

IN BRIEF

CS to AP govt gets 3-month extension

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 26

Chief Secretary Aditya Nath Das got a three-month extension from July 1 to September 30. The central government on Saturday approved the request of Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy to extend his tenure.

Department of personnel and training under-secretary Kuldeep Chaudhary communicated the matter to the state government. The tenure of Aditya Nath Das was scheduled to end on June 30.

GOV FOR HOLISTIC GROWTH OF KIDS FROM EARLY STAGE

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 26

Andhra Pradesh Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan underlined that holistic development through education from an early stage of a child's life has become quite important today, especially given the crises we have been currently facing.

He was participating as chief guest in a two-day International Education e-Conference on the theme - Holistic Education for Excellence in Life - organised by Prajapita Brahma Kumari Ishwariya Vishwa Vidyalaya here on Saturday.

Inaugurating the conference in a virtual mode, Harichandan said children need to be equipped with intellectual, mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual capabilities for facing demands and challenges of everyday life. "Such real-world education will help every child find his or her unique place in the world, which is in alignment with their innate values," he pointed out.

WEBINAR DWELLS ON SCOPE OF SOCIAL WORK

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 26

A National level webinar on 'Scope for Social Work: Profession with National Council of Social Work Education' was organised by the Department of Sociology and Social Work, Acharya Nagarjuna University here on Saturday, in which key discussion was held on the draft National Council of Social Work Education Bill 2021.

Chief Guest Prof Sanjai Bhatt, Delhi School of Social Work, University of Delhi and National Convener, Campaign for NCSWE, stated that this Bill would be the way forward for five lakh professionals and there shall be rapid and sustainable development in the nation. He appreciated the states which have started the campaign and represented to the policy makers and public representatives regarding the Bill. He asserted that social workers were needed to develop human relations, they were the key change agents to bring progress in health, education, economic conditions, social empowerment and the course was designed with in-house and field work practicum.

Prof Sanjai Bhat said South India was having 50% social work institutions in India, so the campaign should be taken as a flagship and advocated at high-level.

PROMOTE SANS TESTS, PLEAD 1ST YEAR MEDICOS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 26

The first-year MBBS students and their parents have urged the state government to promote them to the second year due to improper conduct of classes and incompleteness of syllabi due to the pandemic crisis.

A delegation of students and parents led by T. Srinivasa Vishwanatha called on NTR University of Health Sciences registrar Dr K. Sankar here on Saturday and submitted a memorandum seeking promotion to the second year.

They deplored that the classes for the first-year students could not be held properly due to the Covid-19 induced lockdown. They said the students were deprived of practical learning and later on, though online classes were started, they did not help the students as physical classes would.

They lamented that the improper clinical exposure and lack of practicals adversely impacted the learning.

AP state emerging as 'Fruit Basket of India'

Horticulture farmers being extended all support: Special CS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 26

Special chief secretary (Agriculture) Poonam Malakondaiah announced that the state government has started supporting horticulture farmers because of Covid-19 times. They are ensuring that farmers are able to transport their produce and get a proper price in the market.

Addressing a media conference on Saturday, she said horticulture in the state is being taken up over 17.84 lakh hectares. Their total yield is 312 lakh metric tonnes, which justifies AP being called "fruit basket of the country".

● **DRAWING COMPARISONS** with previous government, Poonam Malakondaiah said while 11,22,912 MT of crops, excluding paddy, had been procured during 2014-2019 at a cost of ₹3,921 crore, the current government has procured 19,30,199 MT crops in the last two years at a cost of ₹6,348 crore.

● **SHE ANNOUNCED** that a foundation stone will be laid on July 8 for construction of 2,000 warehouses in the state.

Poonam Malakondaiah said 46 lakh MT of mango crop is expected, of which 70 percent has already been harvested. Some of it has been exported through 27 Kisan trains. She said the government had also supported farmers by providing minimum statutory price (MSP) for perishable goods like chilli, turmeric, banana and orange, apart

from establishing a price stabilisation fund of ₹3,000 crore.

The principal secretary explained that the state government is currently providing MSP of ₹7,000 per quintal for chillies, ₹6,850 for turmeric, ₹770 for onion, ₹2,500 for minor millets, ₹600 for banana and ₹1,400 for sweet orange.

Besides these, the gov-

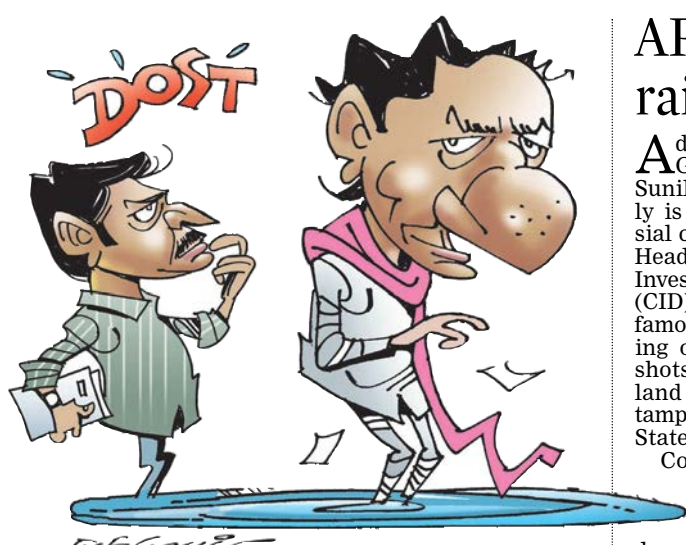
ernment has introduced graded MSP for groundnut and Bengal gram.

She announced that a foundation stone will be laid on July 8 for construction of 2,000 warehouses in the state.

Further, 25 fruit processing units will be set up throughout AP to enable farmers earn more profits.

Drawing comparisons with previous government, Poonam Malakondaiah said while 11,22,912 MT of crops, excluding paddy, had been procured during 2014-2019 at a cost of ₹3,921 crore, the current government has procured 19,30,199 MT crops in the last two years at a cost of ₹6,348 crore.

Neta's Natter



Telangana, Andhra Pradesh boil over Krishna waters

It was supposed to be a sangam to drown all other 'sangams' when the Telangana state and Andhra Pradesh Chief Ministers met in 2019 to discuss, among other things, the sharing of Godavari and Krishna waters. The Krishna has always been the contentious one, with a series of dams and power projects along its course. The CMs had made the right noises when they met, about working together, how every drop of water should be used judiciously and, despite being in two states, all Telugu speaking people were one, and so on.

Fast forward to 2021, and the tune in Telangana has changed. TRS leaders and ministers have taken to, and are crooning, the 'Dost dost n raha' line, about the sangam of the

two states on matters related to the Krishna. "We will oppose AP's projects, particularly the Rayalaseema Lift Irrigation Scheme and the Rajolibanda Diversion Scheme's right canal project," is the refrain adopted by TRS ministers. Being friends is one thing, theft of water is another thing altogether, is what the TRS leaders say. Incidentally, this is not the first time politicians have sought to bring to a boil the waters in the Krishna. And it certainly won't be the last either. Meanwhile, the river continues to run through AP and Telangana and may continue to do so, but only if Maharashtra gets copious rains, lets water down into Karnataka, and then Karnataka does the same for TS and AP.

AP top cop's sermon raises eyebrows

Additional Director General of Police P.V. Sunil Kumar undoubtedly is the most controversial cop in AP these days. Heading the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), Sunil became famous following clamping of cases against big shots in the Amaravati land scam and alleged tampering of records in State Election Commission during the tenure of N. Ramesh Kumar.

The latest is the dramatic arrest of rebel YSR Congress MP Raghu Ramakrishna Raju. While in all the cases, the allegations against the accused, prima facie, are serious and the political direction to file cases is not merely out of vendetta, the handling of the investigation, arrest of the accused and

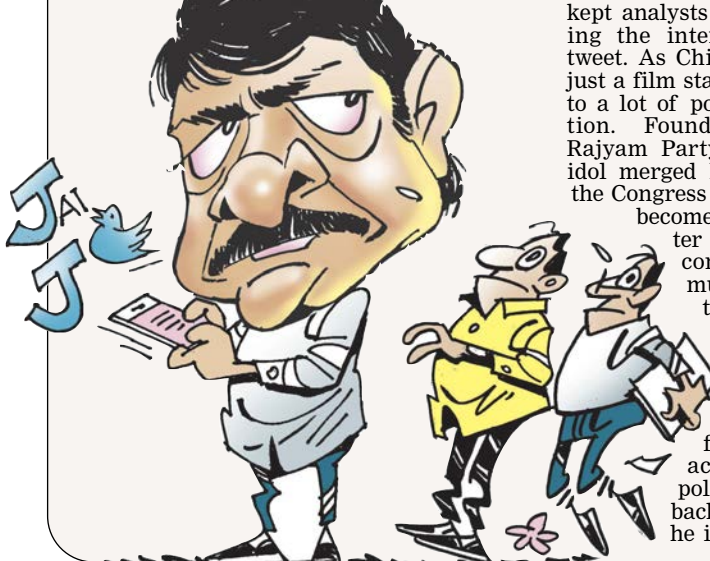
the way they were treated in custody drew flak. Apparently sensing trouble, the CID chief recently held a virtual conference with his officers and gave sermons on protecting individual liberty which he said was the pinnacle of all laws. He went on to explain that arrest would mean suspending one's individual liberty for a brief period of time. Arrest shall not be a matter of routine, he said and asked officers not to apply law as they interpreted but follow the Supreme Court and High Court guidelines.

Well, if officers are faulted for murmuring under their breath that charity should always begin at home, it is, for sure, tantamount to curtailing their individual liberty.

Caste war mars NRI group acquisition plans?

All is not going well with the 'mega' plans of acquiring the NRI Group of Educational Institutions by an agglomeration of companies based out of Hyderabad but spreading its tentacles across the country. The proposed acquisition has turned into a caste war, with the financially strong Kammals of the coastal districts, some of whom owned the NRI group, making every effort to retain ownership and prevent what they called bulldozing by the mega agglomeration owned by Reddys. A once-politically powerful leader stepped into the arena and assured the original promoters of protecting their interests by taking legal support. The mega entrepreneur is rumoured to have met the leader and tried to convince him on the acquisition and even requested him not to put spokes in the move. The leader did not budge and won the hearts of his fellowmen. It is not his fault if they compare him with Chandrababu Naidu and blame the latter for remaining silent on what they describe as a forced acquisition.

What's up Chiru's sleeve?



Megastar Chiranjeevi's tweet appreciating AP Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy's efforts to ensure vaccination for all has kept analysts busy at guessing the intent behind the tweet. As Chiranjeevi is not just a film star, the tweet led to a lot of political speculation. Founder of Praja Rajyam Party, the matinee idol merged his party with the Congress and went on to become a Union minister as part of the compromise formula designed by the Congress high command for creation of Telangana state. This was followed by the actor shunning politics and going back to films where he is best at. Some

drew the inference that another compromise was being worked out between him and Jagan to win over the Kapu community to which the hero belongs. The tweet angered hardcore fans of Pawan Kalyan, his brother, film actor and politician. While the ruling and opposition party leaders are busy making calculations, top guns from the film industry who know Chiranjeevi do not rule out the possibility of the tweet being a simple goodwill gesture in advance of Chiranjeevi's and his son's big budget movies lining up for release. Producers and distributors of Pawan's latest flick 'Vakeel Saab' suffered as Jagan restricted the number of shows and scrapped benefit shows which otherwise are money spinners. Who knows, a simple tweet might turn the fortunes for the elder brother.



Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu being received by GVMC Mayor Golagani Hari Venkata Kumari and others upon his arrival at Visakhapatnam airport on Saturday.

— BY ARRANGEMENT

Venkaiah calls for making India a maritime leader

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 26

Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu on Saturday called for making India a leading maritime nation and emphasized the important role ports will have to play in achieving the ambitious vision.

He was addressing a virtual meeting from Visakhapatnam Port Trust (VPT) guest house here on Saturday after he was briefed by the VPT Chairman K. Rama Mohana Rao on various activities of the port, including its expansion plans.

The Vice-President said that ancient India was a great maritime power and that navies of Chola and Kalinga kings used to rule over the oceans. "We have to regain that glory," he said.

Touching upon the

development of the port infrastructure in the country, he said that as part of the ambitious Sagarmala project, more than 504 projects have been identified to unlock the opportunities for port-led development and these initiatives are expected to mobilize more than 3.57 lakh crore of infrastructure investment.

Noting the decline in the cargo trend at Visakhapatnam port during 2020-21 due to the pandemic after a healthy upward swing between 2015-16 and 2019-20, he expressed hope that it would regain its growth trajectory once the situation normalises.

"It is important to note that ports will play an important role in post-Covid-19 economic recovery," he added.

Lauding ports for having played a proactive role in handling oxygen supplies

and humanitarian relief work during the second wave of Covid-19 and cyclones Tauktae and Yaas, he said "I compliment you all for that".

Referring to the Maritime India Vision 2030, Naidu wanted the port to adopt global best practices in operations and development. He said that the Vision-2030 is not impossible to achieve as India has the inherent strength of knowledge and wanted everyone to work together in the spirit of Team India.

Earlier, the Vice-President was apprised of the port's expansion plans, including the proposed establishment of a ₹406-crore Free Trade and Warehousing Zone (FTWZ) in an area of 103 acres.

Minister Muttamsetti M. Srinivasa Rao and local officials were present on the occasion.

2 SRM students bag plum jobs in Japan

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 26

In what brought laurels to SRM University AP, twins and students of B.Tech-CSE, Rajarshi Majumdar and Saptarshi Majumdar, bagged lucrative jobs in PVP Inc., a strategic partner of Google Japan, with an annual salary package of ₹50 lakh each. They are making preparations to go to Japan to start their careers. Felicitation to the twins and other merit students of the maiden batch of SRM University was held here on Saturday and presented cash rewards.

Dr P. Sathyanarayanan, SRM AP president, congratulating the twins, merit students and the first batch said it was indeed a proud moment for them, seeing so many achievers in the maiden batch. He said SRM University-AP was unleashing power and setting records through incredible placements, with its students getting admissions to international universities, and starting entrepreneurial ventures and start-ups.

Rajarshi and Saptarshi

said that the 24x7 student-run next tech lab, semester abroad and entrepreneurship at UC Berkeley, USA and winning Hackathon in Bay Area competing with MIT, Stanford and Carnegie Mellon students gave them wide exposure to the real world, which would not have been possible without the continuous support of their faculty and university management. They stated it was time that they started their lives in Japan, and were very much looking forward to the new chapter.

Prof. Vajja Sambasiva Rao, Vice Chancellor, said the maiden batch created a record of 100% placement with most students getting multiple offers. He explained that 71 per cent of students got Marquee, Super Dream, and Dream offers and more than 600 companies visited the university for recruitments.

Pro Vice Chancellor, Prof. D. Narayana Rao and Vivekanandan, assistant director, corporate relations and career services, addressed the students on the occasion.

AP DIRECTED TO FURNISH CLEAR DRAWINGS

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The ministry further directed AP to furnish clear drawings, layouts and charts besides details of land acquisition and ayacut proposed to be serviced.

Contending that there was no clarity in the

application submitted by AP government, the MoEF asked the state how much water the state proposes to utilise for the scheme. It also found fault with state government request for amendments in the permission granted to the Telugu Ganga project.

JOBS | TARGET e-Commerce, banking, healthcare and telecom sectors are offering jobs to eligible youth

Vizag tops in country in BPO job creation

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 26

Software Technology Parks of India (STPI), Visakhapatnam, has set a target of creating 45,000 BPO jobs under the India BPO Promotion Scheme (IBPS) across the state within the next three years.

Till now, the state has created 12,000 jobs, includ-

ing 8,000 in Visakhapatnam. With this, AP has topped country in providing BPO jobs. Vizag too figures at the top in the cities category, said STPI Visakhapatnam centre Joint Director M. P. Dubey, who is also the nodal officer for implementing IBPS in Andhra Pradesh.

"We have recruited people even during the pandemic period in the last

● **KEY POINTS:**

- 45,000 BPO jobs by 2023

- AP has BPOs in 11 tier-2 and tier-3 cities and towns

- 12,000 jobs have already been created

- Vizag has topped the country by creating 8,000 jobs under IBPS

and one-half years. Once the pandemic ends, we will be able to reach our target of recruitment," Dubey

told Deccan Chronicle.

Union government launched India BPO Promotion Scheme in 2017

to promote IT units in tier 2 and 3 cities across the country. AP has STPIs at 11 places, including Vizag, Vijayawada, Guntur, Srikakulam, Parvatipuram and Kandukur. The objective of IBPS is to promote basic skills like computer knowledge and communication skills among local youth, so that they can find employment.

While Vizag has so far created 8,000 jobs, 2,000 youth have found jobs in Tirupati. Nearly 100 jobs have been created for locals in Srikakulam town while in Kandukur 200 found employment.

There are total 56 BPO companies in AP supporting the government in reach the employment target. e-Commerce, banking, healthcare and telecom

are among the sectors offering jobs to eligible youth, 40 per cent of whom are women.

"We will provide at least 20,000 jobs by the end of 2021-22 financial year," Dubey assured.

Under IBPS, government provides ₹1 lakh per seat as viability gap funding for setting up BPO and ITES-enabled operations in smaller towns and cities.

SHORT TAKES

YOUTH THRASHED FOR HARASSING GIRL; FIVE HELD

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, JUNE 26

Indrapalem police have arrested five youth, including a minor, on charges of assaulting 20-year-old Rotta Durga Prasad of Velamala Turangi village in Kakinada Rural mandal on Saturday.

Kakinada DSP V. Bhima Rao told reporters that Durga Prasad had been harassing a 14-year-old girl of his village in the name of love. He recently went to her parents' house and allegedly threatened to kill them in case they do not perform his marriage with their daughter.

On learning about the threat, the girl's brother Guri Mohan Kumar, along with his friends B. Shanmukh, N. Vijay Babu, S. Manikanta and R. Samba Sivarao, invited Durga Prasad to a place and beat him up with beer bottles.

When Durga Prasad became unconscious, the accused carried and left him at his house. His family members admitted Durga Prasad to the Government General Hospital for treatment. The DSP said that as per statement of the victim, Indrapalem police have registered a case and arrested three of the accused.

AMMONIA GAS LEAK PLUGGED AT OLD ARTICLES SHOP

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, JUNE 26

Ammonia gas leak took place at an old iron shop near Achutapuram railway station on Saturday night.

According to assistant district fire officer B. Yesubabu, Y. Prakasa Rao runs the old iron shop. He purchases old articles. An ammonia cylinder was one among them.

On Saturday evening, the gas leaked from the cylinder and the neighbours in the area panicked. On receipt of news, the fire department officials rushed to the spot and diluted the gas by pouring water on the cylinder.

MANDAPETA MAN ENTERS GUINNESS

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, JUNE 26

Donthamsetty Bala Nageswara Rao (44) of Mandapeta secured a place in Guinness Book of World Records with his miniature art. He said that he made the smallest wooden spoon with a measurement of 3.09 millimetres within a span of 2.13 hours. He said he got the permission from the Guinness Book of World Records officials and as per their guidelines he made the miniature article in record time. He said that the officials of Guinness Book informed him that he had been selected for the record on Saturday. He studied Class X and makes gold ornaments at Mandapeta.

EX-ITDA PO HELD FOR SEXUAL ABUSE

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, JUNE 26

West Godavari police arrested KR Puram former ITDA project officer R.V. Suryanarayana on charges of sexually exploiting women, promising them providing jobs. He was produced before the Jangareddygudem court which sent him in remand for 14 days. He was shifted to the central jail. Five persons were already arrested in the case previously.

According to the police, a woman released a video on social media a few days back, alleging that two mediators took her to the PO. He promised her a warden job at Tanuku in return for sexual favours and she obliged. But, the PO did not keep his word, she alleged. She said she was making her case public so that none should fall for such inducements and luring. After the release of the video, she released another video, claiming that the earlier one was not true. Meanwhile, West Godavari District Collector Karthikeya Misra relieved Suryanarayana of post and ordered a probe. Jangareddygudem DSP Lalitha Kumari probed the case and questioned five persons and submitted a report. Superintendent of Police K. Narayana Naik said that the allegations against the ITDA PO were proved and that they began criminal proceedings against him.

Miraculous escape



Ten crew members of a mechanised fishing boat from Tamil Nadu had a miraculous escape when a fire broke out in the vessel following an LPG cylinder blast when it was sailing in the Bay of Bengal near Krishnapatnam port on Friday.

Maoists learning to cure the Covid-hit

Registered medical practitioners said to be training them

K.M.P. PATNAIK | DC
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 26

Registered medical practitioners (RMPs) and some quacks are training the outlawed Maoists in treating their members affected by the Covid-19. The virus is said to be infecting activists on a large-scale and making them immobile in the Andhra-Odisha Border zone, sources said.

The activists are for long getting trained in administering first aid and other treatment for bullet wounds, snake bites or fevers like malaria. The trained activists win over the local people by treating them for snake bites and malaria. "But Covid-19 is completely a new phenomenon that caught them off guard. Known to be quick

● **THE VIRUS** is said to be infecting activists on a large-scale and making them immobile in the Andhra-Odisha Border zone, sources said. The activists are for long getting trained in administering first aid and other treatment for bullet wounds, snake bites or fevers like malaria.

learners, some of the activists got trained by the experienced RMPs practicing in the interior villages of AOB soon after the first wave," said a senior police officer. He said Ashok, who was killed in the recent encounter at Theegalametta along with five others, was trained in such treatment. There are about 10 RMPs practising within 10 km radius of the encounter site. Their services are being fully utilised. The only problem they face is a lack of oxygen supply and Dola

650, the tablets prescribed for controlling fever.

A senior RMP doctor said he learnt that the Maoists are procuring mini oxygen cylinders and Dola 650 from Malkangiri area in south Odisha but the supplies are said to be inadequate. "The Maoists themselves admitted that members of Galikonda and Korukonda dalams were infected by Covid-19 and we offered to get them and their family members also treated," said Satish Kumar, the officer on special duty for

Maoist operations based in Narsipatnam.

He said that around 20 senior activists were operating in Vizag agency but a lot of militia members keep coming from Chhattisgarh and Odisha, bringing along with them the virus. Hence, an appeal was made to the villagers to keep away from the Maoists to keep away infections, the OSD said.

The secretary of the Federation of Experienced Medical Practitioners Welfare Association of Andhra Pradesh, J. Joshi, said the RMPs working in villages close to the border were being taken to the interiors to treat the villagers, but it could not be confirmed whether they were rendering service to the Maoists.

S CoR zone formation to be back on track

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, JUNE 26

The Temples Protection Movement Convenor and hereditary archakas-cum-trustee of Chilkur Balaji temple, C.S. Rangarajan, has appealed to the AP government to scrap the newly appointed Specified Authority and constitute a full-fledged Trust Board with a practising Hindu Dalit as the chairman.

If a Dalit is appointed as the chairman, it will definitely send positive signals to the marginalised communities who are feeling excluded in the temple system, Rangarajan said in a press release. According to Rangarajan, the chairman dons the role of Yajaman who is the Kartha of the temple rituals and holds higher clout than the archakas or jeeyangars.

Regular board is required to set aside the apprehensions of crores of devotees of Balaji who feel that the specified authority may toe the line of the government to divert the funds of TTD to adjust for the fiscal deficit.

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 26

The recent appointment of the officer on special duty (OSD) for the much-awaited South Coast Railway (S CoR) headquarters here points to some headway in the project, which had gathered dust for nearly one-and-a-half years.

The Railway Board appointed Burada Chandra Sekhar as the OSD for the S CoR. He is yet to take the charge, railway sources said.

The Centre had announced the S CoR on February 27, 2019 and appointed S.S. Srinivas as the first OSD. R. Dhananjayulu came as his successor in July 2019 to lead preliminary works of the project such preparation of detailed project report (DPR), appointment of supporting staff, and study tours of the designated areas. The former OSDs completed their tasks and submitted the project reports to the authorities concerned including the Railway Board and the Ministry for a final

VIZAG-VIJAYAWADA TRAIN SERVICES RESTORED

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 26

The services two trains were restored for operation. Train 02717 Visakhapatnam-Vijayawada and 02718 Vijayawada-Visakhapatnam will run

as per the schedule on June 28 and 29 and July 5 and 6. Train 07239 Guntur-Visakhapatnam will run on June 27, 28, and 29 and July 4, 5, and 6. Its pairing train 07240 Visakhapatnam-Guntur special will run on July 28, 29, and 30, and July 5, 6, and 7.

decision by the end of 2019.

Later early 2020 the Railways transferred the OSD and the post had since been lying vacant. The railway sources attributed the delay to the Covid-19. "The Covid-19 completely halted the progress of the S CoR, particularly the works at the main office of Waltair railway division here. There were no major budget sanctions, except ₹43 lakh in 2021 and ₹3 crore in 2020 for the S CoR," a senior railway official told the DC.

Visakhapatnam has nearly 200 acres of vacant land to be used for this project. The Railway Minister announced the S CoR as the 18th railway zone in the country in response

to the demands from the people of the north coastal Andhra Pradesh for the last two decades.

Railway Sadhana Porata Committee convenor J.V.V. Satyanarayana Murthy said that the government should not delay the progress and finalise the action plan. It should also consider the demand of creating the S CoR without delinking the Waltair railway division. "We want S CoR with Vizag as its headquarters, but people here can't imagine the new zone without Waltair division, which is currently being operated under Bhubaneswar-based East Coast Railway (E CoR) zone," Murthy said.

CORONAVIRUS INFECTIONS SEE FURTHER DIP

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 26

The Covid-19 infections slightly decreased in AP on Saturday with the registration of 4,147 Corona new infections in the past 24 hours against 4,458 cases on Friday. As many as 5,773 patients were discharged due to recovery in the state and 96,121 samples were tested in which 4,147 were found infected. AP has conducted cumulatively 2,16,37,606 Covid tests.

The total number of infections in 13 districts of AP touched 1,87,56,222 of which 18,16,930 cases recovered and were discharged. A total of 38 new deaths were registered, increasing the death toll to 12,566.

Seven new deaths each were reported in Chittoor and Guntur districts, followed by five new deaths each in East Godavari and Krishna districts, four in Srikakulam district, three in West Godavari district, two each deaths in Anantapur, Kadapa, Visakhapatnam and Vizianagaram districts. The East Godavari district continues to be at the top with the highest new infections of 838, followed by Chittoor with 569 new infections, West Godavari 571, Guntur 321, Krishna 310, Prakasam 289, Visakhapatnam 229, Kadapa 226, Nellore 196, Anantapur 180, Kurnool 160, Vizianagaram 130 and the least number of 128 new infections were registered in Srikakulam district.

PEETADHIPATHI ROW ENDS AT B. MATHAM

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, JUNE 26

Both the warring families contending for the Peethadhipathi post of the prominent shrine of Brahmamgari Matham in the district have resolved their differences and agreed to hand over the responsibilities to Nossam Venkatadri Swami of the eighth generation of Veerabrahmam as the 12th head.

Swami is the eldest son of the first wife of the recently deceased Peethadhipathi Veerabhoga Vasantha Venkateswara Swamy.

DRDO TEST-FIRES TWO ENHANCED RANGE ROCKETS

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, JUNE 26

Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) successfully test-fired an enhanced range 122 mm calibre rocket and the indigenously developed Pinaka rocket from the Integrated Test Range (ITR), Chandipur, off the Odisha coast in the last two days.

According to a statement from the DRDO, the enhanced range versions were tested from a multi-barrel rocket launcher (MBRL) on Friday. Four rockets were test-fired with full instrumentation and they met all mission objectives. These rockets have been developed for Army applications and can destroy targets 45 km away. These will replace the 122mm Grad rockets.

Approximately, 25 enhanced Pinaka rockets were launched in quick succession against targets at different distances.

Vizag on alert to tackle Delta+

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 26

The steel city has been on high alert following the report of the first Delta Plus variant of Covid-19 case at Tirupati.

In the 24 hours ended on Saturday, the registered 229 new Covid-19 cases and two deaths.

Visakhapatnam District Collector V. Vinay Chand instructed all the state-designated Covid-19 care hospitals and the medical staff to be vigilant over the new cases and take proper care while handling the Covid patients. He also appealed to the public to take utmost care by properly following the Covid protocols such as maintaining physical distance, wearing masks, and sanitising hands.

At a recent meeting, the Collector had directed to prepare and submit necessary plans and proposals to increase the number of oxygen beds in government hospitals in the district. He said all the hospitals including KGH, VIMS, Chest Hospital must have sufficient beds with oxygen supply and ventilators.

APSMIDC executive engineer D.A. Naidu was asked to personally inspect the wards at KGH and submit proposals for raising beds and laying pipelines. The VIMS hospital management proposed to increase the number of beds to 650. The oxygen beds in the Chest Hospital would be increased to 50. All health centres were asked to ensure effective testing, tracking and treatment for Covid.

Protests as huts of tribals pulled down

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, JUNE 26

The people of Kullapadu village of Kunavaram merged mandal staged rastaroko at Kunavaram main road in the agency area by blocking the road with bullock – cart, expressing resentment over removal of their residential huts at hillock areas in nearby forests.

Telugu Desam leaders like Y. Bhaskara Rao and others rendered their support to their agitation. The agitators say that Kullapadu and Narsinga peta villages are adjacent to rivulet and if the floods arrive, these two villages will be submerged. Mr Bhaskara Rao said that recently, the ITDA Project Officer has cautioned the people of Polavaram Project Affected people to evacuate their villages to escape from the coming floods.

He said that the people in Kullapadu have laid huts in the Reserve Forest area as the area is only the safest place for them to save their lives from the flood threat. Meanwhile, the forest offi-

cials removed nearly 60 huts from the place.

He demanded the government should allow them to build temporary houses in the forest area until the R&R package and Rehabilitation Colonies are completed.

Meanwhile, the Forest Section Officer Buchiraju said that anybody should not be allowed to axe the trees in the Reserve Forest Area as it is an offence under Reserve Forest Act 1967. He said that the people should make alternative arrangements without harming the forest.

Meanwhile, the people of Muddulagudem in Kunavaram mandal faced the same problem from the forest officials. Nearly 15 families laid huts at the safest places in the area, but the forest officials said that they should not be allowed in the reserve forest area. But the people said that they have not axed a single tree and the government should allow them to build temporary houses.

WOMAN IN LABOUR PAINS CARRIED IN DOLI FOR 3 KM TO CATCH VEHICLE

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 26

A pregnant woman close to delivery time had to be carried on a makeshift stretcher (in local parlance doli) for a distance of three kilometres to get a vehicle to reach the hospital. The vehicle point was over three kms from her residence at

Maryapadu tribal hamlet under Salur mandal in Vizianagaram district.

The incident took place on Saturday drawing criticism from several health activists in the district. The pregnant woman Pottangi Parvathi finally got the vehicle to reach the Primary Health Centre at Baguvalasa.

VIJAYAWADA TO GET ₹600 CR MAKEOVER

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 26

Minister for endowments Vellampalli Srinivas Rao said Vijayawada would be developed as a model city with ₹600 crore funds. He laid foundations for development works taken up at a cost of ₹1.5 crore in the city on Saturday.

Rao said that Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy was intent on turning Vijayawada into a model city and sanctioned ₹600 crore to change the face of the city. Basic amenities would be provided in all the divisions under the Model city project.

The minister inaugurated a newly constructed water tank with 455 KL capacity in 48-division, along with MLC S.K. Karimunnisa, Mayor Rayana Bhagyalakshmi and

VMC Commissioner Prasanna Venkatesh. He responded to a plea for a community hall at Yerrakatta down and directed VMC officials to prepare a proposal.

Rao distributed blue and green bins to locals in the 42-division for segregation of dry and wet waste. He informed that six divisions were selected for the Clean Andhra Pradesh (CLAP) programme and asked the people to hand over only the segregated waste in separate bins to the sanitation staff.

The Mayor said that the VMC launched the development of roads and took up the creation of parks and other basic amenities to provide a great makeover to the city. She sought the cooperation of citizens to achieve the task.

HOPES | HIGH

VCCI urges GVMC to reconsider its decision

‘Withdraw property tax move’

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 26

The Vizagapatnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI) appealed to Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC) to reconsider the decision of implementing capital value system for assessment of property tax. According to a release from the VCCI, many individuals and associations like Laghu Udyog Bharathi, Federation of Andhra Pradesh Chambers of

UNEMPLOYED YOUTH MARCH IN KAKINADA SEEKING JOBS

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, JUNE 26

Unemployed under the banner of East Godavari District Unemployed Youth Association took out a procession

Commerce and Industry, Visakhapatnam Cine Exhibitors Association, Vizagapatnam Cloth Merchants Association, Tax Payers Associations,

in Kakinada on Saturday from zilla parishad centre to collector's office demanding that state government announce its new job calendar offering 50,000 jobs.

Andhra Pradesh Federation of Resident Welfare Association, Visakhapatnam Apartment Resident Welfare Association

(VARWA) approached them to talk with the government and the GVMC over the new property tax system in the city.

The government proposed to introduce capital value for assessment of property tax in place of rental value at rate of 0.15 per cent for residential, 0.3 per cent for non-residential and commercial and 0.5 per cent for vacant plots and 8 per cent library cess on tax value, were high and people are not in a position to pay during this pandemic.

Dr. NTR UNIVERSITY OF HEALTH SCIENCES: A.P VIJAYAWADA - 520 008		
TENDER NOTICE No. 1/W/TS/DM/21 Date: 25.06.2021 Sealed Tenders are invited for following work at Dr. NTR University of Health Sciences, Vijayawada.		
Sl.No.	Name of the work	
1	Hosting of On-line application form and to conduct web based counselling for various courses of Dr. NTR UHS, Vijayawada for the academic years 2021 & 2022	
Note: For further details visit www.approcurement.gov.in		
K. Sankar, M.D., D.T.C.D., Registrar		

Government of Tamil Nadu Vellore Corporation Re-Tender Notice			
Roc.No: 5238/2014/E1 The Commissioner, Vellore Corporation invites tenders in two cover system for the following works as per the conditions laid down in the tender notice published in website https://ntenders.gov.in		Date : 21.06.2021	
Sl. No.	Name of the work (Smart City Mission)	Estimate Cost Rs. in Crores	EMD Cost Rs.
1.	Providing of Road, Channel, Hi-Tech Basic Amenities and PMC (4 Works) in Vellore City Municipal Corporation	11.91 (4 Works range from 2.04 Cr. to 3.98 Cr.)	1% of the Estimate Cost
2.	Period of Bid Document Downloaded Date and Time	24.06.2021 to 25.07.2021 at 3.00 pm available for free Download from website https://ntenders.gov.in	
3.	Pre-Bid Conference	09.07.2021 at 3.00 pm at The Chamber of City Engineer Vellore Corporation.	
4.	Date and time and venue of Tender	26.07.2021 Monday - 3.00 pm at Vellore Corporation	
5.	Date, Time and Venue of opening	26.07.2021 Monday - 3.30 pm at Vellore Corporation Office	
6.	Tender document availability and other details	Other Details can be obtained from the tender notice published in website https://ntenders.gov.in or from Vellore Corporation Office, Engineering section during working hours on working days.	
For Contact: 0416 - 2220578		DIPR/1845/Tender/2021 Commissioner, Vellore Corporation	

DECCAN Chronicle

27 JUNE 2021



Shreya Sen-Handley

Off the beaten track

The wonder years start at dauntless 50

Watching *The Masked Dancer UK* with my children last weekend, I was struck by the age, élan, and agility of two of the three finalists, both in their mid-fifties. When I grow up, I said to myself, that's how I want to be. But if growing up is getting to fifty then it isn't miles away, and with my two left feet, dancing's not on my bucket list.

Of course it's not about dancing at all, which is clearly just an extension of these fifty-somethings' love for life and who-gives-an-eff-about-convention stance. It's a metaphor for the verve with which they've waltzed into aging.

Convention, you see, would want us to age in a particular way. When they talk about aging gracefully, they don't mean you should enter a televised dance contest with competitors half your age. Or wear body-hugging outfits, or get in society's face. They mean you should disappear.

Disappear in a manner however, that suits society; hovering obsequiously on its periphery. You still need to turn up and be counted at funerals. At family functions that are any fun, you are lumped with children to look after; eliminating you from the action. In fact, wherever there's a thankless job, without recognition or reward, you're the one it's pegged for. Because, after all, as the scriptures confirm, you're at that stage of life — Sanyas — when you must renounce it all. Even far-sighted Shakespeare wrote about the "spectacles on nose and pouch on side (colostomy bag?), shrunk shank, and childish treble" of the post-fifty brigade. But he died at 52, without ever having experienced this stage, so what did he know?

I know that if I'm to toddle back to my childhood again, I will cherry pick, like a child might, the bits I want to swallow, spitting the rest out like unpalatable pips. Like the youngest kids, we are undoubtedly more vulnerable to diseases (as this pandemic has proved). Like them as well, we are not at the peak of our physical strength; not as robust as folks in their teens, twenties, or early thirties. We've been there, got the t-shirt, fallen over inelegantly onto the other, twilit side, and got it badly besmirched. But there are oh-so-many advantages to being weather-beaten and worldly-wise.

I know this *before* I've got to fifty because this locked-down pandemic has been an enforced aging. My stay-at-home-cooking-baking-pottering-in-the-garden avatar has descended on me ten years ahead of time. So have the array of diseases it has accelerated, which, had I been allowed to remain active and less anxiety-ridden, I may have side-stepped nimbly for another decade. But you could also look at this imposed maturation as early acquisition of wisdom; a bringing into sharp focus of all that really matters in life.

Yet, because growing old is so reviled by popular culture, and strikes such terror in the human heart, I too was a bit iffy about entering my thirties, but it turned out infinitely better than the decade before that. Arguably, my forties have been even more rewarding (though it does help to have a failing memory; lifting each decade I'm living through to the top). The fifties might be the best yet. Limbering up for it as I have been through this speed-aging pandemic, I feel ready. I feel almost Zen.

Isn't that a lot like Sanyas? Disappearing with 'dignity' aka. not making a fuss? No, because vanishing only as much as *we* want to, from society's bleeping radar, is a whole other trip called freedom.

I've never known more liberty than now; a couple of years, plus a couple of months, away from my half-century. As we grow, conventions bind us and social expectations pin us down, till one day we discover we've been put out to pasture. With society's gaze irrevocably averted in this so-called second childhood, we can be ourselves again like carefree kids.

For example: Not one for superficial chatter, lockdown's one boon has been its cessation, and I'll never again feel compelled. Yet, I'm deeply interested in the welfare of those I love, as well as the world at large. But both these concerns require in-depth conversation and not trivial natter.

Nor will I wear anything ever again that makes me squirm. Not high heels, except when in the mood. And even less often — bras! Both socially imposed, they're uncomfortable, if not injurious to health. And do they really make us more presentable? To whom exactly? Those who care will want us to be comfy, and to everyone else I have this to say: go find something sensible to rant about instead!

Strenuously discouraged from dyeing my hair purple recently, on the grounds that it was unbecoming for my age, I went ahead. It caused a few jaws to drop undoubtedly, but well-wishers and my mirror loved it.

So, come and see me by all means, wild-haired in my flats and ganjee, looking more like my Dadu than ever, and as unwilling to indulge in frivolities.

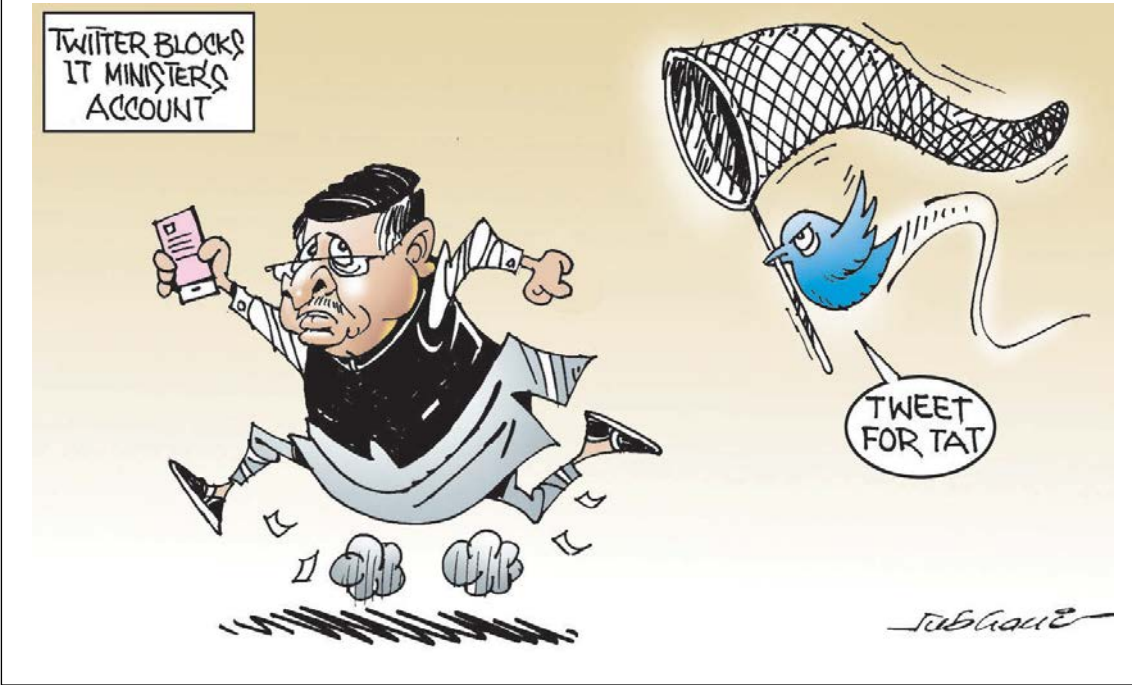
This freedom goes way beyond the trappings of course, though not having to toe the line with even these are considerable victories. Age is then an invisibility cloak, but one that confers a powerful forcefield, allowing us to be ourselves, even as it embargoes the narrow-minded and the nasty.

Growing older and less decorous, like children but in reverse, because we know better now and our bodies won't conform anymore anyhow; society begins to give us a wide berth, not just from disinterest but fear! No longer hounded to deliver on this hide-bound expectation or that, there's peace at last.

Age is indeed more than just a number; it's a wondrous new world.

Shreya Sen-Handley is the author of the recently published Strange: Stories, the award-winning Memoirs of My Body, and a forthcoming book of travel misadventures. Her Twitter and Insta handle is @shreyasenh.

Subhani



With trust as weapon, forge a Naya Kashmir



Pavan K. Varma

Chanakya's View

Chanakya had a basic dictum: you cannot rule a people against their will. Perpetual intimidation of an unwilling populace is a tempting but unworkable solution. You have to win the trust of those you govern. It is good that this principle is at last being followed by the BJP government at the Centre where Kashmir is concerned. The importance of Prime Minister Modi's meeting with 14 leaders from Kashmir on June 24 has to be understood in this context.

Since August 5, 2019, when Article 370 was revoked, the people of Kashmir have literally been incarcerated in their own homes. Landline, mobile and Internet connections were cut; as many as 3,800 political leaders and activists were jailed or put under house arrest; curfews and lockdowns were imposed; and an army of troops and police personnel converted the Valley into occupied barracks.

The time to break through this impasse was long overdue. The PM himself acknowledged that he would have had the meeting earlier, where he could meet leaders face to face instead of virtually, but for Covid.

The most important takeaway from the meeting was that the principal Opposition parties in Kashmir, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the National Conference (NC), attended. Both Farooq Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti were present. The second takeaway was that, in spite of the strong feelings in both these parties against the abrogation of Article 370 — on which the Centre would not yield — there was no veto on discussions, and other

issues of great import could be discussed.

The discussion on Article 370 was deflected by the simple fact that the question of its constitutionality was before the Supreme Court (SC) and, therefore, sub judice. There is, indeed, a good case for the reservations of the Kashmiri parties on the manner in which Article was revoked. According to the Constitution, while 370 is a temporary measure and can be done away with, this step requires a recommendation from the J&K Assembly. This was not obtained. The Assembly had been suspended. There was President's rule. The powers of the Assembly were being exercised by the Centre directly through the governor. The government thus obtained the recommendation from the governor, their own nominee. That was tantamount to seeking concurrence from itself. The decision is under challenge, and rightly so, in the SC, and we would respectfully urge the highest court to expedite a decision.

Two other issues were on the table: the restoration of full statehood to J&K, and the holding of democratic elections. There is understandable resentment in Kashmir that their state has been converted into a Union Territory (UT). The Centre wisely gave in to this demand. The PM reiterated his resolve to restore statehood, and Amit Shah said that he had given this assurance on the floor of the House. The holding of democratic elections were made conditional on the completion of the delimitation exercise in J&K.

Delimitation is the act of redrawing boundaries of the Assembly seats to represent changes in the popula-

tion over time. Although delimitation for the rest of India is scheduled for 2026, there is no doubt that delimitation is overdue in J&K. Earlier, delimitation exercises were done in 1963, 1975 and 1995. Since no census was carried out in the state in 1991, there has been no delimitation since 2001. Delimitation will have an impact on the number of seats currently divided between Jammu and Kashmir. Currently, Kashmir has 46 seats, and Jammu 37. It is expected that after delimitation the number of seats in Jammu would go up, thereby upsetting the current numerical domination of Kashmir representatives.

The Delimitation Commission for J&K was set up on March 6, 2020, under the chairpersonship of retired SC judge, Ranjana Prakash Desai, with the mandate to finish the exercise in one year. The other members of the Commission were Union minister Jitendra Singh, Jugal Kishore Sharma of the BJP, and Farooq Abdullah, Akbar Lone and Hasmain Masoodi of the NC. The Commission did not hold a single meeting until February 2021, ostensibly due to the pandemic. In the first meeting, only the BJP representatives attended. The NC leaders boycotted the meeting to protest against the J&K Reorganisation Act, 2019.

The key question is whether the representatives of the NC, and, indeed, other key Opposition parties like the PDP, will now cooperate with the delimitation process. Not having com-

pleted its work in the one-year deadline, the Commission has been given a year's extension that lapses in March 2022. It is very important to keep to this deadline since the holding of democratic elections is conditional on it. Ultimately, the return of democracy in the troubled state is the best antidote to the existing resentment and anger. Democracy — if genuine — gives people the ventilation valve to express their feelings, and feel that they are stakeholders in unfolding events.

The way forward will be hugely dependent on the creation of trust, ending the *dil ki doori*. The Centre will have to walk the extra mile to ensure this. Its past actions have militated directly against it. Apart from incarcerating an entire state, BJP leaders have till recently reviled the grouping of the Opposition parties in Kashmir as the Gupkar gang. The Centre must take necessary steps to rectify the memories of the past, release political detainees wherever feasible, and carry out the delimitation exercise with utmost transparency and sincerity. An onus also rests on political parties in Kashmir. They must desist from taking extreme positions dictated by a sense of catering to the anger among the Kashmiris. They must work, as Ghulam Nabi Azad said, for the rehabilitation of the Kashmiri Pandits. And, they must desist from making — as Mehbooba Mufti seemed to suggest — Pakistan a stakeholder in what is entirely an internal matter of India. The Central government would also have to retain its full vigilance against terrorism emanating from Pakistan, which would do its best to derail a peace and reconciliation process. With trust as a weapon, the entire country hopes that normalcy would soon be restored, and we would have a *Naya Kashmir*.

The writer, an author and a former diplomat, is in politics

LETTERS

STAYING VIGILANT

The more we relax the public health and social measures, the more the chances of Delta plus variant striking hard. Already it is found in over 85 countries including India and is reportedly spreading rapidly, being the 'most transmissible' one. Right now people in AP are hopeful that night curfew would be lifted and all economic activities are resumed. However, the risk is too high and the state government must continue with the pandemic protocol for some more time before lifting the curfew. With the Delta plus variant already entering AP, it is all the more necessary to continue with the restrictions.

Govardhana Myneedu
Vijayawada

HUMAN GROWTH

The concern about the low GDP numbers are welcome but the real issue which we all should be concerned about is our Human Development Index where we are way behind. The standard of living of our people has fallen to a new low and now it's important more than ever to raise the standard by improving the savings and reducing expenditure. The major part of savings goes towards healthcare and education and yet there has been no major improvement to reduce their expenditure on these basic human needs. The privatization of health care and education has done more bad than good that our policymakers expected.

Ratnaraj Jain
Rajahmundry

REPRESSIVE ACTS

When will the Centre stop using the repressive Sedition Act, UAPA, etc against innocent activists for criticising the government's way functioning is a million rupee question that can be answered only by the ill-advised governments themselves (*HC grants bail to Aisha Sulthana, DC, June 26*). It's most unfortunate how they could have become so thick-skinned, insensitive to human rights, rule of law and injustice day-in and day-out!

K. Nehru Patnaik
Visakhapatnam

Email your letters to
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editor@deccanmail.com. You can
also send them to Editor, Deccan
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Secunderabad-500 003.

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

Indian Navy enters missile era

JAMNAGAR, June 26. The Indian Navy has entered the missile era with the acquisition of a few rocket boats, Chief of the Naval Staff S.M. Nanda said here today. Addressing officers and sailors of *INS Valsura*, the electrical training establishment of the Navy, at a ceremonial parade, Admiral Nanda said that the navy had developed into a balanced force. The equipment on board the ships were of a sophisticated nature.

Anita Katyal
Political
Gup-Shup



Ayodhya leak radar on Yogi; Cong ready to forgive senior

The recent charges of corruption in the purchase of land for the construction of the Ram Temple complex at Ayodhya has led to animated discussions in Lucknow about how Opposition leader, AAP's Uttar Pradesh in-charge Sanjay Singh, managed to lay his hands on the documents about the deals. People in Uttar Pradesh were surprised how the Opposition managed to get hold of these papers because chief minister Yogi Adityanath has a vice-like grip on the administration and anyone suspected of leaking such information or even talking about it publicly would normally be handed out stringent punishment. There is also all-round agreement that the Opposition in Uttar Pradesh is incapable of unearthing such exposes as it is virtually defunct. It is, therefore, surmised that the documents were leaked with Yogi Adityanath's permission. According to the grapevine, the chief minister wanted to get back at the BJP leadership after he was pulled up by the party top brass for flying solo and marginalising his party colleagues. The temple con-

struction committee of the Ram Janmabhoomi Trust is headed by Nripendra Misra, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's former principal secretary, while Champat Rai, also known to be close to Modi, is the Trust general secretary. It is for the Trust office-bearers to defend these allegations while Yogi is out of the picture.

When he was replaced as leader of Opposition in the Kerala Assembly last month, senior Congress leader Ramesh Chennithala shot off a letter to party president Sonia Gandhi to complain about the insulting manner in which he had been eased out. He has since been making amends by posting his old photographs with Indira and Rajiv Gandhi on his Twitter handle to underline his special bond with the Congress and the Gandhi family. For instance, one post shows a photograph of Indira Gandhi campaigning in Chennithala's constituency while another tweet mentions how she signed a letter appointing him as NSUI president chief at the airport before boarding a flight to Russia.

Similarly, there are several pictures of Chennithala with Rajiv Gandhi while on tour and one of Gandhi attending the Kerala leader's wedding reception where he told him about his appointment as Youth Congress president. Chennithala's efforts in getting back into the good books of the Gandhis may well pay off, as there are reports he has been promised a slot as Congress general secretary in Delhi.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's assurance at an all-party meeting last week that holding elections in Jammu and Kashmir is a priority, is in line with the BJP's eagerness to test the electoral waters in the newly-carved Union territory. Though the BJP did not fare well in last year's local elections, the party has not given up on its ambition to install a Hindu chief minister in Jammu and Kashmir as it believes the redrawing of the constituencies by the Delimitation Commission will work to its advantage. Failing this, the BJP is also extending an olive branch to National Conference leader Farooq Abdullah in the belief he will

be amenable to an understanding with the saffron camp. The National Conference has aligned with the BJP in the past and it could well do so in the future. There are unconfirmed reports that back-channel discussions with Abdullah have already been initiated.

The Congress leadership has reason to worry as its party units in several poll-bound states are in turmoil. While the never-ending battle between Punjab chief minister Amarinder Singh and his bete noire Navjot Singh Sidhu can only be described as a soap opera, the situation is no better in Uttarakhand. The post of legislative party leader in Uttarakhand fell vacant recently after senior leader Indira Hridayesh's death but the party is struggling to find her replacement. State unit president Pritam Singh is being persuaded to take over this post but he has declined and threatened to resign if the Central leadership insists on giving him Hridayesh's job. Former chief minister Harish Rawat is keen that his rival Pritam Singh accept this post because then

the latter will not be directly involved in the distribution of tickets for the Assembly polls, giving the former chief minister a free hand in picking his own candidates.

There is a strong buzz in Madhya Pradesh political circles that newly-minted BJP member Jyotiraditya Scindia is eyeing Indore as his next Lok Sabha constituency. This speculation has gathered momentum as the frequency of Mr Scindia's trips to Indore has increased in recent months. Ideally, Mr Scindia would like to return to the Gwalior Parliamentary seat. But he is being given a hard time in his old pocket boroughs of Gwalior and Guna by the sitting MPs Vivek Narayan Shejwalkar and Krishna Pal Singh Yadav. Both the BJP leaders have the distinction of defeating Mr Scindia in his stronghold and they are clearly in no hurry to cede ground to him again. Meanwhile, there is no end to their turf war as all three are quick to take credit for any development work undertaken in the region.

Anita Katyal is a Delhi-based Journalist

SHORT TAKES

AYODHYA SHOULD MANIFEST OUR TRADITIONS: PM

New Delhi, June 26: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday reviewed the development plan for Ayodhya and asserted that the temple town in Uttar Pradesh should manifest the “the finest of our traditions and the best of our developmental transformations”.

Speaking at a virtual meeting, which was also attended by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Modi described Ayodhya as a city that is etched in the cultural consciousness of every Indian and said the human ethos of this city must be matched by futuristic infrastructure.

A Prime Minister's Office (PMO) statement on the meeting said Ayodhya's development is being envisaged as a spiritual centre, global tourism hub and a sustainable smart city.

At the meeting, Uttar Pradesh government officials made a presentation which encompassed various aspects of Ayodhya's development.

The prime minister was informed about various upcoming and proposed infrastructure projects to improve connectivity with Ayodhya and various projects like airport, expansion of railway station, bus station, roads and highways were discussed, the PMO said. An upcoming greenfield township was discussed which includes lodging facilities for devotees, space for ashrams, maths, hotels, bhavans of various states.

An upcoming greenfield township was discussed which includes lodging facilities for devotees, space for ashrams, maths, hotels, bhavans of various states. A tourist facilitation centre and a world class museum will also be built, it said.

Modi said that the coming generations should feel the desire to visit Ayodhya at least once in their lifetime

CJI SEEKS STEPS TO RESOLVE POOR CONNECTIVITY

New Delhi, June 26: Chief Justice of India N. V. Ramana has written to Information Technology Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad seeking steps to resolve poor digital connectivity in rural, tribal and hilly areas, saying this is “adversely impacting the pace of justice delivery”.

In his letter to Prasad, who is also the minister for law and communications, Justice Ramana also referred to the “digital divide” and said “a whole generation of lawyers is being pushed out of the system” due to technological inequality. The Chief Justice of India (CJI) informed about the letter, written on June 8, while speaking on Saturday at the virtual release of a book “Anomalies in Law and Justice” authored by former Supreme Court Judge Justice R. V. Raveendran.

During the course of a panel discussion that followed the book launch, Justice Ramana said that the issue of connectivity figured prominently at a two-day conference of chief justices of high courts that he had held recently.

“Poor connectivity in rural, tribal, remote and hilly areas is adversely impacting the pace of justice delivery and is also depriving thousands of young lawyers across the country of their livelihood. A whole generation of lawyers is being pushed out of the system due to digital divide,” the CJI said.

Ramana said he recently wrote to the law, communications and IT minister, highlighting these issues, and requested him to initiate steps on priority to bridge the digital divide and evolve a mechanism. —PTI

Tikait: Rallies if Centre doesn't resume talks

Farmers mark 7 months of their agitation at Delhi borders

DC CORRESPONDENT WITH AGENCY INPUTS CHANDIGARH/NEW DELHI, JUNE 26

Marking the completion of seven months of agitation at Delhi's borders against the three farm laws passed by the Centre, scores of farmers from Punjab and Haryana on Saturday took out protest marches while farmers camping at Delhi's Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur observed July 26 as “Save Agriculture, Save Democracy Day”.

Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) leader Rakesh Tikait said at least four lakh tractors and 25 lakh farmers are ready to march towards Delhi. However, if talks with the Centre resume, then



Farmers shout slogans during a protest against three farm reform laws, and over other issues at the Golden Gate in Amritsar, on Saturday. Farmers are observing June 26 as Save Agriculture, Save Democracy Day to mark seven months of their agitation.

— PTI

the march will not be taken forward, he said.

Mr Tikait announced two rallies in Delhi next month to intensify the protest against the Centre's three new farm laws. Mr Tikait, who held

a meeting with farmers at Delhi's Ghazipur border, said two decisions were made at the meeting. First, a batch of farmers will leave on tractors for the Singhu border from Uttar Pradesh's

Star TMC MP ill after fake vaccine

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, JUNE 26

Four days after taking a dose of what is purported to be Covishield at a fake vaccination camp, and getting the racket behind it busted with the help of the Kolkata police, Mimi Chakraborty, Tollywood actor and Trinamul Congress Jadavpur MP, fell ill at home on Saturday.

Meanwhile, to mount pressure on the Mamata Banerjee government over the racket run by a bogus IAS officer, allegedly linked to several TMC leaders, Leader of the Opposition Suwendu Adhikari urged the Centre to order a probe by its agencies. At around 4 am, the

MP complained of illness which included severe dehydration, low blood pressure and acute stomach pain.

A doctor treated her and advised her rest with medication but suspected the symptoms as panic syndrome over the fake Covishield dose she got on June 22 rather than its side-effects.

While the Kolkata Municipal Corporation and state health department have launched a drive to check the health of those who along with Mimi Chakraborty got the ‘vaccine’, the Kolkata Police slapped attempt to murder charge on three arrested accused including racketeer Debanjan Deb.

On Friday Adhikari wrote Union health minister Harsh Vardhan, “...several incriminating photos suggestive of the accused's influence in the ruling party of West Bengal have come to the fore. Kolkata Mayor Firhad Hakim, West Bengal minister Subrata Mukherjee, TMC MP Santanu Sen, TMC MLAs Debasish Kumar and Lovely Maitra, KMC councillor Baiswanor Chatterjee and others are seen directly or indirectly endorsing the activities of Debanjan...”

He claimed Debanjan has previously been seen posing with government of West Bengal files or hosting Duare Sarkar

campus of West Bengal government in Ward 66 of KMC. In such a situation with so many influential ruling party leaders and government representatives being seen in close proximity to the accused, we have serious doubts about an impartial investigation from Kolkata Police that follows the instructions of the same government.”

Suwendu added, “Public health frauds like this in midst of a raging global pandemic are making common people skeptic to the authenticity of the vaccination process, thereby adding to vaccine hesitancy which is detrimental to the interests of the human race”.

WORLD

SHORT TAKES

UAE's GOLDEN VISA TO 2 INDIAN AYURVEDIC DOCS

Dubai, June 26: Two Indian Ayurvedic doctors have received the UAE's coveted Golden Visa, according to a media report on Saturday. Dr Shyam Vishwanathan Pillai and Dr Jasna Jamal, both from Kerala, were granted Golden Visas by the UAE's Federal Authority for Identity and Citizenship.

Pillai, CEO of Vaidyashala at the Burjeel Day Surgery Centre in Abu Dhabi, was granted the Golden Visa under the medical professionals and doctors category on June 17. A resident of Al Mamzar in Dubai, Dr Jasna Jamal was given the Golden Visa on June 24.

AQUINO, WHO CHALLENGED CHINA, BURIED

Manila, June 26: Former Philippine President Benigno Aquino III was buried in austere state rites during the pandemic Saturday with many remembering him for standing up to China over territorial disputes, striking a peace deal with Muslim guerrillas and defending democracy in a nation where his parents helped topple a dictator. Aquino died Thursday at age 61 of kidney disease arising from diabetes following a long public absence, after his single, six-year term ended in 2016. Family and friends sang a patriotic song after a silver urn with Aquino's remains was placed beside the tomb of his mother.

REPORT SHOWS DAMAGE BEFORE CONDO COLLAPSE

Surfside (US), June 26: The oceanfront condominium building that collapsed near Miami had “major structural damage” to a concrete structural slab below its pool deck that needed to be extensively repaired, according to a 2018 engineering report on the building.

The report was among a series of documents released by the city of Surfside as rescuers continued to dig Saturday through the rubble of the building in an effort to find any of the 159 people who remain unaccounted for after its collapse.

22 1/2 years in jail for Chauvin

Ex-cop sentenced for George Floyd murder

Minneapolis, June 26: Former Minneapolis police Officer Derek Chauvin was sentenced Friday to 22 1/2 years in prison for the murder of George Floyd, whose dying gasps under Chauvin's knee led to the biggest outcry against racial injustice in the US in generations.

The punishment — which came after Chauvin broke his yearlong silence to offer condolences to the Floyd family and express hope that they eventually have “some peace of mind” — is one of the longest prison terms ever imposed on a US police officer in the killing of a Black person.

Still, Floyd family members and others were disappointed. The sentence fell short of the 30 years prosecutors had requested. And with good behavior, Chauvin, 45, could get out on parole after serving two-thirds of his sentence, or about 15 years. “Just because it's the most time doesn't mean it's enough time,” said Nekima Levy Armstrong, a Minneapolis protest leader.

Judge Peter Cahill went beyond the 12 1/2-year se-



Derek Chauvin

ntence prescribed under state guidelines, citing Chauvin's “abuse of a position of trust and authority and also the particular cruelty” shown to Floyd. Floyd family attorney Ben Crump said the family had gotten “some measure of accountability” but is hoping Chauvin gets the maximum at his upcoming federal civil rights trial.

Crump said this was the longest sentence a police officer has ever received in Minnesota. But he added: “Real justice in America will be PoC men and PoC women and people of colour who will not have to fear being killed by the police just because the colour of their skin. That

would be real justice.”

Outside the courthouse, a crowd of about 50 people clasped hands or placed them on each other's shoulders. The reaction was subdued as people debated whether the sentence was long enough.

Some cursed in disgust. At George Floyd Square, as the intersection where Floyd was pinned to the pavement is now known, members of the crowd broke into applause, and several said, “We'll take it.”

Chauvin was immediately led back to prison. He showed little emotion when the judge pronounced the sentence. His eyes moved rapidly around the courtroom, his Covid-19 mask obscuring much of his face.

The fired white officer was convicted in April of second-degree unintentional murder, third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter for pressing his knee against Floyd's neck for up to 9 1/2 minutes as the 46-year-old man gasped that he couldn't breathe and went limp on May 25, 2020. —AP

Down with drugs



A member of security forces loyal to Yemen's Huthi rebels stands near a bonfire incinerating seized narcotic substances, in the Huthi-held capital on Saturday, the United Nations designated “International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking”.

— AFP

TESLA TO RECALL 2.85L CARS OVER FAULTY SOFTWARE

Beijing, June 26: Electric car giant Tesla will “recall” over 285,000 cars from the Chinese market after an investigation found issues with its assisted driving software that could cause road collisions, a government regulator announced late Friday. Tesla would contact affected users to upgrade their vehicle's software remotely for free, a State Administration of Market Regulation (SAMR) notice said, adding that it affects some imported and domestically manufactured Model 3 and Model Y vehicles.

“The recall plan was filed with the State Administration of Market Regulation, and it was decided to recall the following vehicles from today,” SAMR said.

The order is the latest blow to the American self-driving car pioneer, which has come under growing regulatory scrutiny in China due to several deadly collisions involving Tesla vehicles in recent months.

“Due to issues with the cruise control system... the driver can easily activate the cruise control function by mistake,” the Chinese government agency said in the notice. —AFP

3 more held for Pak blast

Lahore, June 26: Pakistani security agencies have identified the key person behind the car bomb blast outside the house of the 2008 Mumbai terror attack mastermind and chief of the banned Jamat-ud-Dawa (JuD) Hafiz Saeed here and arrested three more persons in connection with the case, officials said on Saturday.

Three teams of the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) have been sent to Karachi, Peshawar and Sheikhupura for gleaning more information about those involved in the blast, an official said.

According to Punjab Law Minister Basharat Raja, so far eight suspects have been taken into cus-

tody in connection with Wednesday's blast that left three people dead and 21 others injured.

“Three more suspects have been arrested from Lahore, Sheikhupura and Peshawar in connection with the Lahore blast on the information of the main suspect — Peter Paul David,” an official of the CTD said. —PTI

B'desh shuts over virus spike

Dhaka, June 26: Bangladesh has announced it will impose a tough new lockdown starting Monday, after a “dangerous and alarming” surge in Delta variant cases of Coronavirus.

All government and private offices will be shut for a week and only medical-related transport will be allowed, the government said late Friday.

“No one can step out of their homes except in emergency cases,” a statement added. Health department spokesman Robed Amin said police and border guards would be deployed to enforce the lockdown and the army may be involved if needed. “It is a

dangerous and alarming situation. If we don't contain it now, we will face an India-like situation,” he said, referring to a surge in cases in neighbouring India in April and May.

Infection rates have been rising sharply since mid-May in Bangladesh, home to around 170 million people. On Friday the government recorded almost 6,000 new cases and 108 fatalities, the second-highest death toll yet in the pandemic. Authorities say the situation in districts near the Indian border is catastrophic, with hospitals in the cities of Khulna and Rajshahi overwhelmed. —AFP

NZ suspends travel bubble with Oz

Wellington, June 26: New Zealand announced a three-day suspension of its quarantine-free travel arrangement with Australia on Saturday, with Wellington citing “multiple” outbreaks of Covid-19 in the neighbouring country.

The announcement comes as a two-week lockdown begins in Sydney to contain a rapidly spreading outbreak of the Delta Coronavirus variant. More than 80 cases have been reported

in Australia's largest city, while a handful of cases have been recorded in the Northern Territory, Victoria and Queensland. “But given the high level of transmissibility of what appears to be the Delta variant, and the fact that there are now multiple community clusters, it is the right thing to keep Covid-19 out of New Zealand,” said NZ's Covid-19 Response Minister Chris Hipkins. —AFP

US won't dump Kabul: Biden

Washington, June 26: President Joe Biden has told his Afghan counterpart Ashraf Ghani that the people of Afghanistan “are going to have to decide their future” but assured him that the US is going to “stick with you” even after the American troops leave the war-torn nation by September.

Biden, who had his first face-to-face meeting with Ashraf Ghani at the White House on Friday said America's partnership with the South Asian nation is going to be sustained. The partnership between Afghanistan and the United States is not ending. It's going to be sustained, Biden told reporters in the Oval Office of the

White House in a joint media appearance with President Ghani and the CEO Abdullah Abdullah. American troops may be leaving, but support for Afghanistan is not ending in terms of helping maintain their military as well as economic and political support, Biden said.

“Afghans are going to have to decide their future of what they want. What they want. But it won't be for lack of us being a help.” “But we're going to stick with you. And we're going to do our best to see to it you have the tools you need,” he assured the top Afghan leaders ahead of the US troop withdrawal before September 11. —PTI

THOUSANDS FLEE KUNDUZ OVER FIGHTING

Kunduz, Afghanistan, June 26: About 5,000 Afghan families have fled their homes in Kunduz after days of fighting between the Taliban and government forces, officials said Saturday, with the insurgents continuing to surround the key northern city. The Taliban briefly seized the city twice in recent years but have now captured the surrounding districts and a nearby border crossing with Tajikistan. —AFP

SHORT TAKES

Injury scare for sprinter Hima

Patiala: Star sprinter Hima Das on Saturday suffered a hamstring injury during the 100m heats at the ongoing National Inter-State Athletics Championships here, leaving her on the verge of missing out on the upcoming Tokyo Olympics. Hima, who has had a lower back injury problem for a long time, did not start in the 100m final due to the injury though she qualified for it. She did complete her heat race and finished third with a timing of 12.01 seconds during the morning session. It is learnt that the Assam athlete is highly unlikely to run the 200m race scheduled on Sunday as well as the women's 4x100m relay final on June 29. Hima's injury is also a big blow to 4x100m women's relay team's qualification.

— PTI

Verstappen takes Styrian GP pole

Spielberg: World Championship leader Max Verstappen of Red Bull produced the quickest lap in qualifying on Saturday to claim pole position for the Styrian Grand Prix. Mercedes' Valtteri Bottas was second quickest but drops to fifth on the grid because of a three-place penalty imposed on Friday, leaving teammate Lewis Hamilton to start on the front row with Verstappen. McLaren's Lando Norris produced the performance of the day, pushing the front runners all the way and finishing fourth.

— AFP

Saurabh and Manu clinch silver medal

Osijek (Croatia): Continuing their impressive run, the Indian duo of Saurabh Chaudhary and Manu Bhaker clinched the silver medal in the 10m air pistol mixed team event at the ISSF Shooting World Cup here on Saturday. Already assured of a silver, the Indian duo was on par with Russia's Vitalina Batsarashkina and Artem Chernousov at 12-12 before losing the last two series to go down 12-16. Representing the other Indian team, Yashaswini Singh Deswal and Abhishek Verma missed out on a bronze medal. Deswal and Verma, who qualified in the third place, were completely outplayed by Iran's Golnoush Sebghatollahi and Javad Foroughi.

— PTI

Champ Farah fails to qualify for Tokyo

London: Four-time Olympic champion Mo Farah's hopes of ending his track career at the Tokyo Games ended as he fell short of the qualifying mark for the 10,000 metres in Manchester on Friday. The 38-year-old won a specially-arranged race to give him a final chance to qualify at the British Championships, but his time of 27 minutes 47 seconds was nearly 20 seconds off the time required to qualify. Farah won the 5,000m-10,000m double at the London Olympics in 2012 and repeated the feat four years later in Rio de Janeiro.

— AFP

Archer Verma wins gold in World Cup

Paris: Star compound archer Abhishek Verma stunned American heavyweight Kris Schaff in a shoot-off to bag a gold medal at the Archery World Cup Stage 3 here on Saturday. Verma's effort has come two months after he along with the Indian team was stopped from board the flight for the first stage of the meet in Guatemala City following their coach's false positive Covid-19 test report. India archers are also in the fray for three more medals in the women's recurve individual, team and mixed pair.

— PTI

Live on TV

EURO

Round of 16: Netherlands vs Czech Republic from 9.30 pm; Belgium vs Portugal from 12.30 am (Monday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

COPA AMERICA

Brazil vs Ecuador from 2:30am on Sony Ten 1, HD; Venezuela vs Peru from 2:30am on Sony Ten 2, HD

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DANES PARTY

Denmark decimate Wales to enter Euro quarters

Denmark	4
(Kasper Dolberg 27, 48, Joakim Maehle 88, Martin Braithwaite 90+4)	
Wales	0

Amsterdam, June 26: Denmark marked the 29th anniversary of their greatest triumph by marching on to the quarter-finals of Euro 2020 on Saturday as Kasper Dolberg scored twice in an emphatic 4-0 win over Wales before an exultant travelling support in Amsterdam.

In the city where Christian Eriksen made his name, it was Dolberg — another former Ajax player — who opened the scoring with a fizzing strike in the 27th minute.

That came after Wales had started so well but Denmark never looked back and Dolberg struck again just after the restart before Joakim Maehle and Martin Braithwaite added more goals late on.

Carried by a wave of emotion, Danish dreams are still intact in a tournament that began in such traumatic circumstances for them with Eriksen's collapse in their opening match against Finland in Copenhagen.

They now go on to a last-eight tie in Baku against the Netherlands or the Czech Republic.

Eriksen, still recovering at home after his cardiac arrest, was present in



Denmark's Kasper Dolberg celebrates after scoring his first goal against Wales in the Euro Round of 16 match in Amsterdam on Saturday.

— UEFA

everyone's minds at the home of Ajax, and that combined with a vast Danish support inside the one-third full Johan Cruyff Arena made this occasion really like a home game for them.

European champions against all odds when they beat Germany in the final on this day in 1992, Denmark finally have their first win in the knockout phase of a Euro since then and it would be a truly extraordinary story if they could repeat the feat this time.

Nobody in Denmark will want to get ahead of themselves but Wales — who fin-

ished with 10 men after Harry Wilson's late red card — could certainly have no complaints about the outcome and there will be no repeat of their run to the semi-finals at Euro 2016.

They needed a moment of magic from captain Gareth Bale or Aaron Ramsey which never came, but in truth they were up against it from the outset.

Aside from the universal goodwill towards Denmark following Eriksen's collapse, a ban on travellers from the United Kingdom entering the Netherlands meant

there were very few Welsh supporters inside the stadium.

Danes, in contrast, descended in their droves on Amsterdam, creating an atmosphere not far off that seen at the Parken Stadium in Copenhagen when they beat Russia to qualify for the last 16 — even the Danish Prime Minister, Mette Frederiksen, was in attendance. To their credit Wales started well, with the probing Bale leading by example in the early stages. He crashed a shot just wide in the 10th minute.

— AFP

WELSH PRINT 'ERIKSEN' ON THEIR JERSEY

Amsterdam, June 26: A framed Wales national team shirt with Christian Eriksen's name on it was given to Denmark captain Simon Kjaer before the teams played in the Round of 16 at the European Championship.

Eriksen collapsed on the field during Denmark's opening match at Euro 2020 and had to be resuscitated with a defibrillator.

The Wales jersey had "CHRISTIAN" written on top of Eriksen's No. 10 and BRYSLA WELLA underneath. Bryslas wella means get well soon in Welsh.

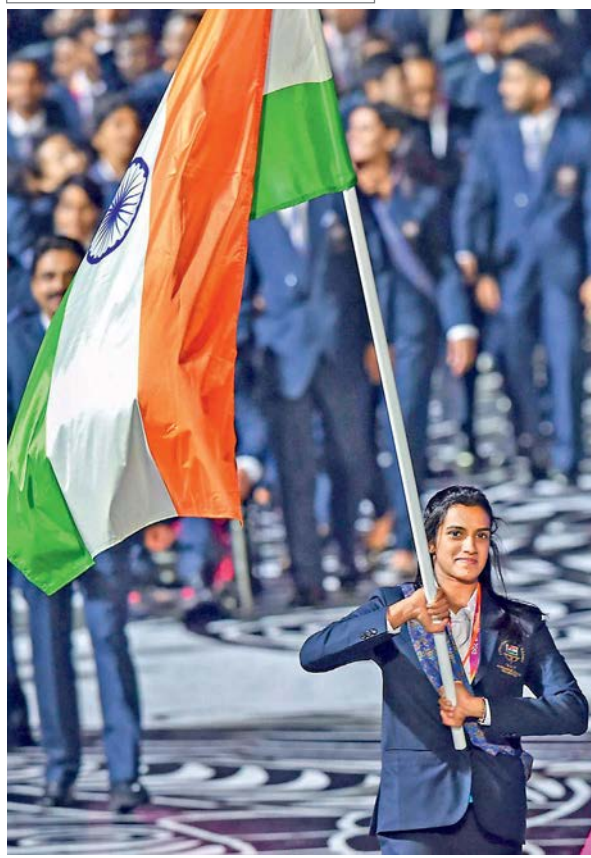
Kjaer, Wales captain Gareth Bale and the three match officials in Amsterdam then posed for a photo with the framed jersey moments before kickoff.

The vast majority of fans at the Johan Cruyff Arena were supporting Denmark in the team's European Championship match against Wales.

Only a handful of Welsh dragon flags were visible among a sea of Danish flags. Wales fans were warned not to travel to the Netherlands because of Coronavirus restrictions in that country.

— AP

TOKYO | OLYMPICS



A file photo of P.V. Sindhu carrying the Indian flag at the 2018 Commonwealth Games in Gold Coast, Australia.

Sindhu carries flag and hopes

MOSES KONDETY | DC
HYDERABAD, JUNE 26

P. V. Sindhu can't wait for the Olympics to begin. The badminton ace will have the rare honour of leading the country at the world's biggest sporting spectacle when the Games begin in Tokyo next month. The Hyderabad girl will carry the tri-colour as she heads the Indian contingent at the Opening Ceremony.

"Being the flag-bearer is such a proud moment altogether," a chuffed Sindhu said.

"To think that you would be carrying the national flag and leading the Indian contingent at the opening ceremony is staggering. I am thrilled and excited because that sort of opportunity is rare... it's a huge honour," the 25-year-old said during an interaction post her talk at TEDxYouth@SuchitraAcademy organised by Suchitra Academy International School in Hyderabad on Saturday.

The Covid pandemic may have pulled everyone back a bit but the gritty girl is gung-ho. "I am emotionally attached since the entire country is showing support and wanting me to get the medal. I am really looking forward to doing that," the Khel Ratna awardee said.

Preparations are in full swing. "Since February I have been practicing at the Gachibowli Stadium, which is the same as the

one in Tokyo where the badminton events will be held. The venue has come in handy to get myself used to the air-conditioning and flight of the shuttle. I am thankful to the government, the Sports Authority and the badminton association for the facility. Whenever I asked for permission to practice, they readily granted my request," Sindhu said.

"In the evenings, I go to the Suchitra Academy, which is like a second home to me, for my recovery sessions — pool, ice-bath, gym and running — that are very much needed as there is not much time left for the Games," Sindhu added.

Suchitra Academy also provides her with sparring partners of different styles and skills — left, right-handed, aggressive, defensive, et al. Everyday there are different players and Sindhu has been up against two, sometimes three, opponents at a time as she gears up to take on the world.

The pressure is intense though. "This Olympics will definitely be different compared to Rio 2016 (where she won silver). Now, everyone wants me to get a medal wherever I play, so yes, there is pressure and we have to deal with it. At the end of the day, Olympics are Olympics — right up there. We have to be prepared for everything and anything," Sindhu said.

Belgium & Portugal in clash of heavyweights

Madrid, June 26: Portugal felt the full range of emotions during the Euro 2020 group stage and with Cristiano Ronaldo in the groove again, they can really begin to believe.

After scoring three late goals to beat Hungary, Portugal were shaken by a 4-2 loss to Germany, only for a 2-2 draw against France to restore morale and ensure they snuck out of Group F in third place.

The result is a last-16 clash with Belgium in Seville on Sunday, when one of the tournament favourites will bow out in what is surely the blockbuster tie of the round.

One of the frontrunners for the Golden Boot will fall too, with Ronaldo and Belgium's Romelu Lukaku both in contention. Ronaldo leads the scoring charts on five goals with Lukaku not far behind on three.

Portugal may have taken only a point from a sweaty contest with France at the Puskas Arena in Budapest but the belief and confidence gained from going toe-to-toe with the world champions could be pivotal for the rest of their tournament.

After chaos against Germany came concentration against the French, a committed, organised and aggressive performance which was a reminder of what carried Portugal to success at Euro 2016 and in the Nations League three years later.

"We were strong and consistent. The players helped each other, we had posses-



Belgian footballer Eden Hazard during a training session.

— Twitter

sion, we attacked well. We improved a lot from the game against Germany," said Portugal's coach Fernando Santos afterwards.

Santos had responded too, reacting to criticism by reverting to his traditional 4-3-3 system of the past two years and making some bold changes to his starting line-up.

CZECH FAVOURITES AGAINST DUTCH

The Czech Republic will enter Sunday's last-16 game against the Netherlands at Euro 2020 as the odds-on favourites, at least when it comes to the history of their head-to-head encounters.

Since the Czech Republic

emerged as an independent state in 1993, their national team have won five games and lost three against the Dutch, on top of three draws.

Before that, Czechoslovakia memorably beat the Netherlands on the way to their only European Championship title in Belgrade in 1976, having edged Johan Cruyff and company 3-1 after extra time in the semi-final.

Czechoslovakia were not there to stop the Dutch when they won the 1988 title in West Germany.

But Czech fans cherish above all the memory of an epic battle at Euro 2004 in Portugal, won by the Czechs 3-2.

— AFP

Sachin bills Jamieson as top all-rounder

New Delhi, June 26: Kyle Jamieson has the ability to become one of the leading all-rounders in world cricket in days to come, reckons legendary Sachin Tendulkar after watching the giant Black Cap torment India's best batsmen in the recently concluded World Test Championship Final.

In New Zealand's emphatic title triumph, Jamieson played a major role with match figures of 7 for 61 in 44 overs along with 21 valuable runs in his team's first essay. "Kyle Jamieson is a fantastic all-rounder. He is going to go on and become one of the leading all-



rounders in world cricket," Tendulkar said on his YouTube channel.

"When I had seen him last year in NZ, he impressed me," the maestro said.

He then elaborated on why playing Jamieson in

English conditions made him even more lethal.

"If you see his bowling, he is very tall and more than swinging, he likes to bowl seaming deliveries. He is a different bowler compared to Tim Southee, Trent Boult and Neil

Wagner.

"Jamieson hits the deck hard and whatever he does, is off the seam. There were variations which he used where he angled is wrists and bowled big inswingers. There was reasonable variation in his bowling and what I liked was consistency," Tendulkar said.

Tendulkar also liked how Jamieson used his height to play the big shots.

front-foot and makes a big statement.

"That kind of unsettles bowler and they have to pull back their lengths because batter is using his height. When the ball has to come chin high, then length has to be short and that gives batter chance to play horizontal bat shots and that's what Jamieson exactly did. Anything off length, he used his height beautifully, stood tall and played most of them."

On the Indian front, Tendulkar felt that Virat Kohli and Cheteshwar Pujara's dismissal in the first hour on sixth day became decisive.

— PTI

Shafali all set to make ODI debut

Bristol, June 26: Teen sensation Shafali Verma is set to make her eagerly-anticipated ODI debut as the Indian women's team seeks white-ball course correction against a strong world champion English side in the first game of the three-match series, here on Sunday. The 17-year-old batting sensation, who has taken world cricket by storm, has so far played 22 T20 Internationals but was inexplicably not picked for the last home series

against South Africa Women, with India witnessing disastrous consequences.

India lost 1-4 against South Africa and there was a lot of debate about Shafali's omission from that series. No such harakiri is expected to be committed by the Indian team management, which now understands Shafali's true value all the more after her stellar Test debut against England last week.

— PTI

SAJAN CREATES HISTORY, MAKES OLYMPIC 'A' CUT

New Delhi, June 26: Sajjan Prakash on Saturday became the first-ever Indian swimmer to qualify for the Olympic Games by breaching the 'A' standard time, clocking 1:56:38 seconds in the men's 200m butterfly event at the Sette Colli Trophy in Rome, Italy. The Games 'A' standard was set at 1:56.48 seconds and the 27-year-old Prakash completed the run 0.10 seconds faster at the Fina-accredited Olympic qualifier.

Prakash also rewrote his own national record



Sajan Prakash

of 1:56.96s that he had set last week at the Belgrade Trophy swimming competition. This will be Prakash's second successive Olympics, having represented India in the 2016 Rio Games.

— PTI