the deliberations state minister for school education Anbil Mahesh Poyamozhi had with district education officers, government officials and experts, some wanted the conduct of the examinations after the coronavirus crisis was over while others favoured its cancellation.

the legislative parties in the Assembly on Saturday before finalizing the issue, which has gained significance after the Centre cancelled examinations for the CBSE and ICSE boards.

Queries came up on the granting of marks to the students in the event of calling off the examinations and concerns were

also raised on fixing the eligibility for admission to colleges without granting marks, particularly when the government was mulling over not taking into consideration the scores obtained in Neet or any other qualifying examination.

Also the meeting felt that the opinion of medical experts and also psychologists should be sought before taking a call on the matter as it was important to ensure if the students would be mentally prepared to sit for the examination.

Poyamozhi said that they would also find out what the other states were proposing to do with the plus-2 examinations and take a decision after weighing

both the options.

Meanwhile, founder of Makkal Neethi Maiaam Kamal Haasan urged the government to decide on the matter with a long term perspective and also taking into consideration the future of students. He said admissions to colleges and also to foreign universities were not made on the basis of marks scored by students in the plus-2 examination.

In a statement, Kamal gave a few suggestions like reducing the syllabus for the examination and also vaccinating the plus-2 students as the teachers had been vaccinated. Delaying the examinations and cancelling them come with hardships for the students, he pointed out.

**Woman dies of black fungus**

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, JUNE 4

A 53-year-old woman resident of Thirupurur in Chengalpet district died of black fungus (mucormycosis) during the treatment at Rajiv Gandhi Government hospital in the city on Thursday night.

The deceased, identified as Bharathi was an AIADMK functionary and the party's Thirupurur zone women's wing president.

According to sources, on May 23 she was tested positive for the coronavirus and was admitted to a private hospital in Ammapet.

Meanwhile last week, she showed symptoms of black fungus. She had eye pain, swelling and blurred vision.

Following this, Bharathi was referred to Rajiv Gandhi Government hospital, where she passed away without responding to the treatment on Thursday night. She is the third person in the district to succumb to black fungus. Last week, two suspected deaths of black fungus were reported in the district.

According to sources, on May 23 she was tested positive for the coronavirus and was admitted to a private hospital in Ammapet. Meanwhile last week, she showed symptoms of black fungus. She had eye pain, swelling and blurred vision



GCC commissioner Gagandeep Singh Bedi and police Commissioner Shankar Jiwal inspect Koyambedu wholesale market on Friday. — DC

## 4,800 vaccinated at Koyambedu market

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, JUNE 4

The Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) has vaccinated at least 4,800 employees connected to the Koyambedu market complex so far.

In a press release on Friday, the GCC said that majority of the beneficiaries of the vaccination drive were fruit and vegetable wholesalers and retailers. Apart from vendors, a special vaccination camp for the inter-state and inter-district lorry drivers, who transport goods, has also been introduced.

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As part of the containment strategy, the Covid-19 appropriate norms will be strictly enforced with the support of police. Vendors, who are not vaccinated within two weeks, will not be allowed to run business inside the complex. So far 1,731 vendors, who did not wear face

mask, have been fined. Action has been taken against 699 shops for violation of Covid-19 protocol.

In May, the GCC collected Rs 11 lakh as fine from people who violated the Corona protocol. In the morning, the GCC officials led by commissioner Gagandeep Singh Bedi took stock of the situation at the market. The commissioner also inspected the vaccine drive, followed by a review meeting. The meeting also decided to launch a clean-up drive inside the market as part of the ongoing drive across the city.

## Corona awareness



A group of youngsters stages a skit to create an awareness on corona prevention near Central railway station on Friday. — DC

## Trio held for drilling hole, attempting to steal liquor

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, JUNE 4

Police arrested three persons on the charges of drilling a hole in a tasmac shop and attempting to steal liquor bottles near Sriperumbudur in Kanchipuram district.

The arrested were identified as Paneer (31), Mahendra Kumar (35) and Mahendran (30), construction workers and all residents of Vallarai near Sriperumbudur. Police sources said the tippers ran out of liquor stocks as all wine shops are shut due to the coronavirus induced lockdown in the state.

Police said the three, on Wednesday night, drilled a hole in the wall of a Tasmac shop in Vallarai neighbourhood and attempted to steal liquor bottles. However, the supervisor of the shop had installed a CCTV camera and human censor alert outside the shop

Police said the three, on Wednesday night, drilled a hole in the wall of a Tasmac shop in Vallarai neighbourhood and attempted to steal liquor bottles. However, the supervisor of the shop

had installed a CCTV camera and human censor alert outside the shop. When the miscreants were drilling a hole in the wall of the shop, he got an alert on his phone. He immediately alerted the Sriperumbudur police who rushed to the spot.

On seeing the police, they fled from the scene. However, they left the two-wheeler they came in on the spot. Police seized the bike and launched a search for the absconding men. Using the registration number, police got to the trio. They were arrested and further investigations are underway, the police said.

## Ensure animals do not suffer during lockdown: HC

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, JUNE 4

Pointing out that the funds released by the Governor helped in the initial feeding, particularly of stray dogs and cats in and around this metropolis, the Madras high court has expressed its hope that private parties, including some prominent corporate houses, chip in with money or material to ensure that the voiceless animals do not suffer during the lockdown.

The first bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy was passing further interim orders on a petition filed by V.E.Shiva, founder-chairman, Mothers of Animals Welfare Trust, which sought a direction to the authorities to take necessary steps to ensure that the stray animals are provided with food and water in this Covid-19 pandemic.

The bench said reports have been filed, inter alia, by the animal husbandry department indicating the release of funds by the Governor and by the state to feed stray animals, abandoned horses and even elephants during the lockdown.

The bench said it was submitted on behalf of the committee appointed by an earlier order of this



court that paltry amounts have been apportioned on a district-wise basis and an amount of Rs 9,000 proposed to be allotted to some of the districts may evaporate even before reaching the districts. It was suggested that the drive to feed the stray dogs and cats be restricted to urban areas for it to make a meaningful impact. It was also pointed out on behalf of the committee that there should be a correlation between the money allotted to a particular area and the number of requests received from such locality. "It is heartening that both the Governor and the state have released funds for a noble cause as promptly as they have. Indeed, the Governor released funds without there being a request from the court and before the state released funds", the bench added and posted to June 9, 2021, further hearing of the case.

## HC to Pondy: Release payment to pvt hospitals to enable continued treatment of Covid patients

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, JUNE 4

The Madras high court has expressed its hope that substantial payments would be released by the Puducherry government to the private hospitals to enable the continued treatment of Covid patients there.

The private hospitals are also requested to not let up in the quality of treatment which is rendered merely because money has not been forthcoming. The health of the patients is of paramount importance", said the first bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy.

Posting to June 11, 2021, further hearing of the petition filed by A.Anand, president, Democratic Youth Federation of India, Puducherry state committee, the bench said in the meantime, the petitioner's allegations of undue charges being levelled by private hospitals in Puducherry should also be looked into by the authorities.

Referring to the submis-

## Drinking water must be available to all citizens: HC

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, JUNE 4

The Madras high court has said it is imperative that drinking water facilities are available to all citizens and if any citizen faces any difficulty in such regard, immediate action be taken by the appropriate authorities.

The first bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy passed the interim order while treating a letter as suo motu Public Interest Litigation.

sion made on behalf of the private hospitals that have been earmarked for exclusive Covid treatment, that no money has been forthcoming from the local government even to provide for the daily diet of the many patients who have taken admission and most of whom have been dis-

charged, the bench said the report filed by the director of health and family welfare department reveals that Rs 20 lakh has been released to each of the private medical colleges towards food charges of the Covid patients referred by the government. Given the many

a report filed when the matter appears next a fortnight hence, the bench added.

The bench said, "It is imperative that drinking water facilities are available to all citizens and if any citizen faces any difficulty in such regard, immediate action be taken by the appropriate authorities. If the grievance in the relevant letter is found to be correct, immediate remedial measures should follow and the measures taken reported to court when the matter appears next on June 18, 2021".

cases that were referred to the private medical institutions by the government because of lack of space and accommodation at government facilities, it was inconceivable that a sum of Rs 20 lakh has been paid to each of the private hospitals without reference to the bed strength at

each of the private hospitals or the number of patients dealt with by each of the private hospitals, the bench added.

The bench said it was submitted on behalf of the Union Territory that bills have to be submitted, vetted and approved for payments to be released and there was a necessary time lag in the process. However, whatever the level of scrutiny that was to be undertaken, it was inconceivable that what was essentially government duty would have been performed by private players without the government even picking up the tab on a day-after or reasonable period-after basis.

Covid patients still remain, some in critical condition, in private hospitals and the like. "It is imperative that the government takes up the matter relating to the payments due to the private medical colleges on a priority basis so that the treatment rendered to Covid patients is not compromised by the private organisations for lack of funds", the bench added.



## SHORT TAKES

Assn mourns  
Tiruchy activist's  
deathDC CORRESPONDENT  
TIRUCHY, JUNE 4

The Associations of Voluntary Agencies (AVA), Tiruchirappalli, on Thursday organised an online meeting to condole the demise of civic and consumer activist M. Sekaran on May 31, due to Covid-19.

K. Govindarajan, founder of the SEVA city-based NGO and president, AVA, Tiruchy presided over the meeting. He recalled the yeoman services rendered for Tiruchy by Sekaran over the years as president of Federation of Consumer and Voluntary Service Association and as chairman of Trichirappalli Citizens Forum. He said Sekaran was lobbying for establishing an All-India Institute of Medical Sciences and a comprehensive bus stand at Tiruchy. He served as a member of Tiruchirappalli Road Safety Council and Airport Advisory Committee.

Among others, Padma Shri Scope Subburaman, social welfare organizations representatives, Dr. Aleem, former Dean of Dr. K.A.P. Viswanatham Medical College, M.Thesnathan, former director NYK, and K.C. Neelamegam, founder of the 'Thaneer', spoke.

12,311 lockdown  
violation cases  
in TiruchyDC CORRESPONDENT  
TIRUCHY, JUNE 4

The Tiruchirappalli city police have netted a fine amount of ₹26.88 lakh from the violators of lockdown norms from May 10 to June 2, according to city police commissioner Arun.

Arun said in a release on Friday that the violations included not wearing the face masks, not maintaining the social distance, and the police have registered 12,311 cases and collected ₹26.88 lakh as fine.

On Thursday alone, 244 cases registered for violating lockdown norms and collected a fine of ₹52,700, he added.

He said they also seized 5901 vehicles including 68 cars, 168 auto-rickshaws, and 5,665 two-wheelers for violating the rules and roaming in and around the city, so far.

Farmer struck by  
lightning diesDC CORRESPONDENT  
PERAMBALUR, JUNE 4

A 55-year-old farmer died on the spot after being struck by lightning at Perali village in Perambalur district on Friday.

Police said the deceased was identified as Ramachandran who was shepherding goats when the lightning accompanied by heavy rain and thunder struck him.

The Maruvathur police registered a case and are investigating. Meanwhile, there was widespread rain in many parts of Perambalur district including Chettikulam, Alathur and Kunnam.

Min thanks Stalin  
over Kalaingar  
memorial libraryDC CORRESPONDENT  
TIRUCHY, JUNE 4

School education minister Anbil Mahesh Poyya Mozhi thanked Chief Minister M.K. Stalin for ordering the establishment of the Kalaingar memorial library at Madurai at an estimated cost of Rs 70 crore in a 2 lakh square feet area.

In a release at Tiruchy on Friday, Mahesh Poyyamozhi pointed out that the proposed library at Madurai will be on par with Asia's biggest modernised Anna centenary library at Chennai for the future benefit of Tamil Nadu's children.

## No place for Sasikala, her kin in AIADMK: Palaniswami

AIADMK bidding time to  
pounce on governmentG. BABU JAYAKUMAR  
& D. SEKAR | DC  
CHENNAI, JUNE 4

The AIADMK is just bidding its time for the coronavirus crisis to subside for it to start functioning as a robust opposition, picking on the government's mistakes and playing its democratic role vociferously.

Among a few issues that were discussed at a meeting, presided over by the Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly Edappadi K. Palaniswami, in the party headquarters on Friday, the question of taking on the government was raised and it was decided that this was not the right time to be aggressive.

Palaniswami, who addressed the media after the discussions with top party leaders and party district secretaries from Chennai and around, said the government should make more efforts to control the spread of coronavirus.

Suggesting the conduct of more tests and releasing the test results in a shorter span than now, Palaniswami said that the party did not want to play politics at this hour of crisis.



Opposition leader Edappadi K. Palaniswami addresses the media after a meeting at AIADMK party office on Friday.

—DC

On the speculation over V. K. Sasikala returning to the party and capturing its leadership, he made it clear that she was not part of the AIADMK and had no role to play in the party, adding that she was only trying to create confusion.

Reiterating the statement of AIADMK deputy coordinator K. P. Munusamy a couple of days ago that Sasikala or any of her family members can never come into the party fold, Palaniswami said that Sasikala herself had issued a statement on retiring from politics before the elections.

Pointing out that she was only talking to members of the AMMK on taking up the party leadership and not to any AIADMK cadre in the audio clippings that were leaked, he completely ruled out the possibility of her entering the AIADMK.

To a question on party coordinator O. Panneerselvam not attending the meeting on Friday, Palaniswami denied that they had any difference of opinion and said that Panneerselvam could not come for the meeting as he was busy shifting his house.

The meeting is said to have also discussed the appointment of Deputy Leader of Legislative Party and the Party Whip in the Assembly and the reasons for the poor performance of the AIADMK in the elections in the northern parts of the State.

Some party functionaries have reportedly felt that it was the BJP that was now playing the role of the opposition by confronting the government on various issues and not the AIADMK. It was also reportedly pointed out that Panneerselvam had issued statements in favour of the DMK government.

But the meeting decided that they shall wait for either the Assembly session to start or the coronavirus crisis to come under control as picking on the government now might not go well with the people.

Palaniswami's first visit to the party headquarters after his election as Leader of the Opposition was marked by his acolytes too turning up for the meetings. Among those who came were D Jayakumar, Benjamin and Valarmathi.

Seeman  
praises DMK  
governmentDC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, JUNE 4

Naam Tamilar Katchi founder Seeman, who was perhaps the most acerbic critic of the DMK in the campaign for the Assembly elections, surprisingly was all praise for the government led by Chief Minister M K Stalin on Friday.

Seeman, who called on Stalin along with film director Bharthiraja, and also presented Rs 5 lakh to the Chief Minister General Relief Fund, told the media that the purpose of his visit was to stress on the release of the Seven Tamils from prison.

He said the Chief Minister explained to him that he had written to the President of India to release the seven persons, convicted in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case, and was also watching the progress of the case related to the issue in the Supreme Court.

Stalin had stated that he was committed to the cause of securing the release of the seven prisoners and was firm on it, Seeman said.

Heaping praises on the functioning of Stalin and his Ministers, he said controlling Coronavirus spread was the need of the hour and even on that the government was doing well.

Recalling Stalin's message of condolence when his father passed away recently, Seeman said he was touched by the Chief Minister's gesture to call him personally to console him.

On the brewing controversy raised by some opposition parties over the State government and its Ministers referring to the Central government as Union Government, Seeman said that India was indeed a Union of States and the usage was absolutely right.

He even went on to say that it was he who first used the term Union Government and totally agreed with the DMK on the issue.

## CROP PRODUCTION IN ACIDIC SOILS

Scientist sheds more light on  
ancient 'Thang Bun' farmingB. RAVICHANDRAN | DC  
OOTY, JUNE 4

Dr H.C. Hombe Gowda, senior scientist, Indian Institute of Soil and Water Conservation, Regional Centre (ICAR-IISWC, RC), here, has revealed the nuances and latency of an ancient farming method called "Thang Bun", being practiced in northeastern India, for improved crop production in acid soils.

The 'Thang Bun' system is an indigenous method practised by the tribal farmers for thousands of years to achieve better crop production in less fertile acid soil.

Dr Gowda studied and identified the scientific rationale behind this system. In this system, the slashed plant residues such as leaf, small branches and grasses are converted to bio-char through burning (oxygen limited burning) which leaves less carbon footprints. This bio-char, when applied in soil, improves the soil fertility and reduces the soil acidity which in turn increases the availability of essential nutrients to the crop plants besides increasing the crop yield.

This practice shows the knowledge of ethnic communities about bio-char preparation, soil acidity, soil fertility and their management using locally available resources.

'Thang Bun' was used in land preparation and crop production in 'Jhum' site, where dried plant biomass obtained during clearing of the vegetation (slashing) is heaped at 0.8 to 1.2 m width and 4 to 7 m length and this biomass is smeared with soil layer at top to give the shape of raised beds. Later the biomass is burnt.

Since the plant biomass is covered with soil on top, oxygen supply is limited during burning, which converts biomass into charcoal (bio-char) through the carbonization process. Before sowing, bio-char is mixed in the soil beds. All dried plant biomass consists of small branches, leaves, shrubs, herbs, grasses and pine needles that were burnt. During this method, bio-char is prepared and added in the raised beds for crop cultivation during the first year 'Jhum' land preparation.

This method of land preparation, followed by burning, is carried out for many centuries by the ethnic tribal communities in states like Meghalaya and is locally called "Thang Bun".

According to the native tribal farmers of Meghalaya, this practice is very old and this ethnic-knowledge on 'Thang

TECH GOOD FOR  
NILGIRIS SOIL

In the acidic Nilgiris soils, this technology may help in improving the soil fertility and crop production. A preliminary study conducted at ICAR-IISWC, RC, revealed that yield of potato rose to the tune of 32 percent and increased the number of table grade tubers.

Bio-char: Charcoal  
made through slow  
thermal decompositionB. RAVICHANDRAN | DC  
OOTY, JUNE 4

Dr Hombe Gowda, senior scientist, ICAR-IISWC-RC, here, explained that Bio-char is the name of the charcoal prepared using the plant biomass through slow thermal decomposition.

Bio-char is rich in carbonaceous material having high micro pore and specific surface area that improves the adsorption character. This soil application can achieve carbon sequestration and significantly improve soil fertility through altering soil chemical, physical and biological properties.

Bio-char is recommended as an amendment for acid soil management due to its high buffering capacity (pH stabilisation) and improving soil functions (amelioration properties) for obtaining higher crop yield while avoiding unfavourable effects of soil. Many studies across the globe confirmed the usefulness of adding bio-char in improving the physico-chemical and biological properties of soil and usefulness in mitigating global warming.

All these land preparation activities (like cleaning and burning, raised bed preparation and burning process) are completed during January to March and sowing is done soon after the pre-monsoon showers. During the first year the beds prepared by the above technique are utilised for ginger and potato cultivation.

In the second year, farmers grow upland paddy and vegetables like chilli, yam, tomato, bottle gourd and pumpkin. After the burning process, the crops are cultivated as per the traditional method without using much external inputs. A scrutiny of the statistically analysed data indicates that, under 'Thang Bun' cultivation, root crops like ginger and potato gave higher yields in comparison to open burnt 'Jhum' cultivation.

In the case of upland paddy cultivation, the increase was to the tune of 72 percent in the second year of study. The significant increase in the yields under 'Thang Bun' can be attributed to improved soil physico-chemical properties such as soil acidity, soil fertility, microbial activity, water holding capacity, bulk density, porosity and soil fertility.

Bun' is passed through generations. This method is an ecologically-based age-old farming system developed by ancient farmers through generations through their interaction with nature and natural resources for their survival, Dr Gowda explained.

## Mashed mangoes



A lorry carrying mangoes from Tirupattur district to Vellore met with an accident at Solur near Ambur leaving the fruits scattered on the road.

—K.Senthil Nathan

## Waiting for the job



Many youngsters along with elders turn up to receive Covaxin at Sembakkam municipality on Friday.

—DC

Declare us as frontline workers,  
demand Anganwadi employeesOP. ARULN | DC  
CHENNAI, JUNE 4

The anganwadi workers and helpers have demanded the government to declare them as frontline workers as they have been working with the government in the fight against Covid-19 for the past two years. As many as 32 anganwadi workers have died since the outbreak of Coronavirus in 2019.

P. Chithirai Selvi, secretary, Tamil Nadu Anganwadi Workers and Anganwadi Helpers' Association, told DC that the state had more than one lakh anganwadi workers and helpers serving in 5,44,439 centres.

"We have been demanding the government to regularise our service, time, scale of pay along with gratuity and pension. Even after serving for 35 years, we get only ₹13,000 as monthly salary and retire with a meagre pension of ₹2,000", she said.

The anganwadis provide supplementary nutrition to pre-school children, health and

nutrition guidance, immunisation, health check-ups and referral services to children below the age of six, pregnant and lactating women.

She said they are also roped in for government services including enumeration of census, looking after pregnant women, registration of birth and death, distribution of nutritious food to pregnant women and lactating women. They are also involved in polio drops, vaccination drives and revision of electoral rolls.

During the Covid-19 lockdowns, they have been distributing nutritious supplements, including rice and dhal, to the beneficiaries at their door steps. The workers are involved in house visits of residents, who come from other parts of the state and country.

"We serve in fever clinics and collect details of temperature of residents, check-up of BP and sugar patients, distribution of Kabasura Kudineer, food to people at quarantine centres, distribution of medicine

to patients in Covid-19 care camps, collect daily details of patients, prepare reports relating to domestic violence, bringing patients to the Covid-19 care centre after identification and inoculation", she said.

Chithirai Selvi said "we have been doing all this work with a meagre salary and not received any incentive from the government". We work facing the risk of contracting the virus. Most of the workers are poor, destitute and widows. They have been doing all this service in coordination of district administration, health department, police and local government. Often, we face hardship from the police during our travel", she said.

The association has demanded the government to declare them as frontline workers, apart from necessary support. Besides regularizing their service, they have also urged the government to issue a solatium of ₹25 lakh to the family members of virus victims.

## Call to return to native trees growing culture

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC  
OOTY, JUNE 4

As the globe observes World Environment Day on Saturday with the theme 'Ecosystem restoration', a group of environmentalists here has plunged into action to bring back the 'native trees growing culture' in the hills to pave way for restoration of the original hill ecosystem and to avoid exotic species in future.

## WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

V. Sivadas, the managing trustee of Nilgiris Environment and Socio-cultural Trust (NEST), who is leading the campaign that began in Fern Hill, said it is apt that this year's theme is 'Ecosystem restoration' as there is a need to restore the ecosystem to combat the challenges to nature and environment.

"The alteration of the origi-

nal ecosystem over the decades has led to various ecological and eco-toxicological effects that saw humankind as well as other living creatures suffer. It is time for the human race to revert back to the old and original ecosystem of the respective regions with the planting of native flora to ensure that nature regains its region-specific originality to

sustain the environment around. The time has arrived for the local communities to 'think globally and act locally', he advocated.

Parameshwaran, a member of NEST, said that returning to the native tree culture is essential, especially in the hills to strengthen the soil texture to avoid landslides. "Certainly, there is a natural understanding between the soil texture and native trees in the hills that mutually sup-

port each other to sustain the ecosystem of the region. Moreover, the native trees naturally go along with the biodiversity of the area to sustain the original ecology and avian life. That's the region where we are insisting on native tree growing culture. It is imperative that people in their respective areas come together to re-imagine, re-recreate and restore the ecosystems," he added.



Environmentalists take to planting of native tree saplings in Fern Hill area in Ooty.

—DC



## SHORT TAKES

BROWN SUGAR  
WORTH ₹2 CRORE  
SEIZEDAKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO |  
DC  
BHUBANESWAR, JUNE 4

The Special Task Force (STF) of Odisha Crime Branch on Friday seized huge quantities of brown sugar and arrested three persons at Jaleswar area in Balasore district.

The market value of the seized contraband weighing 2 kg is estimated to be over Rs 2 crore, state Crime Branch deputy inspector general (DIG) Jay Narayan Pankaj said.

"It's a massive quantity worth over ₹2 crore. We have arrested three persons who are prima facie involved in the illegal trade. The trio belong to Balasore district. We had already seized 33 kg of brown sugar and 66 quintal ganja and arrested several peddlers since we launched our special drive last year," he added.

From the quantity of the contraband recovered from the trio, it becomes clear that they were not the retailers but were trading wholesale. It's too early to determine their modus operandi as the investigation is at an early stage, Pankaj added.

The Crime Branch STF and the Odisha police have recently intensified the anti-narcotics crackdown across the state and they continue to book the traffickers on many occasions.

Dismissing the perception that shutdown would help the smugglers, the DIG clarified that the curfew had no impact on smuggling of brown sugar as transportation of small quantities is easier unlike ganja which is trafficked in bulks.

The top crime branch official hoped that smuggling activities will decrease further in the coming days due to frequent crackdown against drug peddling.

"Moreover, we will also get cooperation from neighbouring West Bengal once the Covid-19 restrictions are eased. The drive can be expedited further," he added.

Last month, the STF had apprehended two drug peddlers and seized huge volumes of brown sugar worth over Rs 1 crore from Sahadevkhunta area in the same district. During searches, brown sugar weighing 1.36 kg, a stolen bike without registration number and other incriminating materials were seized from their possession.

GUJARAT ALLOWS  
OFFICES TO RUN  
WITH 100% STAFF

**Ahmedabad, June 4:** In the wake of a significant decline in Covid-19 cases, the Gujarat government on Friday announced that private as well as government offices in the state can now function with 100 per cent staff from June 7.

The decision was taken by Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani, an official release issued on Friday said. All government offices will remain open on Saturday (June 5), it added.

Private as well as government offices in Gujarat have been functioning with 50 per cent staff since the beginning of May, when the state witnessed a substantial rise in infection cases. The state government had allowed only half the work force in offices in a bid to curb the spread of the virus.

However, the number of daily infections has come down drastically in the last couple of weeks. On Thursday, Gujarat recorded 1,207 new cases and 17 deaths.

HYDROGRAPHIC  
SURVEY VESSEL  
DECOMMISSIONED

**Visakhapatnam, June 4:** INS Sandhayak, the Indian Navy's oldest Hydrographic Survey Vessel, was decommissioned at the naval dockyard here on Friday after serving the nation for 40 years. The ship was decommissioned at a low key event due to the ongoing COVID pandemic, a navy release said.

The National Flag, Naval Ensign and the Decommissioning Pennant were lowered at sunset in the presence of Vice Admiral Ajendra Bahadur Singh, Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief Eastern Naval Command, the Chief Guest at the ceremony, it said. The ceremony was also attended by Vice Admiral Vinay Badhwar, Chief Hydrographer to the Government of India and by serving hydrographers through live streaming. —PTI



Toshika Naidu (13 years), an 8th class student, along with her brother Srinivas G.R. Naidu (10 years), show the pictures of their parents who died due to COVID-19, at Ranjhi in Jabalpur, Friday.

— PTI

PM hails Indian scientists  
for developing vaccine

Modi addresses CSIR meeting via video conferencing

**New Delhi, June 4:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday lauded Indian scientists for developing a Made in India vaccine against COVID-19 and boosting other measures to fight the pandemic within a year of its outbreak.

Addressing a meeting of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) Society via video conference, the prime minister, who is also the president of the scientific body, cited India's experience in the previous century to say that the country used to wait for years to lay its hands on innovations achieved abroad, but its scientists are now working shoulder to shoulder with their counterparts outside.

They are working at the same quick pace, he said.

He said the COVID-19 pandemic is the biggest challenge of the century but history has witnessed that whenever humanity has faced any major issues, science has paved the way for a better path in the future. This work was done by scientists across the world and in India, the prime minister said.

"Our scientists, within a year, developed 'Made in India' vaccine and made it available to the countrymen," he said.

India has indigenously developed Covaxin vaccine against coronavirus.

He said within a year, scientists made the country self-reliant by making COVID testing kits. In a short span, they discovered many drugs to treat coronavirus and developed ways to speed up oxygen production.

"Because of your contribution, immense talent,

Doctors need protection from Covid,  
BJP govt's callousness: Rahul Gandhi

**New Delhi, June 4:** Critical of the government's handling of Covid, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Friday said doctors need protection from coronavirus and the BJP dispensation's callousness as he made an appeal to save them.

Gandhi has criticised the government's policies to check the spread of the pandemic and the vaccination drive.

"Doctors need protection from coronavirus as well as BJP governments' callousness. Save the saviours," he said on Twitter.

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh also attacked Andhra Pradesh Chief

Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy for asking all states to speak in one voice on vaccines.

"All I ask Jagan is: who made the vaccine issue Union vs States? Who unilaterally decided the Union government will abdicate vaccinating 18-44 year olds? Why weren't states consulted before this policy was rolled out? Why don't you ask the PM these questions," Ramesh questioned him.

Reddy had said that in a "states versus Union" situation, the chief ministers should should "speak in a single voice" on vaccines and urged them not to indulge in politics by pointing fingers at Prime

Minister Narendra Modi. Earlier, Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik wrote a letter to all chief ministers for a consensus on centralised procurement of vaccines by Government of India in view of the challenges faced by states.

"Spoke to some CMs who shared my views. No state is safe unless all states adopt vaccination as a top priority and execute it on war-footing," he had said.

Some non-NDA ruled chief ministers have criticised the Centre over its vaccination policy and urged the central government to procure vaccines for them. —PTI

the country is fighting this big war (against coronavirus)," Modi said.

On the occasion, Modi reiterated his call for an Aatmanirbhar Bharat (Self-reliant) and a strong India, saying the COVID-19 crisis may have slowed its pace but the country's resolve remains the same.

Lauding the work done by the CSIR, he said the organisation has produced several talented scientists and it was led by ones like Shantiswarup Bhatnagar.

"I have always stressed that (if) any organisation which has such a great legacy then its responsibility also rises for the future. The country has a lot of expectations from scientists and technicians," Modi said.

The CSIR, he said, has a powerful ecosystem of research and patents and its scientists work for many problems faced by the country.

"But the country's goals and dreams are based on the foundation of the 21st century. Which is why the goals of the CSIR are also extraordinary," he said.

He urged the scientists to go ahead keeping in mind the 75 years of Independence, with clear goals and time bound framework, with a clear direction. This will help in changing the work culture, he said.

"Which is why our goals should be two steps ahead of the future. We have to work on the needs of this decade and future decades from now," he stressed.

India wants to be self-reliant in a number of sectors, ranging from agriculture to astronomy, disaster management to defence technology, vaccine to virtual reality, and biotechnology to battery technology, he said.

He said India is now showing the way to the world in sustainable development and clean energy, and is playing an important role in progress in other countries with its software and satellite development.

Modi said with regards to disaster management, the world has a pandemic like coronavirus before it.

But similar challenges will be in store in the future. For example, experts worldwide are predicting climate change, he said. —PTI

DAC CLEARS  
₹43,000 CRORE  
DEAL TO BUILD  
6 SUBMARINES

FROM PG 1

Mazagon Docks and L&T will now collaborate with any of the five foreign companies to submit their bids. These foreign companies are Russian Rosoboron export, French Naval Group, South Korean Daewoo, German Thyssenkrupp Marine Systems and Spanish Navantia.

Last year the DAC had approved these five foreign companies as the potential Original Equipment Manufacturers that could collaborate on the project.

"This is a landmark approval, being the first case processed under the Strategic Partnership model. This would be one of the largest 'Make in India' projects and will serve to facilitate faster and more significant absorption of technology and create a tiered industrial ecosystem for submarine construction in India," the defence ministry said on Friday.

China is now investing heavily in its Navy and has the fastest growing naval assets in the world.

The DAC also accorded approval of procurement of air defence guns and ammunition for the Indian Army at an approximate cost of Rs 6,000 crores under the Buy and Make (Indian) category.

BJP sacks Bihar MLC  
for anti-Nitish remarksNAYEAR AZAD  
PATNA, JUNE 4

Simmering discontent within the NDA surfaced on Friday when BJP suspended one of its MLC Tunna Pandey for making statements against Chief Minister Nitish Kumar.

Mr. Pandey had recently stoked a controversy by calling Chief Minister Nitish Kumar a "Chief Minister of circumstances" and also threatened to expose him for "having a connection with liquor mafia since 2009".

BJP state president Sanjay Jaiswal on Friday issued his suspension letter in which he said that "a show-cause notice was served to you by the party's disciplinary committee for making comments against the party line. Instead of furnishing a valid explanation, you made another statement. You are being suspended with immediate effect".

Taking a strong objection to his controversial statements against Bihar CM, the BJP disciplinary committee Chief Vijay Singh had served him a notice on Thursday seeking an explanation from Mr. Pandey within 10 days.

Sources said that action was initiated against Tunna Pandey after NDA allies JD(U) and HAM raised the issue with BJP

state president Sanjay Jaiswal.

Later when he was approached for his comments regarding the issue, Mr. Pandey said that "I will give explanations regarding my statements to my party leaders soon".

He has been targeting Nitish Kumar ever since the NDA formed a government in Bihar. Recently he created a flutter in state politics by saying that "the mandate in 2020 elections was in favour of Tejashwi Yadav but Nitish Kumar became the Chief Minister by misusing official machinery".

He also refused to withdraw his statements against Nitish Kumar saying that he was not afraid of speaking the truth. "I will expose Nitish Kumar's alliance with liquor mafias in Bihar. My party is BJP but I am also a public representative so nobody can stop me from speaking the truth".

Reports suggest after he was served notice from the BJP Tunna Pandey had met Osama Shahab, son of former RJD MP M o h a m m a d Shahabuddin. There is also a buzz that he is in touch with RJD leadership and may join the party soon.

His brother Bacchha Pandey is RJD MLA from the Barharia assembly constituency in the Siwan district.

## Swab test



A health worker collects swab samples of poor and street people for Covid tests in Nagercoil on Friday.

—PTI

PPE, masks, shields  
add to waste crisis

**New Delhi, June 4:** The crisis of plastic and biomedical waste is deepening with each Covid case as millions of people use and throw face shields, surgical masks, gloves and PPE suits, once used primarily in hospitals and now an indispensable part of everyday life.

The movement against plastic has taken a battering in the pandemic with dependency on single-use plastic surging and households contributing to the

tonnes of biomedical waste being generated, worried experts said ahead of World Environment Day on Saturday.

The detritus of the pandemic can be seen everywhere PPE suits lying discarded behind hospitals and crematoriums, surgical masks and shields being thrown as part of household waste and, of course, sanitiser bottles, gloves and the like found in street corner garbage dumps.

—PTI

## HEARING | AFTER A MONTH

High court adjourns hearing on fugitive diamantaire's habeas corpus petition

## Indian team sent to bring back Choksi leaves Dominica

**New Delhi, Jun 4:** India's multi-agency team that had gone to Dominica to bring back Mehul Choksi is headed back home on a Qatar Airways private jet after the island nation's high court adjourned the hearing on the fugitive diamantaire's habeas corpus petition, sources said.

Publicly available flight data showed that the jet took off from the Melville Hall Airport in Dominica at 8.09 pm (local time) on June 3 and is travelling towards Madrid.

The multi-agency team of officials is also returning, the sources said.

The team led by CBI DIG Sharda Raut was stationed in Dominica for nearly seven days to bring back Choksi, who is wanted in the ₹13,500-crore Punjab National Bank (PNB) scam, to India.

On Thursday, the Dominica High Court adjourned the hearing on Choksi's habeas corpus petition.

A habeas corpus petition is filed for producing before a court a person who is under arrest or in unlawful detention.

It is likely that the next hearing may take place after a month and the businessman will remain in Dominica, local media reported.

Judge Bernie Stephenson will decide the next date of hearing after meeting both sides, media outlet Antigua News Room said.

The adjournment is to allow lawyers of Choksi and the Dominica government "to agree on the language to be used with respect to the injunction filed to prevent his removal from Dominica", it

said. Thursday's hearing was conducted through videoconferencing with a group of protesters standing outside the High Court building in Roseau carrying placards with messages seeking to know the truth about the controversy.

"Who brought Choksi to Dominica?" read one of the placards, the photo of which was published by many media outlets.

The judge had on Wednesday ordered production of Choksi before the magistrate to face charges of illegal entry into Dominica.

The 62-year-old wheelchair-bound diamantaire, who has a pending Interpol Red Notice against him, arrived before presiding Roseau Magistrate Court in black shorts and a

blue T-shirt from the Dominica-China Friendship Hospital, where he is undergoing treatment. His application for bail was rejected.

Choksi and his nephew Nirav Modi had fled India in the first week of January 2018, weeks before the PNB scam rocked the Indian banking industry.

The duo allegedly bribed officials of the state-run bank to get Letters of Undertaking (LoU) on the basis of which they availed loans from overseas banks that remained unpaid.

The allegedly corrupt bank officials did not enter these LoUs in the core banking software of PNB, thus evading scrutiny. The non-payment of these LoUs or bank guarantees worth ₹13,500 crore resulted in default and

became a liability on the bank.

Choksi had mysteriously gone missing on May 23 from Antigua and Barbuda, where he has been staying since 2018 as a citizen since he fled Delhi.

He was detained in neighbouring island country Dominica for illegal entry after a possible romantic escapade with his rumoured girlfriend.

His lawyers alleged that he was kidnapped from Jolly Harbour in Antigua by policemen looking like Antiguan and Indian and brought to Dominica on a boat.

Modi escaped to Europe and was finally held in London, where he is contesting his extradition to India. Choksi took the citizenship of Antigua and Barbuda in 2017. —PTI



Mehul Choksi is taken in a wheelchair to the magistrate's court by police after his arrest for illegal entry into the country, in Roseau, Dominica, Wednesday.

— PTI



## SHORT TAKES

FIRE AT JUVENILE  
DETENTION KILLS  
6 KIDS IN EGYPT

**Cairo:** A fire broke out on Thursday at a juvenile detention center in Egypt's capital of Cairo, killing at least six children, officials said.

The officials said the fire followed a fist-fight between two children in one ward at the facility, located in the city's Marj district. More than two dozen other children were injured, they said.

Police are holding those running the facility as prosecutors investigate the cause of the fire, the officials said.

The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to brief media.

It was not immediately clear what caused the fire. Initial investigation blamed an electric short-circuit for the blaze, according to state-run media.

The state-run newspaper *Akhbar el-Yom* reported that the children were not able to flee the fire because the ward was locked.

JAILED SAMSUNG  
LEADER FINED FOR  
PROPOFOL SHOTS

**Seoul:** South Korean prosecutors fined the jailed de facto leader of the giant Samsung group 50 million won (\$45,000) on Friday for illegally taking shots of the anaesthetic propofol. Lee Jae-yong — the 168th richest person in the world according to Forbes — is currently serving a two-and-a-half year prison sentence for bribery, embezzlement and other offences in connection with the corruption scandal that brought down ex-South Korean president Park Geun-hye.

He is also standing a separate trial over alleged stock manipulation that effectively eased the path for him to take control of the family conglomerate. Propofol is normally a medical anaesthetic but is also sometimes used recreationally. An overdose of the drug was given as the cause of pop star Michael Jackson's death in 2009.

Lee was accused of having repeatedly taken it at a plastic surgery clinic in Seoul in 2017 and 2018.

GERMAN CLERIC  
TO QUIT OVER  
CHURCH ABUSE

**Berlin:** A leading German cardinal and confidant of Pope Francis, Cardinal Reinhard Marx, offered to resign Friday over the Catholic Church's "catastrophic" mishandling of clergy sexual abuse cases, declaring in an extraordinary gesture that the scandals had brought the church to "a dead end." The archdiocese of Munich and Freising, where Marx has served as archbishop since 2007, published his resignation letter to the pope online, in multiple languages, and the cardinal said Francis had given him permission to make it public.

"It is important to me to share the responsibility for the catastrophe of the sexual abuse by Church officials over the past decades," the 67-year-old Marx wrote in the letter. But he also issued a challenge of sorts for his fellow bishops to use the opportunity of the scandal to save the church and reform it. There was no immediate comment from the Vatican, where Marx sits on powerful financial and political committees.

12 OZ FIRMS FINED  
FOR BREAKING  
PELL ORDER

**Canberra:** A judge on Friday ordered a dozen Australian media companies to pay fines from 1,000 Australian dollars (\$766) to AU\$450,000 (\$345,000) for breaching a gag order by publishing references to Cardinal George Pell's since-overturned convictions in 2018 for child sexual abuse.

Dozens of companies, reporters and editors were initially charged with contempt and breaching a suppression order over their coverage of the convictions, which were banned from publication in Australia until February 2019.

Such suppression orders are common in the Australian and British judicial systems. But the enormous international interest in an Australian criminal trial with global ramifications highlighted the difficulty in enforcing such orders in the digital age. The media companies pleaded guilty in February to 21 charges of contempt in a plea deal in the Victoria state Supreme Court.



People hold up their phones with the light on in the Causeway Bay district of Hong Kong on Friday, after police closed the venue where Hong Kong people traditionally gather annually to mourn the victims of China's Tiananmen Square crackdown in 1989 which the authorities have banned citing the Coronavirus pandemic and vowed to stamp out any protests on the anniversary.

— AFP

HK park empty for 1st time in  
32 years on Tiananmen anniv.

Cops enforce ban public commemorations but protests flicker at distance

**Hong Kong, June 4:** A Hong Kong park that traditionally hosts huge vigils on the anniversary of China's deadly Tiananmen Square crackdown lay empty for the first time late Friday as police blocked access, but flashes of defiance still flickered across the city.

Huge crowds have routinely gathered in Hong Kong's Victoria Park to mark the anniversary of Chinese troops crushing peaceful democracy protests in Beijing's Tiananmen Square on June 4, 1989.

Hundreds were killed in the crackdown, by some estimates more than 1,000.

Public commemorations are forbidden on the mainland and, until recently, semi-autonomous Hong Kong was the one place in China where large scale

remembrance was still tolerated.

This year's vigil was banned at a time when authorities are carrying out a sweeping clampdown on dissent following huge and often violent democracy protests two years ago.

Police threw cordons around the Victoria Park, keeping crowds out and leaving the venue free of candle carrying mourners for the first time in 32 years.

Activists who approached the park were stopped and searched, while officers used loud hailer and signs to call for people to disperse from nearby streets.

Some officers displayed signs warning chanting crowds that they were in breach of a sweeping new national security law Beijing imposed on the

**● POLICE THREW cordons around the Victoria Park, keeping crowds out and leaving the venue free of candle carrying mourners for the first time in 32 years.**

city last year to stamp out dissent.

Unable to muster en masse, many Hong Kong residents still found other ways to mourn the dead.

As the clock struck 8pm in Hong Kong's shopping district of Mong Kok, dozens of people simultaneously turned their mobile phone lights on, a small gesture of defiance in a city where mass remembrance of Beijing's Tiananmen crackdown has been banned.

It was a scene repeated

in multiple districts across the city.

For the last 32 years, crowds of Hong Kongers, often tens of thousands strong, have come together each June 4 in the city's Victoria Park to hold a candlelight vigil for those killed in 1989 when tanks and troops crushed pro-democracy protesters in China's capital.

Police arrested an organiser of Hong Kong's annual candlelight vigil remembering the deadly crackdown in Beijing's Tiananmen Square, warned people not to attend the banned event and cordoned off parts of the venue on Friday as authorities mute China's last pro-democracy voices. In past years, tens of thousands of people gathered in Hong Kong's Victoria Park to honour those who

died when China's military put down student-led pro-democracy protests on June 4, 1989.

Hundreds, if not thousands, were killed. China's ruling Communist Party has never allowed public events on the mainland to mark the anniversary and security was increased at the Beijing square, with police checking pedestrians' IDs as tour buses shuttled Chinese tourists in and out.

Chinese officials say the country's rapid economic development in the years since what they call the "political turmoil" of 1989 proves that decisions made at the time were correct.

Efforts to suppress public memory of the Tiananmen events have lately turned to Hong Kong.

— AFP/AP

## Lancet: Pfizer vax weaker vs Delta variant

FAUCI TELLS CHINA TO RELEASE HEALTH  
RECORDS OF NINE BAT CAVE PATIENTS

**Washington, June 4:** Top US scientist Anthony Fauci has urged China to release the medical records of nine people who fell sick with a coronavirus-like illness prior to the outbreak, saying they could provide insights into whether the pandemic came from a lab. The "lab leak" theory has gained increasing traction, fueled by reports that six miners fell ill in 2012 and three researchers from the Wuhan

Institute of Virology became sick in 2019 after visiting a bat cave in the southwestern Chinese province of Yunnan. In an interview with *The Financial Times* on Thursday, US President Joe Biden's chief medical adviser said the records could answer critical questions over the contested origins of Covid-19 in Wuhan, where a pandemic that has killed over 3.6 million people worldwide began.

the dose gap between vaccines since they found that after just one dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, people are less likely to develop antibody levels

against the B.1.617.2 variant as high as those seen against the previously dominant B.1.1.7 (Alpha) variant, first found in Kent. The team, led by

researchers from the Francis Crick Institute in the UK, noted that levels of antibodies alone do not predict vaccine effectiveness and prospective pop-

ulation studies are also needed. Lower neutralising antibody levels may still be associated with protection against Covid-19, they said.

The study analysed antibodies in the blood of 250 healthy people who received either one or two doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine, up to three months after their first dose.

The researchers tested the ability of antibodies to block entry of the virus into cells, so called 'neutralising antibodies', against five different variants of SARS-CoV-2.

They then compared concentrations of these neutralising antibodies between all variants.

Corporate tax 'in  
sight' as G7 meets

**London, June 4:** Group of Seven finance ministers kicked off talks Friday, with optimism growing that the world's wealthiest countries will support US-backed plans for a minimum global level of corporate tax.

British finance minister Rishi Sunak was hosting the meet — held in person after an easing of Covid restrictions and attended by counterparts from Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States.

The talks were preparing the ground for a broader summit of G7 leaders in Cornwall, southwest England starting on June 11, which will include US President Joe Biden on his first foreign tour since taking office in January.

Momentum is building for a minimum level of corporate tax to pre-

vent multinationals like tech giants from playing the system to boost profits.

Corporate tax is one of two pillars in efforts for global fiscal reforms, the other being a "digital tax" to allow countries to tax the profits of multinationals headquartered overseas.

"And I would just say this: The world has noticed. And I believe they have high expectations for what we all can agree over the coming days.

"Opportunities to make truly lasting reforms like this do not come very often, and I sincerely hope that we seize the moment."

China urges closer Afghan  
ties as US pullout looms

**Beijing, June 4:** China is urging closer security and economic cooperation with Afghanistan in an apparent effort to bolster its influence in the region as the US and its allies prepare to withdraw their forces from the country.

The official *Xinhua* News Agency reported that foreign ministers from China, Afghanistan and Pakistan met via video conference on Thursday and agreed

that the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan should be carried out in a responsible and orderly manner to prevent the deterioration of the security situation in Afghanistan and the return of "terrorist forces."

It quoted Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi as saying the three countries "needed to strengthen communication and cooperation" for the sake of

Afghanistan's interests and those of neighbouring countries. "The security and stability of Afghanistan and the region are facing new challenges, with foreign troops' withdrawal from Afghanistan accelerated, the peace and reconciliation process in Afghanistan impacted, and armed conflicts and terrorist activities becoming more frequent," Wang was quoted as saying.

— AP

S. Korea air chief  
quits as abused  
woman ends life

**Seoul, June 4:** South Korea's air force chief resigned on Friday, apologising and taking responsibility for the death of a member of the force who took her own life, according to her family, after being sexually harassed by a colleague.

Lee Seong-yong offered to step down a day after an air force master sergeant was arrested on charges of molesting and injuring a female colleague of the same rank in March.

The family of the victim said she had suffered mental distress and persistent bullying, and accused the air force of trying to cover up the assault and silence her over the past two months.

President Moon Jae-in immediately accepted Lee's resignation, his press secretary said, making him the shortest serving South Korean air

force chief after appointing him in September.

"I would like to extend my apology to the citizens and deep condolences to the deceased person and her family. I feel heavy responsibility and offer my resignation," Lee said in a statement.

The case sparked a public outcry after the woman's family filed a petition with Moon's office on Tuesday calling for a thorough investigation and punishment for those involved. More than 326,000 people have signed it so far.

Moon ordered an investigation on Thursday including on how the air force handled the case, as the family reported three officials at Lee's base to military prosecutors, accusing two of them of dereliction of duty and attempted compulsion and the other of sexual harassment.

— Reuters

NZ allows way for  
China extradition

**Wellington, June 4:** New Zealand's top court on Friday left open the possibility that a man could be extradited to China to face murder charges in a landmark case that has big diplomatic implications.

It remains uncertain whether the extradition of Kyung Yup Kim will proceed in a case that has already dragged on for more than a decade.

The dispute hinges on whether New Zealand can be assured that Kim will get a fair trial if he's sent to China and won't be tortured. New Zealand doesn't have an extradition treaty with China.

New Zealand's Supreme Court on Friday didn't make a final ruling on the case but asked for more information from Justice Minister Kris Faafoi and others to be submitted by the end of July.

The 3-2 split decision found that it was possible for New Zealand to get sufficient assurance from China about Kim's welfare, partially overturning an earlier appeals court ruling.

Such assurances could include confirmation that representatives could visit Kim at least every 48 hours during the investigation and that the trial take place in Shanghai. But times have changed since a previous justice minister from a conservative government backed extradition. Faafoi is from a liberal government and will decide how to proceed at a time when relations with China have deteriorated.

The court acknowledged Faafoi might see things differently, saying he would be "entitled to depart from the previous minister's decision." — AP

## LANKA SUED AS OIL SPILL LOOMS

**Colombo, June 4:** Environmentalists on Friday sued the Sri Lankan government and operators of a container ship loaded with chemicals and plastic that burned offshore for almost two weeks, as international experts prepared to deal with a possible oil spill. The private Centre for Environment Justice petitioned the Supreme Court alleging that local authorities should have been able to prevent what they called the "worst marine disaster" in Lanka's history.

— AFP

**NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR MICRO, SMALL & MEDIUM ENTERPRISES (NI-MSME)**  
(An Organisation of the Ministry of MSME, Govt. of India and an ISO 9001:2015 certified)  
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**NOTIFICATION FOR HIRING UNDER CONTRACT APPOINTMENT REGULATION (CAR) 2007 RULES**  
Advertisement No.: ni-msme/vacancy notification/2021/01 Date: 01.06.2021

S. No.	Name of the Post	No. of Posts	Scale of Pay and Category	Method of Recruitment	Other Information
1.	Director	3	Level-12 of 7th CPC Group-A	Contract Appointment	For further details regarding eligibility, qualifications, experience, age and job description please visit the official website of the organization <a href="http://www.ni.msme.org">www.ni.msme.org</a> & <a href="http://www.msme.gov.in">www.msme.gov.in</a>
2.	Facility Member	5	Level-11 of 7th CPC Group-A	Regulation	
3.	Associate Faculty Member	4	Level-10 of 7th CPC Group-A	(CAR) 2007 Rules of NI-MSME	
4.	Administrative & Accounts Officer	1	Level-9 of 7th CPC Group-B	NI-MSME	

Candidates offering the application are to submit online application in the prescribed format. The last date for applications along with updated CV, Scanned Copies of certificates (Qualification & Experience), and other relevant certificates are to be uploaded in the ni.msme website. The last date to receive the online applications will be 30.06.2021. The screening of the applications will be done by the Selection Committee and short listed candidates will be informed through their e-mail to attend for an online personal interview.

**Sd/- DIRECTOR GENERAL**

**NORTHERN RAILWAY**  
**TENDER NOTICE**

Chief Engineer/TMC, Northern Railway, Headquarters office, Baroda House, New Delhi-110001, for and on behalf of the President of India, invites 02 No tenders through E-Procurement system for supply of the following items:

S. No.	E-Tender No.	Description of Item	Qty	Due date Time
1.	A07P90STM2021	DIGITAL ULTRASONIC DOUBLE RAIL TESTER	05 Nos	25.06.2021 at 11:30 hours
2.	A28P90TMC2021	Various Types of Cylinder	06 Items	25.06.2021 at 11:30 hours

**Note:-** 1. The complete information of above E-Procurement tenders are available on website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in). The firms, who desire to participate against E-Tenders, are advised to electronically register themselves on the above website for which they would be required to have a class-III digital certificate from certifying agencies authorized under IT Act 2000, by Govt. of India. Manual offers against E-Tenders will not be accepted. No. 219-SH/TMC/07/2021-22 Dated: 03.06.2021 1214/21

**SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE**

**NORTHERN RAILWAY**  
**Notice Inviting E-Tender**

For and on behalf of the President of India, Divisional Railway Manager (Commercial), Moradabad Division, Northern Railway, invites bid online on IREPS Portal, [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) on competitive two packet, open tender system for "Contract for redevelopment/repair and maintenance of Goods-shed at Bareilly Cantt. (BRYC) Station for improving existing/providing additional facilities through private investment for five(5) years."

S. N.	Station name & Code	Category of Station & Goodshed	Cost of bid document including GST @18%	Estimated cost for five years	Earnest Money	Pre-bid Conference date & Time	Date & time submission of Bid & Website
1	Bareilly Cantt. (BRYC)	NSG-6 & Group-Ist	Rs. 11,800/-	Rs. 8,40,42,000/-	Rs. 5,70,300/-	Date- 23.06.2021 Time- 12:00 PM & 14:00 PM	Date- 19.07.2021 Time- 14:00 PM & 14:00 PM

No. 48/Goods/BRYC/MB/21-C Dated: 03.06.2021 1219/2021

**Serving Customers with a Smile**

**NORTHERN RAILWAY**  
**TENDER NOTICE**

Sr. Divisional Signal and Telecom engineer/Moradabad for and on behalf of President of India invites Open tenders through E-Tendering system for the following works:-

S. No.	Tender No. & Description of work	Approx. Cost (₹)	Earnest Money (₹)	Cost of Tender Form (₹)	Last date and time for submission of tender and opening of tender
1.	205-Sig-SNT-MB-21-22 Provision of Fire detection and Alarm system at 30 stations over Moradabad Division.	₹1,00,01,754.51	NIT	NIL	28.06.2021 15:00 hrs.
2.	02RT-PTM-Sig-SNT-2019-2020 TTR-S&T work in c/w turnout/renewal work of engineering in the section MB-GZB, MB-BE and MB-SRE section	₹1,70,30,891.84	NIT	NIL	

**Note:** Complete details of tender can be seen at [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in)  
Tender Notice No. 205/02RT-Sig-SNT-MB-21-22 Date: 04.06.2021 1221/21

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# DECCAN Chronicle

5 JUNE 2021

## Change in pension rules a bid to stifle critical voices

Earlier this week, the government amended Rule 8 of the Central Civil Services (Pension) Rules 1972. It aims to prevent retired officials from writing books or newspaper articles or give interviews without taking prior approval from the current heads of those organisations. In practice, this is likely to amount to a blanket ban unless, in a specific case, the government wants to promote a viewpoint through a retired officer.

It is evident that changing the pension rules amounts to dangling the threat of withholding or even withdrawing the pension earned through decades of dedicated service. This seems an intimidation tactic. In a recent interview, former Army chief Gen. V.P. Malik (Retd) said the amendment “requires a review” and that it was “overarching”. The military leader, who led the Army with distinction in the Kargil war, chose to speak his mind although the military is not covered under the change made. He rightly noted the Official Secrets Act was adequate deterrent who seek to compromise national security.

A retired chief of both the Intelligence Bureau and Research and Analysis Wing. A.S. Dulat, who was an adviser in Atal Behari Vajpayee's PMO, is an author of many books and newspaper articles and is often interviewed in the media, has said he wouldn't be seeking permission. He also said the amendment “isn't right”. He wondered aloud in an interview if the changed rule would apply even if he chose to write literature or poetry. And there is a reason for this.

The threatened backdoor ban would apply to writing that is related to the “domain of the organisation, including references or information about any personnel and his/her designation, and expertise of knowledge gained by virtue of working in that organisation”. If the government turned nasty, this could easily apply to a short story, poem or novel where insights or experiences of a period are referred to.

Why link pension, widely seen as an inalienable part of government service, to drummed-up fears on national security? It is necessary to raise the question as it is amply clear that through their writings and interviews, and through their contribution to think tanks whose discussions are frequently reflected in public forums, retired senior officials enrich the national conversation by raising the level of debate and discussion. They help us better grasp matters relating to national security, on which millions of rupees from the exchequer are spent. The process makes for an aware citizenry, an unquantifiable attribute that aids society and the State by preparing people for times of crisis. The experience of retired senior officials, when made public, also enhances the scope of knowledge production.

There are 18 departments in the Second Schedule of the RTI Act that are covered under the amended order covering pensions. These include the IB and RAW, the paramilitary forces like BSF, CRPF, ITBP, CISF, Assam Rifles, SSB, SFF, the special branch and CID in select locations like the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Dadra, Nagar Haveli and Lakshadweep. The Enforcement Directorate, Narcotics Control Bureau and the Central Economic Intelligence Bureau, outfits which are suspected to be used to harass political opponents, are also covered.

The list of departments suggests that the government is sensitive to any criticism or implied criticism in the future to policies related to Kashmir and the Northeast or distant maritime regions where the intelligence and security services are salient, and is keen that suppressing dissidents and political opponents is cost-free.

## SDG: Gaps flagged, bridge them

A look at the dashboard of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) India Index of Niti Aayog showing data that was released on Thursday throws up little surprise — some Indian states are seen making steady progress while some fail to catch up in improving the lot of their people. And the pattern continues to be similar to what we have seen over all these decades — the South and West are doing relatively well compared with the northern and eastern states. Kerala retains its top position with 75 points while Tamil Nadu has shared the second spot with Himachal Pradesh, each scoring 74 points. Bihar is at the bottom of the list with 52 points. India as a nation has improved its own position by scoring 66 points against last year's 60 on the back of better performance in areas such as clean energy, urban development and sanitation. The 2021 index covers 17 goals, 70 targets and 115 indicators compared with last year's 17 goals, 54 targets and 100 indicators.

As per Niti Aayog, the SDG India Index is intended to provide a holistic view on the social, economic and environmental status of the country as a whole as well as those of the individual states and the Union territories and to provide decisionmakers with critical data for action. It is designed with the help of the United Nations and is expected to help states “understand reasons for differential performance and devise better strategies to achieve the SDGs by 2030”. It should also throw light on the areas where more investment is needed. It's now over to the states to understand the gaps and focus their priorities.

Data are dead numbers unless the people who are entrusted with the job make proper use of it. It calls for a political will and sagacity.

Subhani



## The business of gagging retired spooks isn't easy



Parsa Venkateshwar Rao Jr

A recent amendment to the pension rules of Central government employees provides that those who worked with the intelligence and security agencies, and certain other organisations dealing with India's scientific, strategic and economic interests, will stand to lose their pensions if they write or talk publicly about the outfits they were once associated with and the work they do. It's a clear warning for former spies and spooks, and others who know a little too much about the secrets of the State, that they will lose their pension and other benefits if they were to spill the beans. Given the fact that all of us live in a nation state framework and that we are obliged to protect the interests of the State, it seems but natural that those who were part of officialdom and who worked in the inner circles of the Secret State — which is quite distinct from the Deep State — are honour-bound to keep the secrets till the very end.

It is one of the paradoxes of the modern State that though it operates within a democratic framework and the assumption is that the State is there to protect the interests of all citizens living within its boundaries, it turns out at many times citizens are asked to pay obedience to the State, and even surrender their democratic rights for the survival of the State. And this obligation becomes a draconian demand on those who had worked for the State, and that too in its deepest recesses. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government is understandably even more paranoid about the secrets — often dirty and dark — of the State as

befits a political party with the ideology of idol-worshipping the State. The tweak in the pension rules then does not come as much of a surprise.

But it's a matter of some curiosity and much speculation about why the BJP-led NDA government felt compelled to bring in these punitive changes at this juncture. Is there a fear in the class of political masters that they had tried to use spy rings and the security experts to promote their own agenda on the pretext of serving the State's interests? The case of Mehul Choksi, the fugitive diamond merchant, in Antigua-Dominica does point to some dirty plan that may have gone wrong, or the sedition cases foisted on critics of this government as well as against students and ailing social activists do point to the possibility that the Modi government may have a lot more to hide on issues that involve so-called national interests.

But the government's real irritation lies elsewhere. The retired bureaucrats who have been constantly needing the government are mostly from the IAS and IFS, not many from the intelligence and security services. There are many “grey areas” in this order. If anyone were to write on developments after they left the service, will they attract the punitive action implied in the amendment? The scope of vagueness is much too large.

It is fairly unlikely that in India any government will have to face a book like *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man: The Shocking Story of How America Took over the World*, the 2006 best-seller by John Perkins, a former Central Intelligence Agency operative, which showed the reputa-

sive underbelly of America's secret operations in other countries. If ever there is a book like that of Perkins, it might have more stories of failures rather than successful subversions, in the small countries of South Asia and in the Indian Ocean region.

The issue, however, throws up fundamental issues of morality as well as realpolitik. At the moral level, the citizens of a democratic state have a right to know whether the money they pay in taxes is used for diabolical acts like murder and mayhem, and whether innocent people are being trapped and framed. These goings-on can only be told by those who have worked within the intelligence and security agencies. If the State commits criminal acts in the name of State interests, people have a right to know and to call out the leaders who allowed these things to happen.

It's necessary to know the truth from the realpolitik viewpoint, even if we choose to junk morality. The people have a right to know if ostensibly immoral operations have helped the State's cause or not. It may be that the State would have suffered a lot of harm through ill-thought plans of subversion at home and abroad. Many of America's overseas operations have been utter failures, and the costs in terms of money and men was quite high. The examples of the wars that America has waged in Afghanistan, Iraq and

Syria in the past 20 years in a case in point. No government would, however, allow any of its former employees to spill the beans, and it is natural to hold out the threat of penalties. In India's case, the government's amendment of the pension rules only holds out financial penalties. The former spy or security establishment insider who writes on things he is prohibited from writing, except when permission is granted by a higher officer, will stand to lose his/her pension and other handouts.

Of course, all this is another way of validating the Official Secrets Act. But we know that at least in democratic countries, secret documents are declassified, and the time bar in India is 30 years. Unlike in many other countries, especially those in the West, many of the State's crimes are committed and no record is left about it. It is very unlikely that any of the Indian intelligence agencies, like the Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW) or the Intelligence Bureau (IB), is ever likely to keep scrupulous records of all the right and wrong things that they have done, and which at least after a lifetime come to light. During the Shah Commission hearings after the Emergency, P.N. Haksar, Indira Gandhi's onetime confidant, told the commission that not all orders were put in writing. It is often left to the eyewitness or the victim to speak the truth. It is in situations like these that a former spy or security insider has to speak out for the sake of the truth and morality. Of course, he or she does not have to do so. But if there is a call of the conscience, it may become a compelling need. Then the threat of losing his/her pension or other post-retirement financial benefits may not deter the person from speaking out.

*The writer is a Delhi-based commentator and analyst*

**During the Shah Commission hearings after the Emergency, P.N. Haksar, Indira Gandhi's onetime confidant, told the commission that not all orders were put in writing. It is often left to the eyewitness or the victim to speak the truth.**

## LETTERS

### PEOPLE'S CM

This has reference to your report, CM asks Modi to handover wax manufacturing facility to state. This also refers to your report, State ups pressure on IVC reopening. The Chief Minister is approaching the Covid issue in a scientific manner. His approaches are having a method to arrive at a solution. Above all, it is very laudable that chief minister Stalin, clad in a PPE suit, visited the Covid ward and ICU unit in Coimbatore. He has become the Peoples' CM. He is proving that he is for all. It is an extraordinary event to the spectators and the public. There were several people who had warned him not to repeat such an act. Similarly he humbly requests, people to follow the Covid protocols and more particularly to wear masks properly.

**Suresh Venkatadri, Vellore**

### ENSURE JAB FOR ALL

It is with reference to the news, SC asks for data on vax purchase. Supreme Court order against Central government about its confusing liberalised vaccination policy is a step in the right direction and in the best of public interest. If the Centre had announced a clear roadmap about their vaccine programme — on different age group and about rural areas, the Supreme Court would not have passed such a harsh order. The intention of SC is to ensure that everyone in the country gets equal treatment in getting vaccines. Judicial review and soliciting constitutional justification for policies formulated by the executive is an essential function which the courts are entrusted to perform.

**P. Victor Selvaraj, Palayamkottai**

### SC'S TIMELY ACTION

Apropos report, SC quashes sedition charge against Dua. The apex court's action is timely. The politicians in power won't continue to book their opponents or critics on false charges under sedition laws to imprison them sans bail. We have political freedom but lack social freedom courtesy of the present-day greedy, corrupt and narcissistic politicians. Recently two Telugu news channels were booked under CrPC 124A for airing the views of a YSRCP MP, who is the bete noir of Mr Jagannathan Reddy. Ditto in many states where the inconvenient ones are being hauled up even without filing an FIR. In fact, there are thousands of innocents who are languishing in jails. The Supreme Court, which is seized of the matter, should order their release as everyone cannot approach courts. And also as the political class will never remove those expedient sedition laws, the highest court should assert itself, declare null and void such laws as redundant and anti-people just as it nullified the CrPC 497 by treating it as anti-women.

**A. Seshagiri Rao, Chennai**

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**Kozhikode:** No 6/1002 E, First Floor City Mall, Opp. YMCA Kannur Road, Kozhikode - 673 001

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Farrukh Dhondy  
Cabbages & Kings



“How does a seed turn mud into trees?  
God won't say!  
Numbers of leaves defy infinities  
Nature at play!  
Odours the animals, pollen the bees  
The eternal way.  
The sun sets; birds dance on the breeze  
The sky is grey...”

— From **Wobhi Theek** by Bachchoo

## BBC's Di interview, Harry & Meghan... Why do the Brits 'love' their Queen?

The most famous remark of the late Princess Diana in her BBC interview with journalist Martin Bashir was: “Well, there were three of us in this marriage, so it was a bit crowded.” It was not a revelation. Prince Charles had weeks before admitted in a publicised interview his relationship with Camilla Parker Bowles.

The remark was perceived by the media and the public as an insight into Diana's suffering and seen as an assault on the morals and integrity of the royal family. It precipitated the Queen's agreement that Charles file for a divorce.

At the time there was a lot of speculation about how Martin Bashir had persuaded Diana to give him

that interview and launch the royal scandal. Last week, 25 years after the broadcast, the report of an inquiry into that question has been published. The report, compiled by Lord Dyson (not the muck-suction tycoon) was an exposure of Martin Bashir's perfidious and possibly criminal means of obtaining the interview. Lord Dyson severely criticised the coverup of his actions by the BBC.

The report reveals that Bashir, a junior BBC journalist, got a colleague in the BBC to forge bank statements which “proved” that the press were paying Princess Diana's staff to spy on her and give them details of her relationship with an Army officer called James Hewitt. Bashir took these forged bank statements to Earl Spencer, Diana's brother, and persuaded him that Diana should tell all in an interview before the media went on to characterise her as the villain in the triangle — or quadrilateral?

In the interview, Diana admitted her relationship with Hewitt before it got exposed as scandalous. Perhaps she could have, quite justifiably, said: “Well, since there were three of us in this marriage, I assumed there could be a fourth!”

The BBC apparently knew about the forged documents and Martin Bashir's devious means of obtaining the interview and covered it up. Bashir was not reprimanded or disciplined and was, years later, hired as the BBC's head of religion.

Bashir protests that Diana was quite willing to give him an interview in any case and that his forged documents weren't instrumental in helping persuade her to speak to him.

The 25-year-old episode has been brought to light again and became the focus of media attention displacing, however briefly, the reports from the world and especially India on the Covid devastation, the Israel-Hamas conflict and terrorist activity in Mozambique. Prince William gave an interview attacking the BBC and claiming the interview had led directly to his mother's death.

The newspapers were in the main very happy to use the Dyson report to attack the BBC without making the connection between Diana's death two years later in a speeding car which crashed in a Parisian tunnel as it was being relentlessly pursued by — no, not gremlins — the same newspaper paparazzi.

That the public is interested in the shenanigans and quarrels of the royal

family is not surprising. There's always something to report. The last three focuses on the royals were in themselves, even to a republican like myself, gentle reader, momentarily entertaining.

A year ago, Prince Andrew, the Queen's favourite son, was interviewed on the BBC's *Newsnight* programme about his involvement or friendship with the late Jacob Epstein, the paedophile billionaire who procured young girls for him.

And then there was the Prince Harry and Meghan Markle interview with Oprah Winfrey in the United States. It was seen as an assault on the prejudices and repressive controls within the royal family and caused an estrangement between Harry, his father and brother William.

The death and funeral of Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, brought Prince Harry back briefly to England but the focus shifted from Philip's deeds and gaffes to the froideur between Harry and William.

The Windsor Castle funeral, with the restrictions on gatherings imposed by the Covid lockdown, prevented any mass congregation of citizens, but still they came in their hundreds to profess their love for a man they had never met.

I completely understand, gentle reader, the admiration one may feel for, say, Muhammad Ali, Nelson Mandela or even one of the cricketers or Bollywood actors, male and female — though I suspect the last three have some affinity to the worship of deities. But love?

I, just like you, have various experiences covered by the word. Parental, both ways, romantic and even loving a favourite flower, food or wine... but for members of a privileged, parasitical and patronage-lending, mostly idle family?

It's not that I feel Cromwellian in my republicanism. And I certainly don't feel that a Parliament dominated by the likes of Boris Johnson and the freeprot and deport Indian variants, Priti Clueless and Wishi Sunak, or the mendacious health secretary Matt Halfcock are doing a better job than if it were all left to Liz II.

My faith in parliamentary democracy has been deeply shaken through assessing the actions of elected leaders and parties of several nations in this our sad vale of oppressions. But the hope is that Prime Ministers are not permanent and that even in those countries the populace doesn't love them like the tribal Brits just “love”



quick  
BITES

## INDICATORS %

Sensex	52,100.05	-0.25
Nifty 50	15,670.30	-0.13
S&P 500*	4,225.86	0.79
Dollar (₹)	73.0	-0.12
Pound Sterling (₹)	102.91	0.51
Euro (₹)	88.44	0.497
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	47,917.388	0.80
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	71.95	0.90
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.028	0.52
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.564	-0.063

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

SBI lends ₹3,725 cr  
to Jewar Intl  
airport near Delhi

The Yamuna International Airport Pvt Ltd (YIAPL) has secured a loan of Rs 3,725 crore from the SBI for developing the Noida international airport at Jewar in UP. YIAPL is a Zurich Airport International subsidiary. The entire loan has been underwritten by SBI on a door-to-door loan tenor of 20 years," Christoph Schnellmann, CEO, YIAPL, said. Door-to-door loan means the principal and interest have to be paid within 20 years.

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■ Economy to grow at 9.5%; inflation seen at 5.1%

RBI cuts growth forecast,  
leaves rates untouchedFALAKNAAZ SYED  
MUMBAI, JUNE 4

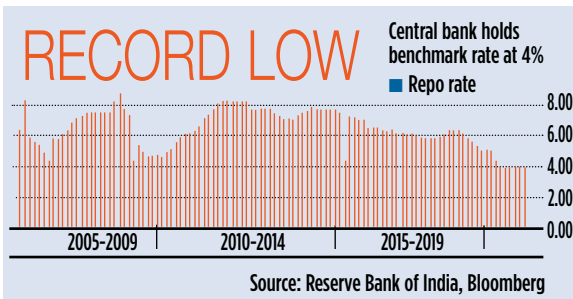
Caught between slowing growth amid the second wave of the Covid pandemic and inflationary pressures, the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) monetary policy committee (MPC) stayed put on policy rates on Friday. The MPC also continued with its accommodative stance "as long as necessary" to support growth.

A status quo in the policy repo rate means that there is unlikely to be any change in your equated monthly instalments (EMIs) on your home loans or car loans as of now. On the flip side, your fixed deposits too would continue to fetch the same low returns.

This was the committee's second bi-monthly monetary policy meeting of the current fiscal and it was widely expected that the rates would remain steady. The MPC, which is the rate setting panel, has kept the repo rate unchanged in the last five bi-monthly policy meets, too.

The six-member monetary policy committee headed by governor Shaktikanta Das voted unanimously for keeping repo rate -- RBI's key lending rate -- unchanged at 4 per cent, and the reverse repo rate—the borrowing rate—at 3.35 per cent.

"The MPC was of the view that at this juncture, policy support from all sides is required to regain the momentum of growth that was evident in



## REITERATES CONCERNS OVER CRYPTO TRADING

SUVASHREE GHOSH  
JUNE 4

The RBI reiterated its concerns over cryptocurrencies, clarifying its stance on digital assets just days after the regulator told banks to set aside a 2018 ban on trading. "There is no change in RBI's position," RBI governor Shaktikanta Das told reporters. "We have major concerns around cryptocurrency, which

we have conveyed to the government."

Das comments come less than a week after the central bank told banks, which are needed to help facilitate crypto trades, not to cite a 2018 RBI circular as a reason to prevent such transactions. The order, which has since been struck down by the Supreme Court, can't be cited or quoted from, it said.

—Bloomberg

H2:2020-21 and to nurture the recovery after it has taken root. Accordingly, the MPC decided to keep the policy rate at its current level of 4 per cent and to continue with the accommodative stance as long as necessary to revive and sustain growth on a durable basis and continue to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 on the economy, while ensuring that inflation remains within the target going forward," said the RBI governor.

Anticipating some impact on the economy of the second Covid-19 wave, the RBI also trimmed the growth forecast by 100 basis points at 9.5 per cent from 10.5 per cent. Inflation for FY22 was revised upwards by 10 basis points with risks broadly balanced.

One basis point is one hundredth of a percentage point.

The RBI has projected CPI inflation at 5.1 per cent for FY22 with 5.2 per cent in Q1; 5.4 per cent in

Q2; 4.7 per cent in Q3; and 5.3 per cent in Q4 FY22. The rising trajectory of international commodity prices, especially of crude, together with logistics costs, pose upside risks to the inflation outlook while a normal south-west monsoon should help to keep cereal price pressures in check.

Deploying an expanded set of tools to support financial conditions in the economy, including interventions in bond and foreign exchange markets, the RBI also continued with its targeted support approach to the most stressed segments.

"We believe inflation management could pose a serious challenge to RBI when the fuel price pass through starts to occur," said India Ratings.

The bigger move was with regards to yield management as the RBI stressed on smooth liquidity management and orderly government securities borrowings. To soften the G-Sec yield, the RBI announced G-SAP 2.0 with a higher amount of Rs 1.2 lakh crore.

On the liquidity front, the RBI has created a new on-tap liquidity window for contact intensive sectors and allocated an additional Rs 16,000 crore to Sidbi to meet the funding requirements of micro, small and medium enterprises. Das further stated that his focus now will be on equitable distribution of systemic liquidity than on simply providing adequate systemic liquidity.

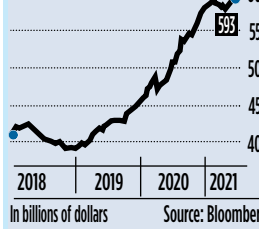
FX reserves to  
help manage  
global  
spillovers: Das

## Forex buffers

Forex pile will help fight spillovers

India foreign exchange reserves

USD-Last Price

ANIRBAN NAG  
JUNE 4

The country's foreign exchange reserves have by all indications crossed \$600 billion, central bank chief Shaktikanta Das said, a huge buffer that will help insulate Asia's third-largest economy from global spillovers and volatile external flows.

Earlier this year, the country's forex reserves briefly surpassed Russia's to become the world's fourth-largest, as the Reserve Bank of India continued to hoard dollars to cushion the economy against any sudden outflows. The reserves are enough to cover around 15 months of imports and have been bolstered by rising inflows into the booming stock market and FDI.

"While these flows ease external financing constraints, they also impart volatility to financial markets and asset prices, while producing undesirable and unintended fluctuations in liquidity, Das said.

—Bloomberg

EU, UK open antitrust  
probe against Facebook  
over classified adsKELVIN CHANAP  
LONDON, JUNE 4

European Union and British regulators opened dual antitrust investigations on Friday into whether Facebook distorts competition in the classified advertising market by using data to compete unfairly against rival services.

The coordinated effort represents an escalation by European regulators in their battle to rein in the dominance of big tech companies. The focus of the investigations highlights a long-standing concern that the data they collect from people or businesses using their platforms is used to get an advantage over competitors, which could include those same businesses.

Facebook collects vast troves of data on the activities of users of its social network and beyond, enabling it to target specific customer groups, said Margrethe Vestager, the European Commission's executive vice president in charge of competition policy.

We will look in detail at whether this data gives Facebook an undue competitive advantage, in particular on the online classified ads sector, where people buy and sell goods every day, and where Facebook also competes with companies from which it collects data, Vestager said.

The UK's Competition and Markets Authority said in a simultaneous



announcement that it launched its own probe to examine whether Facebook's collection and use of data gave it an unfair advantage over competitors providing classified data and online dating services.

Facebook said it will continue to cooperate fully with the investigations to demonstrate that these are without merit. Marketplace, Facebook's classified ad service, and Facebook Dating offer people more choices and both products operate in a highly competitive environment with many large incumbents, the company said in a statement.

The EU's executive commission, the bloc's top antitrust enforcer, is looking at the possibility that Facebook collects data on what users are interested in based on how rival classified ad providers are advertising their sites to Facebook users. The commission is worried Facebook then uses that data to tailor Marketplace to outcompete the rival sites.

It's also looking at whether the way Facebook embeds its Marketplace into the social network gives it an advantage.

—AP

## COFFEE-BREAK

Your day today By Dr C.V.B. Subrahmanyam



**Aries:** Keep a balance between work and domestic commitments. Loved ones could feel alienated if you are unable to make time for important family issues.



**Taurus:** You might learn valuable tips to stay physically fit. Your excellent management skills are likely to help you in passing testing times.



**Gemini:** It is a promising day to develop a healthy relationship with your children. Senior colleagues might create hindrances in your way of achieving targets.



**Cancer:** You are likely to get an opportunity to do something new to generate an extra income. You are likely to get relief from mild indigestion problem.



**Leo:** Your efforts will pave the way for a bright future of your child. You might get inflicted with stomach ulcers. Career targets might not materialize.



**Virgo:** You are likely to make a good investment. Thinking that you are unhappy is the reason behind your unhappiness. Your timely efforts will make a major contribution to your business.

## You share your b'day with

Amit Sath is an Indian actor known for his roles in Kai Po Che, Guddu Rangaela, and the political thriller Sarkar 3. He began his acting career in Star Plus' teen drama Kyun Hota Hai Pyarr.



**Libra:** Learning the art of living will enable you to rediscover your happiness. Avoid over expenditure and investment in dubious financial schemes.



**Scorpio:** You will continue to be resourceful and capable of achieving personal goals. Help from colleagues will be very crucial for business success.



**Sagittarius:** You should get a new perspective on your lifestyle. Don't make important decisions if you're not completely comfortable with any of the alternatives.



**Capricorn:** New financial ventures will prove to be beneficial. Fears, insecurities, jealousies, and hidden resentments may surface. You will feel a very strong need to be loved and to love.

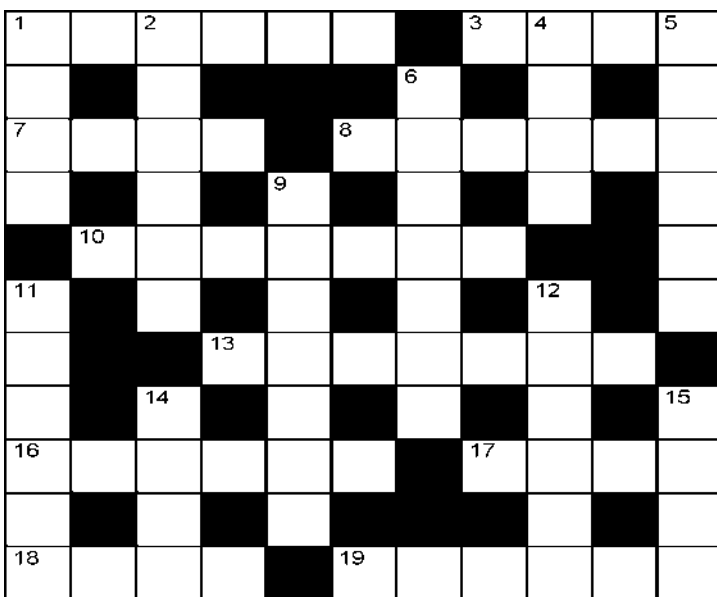


**Aquarius:** You will crave emotional excitement. This is a time for enjoying music, dancing, and being joyfully spontaneous. Pay attention to matters related to your relationship.



**Pisces:** Communicate openly with loved ones. Your current state of affairs seems to be limiting. You will vacillate between feelings of exuberance and optimism about new ideas.

## QUICK CROSSWORD



Across

1. Knighted (6)
3. Espy (4)
7. Coffin cloth (4)
8. Prosper (6)
10. Tongue (7)
13. Predicted (7)
16. Go over (6)
17. Stratagem (4)
18. Exhibit (4)
19. Window-shop (6)

Down

1. Hoodwink (4)
2. Election (6)
4. Duo (4)
5. Fortification ditch (6)
6. Big lie (7)
9. Light motor cycle (7)
11. Angler's boots (6)
12. Candle fat (6)
14. Repeat (4)
15. Funeral fire (4)

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

Across: 1. Preferred, 6. Gavel, 7. Fault, 9. Vied, 10. Peeped, 12. Tasseled, 14. Tail, 17. Elate, 18. Osier, 19. Teaspoons.

Down: 2. Revue, 3. Felt, 4. Rafter, 5. Equip, 6. Gavotte, 8. Tiddler, 11. Rebels, 13. Steve, 15. Align, 16. Solo.

## Word Mine

P  
N D I  
G G A U R

TODAY'S RATINGS: 15 AVERAGE; 17 GOOD; 19 OUTSTANDING

How many words of four or more letters can you make from the letters shown in today's puzzle? In making a word, each letter may be used only once. Each word must contain the letter at the top of the pyramid. There should be at least one nine letter word. Plurals, foreign words and proper names are not allowed.

South: 1. A, 2. B, 3. C, 4. D, 5. E, 6. F, 7. G, 8. H, 9. I, 10. J, 11. K, 12. L, 13. M, 14. N, 15. O, 16. P, 17. Q, 18. R, 19. S, 20. T, 21. U, 22. V, 23. W, 24. X, 25. Y, 26. Z

West: 1. A, 2. B, 3. C, 4. D, 5. E, 6. F, 7. G, 8. H, 9. I, 10. J, 11. K, 12. L, 13. M, 14. N, 15. O, 16. P, 17. Q, 18. R, 19. S, 20. T, 21. U, 22. V, 23. W, 24. X, 25. Y, 26. Z

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## jumble

RVAYG  
USODE  
NIPSGR  
YUOJLF

Answers: 1. RYVAG, 2. USODE, 3. NIPSGR, 4. YUOJLF

Answers: 1. RYVAG, 2. USODE, 3. NIPSGR, 4. YUOJLF

Answers: 1. RYVAG, 2. USODE, 3. NIPSGR, 4. YUOJLF

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Answers: 1. RYVAG, 2. USODE, 3. NIPSGR, 4. YUOJLF

CALVIN AND HOBBS | Bill Watterson



THE WIZARD OF ID | Parker and Hartsd



ARCHIE | Bill Henry Scarpelli &amp; craig boldman



BLONDIE | Dean Young and John Marshall



ANDY CAPP | Reg Smythe



TARZAN | Edgar Rice Burroughs

A TRICK  
VANISHES  
INTO THIN AIR

Dale Carnegie said, "I've found that worry and irritation vanish into thin air the moment I open my mind to the many blessings I possess."

At the bridge table, apparent guaranteed tricks sometimes are made to evaporate, which is irritating for the victim but a blessing for the profligate.

This deal is based on one declared by Italian superstar Pietro Forquet in the 1968 World Team Olympiad. How

did he make four hearts after West cashed the three top spades before shifting to the club queen?

Since Forquet was always a sound bidder, Benito Garozzo (North) had no qualms in raising to game. He thought his partner would take seven hearts, two diamonds and one club without difficulty.

Forquet's original plan was to cash the heart king, then to play a heart to his jack, assuming West had a singleton for his takeout double.

South: 1. A, 2. B, 3. C, 4. D, 5. E, 6. F, 7. G, 8. H, 9. I, 10. J, 11. K, 12. L, 13. M, 14. N, 15. O, 16. P, 17. Q, 18. R, 19. S, 20. T, 21. U, 22. V, 23. W, 24. X, 25. Y, 26. Z

West: 1. A, 2. B, 3. C, 4. D, 5. E, 6. F, 7. G, 8. H, 9. I, 10. J, 11. K, 12. L, 13. M, 14. N, 15. O, 16. P, 17. Q, 18. R, 19. S, 20. T, 21. U, 22. V, 23. W, 24. X, 25. Y, 26. Z

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(Asia Features)



## SHORT TAKES

**Milkha stable in ICU, wife unwell**

**Chandigarh:** Legendary Indian sprinter Milkha Singh is “better and more stable” as he battles Covid-19 in the ICU of the PGIMER hospital here even as his wife and former volleyball captain Nirmal Kaur’s condition deteriorated because of the same ailment. Milkha also received a phone call from Prime Minister Narendra Modi enquiring about his health on Friday. In a statement, Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER) said that Milkha is better than Thursday when he was brought to the hospital with dipping levels of oxygen. “On the basis of his medical parameters today, his condition has been observed better and more stable than yesterday,” PGIMER’s official spokesperson, Prof Ashok Kumar, said. — *PTI*

**Ex-hockey player Usman no more**

**New Delhi:** Former India hockey player Usman Khan has died after a prolonged battle with cancer, the sport’s governing body in the country said on Friday while condoling his death. Khan was 76 and survived by three sons and a daughter. Expressing his condolences to Khan’s family, HI President Gyanendra Ningombam said, “We are deeply saddened to learn about the demise of former India player Usman Khan. He is remembered for his excellent abilities as a left-winger and was a very stylish player in those times. On behalf of Hockey India, I extend our deepest condolences to his family in this moment of grief. He breathed his last in Madanapalle, Andhra Pradesh after a long battle with cancer.” — *PTI*

**Tech Mahindra, Fide in big league**

**Chennai:** The FIDE on Friday announced a new partnership with Tech Mahindra Ltd for the Global Chess League (GCL), which will also have former world champion Viswanathan Anand as its official mentor and partner to shape the league. The memorandum of understanding signed by FIDE with Tech Mahindra, a leading provider of digital transformation, consulting and business re-engineering services and solutions, focuses on creating the Global Chess League, a project first proposed by the latter earlier this year. “Now, with the support of FIDE, the Global Chess League will be provided with an accredited and exclusive status as the only world league officially recognised by the governing body of the sport of chess,” a press release said.

**IOA seeks relief from shut down**

**New Delhi:** Indian Olympic Association (IOA) President Narinder Batra has requested Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to allow them to operate from their office premises for completing administrative work linked to the upcoming Tokyo Olympics. Due to the Covid-19 surge in the national capital, the Delhi government had ordered shutting down of all premises that don’t fall under the essential category. However, the number of cases has reduced in recent days and the capital is inching towards easing of restrictions. “We request and appeal to You Sir to allow the office of Indian Olympic Association to function from Monday 7th June 2021 to enable IOA to upload the mandatory required data,” Batra wrote in his letter to Kejriwal. — *PTI*

**Moin’s son Azam in Pak T20 team**

**Karachi:** Pakistan on Thursday named uncapped Azam Khan, son of former captain Moin Khan, in the T20 squad for the tours of England and West Indies. The selectors also recalled Imad Wasim for the three T20 matches in England and five in the West Indies besides Haris Sohail for the three ODIs in England.

# Swiatek shimmers

## Nadal celebrates birthday with victory; Zverev too wins

**Paris, June 4:** Rafael Nadal celebrated his 35th birthday in style with a straight sets win over Richard Gasquet on Thursday to reach the French Open third round. Nadal, the 13-time champion in Paris and chasing a record-setting 21st Grand Slam title, won 6-0, 7-5, 6-2 to register his 17th career victory in 17 meetings with France’s 53rd-ranked Gasquet.

Next up for the world number three is Britain’s Cameron Norrie who he has beaten twice already this season, at the Australian Open and on clay in Barcelona.

German sixth seed Alexander Zverev eased into the French Open last 16 for the fourth successive year on Friday with a straight-sets win over Serbia’s Laslo Djere.

The 24-year-old, last year’s US Open runner-up, saw off the 55th-ranked Djere 6-2, 7-5, 6-2 on Court Philippe Chatrier.

He will next face former world number four Kei Nishikori, whose third-round opponent Henri Laaksonen retired injured following the opening set, for a quarterfinal spot.

Meanwhile, Serena Williams continued her quest for a record-equalling 24th Grand Slam title by reaching the French Open second week for the first time since 2018, after third seed Aryna Sabalenka’s surprise loss left the veteran American as the highest-ranked player in her half of the draw.

Three-time Roland Garros champion Williams came through a potentially tricky third-round tie with compatriot Danielle Collins, winning 6-4, 6-4. She will next face



Poland’s Iga Swiatek returns the ball to Sweden’s Rebecca Peterson during their women’s singles match of the French Open tennis tournament at the Roland Garros in Paris on Thursday. Swiatek won 6-1, 6-1.

Kazakh 21st seed Elena Rybakina, with a possible quarterfinal against old rival Victoria Azarenka up for grabs.

Also, former world number one Azarenka, who stunned Williams in their 23rd meeting in last year’s US Open semi-finals, cruised past Madison Keys 6-2, 6-2 to reach the Roland Garros fourth round for the first time since making the last four in 2013.

Earlier, defending champion Iga Swiatek breezed

through to the third round, however, beating Rebecca Peterson 6-1, 6-1 on Court Simonne-Mathieu. The No. 8-seeded Pole next faces No. 30 Anett Kontaveit.

**OTHER RESULTS**

**Men’s third round:** Kei Nishikori (Japan) bt Henri Laaksonen (Switzerland) 7-5, 0-0 — RET; Federico Delbonis (Argentina) bt Fabio Fognini (Italy) 6-4, 6-1, 6-3; Alexander Zverev (Germany) bt Laslo Djere (Serbia) 6-2, 7-5, 6-2;

Alejandro Davidovich Fokina (Spain) bt Casper Ruud (Norway) 7-6 (3), 2-6, 7-6 (6), 0-6, 7-5; Daniil Medvedev (Russia) bt Reilly Opelka (USA) 6-4, 6-2, 6-4. **Women’s third round:** Elena Rybakina (Kazakhstan) bt Elena Vesnina (Russia) 6-1, 6-4; Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova (Russia) bt Aryna Sabalenka (Belarus) 6-4, 2-6, 6-0; Victoria Azarenka (Belarus) bt Madison Keys (USA) 6-2, 6-2; Serena Williams (USA) bt Danielle Collins (USA) 6-4, 6-4.

# Messi scores but Argies held

**Santiago Del Estero (Argentina), June 4:** Lionel Messi scored a penalty but Argentina missed out on the chance to take over top spot of South American World Cup qualifying from rivals Brazil after a 1-1 draw with Chile on Thursday.

Messi also clipped the woodwork and forced three impressive saves out of Chile goalkeeper Claudio Bravo but Alexis Sanchez earned the dogged visitors a point in Santiago del Estero.

The draw leaves Argentina a point behind Brazil, the only remaining side with a perfect qualifying record, who host Ecuador on Friday.

Chile are down in sixth, still two points off the qualification places having won only one of their five matches so far.

Argentina captain Messi said he was happy with the result, despite failing to win.

“The team had a good dynamic, it wasn’t easy playing again after so much time,” he said.

Elsewhere, Iran bounced back from two straight defeats to put their 2022 World Cup qualification campaign back on track with a 3-1 win over Hong Kong while Bahrain hammered Cambodia 8-0 to go top of Group ‘C’.

Five-time finalists Iran struck twice in the second half of their Group ‘C’ game to take their tally to nine points from five matches, three behind leaders Bahrain, who are hoping to qualify for the tournament proper for the first time in their history.

Midfielder Ali Gholizadeh put Iran ahead from an acute angle after dribbling his way into the box in the 23rd minute before Vahid Amiri and Karim Ansarifard scored in the second half to give them a 3-0 cushion.

Meanwhile, it took less than a minute for Mathew Leckie to head in the opening goal as Australia romped Kuwait 3-0 in Kuwait City.

Jackson Irvine extended Australia’s lead midway through the first half and Eintracht Frankfurt’s Adjin Hrustic netted the third with a free kick in the 66th minute.

— *Agencies*



Argentina’s Lionel Messi (right) and Eugenio Mena of Chile battle for the ball during their qualifying match for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 in Santiago del Estero, Argentina, on Thursday. The match ended in a 1-1 draw.

— *AP*

## Greece, Belgium in a friendly draw

**Paris, June 4:** A Belgium side missing many of the stars that have helped them rise to the top of FIFA’s world rankings were held 1-1 by Greece in a Euro 2020 warm-up on Thursday.

For his first friendly ahead of the delayed tournament starting on June 11 coach Roberto Martinez was without injured trio Kevin De Bruyne (facial fractures), Eden Hazard (thigh), and Axel Witsel (Achilles).

The former Everton boss also chose to give the night off to Thibaut Courtois (with Simon Mignolet in goal), and Jan Vertonghen and Thomas Vermaelen in defence.

Those that were in Brussels had the chance to press their case for a place in Martinez’s lineup for their June 12 opener against Russia.

Like Hazard’s younger brother Thorgan, who started and supplied the finishing touch to the move that put Belgium into a 20th minute lead after Romelu Lukaku was denied at point blank

range by Greek goalkeeper Odysseas Vlachodimos. Georgios Tzavellas levelled for the unscripted winners of Euro 2004 midway through the second half, tapping in Kyriakos Papadopoulos’ diving header which hit the woodwork.

Martinez will be looking for a sharper performance in the Red Devil’s second friendly against Croatia on Sunday.

Belgium romped through to the finals as group winners with a 40-goal haul. After their Group ‘B’ opener in Saint Petersburg they go on to face Denmark and Finland.

In other warm-ups involving finalists for the delayed tournament Switzerland dished out a 7-0 drubbing to Lichtenstein, with Mario Gavranovic grabbing a hat-trick. The Swiss are in Group ‘A’ with Italy, Wales and Turkey who were also in action, seeing off Moldova 2-0. Ukraine, drawn in Group C, edged Northern Ireland 1-0.

— *AFP*

## TENNIS PLAYER ARRESTED FOR MATCH-FIXING

**Paris, June 4:** A tennis player suspected of match-fixing last year has been arrested in Paris during the French Open, the Paris prosecutor’s office said Friday.

According to French newspaper *Le Parisien*, which first reported the story, the player is 76th-ranked Yana Sizikova of Russia. The prosecutor’s office confirmed to The Associated Press that a “women’s international player” was in custody, but it did not identify her.

An investigation was opened last October by a French police unit specializing in betting fraud and match-fixing. It has previously worked with Belgian authorities investigating suspected fixed matches at the lower levels of professional tennis.

The prosecutor’s office said the probe centered on suspicions about one match at Roland Garros last year. It did not specify the match. German newspaper *Die Welt* and French sports daily *L’Equipe* said at the time there were suspicious betting patterns in the first round of a women’s doubles match on Sept. 30.

On that day, Sizikova and partner Madison Brengle of the United States played on Court No. 10 against Romanian players Andreea Mitu and Patricia Maria Tig. Sizikova was broken to love serving in game five of the second set, during which she double faulted twice.

— *AP*

## Sumit fails dope test, suspended

**New Delhi, June 4:** Olympic-bound Indian wrestler Sumit Malik has been provisionally suspended after failing a dope test during the recent Qualifiers in Bulgaria, a major embarrassment for the country with just weeks left for the Games in Tokyo.

It marks the second consecutive instance of a wrestler being caught in dope net before the Olympics — the previous being ahead of the 2016 Rio Olympics when Narsingh Pancham Yadav had failed one and was slapped with a four-year ban.

Malik, the 2018 Commonwealth Games gold-medallist, had qualified for the Tokyo Olympics in the 125kg category at the World Olympic Qualifier event in Sofia, Bulgaria which was the last chance for wrestlers to earn quotas.

The 28-year-old’s participation at the main event starting July 23 seems uncertain now.

“We got a mail from the UWW (United World Wrestling) on Thursday that Sumit has failed the dope test and he has been suspended provisionally.

The substance found in his sample is said to be 5-methylhexan-2-amine (1,4-dimethylpentylamine),” Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) secretary Vinod Tomar said.

A Delhi-based sports lawyer Parth Goswami contends that since this substance is a specified one, Malik cannot be suspended provisionally.

— *PTI*



Sumit Malik and Brianna McNeal.

## HURDLES CHAMP BRIANNA BANNED FOR FIVE YEARS

**Paris, June 4:** Olympic 100m hurdles champion Brianna McNeal has been banned for five years for tampering with the anti-doping testing process, the Athletics Integrity Unit announced on Friday.

McNeal, 29, can still take part in the US trials for the Tokyo Olympics later this month while she appeals the ban, which is backdated to August 15, 2020, the AIU said in a statement.

Her appeal will be heard before the Olympics begin on July 23.

AIU said she had been banned for “tampering within the results management process”.

It was her second doping violation after she missed the 2017 World Championships while serving a one-year ban for missing three drug tests.

“The system is pretty messed up if you ask me but that’s another topic for another day,” she said in an Instagram post.

— *AFP*

## JAPAN CORNERED ON GAMES, SAYS COMMITTEE MEMBER

**Tokyo, June 4:** Japan has been backed into a corner over the Tokyo Games, a member of the country’s Olympic committee said Friday, arguing the virus-postponed event has “lost meaning” but it is too late to cancel. Public opposition to holding the Olympics this summer remains high, but organisers insist they will go ahead safely under strict Covid-19 countermeasures and with most athletes and officials vaccinated.

In an opinion article for *Kyodo News*, Japan Olympic Committee member Kaori Yamaguchi, who won judo bronze in Seoul in 1988, described “anxiety and distrust” between the public and the government over the Games.

“What will these Olympics be for and for whom? The Games have already lost meaning and are being held just for the sake of them,” she wrote.

“We have been cornered into a situation where we cannot even stop now. We are damned if we do, and damned if we do not,” added Yamaguchi, who has previously voiced unease over the Games and called for their postponement last year.

— *AFP*

## Rain ruins play in Eng-NZ Test

**London, June 4:** Persistent rain meant there was no play before lunch on the third day of the first Test between England and New Zealand at Lord’s on Friday.

The match was intriguingly poised, with England 111-2 in reply to New Zealand’s first-innings 378 that featured debutant Devon Conway’s 200 — the highest score by a batsman making their Test bow in England.

England, now 267 runs behind, slumped to 18-2 before ending the second day with Rory Burns 59 not out and England captain Joe Root 42 not out following an unbroken stand of 93.

New Zealand looked like batting England out of the game while South African-born opener Conway and fellow left-hander Henry Nicholls (61) were sharing

a fourth-wicket partnership of 174.

But they lost four wickets for just six runs as they slumped from 288-3 to 294-7, with Mark Wood, the fastest member of England’s pace quartet, instigating a collapse.

Meanwhile Test debutant paceman Ollie Robinson led England’s attack with 4-75 in the first of this two-Test series.

This match marks the return of spectators to international cricket in England after last season’s fixtures were all played behind closed doors because of coronavirus restrictions. The second Test is due to take place at Birmingham’s Edgbaston from June 10-14.

**BRIEF SCORES**

New Zealand 378 vs England 111/2 in 43 overs (Rory Burns 59 batting, Joe Root 42 batting; Tim Southee 1/17).

## INDIAN PLAYERS UNDER HARD QUARANTINE IN SOUTHAMPTON

**Southampton, June 4:** India spinner Axar Patel has revealed that the team will serve a three-day hard quarantine before it is allowed to train at the Ageas Bowl here ahead of the WTC final against New Zealand. The final begins on June 18 and India have limited time to prepare having arrived here on Wednesday.

On the other hand, New Zealand are already involved in a two-match series against England.

The India squad was in quarantine for 14 days in Mumbai prior to its departure and is in the middle of another yet shorter quarantine.

“I had a good sleep...the plan is to quarantine. We have been told that we can’t meet each other for three days so we will be quarantining for that much time,” said Axar. The men’s and women’s squads were in the same flight. After landing in London, the contingent took a two-hour bus journey to Southampton.

— *PTI*

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