DECCAN

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

NELLORE | THURSDAY | 3 JUNE 2021



Max: 40.5°C Min: 30.2°C Rainfall: Nill

> Forecast: clear. Max/Min

temp. 40/30 ºC

ASTROGUIDE Plava: Uttarayana

Tithi: Vaishakha Bahula Navami till 2.23 am (Friday) Star: Purvabhadra till 6.38 pm Varjyam: From 5.06 am

Durmuhurtam: 10.04 am to 10.56 am; 3.16 pm to 4.08 pm Rahukalam: 1.30 pm to 3 pm **HIJRI CALENDAR**

Shawwal 21,1442 AH **PRAYERS** (SHAHI MASJID)

Fajar: 4.20 am **Zohar:** 12.08 pm **Asar:** 4.42 pm **Isha:** 7.55 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.36 PM SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.40 AM MOONRISE TODAY 00.59 AM **MOONSET** TOMORROW 1.50 PM



Now, every day is bicycle day... we can't afford petrol!

Arun Mishra to head NHRC

New Delhi: Former Supreme Court judge justice Arun Mishra on Wednesday took charge as the new chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission, official sources said. The post had been lying vacant since justice H.L. Dattu, ex-chief justice of India, had completed his tenure in December 2020. "Justice Arun Mishra today joined as the new chairperson of the NHRC. joined," the sources said.

BCI panel to fix

law exams mode

New Delhi: The Bar Council of India has constituted a 'high level expert committee' to decide the method of examination and evaluation for LL.B students in view of ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The apex bar body said the committee was formed in view of requests of several students from across the country, including 273 from the Faculty of Law, Delhi University (DU).

CEC pushes for

new voters

New Delhi: Chief Election Commissioner Sushil Chandra has made a fresh push with the government to allow multiple dates in a year for citizens turning 18 to register themselves as voters. As of now, an individual who has attained the age of 18 years as on January 1 of that year, or before is eligible to be

'Dead' woman

returns alive

Vijayawada: A curious situation has arisen here after a major goof-up by health officials. An aged woman presumed dead with Covid-19 walked back home alive, as her family members and local residents watched her return with a mix of emotions - shock and scare. followed by surprise and joy. The 75-year-old Muthyala Girijamma, a resident of Christianpet at Jaggayyapeta in Krishna district, had been infected with Covid19 and was undergoing treatment at the GGH here since May 12. Report on Page x

WORLD 5

Iran's largest warship sinks in fire



SPORTS 8 | TABLOID

Big guns advance at French Open

PARMOD KUMAR | DC

The Supreme Court on

Wednesday slammed the Centre for asking it to keep its hands off the

Covid vaccination policy

and termed the govern-

ment's decision to provide

free vaccination to 45-plus,

health care and frontline

workers in Phase I, but in

Phase II allowing private

hospitals to charge those

in 18-45 group as "irra-

tional" and "arbitrary". In a stern order, the top court

asked the Centre to fur-

nish details of the pur-

Covaxin, Covishield and Sputnik V — till date, including "file notings reflecting its thinking and

culminating in the vaccination policy", dates of all

placed and the quantity of

vaccines procured. It also asked the Centre to "place

on record a roadmap of

projected availability of vaccines till December 31,

Saying that the issue of

vaccination is absolutely

essential and is the "singu-

procurement

chase of all vaccines

NEW DELHI, JUNE 2

'I am not single. However, I am far away from marriage



deccanchronicle.com, facebook.com/deccannews, twitter.com/deccanchronicle

Mega housing works SC asks Centre why not set to kick off today

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 2

state of Andhra Pradesh is set to create a new record with the launch of construction work on a massive number of 15.6 lakh houses on

Thursday.
Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy will virtually launch the YSR Jagananna Colonies project across the state. An amount of ₹28,084 crore has been earmarked for

As promised in the election manifesto, the Jagan Mohan Reddy government has targeted to complete the 'Pedalandhariki Illu' scheme by June 2023. In both the phases, as many as 28,30,227 houses will be constructed at a cost of ₹50,944 crore. In the phase-2, 12.7 lakh houses would be constructed. While the first phase is set for completion by June 2022, the second phase will be completed by June

It may be recalled that the state government had already set a record even in distribution of house sites to about 30.76 lakh beneficiaries.

Of the 8,905 layouts in the first phase, 11.26 lakh houses are being con-structed as YSR as Jagananna Colonies. Similarly, construction of 2,92,984 houses is being started for the beneficiaries with their own land

GLOBAL FLIGHTS

RESUME FROM

VIJAYAWADA

VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 2

Vijayawada

DC CORRESPONDENT

ational Airport has resumed operation of

international flights des-

tined to the Gulf nations

such as Dubai, Kuwait,

Muscat and Singapore

from Wednesday after a

gap of nearly two months since April 3.

Though a scheduled international flight was

supposed to arrive at the

airport on Tuesday itself, it was cancelled at

the last minute. However, on Wednesday, an international

flight from Dubai carry-

ing 68 passengers includ-

ing children, arrived at

the Vijayawada Intern-

ational Airport marking

the resumption of inter-national flights from the

airport at about 6 pm

and the flight departed

with a few passengers bound to Mumbai after

Page 2: Flight schedule

Intern



Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy

along with 1,40,465 houses for the beneficiaries with

allotted land.
The Chief Minister says the government envisages new towns will emerge with these layouts. Authorities have been directed to focus on infrastructure facilities with an expenditure of ₹32,909 crore. The government is spending ₹4,128 crore on drinking water, ₹22,587 crore on roads and drainage, ₹4,986 crore on power supply, ₹627 crore on internet and ₹567 crore on other facilities.

Each house with a uniform design will be built in 340 square feet area with a bedroom, hall, kitchen, bathroom and

Also each house is provided with two fans, two tube lights, four bulbs, and a plastic tank. The mapping and registration required for the construction of houses have already been completed

ment has targeted to complete the 'Pedalandhariki Illu' scheme by June 2023. In both the phases, as many as 28,30,227 houses will be constructed at a cost

of ₹50,944 crore. EACH HOIUSE will be built in 340 square feet area with a bedroom, hall, kitchen, bathroom and porch.

and geo-tagging works are in the final stages.

It is estimated that the

housing programme will provide 21.70 crore mandays of employment to labourers. Also, large-scale construction work will provide employment to masons, rod vendors, carpenters, electricians, bricklayers and cement

In another kind gesture, even as the prices of building materials are skyrocketing, the government has taken a decision to provide the material at affordable prices. Reverse tendering has even been done to supply quality materials below market price so as not to burden the beneficiaries. The government has set up warehouses at the village and the mandal levels to store cement and other materials for the construction works.

> Page 2: Three options given to beneficiaries

Land survey by June 2023: Jagan

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 2

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has instructed officials to complete the first-of-itskind comprehensive land survey programme in the state by June 2023. He conducted a review meeting on YSR Jagananna Saswatha Bhu Hakku — Bhu Raksha scheme at the camp office at

Tadepalli on Wednesday.

The CM said that the survey would be conducted in three phases and directed the officials to procure required modern survey equipment for a smooth conduct of the programme. He noted that the survey work was moving at a slow pace due to the prevailing Covid situation and asked the officials to make suitable arrangements to complete the survey in the stipulated time. He called for regular review meetings and urged the officials to work with dedication to com-

• THE CM said that the survey would be conducted in three phases and directed the officials to procure required modern survey equipment for a smooth conduct of the programme.

plete the project. He also said that the registration process be continued in secretariats. He directed the officials to expedite comprehensive land survey in urban areas as well. He insisted that once the survey is completed, clear titles should be given and there should not be any scope for land

The officials said they set up 70 base stations till now and they are working with complete accuracy They said they would set up more ground stations with the help of Survey of India and also use drones wherever needed.

■ Page 2: Pilot project is

Vaccine for all below 45 yrs going abroad

give vaccine free for all

Says government policy is irrational, asks for purchase data

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 2

The Andhra Pradesh government will administer anti-Covid-19 jab to students and employees aged below 45 years and going abroad for study or

Disclosing this here on Wednesday, principal sec-retary (health) Anil Kumar Singhal said that based on a direction from Chief Minister Y.S Jagan Mohan Reddy to vaccinate all those below 45 years going abroad for study and work in order to avoid any trouble to them. Guidelines had been

lar most important task" for the government, the top court asked the Centre to furnish the complete vaccine purchase data

Collectors to provide vaccination to such people. However, as some Collectors took to the notice of the government that some students and employees, who went abroad, were facing trou-ble as their vaccine certificate showed only their

Aadhaar number, the government took it up with the Union ministry of health to make some changes in CoWIN app to accept passport number while issuing the vaccination certificate.

Page 2: Centre agrees to make changes in CoWIN

within two weeks' time.

The top court also sought data on the percentage of population that was vaccinated, as against eligible persons in the first three

"Policy of Centre for conducting free vaccination for groups under first two phases and replacing it with paid vaccination by states/UTs and private hospitals for persons in 18-44 years age group is prima facie arbitrary, irrational," said a special bench of Justices D.Y. Chandrachud, L.N. Rao and S. Ravindra Bhat hearing a suo motu case on

Covid-19 management. Referring to the Union Budget for 2021-22 which earmarked ₹35,000 crore for procuring vaccines, the SC also asked Centre to clarify "how these funds have been spent so far and why these funds cannot be utilised for vaccinating all (free of cost) in the 18-44

"While filing its affi-davit, UoI shall also ensure that copies of all the documents and file notings reflecting its thinking and culminating in the vaccination policy are also annexed on the vaccination policy. Hence, we direct the UoI to file its affidavit within two weeks," the bench said.

The sinking ship



The sinking MV X-Press Pearl at Kapungoda where it is anchored off Colombo port, Sri Lanka on Wednesday. Salvage experts were trying to tow the fire-stricken container ship that had been loaded with chemicals into the deep sea as the vessel started to sink on Wednesday.

Daily cases fall to 1.33 lakh

DC CORRESPONDENT **NEW DELHI, JUNE 2**

Wednesday recorded nearly 1.33 lakh fresh cases of COVID-19 and 3, 207 fatalities in the last 24 hours. This is the sixth day

when less than 2 lakh daily new cases have been reported. With 17.94 lakh active cases, the viral caseload in India is below 20 lakh for two successive days now.

As per Union Health

Ministry, daily recoveries in the country continue to outnumber the daily new cases for the 20th consecutive day as 2.31 lakh people got discharged from

medical supervision. The Recovery Rate has now climbed to 92.48 per cent and the daily positivity rate is 6.57 per cent less than 10 per cent for the last nine days.

National Capital Delhi reported 576 new cases and its positivity rate fell below 0.78 per cent. There were 103 deaths and 1,287 recoveries in the last 24 hours in the city.

With a target to vaccinate the entire population by December this year, the Centre is moving fast on foreign vaccine approvals. It is learnt that the government has agreed to grant Pfizer and Moderna "partial" indemnity against legal proceedings and these two companies will soon apply for Emergency Use Authorisation of their

12,768 FRESH **COVID-19 CASES** DC CORRESPONDENT

AP REGISTERS

VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 2

The Andhra Pradesh state registered 12,768 fresh Coronavirus infections, showing a slight surge when compared Tuesday. It saw 98 deaths in the last 24 hours. The state health

authorities reported on Wednesday that out of 98,048 samples tested, persons were found infected with confirmed Coronavirus. Out of a total number of 1,94,48,056 samples tested far in the state, 17,17,156 persons were found infected with the virus and, of them, 15,62,220 recovered while 1,43,795 are still active with the virus.

Among daily cases of Coronavirus infections, East Godavari topped the state with 2,703, followed by 1,551 in Chittoor, 1,506 in Anantapur, 1,052 in West Godavari, 844 in Visakhapatnam, 841 in Krishna, 785 in Nellore, 765 in Guntur, 734 in Prakasam, Kadapa, Srikakulam, 474 Kurnool and 253 Vizianagaram.

■ Page 2: East Godavari still the worst affected

ORDER ORDER

for June completed

Action results in periodic interruption of hearing in case related to 5G wireless technology

Man sings songs of Juhi's films at 5G hearing

New Delhi, June 2: Some of the hit songs of actress Juhi Chawla's movies made their way in the proceedings before the Delhi High Court on Wednesday when a man started singing them during the virtual hearing relating to the Bollywood star's plea against the 5G wireless net-

resulted in the periodic interruption of hearing and on the judge's directions, the person was

repeatedly removed from

the hearing, but he kept on

joining and started singing

till the time the proceed-

ings were locked. Chawla



The action of the man also joined the virtual proceedings from

The man, who was logging in the virtual hearing with different names first started singing Ghoonghat ki aad mein dilbar ka didaar adhura' from her block buster movie *Hum*

hai rahi pyar ke and he was He again joined the pro-

ceedings and started singing from her another hit film Naajayaz Lal lal hoton pe gori kiska naam hai Juhi Chawla' and was again removed from the hearing. The third time, he joined and sang Meri banno ki aayegi baraat ke dhol bajao ji' from the movie Aaina. At the outset, the man was heard saying where is Juhi Ma'am l can't see her and when the judge asked the court master to mute the concerned person, he said you want to mute me. Oh really! Initially, he joined the

hearing with the name of Azaan, thereafter, changed name to Manisha Koirala and then to Janvi. The film star herself on her twitter account last evening had shared the link for joining the proceedings.

She had tweeted "if you do think this concerns you in anyway, feel free to join our first virtual hearing conducted at Delhi High Court to be held on 2nd June, 10.45 am onwards".

Justice J.R. Midha asked the court master to lock the proceedings and to contact Delhi Police and ask them to identify the person so that a contempt notice could be issued. -PTI

Actor's plea defective: Delhi HC New Delhi, June 2: The Delhi High Court on Wednesday termed

defective the suit of actress-environmentalist Juhi Chawla against setting up of 5G wireless networks in the country and said it was filed for media publicity.

The court also questioned Chawla for filing the suit without giving any representation to the government on her concerns related to the technology. Justice J.R. Midha said the plaintiffs, Chawla and

two others, were required to first approach the government for their rights and if denied, they should come to the court.

The court, which reserved order on the suit which after hearing the arguments of various parties, also asked as to why as many as 33 parties have been added to the plaint and said it is not permitted under the law.

It is not the sweet will of the plaintiff to join as many parties and cause of action. Please see the memo of parties. Tell me how you have joined them. Every party cannot be arrayed in the suit, the judge said.

The court further said, It is a defective plaint. This suit has been filed only for media publicity and nothing more than that. It is very shocking.

Did you approach the government with a representation? If yes, is there any denial?, the court asked to which the plaintiffs' counsel replied in negative.

AP WILL BE RULED FROM VISAKHA **SOON: VIJAYASAI**

DC CORRESPONDENT VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 2

YSR Congress MP V. Vijayasai Reddy announced that the state would be administered from the executive capital of Visakhapatnam soon.

The MP along with Minister for Agriculture K. Kannababu told media persons here on Wednesday that the state government would make all requisite measures to start governance of the state from the steel city soon and added that Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy had a prerogative to govern the state from the place of his choice.

He ruled out any role in the pending CRDA case, with regard to relocation of administrative capital. The MP assured to develop the Steel City as slum-free and said that a six-lane road connecting Kailasigiri to Bhogapuram would be developed.

SPECIAL PANEL, TRIBUNAL SOUGHT **FOR WAKF LANDS**

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 2

Andhra Pradesh Ahle-Sunnat Wal Jamaat (APASWJ) has urged Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy to initiate measures for protection of wakf lands by appointing a state level committee headed by a special officer and establishing a wakf tribunal to resolve disputes related to wakf lands.

In a letter to the CM, APASWJ state co-convener Altaf Ali Raza said many wakf lands in the 13 districts of AP state have been encroached. He lamented that earlier governments did not take any measures for regaining the

wakf lands from encroachers.
Welcoming the decision of
Deputy Chief Minister
Amzath Basha on demolition of illegal structures on wakf lands, APASWJ co-convener said 90 percent of wakf lands are in clutches of politicians and influential persons. Altaf Ali Raza said CM Jagan should get these lands freed for the welfare of Muslim minorities, who have supported YSRC in the elections.

DOCTOR PLEADS WITH RAJNATH TO SNUB RAJU

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 2

A prominent doctor in the city has addressed a letter to Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, stating that the letter of MP K. Raghu Ramakrishna Raju against the military hospital at Secunderabad has hurt the sentiments of defense families.

Naga Radhakrishna Ambati said that Raju in his letter made baseless allegations against the military hospital where he was admitted for medical examination as per the Supreme Court guidelines. He said, "As a defence family member and doctor, painfully I would like to bring to your kind notice that the baseless allegations made by him against a serving officer of the military hospital have seriously hurt the sentiments of the defence families.

CM JAGAN URGED TO PROMOTE HINDI UNDER NEP

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 2

Welcoming the implementation of the New Education Policy (NEP) in AP, Hindi Sevasadan Mahavidyalay (HSM) has requested Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy to initiate measures for sanctioning Hindi posts in schools, junior and degree colleges for the promotion of

the national language. HSM founder and general secretary S. Gaibuvalli said that Hindi is a national language which would create employment for at national level and, hence, the state government should measures for its

promotion. Gaibuvalli deplored that the earlier government neglected the Hindi language as it did not sanction Hindi teacher posts in Adarsha. Gurukul and welfare schools in the state and a similar situation prevailed in junior and degree colleges.



Cops have a tough time managing crowds at an urban primary health centre during the vaccination drive at

Bifurcation blues now haunt AP's Met Centre

Officials await capital works to plan permanent facility

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 2

Bifurcation blues still haunt Andhra Pradesh as its Meteorological Centre located at Amaravati for weather forecast lacks a permanent building. At present, it is being accommodated on a private university campus. India

M e t e o r o l o g i c a l Department (IMD) set up a meteorological centre at Amaravati for Andhra Pradesh in December 2018 and the authorities paid ₹1 crore for acquiring an acre of land at Thullur to develop permanent infrastructure to accommodate it. A ground plus two storied building was planned for setting up the met centre.

The met centre authorities say that as the capital city for AP was planned to be developed at Amaravati, they were

WEAVERS ASK PM

SPECIAL PACKAGE

DC CORRESPONDENT

TO SANCTION

• THE MET centre authorities say that as the capital city for AP was planned to be developed at Amaravati. they were eagerly waiting for its development so that they would take up the construction of their permanent office at Thullur. They say that as they require infrastructure like roads, drains and other amenities to come up at the capital city, they are not going ahead with any works.

eagerly waiting for its development so that they would take up the construction of their permanent office at Thullur. They say that as they infrastructure like roads, drains and other amenities to come up at the capital city, they are not going ahead with any works.

But the authorities are silent on the state government's plans to relocate the administrative capital to Visakhapatnam while keeping the legislative capital at Amaravati and the judicial capital in Kurnool.

However, they say that as

the met centre for AP was sanctioned at Amaravati only, they plan to develop it there only

The Met Centre authorities say that they are availing the weather data from three cyclone warning centres located in Visakhapatnam, Kailasagiri Machilipatnam; five airlocated

Gannavaram, Rajahmundry, Kadapa, Tirupati and Kurnool; weather stations located in 16 cities across the state and also from a host of other sources, to release cyclone warnings, weather forecast and farmer bul-

in a day for the benefit of the all the stakeholders. Fortunately, the Met Centre seems to be having no issues of shortage of manpower including technical personnel to operate it, similar on lines of some other departments

letins at regular intervals

in the aftermath of split of AP to form a new Telangana state on June 2, 2004 and also finances as funds get allocated from the Centre. AP Meteorological Centre head S. Stella said, 'We are operating the

Met Centre sanctioned to AP to be set up at capital city Amaravati, from a private accommodation at present and as we purchased land at Thullur, we will develop permanent structure once requisite infrastructure is developed at Amaravati. We been successfully carrying out our weather

Special Covid care for electricity staff sought

VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 2

Rights Forum (AIHRF) urged Minister Narendra Modi for a special package for the revival of handloom sector.

Explaining the plight of handloom weavers since the outbreak of Covid-19 last year in a letter to the PM, AIHRF sought allocation of ₹15,000 crore to the handloom sector to make it self-reliant under the Atmanirbhar Bharat scheme.

president AIHRF Bandaru Narasimham said a majority of weavers' households earn less than ₹5,000 per month. They suffered the worst due to the pandemic and had been facing unbearable financial stress for

the past 14 months. He sought supply of basic rations worth ₹10,000 per month for all the handloom workers till May 2022, release of ₹25,000 directly to the accounts the workers, waiver of all taxes and charges on raw materials, products, waiver of custom duty etc.

Jwala Narasimham said that AIHRF demanded a Scheme of Fund for Regeneration of Traditional Industries (SFURTI).

It also sought under 'PM-CARES for Children' scheme, a corpus of ₹50 lakh in fixed deposit for all children/minors who are orphaned by Covid-19 pandemic.

AIHRF also demanded an increase in approved amount to ₹10 lakhs under 'Mudra Scheme,' direct supply of hankyarn, silk, zari, wool and materials weavers with 75% subsidy,.purchase of handloom products from weavers and private master weavers and ₹25 lakh insurance coverage for each handloom worker who is above 45 years.

reluctant to give them prigency service and they are

DC CORRESPONDENT

The electricity department employees are seekadministering of Covid-19 vaccine to all. reservation of beds in the hospitals and treatment on the lines NTPC is following, ₹50 lakh insurance facility and ₹30 lakh ex gratia in case of deaths. The AP Electricity

Engineers Association lamented that electricity employees were brought under the essential services but the government is with other frontline departments.

APEEA president G.N Reddy, general secretary P. Sridhar and adviser M. Srinivas said that the NTPC is taking several supportive measures for employees who were infected with Covid-19 and fight against the spread of the Covid-19 in an encouraging way. They said that according

to the ESMA Act-1971, power sector employees are considered as emer-

ority for vaccination and making endless efforts to power supply to hospitals, oxygen companies, water supply, diagnostic centres and other essential services amidst pandemic which is a big threat to them and their families.

They stated that the government had administered vaccine to frontline people like doctors, police. nurses, revenue and others but did not offer the same to electricity department employees who were also considered as front-

DOCTORS RESUME WORK AS GOVT TO CONSIDER PLEAS

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 2

Following an assurance from the state government consider demands, senior resident doctors and junior doctors have deferred their boycott of all duties including Covid care by a week and resumed work in the

state on Wednesday. Earlier in the day, representatives from AP Senior Doctor and AP Association Doctors' Junior Association were invited for talks with the Chief Secretary Aditya Nath Das, Principal Secretary (Health) Anil Kumar

Singhal and Director of

Medical Education M. Raghavendra Rao.

The doctors said that their demands were heard positively by the government officials and the Chief Secretary assured to take the issue to the notice of the Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy and resolve the issue in seven days.

THREE OPTIONS **GIVEN TO BENEFICIARIES**

From Page 1

The government is procuring 69.7 lakh tonnes of cement, 7.44 lakh tonnes of steel, 310 lakh tonnes of sand and other materials for the initial construction. The government will

also provide 20 tonnes of sand at free of cost from nearby sand rigs for the construction works.

Further, the government has given three options to the beneficiaries, and made it clear that the beneficiary can make his own decision.

In the first option, the government will supply the quality construction materials required to build the house and will also pay for the labour charges, where the bene-ficiaries can build the house on their own. In the second option, the the construction materi als required for the con-struction of the house themselves and build a house as per their inter-

The government will make payments to the beneficiaries' accounts in a phased manner depending on construction

In the third option, the government shall build the house, taking the entire responsibility of the building materials needed.

PILOT PROJECT IS ALMOST READY

From Page 1

The pilot project was almost ready and would be conducted in 4,800 villages in the first phase. They said they would complete a comprehensive land survey in those villages and purification of records would be done from December 2020 to March 2021 and then a draft would be printed.

Regarding land surveys in urban local bodies, the officials informed that they started a survey at Tadepalligudem in West Godavari district. They said surveys would be conducted in 41 towns and cities in phase 1 from June 2021 to January 2022 and ph would begin February 2022 in 42

towns and cities. would be completed by October 2022. The phase would begin in November 2022 in 41 towns and cities and would be over by April Deputy Chief Minister

(Revenue) Dharmana Krishnadas, Secretary Adityanath Das, Chief Minister's Principal Advisor Ajeya Kallam. Administration Chief Commissioner Neerab Kumar Prasad, Municipal Administration Special Chief Secretary Y. Srilakshmi, Revenue Special Chief Secretary Rajat Bhargav, Finance Principal Secretary S.S Rawat, Panchayat Raj Secretary Principal Gopala Krishna Dwivedi, Revenue Principal Secretary V. Usha Rani and other officials were present.

Covid-hit woman presumed dead, walks back home

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA JUNE 2

A curious situation has arisen here after a major goof-up by health officials. An aged woman presumed dead with Covid-19 walked back home alive, as her family members and local residents watched her return with a mix of emotions — shock and scare, followed

by surprise and joy. The 75-year-old Muthyala Girijamma, a resident of Christianpet at Jaggayyapeta in Krishna district, had been infected with Covid19 and was undergoing treatment at the GGH here since May 12. Her husband Gaddayya used to come to the hospital repeatedly to enquire after her condition.

On May 15, when he went to the hospital, he failed to find her in the Covid ward. When he inquired with the hospital staff, he was told that it meant she had succumbed to the infection. He went to the mortuary, collected the body of an aged woman, presuming that it was his wife, and took it to his home village, Jaggayyapeta. The last rites were performed as per family traditions

the same day.
With curbs having been imposed on performing the last rites on the Coviddead, neither the family nor the villagers removed the tight wrapping on the

woman's entire body before conducting the last

It so happened that her son Ramesh, 35, also died due to Coronavirus while in treatment at a hospital

in Khammam on May 23. The family members and the villagers conducted a memorial service for the loss of both the family members and condoled their death at the event in

the village on June 1.
A pall of gloom hung over the village. However, a day later, on Wednesday afternoon, the elderly woman reached back home, giving a huge shock to her husband and others in the surroundings.

She explained to them that she recovered from the infection and was discharged from the GGH in

the morning.
She told her family members, "I was very disappointed when no family member came to the hospital to take me home after my discharge. The hospital offered me ₹3,000 for transport to return home and take further care of my health.

With this, the family members and villagers recovered from the shock and surprise and it turned out to be a joyous occasion to all.

Repeated attempts to contact government hospital medical superintendent Dr K. Sivasankar Rao to elicit his version

TD THREATENS LEGAL BATTLE FOR SSC EXAMS CANCELLATION

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 2

Telugu Desam MLC Nara Lokesh on Wednesday demanded the outright cancellation of Class 10 and Intermediate examinations Andhra Pradesh just as the Central government scrapped the board examinations at the national level.

Lokesh threatened to launch another legal battle on behalf the students if the Jagan Mohan Reddy regime did not change its "arrogant" and

He objected to the CM not taking proactive steps for rescuing the AP students when the PM

adamant attitude.

himself was reviewing and taking decisions on cancellation of examinations in view of the continuing threat from Coronavirus.

Addressing a virtual meeting with students, parents and student associations, Lokesh said the PM was finding time to hold review meetings on the students' issues but the AP CM was not caring to do so.

SUSPENDED JUNIOR CIVIL JUDGE SHIFTED TO PILER SUB-JAIL

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUPATI, JUNE 2

Junior Civil Judge S. Ramakrishna was on Wednesday shifted from the Chittoor sub-jail to another sub-jail in Piler for security reasons. Ramakrishna is under suspension and was arrested and remanded to the sub-jail in Chittoor on charges of derogatory and threatening remarks against Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy in April this year.

Ramakrishna, who is known for levelling accusations against panchayat raj minister P e d d i r e d d y Ramachandra Reddy was arrested by the police following a complaint filed against him by a

YSRC functionary citing his remarks during a news debate on television in April this year. He allegedly called the CM 'Narakasura', saying that he would not mind taking his life.

Soon after his comments went viral, a YSRC functionary lodged a complaint with Pileru police. Ramakrishna was booked under various Following his arrest,

Ramakrishna has been lodged at the Chittoor sub-jail on remand. However, his son recently approached Anchra Pradesh High Court with a plea to 'shift his father to the sub-jail in Piler, as there was a threat to his father's life at the sub-jail

WATER I SUPPLY Minister Anil Kumar reviews the pace of project works with senior officials

Polavaram water for kharif 2022: Minister

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 2

The Andhra Pradesh govwater supply for crops from Polavaram irrigation project for the kharif season in 2022.

Minister resources P. Anil Kumar Yadav reviewed the progress of Polavaram irrigation project with senior officials and the executing agency MEIL, at the project site at Polavaram West Godavari on Wednesday. Speaking on the occasion. he said the government was committed to the supply of water for the kharif season in 2022 as assured

by the Chief Minister Y.S.

Reddy. Jagan Mohan Reddy. Works were being sped up despite the loss of five engineers at the project site and nearly 80 employees in the irrigation department Coronavirus.

under the Left Main Canal in time. With this, nearly 30 lakh acres will get water from Polavaram project during the kharif

cofferdams, both upper

Officials informed the existing command area spread over 23 lakh acres would be stabilised besides seven lakh acres in the new command area

At present, works are spillway underway for diversion of Godavari water from its main course by taking up command area from June

 OFFICIALS INFORM that the existing command area spread over 23 lakh acres would be stabilised besides seven lakh

acres in the new command area under the Left Main Canal in time. With this, nearly 30 lakh acres will get water from Polavaram project during the kharif 2022.

and downstream, to enable construction of the main dam i.e., earth-cum-rock-fill-dam. Water will be supplied through Polavaram through Dowleswaram barrage to nearly 10 lakh acres in the

15 for the kharif season as

the southwest monsoon is metre becoming active in the diaphr The minister slammed

the former Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu for failing to take up the construction of a diaphragm wall across the river to facilitate the construction of the main dam, as it was damaged for want of proper planning. He asked the former CM whether it should not be considered as his inefficiency and wondered how the previous TD could cover up such lapses and criticise the YSRC government which was committed to the timely completion of

the project. Irrigation authorities said that a nearly 180

diaphragm wall suffered partial damage on its surface following impact of high velocity water gushing out through gaps of cofferdam. They said that they thought of closure of the cofferdam gaps upstream while taking up construction of the diaphragm wall, but failed to do so for various reasons.

The minister directed the authorities to take experts' advice to go ahead with the repair works to the diaphragm wall in an expeditious manner. He also instructed the officials to expedite rehabilitation of Polavaram project affected people to their newly set-up colonies. He

thought of completing the construction of 17,000 houses in the rehabilitation centres by April, they could not do so as they were facing thousands of cases from the people in both the Godavari districts. However, he assured to complete the rehabilitation of all project-affected people in this season without fail. The minister lauded the

officials, engineers and workers who were working at the project, braving the second wave of the Coronavirus pandemic. He took a dig at former CM Naidu and his son Lokesh for staying at home and holding virtual meets to secure their own lives.

WILD ELEPHANTS WREAK HAVOC IN CHITTOOR DIST

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUPATI, JUNE 2

A herd of wild elephants has been creating a flutter, raiding crops and plantations in Mandapeta and Kodur villages in Palamaner mandal in Chittoor district.

According to reports, farmers and villagers are living in fear as they are frequently witnessing nearly 39 wild pachyderms crossing roads and roaming in human habitations for the past two days. The herd first spotted near Mandapeta in the late hours of Tuesday when they were crossing a road.

Villagers said that the wild pachyderms, which ventured into the farmlands on Tuesday night, continued attacking them even on Wednesday and damaged a large extent of

They alleged that despite informing the forest official several times about the elephant menace, no concrete measure was taken to ward off the animals into the forest.

The forest officials, however, maintain that they roped in drum-beaters and took measures to scare away the tuskers back into the forests. They asked villagers to move only in groups and assured to prevent any further crop damage by

EAST GODAVARI STILL THE WORST AFFECTED

From page 1

East Godavari continues to be the worst-hit in the highest number of total Coronavirus active cases at 29,791, followed by 18,695 in Prakasam, 17,706 in Chittoor, 11,889 in Nellore, 11,685 in Visakhapatnam, 10,123 in Krishna, 10,708 in West Godavari, 10,123 in Krishna, 8,732 in Guntur, 8,248 in Srikakulam, 4,358 in Vizianagaram, 4,120 in Kadapa, 4,001 in Anantapur and 3,739 in Kurnool.
With regard to daily cases of

deaths of Coronavirus infected patients, Chittoor reported the highest at 15 followed by 10 in Nellore, nine in West Godavari, eight each in Anantapur, East Godavari and Vizianagaram, seven each in Guntur, Prakasam and Srikakulam, Visakhapatnam, five Krishna and four each in Kadapa and Kurnool. With this, the death toll soared to

The state health authorities liscnarged 15,612 Coronavirus infected patients after recovery in the last 24 hours in the



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Relatives carrying a Covid-19 patient for treatment at New Government General Hospital in Vijayawada on

Medical colleges face staff crunch in AP, TS

4 govt Ayurveda teaching hospitals in bad conditions

DC CORRESPONDENT ANANTAPUR, JUNE 2

Medical colleges in Telugu states face a severe staff crunch and are toiling hard to retain Medical Council of India (MCI) recognition. This, while the Andhra Pradesh government is taking steps to establish 14 new medical colleges and need arises for quality academicians to handle the classes.

About nine medical colleges do not have regular principals, and 60 per cent of the existing colleges have no full-time faculty. The few doctors working in government medical colleges are acting as faculty in the nearby private medical colleges.

Several key departments are not functioning as even non-clinical subjects like bio-chemistry, anatomy, physiology and pharmacology are reportedly taught by fresh MBBS

FLIGHT SCHEDULE

The airport authorities

have scheduled arrival

and departure of both

international and domestic flights at the

airport for the whole

Vijayawada

udhana Rao said, "As we

wanted to take up some

extension and develop-

mental works at our air

port to facilitate opera-

tion of international

flights in a big way, we requested our authorities

to suspend operation of

international flights for

two months and from

April 3 onwards, we stopped their operation.

However, we have resumed international

flights from Wednesday

from the airport in addi-

tion to operation of both

scheduled and unsched-

uled including domestic

and international flights

International flights

have from Wednesday in

addition to operation of

both scheduled and

unscheduled including

domestic and interna-

as per need.'

tional flights.

Airport Madhus-

FOR JUNE

COMPLETED

From page 1

month of June.

International

director G.

graduates in many col-

The Anantapur Medical College is facing a staff crunch. The GGH has no regular dentist and sever-al posts are lying vacant there and at the Super specialty Hospital. During every visit of the MCI team, the authorities have to struggle to satisfy it.

The government's intention

tion was to expand and provide quality medical services and also to concentrate on deputing faculty to proposed medical colleges, Dr. Suresh Babu of Praja Science Vedika

According to MCI stipulation, there should be five in-patients per medical student. Every batch of 25 students should have one professor and two assistant professors of the reader grade. The medical college should have at least 90 junior residents least 90 junior residents and equipment in the neu-and a minimum of 210 rosurgery department are

staff nurses at the hospital attached to the medical

Four Medical colleges in Telangana have been denied permission to admit students from the 2019-20 academic year, thus reducing the existing count of 2,200 MBBS seats in private colleges by at least 600. Following the Medical Council of India (MCI) recommendations submitted last year, the Union Health Ministry made the decision after a thorough assessment of the facilities in these insti-

RIMS Adilabad and the government medical college in Nizamabad are in pathetic states.

Many of the machines and equipment in the medical college are rusting as they have been kept idle due to the shortage of doctors. Dialysis machines

lying idle due to the absence of nephrologists and neurosurgery specialists. Almost all the operation theatres remain closed.

A dearth of anatomy professors has resulted in a new crop of doctors passing out without proper knowledge, the Vedika observed. There has been no professor for this subject in most medical col-

This apart, four government Ayurveda teaching hospitals in AP & TS face worse conditions. The management of the Ayurvedic medical colleges struggled hard to get their UG and PG seats as the CCIM issued only 'conditional permission' to two Ayurvedic medical colleges for the academic

year 2020-21. About 122 professor posts are lying vacant in

the four government homoeopathy colleges. Centre agrees to make changes in CoWIN

From page 1

He said that the authorities responded positively and added that, accordingly, those going abroad should feed their passport number instead Aadhaar number on the CoWIN app once the Centre made the requisite

Meanwhile, the state government took a decision to hike stipend to sen-₹70,000 from ₹45,000 per

ior resident doctors to month. The resident docdecided to hike the monthly stipend of senior residents to ₹70,000 from the present ₹45.000.

state

He added that as PG final year and MBBS students had also sought a hike in their stipend, they discussed the issue with

tors boycotted all their duties including Covid

care on Tuesday all over

the state in protest against the inordinate

delay in revising their

stipend.
Singhal said that the

government nad

Chief Secretary. He said that 350 senior resident doctors joined duty last September and 800 PG students submitted representations for hike in stipend and added that a decision on request would be taken in

a week's time. With regard to consump tion of medical oxygen in the state, the senior official stated that it had come down to 443 metric tonnes in the last 24 hours as against Centre's allocation of 590 tonnes per day.

All set for preparation of herbal concoction CPI national secretary K. Narayana said the party would extend all cooperation to Bonigi Anandaiah for distributing the traditional Elaborate arrangements herbal concoction. ute the herbal medicine

 During an interaction with Anandaiah at Krishnapatnam on Wednesday, he said people have faith in his herbal medicine and the state government also gave nod for the distribution.

deliver the medicine in preparation of the conareas respectively.

An official said on Wednesday that permission has been sought to

The production venue has been shifted from the garden of Anandaiah in Krishnapatnam to the premises of Security located Academy Krishnapatnam Port as there is large space and facilities to store the raw material.

gateway, to enable those booking the medicine online to pay the postal/courier charges. Anandaiah has plans to prepare his herbal medi-cine for Covid cure to tion has lent its support by arranging a machine 75,000 infected patients and material to pack the across Andhra Pradesh.

Anandaiah sought five Since honey is a main days' time to procure all ingredient in the medithe ingredients to start cine, officials

arranged a tie-up with the Girijan Cooperative Corporation to supply large quantities of honey. Similarly, the district forest officer has been

asked to help Anandaiah secure different varieties of herbs being used in his concoction. Officials aim to supply the medicine to 15,000 Covid positive patients in

Nellore district and 5,000 infected patients in each district among the balance 12 districts of the

In Nellore district, the services of village and ward volunteers will be used to deliver the medicine to patients across the district after obtaining the list of patients in their areas of operation. In case of other dis-

tricts, the plan is to send the medicine to the collector for distribution in the area under his purview. The idea is to prevent people from coming to Krishnapatnam or Nellore for the medicine and avoid the spread of the disease.

TTD plans grand Hanuman Jayanthi

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUPATI, JUNE 2

PATHRI RAJASEKHAR |

are being made to distrib-

of Bonigi Anandaiah of

Krishnapatnam to Covid-infected persons in Andhra Pradesh, to start

with, and elsewhere later.

For those booking the medicine online, a deal was struck with the postal department and a

private courier service to

rural areas and urban

create an E-commerce

platform, with a payment

The district administra-

medicine in sachets.

NELLORE, JUNE 2

Making it clear that there is controversy over Lord Hanuman's birthplace, TTD Additional EO A.V. Dharma Reddy said the temple management will cele-brate the Hanuman Jayanthi festival, as per TTD almanac, for 5 days from June 4 to 8.

The TTD official said the TTD declared Anja-nadri as birthplace of Lord Anjaneya after getting the opinion of an experts committee. The jayanthi will be held at a cave located near Akasa Ganga. He asserted that of

the Astadasa Puranas, 12 clearly have reference to the birth place of Anjaneya as Anjanadri in Tirumala hills. As such, there is no room for any controno room 101 an, versy on the issue.

informed that temples for Balanjaneya and Anjana Devi were constructed and speciai pujas would be performed to these deities during these five days. will Abhishekam to Bedi Anjaneya Swamy and special pujas would be offered to Seventh Mile Prasanna Anjaneya

There will be Abhishekam to Bedi Anjaneya Swamy and special pujas would be offered to Seventh Mile Prasanna Anjaneya Swamy as is the practice every year.

Swamy as is the practice every year. Elaborating the day-

wise programmes, the Additional EO said every day there would be special Abhishekam and Pujas at the Hanuman birthplace to both Balanjaneya and Anjana Devi with Jasmine, Betel leaves, Kanakambaram, Chamanti and with Sindhooram on the respective days. Hanuman Chalisa would also be rendered between 2pm and 3pm every day. At Nada Neerajanam platform, special discourses on Hanuman by stalwart scholars would be arranged for all the five days.

All the departments concerned are making arrangeme nts for the festival whi ch is being held in a big way for the first time. "Next year we will plan to observe Hanuman Jayanthi celebrations with more pomp and religious fervour," the official added

NEW PRAKASAM COLLECTOR VOWS TO PUSH PROJECTS

DC CORRESPONDENT **NELLORE, JUNE 2**

The new collector of Prakasam district, Pravin Kumar, said he would put all his efforts to develop the backward district and thanked the government for giving him the opportunity. A 2006 batch IAS Officer,

Pravin Kumar took charge as 36th collector Prakasam district Prakasam Bhavan in Ongole on Wednesday. He replaced Pola Bhaskar who has been transferred and posted as Commissioner of Collegiate Education.

Speaking on the occasion, Pravin Kumar said his priorities include speeding up Velugonda project and land acquisition for Ramayapatnam Port besides completing all the pending projects. He said he would also take steps to implement all the welfare schemes and development works of the government without any scope for cor-

Pravin Kumar said he would also strengthen the village and ward secretariats and ensure transparency in all the operations at the field Venkata Murali, T.S. Chetan, K. Krishnaveni, and DRO Tippe Navak were present.

OLD OFFENDER HACKED TO DEATH

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUPATI, JUNE 2

A 22-year-old youth, who was an old offender, was hacked to death by unidentified assailants in Lakshmi Nagar in Madanapalle town on Wednesday.

The deceased was identified as P. Madhu, an autorickshaw driver by profession. He was involved in various offences related to land settlements and had rivalries with his many peo-

On Wednesday, he was attacked by some unidentified assailants with lethal weapons and was killed on the spot in the Lakshmi Nagar area.

PUBLIC | SPAT | Seers from AP, Telangana State to speak to claimant groups

Dispute continues over B. Matham head

NAGESWARA RAO BALLEDA | DC KADAPA, JUNE 2

Uncertainty persists over who will head Brahmangari Matham in Kadapa district. Vasantha Veerabhoga

Venkateswara Swamy. the 11th chairperson of the seventh generation, recently passed away due to illness. He had two wives. The first wife has four sons and four daugh-

two sons. Both parties are sparring the Matadhipathi position.

With the dispute raging for the last few days, five seers arrived from different parts of the state to hold talks and resolve it. Sri Saiva Kshetra chairperson Shivaswamy told the media that another seven seers would come from the Telangana region and that the disShivaswamy said talks

were the only way to peaceful resolution and advised against sparring in the public. He said endowment Srinivasa Vellampalli Rao was asked to file a report on the controversy the government. Therefore, the report would be made, after taking into account the views of Dharma, law. pute would be resolved justice and people's wish-

peetha dharmas, then bylaws need to be examined.

The existing laws of the land also would need to be studied. However, no outsider would appointed as the head of Matham. He said the arrival of other Swamis Telangana was being delayed due to the e-pass issue. He hoped that the final decision would be acceptable to all Swamy

Navashaktishatak chairperson Bhavani Sankarananda Swamy, Banaganapally Ravvalakonda chairper son Gnaneshwarananda Swamy, Rudra Peetham chairperson Yogeshwarananda Swamy Adhiveshananda Swamy from Saiva Temple accompanied him.

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PLEA TO REMOVE BODIES FLOATING IN GANGA

PARMOD KUMAR | DC NEW DELHI, JUNE 2

The Youth Bar Association of India on Wednesday moved the Supreme Court for an immediate removal of the human bodies floating in the Ganga and other rivers and give them dignified cremation or burial. The petition claimed that these bodies were of Covid-19 victims whose families did not have the resources for their disposal.

The petitioner has sought directions to the Centre, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Bihar, and West Bengal, to issue guidelines or formulate a stan-

dard operating procedure for proper disposal of the bodies. The plea filed through advo-cate Manju Jaitley said float-ing of corpses in the river would cause environmental hazards besides violation of the guidelines of the National Mission for Clean Ganga. It has sought directions to the chief secretaries of the

four states and the district magistrates to ensure no corpse is allowed to be thrown in the river on any ground and stern action be taken against the culprits. It has referred to an earlier verdict of the top court that the dignity of a dead person must be maintained and respected.

HC ASKS MAHA TO SUBMIT INFO OF FIRS DURING COVID

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC

Hearing a suo motu PIL on the issue of increasing number of Covid cases, the Bombay High Court on Wednesday directed the Maharashtra government to submit details of all FIRs registered and arrests made during the pandemic and the present crime rate in the state. The direction came after the state's counsel, advocate general Ashutosh Kumbhakoni, told the HC that while orders of the state high-powered committee were being followed on granting emergency parole to eligible inmates in a bid to decongest prisons during the

tate were still crowded.

On Wednesday, the bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice G.S. Kulkarni reiterated that the state must address the issue of overcrowding in prisons.

Advocate Kumbhakoni informed the court that following the HC's orders passed decongesting prisons and following Covid safety protocols in prisons, 2,168 inmates from seven prisons in the state had been released on interim bail as per the high-powered committee's guidelines.

He, however, said that many inmates who were eligible for the release were not applying for temporary bail.

WHY START VAX **CENTRES WITH POMP: HC TO DELHI**

New Delhi, June 2: The Delhi High Court on Wednesday said if the Delhi government could not ensure that people get both the doses of Covaxin within the stipulated time, then it should not have started so many vaccination centres with "much pomp and splen-

Justice Rekha Palli issued notice to the Delhi government and sought its stand on whether it can provide the second dose of Covaxin to those who got the first jab, before expiry of the incubation period of six weeks between the two doses.

The court also issued notice to the Centre on two pleas to make the second dose of both vaccines against Covid-19 —Covaxin Covishield available in the national

capital. "Why did you (Delhi government) start it (vaccination) if you were not sure you can provide the second dose also? You should have stopped. Maharashtra stopped when it found it cannot provide second dose. You opened so many vaccination centres everywhere with so much pomp and splendour and now you say you don't know when the second dose stock would be available," the court said while hearing the two peti-

One of the petitions has been moved by a lawyer, Ashish Virmani, who received the first dose of Covaxin on May 3 and since May 29 has been unable to book a slot for receiving the second jab which has to be taken within six weeks of the first.



An old woman sells Indian blackberry (jamun) and vegetables during lockdown at a market in Coimbatore on Wednesday.

Mob assaults doc, ransacks hospital in Assam; 24 held

The young doctor was kicked and thrashed with brooms, utensils

MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, JUNE 2

In what has created anger in the medical fraternity as well as civil society of the state, a mob brutally assaulted Seuj Kumar Senapati, a young doctor, and other staff of a Covid Care Centre (CCC) at Udali in central Assam's Hojai district. The assault, recorded on a mobile phone, showed the young doctor being kicked and thrashed with brooms and utensils by the mob on Tuesday afternoon. The video triggered a sharp protest from doctors and

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma who was in New Delhi said, "24 culprits involved in this barbaric attack have been arrested and a charge sheet will be filed at the earliest. I am personally monitoring this investigation and I promise that justice will be

after Giyasuddin, a Covid-19 patient from Udali area. died at the hospital on 32 die of black fungus at Indore hospital in 20 days suffering from the black fungus," he said. At present, 323 patients

as 32 patients have died of mucormycosis in the last 20 days at a government-run hospital in Madhya Pradesh's Indore city, an official said on Wednesday. Of late, sever-al cases of mucormycosis, also known as the black fungus, a serious infection, have been found in people who have recovered from Covid-19.

The Maharaja Yeshwan-trao Hospital (MYH) in the state's industrial hub Indore has been treating a number of black fungus patients not only from here, but also from various other districts.

unit of Indian Medical Association to the deputy commissioner of the dis-

black fungus was admitted in the MYH on May 13 and since then, a total of 439 patients have been admitted till now in the hospital. Out of them, 84 people were discharged after treatment, while 32 patients have died so far," MYH superintendent Pramendra Thakur said.

The present black fungus mortality rate in the hospital is 7.29 per cent, he said, claiming that the fatality rate was lower than other hospitals in the state. "We have carried out more than 200 surger-ies in the last 20 days to save the lives of patients

Tuesday. According to a trict, the patient was mob damaged the building am and died three hours later at 2 pm. The letter said that the

ments at the CCC besides "brutally assaulting" the doctor. The IMA unit said

are undergoing treatment for the fungal infection in

the hospital, the official

said. Out of them, 14 contracted the fungal infec-

tion along with Covid-19, while 301 people got muco-rmycosis after recovering

The eight other patients

suffering from the black

fungus have no record of contracting Covid-19, he informed. The statistics

show that 93 per cent

of the patients contra-

cted the black fungus after recovering from Covid-19. — PTI

from Covid-19, he said.

that unless all the culprits involved in the attack are arrested by 7 am on Wednesday, all doctors of Hojai would boycott all out-patient duty services. It also asked the govern-

ment to provide all hospitals and CCCs with security cover, CCTV cameras and round the clock electricity. "Instructions have been given to superintendent of police Hojai to arrest all persons involved in the assault," the special Director General of Police G.P. Singh said. The Indian Medical

Association wrote to Union home minister Amit Shah, stating that there was a "barbaric attack yesterday...and it was an extremely inhuman attack", and requested for "immediate strict action on culprits"

Meanwhile, the Assam State Branch of the IMA on Wednesday called for all doctors in the state to abstain from outdoor patient services. The body prits be booked immediately and there should be a speedy trial.

Maha launches 'corona-free villages drive'

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC MUMBAI, JUNE 2

In order to curb the spread of Coronavirus in Maharashtra government on Wednesday launched 'Corona-Mukta Gaon' Village) (Corona-free competition, which will reward the successful villages with handsome cash prizes. The scheme has been inspired by the feat of five villages in the state, which have managed to eradicate the virus from their jurisdic-

The competition shall be held in all the six revenue divisions of the state with top three villages in each division getting cash prizes worth ₹50 lakh, ₹25 lakh, and ₹15 lakh. In addition to this, these winning villages shall also be provided additional funds of ₹50 lakh, ₹25 lakh, and ₹15 lakh each, as incentives for various development

"The corona-free village competition has been launched with an aim to encourage the efforts to chase the virus away from the rural areas and make the entire state free of coronavirus at the earliest," said state rural development minister Hasan Mushrif.

The competition has been announced against the backdrop of Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray's appeal to people in rural areas to strive hard for making their villages corona-free. In his address, he had also praised the efforts of villages, which have attained Covid-free status shall be held in all the six revenue divisions of the state with top three villages in each division getting cash prizes worth ₹50 lakh, ₹25 lakh, and

₹15 lakh. COMPETITION HAS been announced on the backdrop of Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray's appeal to people in rural areas to strive hard for making their villages corona-free.

Rural areas in Maharashtra have been hit hard by the second Coronavirus wave than the urban parts of the

state.
More Covid-19 cases have been recorded as villages compared to cities, prompting the state machinery to concentrate more on rural areas.

The total prize money for the corona-free competition will be ₹5.40 crore, said Mushrif. "Every village in the state will be asked to form five teams to implement various initiatives for the eradication of Coronavirus. Villages shall be judged on the basis of 22 differ-ent criteria by a special committee of experts for their work during the period June 1, 2021 to March 31, 2022," he added.

According to state officials, five villages in the state – Hivare Bazaar and Bhoyare Khurd in Ahmednagar district, Bhosi in Nanded district and Antroli and Ghatane villages in Solapur dis-trict have become Coronavirus-free undertaking various initiatives in their areas.



People wait in a long queue to buy liquor from a wine tions in Jammu on Wednesday. Policemen were deployed outside wine shops to maintain order and ensure adherence of Covid-19 guidelines.



PATNAIK WRITES TO CMs OVER VACCINE PROCUREMENT

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC **BHUBANESWAR, JUNE 2**

Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Tuesday wrote a letter to all his counterparts seeking a consensus on centralised procurement of Covid vaccines by the Centre in view of the challenges faced by

In his letter, Patnaik stated that no state is safe unless all states adopt vaccination as a top priority and execute it on war-footing. "However, states should not compete against each other to procure the vaccines. United efforts are required for vaccine procurement and states should have the flexibility to implement the vaccination drive based on local circumstances,

The Chief Minister had highlighted that many states have floated global tenders for vaccine procurement but it is quite clear that global vaccine manufacturers are looking forward to the Union government for clearances and assur-

Naveen said.

MP, U'Khand, Guj. cancel state exams

DC CORRESPONDENTS with agency inputs BHOPAL, JUNE 2

Taking a leaf from the Centre, Madhya Pradesh government on Wednesday decided to cancel the class 12 state board examinations in the interest of safety of the students amid the raging Covid-19 pandemic. Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan took to Twitter to announce his government's decision to not hold this year's class 12 board exam in the state.

"The class 12 board examinations (conducted by MP Board of Secondary Education) for the year 2020-21 have been cancelled. The life of students is precious for us. We can take care of their career

later. We have constituted a committee of ministers who will consult experts and decide on students evaluation", he said.

The Gujarat government also decided to cancel the state board exams for class 12. "The state government decided to scrap the exams for class 12 of the Gujarat Secondary and Higher Secondary Board after taking into consideration the Centre's decision to scrap the exams for class 12 students of the CBSE given the pandemic," state education minister Bhupendrasinh Chudasama said

Uttarakhand intermediate board examinations were also cancelled in view of the prevailing Covid-19 situation in the DC CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs CHENNAI, JUNE 2

The Tamil Nadu government will make known its decision on holding the plus two board exam in the state in two days' time, after conferring with experts, state school education minister Anbil Mahesh Poyyamozhi said.

Chief Minister M.K. Stalin will take the final call on the issue after the views of education and medical experts and teachers among others were elicited, besides considering the stand of other states in this pandemic times, he said.

'Children's health and safety is equally important as their future, as our Chief Minister had said. Echoing this view, Prime Minister Narendra Modi

the CBSE exam on Tuesday," the minister said on Wednesday.

Addressing reporters here after attending a meeting with Stalin, Poyyamozhi said during a meeting convened Union defence minister Rainath Singh earlier, several states opined that the board exam could be conducted with precautionary measures in place.

Maharashtra school edu-cation minister Varsha Gaikwad on Wednesday said a proposal has been sent to the disaster management authority regarding the state board exams for Class 12 students and a decision on the issue will be taken in a couple of

She said the issue was discussed at a meeting of the state cabinet here, a day after the Centre canboard exams citing the prevailing Covid-19 pandemic. Amid the pandemwhich has Maharashtra hard,

TN, Maha to take call on exams soon

Gaikwad said, students' health remains the top priority for the state govern-Karnataka primary and

secondary education minister Suresh Kumar on Wednesday said an appropriate decision will taken soon on holding board exams in the state. "Regarding holding SSLC (class 10) and second year Pre-University (class 12) exams, an appropriate decision will be taken at the earliest," the minister said in a statement.

He said discussions are underway with teachers, education experts and parents in this regard and an appropriate decision will be taken soon keeping in children and their future. The Goa government will go through decisions taken by other states and also consult the Union education ministry before taking a call on Class 12 Goa board exams, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant said. Notably, the Centre on Tuesday cancelled the CBSE Class 12 board exams in view of the Covid-19 situation.

Chhattisgarh governhowever, ment, Tuesday set in the process of holding the "exam from home" for the class 12 board examinations in the state. The students have been asked to collect their question papers and blank answers from the designated Centres 'in person' from June 1 to June 5 and submit their answer papers within five days of receiving the question and

BOARD EXAMS

Experts hail the decision to cancel the board exams in view of the pandemic

hallenge to decide fair evaluation criteria: Experts

New Delhi, June 2: Education experts and stakeholders believe the bigger challenge before the CBSE now is coming up with a fair evaluation criteria for class 12 students whose exams have cancelled demanded that the policy

is notified soon. The experts hailed the decision to cancel the board exams which were earlier postponed in view of the second wave of Covid-19 pandemic. Given the current situation, it is the right decision to cancel the CBSE Board exams. There is no way we could have held exams without compromising the safety of children. While we welcome the decision, we hope the modalities would be worked out quickly in consultation with stakeholders, they said. "Since class marks are

important factor that affects students' career, we expect CBSE to ensure students don't get affected with the methodology of awarding marks," said Praveen Raju, Co-Chair, FICCI ARISE, a collegium of stakeholders aimed at promoting quality educa-

tion. In a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra

Modi on Tuesday, it was decided that the CBSE will take steps to compile the results of class 12 students as per a well-defined objective criteria in a timebound manner. "The next step is equally critical and crucial in

terms of deciding the process and criteria based on which the children's performance will be gauged. This should be performance done keeping in mind that many of them make that extra effort during the last

mile and hence, should be given due advantage," said Charu Wahi, Principal, Nirmal Bhartia School.

According to Vishnu Karthik, CEO, The Karthik, Heritage Schools, the decision on cancellation of board exams has provided some clarity and assuaged stress levels among students and parents but the challenge now is for the CBSE to arrive at an alternative criteria to deter-

mine grade 12 marks. "Any delay or any confusion on the new grading criteria will lead to more confusion and

among students. Clear directions should also be provided to Indian universities to modify their admissions criteria so meritocracy and fairness are not compromised," he

Shishir Jaipuria, Chairman of Seth Anandram Jaipuria Group of Educational Institutions believes deserving students must be allocated grades or marks corresponding to their yearly performance.

"It's a challenge that will require a great deal of meticulous thinking for arriving at a just criterion

I'm sure the schools and boards will rise to the challenge and deliver what's best for the stu-dents," he said. Rajiv Bansal, Director-

for academic assessment

Operations - Global Indian International (GIIS), said admission in undergraduate courses, across India and internationally, are dependent on class 12 results, therefore, the sooner these details are announced, the better it would be for the stu dents, their parents, and the entire academic community.



SHORT TAKES **23 MIGRANTS MISSING, TWO DEAD OFF TUNISIA**

Zarzis, Tunisia, June 2: At least 23 migrants were missing and two bodies recovered from the sea off Tunisia, the Red Crescent reported Wednesday, after the military said more than 100 migrants were inter-

The Tunisian navy said a boat headed for Europe from Zuwara in Libya was intercepted on Tuesday near Miskar oil platform, some 67 kilometres (52 miles) off the coast.

The migrants -- 37 Eritreans, 32 Sudanese and an Egyptian, aged between 15 and 40 -- were handed over to the Red Crescent and International Organization for Migration in the southern port Of Zarzis.

POLISARIO LEADER LEAVES SPAIN. FLIES TO ALGERIA

Madrid, June 2: The leader of Western Sahara's independence movement, whose presence at a Spanish hospital sparked a diplomatic row with Rabat, left Spain overnight and flew to Algeria, a government

source said Wednesday. He's "in Algeria," the source told AFP.

Late on Tuesday, Spain's for-eign ministry said Polisario Front leader Brahim Ghali would be leaving from Pamplona airport but did not say where he would be going.

Ghali's departure came hours after he was quizzed by a Spanish judge over allegations of torture and genocide, which he denied, in a video hearing from the hospital in northern Spain where he spent six weeks recovering from Covid-19.

REMAINS OF U.S. KU KLUX KLAN HEAD TO BE MOVED

Washington, June 2: A project to disinter a Ku Klux Klan leader and move his remains to a museum started Tuesday, local US media reported adding the work would be funded by \$200,000 of anonymous donations.

Nathan Bedford Forrest was a leading pro-slavery Confederate army general during the American Civil War, and the first "Grand Wizard" of the racist Ku Klux Klan organization from 1867 to 1869.

A pedestal on top of his grave a park in Memphis, Tennessee, will be removed first before his remains -along with those of his wife -are taken to the new National Confederate Museum, WMC5

BELARUS ACTIVIST STABS SELF, **RETURNED TO JAIL**

Moscow, June 2: A Belarusian activist who was hospitalised after stabbing himself in the neck in court has been returned to prison following surgery, the Viasna rights

group said Wednesday.
Stepan Latypov, 41, on
Tuesday rammed a pen into his neck on the first day of his trial several protest-related charges during a hearing seen by government critics as part of a sweeping crackdown on political opposition.

Viasna, citing Latypov's relatives, said Wednesday the activist was returned to prison and that family had been able to deliver him a parcel there.

Latypov was detained last September and went on trial in the capital Minsk on several charges including creating protest symbols and resisting law enforcement.

PAK JOURNALIST SUMMONED FOR 'DEFAMING' ARMY

Islamabad, Jun Pakistani journalist recently beaten by unidentified men in his apartment said Tuesday he was summoned by authorities to answer allegations he defamed a key national institution, a term often used for the military. Asad Ali Toor, who works for the Aaj News Pakistani TV channel, said he was consulting his lawyer to decide whether to appear before the Federal Investigation Agency on June 4.

The development comes a week after three armed men forcibly entered Toor's apartment in the capital Islamabad, saying they were from Inter-Services Intelligence. The assailants repeatedly slapped Toor, accusing him of criticising the agency. However, the ISI has distanced itself from the attack, saying it was not involved. Pakistan Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmad has said authorities are close to arresting the assailants.

Trump Hotel for lease



The Trump Organisation is trying to lease out the The Trump International Hotel, after it failed in the 2019 presidential election before the Covid-19 pandemic hit the world.

Iran warship on fire, sinks in Gulf of Oman

Blaze began around 2.25 am, efforts to save Kharg failed

Tehran, June 2: The largest warship in the Iranian navy caught fire and later sank Wednesday in the Gulf of Oman under unclear circumstances, semi-official news agencies reported.
The Fars and Tasnim

news agencies said efforts failed to save the support warship Kharg, named after the island that serves as the main oil terminal for Iran. The blaze began around 2:25 a.m. and firefighters tried to contain it, Fars said. The vessel sank near the Iranian port of Jask, some 1,270 kilome-ters (790 miles) southeast of Tehran on the Gulf of Oman near the Strait of Hormuz — the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf.

Photos circulated on Iranian social media of sailors wearing life jackets, evacuating the vessel as a fire burned behind them. State TV and semiofficial news agencies referred to the Kharg as a "training ship." Fars published video of thick, the ship early Wednesday morning. Satellite photos from Planet Labs Inc. anaBurning ship with chemicals sinking off Sri Lanka port "The ship is under water, Colombo, June 2: A fire- from Sri Lanka and India

climbed onto the vessel

and extinguished a blaze

that had been burning for

sel is being submerged. This was at the same time

as the rescue team got on

board in order to facilitate

the towing of the vessel to

deeper seas for safety reasons," Sri Lanka Navy

spokesman Indika Silva said.

"The rear end of the ves-

12 days.

stricken Singaporeflagged cargo vessel laden with chemicals started to sink on Wednesday off Sri Lanka's main port, a senior navy official said, fuelling severe environmental concerns as the container ship still has several hundred tonnes of oil in its fuel tanks.

Water submerged the MV X-Press Pearl's rear end a day after firefighters

lyzed by The Associated Press showed the Kharg

off to the west of Jask on

Satellites from the U.S.

National Oceanic and

Atmospheric

Administration that track

fires from space detected a

by Fars. The Kharg serves

the Iranian navy capable of providing replenishment at sea for its other ships. It also can lift heavy cargo and serve as a

The warship, built in Britain and launched in 1977, entered the Iranian time of the fire reported negotiations that followed by Fars. The Kharg serves Iran's 1979 Islamic as one of a few vessels in Revolution. Iran's navy

launch point for helicop-

called the Makran, which served similar functions

typically handles patrols in the Gulf of Oman and the wider seas, while the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard operates in the shallower waters of the Strait of Hormuz and the Persian Gulf. In recent months, the navy launched a slightly

the water level is above the deck. The ship is going

down," de Silva said. On Wednesday morning

experts were trying to tow the ship farther out to sea,

some 9 nautical miles

away from the Colombo

port where it had been

anchored since May 20, to

prevent its sinking at the current position which

would have caused severe

The 39-year-old faces up

Biden create Jan. 6 panel Washington, June 2: House Speaker Nancy investigation of the attack, according to a person on the private Demo-

Pelosi rules out having

Pelosi is ruling out a presidential commission to study the January 6 insurrection at the Capitol, telling House Democrats on Tuesday that having President Joe Biden appoint a panel is unworkable even after the Senate blocked an independent probe last week

Pelosi laid out possible next steps after Friday's Senate vote, in which Senate Republicans blocked legislation to create an independent, bipartisan panel to investigate the siege by former President Donald Trump's supporters. She proposed four options for an cratic caucus call, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal conversations. The first option, Pelosi

said, is to give the Senate another chance to vote on the commission. Six Republicans voted with Democrats to move forward with the bill, and a seventh missed the vote but said he would have backed it.

That means Democrats would only need support from three additional Republicans to reach the 60 votes needed for passage. The commission would be modelled after a that investigated the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

involve the House investigating the attack, meaning the probes would be inherently partisan. inherently partisan. Pelosi suggested that she could appoint a new select committee to investigate the siege or give the responsibility to a single committee, like the House Homeland Security panel, which wrote the original bipartisan bill to create

the commission.

Alternately, Pelosi said committees could simply push ahead with the investigations that are already underway.

Cyberespionage: US seizes two domain names

Washington, June 2: The Justice Department said Tuesday that it has seized two domain names used in a cyberespionage campaign that targeted US and foreign government agencies, think tanks and humanitarian groups.

The campaign was dis-

closed last week by Microsoft, which linked it to the same group of Russian intelligence operatives responsible for the massive SolarWinds intrusion that breached federal agencies and private corporations. The company said over the weekend that it was "still not seeing evidence of any significant number of compromised organizations at this time."

The White House on Friday similarly down-played the cyber assault as "basic phishing," in which hackers use malware laden a maile to ware-laden emails to access networks, and said US agencies had largely fended it off. Still, officials say the US government's action on Friday was aimed at preventing any further exploitation of victims, though the Justice Department also warned that the hackers may have used additional into networks between when the hacking first began and the time that the domains were seized.

'Last week's action is a continued demonstration of the department's com-

WILL CONSIDER U.S. REQUEST ON CYBERATTACK, **SAYS RUSSIA**

Moscow, June 2: Russia said Wednesday it was open to considering any request from the United States for help in investigating the cyberattack on the US subsidiary of Brazilian meat processor JBS. "There are contacts through diplomatic channels," Kremlin spok-esman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

"If there are requests from the Americans they will be promptly considered."Peskov said he expected the issue of cybercrime to come up during the June 16 summit in Geneva between Russian President Vladimir Putin and US counterpart Joe Biden.
"It is quite clear that criminality and chal-

lenges in tȟe cybersphere will be on the agenda one way or another," he said.

mitment to proactively prior to the conclusion of criminal investiga tion,"Assistant Attorney General John Demers, the Justice Department's top national security official, said in a statement. — AP

MALAYSIA TO SUMMON CHINESE ENVOY OVER JETS

Kuala Lumpur, June 2: Malaysia's government will issue a diplomatic protest against "intrusion" by Chinese military aircraft into its airspace, the foreign minister said. Foreign

Hishammuddin Hussein said late Tuesday that he will summon the Chinese ambassador to explain "this breach of the Malaysian airspace sovereignty.' Malaysia's air force said its radar picked up the Chinese aircraft Monday near Malaysianadministered Luconia Shoals, a rich fishing ground in the disputed South China Sea. The Chinese planes then moved nearly 60 nautical miles (110 kilometers) off the coast of Sarawak on Borneo island. After attempts to contact the aircraft failed, the air force sent its fighter planes to identify them. It said they were Ilyushin Il-76 and Xian Y-20 strategic transporters, flying at between 23,000-27,000 feet (7,000-8,000 meters) altitude typically used by commercial flights. Malaysia called the incident a "serious threat to national sovereignty and flight safety.' wataysta s clear— having friendly diplomatic relations with any countries does

not mean that we will

compromise our nation-

al security," Hishamm-

uddin said.

Russia adopts 'extremist' bill Firefighter kills colleague, Kremlin to exit executive director of Open Russia, a just disbanded wounds another at fire stn.

upper house on Wednesday overwhelm-ingly backed legislation expected to be used to ban allies of Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny from running in elections, the latest move in a crackdown on the opposition. The bill, overwhelming-

ly approved by the Federation Council, would make it impossible to run in parliamentary elections for leaders, sponsors and rank-and-file members of "extremist" groups."

A Russian court is considering whether to designate Navalny's political network an extremist organisation and could make a decision as early as next week. Critics of President Vladimir Putin say Russian authorities are widening a campaign against the opposition ahead of parliamentary

overflight treaty

Wednesday to withdraw from an international treaty allowing surveillance flights over military facilities following the U.S. exit from the treaty.

The vote comes after U.S. officials told Moscow last month that President Joe Biden's administration had decided not to reenter the Open Skies Treaty, which had allowed surveillance flights over military facilities before

and many of his allies

Moscow, June 2: The Russian parliament's withdrew from the pact. upper house voted As a presidential candidate, Biden had criticised Trump's withdrawal as "short-sighted."

Moscow has signalled its readiness to reverse the withdrawal procedure and stay in the 1992 treaty if the United States returns to the agreement. After the Russian upper house voted to leave the treaty, it would now come Russian President Vladimir Putin for sign-

Gudkov Andrei elections in September. arrested, two more politi-After Navalny was jailed cal activists, Dmitry over the past two days. Pivovarov, were detained

pro-democracy group, was pulled off his Warsaw-bound flight on Monday.

to six years in prison for his involvement in an "undesirable" organisa-tion. A court was expected to decide whether to remand him later Wednesday. On Tuesday, police detained Gudkov after conducting raids on homes of his allies and relatives. The 41-year-old former opposition lawmaker faces up to five years in prison for alleged ly failing to pay a debt under an old lease agreement. Gudkov is likely to be formally charged on Wednesday, said human rights association Agora whose lawyer represents him. Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the detentions were a purely legal matter. -AFP

Santa Clarita, June 2: An off-duty Los Angeles County firefighter fatally shot a fellow firefighter and wounded another at their small community station Tuesday before going to his nearby

home, setting it on fire and apparently killing himself, authorities said. A 44-year-old fire specialist died and a 54-yearold firefighter was shot when the gunman opened fire shortly before 11 am at Fire Station 81, which is about 45 miles (72 kilometers) north of Los Angeles, Fire Chief Daryl Osby told reporters. The wounded man was in critical but stable condition at a hospital. The shooter was a firefighter specialist and fed in flames.

engineer, authorities said. The fire chief said he could not speak to the motive for the attack and doesn't know about any disciplinary actions.

He was not scheduled to work today. He came back and confronted the onduty personnel, a visibly shaken Osby said.

I cannot speak to the mindset of the shooter. I can say that it's very tragic and sad that that would be a decision point of one of the members of the Los Angeles County Fire Department. The gunman, who was not identified, then went to his house less than 10 miles (16 kilometres) away, which authorities found engul-

ASIAN OFFICER ATTACKED IN 'HATE' CRIME

San Francisco, June 2: A San Francisco police officer responding to a call about a man making threats to people in Chinatown was attacked by the suspect, who was later arrested on assault and hate crime charges, authorities said. Surveillance

showed the female officer, who is of Asian descent, approach Gerardo Contreras on Friday and tell him to turn around and put his hands on his

RACIAL I VIOLENCE Last June, former President Donald Trump was greeted by protests during his visit

Biden marks Tulsa Race Massacre in graphic speech

Tulsa, June 2: An emotional President Joe Biden marked the 100th anniversary of the massacre that destroyed a thriving PoC community in Tulsa, declaring Tuesday that he had 'come to fill the silence' about one of the nation's darkest — and long suppressed — moments of racial violence.

"Some injustices are so heinous, so horrific, so grievous, they cannot be buried, no matter how hard people try," Biden

come healing."

Biden's commemoration of the deaths of hundreds of PoC people killed by a white mob a century ago came amid the current national reckoning on racial justice. "Just because history is silent, it does not mean that it did not take place," Biden said.

He said that "hell was unleashed, literal hell was unleashed." And now, he said, the nation must come to grips with the following sin of denial. "We can't said. "Only with truth can just choose what we want

to know, and not what we should know," said Biden. "I come here to help fill the silence, because in silence wounds deepen." After Biden left, there was a spontaneous singing by some audience members of a famous civil rights march song, "Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around."

The events on Tuesday stood in stark contrast to then-President Donald Trump's trip to Tulsa last June, which was greeted by protests. Or the former

President's decision, one year ago, to clear Lafayette Square near the White House of demonstrators who gathered to protest the death of George Floyd, a PoC man, under the knee of a white Minneapolis police officer.

In 1921 — on May 31 and June 1 — a white mob, including some people hastily deputised by authorities, looted and burned Tulsa's Greenwood district, which was referred to as Black Wall Street. On Tuesday, the President,

joined by top PoC advisers, met privately with three surviving members of the Greenwood community who lived through the violence, the White House said. Viola "Mother" Fletcher, Hughes "Uncle Red" Van Ellis and Lessie "Mo-ther Randle" Benningfield Randle are all between the ages of 101 and 107.

Biden said their experience had been "a story seen in the mirror dimly" "But no longer," the president told the survivors. "Now your story will be known

Latasha Sanders, 33, of Tulsa, brought her five children and a nephew in hopes of spotting Biden. 'It's been 100 years, and this is the first we've heard from any US President," she said. "I brought my kids here today just so they could be a part of history and not just hear about it, and so they can teach generations to come."

John Ondiek, another Tulsan in the crowd following Biden's speech on cellphones, said he was

here. That tells me there's an awakening going on in this country." As many as 300 PoC Tulsans were killed, and thousands of survivors were forced for a time into internment camps overseen by the National Guard.

Burned bricks and a fragment of a church basement are about all that survive today of the more than 30-block historically PoC district.







Chronicle

3 JUNE 2021

Targeting ex-chief secy to hit bureaucracy's morale

he way the Narendra Modi government is going about evidently trying to punish the recently retired chief secretary of West Bengal, Alapan Bandyopadhyay, is unlikely to fill the civil service with confidence or

Across the Union government bureaucracy, especially at senior levels where policies are grappled with, the Delhi Durbar under the present PM is widely thought to be hamstrung by signs of cliquishness, leaving the energetic and the hard-working demoralised. The Bandopadhyay episode could deepen faultlines caused by favouritism.

Policymaking and policy implementation are apt to be a casualty in such a setting since civil servants hesitate to offer frank and unbiased assessments in the process of policy formulation for fear of falling foul of the regime and eventually be singled out for unwarranted disciplinary action on false pretexts. The example of Mr Bandopadhyay has every potential to exacerbate such anxieties. This is bad for India. Because only a favoured few were consulted, major policy missteps such as demonetisation ensued

It is irrelevant how the Bandyopadhyay affair ends. What is pertinent is that the episode is malodorous. Its ramifications extend to weakening the structures of governance...

Senior levels of the civil service and retired top civil servants appear to have been flabbergasted by the treatment being meted out to the former West Bengal chief secretary. It seems hardly believable that the topmost civil servant of a state should be sought to be punished for being 15 minutes late for a meeting called by the PM. This was the so-called PM-CM meeting to review the impact of the cyclone Yaas which was full of BJP leaders who had no place in such a discussion. To make matters more absurd, Mr Bandyopadhyay is being proceeded against under the Disaster Management Act.

In a major newspaper article, a former cabinet secretary has noted that the chief secretary was to retire from service on May 31, but at the state government's request was granted an extension as chief secretary. However, only four days later, he was asked to report for work in New Delhi on the day he was to superannuate. This is after the Kalaikunda incident, giving scope for the conjecture that the Centre's action has a political trigger and an

upright civil servant finds himself caught in the crossfire.

The retired senior official has indicated that the move against Mr Bandyopadhyay was peremptory in nature as Mr Bandyopadhyay had not been cleared for "deputation" by the state. Nor had the Centre requested his services on deputation. Besides, he had not been empanelled for the post of secretary in GOI. In the event, the relevant rule that the Centre prevails over a state — when there is a difference over the release of an officer on deputation — does not apply in this particular case

It is not unlikely that the ayatollahs of rule-making in New Delhi were only too aware of this aspect and therefore chose to summon the former chief secretary under the National Disaster Management Act to receive his punishment. (It is telling that the yoga teacher-entrepreneur Ramdev does not attract the penal provisions of NDMA for traducing the medical effort against Covid.)

In the final analysis it is irrelevant how the Bandyopadhyay affair ends. What is pertinent is that the episode is malodorous. Its ramifications extend to weakening the structures of governance and administration in India, besides casting in prejudice the valuable principles of Centre-state relations on which our feder

Testing time for students

he cancellation of the CBSE and CISCE Class 12 board exams was, perhaps the easier decision to make. It will resonate with the primary stakeholders who are students as anxiety levels were the highest among them and their parents amid the deadly second wave of Covid-19 pandemic. A spate of cancellations of state board exams is bound to follow though only four states among all states and UTs had expressed their opposition to the proposal to hold the exams The decision to cancel emanated from the Prime Minister who, well aware of the

nervousness in youth, may have lent an empathetic ear to the students' cause. Simpler it may have been to choose cancellation over conduct of exams but the hard part begins only now as acceptable objective criteria have to be defined in the onerous task of judging students on merit for university. The future of over one crore Class 12 students in various streams, including 14 lakh in CBSE, is at a crossroads (about 1.43 crore students appeared for different school leaving exams in 2020). While performance in internal school assessments during Class 12 or Plus-2 may be used to determine the tabulation of marks, it might be altogether fairer if a student's performances from classes 9 to 12 were to be collated and weightage given to that too. Fixing the evaluation procedure is going to be an

The elite institutions in engineering and medical have their own entrance tests to determine admissions, but arts and science colleges have traditionally depended on marks in school finals. A common universities entrance test might be worth considering but there too the question remains of timing an objective test amid the pandemic whose third wave is expected later in the year. The intricate task of finding a level playing field is not going to be achieved without inviting complications. Beyond that lies a greater threat to a whole generation of students who have to put up with less than satisfactory Zoom education as opposed to the congeniality of real-world learning in classrooms among peers.

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crucial issues at stake. What makes this "open letter" significant is that the signatories include for-Cabinet Secretary K.M. Chandrasekhar, former foreign secretary and national security adviser Shiv Shankar Menon, former health secretary K. Sujatha Rao, former adviser to the Prime Minister T.K.A. Nair, former chief information commissioner Wajahat Habibullah and former Delhi

Now unfettered by civil service regulations and free to speak their mind, these former babus, who call themselves the Constitutional Conduct Group, have alleged that the Centre has botched the efforts to tackle the spread of the pandemic and urged Mr Modi to take urgent action, including centralisfree and universally to all Indians. They have also expressed concern about the "steady erosion of the Cabinet system of governance" (too much PMO!) and deteriorating ties

with the states. Of course, there is nothing new in the missive. The ordinary citizens, Opposition parties, and even the judiciary in several states have been raising these same issues. The "coalition" of the willing that Mr Modi seemed to have created since his ascent to power in 2014 is now beginning to crack. The government had managed the narrative adroitly so far, but in the face of the Covid pandemic, it now seems unable to contain the growing dissent in the country over its pandemic policy.

KHEMKA SETS OFF CENTRE-

The unrelenting Ashok Khemka has struck again. The Haryana cadre IAS officer and whistleblower has brought to light blatant violations of the civil service rules by the Haryana government has been appointing IPS, IFoS and IRS officers to IAS cadre posts such as principal secretary without the Centre's sanction.

made a representation to Cabinet Secretary Rajiy Gauba in December last year, but it has taken a while for the department of personnel and training (DoPT) to sit up and finally

The department has now called for a detailed report from the Khattar sarkar on the status of these postings. It has advised the state administration to stick to the IAS cadre rules and not appoint other all-India cadre officers to IAS cadre posts of principal secretaries and certainly not for a period beyond three months, without the department's prior approval. Some may recall that a similar situation had arisen in Nagaland where the government was appointing state service officers to IAS cadre posts.

Mr Khemka, the officer who flagged

rare thing!

The Modi sarkar has given a year's extension for Intelligence Bureau chief Arvinda Kumar and RAW chief S.K. Goel in the interest of "continuity" Both are IPS officers. Interestingly, these extensions come after the setback to plans when both senior IPS officers, Rakesh Asthana and Y.C. Modi, were left out of the race to become the CBI chief. This, only after the Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana objected to their names, citing a Supreme Court ruling which states that only officers who have more than six months left for

But the government lost no time in quickly approving extended terms, in the case of IB and RAW chiefs. Note, it is only an extension and not a new appointment. Insiders say that the extension to the two officers was given after relaxing the existing rules

EXTENSION RAJ

retirement could be considered.

Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) chief Pramod Chandra Mody is hoping for another extension. This, after two extensions, one of six months and

another of three months already! Of course, it will be argued that it is the PM's prerogative to retain trusted officers in supra-sensitive posts such as the IB and RAW chiefs. It also doesn't hurt a bit, if you are also close to the national security advisor Ajit Doval.

Questions will, of course, be asked about the problems such extensions create within the next in line. While the line of succession at IB is not really affected much by Mr Kumar's extended term, but in the case of Goel, the extension will ensure that at least two senior RAW officers will retire before his extended term ends.

While this practice allows the favourites to continue for a bit longer, it does kill the hopes of officers hoping to retire at the top of their service. But that's the subject for another day... keep watching this space.

> Share a babu experience! Follow dilipthecherian@Twitter.com. Let's multiply the effect.

Subhani

ARE YOU SURE THAT YOU ARE NOT

GUINEA PIG?

Protect vulnerable to heal fractures, revive economy



Patralekha Chatteriee

prisoners offer a telling insight into the state of the country's economy. In Uttar Pradesh, the country's most populous state, 21 jail inmates have recently written to the authorities saying they don't want parole. Their reason: staying in prisons is "safer and healthier" during the Covid-19 pandemic. They know that in the world outside, there won't be free food nor reg-ular health checkups and they will have to struggle for a living.

The signs of economic distress are everywhere. Even as the Centre and state governments continue to weigh in on the grim maths between lives and livelihoods, it is becoming obvious that social protection for our vulnerable makes for a compelling moral argument as well as an economic and social one.

Without it, neither the pandemic-battered economy nor the fractured will gain normality any time

India has begun to take baby steps to emerge from the lockdowns that were triggered by the sharp in coronavirus in the cases "second

Currently, there are flickers of promise: the infections are falling in many places though Covid-19 deaths remain high at around 3,000 every day. Worryingly, the virus continues to course through the countryside.

This week, manufacturing and construction work was allowed to resume in Delhi and some other areas, but with many roads remaining barricaded, transporting material is not easy and there is an acute shortage of labourers. Many have gone back home.

This time around, there was transport so there have been no long marches down national highways like last year, after the first nationwide lockdown. But clearly, many

labourers who come to big cities in search of livelihoods have little faith in their employers or the State to look after them during lockdowns.

"In the past year, we have not put in solid social protection mechanisms for migrant workers or those working in the informal sector. There is the odd relief scheme for limited periods or cash transfer through Jan Dhan, but these have limited reach," says Amit Basole, associate professor of economics at Azim Premji University, one of the key authors of a study, "The State of Working India 2021: One year of Covid-19", brought out by

In the absence of a real social protection mechanism in the cities, people have gone back to their villages. This should surshould it come as a surprise that this will impact attempts to unlock the

'Overnight, we may not be able to formalise all informal workers, but we need to definitely start putting in place a more solid social protection mechanism as a matter of priority,'

economy

Prof. Basole stresses Why is not this a bigger issue? Perhaps the heartimages breaking of deaths, often without dignity, have something to do with it.

"The huge health crisis and graphic images of the dead have overshadowed the severe economic crisis across the country. Not only has the informal sector been rendered more precarious, many who earlier had salaried jobs are now being forced into odd jobs and errands just to survive as a result of the pandemic, lockdowns and various other restrictions," says Prof.

Basole, He speaks movingly about a school bus driver he knows who is trying to make a living ferrying vegetable from wholesale markets to retail shops.

"But this is not a stable way of earning a living. Admittedly this is only anecdotal, but it's not difficult to imagine many more such cases may be

measures

coverage

NREGA and cash trans-

fers also had a patchy

Given the unpredictable

trajectory of the virus, it's

hard to forecast when

lockdowns may be reimposed. All the more rea-

son to invest in a solid

social protection mecha-

nism to minimise the

damage due to disruption. "The State of Working

India 2021" suggests some

urgent policy measures.

These include extending

free rations under PDS

beyond June, at least till the end of 2021, cash transfer of ₹5,000 for three

months to as many vul-

nerable households as

can be reached with the

existing digital infra-structure, including but not limited to Jan Dhan

accounts, expansion of

MGNREGA entitlement

to 150 days, revising pro-

gramme wages upwards

to state minimum wages,

gramme budget to at least

₹1.75 lakh crores, launch-

ing a pilot urban employment programme in the worst-hit districts, possi-

bly focused on women

workers, increasing the

Central contribution in

old-age pensions, auto-

matically enrolling all

MGNREGA workers who do construction work, as

registered workers under

the Building and Other

(BoCW) Act so that they

can access social security

benefits and a Covid hard-

ship allowance for

Anganwadi/Asha work-

ers of ₹5,000 per month for

All these measures toge-

approximately ₹5.5 lakh

spending and bring the

total fiscal outlay on Co-

vid relief to around 4.5 per

cent of GDP over two

But what will be the cost

of not having this large

fiscal stimulus, given the

magnitude of the distress?

Dreze

Somanchi put it: "The

Covid-19 crisis brings

out once again that India

needs a more reliable and comprehensive

The writer focuses on

development issues in

economies. She can be

patralekha.chatterjee

India and emerging

reached at

@gmail.com.

social security system."

ther will cost money

Workers

Construction

six months.

years.

expanding

The report says mobility restrictions, such as those caused by lockdowns, predictably lead to income losses due to decreased economic activity. "We find that a 10 per cent decline in mobility was associated with a 7.5 per cent decline in income. This number is useful to keep in mind when estimating the impact of future lock-

downs," it cautions. Predictably, the poor who lack cushions have been the worst-hit. Nearly half of formal salaried workers moved into informal work, either as selfemployed (30 per cent), casual wage (10 per cent) or informal salaried (nine per cent) workers, between late 2019 and late

Women have been affected more and households have tried to cope by cutting back on food intake, selling assets, and borrowing informally from friends, relatives, and moneylenders.

Government relief measures have helped, but exclusions were also common. In a recent commentary, "The Covid-19 Crisis People's Right to Food", development economists Jean Dreze and Anmol Somanchi note that relief measures helped, but they were

"A large majority of the population had access to PDS in 2020 (with enhanced monthly rations for eight months) and this played a critical role in averting the worst. But it's possible some of the supplementary rations got diverted, initially at least, and sig nificant minority of poor households had no access to PDS at all for lack of a ration card. Other relief

As Dreze and Somanchi put it: 'The Covid-19 crisis brings out once again that India needs a more reliable and comprehensive social security system'

LETTERS

LIQUOR DELIVERY

Liquor buyers are lining up in large number at shops when the curfew is relaxed spreading Covid-19 (Fear of infection in closed spaces hits liquor biz in AP, DC, June 2). Rise and fall in Covid cases in AP is astonishing health authorities. AP government must immediately amend excise rules and bring a mobile app for home delivery of liquor so that we can reduce the crowding.

D. Ravi Kumar Visakhapatnam

3-CHILD POLICY

China's three child policy has signalled the end of an era of its demo-graphic dividends. Till now it had reaped benefits of larger working force. Due to flawed intervention of the state since the introduction of one-child policy in 1979, it has lost healthy demographic trends leading to decreased fertility ratio, male and female sex ratio and increased number of aged people. India must take advantage by transforming its work force into skilled human resources

Dr D.V.G. Sankararao Vizianagaram

SEDITION LAWS

The pinch is being felt even at the grassroots (Stop misuse of sedition, all other laws to stifle dissent, DC, June 2). Adding fuel to the fire, the social media is replete with fake news of people being arrested for speaking/writing against the establishment. The bizarre statistics of 37% booked for speaking against PM alone should be taken seriously. Certainly, the apex court needs suo motu action

regarding sedition cases. **K. Nehru Patnaik** Visakhapatnam



HYDERABAD, JUNE 2 V. Hari Prasad Honorary Secretary of the Andhra Pradesh Welfare Fund, was arrested today. He has been lodged in the Central Crime

Mr. Hari Prasad who is being produced before a City magis trate tomorrow for remand, has been charged with misappropria

The Andhra Pradesh Welfare Fund has been conducting the raffles in the State, for utlising the proceeds for welfare schemes.

tion, cheating, falsification of

accounts and forgery.

Dilip Cherian Dilli Ka Babu



Too much PMO! Ex-babus chide Modi on vaccine policy, state ties

n the context of the second Covid surge, a group of 116 former civil servants has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi accusing the government of not addressing the

lieutenant governor Najeeb Jung, among others.

ing procurement and supply of vac-cines which should be administered

HARYANA TUSSLE ON POSTINGS

government. It appears that the state

Sources say that Mr Khemka had

the issue, should be satisfied with the Centre's response since it is such a

Similarly, there is buzz that the

DECCAN CHRONICLE | NELLORE | THURSDAY | 3 JUNE 2021

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	51,849.48	-0.16
Nifty 50	15,576.20	0.01
S&P 500*	4,209.71	0.18
Dollar (₹)	73.08	-0.23
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.36	0.01
Euro (₹)	89.01	0.18
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,772 ▼ 116	0.23
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	71.15	1.28
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.005	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.593	-0.022
* As of 8:30 PM IST		

Assocham seeks wage support, interest subsidy

Assocham asked the government to extend relief measures such as regulatory easing, wage support, and interest subsidy for the MSMEs. As the states are in the process of easing lockdowns, the trade and industry would need support to pick up their business thread again, it said. It has suggested that the surplus funds of ESIC should be used for providing wage support measures/stimulus packages for the employees.

Ruchi Soya enters nutraceuticals; to sell 10 products



Ruchi Soya Industries said it has made a foray into the nutraceuticals and wellness segment and initially will launch 10 products under the brand 'Patanjali' and 'Nutrela'. Ruchi Soya aims to have a range of products across various categories in the next one year, it said. To start with. the firm is launching 10 products, including vitamin B12, iron complex, vitamin D, vitamin C and zinc complex, daily energy

SMS alerts for IPO process via UPI only from next yr

and weight gain, among others.

Markets regulator Sebi gave time till January 1, 2022 for implementation of guidelines pertaining to SMS alerts under the UPI system for shares applied and allotted during an initial public offering. Earlier, the deadline for putting in place automated web portal with respect to IPOs through UPI system has also been extended to October 1. The framework was to come into force from May 1.

Rossari Biotech to acquire Unitop Chem for ₹420 cr

Speciality chemicals manufacturer Rossari Biotech announced the acquisition of Unitop Chemicals, a supplier of surfactants, emulsifiers, and specialty chemicals, for Rs 421 crore. Rossari will buy 100 per cent equity capital of Unitop, with 65 per cent shares acquired upon closure of the transaction, and the balance 35 per cent over the next two years. The total consideration

for 100% stake is Rs 421 crore.



■ States will have to change rent laws

Union Cabinet clears Model Tenancy Act

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JUNE 2

The Union Cabinet has on Wednesday approved the much-awaited Model Tenancy Act, which is expected to give a fillip to rental housing and property markets across the country.

The Act, the government said, will help overhaul the legal framework on rental housing, enable creation of adequate rental housing stock and enable institutionalisation of rental

The states and Union territories can now adopt the law through fresh legisla-tion or by amending existing rental laws.

As per the Act, the states can set up rent authorities in cities, and landlords and tenants will have to be present before the authority to get rent agreements registered. The Act will also enable setting up of rent courts or tribunals to address rent-related disputes. These courts will have to pass an order within 60 days of receiving a complaint.

Further, the Act has several provisions to safe-guard the interests of both tenants and landlords. Tenants will be liable to pay double the rent for two months and four times the rent in the consequent months if they stay after expiry of the rental agree-

Landlords can approach the rent court asking for eviction, if the tenants fail to pay the rent for two months in a row.

Unless mentioned in the

UNLOCKING VACANT PROPERTIES

▶ Tenants will be liable to pay double the rent for two months and four times the rent in the consequent months if they overstay in a property



approach the rent court asking for eviction, if the tenants fail to pay the rent for two months Landlords cannot ask for more than two

months of rent as security deposit Landlords will have to give three months' notice to the tenant before raising the rent

rent agreement, the landlord cannot hike the rent during the agreement period. The landlord will have to give three months notice to the tenant before increasing the rent. Further, the landlord will

the property.
Landlords in states that adopt the policy will not be able to ask for more than two months of rent as secu-

rity deposit.

be responsible for the

structural maintenance of

The Act also stipulates that the tenant cannot sublet the whole or part of the accommodation without the landlord's permission. Similarly, landlords need to give a written notice 24 hours in advance to visit the premises. They cannot make a visit before 7 am and after 8 pm.

Naredco president Niran-jan Hiranandani said the new law "would make things easier for all stakeholders tenants, landlords and investors to transact in rental housing.

The model Act will facilitate unlocking of vacant houses for rental housing "It is expected to give a fillip to private participation in rental housing as a business model for addressing the huge housing short-age," Hiranandani said. The new act would bring

in over 11 million vacant urban houses into the rental market and help address the country's massive housing shortage, said Pankaj Bhansali, COO, Eqaro Guarantees, a surety solutions provider.

Samantak Das, chief economist and head-research & REIS, JLL, a global property consultant, said, "The Model Tenancy Act is going to give a guiding framework to all states to make their respective tenancy Acts contemporary. Current Acts will give way to the new ones where uniformity will prevail."

BYJU'S, GOOGLE IN TIEUP TO OFFER **SCIENCE, MATHS** IN SCHOOLS

New Delhi, June 2: Education technology Byju's Wednesday announced a partnership with tech giant Google to offer a learning solution' for schools.

With this, the simplicity, flexibility and security of Google Workspace for Education and Byju's content peda-gogy come together on the 'Vidyartha' platform to aid effective learning at school, according to a statement.

This integration of Google Workspace for Education with Byju's would offer a collaborative and personalised digital platform for classroom organisa-tion, available for free to participating educational institutions, the statement added.

"With a commitment to digital education, Google Workspace for Education will combine Byju's unparalleled pedagogy to empower educators in their journey towards digital trans-formation," the statement said.

Built on the Vidyartha platform, this partnership will provide direct access to Byju's math and science pedagogy and visually rich learning solutions, including chapter-wise slides, readymade assignments, data banks, sum-mary docs, handouts, tests, among others.

The acceptance of online learning in the last one year has led to the swift digitisation of the education system, Byju's noted.

Mercedes to sell cars directly to customers

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, JUNE 2

Mercedes-Benz, India's biggest luxury car maker, on Wednesday announced it will completely revamp its sales model in the country and sell its new cars directly to customers.

Through a new 'Direct Customer' model, which the company terms as the 'Retail of the Future', the Pune-based German car-maker said it will start selling its cars directly to customers from October-December quarter.

The dealers will remain an integral part but will not be involved in transactions with the customer or buy stock from Mercedes-

In this new circular sales model, customers will condealerships (now called franchise partners) to buy a Mercedes car. But the dealer's responsibility will rest on providing a suitable brand experience stitute brand experience to the customer through showcasing Mercedes-Benz cars, offering sales consulting and test drives. The dealer will facilitate

the sale of the car as well but Mercedes-Benz India will own all the stock of its manufactured/ imported models. Customers will be invoiced directly by Mercedes-Benz and there will be no financial transactions with the dealer.

For customers, it means transparent prices, and an end to bargaining for a better price, Mercedes-Benz said, as the cars will be now sold directly to customers by the company itself.

The industry's first new retail service will be

in India directly by Mercedes-Benz from Q4 2021 onwards, Mercedes-Benz said. The Indian arm of the German carmaker will

now own the entire stock of cars, sell them via appointed dealers, invoice them reduce inventory the new cars to its cus-tomers directly, process the order and fulfill them, and offer one price and purchasing experience for customers.

The dealer, on the other hand, will handle establishing and maintaining customer contacts, developing the market, and facilitating the sale of Mercedes-Benz cars.

"A key reason for intro-ducing 'Retail of the Future' is to create an enhanced luxury buying experience for our cus tomers," Martin Schwenk, MD & CEO, at Mercedes-Benz India, said.

He said it also will deliver a win-win solution for both customers and our dealers, underscoring our clear vision for a future which is sustainable, empowering, and digital,

The changes to the 'Retail of the Future' strategy for the customer include one price directly offered by Mercedes-Benz, cars will be invoiced India and not by the dealers, and a much-simplified purchase process that is hassle-free. For the dealers, the new retail model will help

costs and allow them to cater to the specific needs of its customers with a single centralised system that gives access to a larger pool of stock cars.

Mercedes-Benz India
will be responsible for centrally managing the selling price of all new cars,

owning and managing the entire stock of new cars, and processing and fulfilling the order, reducing delivery time. Schwenk said dealers will continue as brand representatives, maintain-

ing their connection with customers and strive to offer the best customer experience in the market. The dealers will continue to cater to after-sales

service, remain brand representatives in the mar ket, will be responsible for developing customer relationships, will continue to manage operational handling of customer interac-tions, and will continue local retail marketing

STANCHART UNIT TO LAUNCH CRYPTO TRADING PLATFORM

LAWRENCE WHITE & **ALUN JOHN**

Standard Chartered PLC unit intends to establish a cryptocurrency brokerage and exchange platform in Britain and Europe, targeting institutional clients, the bank said on Wednesday. The new exchange will

be created by a joint venbetween Ventures, the bank's innovation arm, and BC Technology Group, which operates Hong Konglicensed cryptocurrency exchange OSL

The move from Asia, Africa and Middle Eastfocused StanChart is one of the strongest endorsements yet from a mainstream lender for cryptocurrencies, as global banks juggle clients' interest in the digital with concerns coins

about their risks. platform StanChart's will target the European market, connecting institutional traders with counterparties trading bitcoin, ether and other digital assets.

MPC begins meet, likely to hold rates

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, JUNE 2

With the second phase of the Covid-19 pandemic impacting consumption and growth, the monetary policy committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is likely to maintain status quo on policy rates, continue with an accommodative policy stance and ensure adequate liquidity in the system in an effort to stimulate growth. The MPC, which is the rate setbegan its panel, three-day deliberations on Wednesday and would announce its decision on Friday.

The MPC has kept key policy rates unchanged in the last five bi-monthly policy meets.

The RBI's annual report 2020-2021, released last week, has already made it clear that "the conduct of monetary policy in 2021-22 would be guided by evolving macroeconomic conditions, with a bias to remain supportive of

growth till it gains traction on a durable basis while ensuring that inflation remains within the target'

the central bank would ensure that the systemlevel liquidity remains comfortable during 2021-22, is aligned with the stance of monetary policy, and monetary transmission continues unimpeded while maintaining financial stability. In the assessment of the RBI, the evolving CPI inflation trajectory is likely to be subjected to both upside and downside pressures. The food inflation path will critically depend on the and spatial temporal progress of the south-west

monsoon in 2021. While the country's GDP growth has sequentially improved, the near-term outlook for the economy remains clouded with extreme uncertainty and downside risks. Since the previous monetary policy review in April 2021, most of the states

announced stringent lockdowns, reflected by a jump in Oxford's Stringency Index for India from 58 at the start of April to 74

during the month of May These restrictions have severely impacted business activities with the contact-intensive sector facing the highest strain while mobility dropped significantly compared with Q3 and Q4 of FY21

M. Govinda Rao, chief

economic advisor of Brickwork Ratings, said, "The better-than-expected GDP numbers provide much-needed comfort to the MPC on the growth outlook. However, with the imposition of partial lockdown-like tions to contain the virus spread in several parts of the country, the downside risk on growth recovery intensified. Hence, the RBI is likely to continue with its accommodative monetary policy stance in the decision of the MPC meeting to be announced on June 4

Biden targets tax break on property capital gains

DAVID KOCIENIEWSKI & CALEB MELBY

President Joe Biden is pushing to close a tax break that helped his predecessor amass a fortune.

The Democrat has proposed narrowing a tax code provision that allows real estate investors to avoid capital gains taxes when they sell property, as long as they use the gains to buy more. Former president Donald Trump's most valuable investment, which traces back to his \$95 million purchase of a westside Manhattan development site, has benefitted

from the rule. In 2005, when Trump's partners agreed to sell the site for \$1.8 billion— a deal Trump resisted— his cut was about \$500 million. Because the partners then used the capital gains from the sale to purchase two office towers, they and Trump didn't owe any tax on their gains. Today, Trump's stake in the buildings is worth about \$1.2 billion before accounting for debt. Biden's plan would manoeuvre for Trump and thousands of others with real estate investments

The so-called 1031 likekind exchange rule, named after a section of the tax code, was created a century ago to aid family farmers. It has evolved into a beloved tool of property moguls, Fortune 500 companies and real estate trusts that can use it to create a daisy-chain of tax avoidance It works like this: An

investor buys a building for \$4 million and sells it later for \$10 million. By redeploying the proceeds into a new property within six months, she can defer paying taxes on her gains. She can repeat that process indefinitely. When coupled with another tax break that wipes out all capital gains at death, the 1031 provision can enable real estate investors to forgo capital gains taxes entirely, enabling family dynasties to pass on riches to heirs virtually tax-free. Some wealth managers call the strategy "swap 'til you drop." —Bloomberg

MERCHANDISE EXPORTS JUMP IN MAY



SANGEETHA G

of infections, merchandise exports grew both yearly and sequentially in May. With imports declining sequentially, the trade deficit shrunk to an eight-month low of \$6.32 billion in May.

Merchandise exports in May 2021 stood at \$32.21 billion—67.39 per Most importantly, exp despite the second wave.

of \$38.53 billion, there has been an increase of 68.54 per cent over \$22.86 billion in May 2020, but a decline of 17.47 per cent over \$46.68 billion in May 2019. Imports were also 15 per cent down sequentially compared to \$45.45 billion in April

its trade deficit to \$6.32 billion compared with \$15.24 billion in April 2021 and \$16.84 billion in May 2019. However, the trade deficit was higher than \$3.62 billion in the lock-down hit May 2020.

trade deficit shrunk to billion in May 2021 from account of the collapse in gold imports, with the balance led by a narrow er oil deficit," said Aditi

Firm to promote digital agriculture in rural India

Agritech platform Agribazaar on Wednesday said it has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Union agriculture ministry for promotion of digital agriculture in rural India.

with MoU Agribazaar will help in creating a digital platform for farmers," the company quoted Union agriculture minister Narendra Singh

Tomar as saying. The minister said building a detailed database of Indian farmers is a critical goal. It will lead to an increase in their income.

As per the agreement, the project will entail the development and implementation of a digital agriculture platform with solu-

tions in the field of crop

identification and estima tion using remote sensing technology, advisory serv ices to farmers, post-harvest intelligence, market connect and providing financial access to the

Agribazaar co-founder and managing director Amit Mundawala said the project will extend its efforts to ensure that the Indian farming community uses technology to deliver crops with higher and predictable quality, traceability and consis-

agri-technology stack and platform will democratise Indian agriculture irrespective of the size of landholdings with actionable insights for every stakeholder, he In a flowing cream hijab, Karima M. Imam walks through her fields in scrubland in northern Nigeria as workers harvest a gnarled brown root that has turned gold since

LIBBY GEORGE, SABRINA VALLE & NIGEL HUNT

Covid struck: ginger. "If I had the capital, I'd plant more. People are looking for ginger now, and there is not enough, she said at her five hectare farm on the outskirts of Kaduna.

As the pandemic rages people around the world have sought to guard against illness by turning to so-called halo foods. While scientists have dismissed many claims on social media about how superfoods can fend off



the virus, their positive role as part of a healthy diet is widely acknowledged.

As demand for halo foods surges, prices for ginger in Nigeria and acai berries in Brazil have leapt while exports of Indian turmeric and Chinese garlic have

jumped in the past year. "The demand for ginger is high because they are using it as medicine,

during the lockdown she

boiled ginger with turmer-Increasingly health conscious consumers have given an already buoyant

FENDING OFF I THE VIRUS Ginger, garlic, turmeric demand up globally

'Halo' crops reap pandemic profits

global spice market a further boost during the pandemic, heightening investor interest in the sector. Singapore's Olam International completed the purchase of major US

spice manufacturer Olde Thompson last month while Norway's Orkla took a controlling stake in Indian spice exporter Eastern Condiments in

In Nigeria, a 50 kg bag of ginger, which can help the body ward off germs and is used as a cold remedy. now sells for 15,000 naira (\$39), up from 4,000 to 6,000 Imam said, adding that

naira two years ago. Thanks to the ginger

to start building a new house in nearby Millennium City, with a small warehouse attached so she can store and sell fresh ginger.

Prices began rising last year but since January they have taken off due to pandemic-related demand. said Florence Edwards. national president of the Ginger Growers, Process-ors and Marketers

Association of Nigeria. She said there had been demand from all over the world, citing India, China and Europe among popular markets.

a fruit rich in antioxidants hyped as a superfood. The ing region.

CHENNAI, JUNE 2 Despite the second wave

cent higher than the low base of \$19.24 billion in the lock-down-hit May 2020. The exports were also 7.93 per cent higher than \$29.85 billion in the pre-pandemic May 2019. orts continued to grow sequentially by 6.6 per cent compared to \$30.21 billion in April 2021, In the case of imports

This helped India cut

"The merchandise an eight-month low \$6.3 \$15.2 billion in April 2021 as the state-wise restric tions widened, curbing domestic demand for both gold and oil. A predominant 63 per cent of the decline in the trade deficit in May 2021 relative to April 2021 was on

There has also been a surge in demand for acai, state of Para in Brazil is the world's largest produc-Nayar of Icra

Will miss Marin

at Games: Sindhu

New Delhi: Star Indian shuttler P. V. Sindhu on Wednesday wished Spain's Carolina Marin a speedy recovery after she was forced out of the Tokyo Games due to a freak knee injury and said she will miss the reigning Olympic champion at the quad-

rennial event. Marin suffered a torn anterior cruciate ligament in her left knee during training and pulled out of the showpiece event on Tuesday. "So sorry to hear about your injury. Hoping that

you will recover soon and come back stronger," Sindhu, who had settled for the silver medal at Rio Games after losing to Marn in the final, said in a video message posted on twitter "I will miss you at the Olympic Games but hope we compete against each other soon, so come back fast and recover soon. Lots of love," Sindhu said. — *PTI*

Pak departure to

England delayed

Islamabad: The Pakistan cricket team's departure to England has been pushed back by two days after the Pakistan Super League final was rescheduled for June 24 in Abu Dhabi. The PSL was earlier scheduled to end on June 20 and the national team was due to leave for England on June 23 to play three ODIs and three Twenty20s

However, with the PSL final pushed back by four days, the national team will leave for England on June 25. The first ODI is scheduled for July 8 in Cardiff

Abu Dhabi will host the remaining 20 games of the PSL after Pakistan's premier domestic twenty20 league was postponed in March when several players and support staff tested positive for Covid-19. - AP

Task cut out for

Ind against Qatar Doha: Their preparation was far from ideal but India would take

inspiration from the draw against Asian champions Qatar in 2019 when they face the same opponents in the secondleg match of the joint World Cup and Asian Cup qualifiers, here on Thursday India had held mighty Qatar 0-0 in September 2019 here, a result considered as one of the best for the side in recent times. But India are playing their home match here as the Qatari capital was chosen as the centralised venue for all the remaining Group 'E' matches after the qualifiers were halted last year due to the Covid-19 pandemic. India's performance, however, has gone south since then while Qatar, the group toppers, have come into Thursday match on a high. - PTI

Ancelotti back as

Real Madrid coach

Madrid: Carlo Ancelotti has reigined Real Madrid as coach for the next three seasons, the Spanish club said on Tuesday "Hello Madrid!" the 61-year-old Italian who succeeds Zinedine Zidane posted on Twitter.

Ancelotti, who won the Champions League for Real Madrid during his first spell at the club between 2013 and 2015, will sign his contract and be presented to the media on Wednesday, the club said in a statement. It took less than a week for Real Madrid to turn the page on Zidane criticising the lack of confidence shown in

him by the club hierarchy. Instead, Ancelotti is about to be reunited with the club president Florentino Perez who ruthlessly ousted the coach in 2015, just one year after he led the club to a 10th Champions League title. — AFF

Booker leaves

Lakers in lurch

Los Angeles: Devin Booker scored 30 points as the Phoenix Suns left LeBron James and the depleted Los Angeles Lakers facing elimination from the NBA playoffs on Tuesday with a crushing 115-85 victory. Phoenix took full advantage of the injury absence of the

Lakers' Anthony Davis to dominate the Lakers from early in the first quarter before romping to a comfortable win. — AFF

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NADAL MODE ON

Rafael, Djokovic start off with a winning note in French Open

Paris, June 2: Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal began their bids for Grand Slam history with comfortable wins on Tuesday. World No.1 Djokovic kicked off his bid for a 19th Grand Slam title with a 6-2, 6-4, 6-2 win over Tennys Sandgren inside

an empty stadium. Nadal, the 13-time champion and chasing a recordsetting 21st major, defeated Alexei Popyrin of Australia 6-3, 6-2, 7-6 (7/3).

The Spaniard now has 101 wins against just two losses at the tournament. Djokovic saw off world number 66 Sandgren in straight sets for his fourth

win in four meetings with the American. Top seed Djokovic, the champion in Paris in 2016, is attempting to become the first man in more than

50 years to win all four Slams multiple times. The Serb fired 33 win ners and broke serve five times as he set up a clash with Pablo Cuevas of Uruguay for a place in the last 32. Nadal, meanwhile, has now won 26 sets in a row at the tournament.

NAVARRO LOSES MATCH

A "proud" Carla Suarez Navarro came close to winning her first match back after recovering from cancer at the French Open on Tuesday, but bowed out in the first round with defeat by Sloane Stephens.

The Spaniard was told in September 2020 that she was suffering with Hodgkin's lymphoma.

But almost nine months

later, Suarez Navarro is back after recovering following eight chemotherapy and 15 radiotherapy sessions. The 32-year-old served for the match against 2018 runner-up Stephens but lost 3-6, 7-6

OTHER RESULTS

Men's singles second round: Alexander Zverev (GER x6) bt Roman Safiullin (RUS) 7-6 (7/4), (74), 6-3, 7-6 (7/1); Henri Laaksonen (SUI) bt Roberto Bautista Agut (ESP x11) 6-3, 2-6, 6-3, 6-2; Casper Ruud (NOR x15) bt Kamil Majchrzak (POL) 6-3, 6-2 6-4; John Isner (USA x31) bt Filip Krajinovic (SRB) 7-6 (8/6), 6-1, 7-6 (7/5); Reilly Opelka (USA x32) bt Jaume Munar (ESP) 6-3, 6-2, 3-6, 7-5.

Women's singles second round: Elena Vesnina (RUS) bt Petra Kvitova (CZE x11) — walkover; Daria Kasatkina (RUS) bt Belinda Bencic (SUI x10) 6-2, 6-2; Polona Hercog (SLO) bt Caroline Garcia (FRA) 7-5, 6-4; Ana Bogdan (ROM) bt Naomi Osaka (JPN x2) — walkover; Victoria Azarenka (BLR x15) bt Clara Tauson (DEN) 7-5, 6-4.

Paris, June 2: World Cup

runners-up Croatia were

held to a 1-1 draw by Armenia on Tuesday in

their first warm-up match

Inter Milan winger Ivan

Perisic opened the scoring

for the home side in the 24th

minute, with coach Zlatko

Dalic's team up against England, the Czech Republic

But Armenia made the

most of a rare sortie into

Croat territory when

Wbeymar Angulo equalised

Lazio striker Vedat Muriqi

hit all four goals, including

one penalty, as Kosovo outclassed San Marino 4-1.

North Macedonia came

neighbours

in the 72nd minute.

Kosovo's

and Scotland at the Euros.

for Euro 2020.



Rafael Nadal of Spain returns the ball to Alexei Popyrin of Australia during their men's singles match at the French Open tennis tournament in Paris on Tuesday. Nadal won in striaght sets at 6-3, 6-2, 7-6 (7/3).

Questions won't stop for Osaka

Paris, Paris, June 2: Unfortunately for Naomi Osaka, the questions will keep coming. There's nowhere to run and certainly no place to hide when you're a superstar travelling the world and playing on the biggest stages in tennis.

Some of the questions may be repetitive. Some may even be a bit negative, though for the most part those in the tennis media tend to treat top players with kid gloves. Regardless, it's part of her job to answer them.

That's not going to change, even with Osaka's withdrawal from the French Open after refusing to appear at the news conferences every other top player accepts as part of the job.

Only now she'll have even more questions to

not entirely Osaka's fault, though she a second did herself no favors by the clumsy way she handled her mini media revolt in Paris. She blew off her first post-match news conference, after declaring earlier in a posting online that she didn't want to

close to claiming the scalp of

Slovenia after Napoli mid-fielder Elif Elmas scored

the opening goal. But home hearts were bro-

ken as Domen Crnigoj

snatched an equaliser for

Slovenia in the seventh

drawn with Austria, the

Netherlands and Ukraine at

the June 11-July 11 Euros. Slovakia, in Group 'E'

alongside Poland, Spain and

Sweden, were held to a 1-1

In the only game pitching

against each other, the Poles

played out a 1-1 draw against Russia, in Group 'B' with

Denmark and

minute of injury time. North Macedonia

draw by Bulgaria.

Belgium,

two Euro-bound

Croatia, Armenia

play 1-1 stalemate



Naomi Osaka reacts to losing a point in this file photo.

hear the same questions over and over and saying that reporters tend to kick players while they are

In other words, she didn't want to answer questions about why she didn't play better on clay

Osaka rebounded a bit in statement announcing her with-drawal, and that's where announcing it gets tricky. She revealed she had suffered long periods of depression after winning the U.S. Open in 2018 and that she suffers great anxiety when faced with having to answer questions from journalists at news conferences. We all can and should be

sympathetic to that. Depression and anxiety can be devastating and debilitating, as anyone who has suffered from them or dealt with a family member who has them

knows so well. Nobody should be rudge Osaka's decision to withdraw from a major championship because she's having trouble coping with those issues. Indeed, we should all support her

efforts to improve her mental health. But let's make this clear, this isn't a media prob-lem. It isn't a news confer-

ence problem. Frankly, until Osaka said she would not show up for her news conference and then blew off tournament organisers who wondered why, no one even knew there was a

There's nothing inherently wrong with a system that requires athletes who are paid millions of dollars to perform to be asked about their play after ward. There's also nothing wrong with reporters asking an occasional question that may not fit the positive narrative Osaka wants when writing about the newest star in tennis.

It's part of the reason why tournaments like the French Open sell out expensive seats every year. It's a lot of the reason Forbes said Osaka made \$37 million in 2019, most of it in endorse ments from companies that expect Osaka to generate lots of press for their products.

Virat charged up for WTC battle

Mumbai, June 2: India captain Virat Kohli is not too concerned about the limited preparation time that his team will get for the World Test Championship final against New Zealand as he

believes that it has the requisite understanding of conditions from its past experience of playing in England. India take on New

Zealand in the marquee game at Southampton from June 18. Currently, New Zealand are engaged in a two-Test series against England, while India would be in quarantine after landing there, including three days of hotel quarantine.

"...look, in the past we have landed in places three days prior even in a proper schedule and have had a hell of a series and hell of competition, so it is all in the head," Kohli said in the pre-departure press confer-

Virat insisted that it was also about the mindset. ...it is not the first time we are playing in England, we all know what the con-

ditions are like," he said. "And even if you are used to the conditions, if you don't enter the field in the right frame of mind, you are going to nick that first ball or you are going to find it tough to pick wickets,' added the superstar.

According to Kohli, his side would not have any issues even if it gets just We don't have any issues even with four practice sessions heading into the WTC final. because we are absolutely sure of what we can do as a team and we all have played in England.

- VIRAT KOHLI India cricket team captain 1

four practice sessions. we don't have any

issues even with four practice sessions heading into the game, because we are absolutely sure of what we can do as a team and we all have played in England.

"Whether it is with the Indian team or India A as well, for the likes of (Mohammed) Siraj...so we are not bothered by that at all and we just want to get there and make the most of the opportunity at hand,' he added.

he added.
Kohli echoed coach Ravi
Shastri's thoughts about
the World Test
Championship final holding a lot of value.
"All of us take a lot of

pride in playing Test cricket, and the way, we have progressed as a side is an example of what Test cricket means to us. So, for all of us as a unit, those who have been part of the Test side for many years, this is like an accumulation of all the hard work,

DOMESTIC PLAYERS PITCH FOR CENTRAL CONTRACTS

New Delhi, June 2: As the BCCI works out a compensation package and a formula to distribute it for the Covid-19 hit domestic cricketers, voices demanding central contracts for such players are getting louder with seasoned names like Jaydev Unadkat, Sheldon Jackson and Harpreet Singh Bhatia leading the cho-

Last month, former India player and domestic veteran Rohan Gavaskar had also called for state associations to introduce contracts for players over and above their match fees, just like it is for the national team.

Majority of domestic players don't get to play IPL, don't have job security and rely heavily on match fees, which took a beating last season with Ranji Trophy being cancelled due to the pandemic.

Saurashtra captain and India player Jaydev Unadkat doesn't need the security of a contract but he feels it should be introduced for the top 30 cricketers of the

"Talks over central contracts were happening even before the pandemic. Even cricketers at the age group level should be compensated for the lack of cricket, it will keep them motivated and then hand contracts to senior players," Unadkat said.

Conway hits ton to bolster Kiwis

London, June 2: New Zealand's Devon Conway joined a select group of cricketers on Wednesday by marking his Test debut with a splenid hundred (136 off 240 balls) at Lord's to lead New Zealand to 246 for 3 against England at the end of first Day's play. The South Africa-born

opener found himself thrust into the action straight away after New Zealand captain Kane Williamson won the toss and batted in the first of a two-match series against England. But while star batsman

Williamson and the experienced Ross Taylor both fell cheaply, the 29-year-old Conway pressed on to a 163-ball century, reaching the landmark with a flamboyant whipped legside four, his 11th boundary off England debutant fast bowler Ollie Robinson.

Only five other batsmen had previously scored a Test debut hundred at

Lord's, with Conway the first New Zealand international to achieve the feat. New Zealand had the bet-

ter of the morning session to be 85-1 at lunch after Williamson won the toss. But James Anderson, equalling retired former captain Alastair Cook's England record of 161 Test

appearances, struck in the first over after the interval to remove star batsman Williamson for 13 as the runs dried up. And fast Robinson, who'd earlier dismissed Tom Latham,

then had the 37-year-old Taylor lbw for 14. Latham and Conway

made a steady start against England new-ball greats Anderson and Stuart Broad after Black Caps skipper Williamson won the toss. — AFP Brief scores (Day 1): New

Zealand 246/3 in 86 overs (Devon Conway 136 batting; O. Robinson 2/50) vs England.

Veda recalls Covid trauma in family

New Delhi, June 2: "Completely destroyed" after losing her mother and sister to Covid-19 recently, Indian women's cricketer Krishnamurthy says she is slowly learning to tune herself out of that grief and stressed on the importance of mental health assistance in crisis situa-

Nine members of Krishnamurthy's family battled the disease and her mother and sister passed away within two weeks of each other last month in Karnataka. "I'm a big believer in what destiny holds for you, but I really hoped that my sister would come back home. When she didn't, I was completely destroyed. All of us were broken Krishnamurthy ESPNcricinfo. ...I still had to put up a

brave face for the rest of the family. What I had to do in those testing couple of weeks was learn to tune myself out of my grief. But it keeps coming back to haunt you," she said. The middle-order batter said she was the only one in the family not to contract the virus and



ended up coordinating all the medical needs at that time. It was then that she realised how difficult it would have been for several other people to access basic care. "Going through my *Twitter* feed

at the time, I felt a lot of people were struggling with something as basic as getting a doctor to instruct them on what they should be doing whether that was isolating at home or something else," she recalled.

Croatia's Duje Caleta-Car (left) and Armenia's Tigran Barseghyan fight for the

ball during a friendly match at Velika Gorica on Tuesday.

Speaking about the mental aspect of dealing with a health crisis and the ensuing tragedy of such a magnitude, Krishna-murthy said her mother and sister also suffered from anxiety while battling the illness.

"Mental strength is important. My oldest sis-ter, Vatsala, had panic

attacks before she passed away from Covid," the 28-year-old said.

Krishnamurthy revealed that she has dealt with mental health issues of her own in the past and called for a structured support system for those in need.

"A lot of people who are playing cricket currently know what mental health is, but it is also important to accept that if the system is not doing anything to offer you mental-health assistance, you can and must find the support for yourself if you can afford it," she added.

AUSSIE PLAYERS TO RAISE

Sydney, June 2: Top Australian cricketers including star pacer Pat Cummins will participate in a 12-hour gaming live stream on Thursday to raise money for UNICEF Australia's India Covid Appeal.

The brainchild of pacer Josh Lalor, the initiative will let fans watch the likes of Cummins, spinner Nathan Lyon and the pace duo of Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood on a live stream when they talk about cricket and showcase their gaming skills in a bid to raise AUD 100,000. The fundraiser will begin at 1:30 pm IST and will also see participation from Moises Henriques, women cricketer Alyssa Healy and South African Rilee Rossouw among others.

"Being a cricketer from Australia, we have a unique relationship with Indian people," Lalor told cricket.com.au.