

SHORT TAKES

YSRC ON WAY TO
ATTAIN MAJORITY
IN COUNCILDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 11

Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has reasons to celebrate as his party YSR Congress is set to gain majority in Andhra Pradesh Legislative Council in the next two months. Simultaneously, the strength of Telugu Desam in the council will fall.

Three of the four seats under the Governor's quota, had so far been occupied by TD. These seats will fall vacant as those members are retiring after the completion of their term. Besides, YSRC will retain the fourth seat under the Governor's quota that it already holds.

Sources disclosed that the state government has already sent a file to Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan with names of four persons for appointment as MLCs under Governor's quota. They are expected to be approved automatically.

According to sources, the four who have been nominated by YSRC as MLCs are Moshen Raju, Lella Appi Reddy, R. V. Ramesh Yadav and Thota Trimurthulu. All these names have been approved by CM Jagan.

Members of Telugu Desam retiring as MLCs are senior party leaders T. D. Janardhan, Beeda Ravichandra and G. Sreenivasulu.

PUBLIC VIEWS
SOUGHT ON
INDUSTRIAL NODEDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 11

NICDIT Krishnapatnam Industrial City Development Ltd (NKICDL), a special purpose vehicle jointly set up by APIIC and NICDIT (National Industrial Corridor Development Corporation with equity participation from the Central and the State government, is taking up development of the Krishnapatnam industrial node in an extent of 2,500 acres on the Chennai-Bengaluru Industrial Corridor.

In this respect, tender documents have been uploaded on the judicial preview website of the AP government for scrutiny by the general public. The state had accorded administrative sanction for an amount of ₹1,448 crore, informed AP Industrial Infrastructure Corporation (APIIC) vice chairman and managing director J. Subramanyam. He said development of the industrial node would create around one million direct and indirect jobs by 2040 in the state. He said that job generation would be in the identified industrial sectors of food processing, automobile and auto components, textile and wearing apparels, chemical, pharmaceutical, manufacturing of electrical equipment and manufacturing of computer electronics and optical products.

The APIIC MD said that the industrial node would be developed with world-class infrastructure consisting of roads, bridges, utilities, and sewage treatment plants.

MARGANI ASKS
SPEAKER TO
DISQUALIFY RAJUDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 11

In a major development, YSR Congress has sought disqualification of its rebel MP K. Raghu Ramakrishna Raju. YSRC chief whip in Lok Sabha Margani Bharat on Friday submitted a petition to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla seeking disqualification of Krishnam Raju for "anti-party activities".

Krishnam Raju had been elected as MP from Narsapuram constituency on YSRC ticket. This is the second time that YSR Congress has given a petition seeking cancellation of Narsapuram MP's membership of parliament.

The petition pointed out that though elected on YSRC ticket, Krishnam Raju has been working against the party's interests. On this ground, the YSRC chief whip sought that his membership of parliament is cancelled.

MP Bharat said the party had submitted evidence to the Lok Sabha Speaker in the past over the remarks made by Krishnam Raju against YSRC and his anti-party activities. The chief whip had also appealed to the Speaker for disqualification of Narsapuram MP on several occasions.

CM returns to Tadepalli
after two-day Delhi trip

Jagan pleads AP's case with Centre on pending issues, funds

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 11

Ending his two-day Delhi trip during which he discussed the issues of Andhra Pradesh with several Union ministers, Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy returned to his home in Tadepalli on Friday evening.

Ruling YSRC sources said the party is happy over the success of Jagan's Delhi tour and is hoping to get the state's dues from the Centre without any hitch.

The CM met home minister Amit Shah last night and held discussions on decentralised development and the plea for Special Category Status (SCS) for AP, among other issues. He has pleaded for sanction of 13 medical colleges and financial assistance to them. He also requested the central leadership to release the pending dues of ₹4,652.70 crore and an enhancement of the annual person days for work per family from 100 to 150 days by rural development ministry.

Jagan also sought early release of arrears of ₹529.95 crore towards rural local body grants related to the 14th finance commission and ₹497 crore for fiscal 2020-21 in relation to the 15th finance commission recommendations.

The chief minister also requested the central leaders to give assent to the Andhra Pradesh DISHA bills and the Andhra Pradesh land titling authority bill 2020. He also pleaded for the establishment of the central tribal university within the tribal sub plan area.

During the CM's discussions with Jal Shakti minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat regarding the Polavaram project, the CM reiterated the need to complete the project on time and sought approval for investment clearance for ₹55,656.87 crore as recommended by PPA & central water commission and accepted by the technical advisory committee.

Jagan urged the Centre to reimburse the amount regarding the land acquisition and R&R compensation for project-affected families therein as per their right under the fair compensation & transparency in land acquisition, rehabilitation & resettlement act, 2013.

The CM reiterated the need for shifting of headquarters of PPA from Hyderabad to Rajamahendravaram. Jagan Mohan Reddy also called on Niti Aayog vice chairman Dr Rajiv Kumar at Niti Aayog office and discussed with the concerned ministries to reimburse the cost for development of infrastructure in the newly formed colonies as a part of assistance given to the state governments under the PMAY programme.

The CM met the minister of steels Dharmendra Pradhan on Friday and reiterated the plea to not privatize the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant. Jagan requested the Union minister to consider the alternatives as suggested by the state in reviving the plant and also to allot the captive mine in Odisha which will help in reviv-



● JAGAN ALSO sought early release of arrears of ₹529.95 crore towards rural local body grants related to the 14th finance commission and ₹497 crore for fiscal 2020-21 in relation to the 15th FC recommendations.

Pradhan promises
petro complex

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He said the members had already been nominated for the working group on behalf of the state government to discuss the project modalities and asked the Centre to issue immediate directions to start the project.

Responding to the Chief Minister, Pradhan said that a petro complex would definitely be set up in Andhra Pradesh and he was also positive about the VGF. He told the Chief Minister that a meeting would be scheduled next week with the Chief Secretary and the officials of the petroleum department to finalise the procedures.

The Chief Minister said 32 people had laid down their lives to set up the steel plant in Visakhapatnam, where nearly 20,000 people were employed and thousands more were having indirect employment.

Further, the Chief Minister explained that the VSP performed well and made profits between 2002-2015. The plant had gone through an expansion by taking loans, but due to the slump in international market during 2014-15, the organisation fell into debts with the increasing operational costs and lack of own mines.

He explained that in fact, the VSP had achieved the highest ever capacity utilisation of 6.3 MTPA against the installed capacity of 7.3 MTPA and started making a monthly profit of close to ₹200 crore. Continuing this performance for a further period of two years would result in improving the financial situation, he said adding that the Plant

TD HAS NO MORAL RIGHT TO CRITICISE
CM JAGAN, SAYS MINISTER VELAMPALLIDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 11

Minister for endowments Velampalli Srinivas Rao alleged that Naidu has no moral right to criticise Jagan Mohan Reddy who was striving for the development of the people.

The minister, along with VMC commissioner V Prasanna Venkatesh, made a field visit of vari-

ous places in the city and enquired about the problems people were facing and instructed officials to address their issues. They visited Baptistalem in the 35th division of western constituency and promised permanent houses to carpenters in Poornanandampet and said that the division would be developed as a model division.

ing the VSP. He also suggested other possibilities in restructuring the finances of VSP.

He said the works regarding the setting up of a petrochemical complex in Kakinada SEZ should be expedited and urged the minister for a cut in the VGF since the state

could not bear such a burden in the present circumstances.

Later, the CM met the Union ministers of railways, consumer affairs and public distribution and pleaded that an amount of ₹3,299 crore related to subsidy for PDS rice be released by the

oral suspension. The hospitals have to place an indent for supply of required number of vials along with details of patients on the app. The Joint Collector (Development) heading the district-level panel comprising superintendents of teaching hospitals, district medical and health officer, district coordinator for health services and assistant director (drugs), will clear them after verification. There upon, injections will be issued from the central drugs store concerned without any delay.

FOOD ACT CURBS
HURTING POOR,
SAYS JAGAN

From page 1

Jagan Mohan Reddy pointed out to Goyal that the allocation basis for ration rice was decided before the state bifurcation, where all allocations were being made without any reality check.

The CM reminded the minister of the Supreme Court verdict that the state government was responsible for identifying those eligible for ration cards and in this regard, the government surveyed and identified 1.47 crore ration card holders. He said the poor were suffering severely due to unreasonable restrictions under the National Food Security Act, and appealed to mend the situation at the earliest possible. He added that the government was procuring paddy for 2020-21 Rabi season, providing remunerative prices to farmers and ensuring timely payments.

CM VISITED DELHI
TO SEEK RELEASE OF
ARREARS: ADVISORDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 11:

Government advisor (Public Affairs) Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy said that Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has visited New Delhi to seek funds and protect the interests of the state. He refuted the 'hidden agenda' allegations levelled by opposition parties.

Speaking to the media here on Friday, Ramakrishna Reddy said that the Chief Minister had met five Union ministers and vice-chairman of Niti Aayog and discussed pending issues. He made it clear that these meetings had nothing to do with politics.

He said former chief minister N. Chandrababu Naidu used to have secret pacts with the Centre during his tenure and it is well known that he had compromised Special Category Status (SCS) by accepting a special package.

He flayed Telugu Desam and a section of the media for politicising the Delhi tour of the Chief Minister, who was actually trying to get resources to the State which has been hit financially due to Covid.

He slammed TD leader Y a n a m a l a Ramakrishnu for alleging that the Chief Minister had visited New Delhi to save himself from cases.

concerned ministry to the state.

Also, Jagan Mohan Reddy said, the poor are suffering severely due to unreasonable restrictions under the national food security act, wherein the burden is being carried by the state government in providing ration supplies, and appealed to the Centre that this be rectified.



Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana receives a replica of a veena from Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao at Raj Bhavan in Hyderabad on Friday. Justice Ramana's wife Shivamala is also seen in the picture.

— DC

Hyd pulls out all stops
to welcome mana CJIDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JUNE 11

Chief Justice of India Justice N.V. Ramana was given a rousing reception at Raj Bhavan on Friday.

TS Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan and TS Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao accorded a grand welcome to Justice Ramana who received a ceremonial salute from the police at Raj Bhavan.

This is Justice Ramana's maiden visit to TS after becoming the Chief Justice of India on April 24. He was accompanied by his wife Sivamala. He will stay at the Raj Bhavan for three days.

Telangana High Court Chief Justice Hima Kohli, ministers K.T. Rama Rao, A. Indraka-ran Reddy, Mohd Mah-mood Ali, Sabitha Indira Reddy, Puvvada Ajay Kumar, Talasani Srinivas Yadav,

MLAs, Chief Secretary Somesh Ku-mar, Director General of Police M. Mahendar Reddy and several other dignitaries and officials accorded a grand welcome to Justice Ramana on his arrival at the Hyderabad International Airport earlier.

Justice Ramana proceeded straight to the Bhavan where the Governor, HC Chief Justice, Chief Minister, ministers and other dignitaries extended a warm welcome by presenting bouquets.

Justice Ramana landed in Hyderabad from Tirupati where he stayed on Thursday night. The pride among Telugu people was palpable as the son of the soil reached the pinnacle of the judiciary. There were huge hoardings along the major junctions and stretches in the city set up by the TS government, welcoming Justice Ramana.

Justice Ramana recently cleared a proposal of increasing the judges' strength in the Telangana High Court by 70 per cent to 42 from the existing 24. The move was seen as an acceleration of justice delivery in the state. Some banners were put up on Metro rail pillars thanking him for the move. Chandrashekar Rao thanked Justice Ramana for giving the approval to increase the bench strength of the High Court of Telangana.

He said the combined High Court of AP and TS had a strength of 61 judges on the date of bifurcation on June 2, 2014. The TS High Court came into effect on January 1, 2019, with an allotted strength of 24 judges and an increase in bench strength would help expedite resolution of pending cases, he said.

TARGET TO SUPPLY
WATER FOR
KHARIF CROP

From page 1

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 11

Education minister Adimulapu Suresh stated that the government will resolve hurdles related to DSC 2008 recruitment by providing employment to 2,193 aspirants under the time-scale pattern.

He said on Friday that as the 2008 DSC aspirants were fighting for justice for the past 12 years, Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy decided to come to their rescue.

Suresh recalled that during the 2014 election campaign, Telugu Desam had promised to resolve the DSC issue but let down the aspirants after coming to power. He said that the state government, in line with the financial department guidelines, will come to their aid under minimum time-scale pattern and appoint them as

Secondary Grade Teachers (SGT) and a GO would be issued after the Chief Minister returns from his New Delhi tour.

The minister said that of the 7,042 posts notified in the 2018 DSC, 6,361 posts have already been filled up. He stated that in the wake of the court cases, appointment letters of 486 PET and school assistant qualified candidates are being handed over.

Suresh said that the syllabus for the AP TET 2020-21 examination has been prepared and complete details are available on <http://aptet.apcfss.in>.

The education minister stated that some forces are trying to mislead the public about the cancellation of SSC exams. He affirmed that AP would conduct exams after reviewing the corona situation but will not cancel the exams.

ADIVASIS BODY OPPOSES NEW EDN POLICY

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 11

Adivasi leaders in the Visakhapatnam Agency have opposed implementation of the new education policy brought forward by Prime Minister Narendra Modi last year.

The policy brings about many reforms in education. Among these, the 10+2 will be replaced by 5+3+3+4, which includes 3 years of Anganwadi and

pre-schooling.

The district convener of the joint action committee of adivasi unions and federations, Rama Rao Dora, said that as per the new policy, the primary schools would be closed and merged with upper primary schools or high schools. The first three classes would be attached to the Anganwadi centres and the remaining two classes would be merged with UP schools.

Health authorities supplied 36,788 vials of remdesivir with the help of app

MDAP app to supply Covid drugs to needy

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 11

The Andhra Pradesh government has come up with a software application called 'MDAP' to ensure hassle-free and timely supply of Covid-19 and black fungus drugs to the needy patients at both government and private hospitals. The decision is taken given difficulty in accessing the drugs and to prevent irregularities like overcharging, diversion to black market.

The app enables putting up requests for Covid-19 and black fungus cure

injections like remdesivir, tocilizumab, Amphotericin-B and others by the notified government and private hospitals for Covid-19 and black fungus treatment. There are 17 government hospitals and 25 private hospitals notified for black fungus treatment and over 500 government and private hospitals for Covid-19 cure in the state.

However, as the cases of black fungus are rising there is a huge shortage for drugs and injections such as liposomal amphotericin-B and posaconazole 300 mg and posaconazole

Any paper work requiring signatures of the panel members will be done post approval.

The app facilitates online payment for vials by the private hospitals so that once payment is made, the hospitals can get the supply from the central drug stores. The state government fixed the price for the vials. All notified private hospitals have to administer black fungus vials to the infected patients free of cost as it is covered under Aarogya scheme. In the case of some private hospitals procuring such vials on

their own, they are supposed to charge the patients at government fixed price and that amount will be reimbursed to them by the government under Aarogya scheme.

The state nodal officer for '104' and Covid-19 services, Ahmad Babu, said, "We have launched the app 'MDAP' recently and it is of immense help to both government and private hospitals to place indents for Covid-19 and black fungus drugs online and procure them in no time to provide timely treatment to the infected patients in

the state. We plan to include consumables like PPE kits also in the app to supply to the needy."

AP Medical Services and Infrastructure Development Corporation will supply medicines to the notified government and private hospitals as per indent placed in the MDAP.

So far, the app has helped the health authorities supply 36,788 vials of remdesivir, 5,495 vials of liposomal amphotericin B and 2,637 vials of posaconazol and other drugs to the hospitals in the state in the last few days.

Committee members will sign the request for drugs the very next day to avoid delay in treatment of Mucormycosis (black fungus).

The government has also provided a mobile application — MDAP — to hospitals for placing indents and making payments to Central Drug Stores for obtaining the drugs, included tocilizumab and remdesivir.

Accordingly, authorities have issued 228 remdesivir and liposomal amphotericin B injections to one P. Balakrishna Reddy and six vials to K. Syamalamma through MDAP app.

MOBILE APP
MDAP FOR
HOSPITALS

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SHORT TAKES

2 GIRLS DROWN IN IRRIGATION WELL IN CHITTOOR DIST

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, JUN. 11

A pall of gloom descended on the Sivanadhapuram village in Thottambedu mandal of Chittoor district, when two teenage girls from the village drowned in a ground-level open irrigation well on Friday.

According to the reports, the deceased have been identified as Nivetha (13) and Uma Maheswari (12) of Sivanadhapuram.

The two girls, studying sixth standard, were headed to their field on Friday morning, when one of the girls got into a well to drink water. But when the girl slipped and fell into the well, the other one got into the well to rescue them.

However, both the girls drowned. A passer-by who noticed this, tried to save the girl but his efforts went into vain. On being informed, the police and locals rushed to the spot and fished out the two dead bodies. The police, who registered a case on this, shifted the bodies of the girls to the government hospital for autopsy and are investigating further.

FEMALE JUMBO DIES OF ELECTROCUTION

DC CORRESPONDENT,
TIRUPATI, JUNE 11

It seems there is no end in sight to the human-animal conflict with yet another prized pachyderm losing its life in the western part of Chittoor district. A female elephant aged about six years was electrocuted in the fields at Kothigutta village in Palamaner mandal around 11.30 pm on Thursday as an electric pole fell on it.

The deceased calf was part of a herd numbering up to 15-16 that was moving around the farm lands and destroying crops in several villages abutting the Koundinya wildlife in Palamaner mandal for the past few weeks.

"On Thursday night, the villagers tried to drive back the herd into the forest and managed to send away nearly 12 elephants. Few, however, stayed put on the farm land and were eating the mango crop. When two calves were having a tussle, one of them accidentally came in contact with an electric pole, which fell on this 5-6 years-old calf," said S. Ravi Shankar, DFO, Chittoor (West).

On receipt of news, the forest officials rushed to the village and recovered the carcass on Friday morning. As it was difficult to carry it to veterinary hospital, they conducted an autopsy on the spot. Later, they carried out Sava Panchanama and buried it in the nearby forest. The villagers also performed puja to the deceased elephant.

It is pertinent to note here that this is not the first time that animals, especially elephants, died due to human activities along the forest periphery. The vast stretches of this reserve forest are home to a number of pachyderms, which crisscross forests and stray into nearby farm lands in the Chittoor west region.

"The elephant, which died on Thursday night, had 5-11 inches cuts at three to four locations on its head, trunk and ear. While the electric pole hit the elephant's head hard, the power lines might have caused the cuts. During the autopsy, we found mango seeds and corn's kernel in its stomach," the DFO said.

FORTIFYING TEMPLE

V KAMALAKARA RAO | DC
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 11

The city-based Lord Varaha Lakshmi Nrusimha Swamy temple management has undertaken a survey for building a large boundary wall around the temple to protect nearly 5,000 acres of temple land from encroachers. If everything goes well as per plans, the project would be completed by 2022.

A 15-km wall was already built for the century-old Vaishnava temple located on a lush green hill on survey number 275 a few years ago, but it does not cover the entire area. The temple authorities then decided to build another 17-km wall for the total protection of the temple land from encroachments in future.

Confirming this to Deccan Chronicle, the temple executive officer, M.V.

Protest against fuel price hike



Congress leaders stage protest in front of a petrol bunk against the hike in fuel price in Vijayawada on Friday. — C. NARAYANA RAO

Over 10K flats go a-begging in Vizag

Realty reels as there are no takers for low-cost flats

K.M.P. PATNAIK | DC
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 11

Real estate sector, particularly construction activity, was hit hard by the second wave of Covid-19 in Visakhapatnam city that is poised to be the executive capital of Andhra Pradesh.

Builders said around 10,000 flats from Gajuwaka on the south to Madhuravada in the northern city remained unsold since the beginning of the year. Of the unsold flats, 40 per cent are completed and are being given final touches. "There are not even any enquiries for the affordable houses which were built in Anandapuram, Bhimili and Madhuravada region last year," said the chairman of Vizag chapter of the Confederation of

● **Lok Sabha** member M.V.V. Satyanarayana noted should the pandemic continue to be on the wane, consumers are likely to be purchasing flats. Srinivas said builders are apprehensive as construction costs are going up every day.

Real Estate Developer's Associations of India (Credai), B Srinivas.

The Credai local chapter chairman said the builders fixed ₹3,500 per sqft in Gajuwaka, ₹4,500 in Madhuravada and Yendada, yet there are no takers. In contrast, in the prime localities like East Point Colony, Dasapalla Hills and RK Beach, flats are going at ₹10,000 sq ft. There are not many ventures planned in these localities.

Lok Sabha member M.V.V. Satyanarayana noted should the pandemic continue to be on the wane, consumers are

likely to be purchasing flats.

On the plans for new ventures, Srinivas said builders are apprehensive as construction costs are going up every day. Steel prices are jacked up by ₹5,000 since March and a tonne is being sold for ₹55,000. Similarly, cement is being sold for ₹400 a bag. Its cost went up by ₹100 per bag in April this year. In addition to the price hike in materials, the builders are facing a shortage of skilled manpower, restrictions on working hours and other uncertainties.

A low-cost housing builder B.K. Murthy said many people were not making a second enquiry as the second wave of pandemic is putting a severe strain on family budgets due to hard times and crippling hospitalisations. They would take some time to recoup before thinking of owning their homes, he added.

Srinivas said the government should offer some succor to the builders by reducing stamp duty as is being done in some states, revise GST and offer subsidy on steel and cement. "More than our money, we are also concerned about the unemployment slump has caused. Out of 30,000 construction workers, only 5,000 are employed now," Srinivas said.

AP SEES DIP IN BLACK FUNGUS, COVID CASES

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 11

Black fungus cases as also Covid19 cases are showing a steady decline in their spread in Andhra Pradesh. As on Friday, there were 1,307 active black fungus cases while 138 persons have died due to the virus in the state so far.

State health principal secretary Anil Kumar Singhal said the state has administered Covid vaccine to 1,28,824 persons including mothers with children below five years as also the students going abroad for study or work, all on a priority basis. There is no lapse in the vaccination for mothers, he said.

So far, 1.13 crore vaccine doses were distributed to the districts. Of them, 61.67 lakh were first doses and 26.04 lakh second doses. For people aged above 45 years, the first dose was given to 52.52 lakh persons and the second dose to 18.94 lakh persons, covering 53.07 per cent of the population. Some 47.50 lakh doses of the jab will be administered in the state by the end of June.

The positivity rate of the Covid19 virus was gradually registering a dip. It was at 8.29 on June 10 and 8.09 by June 11. The rate of recovery has gone up to 94 per cent. The number of deaths also came down. While 67 persons died of the virus on June 10, the figure for June 11 was 61. Covid19 treatment was being given at 454 hospitals at present.

Earlier, at the peak of the second wave, 625 hospitals had been enlisted for this treatment.

SW monsoon sets in on a farmer-friendly note

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 11

The Southwest monsoon - 2021 has begun with farmer-friendly rainfall across the state. It is a good sign for Kharif agriculture activities, particularly for the dry lands in Rayalaseema region.

The Andhra Pradesh State Development Planning Society's rainfall data has shown on Friday that 10 of 13 districts received 'above normal' rainfall till date during this monsoon season, which annually begins on June 1.

"The SW monsoon has covered the state as per schedule by June 10. It is a good sign for all stakeholders," said S. Stella, director, India Meteorological Department (IMD) Amaravati Centre.

Kadapa, Anantapur, Chittoor and Kurnool in Rayalaseema received above 100% rainfall than normal. Kadapa received 100.8mm of rainfall against its normal of 26.1mm (286.2% above normal), highest among other districts. Anantapur received 89.7 mm of rainfall against its normal of 32mm (180.3% above normal), Chittoor received 66.8mm of rainfall against the normal of 32.8mm (103.7% above normal).

Meanwhile, Nellore, Prakasam and Visakhapatnam districts received rains below normal.

Speaking to Deccan Chronicle, Krishna district agriculture joint director T. Mohana Rao said "The SW monsoon this year indicates a good sign for the Kharif agriculture season. We received nearly 70 percent above normal rainfall in the monsoon season. The favourable rainfall helps farmers for land prepara-

SIX LABS SERVED NOTICES FOR EXCESS BILLING

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL JUNE 11

Acting on complaints from the public that medical scanning centers collected more charges from Covid-19 patients against fixed prices by the state government, the DMHO officials conducted raids and booked six diagnostic centers for not following the rules.

The District Extension Medical Officer (DEMO) J. Raghu Ram said. On Friday they visited and found faults in six diagnosis centers at Kurnool city including Pranav Scanning center, Vasavi Apex, and Sai Megha multi-specialty hospital, he said. LRK diagnosis center Surakshitha Hospital and Kartheek Hospital also violated guidelines, he added.

AT A GLANCE: AP AGRI SCENARIO

● AP Kharif Agriculture Area	37.68 Andhra Pradesh's total Kharif agriculture crop area is lakh hectares	
15.8 lakh hectares is covered by paddy	6 lakh hectares is covered by cotton	8 lakh hectares is covered by groundnuts
50 Over lakh farmers take up farming in the season		
<u>RAINFALL:</u>		
10 out of 13 districts received 'above normal' rainfall in SW Monsoon 2021		
● Nellore, Visakhapatnam and Prakasam districts receive 'below normal' rainfall	● Kadapa received the state's highest rainfall at 286% above normal rainfall.	

MODERATE RAINFALL AT ISOLATED PLACES IN NEXT TWO DAYS: IMD

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 11

A low pressure area formed over Bay of Bengal on Friday. The system was located over northwest Bay of Bengal and adjoining the Odisha and Gangetic West Bengal coasts. It is likely to become more marked during next 24 hours and move west-northwest wards across Odisha, said S. Stella, director, IMD, Amaravati

Centre.

Stella further said that there would be no chance of cyclone under the influence of the system, but light to moderate rains would be poured in isolated places of the state in next two to three days. The people need not worry about any abnormal weather conditions due to the present low pressure system, which was formed closer to the coast, she added.

tion of paddy and other dry crops."

Agriculture wing sources said that the state has nearly 50 lakh farmers, who take up Kharif crops from June to October every year. The total

area of Kharif crops in all 13 districts is 37.68 lakh hectares including 15.8 lakh hectares of paddy, 7.5 lakh to 8 lakh hectares of groundnut and 6 lakh hectares of cotton.

PROMINENT LAWYER SUCCUMBS TO COVID

Kadapa, June 11: Veena Ajay Kumar, 59, a prominent lawyer from Kadapa, died on Friday morning. He was in home isolation when he tested positive to Covid-19 last month. Even after covid was

cured his health had recently deteriorated. His family members immediately rushed him to a private hospital in Hyderabad. He died Friday morning while receiving treatment there.

प्रगत संगणन विकास केंद्र, कोलकाता
CENTRE FOR DEVELOPMENT OF ADVANCED COMPUTING, KOLKATA
CDAC

संघ एवं पुराने संगणनिकी मंत्रालय की वैज्ञानिक संस्था, भारत सरकार
A Scientific Society of the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, Government of India

Advdt. No: CDAC (K)/Admin/HR/CST/2021 Dated: 12/06/2021

सी-डैक कोलकाता को निम्नलिखित पदों पर विज्ञापन: अनुबंध के आधार पर स्मेक्टि परिलिखितों पर नियुक्ति के लिए होनाहर् एवं परिणाम उन्मुखी जनशक्ति की आवश्यकता है। निम्नलिखित व्यक्तियों का कार्यस्थल हेतु निर्धारित होगा।

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SHORT TAKES

MAOIST GUNNED DOWN IN ODISHA

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, JUNE 11

A Maoist was on Friday gunned down during a joint combing operation by Special Operation Group (SOG) jawans and Odisha police at Padampur in Odisha's Bargarh district.

The security personnel also seized a cache of arms and ammunition, including an AK-47 rifle, from Jhanj Reserve Forest near Bhanjagunda area, informed state Director General of Police Shri Abhay.

However, the identity of the slain rebel was yet to be ascertained, the DGP said.

According to reports, a group of Left Wing Extremism cadres opened fire on the security personnel when the latter were carrying out a combing operation in Jhanj Reserve Forest. The security personnel retaliated with full force and in the process a cadre in uniform was killed. However, the remaining Maoists managed to escape.

According to police, an AK-47 rifle, three AK-47 magazines, sophisticated ammunition and other explosives were recovered from the spot. The combing operation was in progress till the report last came in.

"Normally, senior Maoist cadres are given AK-47 rifles to operate. We assume that the encountered rebel could be a senior cadre. Effort is on to establish his identity," said the DGP.

"I once again urge all the Maoists to shun violence and return to the mainstream. I appeal to them to join various rehabilitation schemes of the state government," he added.

SC ORDER ON ITALIAN MARINES LIKELY ON MON.

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JUNE 11

The Supreme Court on Friday agreed to order the dropping of criminal proceedings against two Italian marines accused of killing two Indian fishermen off Kerala coast in 2012, after court was informed that ₹10 crore compensation for the families of victims have been deposited with the court registry.

The Italian marines Chief Master Sergeant Massimiliano Latorre and Sergeant Major Salvatore Grirone, on board Italian-flagged oil tanker M V Enrica Lexie, had killed two Kerala fishermen who were on a fishing vessel in India's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), allegedly suspecting them to be sea pirates.

Telling Solicitor General Tushar Mehta "We will accept that you are saying", a bench comprising Justice M.R. Shah said that they will pass the order on June 15.

On the question of disbursement of money to the families of victims, the court indicated that it may ask Kerala High Court to deal with it as it can monitor the aspect of disbursement of the compensation to the families of the victims.

It said that the money deposited with its registry can be transferred to Kerala High Court. In the course of the hearing on Friday, Solicitor General Mehta told the court that the money can be deposited in interest-bearing bank accounts for gradual withdrawal and accrual of adequate interest.

Covid chaos



People throng a market that opened after two months as restrictions of Covid-19 lockdown eased in Bhopal on Friday.

— PTI

BJP leaders call Mukul Roy 'Mir Jafar, opportunist'

WB BJP chief says anyone can go anywhere, it is their personal choice

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, JUNE 11

The Bharatiya Janata Party, shattered by its national vice president Mukul Roy's exit and his return to the Trinamul Congress, has become a divided house in West Bengal with a blame game between two camps amid a fierce internal revolt since its poll debacle in the state.

While one section slammed the party leadership for inducting Mir Jafars like Roy without any judgment ahead of elections, senior leaders alleged their rivals of having "no contribution" while downplaying the newly elected Krishnanagar North MLA's defection as a "personal choice."

Bishnupur BJP MP Saumitra Khan alleged, "We saw Mir Jafar in Bengal before independence. But now we are seeing them in politics. This type of people are never accepted. Had he been Chanakya in politics, he could have succeeded in ensuring the victory for his son Shubhrangshu from Bijpur Assembly seat this time. But he failed. Mir Jafar can not do anything good. They

only can harm." Another party MP Arjun Singh claimed that Roy was an "opportunist" who belongs to no organisation.

His party colleague Anupam Hazra posted on Facebook, "A pathetic outcome of extra jubilation over one or two leaders during election and sidelining and insulting the efficient through lobbying!!! Now the Royal Passengers of Chartered flights are also missing!!! Still time is there, the

Bengal BJP should stop lobbying and engage the efficient leaders who are sidelined!!!!"

State BJP president Dilip Ghosh, however, said, "Those who have no contribution in the rise of our party here are feeling sad. If someone fails to sing in the party's tune, it is his personal problem, not of the party. Anyone can go anywhere. It is his personal wish. I do not know if there was hardly any gain for us

when he was there. Our party remains intact."

Darjeeling BJP MP Raju Bista said, "Mukul Roy is a senior and a seasoned politician, and his joining TMC is a reflection of his personal choice. The beauty of democracy is that people are free to choose. But sadly, today this freedom to choose does not exist in West Bengal. BJP is making space for democracy to foster again in Bengal and as the 2021

elections showed, BJP has grown stronger in the grassroots level in West Bengal and this momentum will continue unabated."

Former MLA Shilbhadra Dutta, who defected to the BJP before the polls, said, "This is a personal choice. He did whatever he thought was best. I have nothing to say. But people develop a hatred towards politics when they see repeated switches by someone."



BJP leader Mukul Roy hugs TMC general secretary Abhishek Banerjee during his re-joining of the party, as West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee looks in Kolkata on Friday.

— PTI

SC raps Param Bir for having no faith in cops

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JUNE 11

The Supreme Court on Friday described as "shocking" the former Mumbai police commissioner Param Bir Singh saying that he had no confidence in the Maharashtra police with which he has been associated for over three decades as IPS officer, as it declined to entertain his plea for the transfer of all the criminal cases

registered against him in Maharashtra to CBI or an independent agency.

Apparently intrigued over Param Bir Singh showing lack of faith in Maharashtra police in which he grew up to become the top cop of Mumbai police, the court observed that those living in glass houses should not throw stones on others.

Describing as "shocking" Param Bir Singh's plea that he was seeking



the transfer of all the criminal cases to CBI or an independent agency because of his lack of trust in the Maharashtra police, a bench comprising Justice Hemant Gupta and Justice V. Ramasubramanian said,

"It is very surprising. You were part of Maharashtra IPS cadre for 30 years and served it. Now you are saying you do not have faith in that system. It is a shocking ... shocking allegation."

Reminding Param Bir Singh that he was alleging lack of trust in a police force of which he was part for 30 years, the court observed, "It is said persons living in glass houses shouldn't throw stones at other."

"Your Lordships are assuming I am living in glass houses," senior counsel Mahesh Jethmalani appearing for Param Bir Singh said responding to the observation from the bench.

At the outset of the hearing, the court told Singh that it can't pass a blanket order in respect of all the FIRs registered against him and asked him to approach Bombay High Court or any other appropriate forum.

Prashant Kishor's meeting with Pawar sets off speculations

SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC MUMBAI, JUNE 11

Well-known political strategist Prashant Kishor on Friday met Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) chief Sharad Pawar at the latter's residence Silver Oak in South Mumbai. Though the NCP maintained that the meeting was a thanksgiving trip related to the Bengal and Tamil Nadu election, there are speculations that non-Congress opposition parties are trying to put up a joint fight against the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and credible leader against Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The Shiv Sena has been openly proposing Pawar as the opposition leader.

Kishor held talks with the NCP chief and party leaders for three and half hours. The meeting between Pawar and Kishor assumes 'political significance' as it is believed the NCP chief wants a united forum of Opposition parties to take on the ruling BJP in the next Lok Sabha election, which is scheduled in 2024.

A senior NCP leader, requesting anonymity, said that Kishor had apprised the NCP chief about the current political situation with the facts and figures.

He also gave a suggestion on how to unite the opposition parties in the country. Apart from the NCP chief, the meeting was also attended by Baramati MP Supriya Sule, Maharashtra NCP president Jayant Patil and MLA Rohit Pawar.

Speaking with this newspaper on Friday, Maharashtra Cabinet minister and NCP national spokesperson Nawab Malik said that the current political situation in the country was discussed in the meet-

● **KISHOR HELD** talks with the NCP chief and party leaders for three and half hours.

● **THE MEETING** between Pawar and Kishor assumes 'political significance' as it is believed the NCP chief wants a united forum of Opposition parties to take on the ruling BJP in the next Lok Sabha election, which is scheduled in 2024.

● **THE SHIV** Sena has been openly proposing Pawar as the opposition leader.

ing. "A discussion was held over the political situation in the country and how to unite the opposition parties against the BJP in the country," Malik added.

Senior NCP leader and Cabinet minister Chhagan Bhujbal said that Prashant Kishor, who is a successful election strategist, has helped various parties win the elections at the centre and states with his suggestion and strategies.

"But I don't know the exact reason behind the meeting but if he comes with a suggestion, Pawar will certainly consider it," he added.

Shiv Sena spokesperson Arvind Sawant welcomed the meeting and said, "At present, polarisation is needed in the country. If democracy needs to be preserved, a strong opposition is needed."

In March 2021, the Sena had said that there is a need to restructure the UPA, and the new alliance should be led by a senior leader like Sharad Pawar as many regional parties are not ready to work under the leadership of the Congress. According to the Sena, if UPA is restructured, more parties will join the alliance.

Will provide security to Poonawalla if he asks: Maha to HC

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC MUMBAI, JUNE 11

The Maharashtra government on Friday told the Bombay High Court that it would provide security to Adar Poonawalla if he asks.

Following the statement by the state that it would provide more security to Poonawalla if he asks so, a division bench of Justice S.S. Shinde and Justice N.J. Jamadar disposed of the petition filed by city based lawyer Datta Mane seeking Z+ security for Poonawalla. The petitioner had also sought registration of FIR against those who had threatened him in relation to supply of vaccine used in fight against Covid-19. The petitioner had termed the 'Y' category security provided to Poonawalla by the Centre as an eye wash.

On Friday, Chief Public Prosecutor Deepak Thakare made a statement before the court that whenever Poonawalla returns from London, and if he seeks protection, then adequate or additional protection will be

● **THE PETITIONER** had also sought registration of FIR against those who had threatened him in relation to supply of vaccine used in fight against Covid-19. The petitioner had termed the 'Y' category security provided to Poonawalla by the Centre as an eye wash.

given to him immediately. Advocate Pradeep Havnur, appearing for the petitioner, requested the Court to keep the petition pending to consider the prayer for registration of FIR.

The bench, however, said that the petitioner is seeking protection for someone else, but what if he says he doesn't want it? "How can we incorporate all of this into your petition?" asked the bench. The bench said that the court will not entertain the petition beyond a point now.

When Havnur submitted he did not have instructions to withdraw, the court proceeded to dispose of the petition after recording advocate Thakare's statement.

COVID | BLUES Relaxations mandate all shops, offices to follow all guidelines

TN too extends lockdown till June 21

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR & D. SEKAR | DC CHENNAI, JUNE 11

Extending the lockdown till June 21, Chief Minister M.K. Stalin announced a slew of additional relaxations all over the state, more of them in the 27 districts where Covid-19 infections have shown a decline.

In the other 11 districts — Coimbatore, The Nilgiris, Tiruppur, Erode, Salem, Karur, Namakkal, Thanjavur, Thiruvavur, Nagapattinam and Mylāduthurai — too a few relaxations like allowing security services and housekeeping staff in apartments and other buildings have been announced.

However, in the rest of the state, liquor shops will be open from 10 am to 5 pm and beauty parlors, spas,



A health worker administers a dose of the Covid-19 vaccine to a person at a drive-in vaccination centre in Chennai on Friday.

— PTI

salons can function from 6 to 5 pm without switching on the air conditioner and not accommodating customers more than per cent of the capacity.

The relaxations, announced after reviewing the spread of Coronavirus district wise and with a view

to saving the precious lives of people, however mandate all shops and business establishments to provide hand sanitizer with dispenser at the entrance, thermal screening of body temperature and ensuring that all workers wore face masks and so on.

No shop can have the air conditioner on and should restrict the entry of customers with a view to maintaining social distancing, which should also be maintained as they waited outside to enter the premises by marking spots.

Among other activities allowed in the 27 districts with low infection rates are Parks and playgrounds to open for morning walking between 6 am and 9 am, shops repairing agricultural accessories and pump sets (not those doing sales) from 9 am to 5 pm, opticians, both selling and repairing spectacles, from 9 am to 2 pm and potters and handicraft makers and sellers between 6 am to 5 pm.

Shops repairing and selling household accessories like mixies, grinders and television sets, those selling cell phones and outlets

dispensing construction material can all be kept open from 9 am to 2 pm.

Educational institutions can function for doing administrative work relating to admissions and the export companies and those supplying raw materials to them can function with 50 per cent workers, following the Covid-19 protocols.

Other companies can engage 33 per cent of their workers, who would not be allowed to travel by their two-wheelers with e-registration. But IT related firms will have to restrict their employees in the premises to 20 per cent or 10 persons at a time.

Housing Finance Companies, Non-Banking Finance Companies and all insurance companies can function with 33 per cent employees in the 27 districts with more relaxations.

Hassan (K'taka), June 11:

BJP national general secretary Arun Singh's statement ruling out his replacement has given him "more strength", Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa said on Friday and asserted that he will work for the development of the state during the remaining two years of the term.

The 78-year-old Lingayat strongman also said his responsibility has increased because of the trust shown in him by the BJP high command. "Arun Singh who is Karnataka in-charge has said that there is no question (of leadership change). It doesn't arise and that Yediyurappa will remain (CM) for the next two years and complete the term — where does that question arise," Yediyurappa said in response to a question.

Speaking to reporters after a review meeting with officials and public representatives from the district, he said, "It has been clarified that Yediyurappa will continue for the remaining two years and with the cooperation of everyone I will focus on development and tour across the state, and will make honest efforts to do a good job."

Amid speculation about leadership change in Karnataka, Singh, who is BJP's national general secretary in-charge of the state, on Thursday had ruled out replacing the Chief Minister and asserted that Yediyurappa will continue in the top post.

Yediyurappa in response to a question said that Singh's statement has given him "more strength".

"Hundred per cent, when

our Karnataka in-charge has said there is no change for the remaining two years and good work is happening under my leadership, my responsibility has increased. I will put more effort and honestly work for the next two years, and try to live up to the trust shown in me by PM Narendra Modi and Amit Shah (Union home minister)," he added.

Speculation has been rife for some time now that efforts were on, by a section of the ruling BJP to exert pressure for unseating Yediyurappa. Some BJP legislators are said to be pushing for convening a legislature party meeting, citing some decisions taken by the government, its functioning, handling of the Covid crisis and alleged instances of corruption, among others.

— PTI

SHORT TAKES

18 KILLED IN BUS CRASH IN PAKISTAN

Karachi: At least 18 persons were killed and 30 others injured on Friday when an over-speeding passenger bus overturned in Pakistan's Balochistan province, a media report said.

The bus was travelling from Wadh to Dadu when it met with an accident at Khori in Khuzdar district of the province, Geo News reported. Fifteen people were killed on the spot. As soon as the accident was reported, rescue personnel rushed to the spot and started rescue operations, the report said.

The injured and deceased were shifted to Teaching Hospital Khuzdar, where three more people died and the death toll rose to 18, it said. The condition of some of the injured is said to be critical. Sources told the channel that the passenger coach lost control and overturned as it was over-speeding.

THREE DEAD AT FLORIDA SUPERMARKET

Royal Palm Beach, Fla.: A man fatally shot a grandmother and her 1-year-old grandson inside a Florida supermarket before killing himself, authorities said, causing dozens to flee the store in panic.

The shooting happened shortly after 11:30 am on Thursday at a Publix located in a strip mall that also houses small shops and restaurants.

Authorities initially said the shooter and the victims may have known each other. A later update from the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office said there was no known motive or relationship between the suspect and the victims, but detectives were still investigating.

The sheriff's office identified the suspect as Timothy J. Wall, 55, of Royal Palm Beach.

The names of the grandmother and her grandson won't be released. Their family invoked Marsy's Law, the sheriff's office said, which allows victims of crimes to block information that could be used to locate or harass them or their families from being made public.

INDONESIA DENGUE STUDY OFFERS HOPE

Jakarta: Dengue fever infections dropped dramatically in an Indonesian study where a bacteria was introduced into disease-carrying mosquitoes, offering hope in the battle against an illness that sickens millions annually around the world.

Results of the three-year study, published in the New England Journal of Medicine this week, found that infecting dengue-carrying mosquitoes with a harmless bacteria called Wolbachia led to a 77 percent drop in human cases.

Infections requiring hospitalisation also fell by 86 percent in Wolbachia-treated areas of Yogyakarta, a city on Java island where the experiment was conducted, researchers said. The study was conducted by the World Mosquito Program at Monash University in Australia and Indonesia's Gadjah Mada University.

"The 77 percent figure is honestly quite fantastic for a transmittable disease and we're very grateful with the result," said Adi Utarini, a public-health researcher.

INDIA-KUWAIT SIGN MOU ON RECRUITMENT

Kuwait City: India and Kuwait have signed an MoU that brings Indian domestic workers in the Gulf nation within the ambit of a legal framework that streamlines their recruitment and provides them with the protection of the law.

The MoU was signed on Thursday by Indian Ambassador Sibi George and Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kuwait Majdi Ahmad Al-Dhafiri in the presence of visiting External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and his Kuwaiti counterpart Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah.

Jaishankar arrived here on his first bilateral visit to the oil-rich Gulf nation early on Thursday, according to a press release issued by the Indian Embassy here. The MoU brings the Indian domestic workers in Kuwait within the ambit of a legal framework that streamlines their recruitment and provides them with the protection of the law.

G7 to donate 1 billion jabs

Leading economies feel joint approach is best to recover from Covid-19

Carbis Bay, June 11: G7 leaders gathered on Friday for their first in-person talks in nearly two years, with an expected pledge to donate one billion Covid vaccine doses to poor countries on the agenda in a show of Western democratic cohesion.

The club of leading economies — Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and United States — say a joint approach is the world's best chance for recovering from the global health crisis, and tackling climate change.

President Joe Biden has set the tone, ditching Donald Trump's isolationist stance to ram home a message of resolve by the G7 and NATO against both Beijing and Moscow, as he heads into his first sit-down with Russian President Vladimir Putin next week in Geneva.

"The driving animating purpose of this G7 summit is to show that democracy can deliver against the biggest challenges we're facing in the world," a senior US administration official said.

Campaigners say the G7's vaccine donations pledge for this year and next — including 500 million US doses — is far too little, too late to end a pandemic that has claimed over 3.7 million lives worldwide.

"If the best G7 leaders can manage is to donate one billion vaccine doses then this summit will have been a failure," Oxfam said, insisting the world needs 11 billion doses. But the G7 has recognised it needs to rise to competing "vaccine diplomacy" efforts launched by China and Russia, with the Biden administration stressing it expects nothing in return for its donated jabs.

G7 leaders meeting at the seaside resort of Carbis Bay in Cornwall, southwest England, are also expected to outline more help for developing nations to build up infrastructure, as a counterpoint to the debt-fuelled spending by China in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

The initiative "will embrace a high standards, transparent, climate friendly, non-corrupt mechanism" for infrastructure investment in the developing world, the US official said. "It will be an alternative to that which other countries, including China, are offering." Underpinning the US-led



(Left to Right) President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, France's President Emmanuel Macron, President of the European Council Charles Michel, Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel and Italy's Prime minister Mario Draghi, take part in an EU coordination meeting in advance of the start of the G7 summit in Carbis Bay, Cornwall on Friday.

— AFP

CDC LOOKS INTO HEARTBURN AFTER PFIZER VAX

Washington, June 11: US health officials are investigating what appear to be higher than expected reports of heart inflammation in male teens and young adults after they get a second dose of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines.

It's not clear if the heart inflammation is caused by the shots and the reports still are rare, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It urges everyone 12 and older to get vaccinated.

As of May 31, the agency had 275 preliminary reports of such inflammation in 16- to 24-year-olds, CDC's Dr Tom Shimabukuro told a government vaccine meeting on Thursday.

— AFP

diplomatic revival, Biden and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Thursday adopted a new "Atlantic Charter", modelled on the pact signed by their World War II predecessors to help build a new world order.

— AFP

UK says Delta variant 60% more transmissible

London, June 11: The British government said Friday that the new Delta coronavirus variant is 60 percent more transmissible in households than the variant that forced the country to lock down in January.

The Delta variant, which first emerged in India, has caused a rise in cases in the UK, prompting questions about whether social distancing restrictions will be lifted as planned from June 21.

New research from Public Health England "suggests that the Delta variant is associated with an approximately 60 percent increased risk of household transmission" compared to the Alpha variant identified in Kent, southeast England.

The Kent variant caused a surge of Covid cases in January leading to a three-month lockdown as hospitals were stretched to near-capacity.

The government ramped up its public vaccination drive in response, and has now given two doses of vaccine to nearly 29 million adults and one dose to nearly 41 million.



People dine out in Melbourne's Lygon Street cafe and restaurant strip on Friday as the city eases restrictions after a two-week lockdown.

— AFP

Daily cases rose to 7,393 on Thursday, a level not seen since February. More than 90 percent of new cases were of the Delta variant, ministers said.

However the number of patients in hospital remains low, at just over 1,000 on Thursday, and Health Secretary Matt Hancock has said most inpatients have not had any vaccine.

The government said this suggested the vaccination programme is mitigating the impact of the

Delta variant, urging the public to get both jabs.

Jenny Harries, chief executive of the UK Health Security Agency, said that "two doses provide significantly more protection" against the Delta variant than one.

The UK has reported 127,867 deaths from the virus, the worst toll in Europe.

Under the government roadmap, England plans to drop rules on numbers at social gatherings and allow large weddings and reopening of nightclubs from June 21.

— AFP

UK digs in over North Ireland in Brexit trade row

Enniskillen, United Kingdom, June 11: Britain on Friday hit back at French President Emmanuel Macron's uncompromising stance on Brexit, in a simmering row over new trading arrangements for Northern Ireland.

Macron on Thursday warned London that it was "not serious" to review agreements signed last December, just weeks before the UK left the European single market and customs union.

"Nothing is renegotiable," he said before heading to the G7 leaders summit in Cornwall, southwest England.

But Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab insisted that Brussels should be more flexible in its approach to Northern Ireland, which shares the UK's only land border with the EU.

Under the so-called Northern Ireland protocol, checks are required on some goods heading to the British province from mainland Britain — England, Scotland and Wales. But that has angered unionist communities who say it has driven a wedge between them and the rest of the UK, and blamed it for a resurgence of violence.

Controls have been sus-

pending, and London has extended a grace period for checks on deliveries of chilled meat products to the province.

"The change must come from the European Commission side," said Raab. "We are not negotiating or haggling the integrity of the United Kingdom," he told Sky News.

Talks to try to resolve the issue broke up in London without agreement on Wednesday, with Brussels threatening punitive action if London fails to implement the agreement.

The arrangement — to prevent unchecked goods heading into the EU through member state Ireland — effectively means Northern Ireland is still part of the European single market.

The row threatened to overshadow the G7 summit, with reports that US President Joe Biden was angered at the potential harm to the 1998 peace deal that brought an end to three decades of violence over British rule in Northern Ireland.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson played down reports of a rift on Thursday, after the pair met for 90 minutes of talks on the eve of the G7 leaders meeting.

— AFP

US: China can spark 'crisis' in Indo-Pacific

Washington, June 11: Describing China as a "pacing challenge" to the US, Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin has told American lawmakers that Beijing's "aggressive behaviour" in the Indo-Pacific could spark a "crisis" in the strategically vital region.

Responding to questions from members of the Senate Armed Services Committee during a Congressional hearing on the annual budget of the Pentagon, he stressed on having a direct line of communication between the militaries and also between government officials as well, "the defence secretary said.

Austin described the US' relationship with China currently as one of competition.

"As we look at some of the aggressive behaviour that we have witnessed from China in the Indo-Pacific, I'm concerned about something that could happen that could spark a crisis," Austin

told the lawmakers on Thursday. "We need the ability to be able to talk with our allies and partners and also with our adversaries or potential adversaries. So, I think there needs to be a direct line of communication between the military and also between government officials as well," the defence secretary said.

Austin described the US' relationship with China currently as one of competition. "They desire to be the preeminent country on the planet. Their mid to long-term goal is to do that. They look to compete with us, not only militarily but across a spectrum of activity," he said.

— PTI

PAKISTAN TO GIVE RIGHT OF APPEAL TO KULBHUSHAN

Islamabad, June 11: The Pakistan government has rushed through the National Assembly a bill to provide the right of appeal to Indian death-row prisoner Kulbhushan Jadhav amidst ruckus and boycott by the Opposition.

The lower house of Parliament passed the ICJ (Review and Re-consideration) Bill, 2020 on Thursday. The bill is aimed at allowing Jadhav to have consular access in line with the International Court of Justice (ICJ) verdict.

Jadhav, the 51-year-old retired Indian Navy officer, was sentenced to death by a Pakistani military court on charges of espionage and terrorism in April 2017.

India approached the ICJ against Pakistan for denial of consular access to Jadhav and challenging the death sentence.

The Hague-based ICJ ruled in July 2019 that Pakistan must undertake an "effective review and reconsideration" of the conviction and sentence of Jadhav and also to grant consular access to India without further delay.

The ICJ, in its 2019 verdict, had asked Pakistan to provide a proper forum for appeal against the sentence given to Jadhav.

— PTI

H1-B visa: USCIS undoes Trump plan

Washington, June 11: The US' immigration agency has said that it will rescind a 2018 trump-era policy that allowed immigration officers to reject visa applications, including the H1-B, instead of first issuing a notice of intent to deny to the applicants, a decision which will reduce barriers to "legal immigration".

The H1-B visa, popular among Indian IT companies and professionals, is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise.

Technology companies depend on it to hire tens

of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and China. There are other immigrant visas as well which were impacted by the trump-era policy, like the L1, H-2B, J-1, J-2, I, F and O.

The US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) said in a statement on Wednesday that it was updating its policies around expedited processing of applications, changing the guidance around Requests for Evidence (RFEs) and Notices of Intent to Deny (NOIDs), and increasing the validity period for certain Employment Authorisation Documents (EADs).

— PTI

LUCKY | NUMBER

London, June 11: Imagine trying to make an impression on someone who's met, well, almost everyone.

Such is the challenge for President Joe Biden, who is set to sip tea with Queen Elizabeth II on Sunday at Windsor Castle after a Group of Seven leaders' summit in southwestern England.

Biden will be the 13th president to sit with the now-95-year-old monarch. The White House said he previously met the queen

in 1982, when he was a U.S. senator.

Before the two meet again, the leaders are to attend a reception Friday with the queen, her son Prince Charles and his wife, Camilla, and Charles' son Prince William and his wife, Kate.

The queen has met every American president since Dwight Eisenhower during her nearly 70-year reign, except for Lyndon Johnson, who didn't visit Britain while he was

in office.

She was a 25-year-old princess when she came to Washington in 1951 and stayed with President Harry S. Truman and his family at Blair House, where Truman lived while the White House underwent a major renovation. She met Herbert Hoover in 1957, more than 20 years after he left office.

Her personal ties to U.S. leaders underscore the importance of the United States to the United Kingdom and to the queen.

She came of age during World War II and understands the central role the trans-Atlantic alliance has played in modern British history, said Robert Hardman, author of "Queen of the World," which examines her role representing Britain on the world stage.

"She grew up with that sort of sense of the USA is almost a sort of salvation that came along and rescued Europe in the darkest days of the war," Hardman said.

— AP

US nod to 1st Muslim federal judge

Washington, June 11: The US Senate has approved the historic nomination of Pakistani-American Zahid Quraishi to the District Court in New Jersey, making him the first Muslim federal judge in the country's history.

The Senate voted 81-16 on Thursday to confirm Quraishi, 46. As many as 34 Republicans joined the Democrats in confirming the first-ever Muslim-American as a federal judge.

Currently, a magistrate judge for the District of New Jersey, Quraishi would now make history when he will be sworn in as the Judge of the US District Court of New Jersey. "Judge Quraishi has devoted his career to serving our country, and his story embodies both the rich diversity of New Jersey and the promise of



Zahid Quraishi

America as a place where anything is possible," said Senator Robert Menendez during a speech on the Senate floor before the confirmation vote.

Menendez is Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

"Zahid Quraishi is a man of integrity, a consummate public servant, and a trailblazer for Asian-Americans and Muslim-Americans across this country who dream of one day presiding over a court of their own,"

he said.

"We should all draw inspiration from his story because it is a story that could only take place in the United States of America," Menendez said.

The US District Court of New Jersey is one of the busiest in the country, with 46,000 cases pending before it and with judges facing individual caseloads more than triple the national average.

Quraishi was appointed as a US Magistrate Judge for the District of New Jersey in the Trenton Vicinage on June 3, 2019.

Quraishi, who is of Pakistani ancestry, is the first Asian-American to serve on the federal bench in New Jersey.

"Judge Quraishi has devoted his career to serving our country, and his story embodies both the

rich diversity of New Jersey and the promise of America as a place where anything is possible. He was born in New York and grew up in Fanwood, New Jersey with his parents, both immigrants from Pakistan who came to this country to build a better life," Menendez said.

Before his appointment, he was Chair of Riker Danzig's White Collar Criminal Defence and Investigations Group and his firm's first Chief Diversity Officer.

Before joining Riker, Quraishi served as an Assistant US Attorney in the District of New Jersey for over five years. He previously represented the United States as an Assistant Chief Counsel and trial attorney with the US Department of Homeland Security.

— PTI



Queen Elizabeth II, and former US president Barack Obama attend a state banquet in Buckingham Palace, London.

— AP file

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	52474.76	0.33
Nifty 50	15799.40	0.39
S&P 500*	4,240.87	0.04
Dollar (₹)	73.06	0.00
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.38	-0.36
Euro (₹)	88.81	0.07
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,530.441	0.90
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	72.91	0.54
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.006	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.464	0.005

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Govt holds back release of full April IIP data

The government has held back the release of complete data of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) for April, as was done for the same month last year due to the lockdown. By the partial data released by the NSO, industrial production expanded by a whopping 134 per cent year-on-year in April, while it was 22.4 per cent in March. But compared with April 2019 data, industrial growth stood at 0.07 per cent.

Singh's daughters appointed as DLF directors



DLF boss Rajiv Singh's two daughters, Savitri Devi Singh (36) and Anushka Singh (34), have been appointed on the company's board. In a filing, DLF said the board has "co-opted" them as additional directors with immediate effect. Both will be non-executive and non-independent directors. Both hold BSc in Economics degree from the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, DLF said.

US consumer sentiment rebounds in June

US consumer sentiment rebounded in early June as inflation fears subsided and households grew more optimistic about future economic growth and employment. The University of Michigan said its preliminary consumer sentiment index increased to 86.4 in the first half of this month from a final reading of 82.9 in May. The survey's gauge of current economic conditions edged up to a reading of 90.6 from 89.4 in May.

BHEL Q4 loss narrows to ₹1,036 crore

BHEL's consolidated net loss narrowed to Rs 1,036.32 crore in the March 2021 quarter, mainly on the back of higher revenues, compared with a consolidated net loss of Rs 1,532.18 crore in the year-ago quarter. Total income rose to Rs 7,245.16 crore from Rs 5,166.64 crore. In the full financial year 2020-21, the PSU's consolidated net loss widened to Rs 2,699.70 crore compared with Rs 1,468.35 crore in 2019-20.



Pilot run is part of 'Medicines from the Sky' project Flipkart to test drone delivery of vaccine, meds in Telangana

FC BUREAU NEW DELHI, JUNE 11

Homegrown e-commerce major Flipkart on Friday said it has partnered with the Telangana government to lead a consortium tasked with the development and execution of the drone deliveries of medical supplies to remote areas under the 'Medicines from the Sky' project.

As part of the consortium, Bengaluru-based Flipkart will deploy drones and enable deliveries of vaccines and medical supplies.

These efforts will be complemented with technologies such as geo mapping,



routing of shipments and track and trace of location etc, developed by Flipkart over the years in serving millions of customers across the country, a Flipkart statement said.

A combination of these technologies will then be used to conduct 'Beyond Visual Line of Sight'

(BVLOS) deliveries in remote areas of the state.

The pilot, to be conducted for over six days, will be tested out for delivering thousands of vaccines.

"The Covid-19 crisis has pushed the envelope in the rapid development of scalable and robust technologies and the Medicines

from the Sky project is a testament to that. It is a decisive step in making use of cutting-edge technologies for the safety and well-being of the masses," said Rajneesh Kumar, senior VP and chief corporate affairs officer, Flipkart.

The Telangana government has adopted this framework to implement drones for last-mile delivery and will integrate them into the state's healthcare supply chain.

Jayesh Ranjan, principal secretary (IT and I&C), Government of Telangana said the state has been a pioneer in using technology for improving the lives of the citizens.

HC okays CCI probe of e-com biggies

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JUNE 11

The Karnataka High Court on Friday dismissed pleas by e-commerce biggies Amazon and Flipkart challenging the probe ordered by the Competition Commission of India (CCI).

The CCI had ordered a probe in January 2020 against both Amazon and Walmart-owned Flipkart in a complaint filed by the Delhi Vyapar Mahasangh (DVM), representing small businesses. The petitioner had alleged that the e-commerce companies were violating the competition laws while selling smart phones on their platform.

The Delhi Vyapar

Mahasangh had levelled allegations of predatory pricing, deep discounting, preferential seller listing, and exclusive partnerships, among others, against Amazon and Flipkart. The Confederation of All-India Traders (Cait) too had impleaded as a party to the case.

In February, the e-commerce players got stay on the probe from the Karnataka High Court, which found that the ongoing investigation by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) should be first completed before the CCI could initiate a probe. The ED in 2019 had initiated an investigation against Amazon and Flipkart for alleged

violation of Foreign Direct Investment laws.

Following this, the petitioners again approached the court asking it to vacate the stay order.

However, on Friday CCI argued that an investigation by the ED under the Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999 (Fema) does not bar another investigation by the CCI for violations of competition law. It said e-commerce players were twisting the pendency of an ED investigation to ward off CCI's probe.

Responding to the court order, an Amazon spokesperson said: "We will review the judgement carefully and decide on the next steps."

FOREX RESERVES CROSS \$600 BN

Mumbai, June 11: The country's foreign exchange reserves crossed the \$600-billion mark for the first time after increasing by \$6.842 billion in the week ended June 4, RBI data showed on Friday.

The reserves surged to a record \$605.008 billion, helped by a rise in foreign currency assets (FCA), a major component of the overall reserves.

In the previous week ended May 28, the reserves had swelled by \$5.271 billion to \$598.165 billion.

In the reporting week, FCA jumped by \$7.362 billion to \$560.890 billion.

Gold reserves declined by \$502 million to \$37.604 billion. —PTI

Nifty-50, Sensex scale new peaks

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, JUNE 11

The equity market's benchmark indices, Nifty-50 and Sensex, closed at new all-time highs on Friday, marking the fourth successive weekly close with gains. However, the upward momentum seems to be slowing down with relatively lower daily gains for the indices.

The Nifty-50 gained 61.60 points or 39 per cent to close at a new peak of 15,799.35 after touching an intra-day high of 15,835.

The Sensex also closed at a new high of 52,474.76, gaining 174.29 points, and registered a new all-time high of 52,641.53 intra-day.

"The market is rallying on a slowed-down momentum, which can be properly visualised with the help of negative divergence in RSI (Relative Strength Index) in daily time-frame," said Nirali Shah, head of equity research, Samco Securities.

"The traded volume of derivatives saw a sharp decline by 30-40 per cent. The fall in intraday volumes is primarily attributable to either the new peak margin requirements (became effective from June 1) or the drying

up of investor conviction at current levels. Overall, the market remained range-bound with an upward bias," Shah said in her weekly analysis.

The broader market outperformed, with Nifty Mid-cap-50 Index up 2.56 per cent and the Nifty Mid-cap 100 Index up 3.28 per cent.

NSE's India VIX Index dropped 13.04 per cent during the week to 14.10, indicating lower volatility ahead.

The market's upward momentum has sustained on the back of Rs 15,520 crore net buying by the foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) in June so far and domestic mutual funds also lending support as shown by the 14-month high inflows in equity mutual funds in May 2021.

On Friday domestic institutions were net buyers of equities worth Rs 666.36 crore while the FPIs took a pause with Rs 18.64 crore net purchases.

The IT sector emerged a top gainer during the week, with the Nifty IT Index moving up 4.52 per cent while the financials were the laggards, as the Nifty Bank was down 0.69 per cent.

ASSET QUALITY OF MICRO LOAN PORTFOLIOS DIP

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JUNE 11

With lockdowns hitting collections, the asset quality of micro loan portfolios is estimated to have deteriorated this month, exceeding the post-demonetisation levels.

A drop in the collection efficiency of NBFC-MFIs owing to Covid-19 curbs will increase asset-quality pressures in the sector and loans in arrears for over 30 days could rise to 14-16 per cent of portfolio in June from a recent low of 6-7 per cent in March, says a Crisil report. This is higher than 11.7 per cent touched in March 2017 in the aftermath of demonetisation.

"Pressure on asset quality would be higher (than last year) as borrowers do not have a blanket moratorium this time, while their cash flows have been impacted by the second wave," said Krishnan Sitaraman, senior director and deputy chief ratings officer, Crisil Ratings.

Earlier, Sa-Dhan had reported that overall collections, which had bounced back to pre-Covid levels in March, dropped by 10 to 20 per cent in April-May 2021 as the lockdown was imposed in some of the key states.

Passenger vehicle sales dip 66% in May amid Covid disruptions: Siam

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, JUNE 11

Passenger vehicle wholesales— dispatches from factory gates to the dealerships—declined month-on-month by 66 per cent to 88,045 units in May as compared to April as lockdowns across various states impacted dispatches to dealers, auto industry trade lobby the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers, or Siam, said on Friday.

Passenger vehicle wholesales in April stood at 2,61,633 units.

Since both May 2020 and May 2021 were abnormal months because of the Covid-19 situation and lockdowns, comparison of these two months holds no meaning. But a comparison of May 2021 sales with April this year, presents a realistic picture.

Siam said two-wheeler dispatches to dealers dropped by 65 per cent to 3,52,717 units compared with 9,95,097 units in April.

Motorcycle sales declined 56 per cent last month to 2,95,257 units as against 6,67,841 units in April.

Similarly, scooter sales were down 83 per cent to

KIMS Hospitals ₹2,144-cr IPO priced at ₹815-₹825

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, JUNE 11

Hyderabad-based Krishna Institute of Medical Sciences (KIMS Hospitals), one of the largest hospital chains in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, announced a Rs 2,144-crore initial public offering (IPO) in the price band of Rs 815 to Rs 825 per equity share of Rs 10 face value.

The public issue opens on June 16 and closes on June 18.

The KIMS Hospitals Group operates nine multi-specialty hospitals under the "KIMS Hospitals" brand across AP and Telangana.

The hospital chain started with the first hospital, KIMS Nellore, set up in 2000 by cardiologist Bhaskara Rao Bollineni with the vision to create a hospital system for his home state of Andhra Pradesh.

The current network of KIMS hospitals, with total 3,064 beds, are located at Secunderabad, Hyderabad, Vizag, Nellore, Rajahmundry, Srikakulam, Ongole, Anantapur and Kurnool, catering to the healthcare needs of neighbouring states of Karnataka, Odisha, Tamil Nadu and parts of central India.

The IPO comprises a fresh issue worth Rs 200 crore and an offer for sale of over 23.56 million equity shares by private equity investor General Atlantic Singapore and promoter selling shareholders-Bhaskara Rao Bollineni, Rajyasri Bollineni and Bollineni



DODLA DAIRY PUBLIC ISSUE PRICED AT ₹421-₹428 PER SHARE

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, JUNE 11

Hyderabad-based Dodla Dairy announced a Rs 520.18-crore initial public offering (IPO) in the price band of Rs 421 to Rs 428 per equity share of Rs 10 face value.

The public offer opens on June 16 and closes on June 18.

The firm's procurements are spread across five states of Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Maharashtra and its products are available in 11 states.

Dodla Dairy's product portfolio includes milk, buttermilk, ghee, curd, paneer, flavoured milk, doodh peda, ice cream and milk-based sweets.

The IPO consists of a

fresh issue aggregating up to Rs 50 crore and an offer for sale (OFS) of over 10.98 million equity shares by private equity investor TPG Dodla Dairy Holdings and promoter and promoter group selling shareholder Dodla Sunil Reddy, Dodla Family Trust and Dodla Deepa Reddy.

The OFS consists of 92 lakh shares by TPG Dodla Dairy Holdings and 4,16,604 shares by Dodla Sunil Reddy, 10,41,509 equity shares by Dodla Family Trust, and 3,27,331 shares by Dodla Deepa Reddy.

The public offer has 50 per cent shares reserved for institutional investors, 35 per cent for retail investors and 15 per cent for non-institutional investors.

price band of Rs 825. The public offer has reserved 75 per cent shares for institutional investors, 15 per cent for non-institutional investors and 10 per cent for retail investors.



BoM tops PSU banks in loan, deposit growth

New Delhi, June 11: Bank of Maharashtra (BoM) has emerged as the top performer among public sector lenders in terms of loan and deposit growth during 2020-21. The lender recorded 13.45 per cent increase in gross advances at Rs 1.07 lakh crore in FY21, as per the published data of BoM.

It was followed by Punjab & Sind Bank, which posted 8.39 per cent growth in advances with aggregate loans at Rs 67,811 crore at the end of March 2021.

In deposit mobilisation, BoM, with nearly 16 per cent growth, was ahead of even the country's largest lender, State Bank of India, which recorded 13.56 per cent rise.

However, in absolute terms SBI's deposit base was 21 times higher at Rs 36.81 lakh crore against Rs 1.74 lakh crore of BoM.

Current account savings account (CASA) for BoM saw 24.47 per cent rise, the highest among the public sector lenders, during the year. As a result, CASA was 54 per cent or Rs 93,945 crore of the total liabilities of the bank.

According to the announced quarterly numbers, Central Bank of India achieved the second spot by recording 11.46 per cent growth in CASA at Rs 1.61 lakh crore.

Total business of BoM increased 14.98 per cent to Rs 2.81 lakh crore. For the full year 2020-21, BoM's standalone net profit jumped nearly 42 per cent to Rs 550.25 crore. In the previous year, the profit was Rs 388.58 crore.

—PTI

SHORT TAKES

Vinesh emerges on top in Poland

Warsaw: Star Indian wrestler Vinesh Phogat proved that her preparations for the Tokyo Games were on track by winning the 53kg gold at the Poland Open here on Friday, giving herself some crucial 'mat-time' ahead of the Olympics. It is third title of the season for the 26-year-old Vinesh, who claimed gold medals at the Matteo Pellicone event (March) and Asian Championship (April) earlier. The victory would potentially make Vinesh the top seed at the Tokyo Olympics. Except for her opening bout against 2019 World bronze (50kg) winner Ekaterina Poleshchuk, Vinesh wasn't troubled by any of her other rivals as she conceded only two points en route the top place on the podium. She did not concede a single point to Ukraine's Khrystyna Bereza in the final, winning 8-0. Vinesh took most of her points through double-leg attacks while the 2019 European silver medallist Bereza was on the defensive throughout. — PTI

No ministerial delegation for Oly

New Delhi: The Sports Ministry on Friday said it has decided against sending its delegation to Tokyo Olympics to accommodate "maximum" support staff, including coaches and physios, for the athletes competing in the Summer Games. A total of 100 Indian athletes have so far qualified and another 25 to 35 might make the cut. "The Ministry has decided to depute maximum additional support staff such as coaches, doctors, physiotherapists, to optimize the performance of the athletes," the Ministry said in a statement. — PTI

Tokyo undecided on spectators

Tokyo: The question of allowing any fans into Tokyo Olympic venues is still being debated with a decision unlikely to be announced before the end of the month. This would be just a few weeks before the Olympics are to open on July 23. Fans from abroad have already been banned in what is shaping up as a largely made-for-television Olympics. Tokyo and several prefectures are under a state of emergency until June 20. Infections have slowed recently, but the spread of variants is still a concern that could put pressure on already stressed medical facilities. — AP

Warner, Stoinis opt out of The Hundred

Melbourne: Star Australian opener David Warner and all-rounder Marcus Stoinis have pulled out of the inaugural edition of 'The Hundred' as the England and Wales Cricket Board gears up for more withdrawals in wake of the challenges posed by Covid-19 pandemic. Warner and Stoinis, who returned home from Covid-ravaged India after the suspension of the IPL, were named in Australia's squads for the limited over tours to the West Indies and Bangladesh. — PTI

Ngidi takes five as Windies crumble

Saint Lucia: Lungi Ngidi mowed through the lower half of the West Indies batting order on the way to a five-wicket haul as South Africa routed the home side for 97 on the opening day of the first Test of the two-match series at the Daren Sammy Cricket Ground in St Lucia on Thursday. The Proteas reached the close of play at 128 for four, a lead of 31 runs. — AFP

Brief scores (Day 1): West Indies 97 (Holder 20; Ngidi 5/19, Nortje 4/35) vs South Africa 128/4 in 43 overs (van der Dussen 34 (batting); Seales 3/34).

Live on TV

EURO

Group Stage: Wales vs Switzerland from 6.30 pm; Denmark vs Finland from 9.30 pm; Belgium vs Russia from 12.30 am (Sunday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

TENNIS

French Open: Women's singles final from 6.30 pm; Men's doubles final from 8 pm on Star Sports, Select 1, HD

UPC

Fight Night: Israel Adesanya vs Marvin Vettori from 7.30 am (Sunday) on Sony Ten 2, 3



Belgium players pose after a training session. The Red Devils will face Russia in St Petersburg on Saturday. — Twitter

Red alert for Russia

Top-ranked Belgium take on Russia in quest for Euro glory

St Petersburg, June 11: What's being billed by some as the last hurrah for Belgium's "golden generation" begins with two of the team's long-time stalwarts likely to miss their opening match of the European Championship. Injury and fitness concerns mean neither Kevin De Bruyne nor Eden Hazard are set to start against Russia on Saturday at Saint Petersburg Stadium, where the Belgians' World Cup hopes in 2018 died in a loss to France. They return to the same venue three years later as the world's top-ranked team — they have been in that position since October 2018 — but with doubts about the availability of their two star attacking midfielders, and maybe a bit more. De Bruyne is probably the least of coach Roberto Martinez's concerns, despite linking up with the squad a week late after fracturing his nose and eye socket during Manchester City's loss to Chelsea in the Champions League final. The playmaker required a minor operation and is likely to



Gareth Bale of Wales during a training session in Baku on Thursday. — AFP

be ready to start in Belgium's second game, against Denmark in Copenhagen on June 17, when he might be wearing a face mask. Hazard's health is slightly less clear-cut, with the winger in far-from-perfect shape after an injury-dis-

HEAD-TO-HEAD

WALES-SWITZERLAND
● **Matches:** 7. Switzerland: 5. Wales: 2.
● **EURO MEETINGS**

1999: Switzerland bt Wales 2-0 in Zurich.
1999: Switzerland bt Wales 2-0 in Wrexham.
2010: Switzerland bt Wales 4-1 in Basel.
2011: Wales bt Switzerland 2-0 in Swansea.

DENMARK-FINLAND
● **Matches:** 59. Denmark: 38. Finland: 11. Draw: 10
● **EURO MEETINGS**

1986: Denmark bt Finland 1-0 in Copenhagen.
1987: Denmark bt Finland 1-0 in Helsinki.

RUSSIA-BELGIUM

● **Matches:** 7. Belgium: 5. Draw: 2.
● **EURO MEETINGS**

2019: Belgium bt Russia 3-1 in Brussels.
2019: Belgium bt Russia 4-1 in St Petersburg.

— S. PERVEZ KAISER

rupted season with Real Madrid and only being a substitute in Euro 2020 warmup games. Martinez said Hazard still needed to get "match intensity" so is likely to be on the bench again for the game against Russia, whose chances of an upset

win suddenly have improved. Playing in front of a potential 30,000 fans, among the biggest group-stage attendances at the tournament, can only spur on Russia in their fifth straight appearance at the European Championship.

BALE 'NOT WORRIED' ABOUT DROUGHT

Wales captain Gareth Bale said on Friday he was unconcerned about his international goal drought on the eve of his side's Euro 2020 opener against Switzerland.

Bale, 31, last scored for Wales against Croatia in October 2019 but has created four goals in his previous seven appearances. "It doesn't matter. I've made assists. I'm still contributing. I'm not worried," he said.

"If the chances arise to score, hopefully I can take them," he added.

Bale's side start their campaign in Azerbaijan on Saturday in the competition that has been delayed by a year due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The Real Madrid forward, who spent last season on loan at Tottenham,

has scored 33 goals in 92 international appearances since making his debut in 2006 but his goalless run stretches back 11 matches.

Wales coach Robert Page, who will take charge of the side during the tournament as Ryan Giggs is facing trial in England, backed his star player.

FINLAND READY FOR DANISH TEST

Finland goalkeeper Lukas Hradecky didn't sugar coat things when summing up the difference between his team and Denmark at the European Championship.

"They have better players than us in every position," Hradecky said bluntly ahead of Finland's major tournament debut at Euro 2020.

Then the Bayer Leverkusen goalkeeper touched upon the one thing that could speak in his team's favor going into Saturday's Group B game in Copenhagen.

"But we have shown before that the sum of all the parts in our puzzle is greater than what people think," he said.

— Agencies

Quick passes

Spain vaccinate entire squad

Worried that a coronavirus outbreak could derail their chances at the European Championship, Spain sent in the army on Friday to vaccinate the national team three days before their opening match at the tournament. Medics from Spain's Armed Forces administered the shots at the team's training facility near Madrid. "We have had the privilege and the good fortune that the government decided to vaccinate us," said Spain midfielder Thiago, who was infected with Covid-19 last year. "While this is great news for us, I hope that we don't have any adverse effects before the match."

Scotland players to take a knee

Scotland's players will take a knee at the European Championship before the game against England in London but will stand ahead of matches in Glasgow against the Czech Republic and Croatia. The England team have been doing the anti-racism gesture since last year. Scotland captain Andy Robertson says "we have collectively decided to again take the knee as a team for the fixture against England at Wembley Stadium." The match will be played on June 18. The gesture has been booed by a section of England fans but the team will continue to take a knee at Euro 2020. England's first game of the tournament will be on Sunday against Croatia.

De Bruyne to miss opener

Kevin De Bruyne has not travelled to St. Petersburg with the Belgium squad for Saturday's European Championship game against Russia. The Manchester City playmaker only linked up with the team on Monday after having a minor operation on the fractured nose and eye socket he sustained during the Champions League final against Chelsea on May 29. Belgium coach Roberto Martinez says De Bruyne hasn't yet trained with the group and was still following an individual programme to "get him back to really being able to move freely."

Martinez says he expects De Bruyne to join full training with the squad when Belgium's players return to the training camp in Tubize after the group game against Russia.

COPA | AMERICA

Messi, Di Maria boost Argie side

Buenos Aires, June 11: Lionel Messi, Sergio Aguero and Angel Di Maria are headlining the Argentina squad that will head to Brazil for the Copa America, seeking their national team's first major title since 1993.

The list was published on Thursday by South American governing body, CONMEBOL.

Defender Juan Foyth and striker Lucas Ocampos are the most notable absentees from the 28-player squad, despite featuring regularly since Lionel Scaloni became head coach in 2018.

Foyth was involved late when Argentina conceded a last-minute equaliser to Colombia in a World Cup qualifying match earlier this week.

The Villareal defender, a winner of the latest Europa League, lost possession at the edge of the penalty box. Colombia subsequently crossed and then found the back of the net with a header by Miguel Borja.

Sevilla's Ocampos had a lacklustre performance in the 1-1 draw against Chile last week, also in a World Cup qualifier. — AP

A Stef closer to Slam dream

Paris, June 11: Stefanos Tsitsipas went from way ahead to suddenly stuck in a five-set struggle against Alexander Zverev at the French Open on Friday before emerging to earn his first berth in a Grand Slam final.

The fifth-seeded Tsitsipas entered with an 0-3 record in major semifinals and it seemed as if he might let this one slip away, too, until a late surge carried him to the 6-3, 6-3, 4-6, 4-6, 6-3 victory after more than 3 and a half hours at Court Philippe Chatrier.

On Sunday, Tsitsipas will face 13-time Roland Garros champion Nadal or top-seeded Novak Djokovic for the championship on the red clay. Tsitsipas regained control of his semifinal on a cloudy afternoon in the late going thanks to a combination of more solid returning by him and a succession of ground-stroke unforced errors from the sixth-seeded Zverev, a 24-year-old from Germany.

The fifth set began with a key service hold after Tsitsipas double-faulted to fall behind love-40. From there, he won five consecutive points, including one with a cross-court forehand passing winner that he celebrated by shaking his racket as the crowd chanted, "Tsi-tsi-pas! Tsi-tsi-pas! Tsi-tsi-pas!"

Then Tsitsipas broke to go up 3-1 with plenty of help from Zverev, who double-faulted, then missed a backhand, followed by a forehand and another backhand.

Zverev winced and Tsitsipas raised his right fist.

Fifteen minutes later, Tsitsipas earned his first match point, and while he needed five of them to



Stefanos Tsitsipas of Greece celebrates a point against Germany's Alexander Zverev during their French Open semifinal at the Roland Garros on Friday. — AP

close the proceedings, he eventually did convert one with an ace.

Tsitsipas will be the first player from Greece in a Grand Slam singles final and youngest man to appear in the title match at the French Open since Nadal won the 2008 championship five days after his 22nd birthday.

And this is not some out-of-nowhere ascension. Tsitsipas has been build-

ing toward this over the past couple of seasons, reaching three major semifinals in a row and leading the ATP in total match wins (39 now) and clay-court wins (22) in 2021. Three of his seven career tour-level titles came on clay, including a pair this year — at the Monte Carlo Masters and Lyon.

Zverev's loss makes him 0-10 against members of

ANASTASIA AND BARBORA SEEK GRAND SUCCESS

Paris, June 11: Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova and Barbora Krejickova, two of the most unlikely Grand Slam finalists of the modern era, meet in Saturday's French Open title match at the conclusion of a shock-heavy tournament. World number 32 Pavlyuchenkova has reached this stage for the first time at the 52nd attempt, 10 years after making a first Slam quarter-final in Paris.

Krejickova has long been labelled a doubles specialist and this is just her fifth appearance in a main draw singles at the Slams, having never previously got beyond the last 16. However, both women have capitalised on a draw where the top seeds fell and just kept falling.

Ashleigh Barty hobbled out in the second round.

Serena Williams was knocked out in the fourth round, world number two Naomi Osaka withdrew after one match while 2018 champion Simona Halep never even made it to Paris. Pavlyuchenkova is bidding to become the fourth Russian champion at Roland Garros. — AFP

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