

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

KARIMNAGAR | FRIDAY | 4 JUNE 2021



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**BCCI biggie Srinivasan's daughter guilty of conflict**

**SPORTS | 8**

**TABLOID**

**Hustle culture & burnout generation**



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## WEATHER



**Max:** 31.6°C  
**Min:** 23.1°C  
**RH:** 54%  
**Rain:** Nil

**Forecast:** Partly cloudy. Rain likely. Max/Min temp. 37/23°C

## ASTROGUIDE

**Plava:** Uttarayana  
**Tithi:** Vaishakha Bahula Dasami till 4.08 am (Saturday)  
**Star:** Uttarabhadra till 8.49 pm  
**Varjyam:** Sresha Varjyam up to 6.51 am

**Durmuhurtam:** 8.20 am to 9.12 am; 12.40 pm to 1.32 pm  
**Rahukalam:** 10.30 am to 12 noon

### HURI CALENDAR

**Shawwal** 22, 1442 AH

### PRAYERS

**Fajar:** 4.31 am

**Zohar:** 12.24 pm

**Asar:** 4.50 pm

**Maghrib:** 6.53 pm

**Isha:** 8.09 pm

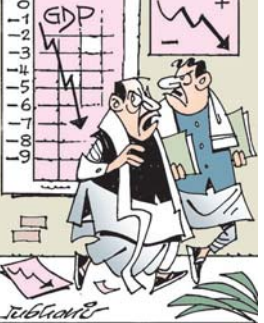
**SUNSET TODAY** 6.48 PM

**SUNRISE TOMORROW** 5.40 AM

**MOONRISE TOMORROW** 1.43 AM

**MOONSET TODAY** 1.56 PM

## COUNTER POINT



These economists are anti-nationals, they are showing negativity!

## SHORT TAKES

### SC seeks Class XII assessment plan

**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court said it was happy to note that the government has cancelled the Class 12 board exams, and directed the CBSE and CISCSE to place on record objective criteria for assessment of students in two weeks. A bench of Justices A.M. Khanwilkar and Dinesh Maheshwari asked Attorney General K.K. Venugopal and advocate J.K. Das, to place the parameters in 2 weeks. ■ Full report on Page 4

### CVC opposes pvt jobs by ex-babus

**New Delhi:** Noting instances of retired officials taking up jobs in private sector organisations soon after their retirement, the Central Vigilance Commission on Thursday said acceptance of such an employment offer without the completion of mandatory cooling-off period "constitutes a serious misconduct". It said all government organisations must take vigilance clearance before offering postretirement jobs to babus.

### 5 die in new UP hooch tragedy

**Aligarh (UP):** Five people died and 22 more were hospitalised after consuming spurious liquor in a village here, days after another hooch tragedy resulted in the death of at least 35 in the district, police said on Thursday. That incident had triggered punitive action by the government. On Wednesday night, some brick kiln labourers fell sick after consuming country-made liquor dumped in a canal near Rohera village in the Jawan area, they said.

### SW monsoon enters Kerala

**New Delhi:** After a delay of two days, the Southwest Monsoon made an onset over Kerala on Thursday, marking the commencement of the four-month rainfall season in the country, the IMD said. It is likely to advance into remaining parts of south Arabian Sea and some parts of central Arabian Sea, remaining parts of Kerala, Lakshadweep, during the next two days, the IMD said.

## Ever ready



Army Chief General M.M. Naravane reviews the security situation along the Line of Control in Kashmir on Thursday. He said the longevity of the ceasefire along the Line of Control with Pakistan depends on the actions of the neighbouring country but asserted that there would be "no slackening" of preparedness as terror infrastructure across the border was intact.

— PTI

## Etala to quit Assembly, TRS

### Former minister to submit resignation, join BJP on June 8

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 3

Former minister Etala Rajendar has decided to submit his resignation from the Legislative Assembly and also from the TRS on Friday.

According to his close aides and relatives, Rajendar will join the BJP in New Delhi in the presence of party president J.P. Nadda and other key leaders on June 8. Also joining BJP, along with him, will be former MLA Enugu Ravinder Reddy and Tula Uma, former chairperson of the Karim-

nagar zilla parishad. Rajendar returned to Hyderabad after meetings with Nadda, and BJP organisation secretary B.L. Santhosh in Delhi.

He informed his followers and well-wishers that the meetings with BJP leaders were fruitful and he has decided to join the party to fight against Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao. Some of his constituency leaders advised him to launch a party by roping all those dissatisfied with TRS leadership. They also suggested that in BJP he may not have the freedom to speak

against Chandrasekhar Rao, a problem being faced by some senior leaders who had joined the BJP.

Rajendar persuaded them saying that in the given situation, it was better to sail with the BJP which is in power at the Centre and stronger than Congress. He said a new party will be compared to the shortlived Praja Rajyam of Telugu film actor Chiranjeevi and the Telangana Jana Samiti of Prof. Kodandaram.

Meanwhile, it is being rumoured that Rajendar wants to field his wife Jamuna for the Huz-

urabad byelection. If she loses, his image will not be dented much and if she wins it will underscore his clout. News from TRS circles is that Chandrashekar Rao would like to expel Rajendar from the party and complain to the Speaker that he had crossed the party line which warrants disqualification from the Assembly.

Interestingly, political analysts and the people are wondering about the outcome if Rajendar submits his resignation to the Speaker and at the same time TRSLP rakes up its disqualification demand.

### PM DIALS MUKUL AFTER TMC CALLS ON BJP LEADER

**RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC**  
KOLKATA, JUNE 3

Prime Minister Narendra Modi dialled BJP national vice-president Mukul Roy on Thursday morning and enquired about his ailing wife Krishna Roy, who was admitted to Apollo Gleneagles Hospital after getting infected by Covid-19 along with her husband recently.

The PM's call to the newly elected BJP MLA of Krishnanagar North, who recovered from the infection however, came a day after Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's nephew Abhishek Banerjee met his son Shubhrangshu Roy, now in the BJP, at the hospital to know about his mother's health, which left the saffron party stumped.

## TS ranks 6 in Niti Aayog's sustainable growth index

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 3

Telangana at sixth place in Niti Aayog's index for sustainable development goals (SDG), according to the data released on Thursday.

The SDG index evaluates the progress of states and Union Territories on social, economic and environmental criteria and is released every year by Niti Aayog.

Kerala retained its rank as the top state with a score of 75. Himachal Pradesh and Tamil Nadu took the second spot with 74 points.

Andhra Pradesh shared third spot with Goa and Karnataka with a score of 72. Telangana was placed at sixth place along with Gujarat with a score of 69.

● **THE SDG index evaluates the progress of states and Union Territories on social, economic and environmental criteria and is released every year by Niti Aayog.**

Bihar has been adjudged the worst performer.

AP and Telangana state did not figure in the list of top states on parameters of no poverty (Goal No.1), zero hunger (Goal No. 2), good health and well being (Goal No. 3), quality education (Goal No. 4), gender equality (Goal No. 5), clean water and sanitation (Goal No. 6).

Out of total 16 goals, the Telugu states figure among the top states only in terms of Goal No. 7 on

affordable and clean energy.

Bihar, Jharkhand and Assam were the worst performing states in this year's index with a score of 52, 56 and 57 respectively.

The third rendition of India's SDG Index was launched by Niti Aayog Vice Chairman Rajiv Kumar on Thursday.

"Our effort of monitoring SDGs through the SDG India Index and Dashboard continues to be widely noticed and applauded around the world. It remains a rare data-driven initiative to rank our states and Union Territories by computing a composite index on the SDGs," Kumar said.

■ Page 2: Index used to measure progress

## COVID | DISCONNECT

### Many numbers submitted by govt to High Court found to be non-responsive

## We called 59 helplines. Only 17 responded

**HARLEEN MINOCHA | DC**  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 3

People attempting to reach out to government agencies or the state health department seeking help for information on Covid-19 or assistance in similar situations are getting no response if they are using helpline phone numbers in different districts of the state. These phones remain switched off or send out messages saying the numbers are invalid.

All these phone numbers — spread over the 33 dis-

tricts of the state — were listed in the affidavit submitted on May 31 by the state director of public health to the Telangana high court, as part of the state government's submissions during the hearings on public interest litigations (PILs) on Covid-19 at the High Court.

*Deccan Chronicle* on Thursday called all of the 59 helpline numbers listed in the affidavit, and some of them were called multiple times. It was found only 17 of these phones were functional and responsive.

● **ALL THESE phone numbers — spread over the 33 districts of the state — were listed in the affidavit submitted on May 31 by the state director of public health to the high court**

The rest were either invalid numbers or have been switched off.

The affidavit submitted in the HC lists two phone numbers for Hyderabad district. When called, one was in 'switched off' mode while the other number was not answered despite

several attempts. DC did not receive any call back from the particular number. The numbers listed for districts of Bhadradi Kothagudem, Jagtial, Asifabad, Mahbubnagar, Mancherla, Medak, Nagarkurnool and Yadadri were all invalid.

In cases where multiple numbers were listed, only one number was working in most districts, or both were not reachable — like in the case of Rajanna Sircilla, where two out of the three numbers did not answer while the third

number was switched off.

In case of Warangal Urban, out of the six numbers listed by the government, only one responded to the correspondent's call.

In the case of Sangareddy, Suryapet and Siddipet districts, the numbers listed in the affidavit for people to reach out for help on Covid-19 were the same for all three. And, of these three, two numbers turned out to be invalid, whereas the receiver at the third number said that it was not a helpline number but was only for giving

Covid-19 test reports.

The only helpline number from this lot of three listed for Siddipet was an invalid number. The number that worked for both Suryapet and Sangareddy was the one where the receiver said it was meant for Covid reports.

Of all 33 districts, *Deccan Chronicle* found only one district where all five landline numbers provided in the list actually worked and that was Rangareddy.

■ Page 2: No reply: The helpline call status

## Centre, Bio-E seal deal for 30 cr jabs

### It will be 2nd indigenous vaccine after Covaxin; Talks on to bring Pfizer, Moderna, J&J to India

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 3

The Centre has signed a deal for 30 crore vaccines with Hyderabad-based Biological-E that is making India's second indigenous vaccine after Covaxin.

"The vaccine by Biological-E is undergoing Phase 3 clinical trials after showing promising results in Phase 1 and 2 clinical trials. The vaccine being developed by Biological-E is a RBD protein sub-unit vaccine and is likely to be available in the next few months. These 30 crore doses will be manufactured and stockpiled by Biological-E from August to December 2021. For this, the Union ministry of health would be making an advance payment of ₹1,500 crore to s Biological-E," the ministry said on Thursday.

The Biological-E Covid vaccine candidate has been supported by Centre from preclinical stage to Phase-3 studies during which the department of biotechnology has provided grant-in-aid of over ₹100 crore and also partnered with Biological-E to conduct animal challenge and assay studies.

Meanwhile, India is try-

## Modi, Kamala discuss U.S. vax sharing plan

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 3

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday spoke to US Vice-President Kamala Harris who told him about the US plans to make vaccines against Covid-19 available to other countries, including India, under its 'Strategy for Global Vaccine Sha-ring'. Modi thanked Harris for the help and solidarity extended by the US to India in battling the second wave of Covid. He also invited her to visit India. They highlighted the

potential of the India-US partnership as well as the Quad vaccine initiative.

Harris said the US will start sharing the first 25 million doses of Covid vaccines with India and three other countries.

Earlier, President Joe Biden announced that the US will allocate 75 per cent — nearly 1.9 crore — of the first tranche of 2.5 crore doses of unused vaccines from its stockpile through the UN-backed Covax global vaccine sharing programme to countries in South and Southeast Asia as well as Africa.

ing to secure more vaccines from abroad.

"We are also part of discussions with major vaccine manufacturers like Pfizer, Johnson and Johnson, and Moderna about sourcing and possible local manufacturing of their vaccines in India. We have also helped to expedite the introduction of the Sputnik-V vaccine," MEA spokesperson

Arindam Bagchi said. "Vaccines have complex supply chains. We have worked to ease regulatory disruptions to these supply chains with key partners through diplomatic interventions

Foreign Secretary Harsh V. Shringla said the government is in talks with major pharma firms to source, and locally manufacture Covid-19 vaccines.

## SEDITION CHARGE AGAINST VINOD DUA QUASHED

**PARMOD KUMAR | DC**  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 3

In a relief to senior journalist Vinod Dua, the Supreme Court on Thursday quashed an FIR registered by Himachal Pradesh police alleging sedition against him for making comments critical of the Centre's handling of the first phase of the 21-day long nationwide lockdown.

The video was uploaded by Dua on YouTube for his *The Vinod Dua Show* on March 30, 2020.

Quashing the FIR, Justice Uday Umesh Lalit, said, "Given the drift of the talk show and all the statements put together, it cannot be said to have crossed the limits set out in the 1962 constitution bench judgment and certainly not made with the intent to incite people..."

"It can at best be termed as expression of disapprobation of actions of the government and its functionaries so that prevailing situation could be addressed quickly and efficiently."

## GAMBHIR FOUND STOCKING VAX, PILLS ILLEGALLY

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI JUNE 03

BJP MP Gautam Gambhir's foundation was found guilty of unauthorised stocking, procurement, and distribution of Fabiflu medicine to Covid-19 patients, Delhi's drug controller body informed the Delhi High Court on Thursday.

The drug controller informed the HC that action will be taken against the foundation, drug dealers, and other such cases. The DCGI was submitting a fresh report to the HC after the body was reprimanded for giving a clean chit to Gambhir's foundation.



## SHORT TAKES REVANTH REDDY THREATENING ME: HANUMANTA RAO

**Hyderabad:** Congress senior leader V. Hanumantha Rao alleged that Congress working president A. Revanth Reddy and his followers were threatening him over the phone and on social media.

Speaking to the media, Hanumantha Rao asked who would direct the party if Revanth Reddy is made PCC chief and then goes to jail. He demanded that the party high command pick a candidate from the BC community to be PCC chief. If a candidate from the Reddy community has to be picked, it must be Congress MP Komatireddy Venkat Reddy, who has been with the Congress since its inception. He warned against picking someone who had come from another party for the job.

Hanumantha Rao recalled that he fought the then Chief Minister Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy when he was in power but had not faced this situation. He expressed unhappiness that the party was not taking the threats seriously.

## CONG. DEMANDS FREE COVID JAB ACROSS STATE

**Hyderabad:** Telangana Congress in-charge Manickam Tagore and TPCC president N. Uttam Kumar Reddy on Thursday called upon district congress committees to submit memorandums to their respective district collectors on Friday demanding universal free vaccination. Addressing the DCC presidents and other senior party leaders online, they said that this was a nationwide programme. They said that memorandums should be addressed to the President of India and they should be submitted to the collectors. Tagore and Reddy criticised the BJP government at the Centre and the TRS government in the state for failing to control the pandemic. They said that the BJP government did not have a plan to control the pandemic.

## Hurry up and wait!



People queue up to get vaccinated at a special drive which was organised by the authorities at Musheerabad in Hyderabad on Thursday.

— P. SURENDRA

# Ex-NSG commando gets ₹30 lakh after long delay

### On HC's order, officer gets aid from govt to build house

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD JUNE 3

As a result of regular follow-up by the Telangana High Court in the last four years on a plea for extending financial assistance to the crippled NSG commando Kanagala Sriramulu, the Telangana state government said it had allotted ₹30 lakh to him for the construction of a house. Sriramulu, an expert in defusing grenades, was part of the bomb disposal squad of the National Security Guard and was gravely injured in the 2016 terror attack on the Pathankot Air Force base in Punjab. Since then he is out of service and grappling with serious financial problems in his life.

● **COURT HAD** also directed the government to take care of the educational expenses of the former commando's children. In response, the court was told that an educational institution has promised to provide free education to them.

The High Court took up the matter via a suo motu public interest litigation in 2017 and advised the state government to come to the aid of the injured commando, more so as he hailed from Telangana and had served the nation valiantly.

Following regular queries from the court, the state government had, on October 27, 2018, allotted a plot admeasuring 300 square yards to the com-

mando at Gundla Pochampally in Ranga Reddy district on the outskirts of Hyderabad. However, the commando expressed his inability to raise a roof over his head due to his financial condition. He explained that he was taking care of the educational requirements of his two children besides his wife.

The state government had given an undertaking to the court that it would help him build a house in the allotted place. However, no governmental support came to him till 2021. In April, the division bench comprising Chief Justice Hima Kohli and B. Vijayes Reddy gave a last opportunity to the government to either build the house or allot the money to

the ex-commando.

On Thursday, Harendra Prasad, special counsel to the Telangana state government informed the court that ₹30 lakh had been deposited into the account of the former commando for the house construction on the plot that had been allotted to him earlier. The court had also directed the government to take care of the educational expenses of the former commando's children. In response, the court was told that an educational institution has promised to provide free education to them. The court then insisted that this be given in a written submission and advised the district collector to file the same in an affidavit.

## INDEX USED TO MEASURE PROGRESS

From page 1

Launched in December 2018, the index has been stated to be the primary tool for monitoring progress on the SDGs in the country and has simultaneously fostered competition among the states and union territories by ranking them on the global goals.

The index, developed in collaboration with the United Nations in India, measures the progress at the national and sub-national level in the country's journey towards meeting the global goals and targets and has been successful as an advocacy tool to propagate the messages of sustainability, resilience, and partnerships, as well.

From covering 13 goals, 39 targets, and 62 indicators in the first edition in 2018-19 to 17 goals, 54 targets and 100 indicators in the second, the third edition covers 17 goals, 70 targets, and 115 indicators. The SDGs, constituted through a consultative process, have 17 goals and 169 related targets to be achieved by 2030. India's overall score across sustainable development goals improved marginally by six points, from 60 in 2019 to 66 in 2021, Niti Aayog said while releasing the index.

## HC GRANTS BAIL TO EX-GST OFFICER

**Hyderabad:** Justice G. Sri Devi of the Telangana High Court on Thursday granted conditional bail to former GST officer Srinivas Gandhi, who was in jail following the graft case lodged against him. The CBI had booked Gandhi, who was then working as superintendent in the anti-evasion wing of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) in Hyderabad, for amassing properties illegally.

Gandhi has to submit a ₹50,000 bond with two sureties, the High Court said in the conditions for his bail. He should also co-operate with the investigation officers, the judge said.

## NO REPLY ON MOST COVID HELPLINES

A STATUS REPORT ON HELPLINE NUMBERS MENTIONED IN THE GOVERNMENT'S AFFIDAVIT TO THE HIGH COURT

● **Hyderabad**  
7337371002: Not answered  
7995039793: Switched off

● **Adilabad**  
8732220462: Invalid

● **Bhadradi Kothagudem**  
8744241950: Invalid  
8744246655: Invalid

● **Jagtial**  
87242222204: Invalid

● **Jogulamba Gadwal**  
8546274007: Invalid  
8546295052: Invalid

● **Asifabad**  
Invalid

● **Mahbubabad**  
8719298526: Invalid  
8719240400: Invalid

● **Mahbubnagar**  
8542241165: Invalid

● **Mancherial**  
4024651119: Invalid

● **Medak**  
8452223360: Invalid

● **Medchal Malkajgiri**  
8418297820: Invalid

● **Mulugu**  
9492624469: Not helpline



● **Nagarkurnool**  
8540230201: Invalid

● **Nalgonda**  
9581555093: Switched off

● **Nizamabad**  
8309219718: No reply

● **Peddapalli**  
Numbers not reachable, or disconnects

● **Rajanna Sircilla**  
6309141122: Not answering  
9521842941 (Rajasthan number) Switched off,  
739653254: Not answering

● **Sangareddy**  
8455272233: Invalid  
8455272525: Invalid  
7093324551: For Covid reports

● **Siddipet**

Same as Sangareddy, invalid

● **Suryapet**  
same as Sangareddy, only for Covid reports

● **Vikarabad**  
Out of reach

● **Wanaparthy**  
8545233525: Invalid

● **Warangal Urban**  
7207188040: Disconnects  
7093250040: Disconnects  
7995118405: Switched off  
8179243595: Switched off  
8341812395: Switched off

● **Yadadri:**  
18004257106: Not in service  
8685200020: Invalid

# Journalist Raghu who wrote against TRS arrested

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD JUNE 3

The Mattampally Police in Suryapet has put under arrest a journalist from Malkajgiri a few hours after he was taken into custody by them on Thursday afternoon, when he stepped out of his home to buy groceries.

The family members, who suspected he was abducted by some gang as he was incommunicado for about three hours, received a letter from the police later in the day, stating that he was placed under arrest.

Raghu Ramakrishna, who has been writing for Tolivelugu and contributed pieces to other media outlets, was a critic of the ruling Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS).

The SHO of the Mattampally police, in a statement to Raghu's wife, said that the scribe was arrested at 12.45 pm on June 3 near his house in Hyderabad after he was informed of the grounds for his arrest. He was later produced before a local court before being remanded to judicial custody.

Police sources said the arrest was in connection with an old case wherein he was named as accused number 19, and booked under Sections 146, (rioting) 147 (punishment for riots) and 148 (rioting armed with deadly weapon), 332 and 333 (voluntarily causing hurt to deter a public servant from his duty) read with 149 (unlawful assembly) of the IPC, besides other sections of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1932. Police officials at Malkajgiri said that as per the law, they should "inform" an individual either before or after his arrest. "We received information about the arrest a while after the cops took him into custody. Since it's the law and order police of the state that made the arrest, they need not inform us beforehand," said Malkajgiri inspector B. Jagadeeswar Rao, explaining the delay in informing Raghu's family of the arrest.

## SCRIBES, CONG., BJP CRITICISE RAGHU'S ARREST

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD JUNE 3

Telangana BJP chief Bandi Sanjay condemned the arrest of journalist Raghu Ramakrishna and said that he would take up the issue with the Centre.

"Will journalists be arrested for pointing out the shortcomings of the government in our society? Some ruling party leaders occupied tribal lands in Huzurnagar constituency's Gurrampode thanda. Raghu has been booked for exposing such deeds. It is the media's job to highlight corruption and irregularities in public." "The KCR government wants to silence the media and give out a message that cases will be filed against those criticising ruling party leaders," Sanjay said.

Noting that journalists played a major role in the agitation for statehood, he asked how a senior journalist could be 'kidnapped' 24 hours before the state celebrated its formation day. "What happened to Raghu today can happen to any other journalist here tomorrow," he said.

Congress spokesperson Dr Sravan Dasoju said, "Raghu, who has been exposing the TRS government's fault lines and spreading awareness around public issues, should be saved. He is a very agile journalist who has a brilliant understanding of social issues and belongs to a backward class community. The TRS government is solely responsible for Raghu's safety and immediate steps should be taken to prevent any untoward development.

Journalist unions and political parties across the city have expressed their anger and condemned the move by the TRS government.

# VIT-AP inks MoU with IDS Inc, US

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 3.

The VIT-AP University has said that it has entered into an agreement with IDS Inc, USA, for providing skills and capabilities for its students in blockchain technology. The University's School of Computer of Engineering has signed a memorandum of understanding with IDS for joint efforts in research and development and upskilling undergraduate and graduate students in blockchain technology.

Dr S.V. Kota Reddy, Vice-Chancellor, VIT-AP University said the MoU will enable students to build careers in this emerging field. It will also provide an opportunity to the students, scholars, and faculty members to carry out research and to develop advanced applications using blockchain technology. Further, IDS will provide internships with financial support, and job opportunities to selected students of VIT-AP University, he said.

Sudharshan Reddy Minumula, CEO of IDS Inc., said the collaboration with VIT-AP University will help faculty and students to explore and work with next generation technologies. Aravind Voruganti, IDS Inc., vice-president, said the partnership will encourage and enable students to pursue a career in blockchain technology-driven fields.

Dr Hari Seetha, Dean, School of Computer Science and Engineering, Dr C.L.V. Sivakumar, Registrar, VIT-AP University, faculty and students witnessed the virtual MoU signing ceremony.



Minister K.T. Rama Rao is briefed about the facilities on the newly-launched mobile intensive care units that are mounted on buses, in Hyderabad on Thursday.

— DC

# 30 buses equipped to provide intensive care

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 3

Thirty specially designed buses that will serve as mobile intensive care units across the state were inaugurated here on Thursday. Each of the districts will have a mobile ICU.

Flagging them off after receiving a briefing about the facilities in each of the buses, minister K.T. Rama Rao, thanked The Lord's Church for contributing the mobile ICUs for providing urgent services to people in unserved areas.

He said the vehicles were a welcome addition to healthcare services during the pandemic.

demic. "Covid has made every one realise the importance of healthcare workers who are now being looked upon as equal to God," he said.

Each mobile unit will have 10 beds, with a doctor and two nurses staffing it. Each bed is provided with a dedicated oxygen line that is served by a central oxygen storage in the vehicle.

The new vehicles and the services they provide have been arranged by The Lord's Church in conjunction with VeraSmart Health Care. Each bus is equipped with facilities for video consultations that the staff can use reach out to specialists or hospitals.

## GET | VACCINATED Vaccination drive to commence from tomorrow in state

# IPM to jab foreign-bound students

KANIZA GARARI | DC  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 3

Students planning to go abroad for studies can get vaccinated against Covid-19 at the Institute of Preventive Medicine at Narayanguda, Director of Health Services Dr G. Srinivasa Rao announced on Thursday.

While the vaccination will begin on Saturday, a link for booking online slots by such students will be available at <https://www.health.telangana.gov.in> from Friday.

Dr Rao said the lockdown has brought Covid-19 cases down but there

are still some districts where the fresh infections were high and continuing. These hotspots of Covid-19 infection in rural areas will be visited by health officials to understand the reasons for the continued spread of the disease.

He said some of the areas of concern were Sathupalli and Madhira in Khammam, Huzurnagar and Kodad in Suryapet, Alampur in Jogulamba Gadwal, Haliya in Nalgonda and Makthal in Mahbubnagar districts. Strict measures to contain the spread of the disease will be enforced in such areas and people have to

● **IN ALL,** 14 new RT-PCR testing labs will begin functioning in different districts from June 10 to improve the testing. In addition, mobile testing vans were also being used to cover populations in interior areas, the officials said.

exercise utmost caution, Dr Srinivas Rao said, addressing a press conference.

He said that it has also been noted that children in several districts are suffering from multisystem inflammatory syndrome, and many of them are now being brought to the city

with complaints of recurrent fever.

Dr K. Ramesh Reddy, of Medical Education said these cases are also a cause for concern and the early treatment will help in faster recovery.

The state, Dr Rao said, has identified seven lakh people in high risk groups for vaccination and it is being ensured that these groups are vaccinated at the earliest. Frontline workers in municipal corporations who have not been vaccinated are also in the priority groups and steps are being taken to vaccinate all of them, he said.

Dr Rao said, "A special team has been formed to look into the complaints of the patients with excess billing. This team will work to get refunds to the patients from the erring hospitals. This team will also look into the aspect of renewing licenses where hospitals must have their own oxygen plants."

In all, 14 new RT-PCR testing labs will begin functioning in different districts from June 10 to improve the testing. In addition, mobile testing vans were also being used to cover populations in interior areas, the officials said.



OTHER STORIES

CALL TO SPEED UP WORKS ON COLLECTORATE

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KAMAREDDY, JUNE 3

Government whip, Gampa Govardhan directed officials to complete the patchworks of newly constructed collectorate complex and SP office in Kamareddy on Thursday. He visited the both offices besides National Highway 44. The officials explained the ongoing works to the government whip.

Gampa Govardhan said that Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu will inaugurate the Kamareddy collectorate and SP office building soon. District collector A. Sharath, SP N.Swetha and other officials were present. Meanwhile, state police housing corporation managing director Sanjay Kumar Jain, chief engineer Vijay Kumar also visited the newly constructed DPO.

FARMERS SAD AS PADDY DAMAGED BY RAIN

**Khammam:** The farmers of Laxmipuram are worried over the damage to paddy that was kept at the lifting centres, in view of the present spell of rain.

These farmers have been pleading with the officials since the last four days to send lorries and lift the paddy. There was no response from the officials, and now the rain destroyed the paddy.

Farmer Nunna Ramaiah said he placed 40 bags of paddy at the Laxmipuram lifting centre four days ago and waited for officials to come and take these away.

The organisers of the primary agricultural cooperative society have asked them to wait till the lorries come in.

In the meantime, rain poured in and the paddy got damaged.

Farmer leader Bandi Ramesh said the government should lift the paddy without further delay and the farmers should be paid the minimum support price (MSP) for their produce.

CONG. COMMITTEE TO NAME TPCC PRESIDENT SOON

IREDDY SRINIVAS  
REDDY I DC  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 3

The All India Congress Committee (AICC) has finally concluded the exercise of finding the new Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) president. Sources state that the party high command will announce the name in the next few days. Several leaders from the state are likely to make it to AICC committees.

As per a leader's expectation, AICC president Sonia Gandhi will take the final decision soon. Former minister D Sridhar Babu, CLP Leader Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka and working president A. Revanth Reddy, MLC T. Jeevan Reddy are in the race.

But several senior leaders are opposed to the move as he came from a different party. V. Hanumantha Rao, T. Jayaprakash 'Jagga' Reddy and others openly commented against Revanth Reddy's candidature. According to one AICC secretary, who represents the state, all aspirants are lobbying for their respective candidature with their Delhi contacts. He stated that the decision was postponed in January due to the Nagarjunasagar byelection, but the actual reason was that some unhappy senior leaders sought postponement of the announcement. An aspirant for the TPCC chief post stated, "There is no final decision about the next PCC chief".

Meanwhile, incumbent TPCC chief N. Uttam Kumar Reddy is likely to be appointed general secretary of the AICC and also be made in-charge of one or two states.

Ponnampallapudi, Jetti Kusuma Kumar and Komatireddy Venkat Reddy are also likely to be appointed as AICC secretary. Shabbir Ali is likely to be appointed working president of the TPCC.

Party sources said that party in-charge Manickam Tagore is likely to be appointed as Tamil Nadu Congress chief.

● **FORMER MINISTER D Sridhar Babu, CLP Leader Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka and working president A. Revanth Reddy, MLC T. Jeevan Reddy are in the race.**

Covid saga: Parents dying, leaving children orphans

The second wave is claiming lives of breadwinners in family

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KARIMNAGAR JUNE 3

The second wave of Coronavirus is devastating many families and claiming the lives of their breadwinners. Deaths of two to three persons in same family are also being reported from several areas of erstwhile Karimnagar district, often leaving their children orphans.

Those in between the 35-45 age-group are among the worst-affected. In Peddapalli district, couple Kudikala Mallesh (38) and Srujana (33), residents of Adavi Srirampur village of Muttaram Mandal, died of Covid in a span of 12 hours.

The couple, survived by two sons, used to run a medical shop in Adavi Srirampur village. When both the husband and wife were diagnosed positive, they underwent treatment and remained in home isolation for a week. The struggle with the virus continued and they were later admitted to a private hospital at Karimnagar.

Before they decided to move into the hospital, they had left their two sons Charan (11) and Manideep (7) at the house

of Mallesh's parents in Begumpet of Ramgiri mandal in Peddapalli. "Taking loans from relatives and money lenders, Mallesh spent around Rs10 lakh for their treatment," the relatives said.

Mallesh's brother Sadi and Srujana's brother Krishna, having learnt about the Ayurvedic medicine of Anandaiah, had even gone to the Andhra Pradesh border in an ambulance. With the help of their friends in Krishnapatnam, they managed to get the medicine. However, when they were returning with the medicine, they heard that Mallesh has passed away in the hospital. They rushed to the hospital in Karimnagar to save at least the life of Srujana. But, within a span of 12 hours, she took her last breath, leaving the children orphans.

A similar incident took place in Vemulakurthi village of Ibrahimpatnam mandal of Jagtial district. Both the husband and wife died leaving their two children orphans.

One Satapuram Bhimaiah, a fisherman died of Covid five months ago. When Bhimaiah passed away, his wife Rajakala (32) was four

months pregnant. After the death of Bhimaiah, she faced a lot of hardships to take care of their two sons -- Ganesh (13) and Manoj (7) -- working as a farm labourer from a rented house. On May 19, she started receiving labour pain and was admitted to a hospital.

But the strain she faced during the last five months led to the death of a growing fetus. Due to loss of excess blood, she went into an unconscious state. The doctors tried to administer her fresh blood. With an increase in the number of Corona patients, though, the blood of the same group was not available. This led to the death of Rajakala.

The two children who became orphans do not have any close relatives. Their grandparents had died long ago. The villagers conducted the final rites of Rajakala.

Having learnt about the tragic death of Bhimaiah and Rajakala, distant relative Saiamma came to help the orphaned children. An elderly woman, she was living alone in a rented space in Metpally mandal.

In Rajanna Sircilla district, auto driver Shaik

Khaleem (40) and his wife Nikath Tabbassum (38), living in Vidhyanagar Colony at Sircilla town, died of Covid in a space of five days. They left their two daughters Amaan (15) and Rumaan (13) orphans.

Even their daughters have also contracted the deadly virus, and there was no one to help them out. Luckily for them, Sircilla MLA and minister KT Rama Rao came to the rescue of the girls and directed district collector Krishna Bhaskar to provide immediate treatment to them -- Amaan and Rumaan. He also assured them that he would take care of their education after their recovery and will extend other support to secure their future.

In yet another incident, both father and son in a family died within 15 days' time. T Lakshminarayana (60), resident of Mallial mandal of Jagtial district, was running a beedi unit. He died after being infected with coronavirus. His son Madhu (36), a private college lecturer, was also tested positive but could not attend the final rites of his father since he was undergoing treatment in a hospital. After 15 days, Madhu too died.

Steps underway to prevent flood water threat: Mayor

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KARIMNAGAR, JUNE 3

All suitable measures are being taken to prevent threat from floods in across colonies ahead of the rainy season. These include desilting works of storm water drainages under Smart City project.

This was stated by mayor, Yadagiri Sunil Rao, after laying a foundation stone for desilting works of storm water drainages at a cost of ₹29 lakh in Ashok Nagar here on Thursday. He urged officials and contractors to complete the works on a priority basis.

Sunil Rao said that Karimnagar Municipal Corporation (KMC) has

taken up special steps to ensure for free flow of flood water and to prevent it from entering houses. Since flood water canals in city were constructed long back, many are in ruins and some have collapsed. It is because of this water is getting stagnated in some colonies and entering houses following rains heavily. As a permanent solution to such problems, flood water threat was included under smart city project, and the decision was taken to practically implement, he pointed out.

Keeping in view the needs of coming generations, the construction and leveling works of all

storm water drainages will be completed in the next two years, he said.

Sunil Rao also said that steps are being taken to prevent drainage water getting mixed into Manair wagu by setting up a water filtration centre at the end point. It is only after filtration of drainage water and ensuring that it does not emit foul smell that water will be released into Manair wagu, he added.

Corporators Nampalli Srinivas, Guggilla Manjula, Pittal Vinoda, Mendi Sripatha, executive engineer Raman and divisional engineer Masood Ali were present on the occasion.

KCR's grandson praises artist for KCR's sketch

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KARIMNAGAR, JUNE 3

The Chief Minister, K. Chandrababu Naidu's grandson and TRS party working president, K.T.Rama Rao's son Himanshu expressed happiness by seeing his grandparents painting on his twitter account and appreciated the person who painted it.

The pencil sketch painting of CM KCR and his wife Shoba talking to each other while smiling went viral on various social media platforms and received hundreds of likes for the post. The painting was drawn by Kalikota Venkatachary who hails from



The pencil sketch of KCR and his wife Shoba by Kalikota Venkata chary.

Karimnagar district. Mr. Venkatachary shared the painting on twitter. Which was lauded by one Yerroju Chandu and posted it in re-tweeted by tagging KTR's son Himanshu.

After seeing the pencil sketch painting of his grandparents,

Himanshu reacted immediately and replied by saying that he felt very happy after seeing the painting of his grandparents.

He praised the artist Venkatachary and expressed thanks to him for drawing such a wonderful piece of sketch.

Ending hunger pangs



BC welfare minister Gangula Kamalakara along with KMC Mayor Y. Sunil Rao and corporator G. Jayasri distributes food packets at RTC bus stand in Karimnagar on Thursday. —DC

Third round Covid survey begins today in Nizamabad

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NIZAMABAD, JUNE 3.

Third round of door-to-door survey on fevers will begin on June 4 in Nizamabad district. To trace the Covid-19 patients and provide them medical kits at their doorsteps, the medical teams pressed into service. Following the successful completion of two rounds

of the survey, the district administration has decided to carry out another round of survey.

The officials noticed that Covid-19 positivity rate is still high in Morthad, Bheemgal, Yedapally, Kammarpally, Mosra and Rakasipet in Bodhan. Presently, the district average Covid-19 positivity rate is reduced to 2.95 percent on Thursday.

District collector C. Narayana Reddy directed officials to take all steps to prevent Covid-19 in villages by June 9. He said that each medical team should visit 50 houses per day.

Collector said that daily 6,000 Covid-19 tests conducted in the district and mild, moderate patients' condition will be monitored regularly.

Adivasis still skeptical of digital survey gains

the two states as also the central government look into their issues.

The Gondwana Samkshema Parishad's leader Sonde Veeraiah said the "adivasi brothers are suffocating due to problems relating to their lack of jobs and about podu lands. The new lambada sects of Rajasthan and Maharashtra have been included in the ST reservation list.

"Adivasis in various meetings explained their problems with the lambadas. A majority of the adivasis felt that this was like placing a tiger and a goat at one place. One will eat the other in no time. How can the government justify this?"

Adivasi sects used to live in the forests and the lambadas did not have such a

lifestyle. Some adivasis exert pressure on us to merge the entire Bhadrachalam division in Andhra Pradesh," he said, adding, "We have no choice other than discussing these issues with the governments."

He said land pattas were given to non-tribals and lambadas in the name of Sada Binama. "We have our own doubts on the new land digital survey. We want a clarification," he said.

Nine adivasi sects' state coordinator Chunchu Ramakrishna said the division of Bhadrachalam into two parts came as a big blow to the adivasi sects in Telangana. The adivasis thus came to the conclusion that they are being neglected in Telangana.

LALITHA'S TERM AS MLC ENDS

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NIZAMABAD, JUNE 3

MLC Akula Lalitha completed her six-year tenure on Thursday. Speculation is rife on whether or not she will be re-nominated, which TRS boss and Chief Minister K. Chandrababu Naidu reportedly assured her. Lalitha changed her loyalties from the Congress to the TRS in 2018.

Since commencing her political career as MPP president of Makloor mandal from Congress, she has been Dichpally MLA, Nizamabad district Congress committee president, Mahila Congress state president of united Andhra Pradesh and All India Mahila Congress general secretary.

Although she differed with her political mentor D. Sriniva, presently TRS Rajya Sabha MP, Lalitha won as MLC in 2015 from the MLAs quota. She also contested as Congress MLA candidate in Armoor Assembly constituency and lost to TRS nominee A. Jeevan Reddy. After the defeat, she joined TRS.

Earlier, MLCs V. Gangadhar Goud and D. Rajeshwar from Nizamabad district changed their loyalties from Telugu Desam and Congress parties to TRS. Both were re-nominated.

● **SINCE COMMENCING** her political career as MPP president of Makloor mandal from Congress, she has been Dichpally MLA, Nizamabad district Congress committee president, Mahila Congress state president of united Andhra Pradesh and All India Mahila Congress general secretary.

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## SHORT TAKES

MUMBAI MAYOR  
IN SOUP OVER  
ONLINE REPLYBHAGWAN PARAB | DC  
MUMBAI, JUNE 3

Mumbai mayor Kishori Pednekar on Thursday landed herself in controversy over a tweet, in which she allegedly used objectionable language. She later deleted the tweet claiming that her party worker had posted the message from her account.

Responding to a Twitter user's question "Contract Konala Dila?" (To whom contract has been given?), tweet about the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation's (BMC) global tender for Covid-19 vaccine supply, Pednekar replied "Tujhya Bapala!" (To Your Father).

The mayor later deleted the tweet by claiming that her party worker had posted the message from her account while she was busy with a work commitment.

Pednekar, who belongs to Shiv Sena, said, "A Shiv Sainik sent out that particular tweet from my phone. He may have done it out of anger. I usually check my phone when it comes back in my hands, and I noticed the said tweet. I realised that it was a big mistake and that this should not have been done. However badly others might behave with us, we should not behave the same way with them."

"I have learned a lesson from this that your mobile phone should not be handed over to a person even if they are close to you," she further said.

17 PILOTS DIED  
OF CORONAVIRUS  
IN MAY

**New Delhi, June 3:** A total of 17 pilots of Air India, IndiGo and Vistara died due to Covid-19 in May when the country witnessed the peak of the Coronavirus pandemic's second wave, sources said on Thursday.

IndiGo lost 10 pilots and Vistara two, aviation industry sources stated.

Air India officials said five senior pilots — captains Harsh Tiwary, G.P.S. Gill, Prasad Karmakar, Sandeep Rana and Amitesh Prasad — of the national carrier died of Covid.

No pilot has died due to Covid-19 at AirAsia India till date, the industry sources mentioned.

"We are committed to covering our entire workforce by mid-June," said Raj Raghavan, Senior VP & Head of Human Resources, IndiGo, in a statement.

Indigo has a "robust" welfare scheme and a "benevolent policy" so that each family of the deceased pilot would be getting ₹5 crore, the sources mentioned. They added that while there were barely a few pilots of IndiGo who tested positive during the first wave, almost 450 pilots of the carrier tested positive for Covid-19 during the second wave.

HC ISSUES  
SUMMONS TO  
RAMDEV

**New Delhi, June 3:** The Delhi High Court on Thursday issued summons to yoga guru Ramdev on a plea accusing him of making statements against allopathic medicines and claiming Patanjali's Coronil kit is a cure for Covid-19 but refused to restrain him at this stage saying the allopathic profession was not so fragile.

The high court however orally asked Ramdev's counsel to tell him not to make any provocative statements.

"Rajiv Nayar is a very respectable senior (advocate). I am sure his client will listen to him," Justice C. Hari Shankar said.

The high court issued summons to Ramdev on the suit filed by Delhi Medical Association (DMA) and asked him to file response in three weeks and listed the matter for hearing on July 13.

Considerable time has passed since passing of allegedly injurious statements. The counsel says defendant no. 1 (Ramdev) continues to make statement. No injunctive order can be given without giving an opportunity to the plaintiff, especially in view of the objections. Issue summons on the suit, Justice Shankar said.

The court also issued summons to social media platforms Twitter and Facebook and Astha channel, who are made parties to the petition.

DMA, on behalf of its doctor members, submitted before the court that Ramdev's statement affects as Coronil medicine does not cure Covid and it is misleading.



Beneficiaries wait to receive the second dose of the Covid-19 vaccine at a vaccination centre in New Delhi on Thursday. — PTI



People flout social distancing guidelines in a market area after relaxation in lockdown norms in Jabalpur on Thursday. — PTI

## MVA speaks in different voices on curbs

Maha all set to unlock in phases but CMO and Congress minister differ on withdrawal of restrictions

SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC  
with agency inputs  
MUMBAI, JUNE 3

The conflict among Maharashtra's ruling parties (Maharashtra Vikas Agadhi) was again out in the open after the Chief Minister's office disapproved the announcement made by a Congress minister regarding withdrawal of lockdown.

Senior Congress leader and Maharashtra relief and rehabilitation minister Vijay Wadettiwar on Thursday held a press conference and declared the withdrawal of lockdown in 18 out of 36 districts from Friday.

Within an hour after Wadettiwar's announcement, Maharashtra Chief Minister's Office (CMO) issued a statement stating that curbs have not been withdrawn. "A proposal in this connection with unlock is under consideration. The decision is yet to be taken," the statement said.

Chief minister Uddhav Thackeray on Thursday held a meeting of the State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA) through video conferencing.

Subsequently, Wadettiwar said that the state government has decided to 'unlock' 18 districts of the state, where the positivity rate of Covid is less than five per cent. The state has planned to lift the restrictions in five phases.

However, in a statement, the CMO said, "We have not prevented the spread of Coronavirus infection completely as yet. The infection is increasing in some rural parts of the state. Considering the deadly coronavirus and mutations in it, it is necessary to decide whether the curbs should be relaxed or not. The restrictions imposed in the state are yet to be lifted."

The decision on relaxing restrictions is under consideration and no decision has been taken, the CM's Office said. After the Chief

K'taka announces ₹500 cr  
relief, extends lockdown

**Bengaluru, June 3:** The lockdown slated to end on June 7 was extended till June 14 in Karnataka as Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa on Thursday announced a ₹500 crore second relief package.

The relief was meant for sections, which were left out in the previous package of ₹1,250 crore.

"We had earlier announced stringent

restrictions from May 24 to June 7 to contain the spread of Coronavirus. Though the infections have reduced, the spread of the disease is still on," Yediyurappa said.

The decision to extend the restrictions by a week was taken following the recommendation of experts, he said.

The lockdown-like restrictions have been in effect since April 27.

From May 10, the Chief Minister announced a lockdown till May 24 morning. However, it was further extended till June 7.

The second Covid relief package of ₹500 crore would encompass teachers, 'ASHA' and Anganwadi workers, fishermen, workers in film industry, temple priests, Muezzins in mosques and powerloom workers.

The relief package

● **THE SECOND** Covid relief package of ₹500 cr would encompass teachers, 'ASHA', Anganwadi workers, fishermen, workers in film industry, temple priests, Muezzins in mosques and powerloom workers.

marked. Temple priests serving in the 'C' category of temples under the Muzrai department, Imams and Muezzins in mosques and ASHA workers would also get ₹3,000 each, Yediyurappa said.

He said ₹24.7 crore has been earmarked for Anganwadi workers who would get ₹2,000 each.

The government also exempted the medium, small and micro enterprises from the fixed electricity charge which would cost ₹114.7 crore to the government.

BJP Karnataka unit chief and Dakshina Kannada MP Nalin Kumar Kateel welcomed the second package announced by the Chief Minister.

To a query, the Chief Minister said already the disbursement of relief packages to various sections, as announced earlier, is on.

Almost 70 per cent of people have started receiving the benefits of the previous package. Within two days, we will start disbursing the second relief package to the beneficiaries. We will make a sincere effort to give the benefits to people within a week," Yediyurappa told reporters. — PTI

A sum of ₹35 crore has been reserved for 59,000 powerloom workers who would get ₹3,000 each, the Chief Minister said.

He added that each of the 22,000 unorganised workers in film industry and television medium would get ₹3,000 for whom ₹6.6 crore has been ear-

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MP: MINORS'  
PARENTS TO GET  
VAX PRIORITYRABINDRA NATH  
CHOUDHURY | DC  
BHOPAL, JUNE 3

As part of measures to effectively deal with a possible third wave of Coronavirus, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivrang Singh Chouhan on Thursday announced that priority would be given to parents of minors aged below 12 years in the current vaccination drive.

In a video statement released here, Chouhan said the decision to give priority to the parents of minors aged below 12 years in the ongoing third phase of vaccination in the state was taken following warnings by experts that children may be affected the most in the third wave of pandemic, feared to hit the country by December this year.

"We have started establishing children wards in many hospitals in the state as part of our preparation to deal with a possible third wave of pandemic. We have decided to give priority to parents of minors aged below 12 years in the vaccination drive so that they can stay with their sick children safely in the hospitals", he said.

The Chief Minister said the second pandemic wave was under 'control' in the state now and added that the state government was trying to stop the third wave by intensifying the vaccination drive in coming days.

Chouhan further said students visiting abroad for higher studies would also be given priority in vaccination to ensure that their travel plans were not disrupted due to restrictions on travels by Indians imposed by some countries.

Management department has decided five levels of severity of the pandemic based on the positivity rate and availability of oxygen beds.

The degree of relaxation will be decided as per the level of severity and guidelines on whether to relax the curbs or further strengthen them will be announced soon, the Chief Minister's Office said.

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Management department has decided five levels of severity of the pandemic based on the positivity rate and availability of oxygen beds.

Maha, UP cancel  
state board exams

**Mumbai, June 3:** The state board examinations for classes 10 and 12 in Maharashtra have been cancelled this year in view of the prevailing Coronavirus pandemic, minister Vijay Wadettiwar announced on Thursday.

Speaking to reporters here, relief and rehabilitation minister Wadettiwar said the state board exams of classes 12 and 10 are cancelled. "Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray had already indicated about it in his earlier address to the state. A (formal) decision was taken today."

The Maharashtra government's decision came two days after the Centre cancelled the CBSE class 12 board exams citing the prevailing Covid-19 pandemic. The class 10 (SSC) board exams in the state were cancelled earlier due to a surge in Covid-19 cases, but a formal announcement was made on Thursday.

The Uttar Pradesh Board also cancelled the class 12 examination. The decision was taken at a meeting chaired by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath in which deputy chief minister Dinesh Sharma, who holds charge of secondary education department, was also present.

Additional chief secretary, information, Navneet Sehgal said that, "examination for the UP board class 12 has been cancelled."

Nearly 26 lakh candidates are registered for the class 12 board exams in the state.

The state had last month cancelled class 10 UP Board exam following which nearly 30 lakh candidates, who had registered for it, were promot-

ed to class 11.

Many state boards have cancelled the class 12 exam after the Union government on Tuesday decided to cancel the CBSE Class 12 board exams amid the Covid-19 pandemic with Prime Minister Narendra Modi asserting that the decision has been taken in the interest of students and that the anxiety among students, parents and teachers must be put to an end.

However, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday said a decision on holding the class 12 exams in the state will be taken after the CBSE announces modalities for marking the students.

Addressing a press conference on his first visit to the national capital as chief minister, he also said that all willing residents of Assam will be vaccinated by the end of December as more Covid-19 vaccines will be arriving in the state from this month onwards.

Asked whether the class 12 exams conducted by the Assam Higher Secondary Education Council will be cancelled, Sarma said a decision in this regard will be taken after consultation with all stakeholders as it is a question of a students' future.

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## RIGHTS | MATTER

## Supreme Court chides CBSE for falling back on its examination bylaws

## SC allows name change on CBSE Cl-12 certificates

PARMOD KUMAR | DC  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 3

The Supreme Court on Thursday upheld the students' right to change or correct their names in the Class XII certificate of the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) on the principle that the right to control one's identity must remain with the individual for all times.

A bench comprising Justice A.M. Khanwilkar, Justice B.R. Gavi and Justice Krishna Murari chided the CBSE for falling back on its examination bylaws to deny issuance of fresh certificate with alteration or change in the name of the students.

The CBSE had cited

● **REASONABLENESS** would demand, SC said, a proper balance between a 'student's right to be identified in the official (public) records in manner of her choice and the Board's argument of administrative efficiency."

● **THE JUDGMENT** came in an appeal by one I. Jigya Yadav through her father in 2011 after Delhi HC rejected her plea in 2010.

administrative efficiency to resist the change or altering of names in the certificates issued by the board.

Speaking for the bench, Justice Khanwilkar said, "Administrative efficiency, despite being a crucial concern, has not been and cannot be elevated to a standard that it is used to justify non-performance of essential functions by an instrumentality of the state."

"To use administrative

efficiency to make it practically impossible for a student to alter her identity in the Board certificates, no matter how urgent and important it is. Would be highly disproportionate and can in no manner be termed as a reasonable restriction," Justice Khanwilkar said.

Reasonableness would demand, the court said, a proper balance between a "student's right to be identified in the official (pub-

lic) records in manner of her choice and the Board's argument of administrative efficiency."

To sustain this balance, the court said that it would be open to the Board to limit the number of times such alterations could be permitted including subject to availability of the old records preserved by it as per the extant regulations.

However, to say that after the publication of examination results and issuance of certificates, there can be no way to alter the record would be a case of "total prohibition and not a reasonable restraint."

The top court judgment came in an appeal by one I. Jigya Yadav through her father in 2011 after Delhi

High Court rejected her plea in 2010. The petitioner has challenged by-law 69.1 primarily on the ground that it does not permit any correction in name, either of the candidate or his/her parents in the school certificate unless such correction/alterations are necessary for bringing the documents in conformity with the school record.

The court further stated that CBSE, which deals with maintenance of educational standards, cannot arrogate to itself the power to impact the identity of students who enroll with it.

The court said that the provision in CBSE by-laws restricting change of name "post publication of examination results" is

excessively restrictive and violative of Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution.

However, the court clarified that the provision for change of name in the by-laws is clearly severable from those for corrections in name/date of birth and, therefore, the court's determination shall not affect them except as regards the condition of limitation period.

The Supreme Court directed the CBSE to process the applications for correction or change, as the case may be, in the certificate issued by it in the respective cases under consideration.

It also ordered that the bye-laws of the board are amended to reflect the guidelines laid down by the court.

DHARAVI  
REPORTS ONE  
FRESH CASE

**Mumbai, June 3:** For the first time in four months, Mumbai's Dharavi area reported just one new Coronavirus case on Thursday, a senior official of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) said.

The slum-dominated area had not detected a single case on Wednesday, he said.

The tally of infections in Dharavi stands at 6,829, of which 6,451 patients have recovered from the disease and 19 are undergoing treatment, the official said.

Dharavi became a hotspot of coronavirus infection at the start of April, with 99 cases reported on April 8 alone.

— PTI



## SHORT TAKES

6.1-MAGNITUDE  
QUAKE STRIKES  
INDONESIA

**Jakarta, June 3:** A 6.1-magnitude earthquake struck off the coast of Indonesia's remote Maluku islands Thursday, the United States Geological Survey said, but no tsunami warning was issued.

The strong quake hit at a relatively shallow depth of 31 kilometres, about 127 kilometres southwest of the city of Ternate. Shallower quakes tend to cause more damage, but there were no immediate reports of casualties. "It was a decent shake, but people weren't panicking," said Ternate resident Nasarudin Amin. "There are warnings about potential aftershocks." Indonesia experiences frequent quakes due to its position on the Pacific "Ring of Fire".

4 KILLED AS BOMB  
HITS MINIVAN  
IN KABUL

**Kabul, June 3:** A bomb ripped through a minivan in the western part of the Afghan capital Kabul on Thursday, killing at least four people.

No one took responsibility for the attack in the neighbourhood, which is largely populated by the minority Hazara ethnic group who are mostly Shiite Muslims. The Islamic State has carried out similar bombings in the area, including an attack on two minivans on Tuesday that killed at least 10 people. Shiites are a minority in mostly Sunni Afghanistan, and the Islamic State affiliate has declared war against them. In a statement, IS said they had also bombed an electrical grid station on Tuesday, leaving much of Kabul in darkness.

TRUMP SHUTS  
DOWN HIS SOCIAL  
MEDIA SITE

**Washington, June 3:** Donald Trump has permanently closed his blog, a webpage where the former US president shared his fiery speeches and statements after being banned by social media giants, including Facebook and Twitter.

The page titled From the Desk of Donald J. Trump has been removed from Trump's website after going live less than a month earlier, his spokesperson Jason Miller told *CNBC* news on Wednesday.

It was just auxiliary to the broader efforts we have and are working on, Miller said, adding that the webpage will not be returning.

"Hoping to have more information on the broader efforts soon, but I do not have a precise awareness of timing," Miller said.

FRANCE'S DAVID  
DIOP WINS INT'L  
BOOKER PRIZE

**London, June 3:** French novelist David Diop on Wednesday won the prestigious International Booker Prize for books translated into English with his World War I-set novel, "At Night All Blood is Black".

The Paris-born writer became the first French winner of the prize, awarded for a book translated into English and published in the UK or Ireland, and a ceremony broadcast online.

Lucy Hughes-Hallett, chair of the judges, said "this story of warfare and love and madness has a terrifying power".

"We judges agreed that its incantatory prose and dark, brilliant vision had jangled our emotions and blown our minds," she said, adding "it had cast a spell on us".

BLOOD MONEY  
SAVES INDIAN  
FROM DEATH ROW

**Abu Dhabi, June 3:** A 45-year-old Indian, who was on death row in the United Arab Emirates for killing a young Sudanese boy in a road accident in 2012, can't believe that he will be a free man and can return to the country to be with his family. Becks Krishnan was saved by prominent NRI businessman and philanthropist M.A. Yusufali who helped to pay his "blood money" amounting nearly ₹one crore.

Krishnan, who hails from Kerala, was sentenced to death by UAE Supreme Court after he was found guilty of killing a young Sudanese boy when he recklessly drove and rammed his car into a group of children in September 2012. Ever since, his family and friends have been trying hard for Krishnan's release without any success, especially as the victim's family had already gone back and settled in Sudan, putting an end to any discussion or pardon. The Krishnan family then approached Yusufali,

## Tiananmen protest anniv eve



Visitors tour in front of Tiananmen Gate on the eve of Friday's anniversary in Beijing, on Thursday. Communist Party leaders have imprisoned or driven activists into exile and largely succeeded in ensuring young people know little about the June 4, 1989, deadly crackdown on the pro-democracy movement. — AP

Bill to remove per nation cap  
on Green Card in US Congress

**Washington, June 3:** A bipartisan legislation has been introduced in the US House of Representatives to eliminate the per country cap on employment-based Green Card. The legislation was introduced by Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren and Congressman John Curtis and it is likely to benefit Indian IT professionals anguishing over decades of Green Card wait. The Equal Access to Green cards for Legal Employment (EAGLE) Act, 2021 needs to be passed by the Senate before it can be sent to the White House for the president to sign it into a law.

The bill phases out the seven per cent per-country limit on employment-based immigrant visas. The bill also raises the seven per cent per-country limit on family-sponsored visas

● **THE BILL** phases out the seven per cent per-country limit on employment-based immigrant visas. The bill also raises the seven per cent per-country limit on family-sponsored visas to 15 per cent.

Its predecessor, the Fairness for High Skilled Immigrants Act, was passed in the House in the 116th Congress with a resounding bipartisan vote of 365 to 65.

"We all know that our immigration system is severely broken and it has been broken for decades," said Lofgren, Chair of the House Subcommittee on Immigration and Citizenship. The basic framework for allocating im-

migrant visas dates back to the middle of the 20th century and was last seriously updated in 1990, when the Congress established the worldwide numerical limits on visas and the seven per cent per-country cap that still exists today, she said.

Over time, these limitations have led to backlogs that were unimaginable in 1990. The effect has been that countries with relatively small populations are allocated the same number of visas as a relatively large population country.

"The result? A person from a large-population country with extraordinary qualifications who could contribute greatly to our economy and create jobs waits behind a person with lesser qualifications from a smaller country," she added.

"It makes no sense. Because of this, we are now seeing recruiters from outside America luring those with the highest skills away from the US. That hurts our economy.

The bipartisan EAGLE Act moves our country toward a system that emphasises birthplace and better serves America. Simply put, it will allow US companies to focus on what they do best — hiring smart people to create products and services, which creates jobs in our districts," Lofgren said. Congressman Curtis said the 2020 census showed that Utah has the fastest-growing state in the nation due to major growth and innovation in the technology sector, bringing thousands of new jobs to the state.

— PTI

S'PORE BEGINS  
PROBE INTO  
FIRE ON SHIP

**Singapore, June 3:** Singapore on Thursday started its own investigation into the massive fire on a chemical-laden cargo vessel, sailing under the country's flag, that sank in Sri Lankan waters and posed a grave threat to the environment and marine life.

The Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA) in a press statement said it also understands that the Sri Lankan authorities are investigating the incident.

"As the flag State, MPA has also commenced its own investigation on the incident," it said. The container ship MV X-Press Pearl, carrying a consignment of chemicals and raw materials for cosmetics from Hazira in Gujarat to Colombo Port, sank.

— PTI

Cyberattack: Biden says  
looking at Russia reprisal

**Washington, June 3:** US President Joe Biden said Wednesday he is "looking" at possible retaliation after the White House linked Russia to a cyberattack against global meat processing giant JBS.

Asked by a reporter if he would take action against President Vladimir Putin, whom he will meet for a summit in Geneva later this month, Biden said: "We're looking closely at that issue." The ransomware attack on a US subsidiary of Brazilian-owned JBS has again prompted accusations that Russia is at least harbouring cybercriminals.

Similar suspicions were raised after ransomware hackers forced the temporary shutdown of the huge Colonial fuel pipeline in the eastern United

States last month. Asked if Putin is testing him ahead of their summit, Biden said "no." The Federal Bureau of Investigation on Wednesday attributed the attack to "REvil and Sodinokibi," which experts have said are two names for the same hacking group with ties to Russia, and said it was "working diligently to bring the threat actors to justice."

"We continue to focus our efforts on imposing risk and consequences and holding the responsible cyber actors accountable," the FBI said in a statement. The White House says Biden will bring up US concerns during the summit on June 16, as well as at earlier summits with allies in the G7 group, the European Union and Nato. "We expect this to be an issue of discussion throughout the President's trip," Press Secretary Jen Psaki told reporters. "Harbouring criminal entities that are intending to do harm, that are doing harm to the critical infrastructure in the United States, is not acceptable," she said.

— AFP

Bibi rivals reach  
deal to oust him

## Lapid: 8-party coalition has been formed

**Jerusalem, June 3:** Israel's Opposition parties on Thursday set the wheels in motion for a potential national unity government after clinching a last-minute agreement to oust Benjamin Netanyahu, the longest-serving prime minister in the Jewish nation's history.

Yair Lapid, leader of the centrist Yesh Atid party, announced an eight-party coalition had been formed after tough political negotiations. Under a rotation arrangement, the head of the right-wing Yamina party, Naftali Bennett, 49, would serve as the prime minister first before handing over to Lapid.

Lapid, 57, officially informed President Reuven Rivlin and Knesset (Parliament) Speaker Yariv Levin about the deal late Wednesday night, barely half an hour before the Wednesday midnight deadline.

The announcement came after a series of back-to-back meetings with the leaders of the anti-Netanyahu camp in the 120-member Knesset.

"In accordance with Clause 13(b) of the Basic Law: The Government I am honoured to inform you

● **UNDER A** rotation arrangement, the head of the right-wing Yamina party, Naftali Bennett, 49, would serve as the prime minister first before handing over to Lapid.

that I have succeeded in forming a government... MK (Member of Knesset) Naftali Bennett will serve as a prime minister first, Lapid told Rivlin.

"I commit to you Mr President that this government will work to serve all the citizens of Israel including those who aren't members of it, will respect those who oppose it and do everything in its power to unite all parts of Israeli society," the Yesh Atid party leader said. Lapid will serve as foreign minister until the two men swap roles halfway through the term.

There still needs to be a parliamentary vote before the government is sworn in.

The Israeli president thanked Lapid saying, "We expect the Knesset will convene as soon as possible to ratify the government, as required."

The development, seen by some as historic as it

includes an Arab party in the coalition, will break an ongoing political impasse that has seen Israel go through four polls yielding inconclusive results in less than two years.

Lapid's coalition is composed of Yesh Atid, Yamina, Kahol Lavan, New Hope, Labor, Yisrael Beiteinu, Meretz and United Arab List.

Netanyahu, 71, in his first reaction on Twitter said "all legislators elected by voters from the right must oppose this dangerous left-wing government."

The Opposition on Thursday moved quickly to push for a vote for the Knesset Speaker to be replaced as soon as possible.

The move to replace Likud's Yariv Levin is designed to deny the Speaker the chance to drag his feet on scheduling a confidence vote on the new government.

In the letter to the Knesset's secretary-general, the Opposition bloc asked that a vote to replace Levin with Yesh Atid MK Mickey Levy as Speaker be placed on the agenda at the next plenum session, which is set to take place on Monday.

— PTI

UK SEEKS TO FLIP  
GOVT'S FOREIGN  
AID BUDGET CUT

**London, June 3:** Lawmakers from Britain's governing Conservative Party said Thursday they hope to force a vote in Parliament next week that could make the government reverse a contentious cut to the United Kingdom's foreign aid budget.

The British government dropped a long-standing commitment to spend 0.7% of the UK's gross domestic product on international aid, citing the Coronavirus pandemic's blow to the economy. It says the cut to 0.5 per cent is temporary.

United Nations agencies and other international organisations say the reduction will hurt programmes that help some of the world's poorest people.

Former International Development Secretary Andrew Mitchell says he has enough support to win a vote on Monday, just days before Prime Minister Boris Johnson hosts leaders of the Group of Seven wealthy nations for a June 11-13 summit in Cornwall, England.

The vote will only happen if the speaker of the House of Commons allows it, which is not guaranteed.

But the growing list of Conservative lawmakers supporting Mitchell nevertheless could pressure the government to change course.

— AP

G7 health heads  
talk vax sharing

**Oxford, June 3:** Health ministers from the G7 group of wealthy nations met Thursday in Britain to discuss sharing vaccines with poorer countries, as calls continue to ensure fairer global distribution of doses.

The meeting in Oxford in southern England comes ahead of next week's G7 summit, hosted by the United Kingdom, which is set to be dominated by discussion of the coronavirus pandemic and recovery plans.

"We'll be working together with G7 partners to try to meet the objective that a vaccine is made available right across the world," UK Health Secretary Matt Hancock told reporters.

"After all, this is a global pandemic and nobody is safe from it until everybody is safe," he added.

The G7 gathering was also set to focus on improving identification of animal-borne infections, given three-fifths of all infections jump from animals to humans.

The ministers from Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States vowed to "combat future health threats by working together to identify early warning signs from animals and the environ-

ment". "There will be more diseases that cross that boundary from animals to humans," Hancock added.

— AFP

Vax refusal: Sindh  
to stop staff pay

**Islamabad, June 3:** The chief minister of Pakistan's Sindh province on Thursday directed the authorities to stop the salaries of government officials from July if they fail to get vaccinated for Covid-19.

The order was passed during a meeting of the provincial task force on Covid-19 chaired by Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah. "Government employees who do not get themselves vaccinated will have their salaries stopped from July," Shah said.

A directive on this has been issued to the finance ministry, officials said.

The Sindh government has already fixed June 5 as the deadline for all teachers in the province to get vaccinated. The step is because all educational institutions are to open from June 7.

According to the the Sindh Health Department, 1,550,553 people have been vaccinated in the province so far, while 1,121,000 people have received the first dose and 429,000 people have been fully vaccinated against

MORE CASES IN  
VIRUS CLUSTER  
IN SOUTH CHINA

**Beijing, June 3:** Fifteen more Covid-19 cases have been reported in the southern Chinese province of Guangzhou, with a report saying the Coronavirus variant in the latest outbreak is more transmissible than in previous clusters in the country.

The city of Guangdong has locked down neighbourhoods and requires anyone wishing to leave the province to show a negative virus test taken within the past 72 hours.

— AP

the virus. Meanwhile, Pakistan's Coronavirus tally reached 926,695 on Thursday with the detection of 2,028 cases in the last 24 hours, while 92 more fatalities pushed the death toll to 21,022, the health ministry said.

— PTI

## OVERLOOKED | NEIGHBOUR

## Aim to understand how planet became an inferno

## Nasa announces 2 new Venus missions

## EARLIER VOYAGES

**1970:** Nasa's Mariner 2 performed the first successful flyby in 1962, and the Soviets' Venera 7 made the first successful landing.

**1978:** The year when a US-led mission had last gone to the Venusian atmosphere.

**1989:** Nasa used a space shuttle to send its Magellan spacecraft into orbit around Venus.

**2006:** The European Space Agency put a spacecraft around Venus.

Veritas, will seek a geological history by mapping the rocky planet's surface.

"It is astounding how little we know about Venus," but the new missions will give fresh views of the planet's atmosphere, made up mostly of carbon dioxide, down to the core, Nasa scientist Tom Wagner said in a statement. "It will be as if we have rediscovered the planet."

Nasa's top science official, Thomas Zurbuchen, calls it "a new decade of Venus". Each mission — launching sometime around 2028 to 2030 — will receive \$500 million for development under Nasa's Discovery programme. The missions beat out two other proposed projects, to Jupiter's moon Io and Neptune's icy moon Triton. The US and the former



In this photo provided by Nasa, Administrator Bill Nelson speaks during his first major address to employees, at the agency's headquarters in Washington on Wednesday. — NASA/Bill Ingalls

Soviet Union sent multiple spacecraft to Venus in the early days of space exploration.

Nasa's Mariner 2 performed the first successful flyby in 1962, and the Soviets' Venera 7 made the first successful landing in

1970.

In 1989, Nasa used a space shuttle to send its Magellan spacecraft into orbit around Venus.

The European Space Agency put a spacecraft around Venus in 2006.

— AP



# DECCAN Chronicle

4 JUNE 2021

## Vaccines for all: SC has put Centre squarely on the mat

The demand for a review of the Union government's liberalised vaccine policy that handed over the responsibility of vaccinating people aged between 18 and 44 years to the state governments and private hospitals is gaining strength what with the Supreme Court questioning its very logic. In its interim order in a suo motu case on Tuesday, the apex court wondered why the Centre cannot procure the vaccines for the states as well if it gets the doses cheap because of the size of its order. The court pointed out that the Union Budget for 2021-22 has earmarked ₹35,000 crores to vaccinate people unlike the cash-strapped states, and asked the latter whether they have plans to vaccinate their people for free. After digging out data which said there are about 13,000 villages with no common service centres, the court flagged the issue of digital divide and reminded the government that accessibility barrier could have serious implications on the fundamental rights to equality and health of the marginalised sections of society as registering themselves on the

**The government should take the court's intervention as an opportunity to make a course correction and take charge. It should go in for a thorough review of the botched policy.**

CoWin app is mandatory to get the jab. Some could find the court's directive to produce the data of the purchases the Centre has made till now and the documents and file notings reflecting its thinking on the policy a bit of judicial overreach but the court, as the defender of fundamental rights including the right to life, has little option but to put its foot down and hold a delinquent government accountable. The same sense of duty could have driven it into asking the government to produce an outline for how and when it seeks to vaccinate the remaining population by the end of 2021.

The court's views apart, the vaccine policy has come under criticism from several state governments, experts and epidemiologists as it refuses to address the challenges the pandemic poses to the nation. The latest to join the chorus is Odisha chief minister Navin Patnaik who wants the Centre to procure vaccines for all the states.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is on record saying vaccination is an important tool in the fight against the virus but the government he heads does not seem to understand its import, lest it should not have forced state government and private companies to fight with one another for a life-saving product in a market where the supply is limited. The Centre should have long ended the charade of the state governments floating global tenders for vaccines only to get poor response when it, as it stated the other day, had known that there is a global shortage of the doses and that manufacturers are unlikely to deal with state governments. It should have taken an early decision on making the Integrated Vaccine Complex at Chengalpeta in Tamil Nadu functional instead of sitting on the repeated reminders by chief minister M.K. Stalin.

The government should take the court's intervention as an opportunity to make a course correction and take charge. It should go in for a thorough review of the botched policy and come out with a comprehensive one which will inoculate every citizen whether a third wave hits the nation or not. Better late than never.

## Osaka's prerogative

Sport mirrors the society it is played in but in the modern age that society has got unimaginably more complex. Take for instance the walkout from the French Open by one of the most talented players in women's tennis — Naomi Osaka, four time Grand Slam winner. Facing mental health issues as in dealing with a psychosis over media conferences, which she thinks only induce doubts in players' minds, she decided to abandon the Grand Slam rather than face up to her demons. But what did sport do but throw the book at her in pedantic action and which proved so unpopular, with public opinion swinging hugely in sympathy with her condition, that the sports administrators were running for cover.

Professional sport can no longer be run like a circus ring into which athletes are corralled to perform while taking home fat pay and endorsement cheques. The finest athletes are subjected to extreme anxieties, which their skills help tame sometimes. But they all suffer the same human frailties as John Doe and that calls for empathy rather than stentorian diktats from the keepers of the codes of behaviour. Ironically, the men running the most from the press and media were the admin men of the Grand Slams just when they were required to come clean and act in the interest of inclusivity in sport by explaining themselves.

The mental well-being of sportspeople is also important for the entertainment they offer through their artistic skills that please the aesthete and the aficionado as well as the common man. The complexities of individual behaviour under competitive pressures in young people may seem administratively difficult to handle. But sport must endure all that besides taking a stand against so much else that is wrong with the world, such as racism, sexism and jingoism. They made the debutant England Test cricketer Ollie Robinson apologise cringingly and in public for tweets of 2012 and 2013 that were racist and sexist. It is in addressing sympathetically the issue of his career that sport can show it has the equanimity and the empathy when it comes to dealing with sportspeople.

### DECCAN CHRONICLE

**KAUSHIK MITTER**  
Editor

**K. SUBHAKAR**  
Printer & Publisher

DECCAN CHRONICLE offices are located at:

**Hyderabad:** 36, Sarojini Devi Road, Secunderabad - 500 003, Ph: 040-27803930-4; Fax: 040-27805256  
**Vijayawada:** No.C-3 & 4 Patamata, Industrial Estate, Auto Nagar, Vijayawada (A.P.), Ph: 0866-2555284/2555287; Telefax: 0866-2555234

**Visakhapatnam:** Survey No.1/3A Beach Road, Near Kailasagiri Ropeway, Sector-9 MVP Colony, Visakhapatnam - 530 017 (A.P.), Ph: 0891-2552333/2552334; Fax: 0891-2755285

**Rajahmundry:** Vemagiri, Dhawaleswaram Rd, Rajahmundry, Ph: 0883-2417618/2417208; Telefax: 0883-2417208

**Anantapur:** Thapovan colony, Bangalore By-Pass Road, Anantapur - 515004, Ph: 08554-276903; Fax: 08554-276904

**Karimnagar:** Survey No.1341, Vavilalapally Colony, Jagityala Road, Karimnagar - 505 001, Ph: 0878-2228908; Telefax: 0878-2220433

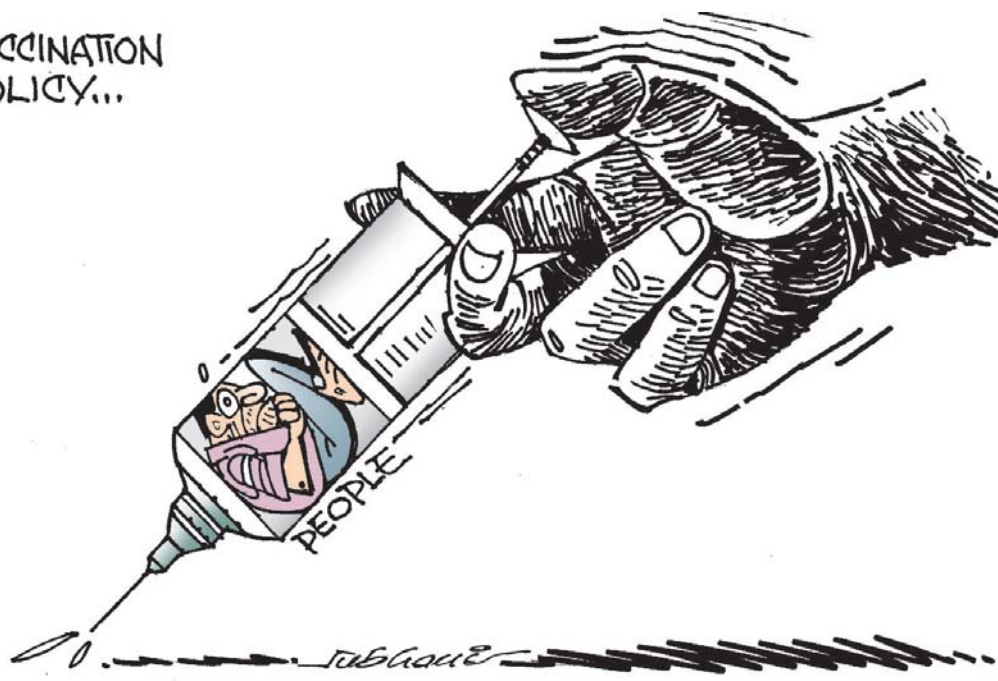
**Nellore:** Survey No.527/2, Burranpur Village, Venkatachalam (M), Chennudugunta Panchayat, Nellore, Ph: 0861-2348581/82; Telefax: 0861-2348580

**Chennai:** SP-3 Developed Plot, Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai - 600 032, Ph: 044-22254747/48/50/51; Advt Fax: 22254765/22254766/42305325

**Coimbatore:** 77, Vivekananda Road, Ramnagar, Coimbatore - 641 009, Ph: 0422 2231255  
Gram: CHRONICLE Postal registration no: No. H/SD-348/2006-08

Subhani

VACCINATION  
POLICY...



## Why China needs to pay reparations to the world



Abhijit Bhattacharyya

In an article in August last year, I had argued that the “world needs to seek reparations from China” for the all-round harm it had caused. “Covid-19 has done more damage to the global economy in six months than the two world wars did in 10 years. The Chinese origin virus has already claimed over six lakh lives, while more than 1.6 crore cases have been recorded. There is debt worth billions, perhaps trillions, of dollars and over 200 countries are on the road to ruin”, I had written.

Today, in June 2021, the casualty figures have not only multiplied several hundred times in just 10 months, but skyrocketed to astronomical levels, battering all 223 countries, minus China. Therefore, I reiterate that the world, including India, must compel the Communist Party of China's government in Beijing to pay suitable reparations or damages to all nations that have been left devastated by the China-conceived Third World War, which is still raging. No one has been left untouched. The effects are starkly visible all over: with India's economics, society, industry, public health, trade, commerce, security, territorial integrity and 1.3 billion people's lives turned upside down.

No one is quite sure what lies in store for the world's second most populous country six months from now, except to helplessly stare at the stark reality of New Delhi being in cusp of an unprecedented period of economic turbulence, caused wholly by the Chinese chemical and biological warfare germ, known to the world as Covid-19, which originated from Wuhan in 2019. The WHO and international bodies have now, belatedly, started an investigation into the origins of the virus, but its credibility has already hit rock bottom in the eyes of most people in the affected nations, which certainly includes Indians.

Thus, New Delhi continues to pay dearly for the blind trust it reposed in the congenitally deceptive “goodwill” and false “promises” of the CPC's deceitful and duplicitous leaders and has rarely learnt any lessons. Just consider some of the facts and figures compiled by Prof. Kaushik Basu, a world-renowned economist, currently a professor at Cornell University and a former chief economic adviser to the Government of India and former World Bank chief economist. Of 14 Asian nations (Bangladesh, Myanmar, China, Vietnam, Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan, Indonesia, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, India), the minus eight per cent annual GDP growth of 2020 positions India last but one (above Philippines' minus 8.3 per cent). In contrast, Bangladesh, with 3.8 per cent annual GDP growth in 2020 tops the list of 14 Asians, with China's 1.9 per cent growth putting it in third spot, below second-placed Myanmar's two per cent GDP growth.

In Covid-19 deaths per million population too (as of May 21, 2021), India hit nadir in descending order of 14 Asian states. Bhutan's one, to India's 212, and China's three deaths per million, that clearly shows the scale of beating India has taken at the hands of the CPC-ruled dragon.

The story doesn't end here. The quantity and quality of universal damage, maliciously inflicted by the CPC since 2019, indisputably qualifies China as the principal destroyer which must be compelled to pay reparations to the world at large, and India in particular.

Just as vanquished Germany was compelled, by 40-odd nations by the Treaty

of Versailles (June 28, 1919) to pay reparations, especially to France, for starting the First World War and ravaging its neighbours. In comparison to the universally destructive 2021, 1919 appears minuscule, as China has set the whole world on fire with its lab created CBW airborne germs; killing, maiming, numbing, crippling soldiers to factory workers; farmers to college students; doctors and nurses on duty to a host of service industry personnel.

Beijing's single-point agenda is to monopolise the world economy. In India-China bilateral trade alone, Beijing has so far profited by over \$483 billion in 20 years, starting 1999-2000. In other areas too, like Chinese banks operating in India, and sub-standard Chinese automaker MG, is on a profiteering spree through high prices and poor service. India's roads, railways, telecoms, tech are all being targeted, and the aim is to bolster China and destroy India.

Let's translate \$483 billion to India's annual defence expenditure. Military Balance 2021, published by the International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, shows India's 2020 defence budget of \$64.1 billion standing third behind America's \$738 billion and China's \$193.3 billion. The outcome of a one-way \$483 billion Chinese profit implies loss of the same amount to India — which is equivalent to seven and a half years of India's defence budget! That's just one segment, not to speak of several other sectoral losses worth millions/billions. One, therefore, fails to comprehend, why a battered India shouldn't demand reparations from the CPC. After all, the world has already entered

**The twenty-first century is, so far, a ‘war without gunshots’ (except in Ladakh), but its airborne destruction far outweighs the twentieth century firepower of the two world wars**

the third year of the Third World War, which has put the lives of 1.3 billion Indians under grave threat.

Paradoxically, the Wuhan-origin “Third World War CBW virus”, despite looking surreal and bizarre, has turned the much-touted cliché “world is one” and “world is a global village” into reality. The world is indeed “really one”, as all sides, except China, are “sinking as one”. In unison, Beijing's bragging now stands out. The CPC is claiming that China has hiked industrial production, exports to the US, EU and India, and this comes amid an assault on freedom of navigation through international waters and the “wolf warrior diplomacy” targeting everyone and anyone — from Canberra to London, Pacific islands to the Balkans, along with landlocked Tibet, Xinjiang and Taiwan. Plus of course the never-ending standoff in Ladakh and tensions across the Himalayas.

Today, therefore, is a time of reckoning. The world must collectively demand reparations, as done after the First World War by the Versailles Treaty. Two articles — 231 and 232 — made Germany capitulate and agree to pay for the wilful death, damage and destruction it caused to Europe.

The prefix “re” thus becomes the economic pass-word of battered countries: “Reconstruction, recovery, rebuild, reparations, retrenchment, repayment of war debts,” revaluation of currency and restoration of the gold standard. The twenty-first century is, so far, a “war without gunshots” (except in Ladakh), but its airborne destruction far outweighs the twentieth century firepower of the two world wars. The CPC must be forced to pay reparations, if the world is not to capitulate to the dictates of Emperor Xi Jinping. Incidentally, Xi will turn 68 on June 15, the day he killed 22 Indian soldiers in 2020 to mark his 67 years!

*The writer is a Supreme Court advocate. The views expressed here are personal.*

### LETTERS

#### LAND SURVEY

The digital land survey is a welcome move (*KCR orders digital land survey, DC, May 3*). Land ownership will become exclusive and eliminate land-grabbing. It can be given a unique digital identity instead of complex municipal/survey numbers. This will ease the burden on the judiciary and bring relief to the litigants too.

**P.R. Ravinder**  
Hyderabad

The cause of land disputes is unwanted elements getting involved to earn easy money. Spending ₹400 crore to make a land dispute free state at this juncture is not a wise decision when the government is struggling to fund development programmes and is forced to sell its lands to raise funds.

**M.G.Sai Baba**  
Hyderabad

#### RELIEF TO PATIENTS

Kudos to the Telangana High Court for capping hospital charges (*HC orders cap on hospital charges, DC, May 3*). It is a welcome relief to all those who are undergoing the Covid-19 treatment at these private hospitals. The pressure of huge bills in addition to facing the disease is a big mental stress and torture. The government must also consider waiving bills for those who lose their lives.

**Fatima Zafar**  
Secunderabad

### 50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

#### Hari Prasad remanded to custody

HYDERABAD, June 3.

Thakur V. Hari Prasad, Honorary Secretary of A.P. Welfare Fund, who was arrested by the State Crime Branch CID yesterday, was today remanded to judicial custody for 15 days.

He was charged with cheating, misappropriation, falsification of accounts and embezzlement of amounts of the A.P. Welfare Fund. The State Crime Branch CID in the meantime have also arrested Mr. Diwakara Shetty, Joint Secretary of the Kannada Natya Ranga, this evening on charges of cheating and misappropriation. He has been accused of producing a false resolution purported to have been passed by the Kannada Natya Ranga.

## Why is medical care making Covid-hit sicker, poorer in India?

Pranay Sinha,  
Amita Sudhir,  
Tania A. Thomas and  
Scott K. Heysell

**J**ugaad” is a Hindi word which refers to using resources frugally yet creatively. From low-cost space flights to cost-efficient cardiac surgery, India has pioneered ways to maximise its limited resources. And yet, as front-line emergency physicians and infectious diseases physicians, we have seen a wasteful misuse of healthcare resources in India during the Covid-19 pandemic, which threatens the health and wealth of millions.

Emboldened by falling Covid-19 cases, the Indian government loosened restrictions by October 2020. By March 2021, there were signs that the virus was resurgent. According to the Johns Hopkins database, India has seen more than 2.8 crore cases of Covid-19 and more than 3.2 lakh deaths by May 31, 2021. More than 50 per cent of deaths have occurred during the second wave and models suggest that these numbers may be underestimates. Heroic Indian healthcare workers, many of them still unvaccinated, are persevering despite the unprecedented shortages of hospital beds, oxygen, and even fever-reducing acetaminophen. Unfortunately, clinicians are using government guidelines based on tenuous or even counterfactual medical evidence, that are resulting in systematic errors.

Anti-bacterial drugs like

azithromycin and doxycycline are commonly prescribed despite a lot of evidence that they have no plausible benefits for the viral infection of Covid-19. In addition to monetary costs, patients also face health risks from unnecessary antibiotics. For instance, azithromycin may promote dangerous and even fatal changes in the heartbeat pattern.

Antibiotic overuse also propagates anti-microbial resistance, already a major concern in India.

The latest Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) recommendations from May 18 still include repeatedly debunked drugs like ivermectin and hydroxychloroquine. These inclusions are entirely inconsistent with the current scientific consensus and should be removed promptly to avoid all confusion. We are heartened that nationally well-known medical leaders like Dr Randeep Guleria, the head of New Delhi's All India Institute of Medical Sciences, have publicly opposed the use of these discredited Covid therapies. The ICMR guidelines should also be purged of these ineffective drugs to avoid confusion.

The ICMR guidelines also suggest use of remdesivir for in-patients. This drug has not been found to have any mortality benefit, and its benefit in shortening

hospitalisation is studied only in the background of adequate supportive care, which is currently available to most Indians. And yet, many Indians are paying \$65 (Rs 5,000) for a five-day course and even higher costs on the black market. Similarly, we are concerned about the recent premature emergency use authorisation given to 2-deoxy-D-glucose (2-DG.). Although the government cites success for this drug in clinical trials, these data have not been made available to the public.

Steroids, a cornerstone of Covid-19 therapy, are also being used improperly. The evidence on steroids is clear — they should be given to patients who need oxygen, at a specific dose, and for up to 10 days. In India, steroids are being given early in the disease — before oxygen needs are apparent, at higher doses, and for much longer periods. They can weaken the immune system, worsen diabetes, a disease one in eleven Indians have, and may be implicated in an alarming number of Indians developing a range of fungal infections, including deadly mucormycosis (which is being called black fungus). Fungal infections are not inevitable with steroid use — we did not observe such high rates of invasive fungal infections in the United States when using steroids as recommended

by clinical trials.

Indians with Covid-19 are advised to take a large assortment of minerals and vitamins that again have not been shown to be effective. As physicians who cared for patients in the early days of the pandemic in the US, we understand the impulse to “do something” in the midst of so much death, devastation, and desperation. However, having also seen our relatives confused by interminable lists of drugs, we know that seemingly harmless nutritional supplements have opportunity costs — they draw attention away from what is essential. Additionally, given that more than a billion Indians subsist on less than \$5.50 (₹40) daily per capita, each addition to their medication list must be evidence-based and serve a clear purpose.

We have the utmost empathy for the Indian healthcare workers who are stretched beyond belief and lack the time to research their recommendations and follow the rapidly growing Covid-19 literature. We exhort the Indian public health leadership to promptly take three specific steps to support Indian clinicians.

First, increase public awareness of what to do to care for loved ones at different stages of the disease and keep patients out of hospitals when possible.

NGOs like Swasth and volunteer groups like India COVIDSOS have already developed accessible protocols that can empower Indians to care for sick family members at home, and community organisations to care for patients in Covid-19 care centres, an essential option when hospitals are overwhelmed. Second, the ICMR guidelines must be purged of any therapies that do not stand up to hard-nosed scientific scrutiny. Lastly, the Indian leadership should ensure regular clinical updates to support beleaguered Indian healthcare workers. These updates should come as digestible recommendations straight to the healthcare providers' phones. Clinicians should be made aware of the cost and the effectiveness of the drugs they prescribe so they can personalise care and share decision-making with patients struggling with the financial burden of Covid-19.

Adversity is the mother of frugal creativity, and it is hard to imagine a time more adverse. Though despondent, we nourish the hope that India can mitigate further misery with *jugaad*, delivered with clear communication, and backed by scientific rigour.

*The writers are doctors working in different hospitals in the United States*



## quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	52,232.43	0.74
Nifty 50	15,690.40	0.73
S&P 500*	4,199.05	-0.22
Dollar (₹)	72.90	0.25
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.44	-0.08
Euro (₹)	88.88	0.14
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,530▼339	0.69
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	70.99	-0.50
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.997	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.615	0.024

## Services sector moves into contraction zone

Services sector activities slumped into contraction territory for the first time in eight months, amid renewed decline in new work intakes due to the escalation of the pandemic and the reintroduction of restrictions. The seasonally adjusted India Services Business Activity Index fell to 46.4 in May, down from 54.0 in April. In PMI parlance, a print above 50 means expansion while a score below 50 denotes contraction.

## Guidelines for ₹12K-cr telecom PLI issued



The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) issued operational guidelines for the Rs 12,195-crore PLI scheme for the telecom sector. The registration process for the scheme will begin on Friday and remain open for 30 days till July 3, the DoT said. The scheme, which will be effective from April 1, 2021, will provide incentives to companies on their investments and incremental sale till 2025-26.

## MFs' overseas exposure limit raised to \$1 bn

The Sebi enhanced the overseas investment limit for a mutual fund house to \$1 billion from the existing \$600 million. The overall mutual fund industry limit is capped at \$7 billion. The higher limit would allow MFs to allocate a higher share of their corpus for foreign securities. "Mutual funds can make overseas investments subject to a maximum of \$1 billion per mutual fund, within the overall industry limit of \$7 billion," the Sebi said.

## VW drives in Polo automatic at ₹8.51 lakh

Volkswagen introduced the Comfortline variant of the Polo 1.0 TSI with an automatic transmission at a starting price of Rs 8.51 lakh at Delhi showroom. The new model is powered by a BS 6-compliant 1.0-litre turbocharged stratified injection (TSI) engine from the Volkswagen Group. The new Polo variant comes with an auto-climatronic air-conditioning feature, besides a 17.7 cm Blaupunkt music system, exclusive to this trim only.



## ■Capa expects traffic to pick up in H2 Airlines stare at \$4.1 bn loss

SANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, JUNE 3

Hit by the second wave, India's airline companies are likely to register a consolidated loss of about \$4.1 billion in FY22, similar to the losses clocked in FY21, provided there is no third wave of the pandemic this year. The companies will require \$5 billion of recapitalisation this financial year to survive.

"We expect that Indian airlines will lose a consolidated \$4.1-billion in FY22, similar to that in FY2021. This will take total losses over two years to around \$8 billion as a result of the two Covid-19 waves," aviation consultancy firm Capa India said in a report.

The report finds that the full-service carriers are expected to contribute as much as \$2.1 billion in the total losses this year, while the budget carriers would account for the remaining \$2 billion.

Full-service carrier Air India and no-frills player IndiGo together will account for around \$4.5 billion of the combined \$8 billion of losses in two years.

The projected losses could rise further if necessary recapitalisation comes in the form of debt, as the borrowing costs will have to be included.

Capa estimates that the airline companies will require close to \$5 billion of recapitalisation in FY22 just to survive. Out of this, around \$1.1 billion is in the pipeline in the form of Initial Public Offering,



Qualified Institutional Placement and other financial instruments. If these plans materialise, the incremental requirement could be reduced to \$3.5 billion.

The government had recently expanded Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) to include civil aviation in the scheme. The scheme has already sanctioned Rs 2.54 lakh crore of loans and will be valid up to September end or till the unutilised amount in the Rs 3 lakh crore under the scheme is exhausted.

Capa also expects domestic airline traffic to pick up to 80-95 million during FY22, far higher than 32.5 million traffic recorded in FY21, but well below the 140 million registered during FY20. Capa estimates a moderate recovery in June after the second wave subsides. However, its projections did not take a possible third wave into consideration.

"After a massive slump

in April and May, we expect to see a moderate recovery in June as activity returns, with an acceleration in traffic from the second quarter.

"As was the case in the second half of FY2021, we expect to see rising confidence and continued traffic recovery in the second half of this financial year," Capa said.

According to rating and research firm Icra, domestic air traffic nosedived to 19.20 lakh passengers in May from around 57.3 lakh in April, registering a sharp 65-67 per cent month-on-month contraction. Average daily departures were around 900 against 2,000 in April 2021 and average number of passengers per flight in May was 72, against 93 passengers in April 2021.

International passenger traffic stood at around 1.4 lakh in May, a sequential decline of around 96 per cent. The international traffic is projected to be in the range of 16-21 million passengers for the year.

## Nifty hits record high as curbs ease

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD  
MUMBAI, JUNE 3

The market gained more than half a per cent on Thursday, buoyed by the sharp decline in fresh Covid cases and several states partially lifting lockdown curbs.

The Nifty-50 closed at new all-time high of 15,690.35, gaining 114.15 points, or 0.73 per cent.

The Sensex gained 382.95 points, or 0.74 per cent, closing at a new high this year at 52,232.43, surpassing the earlier closing high of 52,154.13 on February 15, 2021. The index is now near its all-time high of 52,516.76.

The broader market outperformed with BSE Mid-cap and Small-cap indices gaining 1.04 per cent each.

The market capitalisation of all BSE-listed companies closed stood at a new all-time high of Rs 226.51 lakh crore.

Foreign portfolio investors were net buyers of equities worth Rs 1,079.20 while domestic institutions booked profit worth Rs 278.97 crore.

As several states have started lifting restrictions with the second wave receding, consumer focused sectors gained on Thursday.

BSE Consumer Durable index topped sectoral gainers list with a 4.44 per cent gain. The other sectors that gained included BSE Realty (3.95 per cent), Capital Goods (1.46 per cent), Oil Gas (1.25 per cent) and Bankex (0.90 per cent).

## Saudi raises oil prices for Asia customers as market tightens

JAVIER BLAS,  
SALMA EL WARDANY &  
ANTHONY DI PAOLA  
JUNE 3



Saudi Arabia increased oil prices for customers in its main market of Asia by more than expected after crude surged above \$70 a barrel and the Opec forecast that global demand would heavily outstrip supply over the rest of the year.

State energy firm Saudi Aramco hiked its key Arab Light grade for July shipments to Asia by 20 cents to \$1.90 a barrel above a benchmark. Analysts surveyed by Bloomberg were expecting a raise of just 10 cents.

The kingdom sends more than 60 per cent of its exports to Asia, with China, India, South Korea and Japan, being the biggest buyers. Last month, it shipped 6.1 million barrels a day, according to preliminary data compiled by Bloomberg.

Prices for four of Aramco's five Asian grades were increased, with the only drop coming for heavy crude. All grades for Europe were raised, while those for the US were kept the same as for June.

The move is a reverse of Aramco's cut for Asian customers in June, a decision made in early May as new coronavirus cases hammered fuel demand in India.

The Asian country and others such as Japan and

Malaysia are still struggling to slow the pandemic. Still, the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries this week predicted that oil stockpiles will decline rapidly from August as lockdowns ease across major economies and travel picks up.

The Opec and its partners—a 23-nation grouping led by Saudi Arabia and Russia—stuck to a plan to increase production this month and in July. But they refused to say what their plans were beyond those dates.

Brent crude has climbed 38 per cent in 2021 to a two-year high of about \$71.20 a barrel. It extended gains this week on Opec's new outlook and because nuclear talks between Iran and world powers stalled. Should the sides reach a deal, the US will probably ease sanctions on Tehran's oil exports.

—Bloomberg

## Rural net users to beat urban by '25

SANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, JUNE 3

Active internet users in India will touch 900 million in five years, finds a study. By 2025, rural India will have more internet users than urban India.

There are around 622 million active internet users as of 2020 and in five years the number of active users will grow by 45 per cent, as per IAMAI Kantar-ICUBE 2020 Report. The report finds that there is a lot of

headroom for growth in rural India and this would help in bridging the urban-rural digital divide.

"By 2025, there would be a greater number of internet users in rural India than in urban India. Given this, the digital ecosystem will need to evolve to address the specific needs of this emerging demography. Vernacular, voice and video will emerge as the gamechangers for the digital ecosystem over the next few years," said

Biswapriya Bhattacharjee, executive vice president, insights division, Kantar.

Though internet penetration in urban areas is higher than rural now, usership in rural areas has been growing at a faster rate on a year-on-year basis. Internet users grew by 4 per cent in urban India reaching 323 million users or 67 per cent of urban population in 2020.

Small towns account for almost two out of five active internet users.

## Steel prices hiked by up to ₹4,900/tonne

New Delhi, June 3: Leading steel-makers have hiked the prices of hot rolled coil (HRC) and cold rolled coil (CRC) by up to Rs 4,000 and Rs 4,900 per tonne, respectively, industry sources said on Thursday.

After the price revision,

a tonne of HRC will cost Rs 70,000-71,000 while CRC will cost Rs 83,000-84,000 per tonne.

The price revision has been made in the last two days, the sources said.

HRC and CRC are flat steel used in industries such as auto, appliances

and construction. Hence, any rise in steel prices impacts the prices of vehicles and consumer goods and raise the cost of construction, as steel is a key raw material for these sectors.

Sail, JSW Steel, Tata Steel, JSPL and AMNS

India are the leading steel-making companies in the country which jointly contribute about 55 per cent to India's total steel production.

When contacted, a Sail official said "it is market driven" and did not comment further. —PTI

## US tax: G&J trade hopeful of solution

SANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, JUNE 3

The gems and jewellery industry finds the six-month suspension of retaliatory tax by the US as an indication for a multilateral solution.

Concluding one-year Section 301 investigations on Wednesday, the United States trade representative (USTR) deferred by 180 days the proposal to impose punitive tariff of 25 per cent on select products imported from countries like India, Austria, UK, Turkey and Spain for imposing digital services tax on online platforms of foreign companies. The

products include 17 jewellery items imported from India.

The suspension is intended to provide additional time to complete the ongoing multilateral negotiations on international taxation at the OECD and in the G20 process, the USTR, which coordinates US' international trade, commodity, and direct investment policy, said in a statement.

At the USTR multi-jurisdictional hearing held virtually on May 10, the GJEPC along with other major trade bodies and leading exporters from the gems and jewellery sector put forward Indian indus-

try's grievances.

"Most of the speakers at the hearing were of the view that a multilateral solution would be a preferable option, as a unilateral action undermines and weakens the Dispute Settlement Mechanism under WTO. The suspension of tariff on goods for up to 180 days is an indication that the USTR is willing to wait till a multilateral solution is found for Digital Service Taxes (DST)," said Colin Shah, chairman, GJEPC.

The Indian gems and jewellery industry had argued that the imposition of the proposed 25 per cent import duty on 17 Indian

jewellery items would immensely impact the labour-intensive sector with loss of jobs and livelihoods and a shift of business to countries such as China and Mexico.

The US is India's major export market for gem and jewellery products. Exports of around \$9.3 billion go to the market accounting for 25.6 per cent of the total gem and jewellery exports of \$36 billion from the country.

American jewellery companies also bank on Indian companies to fund their business through long credit and memo facilities, which would have major repercussions.

### PRICEY | GROCERY

## Very little room for any production shock: FAO economist

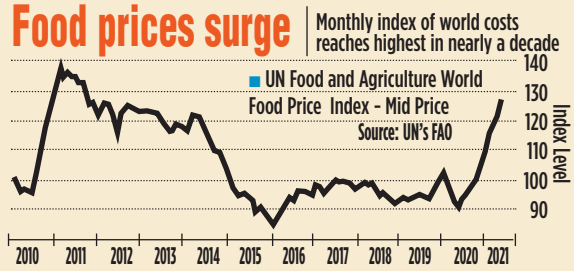
## Global food prices surge to near decade high

MEGAN DURISIN  
JUNE 3

Global food prices extended their rally to the highest in almost a decade, heightening concerns over bulging grocery bills as economies struggle to exit the Covid-19 crisis.

A United Nation's gauge of world food costs climbed for a 12th straight month in May, its longest stretch in a decade. The continued advance risks accelerating broader inflation, complicating central banks efforts to provide more stimulus.

Drought in key Brazilian growing regions is crippling crops from corn to coffee, and vegetable oil production growth has slowed in Southeast Asia. That's boosting costs for livestock producers and



risks further straining global grain stockpiles that have been depleted by soaring Chinese demand. The surge has stirred memories of 2008 and 2011, when price spikes led to food riots in more than 30 nations.

"We have very little room for any production shock. We have very little room for any unexpected surge in demand in any country," Abdolreza Abbassian,

senior economist at the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization, said by phone. "Any of those things could push prices up further than they are now, and then we could start getting worried."

The prolonged gains across the staple commodities are trickling through to store shelves, with countries from Kenya to Mexico reporting higher food costs. The pain

could be particularly pronounced in some of the poorest import-dependent nations, which have limited purchasing power and social safety nets.

The UN's index is trending at its highest since September 2011, with last month's gain of 4.8 per cent being the biggest in more than 10 years. All five components of the index rose during the month, with the advance

led by pricier vegetable oils, grain and sugar.

The world's hunger problem has already reached its worst in years as the pandemic exacerbates food inequalities, compounding extreme weather and political conflicts.

There were other elements that exacerbated skyrocketing food costs a decade ago. For example, oil prices neared \$150 a barrel—double current levels—and there was a wave of trade restrictions by major grain shippers. Costs for rice, one of the world's food staples, have remained relatively subdued during the current agricultural price surge.

Gains in the past year have been fuelled by China's "unpredictably huge" purchases of foreign grain. —Bloomberg

Across the board	All food categories tracked by FAO climbed in past 12 months
Overall food index (%)	40
Cereals	37
Vegetable oil	124
Dairy	28
Meat	10
Sugar	57

Source: UN's FAO/Bloomberg

## STATES TOLD TO ISSUE RATION CARDS TO POOR

New Delhi, June 3: The Centre has issued an advisory to all states and UTs to identify and issue ration cards to the most vulnerable and economically weaker sections to ensure their coverage under the National Food Security Act (NFSA).

Addressing a virtual press conference, food secretary Sudhanshu Pandey said states and Union territories have scope to add coverage of 1.97 crore under the NFSA. Fourteen states have completed 100 per cent coverage quota.

On Wednesday, the food ministry has issued an advisory to all states and UTs to launch a special drive to reach out to vulnerable and weakest sections of the society, such as street dwellers, rag pickers, hawkers and rickshaw pullers. —PTI



## SHORT TAKES

## Hockey team all set for Olympics

**Jaipur:** Seasoned striker Yuvraj Walmiki has a "gut feeling" that the Indian men's hockey team will win a medal if the Tokyo Olympics goes ahead as per schedule. Among other things, the 31-year-old Walmiki, spoke about the national team's prospects in Tokyo, his life's struggles and how they helped him become a better human being on the latest episode of 'SportTiger Talks'.

"One thing I will definitely say is that Indian hockey right now is doing wonderfully well under (leadership of) (PR) Sreejesh and Manpreet (Singh)," Walmiki said.

"I still have this gut feeling... In case, Tokyo Olympics takes place, the Indian hockey team will bag a medal this time. I have this strong belief in my heart," he added. — PTI

## India hoopster in US varsity side

**New Delhi:** NBA Academy India graduate Lalnehpuia Chhakhuak has enrolled at North Park University in Chicago, Illinois, becoming the sixth male student-athlete from the academy to commit to a high school or college basketball programme in the US. Chhakhuak first participated in the 2017-18 Reliance Foundation Jr. NBA program before joining NBA Academy India in 2018 as a part of the academy's second class of student-athletes identified through the ACG-NBA Jump program. The 6-1 guard represented NBA Academy India at the 2018 and 2019 NBA Academy Games in Australia and the US, respectively, as well as the Point Loma Nazarene Team Camp in San Diego in 2019. — PTI

## Vidit qualifies for chess World Cup

**Chennai:** India No.3 Vidit Gujrathi has qualified for the FIDE chess World Cup 2021, to be held in Sochi, Russia from July 10 on the basis of his rating. With this, Grandmaster Gujrathi becomes the fourth Indian man to qualify for the upcoming World Cup, a press release said on Thursday. The Nashik-based player joins Grandmasters P. Harikrishna, Aravindh Chidambaram and P. N. Sriharsha as the Indian men to have qualified for the World Cup. Meanwhile, Koneru Humpy, D. Harika, Bhakti Kulkarni, R. Vaishali and Padmini Rout have qualified for the women's event at the World Cup. This will be Gujrathi's third World Cup appearance, having previously featured in 2017 and 2019. — PTI

## Indian teams arrive in England

**London:** The Indian men's cricket team arrived here on Thursday for the upcoming World Test Championship final against New Zealand and the subsequent Test series versus hosts England. The men's team was accompanied by the women's side which is touring England for three ODIs and as many T20s besides the one-off Test, starting in Bristol on June 16. "Touchdown," top-order batsman K. L. Rahul tweeted with a picture of the chartered flight in the background, confirming their safe arrival in London. Both the teams will now travel to Southampton, where they will complete their mandatory quarantine. — PTI

## 76ers, Hawks in NBA playoffs

**Los Angeles:** The Philadelphia 76ers and Atlanta Hawks advanced to an Eastern Conference semifinal showdown on Wednesday, wrapping up emphatic series victories over the Washington Wizards and New York Knicks. Seth Curry's 30-point display helped the Sixers shrug off the injury absence of Joel Embiid as the top seeds completed a 4-1 playoff series win with a 129-112 defeat of the Wizards in Philadelphia. In New York, the fifth-seeded Hawks brought the Knicks' season to an end with a 103-89 victory at Madison Square Garden to clinch the best-of-seven series 4-1 after a bruising contest. — AFP

## Live on TV

## CRICKET

England vs New Zealand: First Test, Day 3 from 3.30 pm on Sony Six

## FOOTBALL

Euro Pre-Tournament Friendlies: Italy vs Czech Republic from 12.15 am (Saturday) on Sony Ten 2

## SERENA ON SONG

## Federer blows hot, Djokovic cool as stars advance in France

**Paris, June 3:** Serena Williams survived a French Open scare to extend her latest bid for an elusive 24th Grand Slam singles title with a three-set victory over Mihaela Buzarnescu on Wednesday, while men's fifth seed Stefanos Tsitsipas and World No.2 Daniil Medvedev also reached the third round.

The 39-year-old Williams, who has been one short of Margaret Court's all-time record of most major trophies since 2017, brushed off a second-set blip to win 6-3, 5-7, 6-1.

Meanwhile, Roger Federer became entangled in a rare running dispute with a chair umpire on Thursday before safely securing his place in the Last 32.

Federer saw off Marin Cilic for the 10th time in 11 meetings, winning 6-2, 2-6, 7-6 (7/4), 6-2 but only after a second set bust-up with umpire Emmanuel Joseph.

The 20-time Grand Slam title winner was handed a time violation at 1-3 down in the for taking too long between points. "I don't even dare to go my towel anymore," he said to Joseph.

Federer, the oldest man in the draw at 39, lost his cool and the set before recovering to defeat former world number three Cilic.

World number one Novak Djokovic continued his bid for a 19th Grand Slam title with a straight-sets win over Uruguay's Pablo Cuevas to reach the third round. The 34-year-old, who is looking to become the first man in more than 50 years to win all four Slams multiple times, won 6-3, 6-2, 6-4 on Court Suzanne Lenglen.

Tsitsipas put in a strong display to dispose of Spaniard Pedro Martinez



Serena Williams of the United States serves to Romania's Mihaela Buzarnescu during their second round match of the French Open tennis tournament at Roland Garros in Paris, France, on Wednesday. — AP

6-3, 6-4, 6-3. The Greek next faces American John Isner.

Medvedev bounced back from losing the first set to American Tommy Paul in style by romping to a 3-6, 6-1, 6-4, 6-3 victory.

## INJURED BARTY IS OUT

Top seed Ashleigh Barty retired injured midway through the second set of her French Open second-round match against Poland's Magda Linette on Thursday. She left the court for medical treat-

ment after losing the first set 6-1. She had struggled with a hip problem during her first-round win and called it quits at 2-2 in the second set on Court Philippe Chatrier.

## MEN'S PAIR COVID +VE

French Open organisers say that both members of a men's doubles team have tested positive for Covid-19 and have been dropped from the tournament.

The players were placed in quarantine. The tournament did not identify

them. The French tennis federation said these were the first two positives from the 2,446 Coronavirus tests that have been administered on players and their entourages since the start of qualifying rounds on May 24. — Agencies

## OTHER RESULTS

**Men's second round:** Jannik Sinner (ITA x18) bt Gianluca Mager (ITA) 6-1, 7-5, 3-6, 6-3; Mikael Ymer (SWE) bt Gael Monfils (FRA x14) 6-0, 2-6, 6-4, 6-3; Diego Schwartzman (ARG x10) bt Aljaz Bedene (SLO) 6-4, 6-2, 6-4; Philipp Kohlschreiber

(GER) bt Aslan Karatsev (RUS x24) 6-3, 7-6 (7/4), 4-6, 6-1.

**Women's second round:** Magda Linette (Poland) bt Ashleigh Barty (Australia x1) 6-1, 2-2 — retired; Ons Jabeur (Tunisia x25) bt Astra Sharma (Australia) 6-2, 6-4; Sloane Stephens (USA) bt Karolina Pliskova (CZE x9) 7-5, 6-1; Karolina Muchova (CZE x18) bt Varvara Lepchenko (UKR) 6-3, 6-4; Elina Svitolina (UKR x5) bt Ann Li (USA) 6-0, 6-4; Sofia Kenin (USA x4) bt Hailey Baptiste (USA) 7-5, 6-3; Jessica Pegula (USA x28) bt Tereza Martincova (CZE) 6-3, 6-3; Maria Sakkari (GRE x17) bt Jasmine Paolini (ITA) 6-2, 6-3.

## Srini's daughter in conflict of interest

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, JUNE 3

Tamil Nadu Cricket Association president Rupa Gurunath has been found guilty of conflict of interest. The BCCI's Ethics Officer Justice D. K. Jain, in his order on Tuesday, upheld a complaint made by Sanjeev Gupta. Rupa is the daughter of former BCCI chief N. Srinivasan.

Gupta, a former life member of the Madhya Pradesh Cricket Association, had alleged that Rupa was occupying more than one position,

contrary to the Board rules. Rupa is the president of TNCA and also a whole-time director of India Cements Limited, the company which owns Chennai Super Kings Cricket Ltd (CSKCL).

According to Gupta, all seven directors of CSKCL sit as directors on the subsidiary companies of India Cements, thus "giving rise to an instance of conflict" against Rupa.

Justice Jain, in his order, said Rupa "has an indirect interest (if not direct) in CSKCL which has entered into a contract with BCCI."



Rupa Gurunath

"All these facts go on to show that a circuitous web of entities, including CSKCL has been created under the umbrella of

ICL. The management and governance of all such entities directly or indirectly lies in the hands of the board of ICL, notwithstanding the defence pleaded that ICL has no stake in CSKCL.

"In the given factual scenario, it can be safely inferred that the respondent (Rupa), in her capacity as the whole time director and promoter of ICL, has close associations with the trustees of IC Shareholders Trust and the Directors of CSKCL, which has a franchise agreement with the BCCI. This is one of the recog-

nised forms of conflict of interest," the order said.

"ICL, CSKCL, IC Shareholders Trust, subsidiary companies of ICL, IC Capital, all share the same official address and ICL has been one of the sponsors of CSKCL franchise Chennai Super Kings," the order added.

The Ethics Officer also said the BCCI shall requisite steps in accordance with law to ensure due compliance. Thus, Rupa has to relinquish one of the posts. TNCA sources, however, said Rupa is likely to appeal against the order in a court of law.

## Conway cracks double on debut Devon seventh in Test history to score 200 in first knock

**London, June 3:** New Zealand opener Devon Conway made exactly 200 on Test debut before England slumped to 25-2 on the second day of the series opener at Lord's on Thursday.

Conway was last man out in a first-innings total of 378 on the second day of this two-match series.

The South Africa-born left-hander was in sight of becoming the very first batsman in the 144-year history of Test cricket to carry their bat — bat throughout the entire innings — in their first knock in the format when he was run out to end a stay of more than nine-and-a-half hours.

Nevertheless, it needed a review of a close call before it was confirmed that England captain Joe Root had taken the balls off in time.

Even so, Conway was only the seventh batsman to make a double hundred on Test debut.

Conway has also broken former India captain Sourav Ganguly's 25-year-old record of registering the highest Test score on debut at Lord's when he went past the stylish southpaw's 131.

He faced 347 balls, with 22 fours and went to 200 in style when he hooked fast bowler Mark Wood for the only six of his innings.

New Zealand No. 11 Neil



New Zealand's Devon Conway celebrates after reaching his double century during the second day of the first Test against England at Lords Cricket Ground in London on Thursday. — AFP

Wagner, also born in South Africa, made 25 not out off 21 balls that included a superb straight six off Stuart Broad during an entertaining last-wicket stand

of 40. Sussex paceman Ollie Robinson, like Conway making his Test debut, led England's attack with four wickets for 75 runs in 28 overs. But New Zealand then

## DOUBLE CENTURIANS ON TEST DEBUT

- 287 — Tip Foster (England) vs Australia in Sydney, 1903-04
- 222\* — Jacques Rudolph (South Africa) vs Bangladesh at Chattogram, 2002-03
- 214 — Lawrence Rowe (West Indies) vs New Zealand at Kingston, 1971-72
- 214 — Matthew Sinclair (New Zealand) vs West Indies at Wellington, 1999-00
- 210\* — Kyle Mayers (West Indies) vs Bangladesh at Chattogram, 2020-21
- 201\* — Brendon Kuruppu (Sri Lanka) vs New Zealand in Colombo, 1986-87
- 200 — Devon Conway (New Zealand) vs England at Lord's, London, 2021

— S. PERVEZ QAISER

struck twice with the ball themselves.

Kyle Jamieson had Dom Sibley lbw for a duck with a ball that straightened to hit the opener on the back pad, the decision upheld on 'umpire's call' after a review. But there was no room for doubt when Zak Crawley was caught behind off Tim Southee for two. — AFP

## BRIEF SCORES

**Day 2, at Tea:** New Zealand 378 in 122.4 overs (Devon Conway 200; Ollie Robinson 4/75) vs England 25/2 in 10 overs.

## SANIA THANKS RIJJU FOR VISA RESOLUTION

**New Delhi, June 3:** Indian tennis star Sania Mirza on Thursday thanked, among others, Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju for their prompt intervention in getting her son and sister's UK visa approved, enabling them to accompany her for the Olympics' preparatory tournaments.

Weeks after the sports ministry sought intervention of India's external affairs ministry on the issue, the Sports Authority of India (SAI) on Tuesday said that the visa for Sania's son and sister has been approved. The 34-year-old winner of six Grand Slams in doubles took to Twitter to thank everyone for their help.

"I would like to thank the Union Sports Minister, @KirenRijiju sir Indian Embassies in (UAE and UK), @Media\_SAI and the British Govt for helping my son Ishaan and my sister Anam get the visa to enable them to travel with me to UK for the tournaments. Very grateful @PMOIndia," Sania tweeted.

Responding to Sania's tweet, Rijiju wished the former India number one luck as she begins her Journey with an eye on the Olympics. — PTI

## 10,000 Olympic volunteers quit

**Tokyo, June 3:** The Tokyo Olympics chief said the Games would only be cancelled in extreme circumstances on Thursday as organisers revealed 10,000 volunteers had quit over Coronavirus fears, a sexism row and scheduling problems.

Exactly 50 days before the opening ceremony, Tokyo 2020 president Seiko Hashimoto said the show would go on unless the pandemic stops a majority of teams from travelling.

"If various countries around the world experience very serious situations, and delegations from most countries can't come, then we wouldn't be able to hold it," she told the *Nikkan Sports* daily.

"But conversely, unless such a situation emerges, the Games will not be cancelled," she added.

The 2020 Games remain beset by doubts and low public support as Japan battles a fourth Coronavirus wave with much of the country, including Tokyo, under a state of emergency.

Late on Wednesday, Tokyo 2020 CEO Toshio Muto said around 10,000 of the 80,000 volunteers — vital to the smooth running of the Games — had quit, largely over coronavirus concerns.

Others dropped out after the Games were postponed, or in protest at sexist remarks made by Hashimoto's predecessor

If various countries around the world experience very serious situations, and delegations from most countries can't come, then we wouldn't be able to hold it. But conversely, unless such a situation emerges, the Games will not be cancelled.

— SEIKO HASHIMOTO  
Tokyo 2020 president

who was forced to resign, Muto told Japanese media.

However, Muto said the reduction in volunteers would not affect the Games because the event has been scaled back, so fewer people are needed.

Overseas fans have already been barred, and a decision on whether to allow domestic spectators is expected after the state of emergency in Tokyo ends on June 20.

The number of overseas officials and participants has been cut by about half, to around 78,000, with calls for further reductions.

Organisers will unveil details of the medal ceremonies later on Thursday — the latest attempt to generate positive momentum.

Polls show 80 per cent of Japanese oppose hosting the Games this year. But surveys among the population of Tokyo have found a more even split between those in favour and against. — AFP



Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju (centre) poses with athletes after unveiling India's kit for the Tokyo Olympics, in New Delhi on Thursday. — D. KAMRAJ

## INDIA'S OLYMPIC SQUAD LIKELY TO BE 190-STRONG

**New Delhi, June 3:** The Indian contingent for the upcoming Tokyo Olympics is expected to be around 190, including over 100 athletes, IOA president Narinder Batra said on Thursday as Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju unveiled the official kits for the country's participants.

So far, 100 athletes have qualified for the Tokyo Games, including 56 men and 44 women. The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) expects another 25 to 35 to make the cut for the Games, which open on July 23. Indian athletes from 12 sports — badminton, boxing, hockey, wrestling, sailing, athletics, archery, equestrian, fencing, rowing, shooting and table tennis — have so far qualified for the Tokyo Olympics.

"We are estimating to touch 125 to 135 (qualified athletes) by the next two to three weeks when the qualification process is over," Batra said.

"This means the Indian contingent, including officials and support staff, is likely to be around 190," he added. The number of officials cannot be more than one-third of the athlete group as per the Sports Ministry rules. The ministry can, however, allow additional officials at no cost to the government. — PTI

## Mbappe stars as France win big

**Nice (France), June 3:** Karim Benzema said he was happy with his performance despite a missed penalty as he made his first France appearance in almost six years in Wednesday's 3-0 Euro 2020 friendly win over Wales in Nice.

Benzema had been left out of Didier Deschamps' squad since October 2015 due to his alleged role in a blackmail plot.

Kylian Mbappe, Antoine Griezmann and Ousmane Dembele were on the score-sheet for the World Cup winners against the Euro 2016 semifinalists, who had Neco Williams sent off for handling the ball in his area. Meanwhile, Trent

Alexander-Arnold gave Gareth Southgate a Euro 2020 injury scare as Bukayo Saka scored his first goal for England in Wednesday's 1-0 friendly win against Austria.

In another match, Memphis Depay scored twice to salvage a 2-2 draw for the Netherlands in a pre-Euro 2020 friendly on Wednesday against a Scotland side missing seven players following midfielder John Fleck's positive Covid-19 test.

Elsewhere, Mats Hummels and Thomas Mueller made their return to international football after a two-year exile as Germany were held to a 1-1 draw. — AFP