

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
KARIMNAGAR | SATURDAY | 3 JULY 2021

WEATHER

Max: 29.8°C
Min: 22.0°C
RH: 63%
Rainfall: Nil
Forecast: Cloudy sky. Light to moderate rains. Max/Min temp. 29/20°C

ASTROGUIDE

Plava: Uttarayana
Tithi: Jyeshtha Bahula Navami till 5.32 pm
Star: Revathi till 6.13 am
Varjyam: 4.36 am to 6.24 am (Sunday)
Durmuhurtam: 5.49 am to 7.33 am
Rahukalam: 9 am to 10.30 am
HJRI CALENDAR
Zeeqad 21,1441 AH
PRAYERS
Fajar: 4.36 am
Zohar: 12.30 pm
Asar: 4.56 pm
Maghrib: 7.00 pm
Isha: 8.17 pm
SUNSET TODAY 6.54 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.46 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 12.51 AM
MOONSET TODAY 1.26 PM

COUNTER POINT



Relax, sir... those are mangoes from Didi!

SHORT TAKES

Assets of Ahmed Patel's kin seized

New Delhi: The Enforcement Directorate on Friday said it has attached assets of late Congress leader Ahmed Patel's son-in-law, actors Dino Morea and Sanjay Khan and DJ Aqeel in a criminal investigation into a money laundering case linked to an alleged bank fraud. The case involves a Gujarat-based pharmaceutical company called Sterling Biotech group and its promoters.

Congress seeks Covaxin probe

New Delhi: The Congress on Friday raised several questions over a deal for the supply of coronavirus vaccine Covaxin to Brazil, and demanded that the government order a probe into charges of graft. Congress spokesperson Supriya Shrinete said the government needs to clear the air over the deal with Brazil as Covaxin was developed by Bharat Biotech.

Benegal opposes new cinema law

Mumbai: Veteran director Shyam Benegal on Friday said filmmakers' concerns over the Centre's proposal to amend the Cinematograph Act are "natural". On June 18, the Centre had sought comments on the draft cinematograph bill which proposes to penalise film piracy with a jail term and fine, and give more powers to the Central government.

FOREVER | WAR

US troops leave Kabul after 20 yrs

Kabul, July 2: After nearly 20 years, the US military left Bagram Airfield, the epicentre of its war to oust the Taliban and hunt down the al-Qaida perpetrators of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on America, two US officials said on Friday.

The airfield was handed over to the Afghan National Security and Defence Force in its entirety, they said on condition that they not be identified because they were not authorised to release the information to

the media. One of the officials also said the US top commander in Afghanistan, Gen. Austin S. Miller, "still retains all the capabilities and authorities to protect the forces."

Miller met Afghan President Ashraf Ghani on Friday and according to a Dari-language tweet by the Presidential palace the two discussed "continued US assistance and cooperation with Afghanistan, particularly in supporting the defence and security

forces." There were no specifics but the US is already committed to paying nearly \$4 billion annually until 2024 to finance the Afghan national security forces.

While no one was calling Miller's visit a farewell, in the backdrop of the evacuation of Bagram Airfield it had the hallmarks of a goodbye.

Meanwhile, Afghanistan's district administrator for Bagram, Darwaish Raufi, said the American

departure was done overnight without any coordination with local officials, and as a result early Friday dozens of local looters stormed through the unprotected gates before Afghan forces regained control.

"They were stopped and some have been arrested and the rest have been cleared from the base," Raufi said, adding that the looters ransacked several buildings before being arrested and the Afghan forces took control. —AP

Battery of fire



The first lot of 12 Short Span Bridging System (SSBS)-10 m, designed and developed by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), that was inducted into the Indian Army in the presence of Chief of the Army Staff General M.M. Naravane during a ceremony held at Cariappa Parade Ground in New Delhi. —PTI

Rawat quits as U'khand CM, replacement today

DC CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs
NEW DELHI/DEHRADUN, JULY 2

With about seven months left for the Assembly polls in Uttarakhand, Chief Minister Tirath Singh Rawat of the BJP resigned on Friday to avert a "constitutional crisis."

The CM arrived at Raj Bhavan late on Friday night and was learnt to have submitted his resignation to Governor Baby Rani Maurya.

Tirath Rawat had succeeded Trivendra Rawat in March this year. The BJP had bagged 56 out of the state's 70 Assembly seats in 2017 but retaining power in next year's Assembly polls will be a challenge, partly because of a resurgent Congress.

Neither the BJP leadership or Tirath Rawat, who held a press conference in Dehradun late in evening on the BJP government's development work, including Covid-19 relief measures, during his 117-

day tenure, spoke about resigning as the Chief Minister.

Earlier in the day, Tirath Singh Rawat had met BJP president J.P. Nadda twice as well as Union home minister Amit Shah in New Delhi.

The new Chief Minister is most likely to be a sitting MLA, who would hold the post for just nine months till the elections. BJP MLAs are to elect their new leader on Saturday. All party MLAs have been asked to attend the meeting.

Now an MP, Tirath Singh Rawat, who succeeded Trivendra Singh Rawat in March, had to be elected to the state Assembly by September 10.

However, the Election Commission's move to defer some bypolls had complicated matters for Tirath Singh Rawat as the poll panel believed that it would not be appropriate to hold elections till the Covid pandemic situation improves significantly.

Section 151A of the Repre-

sentation of the People Act 1951 mandates the EC to fill vacancies in Parliament and state legislatures through bypolls within six months from the date of their occurrence, provided that the remainder of the term of the new member is one year or more.

The term of the Assembly is due to come to an end in March, only about nine months away. The poll panel, therefore, was not required to hold a byelection in the state.

While a "constitutional crisis" was cited for Tirath Singh Rawat's quick resignation, speculation had been rife that it would not be easy for him to win the bypoll if he was not fielded from the party's strongholds.

For the BJP, which is mired in Covid-19 mismanagement issues during the Kumbh Mela and corruption allegations, and the Congress in a resurgent mode, a third CM in five years will only add to its worries.

VELAMA, KAMMA COMMUNITIES GET HYD LAND

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JULY 2

The state government on Friday issued orders allotting five acres of land each to the Velama and Kamma communities in Serilingampally mandal for construction of their 'community bhavans'. The value of these land parcels is said to be up to ₹50 crore per acre. The plot adjacent to HiTec City road and abutting the NAC road in Khanamet was allotted to the All India Velama Association while another site, abutting the road to Ayyappa Society was allotted to the Kamma Vari Seva Sanghala Samakya.

COVID VACCINE FOR PREGNANT WOMEN NOW

New Delhi, July 2: Pregnant women in India are now eligible to get vaccinated against Covid with the Union health ministry on Friday giving the approval based on recommendations of the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (NTAGI). The ministry said pregnant women should be informed about benefits, risks and likely side-effects of Covid-19 vaccine to help them make an informed decision on taking the jab.

Till now, all groups except pregnant women were eligible for Covid vaccination. Now, it is expanded to even pregnant women in the world's largest immunisation drive, the statement said. Studies have shown that Covid infection during pregnancy may result in rapid deterioration of health of pregnant women and they are at an increased risk of diseases and might affect fetus too, it said.

Experts have suggested that the Covid-19 vaccine may be offered to the pregnant women if no contraindications exist, it said. The intent is to weigh risk versus benefit on individualised basis so that a pregnant woman can take an informed decision. —PTI



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SPORTS | 8

Federer oldest in Wimbledon third round

TABLOID

The new recovery therapy on rise

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TS steps up hydel power production

Cheap energy turns key for Kaleshwaram

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JULY 2

Notwithstanding the stiff resistance and complaints by the Andhra Pradesh government, TS Genco (Generation Corporation) continues to generate hydel power at irrigation projects over river Krishna at the rate of almost 30 MW per day since June 29 with the security cover provided by the TS government by deploying a large police force at the dams.

The total installed capacity of hydel power in Telangana state is 2,441 MW. Of this, over 90 per cent is from projects on the Krishna. Nagarjuna-sagar, Srisaillam, Pulichintala and Jurala projects comprise 2,369 MW of the installed capacity.

The TS Genco has produced over 100 MW power for the last four days since June 29, when the tussle erupted over generation of hydel power with the Andhra Pradesh government complaining to the Centre against TS.

TS Genco is utilising hydel power to operate the Kaleshwaram lift irrigation pumps, which require

● **THE TOTAL** installed capacity of hydel power in Telangana state is 2,441 MW. Of this, over 90 per cent is from projects on the Krishna.

● **TS GENCO** is utilising hydel power to operate huge lift irrigation pumps to lift Godavari water from the Kaleshwaram project to fill reservoirs.

a large amount of power. The government is incurring a heavy expenditure on account of using thermal power. To overcome this, the state government has decided to utilise cheaper hydel power to the maximum extent during monsoon, which is suitable for hydel power generation when inflows will be huge in projects.

The TS government has started lifting Godavari water from the Kaleshwaram project to fill reservoirs starting from Medigadda, Annaram, Sundilla to Mid-Manair project and Mallannasagar, using what are called 'Bahubali

motors' for their size.

The Srisaillam Left Bank Canal has the highest installed capacity of 900 MW followed by Nagarjuna-sagar (815 MW), Lower Jurala (240 MW), Jurala (234 MW), Pulichintala (120MW) and Nagarjuna-sagar left canal (60MW).

At Srisaillam, the TS Genco produced 9.72 MW power on June 29, 12.97 MW on June 30 and 13.79 MW on July 1. At Nagarjuna-sagar, it generated 6.76 MW on June 29, 16.12 MW on June 30 and 15.95 MW on July 1. At Pulichintala, it has produced 0.06 MW on June 29, 0.55 on June 30 and 0.80 on July 1.

These figures indicate that TS Genco has been increasing generation at all projects day after day while AP government is stepping up opposition. The hydel generation is not being taken up at a single project on river Godavari due to poor water levels in Singur which has installed capacity of 15 MW, Nizamsagar (10 MW), Pochampad (36 MW), Peddapalli mini hydro (9.2 MW) and Palair mini hydro (2 MW). There is zero production in these projects at present.

SHORT TAKES

BJP MEET TO DISCUSS WATER ROW WITH AP

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JULY 2

The BJP state executive committee will meet on July 4 to discuss important issues in the state involving farmers and the sharing of river waters with Andhra Pradesh. TS BJP general secretary G. Premender Reddy told the media on Friday that Tarun Chugh, the party incharge, will attend the meeting online. The party is also likely to discuss the issue of unemployment and the bypoll at Huzurabad. Premender Reddy said state party president Bandi Sanjay, Union minister of state for home G. Kishan Reddy, vice-president D.K. Aruna, OBC Morcha president Dr K. Laxman and state committee members will join the meeting.

NO RELIEF FROM HC FOR TOP AP OFFICER

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JULY 2

The Telangana High Court on Friday refused to issue directions to stop trial against Y. Srilakshmi, senior IAS officer in Andhra Pradesh, at the CBI court in relation to the lease given to Obulapuram Mining Company (OMC). The court directed the CBI to file a memo before the CBI court stating that the probe was complete in this case. Srilakshmi had filed the petition before the Telangana High Court seeking to issue directions to the CBI court to stop further proceedings against her in the OMC case until the border issue between Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka is finalised. Her counsel said the issue of the border of the two states was pending before the Supreme Court.

HC SEEKS DETAILS OF QUASH PLEAS IN JAGAN CASES

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JULY 2

The Telangana High Court on Friday sought case-wise details from the CBI about the quash petitions filed by the accused in relation to the Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy quid pro quo cases. The CBI has filed 11 chargesheets and had booked government officials as accused. Most of the accused have approached the High Court seeking to get their names removed. On Friday, Justice Shamim Akther was dealing with quash petitions filed by Hetero Pharma and its director Srinivas Reddy, Srinivas Balaji, who is accused in the Lepakshi Knowledge Hub cases, Jitendra Hirwani of Indu group and Embassy realtors. T. Niranjan Reddy, counsel for Hetero, said the High Court had quashed the case against the India Cements managing director and sought similar relief. He complained that there was political influence on the CBI to register the cases against the industrialists and others. He said that with the land allotments from the government, Hetero had developed Mediciti and nearly 3,000 people were getting employment. Surender, CBI counsel, denying the allegations of political influence, said that there were 103 accused in 11 cases. He said the case relating to the India Cements MD does not apply to other cases.

● THE CBI has filed 11 chargesheets and had booked government officials as accused.

UAPA | ACTION

Duo allegedly had ties with LeT, visited Pakistan for training

NIA gets custody of train blast accused

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JULY 2

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) was given seven-day custody of Mohammad Nasir Khan and Imran Khan, the Hyderabad-based brothers who are accused of being Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LeT) activists, by a court in Patna. They are being investigated for their alleged involvement in the Darbhanga railway station parcel blast case. Sources said that NIA had sought 10-day custody

Ignore Jagan’s letter on hydel plant: TRS

Party alleges AP CM trying to mislead Centre

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JULY 2

Telangana state ministers on Friday urged the Centre to ignore the letter written by Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy complaining against the TS government for taking up hydel power generation at irrigation projects across the Krishna.

Energy minister G. Jagadish Reddy and tourism minister V. Srinivas Goud addressed separate press conferences to lash out at Jagan Mohan Reddy for allegedly misleading the Centre with “fake complaints”.

The energy minister asked the Chief Minister to do some soul-searching to understand how the situation had arisen that he had to write to the Prime Minister.

“Jagan himself has created this situation. Our Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao had extended a hand of friendship and offered to settle all water disputes amicably. He offered to share surplus Godavari water since availability of water in Krishna is comparatively low. But Jagan unilaterally decided to construct the Rayalaseema Lift Irrigation Scheme and expand the Pothireddypadu project to divert Krishna water to AP illegally,” the minister said. He urged the AP CM to remember that Telangana was a state and not a part of Andhra Pradesh. Telangana has a Chief Minister who never compromises when it comes to protecting the

AP’s demand for watch on key projects gains weight

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JULY 2

The Andhra Pradesh government’s long pending demand for monitoring of common projects like Srisailem and Nagarjunasagar on the Krishna river by the Krishna River Management Board (KRMB), has resurfaced in the wake of the dispute over sharing of water between Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.

Water resources authorities said that at the time of bifurcation in 2014, there was a demand to keep these projects under the control of the KRMB so that it can oversee the maintenance of these projects and resolve any dispute on the river between the two governments.

Similarly, there is also a demand to deploy Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) personnel at such projects instead of the present practice of deploy-

ing police by both the states in their respective areas which causes tension at the project sites. It may be mentioned that AP water resources officials were not allowed by the Telangana state police at Nagarjunasagar dam when they tried to meet their counterparts from Telangana to talk about the water dispute. Telangana state officials refused to meet their AP counterparts.

AP Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Jal Shakti minister Gajendra Singh Shekawat on the state’s water dispute with Telangana, and the AP government is eagerly waiting for their responses. Speaking to this correspondent, AP water resources engineer-in-chief C. Narayana Reddy said, “We are awaiting the Centre’s response on the Krishna water dispute

and we are also working on some remedies to resolve the issue.”

On the other hand, the Telangana state government is continuing hydroelectric power generation from all three projects - Srisailem, Nagarjunasagar and Pulichintala in the last few days by releasing nearly two to three tmc ft of water. AP authorities raise concern over release of water resulting in depletion of available quantum of water in the Krishna river catchment areas upstream with no sign of rainfall and also no hint of any floods.

The AP authorities say that the TS government is flouting Pulichintala project protocol by releasing water for generation of hydroelectric power even though water should be released based on needs of the delta area for cultivation of crops and for drinking water purposes.

Implement 10% quota in jobs, edu: OC body

DC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, JULY 2

When the state government was claiming that welfare of all sections of people was its main target, then why is it neglecting the weaker sections belonging to the OC category, asked Poladi Rama Rao, president of the ‘OC Social Welfare Federation’(OC-SWF), here on Friday.

Speaking to the media at Press Bhavan in Karimnagar, Rama Rao said the Centre had allotted 10 per cent of reservations for people from the economically weaker sections belonging to the OC category in education and employment. The state government had released GO No. 33 on February 8, 2021, and directed the heads of all departments to implement this quota. But there was no sign of implementation of the GO in any department, he alleged.

Recently, the education department issued notification for the admission into 36 junior colleges and for admissions of 5th class students into general gurukul residential schools. But there was no option for EWS reservations, he said. When the issue was taken to the

notice of ministers and officials, there was no response from them.

The OC-SWF filed a petition in the High Court under OC-JAC. After hearing the appeal, the High Court on June 18 issued orders to the authorities to implement the quota, he said. When the officials neglected the High Court orders and did not implement the reservations, the High Court issued contempt orders to the officials on June 29, he added.

Rama Rao said for to protest the government’s negligence on the matter, the OC-SWF would going to stage a protest in the district, revenue division and mandal headquarters.

If the government behaved stubbornly, then the agitation would be intensified like that of Telangana agitation.

Later, representatives of the OC-SWF submitted a representation to B. Vinod Kumar, vice-chairman of the TState Planning Commission.

The representatives of the OC-SWF P. Keshava Reddy, Ch. Purushotham Rao, U. Radha Krishna Reddy, Dr. Deepak Rubu, G. Swamy Reddy, were among those who were present along with others.

UNION MIN. ASSURES FUNDS FOR HOUSES UNDER PMAY TO KOLAM ADIVASIS

DC CORRESPONDENT
ADILABAD, JULY 2

The Union Minister state for Tribal Affairs Renuka Singh on Friday said the Central government will sanction funds for the construction of houses to the Kolams Adivasis under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana(PMAY) if the state government sends proposal immediately.

A team of Kolam Adivasis met the Union Minister of State for Tribal Affairs Renuka Singh and submitted a representation to appealing to sanction 10,000 houses every year to Kolams and give ₹50 crore grants of CCDP (Conservation cum Development Plan) for the

empowerment of the Kolams.

A team of Kolam Adivasi leaders of Kolam Seva Sangham led by the its state president Tekam Bhasakar met the Minister in Delhi and brought the problems faced by the Kolams considered as PVTGs to her notice.

Minister promised to visit the Adilabad district to know the social and economic condition of the Kolams in October of this year.

Kolam Adivasi leaders requested the minister to take steps to give priority to the PVTG Kolams in filling the jobs in the Girjan Cooperative Corporation and financial help to Kolams for their medical treatment in emergencies.

Covid pandemic hit Haritha Haram programme this year

DC CORRESPONDENT
ADILABAD, JULY 2

It seems like the ongoing seventh Haritha Haram and tree planting programme is looking like forests without butterflies with no participation of students and children due to Covid-19 pandemic.

There is no participation of school children and college students in ongoing Haritha Haram unlike in the past due to the Covid-19 pandemic and closure of the schools and colleges.

Only local MLAs, political leaders, party activists and government employees were

seen at Haritha Haram programmes.

It seems the Haritha Haram and tree plantation the programme has lacked enthusiasm and colourfulness with the absence of students and youngsters.

Respective collectors and Superintendent of police of Nirmal, Adilabad, Mancherial and Komaram Bheem Asifabad are actively participating in the Haritha Haram programmes organised locally.

Minister for Forest Allola Indrakaran Reddy and collector Mushariff Farooqui and Additional collector

TS BJP HOPEFUL STATE MPs MAY GET CHANCE IN UNION CABINET REJIG

DC CORRESPONDENT
NIZAMABAD, JULY 2

BJP leaders in Telangana are hopeful that the impending Union Cabinet rejig may see induction of some party MPs from the state.

In this connection, the names of Nizamabad MP Dharmapuri Arvind and Adilabad MP Soyam Babu Rao are doing the rounds among partymen. There is no indication from Delhi yet of any induction from Telangana state.

Karimnagar MP Bandi Sanjay was elevated as BJP state president and BJP men here feel either Adilabad MP Soyam Babu Rao or Nizamabad MP Dharmapuri Arvind might get a chance. Soyam Babu Rao is the lone MP from the Adivasi Gond tribe. He has a strong base among primitive tribals as he had earlier served as Boath MLA.

If Soyam Babu Rao is elevated as union minister, the Gonds in Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra will get representation from the community.

Three tribal MPs including Soyam Babu Rao are hoping for elevation. Nizamabad MP Dharmapuri Arvind’s followers believe he stands a good chance this time.

Speaking to Deccan Chronicle, a senior BJP leader said that among the four BJP MPs from Telangana, three have been representing the north Telangana region. “If Union minister post is allotted to one of them, it would strengthen the party in undivided Nizamabad, Adilabad and Karimnagar districts,” he opined.

● IF SOYAM Babu Rao is elevated as union minister, the Gonds in Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra will get representation from the community.

ALL GATES OF BABLI PROJECT OPENED

DC CORRESPONDENT
NIZAMABAD, JULY 2

All 14 gates of Babli project opened on Friday and released water downstream of river Godavari.

As per directives of the Supreme Court, irrigation engineers of Telangana and Maharashtra states in presence of Central Water Commission officials released the water.

As a result, water flow in river Godavari has been increased at Kandakurthi village, where Godavari enters into Telangana state from Maharashtra. The confluence of river Godavari and its tributaries Manjeera and Harida in Kandakurthi witnessed heavy flow, resulting in partial submergence of Shiva temple on the banks of river. However, Babli water has been reaching Sriramsagar project. The water level in project is reached 1,070 feet and inflows stands at 4,374 cusecs on Friday evening.

28.871 tmc of water is storage in the project as against its full reservoir capacity is 90 tmc. The last year water level in SRSP on the same day was 1070.70 ft and storage of 30.360 tmc.

COLLECTOR ENQUIRES ABOUT PROBLEMS OF PEOPLE IN MUCHKUR, STAYS IN VILLAGAE

DC CORRESPONDENT
NIZAMABAD, JULY 2

To know the problems of people at first hand, the district collector C. Narayana Reddy slept in Muchkur village of Bheemgal mandal on Thursday night. As part of the Palle Pragathi programme, begin Palle Nidra in selected villages. Collector visited wards in the Muchkur on Friday and interacted with the villagers.

The villagers brought several problems to the notice of collector and he directed Bheemgal mandal officers to rectify them immediately. Collector C. Narayana Reddy

said that the state government is giving priority for sanitation and greenery during the Palle Pragathi programme. He said that funds and expenditure details of gram panchayat should be displayed in the village.

Collector directed to construct roads and drainages in Muchkur village and avert the inundation of houses due to rain water from nearby water tank. Reacting to complaints against the Mission Bhagiratha scheme, he directed the officials concerned to provide drinking water to all by July 15. He also suggested providing employment to the workers under MGNREGS.

PROF LAKSHMA REDDY APPOINTED RASHTRIYA AVISHKAR ABHIYAN NODAL OFFICER

Warangal: Prof K. Lakshma Reddy, Department of Chemistry, has been appointed as the Rashtriya Avishkaar Abhiyan (RAA) Nodal officer at National Institute of Technology, Warangal (NITW), Prof N.V. Ramana Rao, Director NIT Warangal has stated. “Prof. A. Ramachandraiah, who has been serving as the RAA Nodal Officer to this date would be retiring on July 31st and this position was passed on to Prof. K. Lakshma Reddy who

has great experience in promoting scientific notions among people. Prof. Lakshma Reddy will execute the Department of Science and Technology-Vigyan Prasara Science project on science communication, popularization and extension (SCOPE) in Telugu language at Telangana and Andhra Pradesh states. Prof. Reddy shall also carry out funded and non-funded mentoring activities associated with the RAA at NIT(W), NV Ramana Rao said.

SHORT TAKES

COMPLAINT ON WINE SHOP FOR OPENING IN LOCKDOWN

Khammam: Marlapadu sarpanch Venugopal Reddy said that the wine shop owner was warned not to open the shop after 1 pm. He said that lockdown is being implemented in Marlapadu village in Vemsoor mandal as Covid-19 cases are being reported. He said that he complained over the attitude of wine shop owner to the excise officials and Sattupalli MLA Sandra Venkata Veeraiah. The assembling of people in Marlapadu is high and lockdown is need of the hour for some more days.

CM LIKELY TO VISIT RAJANNA SIRCILLA DIST TOMORROW

DC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, JULY 2

Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao is likely to visit Rajanna Sircilla on Sunday to inspect ongoing pallo and pattana pragathi programmes, along with other developmental works undertaken in the district.

The CM's visit is focused on developing villages and towns in a planned way, along with providing basic facilities, increasing greenery and maintaining cleanliness. He has already held a review meeting recently with district collectors and officials of panchayat raj department for implementing village and city programmes successfully across the state.

The Chief Minister is expected to distribute double bedroom houses to beneficiaries, apart from inaugurating the new collectorate complex building and nursing college.

WILL FIGHT AGAINST ANTI-PEOPLE POLICIES: REVANTH

Khammam: Fresh into the job, TPCC president A Revanth Reddy has started getting support from the rank and file of the party, and its leaders in Khammam district.

As part of his reaching out initiative, Reddy sought the support of former Union minister Renuka Chowdary, during a meeting with party leaders from Khammam and Bhadrachal districts in Hyderabad.

Former ministers Sambani Chandrasekhar and R. Damodar Reddy, Khammam market committee former chairman Manukonda Radha Kishore, Rayala Nageswara Rao, corporators Lakavathi Saidulu, P. Chandram and Duddukuri Venkateswarlu, former corporators Vaddeboina Narasimha Rao, Nagandla Deepak Chowdary, Dodda Ashok and party leaders K. Gopal, Chandrika and Dirisala Venkateswarlu were among those in the meeting.

Revanth Reddy and Renuka Chowdary met Mustafa, a Congress leader in Khammam, who was in jail under PD Act, in the online 'mulakat'.

They told him that they would fight the case in court for his release. Sources said that after Reddy offered to come to her house to seek her support, Renuka invited leaders from Khammam and Bhadrachal districts.

She said that the NDA government at the Centre and TRS government in Telangana had failed on all fronts and people were looking for a change.

Reddy said "Congress will fight against Chandrasekhar Rao's anti-people policies. I will be in complete charge after assuming office as TPCC president on July 7".

COPS NAB 3, SEIZE 126KG MARIJUANA

Warangal: Three gang members peddling Ganja were arrested by the task force and Jangaon police on Friday and 126kg of cannabis worth ₹12.60 lakh has been recovered from them.

Commissioner of police Tarun Joshi said the accused, Gugulot Sudhakar, Gugulot Suresh of Warangal Rural along with Titolia Dinesh of Hyderabad have been smuggling ganja from Narasipatnam in Andhra Pradesh and selling it in Hyderabad. The main accused Sudhakar used to purchase the banned substance and the remaining two helped in selling it to various sources. As usual, Sudhakar shifting it to Hyderabad via Suryapet. The police, who had information regarding their arrival conducted vehicle checks near Jangaon and nabbed them.

TRS MLAs encroached Khadi Board land: Cong.

DC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, JULY 2

Medipally Satyam, Congress Choppadandi Assembly segment in-charge, on Friday accused TRS MLAs Vidhya Sagar Rao and Sunke Ravi Shankar of illegally grabbing 60 guntas of land belonging to Khadi Board.

Earlier during the day, Congress workers blocked traffic on Jagtial-Karimnagar national highway at Pudur village of Kodimayala mandal in Jagtial district. Led by Satyam, they alleged that without issuing any public notification, the state government has registered the Khadi Board land in name of Menneni Raja Narasimha Rao, a TRS leader and a benami of the ruling party MLAs.

Satyam said they had taken up the issue with Khadi Board commissioner and district collector. But the two officials have not responded till date. When a common man complained against former minister Etala Rajendar, the state gov-

Adivasis losing out due to lack of skills, network

Adivasi students in need of career guidance cell at ITDA, Uttoor

DC CORRESPONDENT
ADILABAD, JULY 2

Many Adivasi students are not getting admission to higher educational institutions and jobs too as they do not know how to apply online. They also lack English knowledge in addition to the poor cell phone network in their villages.

The problems have doubled for Adivasi students during the Covid pandemic and subsequent lockdown. They are unable to get the official information about admissions in Tribal Welfare Residential Colleges and other educational institutions.

Many Adivasi students do not have access to newspapers and they are not aware of the new notifications being issued for seats in educational institutions and for jobs in the government and private sectors.

The need of the hour is

to set up an exclusive career guidance and counseling cell for Adivasi students and educated youth at ITDA, Uttoor, to give them information about education and employment and motivate them to go for higher education and write for competitive examinations.

On June 21, a group of seven Adivasi girl students who completed SSC came all the way to the ITDA office from interior Pangdimadhara of Tiryani mandal in Komaram Bheem Asifabad district. They traveled 60km to get to know how they can apply online for admissions for 2021-22 into corporate colleges provided by the tribal welfare department.

Many Adivasi students are not exposed to laptops and computers and have no idea about applying online for seats and jobs. A small section of Adivasis who have completed

Degree in recent years are having some knowledge about using computers.

Adivasi leader Purka Bapurao said a group of Adivasi girl students came all the way to ITDA, Uttoor from Pangdimadhara to apply for admissions to corporate colleges at ITDA as they did not know they could apply online from anywhere.

He said the girl students had just completed SSC and were entering into intermediate education.

Pandram Sangeetha of Pangdimadhara who came to ITDA along with her said they don't know where to apply for admissions into junior colleges and they stepped out of their homes for the first time to apply for admissions. She said it would be good if ITDA officials extended full support to them to continue with their education.

Officials of the ITDA are

supposed to display all the notifications for admissions and jobs on the notice board for the benefit of the student and educated youth.

Community leaders say Adivasi students are coming out of their villages for the first time after overcoming many hardships, but these youths get disappointed when they do not get the support and cooperation from the Tribal Welfare Department. Thus, their journey gets stuck before they start.

ITDA officials should set up a cell and create awareness among these students at the village and mandal level through meetings and workshops about intermediate, degree and PG courses that are being offered to them free and are available at educational institutions under Tribal Welfare Department, community leaders add.

Ajay tells sarpanches to develop ideal GP's

DC CORRESPONDENT
KOTHAGUDEM, JULY 2

"It is time to shape our habitations as ideal gram panchayats. With the cooperation of officials, sarpanches can complete all pending works during Palle Pragathi. The state government has decided to provide logistic support to gram panchayats in the task", said transport minister Puvvada Ajay Kumar.

The development of the state relied on the growth of the gram panchayats and Telangana stood first with gram panchayats showing progress across parameters like drinking water facilities, roads, sanitation, health and education.

The minister attended various programmes in Bhadrachal district on Friday as part of Palle Pragathi. "Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao evolved 'Palle Pragathi' and 'Pattana Pragathi' to make all

colonies environmentally friendly. Planting saplings and nurturing trees are important", he said.

Sarpanches should conduct grama sabhas without fail as these sabhas are a key tool in democracy and opinions of locals should be duly considered. Rural areas are getting clean water through Mission Bhagiratha, he said.

The minister visited the site where the collectorate is being built here. He said that officials should ensure that it is completed in time. He planted saplings in Bhadrachalam besides inaugurating a toilet complex in veterinary hospital and Pattana Prakrithi Vanama.

JAGGA TAKES CYCLE YATRA IN PROTEST OVER FUEL HIKE

Hyderabad: In a novel protest against the steep increase in fuel prices, TPCC working president T. Jayaprakash 'Jagga' Reddy rode a cycle for 14 km on Friday. He said the people were adversely affected by the zooming fuel prices.

Rain effect



As municipal officials ignore the road damaged at Rajeev Chowk, rains have added more suffering to the commuters. —DC

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➤ Interview dates will be informed to the candidates.
-Secretary & Correspondent

NTPC sets up 100MW floating solar power plant in Peddapalli

DC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, JULY 2

The CGM of National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC), Ramagundam, Sunil Kumar in a statement released on Friday said that in order to focus on renewable energy, they had started construction of an environment-friendly 100-megawatt floating solar power plant in Godavarikhami of Peddapalli district.

It should be recalled that in order to save natural fossils, NTPC Ramagundam had initially taken up 10 MWs solar power plant. They successfully gen-

erated about 12 million units of power annually, thereby saving around 14,000 tonnes of non-renewable fossil fuel (coal) reserves.

Kumar stated that NTPC has become India's first energy company to declare its energy compact goals as part of the UN High-level dialogue on Energy (HLDE). It is aiming for 10 per cent reduction in net energy intensity by installing 60 GW of renewable energy capacity by 2032.

As part of this, the Ramagundam unit is constructing the 100-MW floating solar power project at its balancing reservoir spread over 450 acres of water surface at an estimated budget of ₹423 crore, which will be the largest segment in the country.

He said that commissioning of the project could have been completed by now but was delayed because of Covid-19. Now, they are planning to commission in a phased manner with an immediate target to commission 15 MW by July-end and 10-15 MW in every subsequent month.

Some months back, Hardeep Singh Dang, New & renewable energy minister from Madhya Pradesh visited the site at NTPC-Ramagundam reservoir to get a first-hand experience as they were planning to execute the world's largest 600-MW floating solar project at Omkareshwar

belonging to Padmshali community in the region. As part of their protest, Congress party workers tried to enter the Khadi Board office. But they were prevented by police personnel deployed there. A heated argument took place between them. Police brought the situation under control by arresting Congress workers and shifting them to a nearby police station.

Platform for training centre, lectures, symposiums, workshops

PV centre in KU for social, economic reforms

DC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, JULY 2

P.V. Narasimha Rao Centre for the promotion of Social and Economic Reforms (Vignana Peetam) to be set up in the Kakatiya University campus, is going to strengthen Telangana studies on culture, language, history, social and economic development, said vice-chancellor T. Ramesh.

He was addressing the media at the university senate hall on Friday and thanked Chief Minister K



Kakatiya University vice-chancellor, T. Ramesh.

Chandrashekar Rao for approving the proposal to set up the Vignana

Peetam at KU. The VC stressed the need for future generations to learn from the litterateur who showed great statesmanship during his political career. He recalled that PV, who believed not in becoming the king but being a kingmaker, has honed up Manmohan Singh for the future. "PV Narasimha Rao's term as the Prime Minister of the country was the most challenging. He tackled several complex situations and came on top to stabilise not only the minority government but

also the falling economy of the country. His decisions paved the way for reforms in several sectors including disbursing of his own land of 800 acres to the landless as part of his land reforms," the VC said.

Ramesh also reminded that PV brought reforms wherever he worked either as a state minister, Chief Minister, Union Minister or Prime Minister. His literary works including Golla Ramavva teach several lessons on humanity. Such a person should be

remembered and must stand as an example for the students and teachers alike, he said.

The Vice-Chancellor explained that the PV Vignana Peetam would create the platform for a training centre, popular lectures, symposiums, workshops and pave the way for research on local culture and society.

"We also intend to set up a museum as part of this institute along with an archaeology museum. A research journal on PV's name would also be printed," he said.

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IN BRIEF

DESHMUKH CLAIMS CBI PROBE ILLEGAL

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC MUMBAI, JULY 2

Terming the CBI inquiry against him as illegal, Anil Deshmukh, the former Maharashtra home minister, on Friday complained to the Bombay High Court that he is facing inquiry over corruption charges in breach of legal procedure while even 26/11 terrorist Ajmal Kasab got the benefit of the rule of law.

Raising the question of prior sanction to book Deshmukh being a government servant senior counsel Amit Desai on behalf of Deshmukh contended before the court that even though preliminary inquiry against applicant was initiated on the orders of this court but the central probe agency didn't seek prior sanction from the Maharashtra government to prosecute the NCP leader, who was at the time a public servant.

Advocate Desai argued before the division bench of Justice S.S. Shinde and Justice N.M. Jamadar this absence of sanction made the inquiry against Deshmukh, on the charges of corruption and misconduct, illegal.

The bench was hearing the petition filed by Deshmukh challenging the FIR registered by the CBI against him in the aftermath of corruption allegations made against him by former Mumbai police commissioner Param Bir Singh.

Advocate Desai said section 17A of the Prevention of Corruption Act mandated that the police or any other investigating agency procure a prior sanction to prosecute a public servant. The bench, however, pointed out that section 17A protected an officer's conduct that was in discharge of his or her official duties.

NOW, PETROL GROSSES ₹100 IN CHENNAI

New Delhi, Jul 2: Petrol price on Friday crossed the ₹100-per-litre mark in Chennai as well as in some places in Punjab and Kerala after fuel prices were hiked yet again.

Petrol is priced at over ₹99 a litre in Delhi and Kolkata - the only metro cities which haven't seen the ₹100 mark yet.

Petrol price was hiked by 35 paise per litre on Friday but there was no change in diesel rates, according to a price notification of state-owned fuel retailers.

On Thursday, the price of domestic cooking gas (LPG) was hiked by ₹25.50 per 14.2-kg cylinder. A subsidised and non-subsidised cylinder now costs ₹834.50 in Delhi. The increase in petrol price -- 33rd in two months - took rates across the country to fresh highs.

In Chennai, the petrol price rose to Rs 100.13 a litre.

MORE NATIONS OKAY INDIAN VACCINES

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC NEW DELHI, JULY 2

A total of 12 European Union (EU) member-nations have till now decided to give Indian nationals vaccinated with Covishield exemptions from travel restrictions in their countries, government sources said on Friday, with the Netherlands joining the bandwagon as well.

These nations are Austria, Germany, Slovenia, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Spain, Switzerland, Estonia, Netherlands, Latvia and Finland, sources said.

Estonia, meanwhile, has in addition decided to give exemptions to Indians vaccinated with Covaxin as well, sources said.

Meanwhile, at his weekly briefing on Friday, external affairs ministry spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said, "The EU has now instituted a digital covid certificate for exempting restrictions on the movement of vaccinated people. Our expectation is that Indians who have been vaccinated through our domestic vaccination program would be treated at par with those vaccinated in the EU and CoWin vaccination certificate would be recognised by the EU on a reciprocal basis. Such CoWin vaccination certificates can be authenticated on the CoWin website itself. We are in touch with EU member states in this regard for reciprocal acceptance. I understand that a number of EU countries have already taken positive steps in this direction."

TAMIL NADU EATERIES CAN OFFER DINE-IN FROM MONDAY

G BABU JAYAKUMAR & D SEKAR | DC CHENNAI, JUL 2

Ushering in a single norm lockdown for the entire State, Chief Minister M K Stalin has permitted all eateries to offer dine-in facility from 6 am to 8 pm and done away with e-registration or e-pass for travel within the State from Monday.

Announcing the new lockdown restrictions and relaxations that would be in force till July 12 and common for all the districts, Stalin said hotels, lodges, guest houses and dormitories would open their doors for guests but with 50 per cent occupancy.

While most of the relaxations announced for the 27 districts with less Coronavirus spread will now be applicable for the remaining 11 that are now under strict restrictions, it would be strict no for inter-State bus service, international travel, theatres, bars, swimming pools, social and political gatherings, entertainment, sports and cultural events, schools and colleges and zoos.

The same old rule for marriages and funerals would continue with only 50 guests and 20 mourners allowed to take part.

Some of other relaxations are permission for business to business exhibitions with strict adherence to Covid-19 protocols, including mandatory RT-PCR test, IT sector offices to function with 50 per cent attendance and opening of clubs, gyms and sports facilities.

Liquor shops will be open from 10 am to 8 pm, buses will run within the State with no air conditioning, research scholars can attend to their work, tea shops can entertain 50 per cent clientele.

CHAUTALA RELEASED FROM TIHAR JAIL

New Delhi/Chandigarh, Jul 2: INLD chief Om Prakash Chautala walked free from the Delhi's Tihar Jail Friday after serving a 10-year sentence in a recruitment scam, his party workers welcoming him with flower petals and drum beats at the capital's border with Haryana.

The former Haryana chief minister told party workers that he will continue to fight for farmers and the poor.

Chautala (86), who was already out on parole, reached the Tihar Jail on Friday to complete formalities after which he was released, prison officials said.

Director General (Delhi Prisons), Sandeep Goel, said, "After necessary formalities, he (Chautala) has been released".

Last month, the Delhi government had passed an order granting a six-month special remission to those who have served nine-and-half years of their 10-year prison sentence to decongest jails in view of the Covid pandemic.

According to officials, since Chautala has already served nine years and nine months of his sentence, he was eligible to get out of prison. Chautala was jailed in 2013 in connection with a teacher recruitment scam. He was on emergency parole since March 26, 2020 due to the Covid pandemic and was scheduled to surrender on February 21, 2021.

However, his parole had been extended by the high court.As on February 21, he had two months and 27 days of jail time left which has been counted as remitted. O P Chautala, his son Ajay Chautala, and 53 others were convicted and sentenced in the case of illegal recruitment of 3,206 junior basic teachers in 2000.

Crucial visit



Union minister of state for home G. Kishan Reddy during a visit to the BSF Frontier headquarters in Jammu. After the visit, the minister tweeted, "Had the opportunity to interact with several officers across ranks, serving in this distinguished CAPF. Always an enriching experience to spend time with our personnel". (sic)

- PTI

Ruckus forces Dhankhar to cut short inaugural address

BJP MLAs protest lack of mention of post-poll violence in Assembly speech

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, JULY 2

A huge ruckus by West Bengal BJP MLAs forced governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on Friday to leave the Assembly without finishing his inaugural address to the House for the first budget session of the third Trinamul Congress government.

The turn of events that unfolded on Friday afternoon was not only unprecedented in the state legislature's history, but also was rare in the relations between the governor and the BJP. At 2 pm, Mr Dhankhar rose to deliver his speech in the

House. He was, however, greeted by angry BJP MLAs, headed by Leader of the Opposition Suwendu Adhikari, who shouted slogans at him from the Opposition benches. Soon they went to the well of the House and burst into noisy protests there as well.

All of them were carrying posters and placards of persons they claimed were their party workers who became victims of the post-poll violence unleashed by the ruling Trinamul Congress in the state after coming to power on May 2.

They were furious after finding no mention of the

post-poll violence on their party workers in the state in the copies of the governor's address, which is customarily drafted by the state government, which were given to them.

Disrupted by the stir, an anguished governor stopped his speech for a minute and apparently expressed his displeasure to Assembly Speaker Biman Banerjee, who spoke to chief minister Mamata Banerjee. Mr Dhankhar then resumed his address, which was however hardly audible due to the BJP MLAs' loud demonstration.

After four minutes, a disappointed governor cut

short his speech and tabled it in the House. Escorted by the Speaker and the CM, Mr Dhankhar then walked out of the Assembly and left for Raj Bhavan.

Mr Adhikari said, "With awe and wonder we found that the governor's address scripted by the state government lacked any mention of the post-poll violence. It also claimed that there have been no atrocities since May 2 and what is referred to as post-poll violence is false, apart from blaming the Election Commission for the anarchy during its rule in the state for the Assembly polls. That is

why we protested."

On the disruption of the governor's speech, the Nandigram BJP MLA added: "He is a very sensitive person. Our protests perhaps compelled him to cut short his address suddenly."

Lashing out at him, parliamentary affairs minister Partha Chatterjee said: "The way the Leader of the Opposition bragged about his party MLAs' protest has turned out to be a balloon... Their aim was to create indiscipline and obstruct the proceedings of the House in front of the governor, whose door they knock on otherwise."

Body of project associate found on IIT-M campus

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, JULY 2

The charred body of a project associate working at IIT-Madras was found on the campus on Thursday evening. The deceased has been identified as Unnikrishnan Nair, a native of Ernakulam in Kerala who was recruited by IIT Madras this April after he had got his M.Tech degree.

Police suspect it to be a case of suicide as he had left behind an 11-page suicide note which allegedly talked about stress at the workplace.

According to police sources, the half-burnt body was spotted on Thursday at around 6 pm when a sports officer of the campus came to the hockey field with the players. The institute alerted the Kotturpuram police, who rushed to the spot and recovered the

body and sent it to a government hospital in the city for post-mortem.

A police team went to his residence in Velachery, from where they retrieved the suicide note. The police have registered a case under CrPC Section 174 (enquire and report on suicide). Unnikrishnan's family was informed of his death and the police are awaiting post-mortem results to decide on the course of the investigation.

IIT-Madras in a statement released on Friday said that it was an unfortunate and tragic incident.

Unnikrishnan's alleged suicide comes a day after Assistant professor Vipin P. Veetil of the department of humanities and social sciences had resigned from IIT Madras alleging multiple instances of discrimination.

PAWAN BALI | DC NEW DELHI, JULY 2

Calling the drone attack at Jammu air base as a terrorist act, Indian Air Force (IAF) Chief Air Chief Marshal R.K.S. Bhadauria said on Friday that Air Force is in the process to boost its anti-drone capability to counter such attacks.

He said that the Jammu airbase did not have the advanced anti-drone system and it did not house any critical asset.

"What happened at Jammu was essentially a terrorist act which attempted to target our assets there... that attempt failed, our assets were not damaged. There were two explosives used," he said.

The Air Chief Marshal said that one of the explosives was "fragmentation in nature, more meant to kill people if they were to come on to that scene." Two personnel suffered minor injuries during the attack. In the first ever

● The Air chief said that the Air Force has also worked extensively with DRDO for a hard-kill anti-drone system.

drone attack on Indian soil two drones were used to drop low-intensity improvised explosive devices (IEDs) on Indian Air Force's Jammu air base on the intervening night of June 26-27.

"We have gone over this subject in terms of the implications of this kind of capability in the hands of non-state actors and the kind of effect the drone capability and the armed drone capability would have on even future conflicts," he said.

"All those issues have been looked at and many of these projects were already undertaken and some have already been fielded and it is from the indigenous industry especially the soft kill options are already in the field. This particular base did not have critical assets

and we did not have that system fielded in there," said Bhadauria.

He said that there are standard operating procedures at such bases to deal with drone threats "but this happened on a night when there was no visibility". "In terms of our ability to counter such (drone) its already, some ability has already come and much more is coming. In fact another month from now deliveries will start for another such system from indigenous sources," he said. (sic)

The Air chief said that the Air Force has also worked extensively with DRDO for a hard-kill anti-drone system.

"They have nearly functional system. It is under trial. Some improvements need to be done in order to achieve the kind of distances we need to effectively target such activities and that it's just a matter of time before we finish the trials and put it into production so that element will also come

DOMINICA PM SAYS GOVT. NOT BEHIND CHOKSI ABDUCTION

New Delhi, Jul 2: Dominica Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit has termed "total nonsense" the claims that his government was involved in alleged abduction of diamondaire Mehul Choksi, wanted in ₹13,500 crore scam in Punjab National Bank, from neighbouring Antigua and Barbuda, local media there reported.

In his weekly "annou palay" show, Skerrit said his government will allow the court to carry out its process regarding Choksi and gave the assurance that his rights and obligations will be respected, *Dominica News Online* reported.

Skerrit refuted the allegations of a plot between India and Dominica government to kidnap Choksi from neighbouring Caribbean country Antigua and Barbuda, where he was staying since 2018 as a citizen, after fleeing from India, and bring him to Dominica, the news portal reported. - PTI

U'KHAND BJP MLA ACCUSED OF RAPE

Dehradun, Jul 2: BJP's Jwalapur MLA Suresh Rathore has been accused of rape by a former party colleague, according to police here.

A case of rape was lodged against the MLA at the Bahadarabad police station of Haridwar on Thursday night after a lower court's order. Rathore is the second BJP MLA from Uttarakhand after Mahesh Negi against whom such serious charges have been levelled.

Rathore has been accused of rape and criminal intimidation by the complainant.

IAF chief: Jammu airbase didn't have advanced anti-drone system

in," he said.

The Air Chief Marshal said that the Air Force is looking to have some anti-drone systems in place even at those bases which don't have critical assets. "so it is a question of how we deploy our limited system at the moment but very soon we will have enough and we will target... will find a way of tackling these threats," he added.

Meanwhile, the military turf war over the "theaterisation" of the armed forces heated up on Friday.

As the Air Force expressed concern on the proposals, Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Bipin Rawat on Friday called the Indian Air Force "a supporting arm" of the military, specifically the Army, just like the artillery and engineering services.

However, the Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal R.K.S. Bhadauria, countered this, saying the Air Force is not just a supporting arm but has a wider role.

BIG LOSS Army soldier killed and another wounded in the fierce gunfight in Valley

LeT commander among 5 militants gunned down

DC CORRESPONDENT SRINAGAR, JULY 2

Five suspected Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LeT) militants including a district level commander and an Army soldier were killed and another wounded in a fierce gunfight which broke out in Hanjin village of Jammu and Kashmir's southern Pulwama district on Thursday night and continued through Friday afternoon.

The police officials identified the slain commander as Nishaz Husain Lone alias Khitab and said that among the four other LeT cadres killed with him was

a Pakistani national Abu Rehan alias Tawheed. The other three slain militants are Danish Manzoor Sheikh, Amir Wagay and Mehran Manzoor- all local Kashmiris.

Hawaldar Kashiray B. of the Army's 44 Rashtriya Rifles laid down his life while fighting the militants, said an official. The injured soldier has been admitted to a military hospital in Srinagar, he said.

The police said that the fighting started when its counterinsurgency Special Operations Group, the 44 Rashtriya Rifles and Central Reserve Police

Force (CRPF)'s 182 and 183 battalions together launched a cordon-and-search operation at Hanjin in Rajpora area of Pulwama to flush out militants, dead or alive. It said that the militants holed up in the village after the troops moved in, however, turned down repeated surrender offers from the latter.

The police said that due to darkness the operation was suspended late Thursday night, but the cordon remained intact through the night. The fighting resumed at first light on Friday "after the militants once again

refused to surrender and instead opened a barrage of gunfire injuring two soldiers one of whom succumbed later.

The Army said that two AK-47s, one SLR, two pistols and "other war like stores" were recovered from the encounter site.

Inspector General of Police (Kashmir range), Vijay Kumar, termed the killing of militants as "another big success".

Meanwhile, the J&K police on Friday claimed foiling an ex-filtration bid through the Uri sector of the Line of Control (LoC) by arresting four persons.



Locals inside a house that got partially damaged during an encounter between security forces and militants, at Rajpora in Pulwama district on Friday. - PTI

SHORT TAKES

SYRIA SEEKS AID TO REHABILITATE IS-LINKED MINORS

Beirut: Syria's Kurds on Friday urged international help to set up rehabilitation centres for minors linked to the Islamic State group, after charges they were holding "hundreds of children" in adult prisons.

Acknowledging that some jihadist-linked minors were being held in adult prisons, separate to the many more in camps, senior Kurdish foreign affairs official Abdelkarim Omar said around 30 teenagers have lately been transferred out of one overcrowded camp.

He spoke just days after the International Committee of the Red Cross said "hundreds of children — mostly boys, some as young as 12 — are detained in adult prisons" in northeast Syria.

FALL OF TIGRAY CAPITAL MARKS NEW PHASE

Addis Ababa: Rebel fighters in Ethiopia's war-hit Tigray stunned the world this week by retaking the regional capital Mekele, sparking boastful statements by their leaders and rowdy street celebrations by their supporters.

It came exactly seven months after those same fighters were driven out by the army of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, a Nobel Peace Prize winner who now finds himself mired in an ugly war.

Abiy's government has since announced a unilateral ceasefire, while the rebels have gone on to seize most of Tigray, the northernmost region of Ethiopia. As the UN Security Council is expected to hold its first public meeting on Friday on the conflict, world leaders are mulling what comes next — and whether worst-case humanitarian scenarios should be avoided.

MURDERED MP'S SISTER ELECTED IN KEY UK VOTE

London: Labour leader Keir Starmer breathed a sigh of relief on Friday after the party eked out victory in a special election in one of its northern strongholds, easing discontent after a series of poor showings by Britain's main opposition party.

Starmer praised Kim Leadbeater's 323-vote triumph in the election to represent the Batley and Spen district of West Yorkshire in the House of Commons as a "fantastic result." While the margin of victory was far below the 3,525-vote cushion Labour achieved in 2019, polls had suggested the party could lose the seat it has held since 1997.

Starmer, who has led Labour since April 2020, is under pressure after the party posted dismal results in local elections in May, then lost a special election in Hartlepool, which it had held for 62 years. The party is seeking to stop the momentum of Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Conservatives, which made inroads in Labour's traditional working class strongholds during the 2019 parliamentary elections. Leadbeater is the sister of Jo Cox, who was the Labour lawmaker for the district when she was murdered in 2016.

6MN EU CITIZENS APPLY TO STAY IN UK AFTER BREXIT

London: More than six million EU citizens have applied to stay in the UK after Brexit, the government said Friday, nearly twice the number thought to be living in Britain before it left the bloc.

There was a late flurry of applications ahead of a June 30 deadline for the settlement scheme, designed to allow EU citizens residing in the UK to retain the same rights as they enjoyed before Brexit.

But since the end of the Brexit transition period on January 1, EU citizens wishing to settle or stay have faced tougher tests to secure residency and employment.

The final figure of 6.02 million applications, with 5.1 million grants of status, is far higher than the 3.7 million EU nationals originally estimated to be in the country when the scheme launched in March 2019.

More than 4,00,000 applications were made in the final month before the scheme ended, the Home Office said, adding that those who had missed the deadline on "reasonable grounds" could still make a late application.

Turkey may run airport in Kabul

Seeks political, financial, logistical support from UN, Nato in order to execute proposal

Istanbul, July 2: Turkey's defence minister said on Friday that negotiations over his country's proposal to operate and secure the key international airport in Afghanistan are taking place.

Defence Minister Hulusi Akar said Turkey was discussing the plan with several countries. "There must be some political decisions at the United Nations and NATO, and an agreement must be reached with the Afghan government," he said, adding that Turkey was seeking political, financial and logistical support from various countries.

He emphasised that a final decision had not yet been reached, but negotiations with the United States were continuing and the plan would be executed after the Turkish president's approval.

Earlier this summer, Turkey proposed to operate and provide security for Kabul's Hamid Karzai International Airport in the aftermath of the US pullout from Afghanistan.

● **AN AGREEMENT** on the protection of the airport has become increasingly urgent as the final withdrawal of the remaining 2,500-3,500 US troops and 76,000 allied NATO soldiers nears a conclusion.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan discussed it with US President Joe Biden at their first face-to-face meeting during the NATO summit in mid-June.

An agreement on the protection of the airport has become increasingly urgent as the final withdrawal of the remaining 2,500-3,500 US troops and 76,000 allied NATO soldiers nears a conclusion.

On Friday all U.S. troops left Bagram Airfield after 20 years. The airfield had been the epicenter of the countrywide military operation to defeat the Taliban and hunt down al-Qaida perpetrators of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States.

NATO-member Turkey has over 500 troops in Afghanistan and already plays a significant role at the airport. Akar has previously said Turkey has no plans to deploy more troops.

"The airport must be open and operate. If the airport doesn't work, embassies will pull out, and in such a situation, Afghanistan would become an isolated state," the defense minister said.

Without a separate agreement on the airport the current operations would have to be maintained under the Resolute Support Mission, which is the current US-led military mission.

Until there is an agreement it is not clear that the U.S. and NATO can declare their military mission in Afghanistan over. "We have stated our intent. We said we can stay if these conditions are realized," Akar said.

The minister's comments were carried by official Anadolu news agency. —AP



Women demonstrators clash with Turkish police as they protest against Turkey's decision to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention, in Istanbul. Police fired tear gas at protesters in Istanbul demonstrating against Turkey's controversial exit from a treaty combatting femicide and domestic abuse. —AFP

Turkey withdraws from treaty protecting women

Istanbul, July 2: Turkey formally withdrew on Thursday from a landmark international treaty protecting women from violence, and signed in its own city of Istanbul, though President Recep Tayyip Erdogan insisted it won't be a step backward for women.

Hundreds of women demonstrated in Istanbul later Thursday, holding banners that said they won't give up on the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention. "It's not over for us," one read. Similar protests were held in other Turkish cities.

Erdogan ended the country's participation in the convention with a surprise overnight decree in March, prompting condemnation from women's rights groups and Western countries. A court appeal to stop the withdrawal was rejected this week.

Erdogan announced his "Action Plan for Combating Violence against Women" on Thursday, which includes goals such as reviewing judicial processes, improving protection services and gathering data on violence.

"Some groups are trying to present our official withdrawal from the Istanbul convention on July 1st as going backwards," he said. "Just like our fight against violence towards women did not start with the Istanbul Convention, it won't end with our withdrawal."

In March, the Turkish Presidency's Directorate of Communications issued a statement saying the Istanbul Convention was "hijacked" by those "attempting to normalise homosexuality — which is incompatible with Turkey's social and family values." Erdogan emphasized traditional family and gender values Thursday, saying combating violence against women was also a fight to "protect the rights and the honor of our mothers, wives, daughters."

US State Department spokesperson Ned Price tweeted that Turkey's withdrawal was "deeply disappointing and a step backward for the international effort to end violence against women."

Women, LGBT groups and others have been protesting the decision. They say the convention's pillars of prevention, protection, criminal prosecution and policy coordination, as well as its identification of gender-based violence, are crucial to protecting women in Turkey. —AP

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Activists hold placards reading 'Patents kill', 'Free vaccine' and 'Waive patents' during their march to European Union mission in Kiev on Friday in a rally in support of vaccination action called, 'Vaccinate our world'. Participants urge EU members to support the proposal to waive patent protection for life-saving Covid-19 vaccines. — AFP

Oz tightens border controls to curb risk of virus variant

Canberra, July 2: Australia plans to halve commercial passenger arrivals due to virus risks as parts of the country emerged from lockdowns on Friday. Australia will reduce its cap on arrivals from 6,000 passengers a week to 3,000 by July 14 to reduce pressure on hotel quarantine. Prime Minister Scott Morrison said after a meeting with state and territory leaders.

Australia already has some of the world's tightest border restrictions aimed at keeping Covid-19 out of the country. The new restrictions add to obstacles faced by 34,000 Australian citizens and permanent residents stranded overseas and registered with the government as wanting to come home.

The government will charter more airlines to repatriate Australians, but the reduced limit on commercial passenger arrivals could continue until next year.

"If medical advice changes between now and then, if medical advice suggests that we can alter that, then of course the National Cabinet has always been receptive to that advice and we'll continue to monitor that," Morrison told reporters, referring to his decision-making meetings with the state and territory leaders.

"We wouldn't want to keep those caps in place any longer than we had to," he added. Almost half the Australian population locked down since last week due to clusters mostly of the delta variant of the Coronavirus that is thought to be more contagious. —AP

Paris, July 2: The French government denied any cover up on Friday over radiation levels in the Pacific following its nuclear testing in the region, as discussions were held in Paris about the legacy of the explosions.

A two-day roundtable meeting called by French President Emmanuel Macron in April began on Thursday following fresh allegations that the testing between 1966-1996 caused hidden atmospheric and ground pollution.

"There was no state cover up," Genevieve Darrieussecq, junior defence minister, said in a brief comment on the sidelines of the event where she has ruled out any official apology from France.

In March, online investigation site Disclose created waves when said it had analysed some 2,000 pages of French military documents declassified in 2013 about the nearly 200 tests carried out around French Polynesia. Using statistical modelling and help from academics and specialists, it concluded that "French authorities have concealed the true impact of nuclear testing on the health of Polynesians for more than 50 years."

The roundtable discussion, which Macron attended on Thursday without making any public comment, has met with a mixed response from Polynesian politicians. —AFP

UAE bans travel to 14 countries including India

Dubai, July 2: The UAE government on Friday prohibited its nationals from traveling to 14 countries, including India and Pakistan, in a major step to arrest the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The UAE's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MoFAIC) and the National Emergency Crisis and Disasters Management Authority (NCEMA) announced that its citizens are prohibited from travelling to India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Namibia, Zambia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, Sierra Leone, Liberia, South Africa, and Nigeria.

"Exempt from the decision are the UAE diplomatic missions in the aforementioned countries; emergency treatment cases; official delegations and previously authorised business and technical delegates," they said in a statement released to the UAE's official news agency WAM. —PTI

Covid tests must in schools to avoid 'harmful effects': WHO

Copenhagen, July 2: The World Health Organisation said Friday that Covid-19 tests should be carried out in schools — even when no cases have been detected — to avoid the "harmful" effects of remote learning.

Screenings in schools had previously only been recommended if a cluster of coronavirus cases has been identified, but the WHO now believes PCR or rapid antigen tests should be given even in the absence of symptoms among students and staff.

"The summer months offer a valuable window of opportunity for governments to put in place the right set of measures that will help keep infection rates down and avoid resorting to school closures," Hans Kluge, WHO's regional director for Europe, said in a statement issued together with UNICEF and UNESCO.

He added that closing schools "as we have seen, have such a harmful effect on the education, social and mental well-being of our children and youth." "We can't allow the pandemic to rob children of their education and development," said Kluge. —AFP

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Russian President Vladimir Putin chairs a Security Council meeting at the Kremlin, in Moscow, Russia, on Friday. — AP

CYBER | SECURITY

Rogue networks used Kubernetes, an open-source tool originally developed by Google

NSA discloses hacking methods used by Russia

Washington, July 2: US and British agencies disclosed on Thursday details of "brute force" methods they say have been used by Russian intelligence to try to break into the cloud services of hundreds of government agencies, energy companies and other organisations.

An advisory released by the US National Security Agency describes attacks by operatives linked to the GRU, the Russian military intelligence agency, which has been previously tied to major cyberattacks abroad and efforts to disrupt the 2016 and 2020 American elections.

In a statement,

Cybersecurity Director Rob Joyce said the campaign was "likely ongoing, on a global scale." Brute force attacks involve the automated spraying of sites with potential passwords until hackers gain access.

The advisory urges companies to adopt methods long urged by experts as common-sense cyber hygiene, including the use of multi-factor authentication and mandating strong passwords. Issued during a devastating wave of ransomware attacks on governments and key infrastructure, the advisory does not disclose specific targets of the campaign or

its presumed purpose, saying only that hackers have targeted hundreds of organisations worldwide.

The says GRU-linked operatives have tried to break into networks using Kubernetes, an open-source tool originally developed by Google to manage cloud services, since at least mid-2019 through early this year. While a "significant amount" of the attempted break-ins targeted organisations using Microsoft's Office 365 cloud services, the hackers went after other cloud providers and email servers as well, the said.

The US has long accused Russia of using and toler-

ating cyberattacks for espionage, spreading disinformation, and the disruption of governments and key infrastructure.

The Russian Embassy in Washington on Thursday "strictly" denied the involvement of Russian government agencies in cyberattacks on US government agencies or private companies. In a statement posted on Facebook, the embassy said, "We hope that the American side will abandon the practice of unfounded accusations and focus on professional work with Russian experts to strengthen international information security."

Joe Slowik, a threat analyst at the network-monitoring firm Gigamon, said the activity described shows the GRU has further streamlined an already popular technique for breaking into networks.

He said it appears to overlap with Department of Energy reporting on brute force intrusion attempts in late 2019 and early 2020 targeting the U.S. energy and government sectors and is something the US government has apparently been aware of for some time. Slowik said the use of Kubernetes "is certainly a bit unique, although on its own it doesn't appear worrying." —AP

DECCAN Chronicle

3 JULY 2021

Take note of grim signals, warnings in Xi's speech

If the founding of the Communist Party of China in Shanghai in 1921 in the shadow of the Russian revolution of 1917 — *Ten Days that Shook the World* — as the title of a famous contemporary book by an American journalist put it — was an event that would hardly have been noticed, CPC's July 1 centenary would be analysed around the world. This is chiefly on account of the speech of Xi Jinping, CPC general secretary and President of his country for life. It is a speech that sets out China's vision of the next one hundred years to build a mighty military machine. This seems an eerie recall of Hitler's resolve as he went about building the Third Reich. In his hour-long address, Mr Xi noted that "on the journey ahead" the country and the Party "should always be prepared for potential dangers" and "balance development and security imperatives".

For India, which has come to share a border with China in its Himalayan north and east after the obliteration of Tibet's national status and China's militarist push through Aksai Chin into Indian Ladakh, the special address brings home the fact that India will be face to face with a national security state where the people's military will be the driving force in securing China's vision of the next one hundred years.

CPI highlighted the need for peace on the border while the CPI(M) eulogised CPC's history

Under the leadership of the Communist Party, the "people's military" will be the "strong pillar" of strengthening socialism. China, Mr Xi warned, won't accept "sanctimonious preaching" from "those who think they have a right to lecture us". This is no doubt upbraiding the US (which is in the habit of pointing fingers at those that don't show it love and affection). China's leader also declared that his country will not tolerate any power trying to "bully" or "subjugate" it. Any attempt to do so will be "on a collision course with a great wall of steel". It needs to be clarified that while some of the international news reporting on the centenary event in Beijing speaks of Mr Xi warning of "broken heads" and "bloodshed" if there is a bid to bully China, the official English language version of the speech circulated by the Chinese news agency Xinhua (and carried on the portal of Nikkei Asia) carries no such reference. If the official English version has been duly edited under the Party's guidance to soften the original, then India should take note. It is broken heads and bloodshed that was headline news from Galwan in June 2020.

Mr Xi's special address collapses the Communist Party, the Chinese state, and the Chinese people, making clear China's intention to perpetuate its one-party State. It opens with the sentence that July 1 was a "great and solemn day in the history of the CPC and the Chinese nation."

China's strongman says that "socialism with Chinese characteristics" "transformed" the country, through "reforms", from being a "highly centralised planned economy" to becoming a "socialist market economy". It is this which had made China "a moderately prosperous society in all respects" and the country is on course to becoming a "great modern socialist country in all respects" in the next one hundred years. Evidently, the Vietnam Communists paid greater attention to the military state aspect and did not send Mr Xi's felicitations on the big day, but the CPI(M) and the CPI did. Both noted China's success against the pandemic. CPI highlighted the need for peace on the border while the CPI(M) eulogised CPC's history.

UK opens doors to young Indians

There is good news for the aspirational student community as the UK, a traditional base of liberal education in the arts and sciences, has opened a new graduate immigration route that will allow them the opportunity to stay longer in the UK after they have finished their studies when they can aim to kickstart their careers and, to begin with, stay on for at least two years.

The UK is the second biggest destination for students after the US and 56,000 Indians took student visas even during the pandemic in 2020. The US, too, has started its student admission process for the university semester that begins in the autumn and young Indians are preparing to sally forth in furthering their education, which they cannot pursue in India itself for various reasons.

The UK's recognition of talented international students to join their workforce is also a sign that the seemingly insular character of their "Brexit" from the EU will not obtrude to disrupt a points-based immigration system. There was a fear that xenophobia may have been one of the drivers of the "Leave" vote but it's clear now from British Home Secretary Priti Patel's comments on the prospective immigration of students through the jobs route that the UK is as open as it used to be before the 2016 referendum led to the landmark separation from Europe.

Regardless of Scottish aspirations for independence and an ambition to get back into the EU, the UK is committed to a roadmap of a decade of improving India ties and even seeks a trade deal. It is another matter that India is unable to offer every aspirational student an opportunity to excel because of various constraints, not least of all being the quality of higher university education outside the elite institutions of professional studies and their basic degrees. In terms of numbers, students leaving India is not so alarming as to raise the old fears of a brain drain.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

KAUSHIK MITTER
Editor

K. SUDHAKAR
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 Roadway, 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, Vavilalpally Colony, Jagtiyala 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
Grant: CHRONICLE Postal registration no: No. H/SD-348/2006-08

Subhani



Drones as weapons: India is facing a new challenge



Syed Ata Hasnain

It is not something really unexpected. Whenever a serious initiative is taken by the establishment in India towards normalisation of the situation in Jammu and Kashmir or a fillip is given to a process which is otherwise languishing, there invariably comes a dampener in the form of an unexpected high-profile event. Such events become trendsetters or an element of transformation in the conflict situation, both in the military and political fields. Former Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's famous Lahore Yatra ended with the Kargil intrusion in 1999. Narendra Modi's effort to give India-Pakistan relations a touch of informality with his surprise visit to Nawaz Sharif's family home outside Lahore in December 2015 was met a week later by the Pathankot attack on the first day of 2016. The successful campaign "Operation All Out" launched by the Indian security forces through 2017-18 triggered the Pulwama attack in early 2019; the aim was to send home a message on the relevance of the proxies. Given this backdrop, as soon as the top Indian leadership invited 14 leaders of J&K's mainstream political parties for talks and consultations to break the ice after the two-year disquiet, an initiative dampener designed to take away attention from the positives was expected. In the context of our current times, such an expectation should also have been because of the relative frustration among those who are opposed to the Indian narratives over J&K. In the two years since the constitutional decisions, the Indian government broke the stranglehold that separatists, ter-

rorists and Pakistan's Deep State had established in J&K. By its relentless actions against inimical elements and a successful programme of cultivation of international opinion, the government made all these supposed stakeholders irrelevant to the people of J&K.

Was the drone attack serious enough to be classified as a spectacular event which could prospectively have an effect on the J&K situation? We have had mass casualty events earlier which acted as trendsetters and had the potential of being gamechangers. The 2016 Uri attack and 2019's Pulwama were two such events. Both acted as sparks with the message of extant proxy capability and to convey that the battle was still on. So, unlike conventional operations, this is a typical characteristic of hybrid conflict; it rises and falls in intensity and manifestation. After the successful run of counter-terror operations through the 1990s, the proxies adopted the so called "fidayeen" tactics of suicide attacks on Indian forces' camps and government installations. This forced the deployment of an out-of-proportion ratio of troops to secure billets, camps and facilities. For some time, it did create fair consternation in the forces' ranks. The run of such attacks lasted for about five years, by when the forces found solutions to reduce their impact. But making suicide attacks impossible could never be achieved.

There is another interesting analogy which deserves recall. We were hit hard by the improvised explosive devices used by the LTTE in Sri Lanka. That threat came back to hit us in Kashmir too in the 1990s. It was supposed to be crude technology which should have been

countered by sophisticated neutralisation through the electronic spectrum, especially when the trigger system moved on to the remote mobile type. For a long time, the Army tried a plethora of neutralisers, but the IED has continued to remain a threat till as late as Pulwama. The United States was hit by car bombs in Afghanistan and Iraq; no credible counter to that has yet been developed. What I am alluding to is the fact that counters to an emerging technology or even a crude antiquated one may not always be found. One has just to learn to minimise the impact if the device gets past all security and manages to strike. This is exactly what the threat from drones may end up as. We are just witnessing the advent of drone tactics in the field, in the terrorist domain in our environment and there is unnecessary finger pointing alleging tardiness by the military. In the armed forces, a lot of effort has been going on in the past decade to study the threat from drones, but more in the domain of conventional warfare employing armed fixed-wing drones. The use of the quad and hexa helicopters of a smaller variety have also been under the scanner ever since logistics drops from across the border were seen in Punjab and parts of Jammu division. The feasibility of the use of these to drop lethal payloads or be employed as rammers from the sky was anticipated. Now that the nature of threat becomes more focused, the specific measures to counter them will be refined progressively. Besides technology, which is the obvious answer,

there will have to be awareness training and specific reporting procedures developed for the civilian population too as the threat is of a nature that can proliferate rapidly. It will not be restricted to military targets alone, but also to a wider variety which will have an effect on society at large; recalling the basics of the terrorist mantra.

Did the Jammu incident and the subsequent sightings of drones have a specific purpose? I call these "relevance operations", desperate efforts at the revival of relevance. The Lashkar-e-Tayyaba is under pressure with Hafiz Saeed serving a jail sentence due to his involvement in terror financing. Recently, blasts have occurred outside his house in Pakistan with reported casualties. The LeT's capability to be of significance in Kashmir has taken a beating and it is desperate to get back to business, especially since the Deep State in Pakistan will want it to keep the resistance alive even as they worry about Afghanistan. That task may manifest itself in different ways; perhaps a drone threat is one way, the innovative one.

Lastly, a question that is being frequently asked in several quarters is whether a drone attack on an Air Force base is an act of war? It is best to parry that question for now, more due to the regional geopolitical environment and the developing internal dynamics in J&K. Specific answers to this question will not be available as the issue remains rooted in the grey zone. It's not as if we are giving Pakistan any leeway. It's just that we are recognising the world has moved far beyond the either/or labelling of events which might require specific responses. Our response too may be in the realm of pragmatic realism, which is awaiting the right opportunity.

The writer, a retired lieutenant-general, is a former GOC of the Srinagar-based 15 ("Chinar") Corps

Did the Jammu incident and the subsequent sightings of drones have a specific purpose? I call these 'relevance operations', desperate efforts at the revival of relevance.

LETTERS

FREE HEALTHCARE

CJI N.V. Ramana is God's gift to India (CJI calls for universal free healthcare in India, DC, July 2). He emphasised the universal truth, 'Health is wealth'. A government that encourages quacks is no government. Playing with the lives of poor is criminal. When a politician sneezes, he goes abroad for treatment but asks tribals in remote areas to go to the primary health centre.

Zarin Shafat Khan
Hyderabad

LAND REGISTRATION

It is unfortunate that the government is planning to hike registration charges (*Registration charges may be hiked from 6% to 7.5%, DC, July 2*). With GST, retail buyers are already burdened with high cost. It is not prudent to hike the registration cost now. The government can hike registration value of properties with fair market value and collect more fees.

V. Vijay Kumar
Hyderabad

CONGRESS AFFAIRS

Months after the dissent in the Congress over the leadership, veteran leader Sushilkumar Shinde has spoken out. The party high command must take his words seriously even though they disagree. Such divisions are not good when it is going for elections.

Muaz Qasmi
Hyderabad

Email your letters to
info@deccanmail.com,
editor@deccanmail.com. You can also send them to Editor, Deccan Chronicle, 36, Sarojini Devi Road, Secunderabad-500 003.

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

Space heroes cremated

MOSCOW, July 2. Millions of Soviets joined weeping Moscowites in paying homage to their three space heroes, Georgi Dobrovolski, Vladislav Volkov and Viktor Patsayev who were cremated in a solemn function here last night. The urns containing the ashes of the Soyuz 11 cosmonauts were taken to the Soviet Army headquarters building where they will be on view to the public.

Farrukh Dhondy
Cabbages & Kings



"The essence of democracy is that every citizen feels free where no one's a minion And every opinion Can be expressed quite openly."

— From *The Sound and Akoori*, by Bachchoo

Ugly are the ways of democracy in which all manner of prejudice, idiotic belief, irrational allegiance, self-righteous opinion and perceived individual material benefit guide the hand as it hovers above the ballot box. But OK, that being said, gentle reader, I suppose one has to agree with Winston Churchill when he said it's the best worst system of being ruled.

The byelection for a Member of Parliament in the Yorkshire constituency of Batley was a paradigm of this ugliness. These towns of Yorkshire and Lancashire were developed as the manufacturing base of textiles in the nineteenth century. Indian historians record the sale of Lancashire cotton to the subcontinental colony and the boycotting of these by the Independence movement in favour of Swadeshi fabric and khadi.

After the Second World War, these mills suffered an acute shortage of labour. None of them could recruit workers for the night and even for some hard-pressed day shifts. This chasm of dearth was filled in the 1950s and 1960s through the import of immigrant labour, in main from Mirpur in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

Hence the population of Batley is, despite the closure of the mills in the era in which Margaret Thatcher was Prime Minister, still 25 or so per cent immigrant and Muslim. This immigrant population traditionally supported the Labour Party in every election for the last several decades. *Mais plus ca change!*

Its last MP, Tracy Brabin, was a Labour member and she resigned to contest and take up the mayoralty of West Yorkshire. The MP before her was one Jo Cox, who was stabbed to death on the streets of Batley by a maniac who claimed to be a white supremacist Nazi. Now, with the resignation of her successor, the byelection was called. Jo Cox's sister, Kim Leadbeater, stood as the Labour candidate. And before I tell you the result, gentle reader, let me sum up the nastiness of the campaign.

Ms Leadbeater is openly lesbian and that, in an advanced democracy such as Britain — in contrast to, shall we say, an election in Iran — ought not to matter one jot. There are several gay and lesbian MPs in the British Parliament as the population, by and large, doesn't concern itself with the sexual orientation, or even the adulterous behaviour, of the candidates when casting their votes.

But perhaps not in Batley. For why? Enter George Galloway. This maverick is a professional Scottish politician who was once a member of the Labour Party but was thrown out of it for turning up in Iraq when Britain was fighting a war there and virtually bending the knee to Saddam Hussein. He has since made himself an advocate of "Islamic" causes, mainly international support for Palestine and virulent criticism of Israeli domestic policy which veers, though Mr Galloway is adamant in his denial of it, into blatant anti-Semitism.

Mr Galloway parachuted himself into the Batley byelection standing for a fantasy outfit he founded called The Workers Party. His object wasn't to get elected and represent the constituency, but to take Muslim immigrant votes

away from Labour so that the Conservatives could take the seat. His object was to demonstrate that the Labour Party can't continue to be led by Sir Keir Starmer. His campaign posters in the town declared that Sir Keir Starmer must go.

I must admit, gentle reader, that I know this George Galloway and while I can concur with his support of Palestine against Israeli policy and its murderous attacks, I don't have much time for him. I came across him in the 1970s and 1980s, through left-wing events.

Then, when my daughters were of secondary school age, they were accepted by an ex-grammar school even though we lived outside the catchment area. Mr Galloway's daughter also lived outside the area and he got her in after arduous appeals and pulling strings.

He recalled this as an injustice when we met in Karachi at a literary festival some years ago. Myself and other writers were surprised to see billed as the chief guest and speaker at the festival, the non-literary, non-writer George Galloway, invited we suppose for his stance on Iraq.

When, one evening, the writers piled

into a coach taking us to a British Council party, the organiser boarded the bus saying: "Farrukh, George Galloway wants you to ride with him in his chief-guest limo." The entire coach began to derisively jeer. I was embarrassed, but for politeness' sake rode with George to the party.

In Batley, Mr Galloway courted the Muslim vote through support for those Muslims who disapproved of Kim Leadbeater for being a lesbian and shouted at her as she campaigned, saying she will support the spread of lesbian and gay "propaganda" in their children's schools. Mr Galloway also accused her of having an anti-Palestinian and pro-Israeli stance. None of this is true. But it's politics and nastiness, prejudice and lies are par for the course.

Despite all this, Ms Leadbeater won the seat for Labour with a narrow majority of 326 votes. The disturbing fact, however, is that Mr Galloway polled 21 per cent of the vote, which is approximately the percentage of the Muslim population of the constituency.

Mr Galloway, perhaps in a feeble imitation of Donald Trump, has now declared that he will go to the courts to challenge the result.

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	52,484.67	0.32
Nifty 50	15,722.20	0.27
S&P 500*	4,338.16	0.42
Dollar (₹)	74.75	-0.22
Pound Sterling (₹)	102.78	-0.06
Euro (₹)	88.38	0.00
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	46,615.251	0.53
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	75.92	0.11
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.065	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.451	-0.029

* As of 8:30 PM IST

India joins global deal on minimum tax

India has joined the global deal on endorsing global minimum tax on multinational companies. It expects a consensus to be reached by October. Around 130 countries on Thursday had adopted a statement outlining a consensus on taxation. The deal calls for a global minimum tax of 15 per cent. Under it, countries could tax their companies' foreign earnings up to 15 per cent if they go untaxed through subsidiaries in other countries.

50% price hike in ranitidine, ibuprofen allowed



The National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority said it has allowed a one-time increase of 50 per cent in the ceiling prices of nine scheduled formulations of three drugs, carbamazepine, ranitidine and ibuprofen to ensure their availability. While carbamazepine is an anti-epileptic drug, ranitidine is used for the treatment of ulcers of the stomach and intestines and ibuprofen is used to relieve pain from various conditions.

In talks with investors for fund raise: VIL

Cash-strapped Vodafone Idea (VIL) said it is in active talks with potential investors for fund raising, and asserted that 'floor price' remains the "best and most preferred" fix for industry's woes arising from tariff-related issues. VIL confirmed that it has approached government to extend moratorium on spectrum instalments. VIL highlighted that sector's biggest pain point comes from pricing issues.

Laurus Labs gets DRDO licence to make 2DG

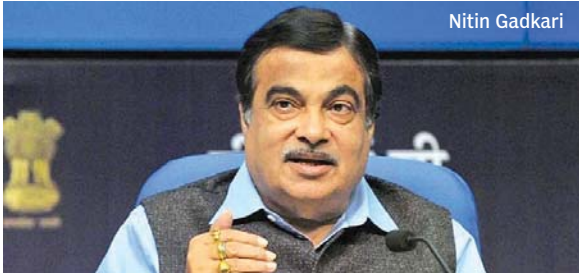
Laurus Labs said it has received the licence from Defence Research and Development Organisation to manufacture and market Covid-19 treatment drug 2-Deoxy-D-Glucose (2DG). 2DG has been given emergency approval by the Drugs Controller General of India for use on Covid-19 patients. On June 28, Dr Reddy's Lab had announced the commercial launch of 2DG.



Shops now eligible for priority loans, stimulus Retail, wholesale trade granted MSME status

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, JULY 2

The government has recognised retail and wholesale trade as MSME, making them eligible for the benefits like priority sector lending and pandemic stimulus packages. MSME minister Nitin Gadkari said the government has revised the guidelines for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to include retail and wholesale trade under the category. "Retail and wholesale trade were left out of the ambit of MSME, now under the revised guidelines, retail and wholesale trade will also get the benefit of priority sector lending under RBI guidelines," Gadkari said.



Apart from priority sector lending, traders will also be eligible for all the benefits provided to MSMEs, including the stimulus packages and Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme announced for the pandemic-ic-hit enterprises. All those enterprises which have a turnover of less than Rs 250 crore will be eligible to be considered as MSMEs. The expanded definition of MSME will benefit 2.5 crore retail and wholesale traders, the government said. But the Confederation of All India Traders (Cait) says there are more than 6.5 crore retailers and wholesale traders who will benefit from this decision. "These traders have been providing employment to about 40 crore people and

generating an annual turnover of Rs 115 lakh crore. The pandemic-hit traders will now be able to restore their businesses by obtaining necessary finances which were earlier denied by banks and other financial institutions," said Praveen Khandelwal, secretary general of Cait. This could throw a lifeline to lakhs of traders who have either shut shop or are on the verge of closure due to the pandemic. In order to be categorised as MSME, these traders will have to register on the Udyam Registration portal. "This landmark decision will have a structural impact for the sector, helping it get formalised," said Kumar Rajagopalan, CEO, Retailers Association of India.

Urban Indians prefer job to cash handout: LSE study

JAIVEER SHEKHAWAT
JULY 2

A majority of urban Indians left unemployed by the coronavirus pandemic want the government to guarantee them jobs like it does for people in rural areas, says a study by the London School of Economics. An overwhelming 82 per cent of respondents surveyed for the report 'City of dreams no more, a year on: worklessness and active labour market policies in urban India' favoured job guarantees followed by 16 per cent for cash transfers.

Even most of those who had received cash handouts from the government in the wake of the pandemic preferred having job protection over financial assistance, wrote Swati Dhingra and Fjolla Kondirolli, the authors of the report. The central government currently guarantees at least 100 days of employment in a financial year to every household in rural areas. Budget allocation for the programme was stepped up last year amid the pandemic, and authorities reported as much as a 50 per cent increase in

enrolment for the programme. The study re-contacted respondents in India covered in an earlier survey following the first wave of the pandemic. Unlike last year when Prime Minister Narendra Modi imposed a sweeping nationwide lockdown to stop the virus's spread, movement curbs this time around were localised with limited economic fallout. Still, the study found 40 per cent of re-contacted workers had no work or pay, 10 months on from the first lockdown months. "Younger individuals, in

the bottom half of pre-Covid earnings, experienced higher levels of worklessness," the authors wrote, based on responses from 4,763 individuals between January and March this year in three lower-income states of Bihar, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh. Some other findings of the survey are: Urban individuals have been unemployed for the last six months on average; and the share of employed individuals who had a full year's work has halved from the previous year. —Bloomberg

EXPORTS RISE 47%, TRADE DEFICIT AT \$9.4 BILLION

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, JULY 2

Merchandise exports in June stood at \$32.46 billion, 47 per cent higher than the same month last year and 30 per cent higher than June 2019. From surplus in June last year, trade balance moved to a deficit of \$9.4 billion. At \$32.46 billion, exports grew from \$22 billion in June 2020 and \$25 billion in June 2019. On a sequential basis too, exports grew from \$32.27 billion in May 2021 and \$31 billion in April 2021. Major commodity groups that recorded growth in June 2021 included rice, other cereals, iron ore, organic and inorganic chemicals, petroleum products, plastic and linoleum and engineering goods. Merchandise imports in June stood at \$41.86 billion —96.33 per cent up over \$21.32 billion in June 2020 and 2 per cent over \$41.03 billion in June 2019. India had a trade deficit of \$9.4 billion in June against a trade surplus of \$0.71 billion in June 2020. But the deficit narrowed down by 41.26 per cent over the \$16 billion deficit in June 2019.

Unicorn Cars 24 nears \$250 mn deal with DST

SARITHA RAI
JULY 2

India's Cars24 Services Pvt Ltd is in talks with Yuri Milner's DST Global and other investors for a funding round that could double the used-vehicle site's value to \$2 billion, a person familiar with the discussions said. India's biggest online marketplace for pre-owned cars is set to raise \$200 million to \$250 million from existing backers including DST, which may lead the round, said the person, who asked not to be named discussing a private deal. Other investors including Moore Capital Management could join the deal, which could close in a few weeks, the person added. The pact could value Cars24 at \$1.6 billion to \$2 billion, up from about \$1 billion in November, when it closed a Series E round, the person said. Used-vehicle sales are booming in India because consumers are shunning mass transit systems to avoid catching Covid-19. While the pandemic has



stymied sales of new autos, pre-owned cars are in demand as cost-conscious buyers seek value for money. Cars24 and DST Global representatives declined to comment. Moore representatives didn't respond to emails seeking comment. The startup, based in Gurgaon on the outskirts of New Delhi, was founded in 2015 by Vikram Chopra, Mehul Agrawal, Ruchit Agarwal and Gajendra Jangid to make the used-vehicle trade smoother. Buying and selling cars in India has long been an anxiety-ridden, bumpy process dominated by street-corner mom-and-pop sales yards, with consumers distrustful of the

pricing and the condition of the vehicle. Cars24 aims to make the purchase of a pre-owned vehicle as easy as buying a refrigerator or a smartphone online. It prices vehicles based on AI algorithms and uses data to determine which car would give the new owner least trouble. The vehicles are refurbished in the company's reconditioning facilities before being listed on its platform. Cars24 has a seven-day no-questions-asked return policy and provides a six-month warranty. It also sells pre-owned motorcycles and scooters and offers financing. The startup said earlier this month it has expanded to Australia and the United Arab Emirates and plans to enter other markets in the Middle East and Southeast Asia this year. In November, Cars24 said its website traffic had increased by four times since the start of the pandemic. Its existing investors include Sequoia Capital India, Exor Seeds, Kingsway Capital Partners and others. —Bloomberg

IOC works on aluminium battery to take on Li-ion

DEBJIT CHAKRABORTY & RAJESH KUMAR SINGH
JULY 2

A drive to reduce dependence on imported materials and technology, especially from China, is pushing India to invest in a battery technology that uses aluminium rather than lithium as the key ingredient. Indian Oil Corporation, the nation's largest oil refiner, has teamed up with startup Phinergy Ltd to develop the Israeli company's aluminium-air battery. India has few exploitable options to produce lithium, the key metal for the current generation of electric-vehicle batteries, but its eastern jungles hold large reserves of bauxite, the ore used to make aluminium. "Lithium is scarce in the country and we started scouting for an element which is abundantly available as a natural resource," said Indian Oil R&D director S.S.V. Ramakumar. India is among the top 10 bauxite producers. It has some 600 million tonnes of the ore in proven reserves, according to the US Geological Survey, though India's mining ministry estimates that untapped resources may be many times that amount. Moreover, the country has invested heavily in production of aluminium over the years to become the world's second-biggest smelter of aluminium. "Clearly the special consideration here is that aluminium is in better supply than lithium," said James Frith, head of energy stor-

age at BNEF in London. "But with the ever-falling prices of lithium-based systems, developers will be under pressure to find niche applications where aluminium-oxygen can gain a foothold." An aluminium-air battery could win advantages over its lithium-ion rival in three other crucial ways, Ramakumar said: It's potentially cheaper, vehicles using it would have a longer range, and it's safer. The battery works by tapping electricity generated when aluminium plates react with oxygen in the air. It has one of the highest energy densities for a battery. But the system has a number of drawbacks that have kept it from wide-scale use since it was first proposed in the 1960s. Chief among them is the cost of materials that need to be added to the battery to prevent the power from dropping and the fact that the cells can't be recharged. Instead, Phinergy's plan is for users to be able to quickly swap in a new battery and send the used one to a recycling facility. It takes just three minutes to replace the battery, about the time it takes to fill up at a gas station, Ramakumar said. The fuel retailer plans to use its network of filling stations as swapping points. In comparison, lithium-ion batteries often contain hazardous materials that can be toxic if not disposed of correctly, making them harder to recycle. By 2035, the world will have accumulated about 4 million tonnes of Li-ion bat-

teries that have reached the end of their lives, according to a BloombergNEF estimate. Lithium is already entrenched in the EV market and absorbs most of the research dollars, with many potential challengers based on sodium, magnesium or aluminium focused on smaller segments such as backup power systems, energy storage or low-power transport, like forklifts. Yet demand both from electric transport and renewable energy storage means India could provide a market big enough for aluminium-air batteries to find a role. Battery demand will rise to as much as 185 gigawatt hours by 2035, according to BNEF. Amara Raja Batteries Ltd, India's largest producer of lead-acid cells, is examining existing lithium-based technologies as a "next growth engine," though also sees scope for alternatives to be developed, Vijayanand Samudrala, the firm's president of new energy, told a BNEF summit on Tuesday. "I don't think there's a final word on the maturity of the technology, I can see at least two or three generations of technology shift happening in the batteries area in the next 10 years," he said. Indian Oil made a strategic investment in Phinergy in early 2020, and the Indian firm's 30,000 service stations can "serve as the infrastructure for the deployment of Phinergy's technology," the Israeli company said in an e-mail. —Bloomberg

IDP to acquire British Council's IELTS biz

FC BUREAU
CHENNAI, JULY 2

The British Council will sell its business of conducting English language test IELTS in India to IDP Education Limited, an international organisation offering student placement in various countries. IDP will acquire the Indian business for 130 million pounds. IDP and British Council have been partners in conducting the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) globally. British Council employees working on IELTS in India will become part of the IDP team and the transaction is expected to be completed in August. IELTS is the world's most popular English language test for study and migration and is trusted by more than 10,000 organisations. It is recognised for school and university entrances in many English speaking countries, including the UK and the US, Canada and Australia. It is also required for visa and citizenship purposes in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the UK.



This sale to its partner IDP will ensure that the continuity of the tests remains. The proceeds of the sale will enable the British Council to improve its financial position which has been impacted by Covid-19, said Kate Ewart-Biggs, interim CEO of the council. The British Council is a UK charity governed by Royal Charter and a UK public body. It received 179 million pounds in grant funding from the UK government in 2021-22. The council has been present in India for 73 years now. Andrew Barkla, CEO of IDP, said, "This agreement marks the start of a new chapter for IELTS in India." Australia-listed IDP has operations in more than 50 countries. In 2019, four million IELTS tests were held globally, said IDP. It did not share national-level numbers.

Lull in equity market ahead of new earnings season

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, JULY 2

The market took a pause during the week from the record-breaking rally of May-June, and before the next earning season begins. After four consecutive sessions of decline, benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty-50 closed in the green on Friday, gaining around 0.3 per cent. For the week, the Nifty-50 ended 1.10 per cent lower at 15,722 after forming a new high early in the week at 15,915.65. The Sensex crossed the 53,000 mark intra-day touching 53,126.73 for the first time during the week but closed 0.82 per cent down for the week at 52,484.67.

The broader market outperformed during the week, with the BSE Midcap down by 0.45 per cent and the BSE Smallcap up by 1.80 per cent. Amongst sectors, BSE Power was the biggest loser, shedding 4.1 per cent followed by the BSE Oil & Gas, which corrected over 2.5 per cent while sectoral indices, including BSE Metals, Auto, and IT corrected between 0.5 to 1.5 per cent during the week. The BSE Pharma was the biggest gainer rising over 3.5 per cent. The first quarter earnings season will begin from mid-July and the market is keen to know how India Inc traversed the Covid second wave.

OLA ELECTRIC SCOOTER REVEALED

MICHAEL GONSALVES
PUNE, JULY 2

Ola Electric is gearing up for the launch of its first electric scooter. The firm is expected to announce price of its e-scooter later this month. The new electric scooter from the company is expected to be priced around Rs 1 lakh and it will take on rivals like Ather Energy's 450X. Bhavish Aggarwal, chairman and group CEO at Ola Electric, on Friday posted a video of him riding the Ola Electric scooter on Twitter, hinting that the scooter is now ready for a market launch.



Virgin Galactic plans Branson space trip before Bezos blasts off

JUSTIN BACHMAN
JULY 2

Richard Branson plans to fly to space on July 11, days before a similar trip by fellow billionaire Jeff Bezos. The shares of Branson's Virgin Galactic Holdings Inc surged. Virgin Galactic's VSS Unity spacecraft will also carry three other company employees and two pilots from the launch site in New Mexico, according to a company statement Thursday. Bezos is planning a trip to space July 20 from nearby West Texas aboard a rocket made by

Blue Origin, the Amazon.com Inc. founder's space company. Branson will evaluate the "private astronaut experience," the company said, as Virgin Galactic prepares to offer space flights to well-heeled customers in 2022. "After more than 16 years of research, engineering, and testing, Virgin Galactic stands at the vanguard of a new commercial space industry, which is set to open space to humankind and change the world for good," Branson said in the statement. Virgin Galactic soared

23 per cent to \$53.20 after the close of regular trading in New York. The trip will be Virgin Galactic's fourth flight to space with crew members. Joining Branson will be Beth Moses, the company's chief astronaut instructor, who has flown previously; Colin Bennett, an operations engineer; and Sirisha Bandla, vice president of government affairs. Virgin Galactic executives have said they intend to resume ticket sales after Branson's flight. It suspended sales after a 2014 crash killed a test pilot. —Bloomberg

New Role POONAM GUPTA JOINS NCAER AS DG

Poonam Gupta has joined the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) as its new director general. Gupta is the first woman DG of the council. She succeeds Shekhar Shah. Before joining NCAER, Gupta was lead economist, global macro and market research at International Finance Corporation; and lead economist for India at the World Bank. Her earlier roles include the RBI chair professor at National Institute of Public Finance and Policy; professor at Icrier; associate prof, Delhi School of Economics; and economist at the IMF.

LEYLAND GETS ASTON MARTIN MAN TO HEAD EV

Ashok Leyland said it has appointed former Aston Martin chief Andy Palmer as executive vice chairman and CEO of its electric vehicle arm Switch Mobility from July 1. The unit combines the electric commercial vehicle operations of Ashok Leyland and its British arm Optare.

SANJAY MADAN IS REGIONAL ED, NTPC SOUTH

Sanjay Madan, regional executive director (Western Region -II) has taken additional charge as RED (South) from Friday. A graduate in Mechanical Engineering from Bhopal University, Madan joined NTPC as executive engineer trainee in 1983. In his 38-year career in NTPC, he worked in various capacities at NTPC-Vindhyachal, NTPC-Dadri, SRHQ and Corporate Centre.

SHORT TAKES

India look to avoid the English sweep

Worcester: An under-fire Indian women's team would be desperate to address vice-captain Harmanpreet Kaur's prolonged lean patch as they seek to stop a marauding England side from completing a 3-0 sweep in the final ODI here on Saturday. Having lost six out of the last seven ODIs, the Mithali Raj-led side are finding it difficult to stem the rot as they face the ignominy of another one-sided series defeat after being thrashed by the South African women on home soil. While the bowlers did up their game in the second ODI with a much-improved performance, the batting has left the team down yet again with skipper Mithali left to do all the heavy lifting, which is also affecting her game. — PTI

Bravo blazes as WI level SA series

Grenada: Dwayne Bravo's career-best T20I figures of four for 19 led the West Indies to a successful defence of a modest total as the home side pulled off a series-levelling 21-run victory over South Africa in the fourth match of the five-game series on Thursday. Set a target of 168 after captain Kieron Pollard belted an unbeaten 51 off 25 balls with five sixes and two fours to lift the West Indies to 167 for six, the Proteas relied heavily on the consistent Quinton de Kock in their quest to clinch the contest ahead of the final match on Saturday. **Brief scores:** West Indies 167/6 (Lendl Simmons 47, Kieron Pollard 51 (not out); Tabraiz Shamsi 2/13, George Linde 2/16) bt South Africa 146/9 (Quinton de Kock 60; Dwayne Bravo 4/19, Andre Russell 2/30).

Hamilton fastest at Austria F1 practice

Spielberg: Mercedes found welcome speed as rain fell at the Austrian Grand Prix on Friday, with Formula One champion Lewis Hamilton leading a damp second practice ahead of teammate Valtteri Bottas. The conditions proved less to the liking of championship leader Max Verstappen. The Red Bull driver topped the leaderboard early on but then drifted down to third place as the track became wetter. Hamilton was 189 ahead of Bottas and 217 clear of Verstappen on Red Bull's home track. It was a positive sign for Mercedes that the drivers in fourth and fifth — Aston Martin pair Lance Stroll and Sebastian Vettel — were using Mercedes engines. — AP

Arjuna slams SL over 'India B' tour

Colombo: Sri Lanka's World Cup-winning skipper Arjuna Ranatunga on Friday slammed the island's sports leaders for agreeing to a tour by a "second level" India side. Ranatunga, 57, said the tour undermined the country's "dignity" as he attacked Sports Minister Nimal Rajapaksa and Sri Lanka Cricket. "The Indian squad that came to Sri Lanka is not their best, it is a second level team," Ranatunga said. "Sri Lanka may have gone down (in the rankings), but as a cricketing nation we have an identity, we should not be sending our best to play an Indian B team," added the former captain. — AFP

Bucks a win away from NBA finals

Los Angeles: The Milwaukee Bucks showed they are more than a one-man show, using a balanced attack to dominate the Atlanta Hawks 123-112 in game five of the Eastern Conference finals. Brook Lopez had 33 points, Jrue Holiday 25 and Khris Middleton garnered 26 points. — AFP

Live on TV

EURO

Quarterfinals: Czech Republic vs Denmark from 9.30 pm; England vs Ukraine from 12.30 am (Sunday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

COPA AMERICA

Quarterfinals: Uruguay vs Colombia from 3.30 am (Sunday); Argentina vs Ecuador from 6.30 am (Sunday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

Printed and Published from Karimnagar by K.Sudhakar on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited at Deccan Chronicle Press, H.No. 1-21/12/1, Chertabthutkur Road, Mugdumpur Village, Karimnagar - 505 186 Telangana State Regd. No. HSD-2/22K RNI Registration No. APENC2001/04766 Ph: 9121181123 Grams: CHRONICLE Editor: Kaushik Mitter

Lions on the move

Roaring England off to Rome to take on Ukraine in quarters

London, July 2: England have Raheem Sterling to thank for their trip to Rome on Saturday for their Euro 2020 quarter-final against Ukraine, and they are now favourites to go on and reach a European Championship final for the first time.

The Manchester City star is already playing in his fourth major tournament but his talent, until now, had not been fully appreciated by the England support.

A precocious young player when England crashed out at the group stage of the 2014 World Cup, Sterling was one of the fall guys two years later as Roy Hodgson's side exited Euro 2016 against Iceland. On social media, Sterling branded himself "The Hated One" during that tournament and he had to deal with negative stories in the press about his perceived lavish lifestyle and other issues.

He did not forget that treatment. In 2018, months after helping England reach the semi-finals of the World Cup despite failing to score, Sterling was racially abused while playing for Manchester City away to Chelsea.

Sterling took to Instagram to challenge media organisations for their portrayal of young black players, claiming it was fuelling "racism and aggressive behaviour".

At just 26, he is a senior figure in a youthful England squad with 65 caps already to his name and represents a fearlessness and social conscience that have made Gareth Southgate's side respected on and off the field.

In the face of booing from some of their own support, England's players have continued to take the knee before each match. — AFP



England players during a training session ahead of the Euro quarterfinal against Ukraine.

— Twitter

Denmark dream of '92 repeat

Baku, July 2: Denmark will be dreaming of following in the footsteps of the side who claimed a shock European title in 1992, but standing in their way of a semi-final place at Euro 2020 on Saturday are the Czech Republic, who have sent them packing before.

The Danes were in danger of an early exit after group-stage losses to Finland and Belgium, the first of which was overshadowed by star player Christian Eriksen suffering a cardiac arrest on the pitch.

But, roared on by a raucous Copenhagen crowd, they thrashed Russia 4-1 to finish second in Group B, before travelling to Amsterdam to thump Wales 4-0 in the last 16.

Denmark have not reached a major tournament semi-final since lifting the trophy 29 years ago, when they initially failed to qualify but were late replacements for Yugoslavia.

"It's a chance that we might never have again," coach Kasper Hjulmand said ahead of Saturday's last-eight match against the Czechs in Baku.

"It's many years' work for lots of people. We want to make the most of this chance."

The Scandinavians have gone from strength to strength in the tournament and know victory in Azerbaijan would set up a last-four meeting with either England or Ukraine at Wembley.

Youngster Mikkel Damsgaard has shone since taking the place of Eriksen in the second group match, scoring a wonderful opening goal against Russia.

"The match against Wales was the biggest of my career," he said. "The next match will be the biggest match I have ever played, so it's getting even crazier all the time for me."

Hjulmand is expected to have a full squad to choose from, with the exception of Eriksen, although RB Leipzig forward Yussuf Poulsen may only be fit enough to play for an hour.

The last time Denmark reached a major quarter-final was at Euro 2004, where they were beaten 3-0 by a Czech Republic side inspired by Pavel Nedved and two goals for Milan Baros.

"I had a really bad experience watching the match at Copenhagen Town Hall Square," Danish defender Mathias Jorgensen told uefa.com.

"At the time, we all believed we would easily get past them. And that turned into an awful and, as I remember, rainy day in Copenhagen." — AFP

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Spaniards down Swiss, in semis

Saint Petersburg, July 2: Goalkeeper Unai Simon was the hero as Spain edged past 10-man Switzerland 3-1 on penalties on Friday to set up a Euro semifinal against either Belgium or Italy.

After a 1-1 draw which saw the Swiss play for 43 minutes a man down, Simon made two saves in the shootout to help keep Spain's bid for a record fourth European crown alive.

It was heartbreak for Switzerland, who were bidding for reach the semi-finals of a major tournament for the first time in their history.

Spain forged ahead early on when Denis Zakaria put through his own net, but Switzerland were the better side for long periods and Xherdan Shaqiri, standing in for the suspended Granit Khaka as captain, equalised in the 68th minute.

The Swiss were reduced to 10 men with 13 minutes remaining, though, when midfielder Remo Freuler was controversially dismissed for a tackle on Gerard Moreno.

Switzerland goalkeeper Yann Sommer, the hero of the penalty shootout win over world champions France in the Last 16, made a string of fine saves in extra time.

But Simon saved from

Fabian Schaer and Manuel Akanji, while Ruben Vargas blazed over in a tense finale as Spain snuck through, with Mikel Oyarzabal smashing home the winning spot-kick.

After scoring 10 goals in their previous two matches, this was a return to the type of profligate performances which saw Spain draw their first two group games against Sweden and Poland. But the 2008 and 2012 winners had made a dream start to this quarter-final, taking the lead in fortunate circumstances in only the eighth minute.

A corner was cleared only as far as Jordi Alba, whose left-footed volley was diverted past Sommer by Switzerland midfielder Zakaria, only playing in place of Khaka.

Switzerland had an even better chance for a leveller in the 64th minute, as Shaqiri sparked a quick counter-attack which ended with Spain goalkeeper Unai Simon reacting well to keep out Zuber's stabbed effort at his near post. But the underdogs found the equaliser they deserved four minutes later, as Freuler latched onto a loose ball after a mix-up in the Spanish defence and squared for Shaqiri to slot into the far corner and score his third goal of the tournament.

— AFP

Olympic briefs

Maana gets quota place

Indian woman swimmer Maana Patel's participation in the Tokyo Olympics has been confirmed through 'Universality quota', the Swimming Federation of India (SFI) said. Maana will take part in the 100m backstroke at the Tokyo Games and is the third Indian swimmer to have qualified after both Srihari Nataraj and Sajjan Prakash achieved Olympic Qualification Timing (OQT) 'A' level recently. The Universality quota allows one male and one female competitor from a country to participate in the Olympics, provided no other swimmer from the same gender qualifies for the Games or receives a FINA invite based on his or her Olympic Selection time (B time).

Mariyappan to carry flag

Top para high-jumper Mariyappan Thangavelu was on Friday named the flag-bearer of the Indian contingent in the Tokyo Paralympics, which begins on August 24. Thangavelu, who is defending the T-42 gold he had won in 2016 Rio Paralympics during the August 24 to September 5 showpiece in Tokyo, was picked for the honour. "Mariyappan will be the flag-bearer of the Indian contingent at the Tokyo Paralympics. The decision was taken at the executive committee meeting of the Paralympic Committee of India (PCI)," Parathletics chairman R. Satyanarayana said.

Sindhu to get recovery system

Acting on world champion P.V. Sindhu's request, the government on Friday sanctioned the purchase of an advanced recovery equipment, which will help her remain in best physical shape ahead of the upcoming Tokyo Olympics. The approval came within 24 hours of the 2016 Olympic silver-medallist Indian shuttler's request, the Sports Authority of India (SAI) said. One of India's biggest medal hopes in Tokyo, Sindhu was thrilled. "I am happy that it did not take even a day for the Sports Authority of India to approve my request for the recovery system," Sindhu said upon receiving the administrative sanction to procure the game ready recovery system.

Malik's Tokyo hopes dashed

New Delhi, July 2: His hopes of competing in the Olympics over, Indian wrestler Sumit Malik was on Friday banned for two years by the sport's world governing body UWW after his B sample also returned positive for a prohibited stimulant.

The 28-year-old has one week to decide if he would accept the sanction or challenge it.

Malik was handed a provisional suspension last month for failing a dope test during the World Olympic Qualifier event in Sofia, where he had qualified for the Tokyo Games in the 125kg category.

His 'B' sample was opened on June 30 and expectedly that also provided the same result.

A specified substance was found in Malik's sample, though, the 2018 Commonwealth Games gold-medallist had said that he only took painkillers to manage right knee niggle.

"Sumit Malik's B sample has given the same result and the UWW has banned him for two years from June 3. He has a week to



Sumit Malik

respond. He can call for a hearing or accept the sanction," a source in the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) said.

Sources close to Rohtak-based Malik said they will soon take a decision.

"We are discussing the matter with our lawyer," said the person who is interacting with Malik on the matter.

The general opinion in WFI is that Malik should challenge the sanction since it was not a steroid but a stimulant that was taken inadvertently.

Malik has been nursing a knee injury that he suffered during the national camp before the Olympic Qualifiers began at different venues. — PTI

