

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

ANANTAPUR | FRIDAY | 18 JUNE 2021

WEATHER



Max: 35.0°C
Min: 17°C
RH: 56%
Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: Cloudy sky.
Misty morning. Max/Min
temp. 35/17 °C

WORLD | 5

**PIO to lead U.S.
EPA's water agency**



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SPORTS | 8

**Nadal pulls out of
Wimbledon, Olympics**

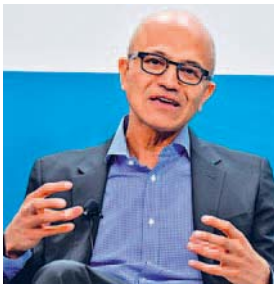


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Satya Nadella

SATYA NADELLA IS MICROSOFT CHAIRMAN

New York, June 17: Microsoft's India-born CEO Satya Nadella has been appointed as the technology giant's new chairman, an additional role in which he will lead the work to set the agenda for the board.

Microsoft Corp on Wednesday announced that the board's independent directors unanimously elected Nadella to the role of board chair, and unanimously elected John W. Thompson as the lead independent director, a role he held previously from 2012 to 2014.

In this role, Nadella will lead the work to set the agenda for the board, leveraging his deep understanding of the business to elevate the right strategic opportunities and identify key risks and mitigation approaches for the board's review, the company said in a statement. — PTI

Ex-sarpanch, brother murdered in Kurnool

Gang of eight lay in wait to execute murder plan

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL, JUNE 17

Two Telugu Desam leaders were killed and three seriously injured by their political rivals at Pesaravai village in Gadivemula mandal of Kurnool district on Thursday. The deceased were former village sarpanch Nageswara Reddy and his brother, former KDCC bank director Pratap Reddy.

The two were close associates of TD Nandyal parliamentary constituency president Gauru Venkata Reddy.

The police said eight persons were involved in the attack.

Three persons were seriously injured and admitted to a Nandyal hospital. They

● **THE ASSAILANTS** used a sports utility vehicle (SUV) to attack the two victims. When they fell down, they were done to death with knives and other sharp objects, the police said.

were Vaddu Venkateshwar Reddy, Vaddu Subba Reddy, and Venkateshwar Reddy.

The assailants were suspected to be activists of the YSR Congress.

They used a sports utility vehicle (SUV) to hit the two victims. When they fell down, they were done to death with knives and other sharp objects, the police said.

It is learnt that the gang of eight lay in wait to ex-

cute their plan on the outskirts of the village. "The family came out of their home and walked by foot on their way to the burial ground to perform some rituals for a close relative. The four-wheel vehicle hit the two brothers. The gang got out of it and killed the two with their hunting knives," as per the police report.

The victims fell down and died on the spot. After killing the targeted two, the assailants fled the scene by vehicle.

Nandyal DSP Chidananda Reddy rushed to the spot and took charge of the situation. The villagers were in the grip of fear and a police squad has been deployed there to prevent further violence.

SC ACCEPTS CBSE, ICSE 40:30:30 EVALUATION PLAN

PARMOD KUMAR
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, JUNE 17

The Supreme Court on Thursday ruled out revisiting its earlier decision to cancel Class XII Board exams and accepted the evaluation plan submitted by the CBSE and ICSE for awarding marks to students who are to appear for Class XII Board examination.

Based on results of Class XII, XI and X respectively, the CBSE has adopted a 40:30:30 formula to evaluate and mark students.

The Council for the Indian School Certificate Examination (ISCE) said that it will consider the performance of students for the last six classes in finalising the final board results. According to the CBSE formula, the theory marks of each subject will be computed using 40 per cent from the marks they got in the subject pre-boards or mid-term exams held by their schools earlier this year, 30 per cent from their Class XI final exam marks, and 30 per cent from their Class X Board exam results. It will be added to the marks they got in Class XII internal assessments and practicals for that subject.

■ Page 2: CBSE schools to form result panel

AP to fully apply New Edu. Policy

None to be laid off during schools reshuffle

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 17

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy stated that the New Education Policy (NEP) would be very much useful to students and teachers and instructed officials to draft an action plan for its smooth implementation. He further ordered that one or two government junior colleges be set up in every mandal to impact good quality education.

The CM informed that the modernisation of schools under the Nadu-Nedu phase-2 would start on July 1 and asked officials to consider including sport dress and shoes in the Vidya Kanuka kits for the students from next year. He was holding a review meeting on the education department and Nadu-Nedu on Thursday.

Jagan Mohan Reddy insisted that no employee would be laid off from schools and Anganwadi centres, and no centre would be closed. Instead, changes were being made for synergy between them. He said there should be two types of schools. One should offer PP1, PP2,

● **THE CM** asked officials to consider including sport dress and shoes in the Vidya Kanuka kits for the students from next year while holding a review meeting on the education department and Nadu-Nedu

Preparatory Class, Class 1 and Class 2. It should be located within 1 km distance of the students. The other should offer education from Class 3 to Class 10, within 3km distance.

The CM explained that the main purpose of the new policy change is to keep the teacher-student ratio rational. For instance, he said it is not appropriate to have one teacher for four students or a single teacher for a large number of students. The approach of a single teacher teaching all subjects is also incorrect, he felt.

The CM stressed on the right student-teacher ratio in foundation courses as sound mental development is essential for the children below eight years and their skills need to be improved. He also said it is not appropriate to set up all class-

rooms at one place and added that no one should find fault with the move to bring schools within 3 km distance of students. He said the aim is to provide quality education, quality teaching and quality infrastructure as per the NEP and the state education policy should be in tune with it. The government is looking forward to teaching in the English medium, striving to provide quality education to the children. He called for creating awareness among teachers, public representatives and others on the NEP and the officials should clarify their doubts.

Reviewing the Nadu Nedu, he asked the officials to frame an action plan to complete Nadu Nedu works in Anganwadi centers within two years. He said the foundation schools concept was introduced by the Central government and everyone should follow it. He said there are 18 subjects till Class 5 and the SGT teacher can't handle them and a separate teacher is needed for each subject.

■ Page 2: CM: All schools must have playgrounds



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SHORT TAKES

FORMER MLA
PHILIP TOCHER
JOINS YSRCDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 17

Former MLA (Anglo Indian) Philip C. Tocher joined YSR Congress in the presence of Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy at the camp office in Tadepalli on Thursday. Tocher was accompanied by MLC Lella Appi Reddy, YSRC leaders Kathera Suresh and Kathera Henry Christina.

In a separate programme, Mandapeta YSRC coordinator Thota Trimurthulu paid a courtesy visit to Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy at the camp office. Accompanied by his son Thota Prudhvi Raj, he thanked the Chief Minister for selecting him for the MLC post.

NAIDU ASKS CM
TO CLEAR DUES
TO FARMERSDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 17

Former Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Thursday asked CM Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy to clear the farmers' pending dues at the minimum support price for food grains the state.

In a letter to the CM on Thursday, Naidu said many farmers did not get their pending dues till date in spite of the Kharif season which began two weeks ago. The dues of ₹2,500 crore were pending in East Godavari district, he added.

WASTE-TO-ENERGY
PLANT TO GO ON
STREAM IN JULYDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 17

Minister for municipal administration Botsa Satyanarayana stated that the Jindal Waste to Energy Plant with 15MW capacity in Guntur would start its operations by next month. Only 10 per cent of the works for the plant was completed during the term of the Telugu Desam government, but the YSRC gave top priority to the completion of the works, he said on Thursday.

Satyanarayana said two waste-to-energy plants were under construction, one in Guntur and the other in Visakhapatnam.

The minister inspected the Jindal plant at Obulanaidupalem on the outskirts of Guntur city and reviewed the progress of the works. Jindal urban waste management project president M. M. Chari explained about the features of the plant through a power-point presentation.

AP OKAYS LAND
FOR SINDHU'S
ACADEMY IN VIZAGDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 17

The AP government on Thursday issued orders alienating two acres of land at Chinagadili area in Vizag city to badminton star P. V. Sindhu for establishing an academy and sports schools free of cost.

The allocation was assured by CM Jagan Mohan Reddy when Sindhu was crowned the women singles world champion in 2019. Though initially, the allotment was expected to be around five acres, only two acres has been allocated to start with, taking into consideration various factors.

The Sports Authority of Andhra Pradesh (SAAP) verified her application and said it would be registered soon after she completes registration of the trust. She has agreed to submit a detailed project report. The academy will be constructed in two phases at an expenditure of ₹5 crore in each phase.

Sindhu has also assured that the land will only be used for development of the badminton academy and sports school.

After careful examination of the proposals, the state government has issued orders for alienation of land, albeit with some norms. The government laid a condition that the academy should have separate access from the main road and should not be used for any other alternative purposes.

The academy shall also serve talented but poor without commercial outlook and complete the project within the time-frame stipulated by youth advancement, tourism and culture department.

CM reviews books



Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy is all ears as minister for education A. Suresh explains a point at a review meet on education, Anganwadis and Nadu-Nedu at his camp office in Tadepalli on Thursday.

— By ARRANGEMENT

‘TD evaded ₹960cr
arrears to farmers’

Our govt cleared it, also helped tenant farmers: YSRC

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 17

YSR Congress has criticised that the opposition Telugu Desam is showing false love towards farmers, in wake of a missive shot by TD chief Chandrababu Naidu to Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy who is dedicatedly working for the welfare of farmers.

Advisor to government (public affairs) Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy, speaking to the media here on Thursday, refuted Naidu's allegations and depicted them as a false campaign to mislead the people. He recalled that the YSRC cleared the dues to farmers, which were left behind by the previous government.

Rubbing the letter of Naidu, Ramakrishna Reddy said it was full of false and baseless allegations. He said the TD leaders had no moral right to speak on the farmers' issues, as they left a debt of ₹960 crore towards crop procurement. He stated that the letter written by Chandrababu about the pending arrears to farm-

ers is false propaganda by the TD leaders. He said the opposition was showing false concern for the farmers and the agriculture sector, but in reality, it was the TD government that gave empty promises and had left huge pending dues of ₹960 crore.

Ramakrishna Reddy stated that it was Jagan Mohan Reddy who took the initiative of clearing all the pending arrears left by Naidu. He said Naidu should be ashamed of writing a letter saying that the farmers were paid within 48 hours of procuring the crops in his rule. He said that people had not yet forgotten the dark days of TD rule and stated that Jagan Mohan Reddy's governance instilled confidence among the farmers.

Comparing TD and YSRC governments' crop procurement schemes, Ramakrishna Reddy said that hardly 18 lakh tonnes were procured during 2014-15 and by the end of TD term in 2018-19, only

20.5 lakh tonnes of crop was procured at a cost of ₹4,800 crore, without clearing arrears of ₹1,000 crore.

In contrast, in 2019-20 nearly 34.74 lakh tonnes of crop was procured at a cost of ₹6,331 crore and in 2020-21, so far over 25 lakh tonnes were procured by paying ₹4,728 crore to the farmers. The government would complete the targeted procurement of 45 lakh tonnes this year. He said this showed YSRC's true commitment to farmer welfare.

On the minimum support price (MSP), the government advisor said that the MSP would prevent the farmers from not falling into losses by selling their produce at non-profitable price. He clarified that it is not mandatory for the farmers to sell their produce to the government – they can sell to whoever is paying higher price.

Ramakrishna Reddy pointed out that the YSRC government included

under the e-crop system even tenant farmers who were not given any support during the TD regime. Currently, procurement is taking place right at the farm gate. The government will stand by the farmers from seed to sale.

In regard to property tax, Ramakrishna Reddy said that the TD was unnecessarily levelling charges against the government. He explained that under the FRBM Act, the state was implementing the recommendations of the Central government as per the 15th Finance Commission, which is already being implemented in BJP-ruled states. He further explained the additional revenue to the government due to the upgraded property tax policy is only ₹186 crore.

He added that none of the property owners was making a fuss, except TD and BJP leaders. Speaking on the arrears to be cleared by the Centre, he said the BJP can take a credit by providing ₹3,300 crore towards clearing them.

TS soon to implement
Nadu-Nedu programmeDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 17

The Government of Telangana has embarked on a school infrastructure development project similar to that of the Andhra Pradesh government's flagship scheme, Nadu Nedu.

After learning that the Andhra Pradesh government has developed an end-to-end encrypted software with Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) for the ongoing school revamp project, the Telangana government sought out TCS to provide software and services to it.

TS principal secretary (education) Sandeep Kumar Sultania wrote a

letter to principal secretary (school education) B. Rajasekhara, seeking information about the Nadu Nedu programme for a similar project in Telangana.

The officials informed the CM of this at review meeting on the Nadu-Nedu progress on Thursday.

TCS had informed TS that a formal 'no objection' was required from

the AP government to design a project on the lines of Nadu-Nedu, using the same software. Hence, the TS wrote to the AP education department seeking its consent, to which AP responded positively.

The Chief Minister said, "if this is for the benefit of our Telugu people, we should provide them all the support they need."

From page 1

The results of XII stand board examination by CBSE and ICSE will be declared by July 31, 2021.

"After perusing the scheme presented by the concerned Boards, prima facie, we have no hesitation in accepting the same and permit the Boards to proceed on that basis," said a vacation bench comprising Justice A. M. Khanwilkar and Justice Dinesh Maheshwari in their order.

However, Justice Khanwilkar in the order pronounced by him said that the scheme "must incorporate" providing for

a "dispute resolution mechanism" in case the students apply for correction of the final results declared by the concerned Boards. The court made it clear that the conduct of optional examination would be subject to "conducive situation and logistical constraint".

Under the scheme framed by the CBSE, each school will constitute a five-member Result Committee to be headed by the principal.

Noting that the marks to be awarded will be based on the school-level assessment involving variations in the quality of question papers, evaluation stan-

dard, the mode of conduct of exams etc, in an important rider the CBSE said that the total marks awarded should be in consonance with the past performance of the school in Class XII Board examinations.

The subject wise marks assessed by the school for 2020-2021 should be within

CM: ALL SCHOOLS
MUST HAVE
PLAYGROUNDS

From page 1

The CM made it clear that all schools shall have playgrounds and ordered land acquisition wherever necessary. He said to strengthen laboratories and libraries in schools and added to provide better internet facilities in school libraries.

Education minister Adimulapu Suresh, women and Child welfare minister Thaneti Vanitha, school education principal secretary Buditi Rajashekar, women and child welfare principal secretary A. R. Anuradha, women and child welfare director Kritika Shukla, education commissioner Chinaveerabhadru, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan state project director Vetri Selvi, finance secretary Gulzar and other officials were present.

Jagan stresses on
quality housesDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 17

Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Thursday interacted with newly-appointed Joint Collectors (Housing) across the State to ensure effective implementation of Pedalandariki Illu scheme.

During the meeting, the CM said that 'Pedalandariki Illu' initiative is a massive housing project taken up by the State government, the first in the country. He stated that over 28 lakh houses are being constructed in 17,000 layouts, where some of the layouts are of the size of municipalities. He directed officials to complete them within the time-frame.

Besides these, the CM told the officials to focus on providing house-sites to all eligible persons within 90 days of apply-

ing on a saturation basis, by maintaining complete transparency and zero corruption. He spoke against a situation where only 10 per cent of eligible people get benefitted. He said that officials should take the responsibility of constructing houses for all those receiving house-sites.

Reddy said that colonies should not become slums and they all must boast of good infrastructure facilities, which is a top priority, as the government is spending over ₹84,000 crore on it with infrastructure alone getting ₹34,000 crore of the amount.

He instructed the officials to maintain transparency and ensure quality in every work. If quality is compromised, problems will arise and therefore it was essential to proceed with an effective plan of action, he added.

CM to unveil job calendar today

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 17

Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy will release on Friday a calendar schedule to fill vacant posts in various government departments.

For the first time in the history of the state, the state government under the leadership of Jagan Mohan Reddy fulfilled the dreams of unemployed in the state by providing jobs to 6,03,755 people in last

two years. Out of 6,03,755 jobs, regular posts were 1,84,264, jobs on contract basis were 19,701 and jobs provided through outsourcing were 3,99,791.

The Chief Minister will release the job calendar 2021-22, through which 10,143 vacant posts in various departments would be filled. The notification to fill 1,238 backlog SC, ST and DA posts would be released in July, 36 posts in APPSC Group 1&2 category in August,

450 police jobs in September, 451 posts in health (doctors and assistant professors) in October, 5,251 jobs in health (paramedical, lab technicians and pharmacists) in November, 441 nurse jobs in December, 240 posts as lecturers in degree colleges in January 2022, 2,000 posts as assistant professors in universities in February 2022, and 36 posts in other departments will be filled in March 2022.

Factional fights, murders
back after lull in KurnoolD. SIVA RAMI REDDI | DC
KURNOOL, JUNE 17

Kurnool woke up on Thursday to the deafening news of double-murder of Vaddu Nageshwar Reddy and his brother Prathap Reddy at Pesaravai village in Gadivmeula mandal, which spread like a wild fire in the district.

Family members of the deceased were inconsolable. Santhi, the daughter of Pratap Reddy, hugged the blood-soaked bodies and screamed violently, "Now there is no male member in the family. But I will avenge the deaths."

"What wrong did my dad do? Is it wrong to work for a party he believes in," she asked.

Gouru Charitha Reddy, former Panyam MLA and TD leader, said as the panchayat elections were over, the YSRC had stepped up pressure on TD activists to join them or face the consequences. Prathap Reddy had been beaten up during the recent elections by the followers of rival Katasani Rambhupal Reddy, the Panyam MLA.

Alleging that Banaganapalle's murder politics has badly affected life in Panyam constituency, she blamed Rambhupal Reddy for this heinous turn. "The ruling party MLAs are turning restless and targeting those who take a different line. There is no peace in the district," Charitha Reddy alleged.

The faction-ridden villages in the district have been seething in anger

THE KURNOOL DISTRICT WITNESSED
"BRUTAL POLITICAL MURDERS"
IN THE PAST TEN YEARS.

Here is The timeline :

2011: Congress leader Dalvai Ramaiah was killed in faction attacks at Mantralayam of Kurnool district.

2015: TDP activist Nagesh was killed at Uppalur village near Kolimigundla, a follower of BC Janardhan Reddy

2017: YSR congress party key leader Cherukulapadu Narayana Reddy and his aide Sambasivudu were done to death at Veldurti of Kurnool district.

2019: TDP activist Subba Rao was brutally killed by his political rivalries at Belum caves of Kolimigundla Mandal in Kurnool district.

YSRC KILLED 30 TELUGU DESAM
LEADERS IN 2 YEARS, SAYS NAIDUDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 17

Condemning the daylight killing of two TD leaders at Panyam assembly segment in Kurnool, former Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu said over 30 TD activists were killed ever since the YCP came to power two years ago and nearly 1,500 attacks were made on the TD leaders and activists and their properties all over the state.

Naidu said the two brutal murders triggered doubts whether the police were in existence or not

after the recent gram panchayat elections where TD activists bravely stood up against the YSRC's single-minded agenda of eliminating its political rivals, said Gouru Venkat Reddy, TD's Nandyal parliamen-

in the state. Former sarpanch Vaddi Nageswara Reddy and cooperative society former president Vaddi Pratapa Reddy were killed by rivals when they were returning from the cremation ground after attending the funeral rites of a relative.

TD Chief said that the miscreants came in a vehicle and crashed into the car of the two TD leaders before attacking with sickles.

He alleged YSRC MLA Katasani Rambhupal Reddy's role in the murders.

tary constituency president.

Telugu Desam general secretary Nara Lokesh would visit Pesaravai village to console the bereaved family, said Venkat Reddy.

Lawyer appearing for the petitioner Anubha Shrivastava Sahai and others told the court that out of 28 states, 18 have cancelled their exams, 6 have conducted and completed them and remaining four have not responded.

In both the cases – CBSE/ICSE and in the matter relating to the cancellation of Class XII examination in four states – the next hearing will take place on June 21, 2021.



ASTROGUIDE

Plava: Uttarayana
Tithi: Jyeshtha Shuddha Ashtami till 8.34 pm
Star: Uttaraphalguni till 9.32 pm
Varjyam: 5.10 am to 6.43 am; 5.32 am to 7.04 am (Saturday)
Durmuhurtam: 8.22 am to 9.15 am; 12.43 pm to 1.35 pm
Rahukalam: 10.30 am to 12 noon
HILRI CALENDAR
Zeeqad 5,1442 AH
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.08 am
Zohar: 12.05 pm
Asar: 4.11 pm
Maghrib: 5.47 pm
Isha: 7.02 pm
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.08 AM
SUNSET TODAY 6.33 PM
MOONSET 11.31 PM
MOONRISE 11.21 AM

COUNTER POINT



This is the list of malls, restaurants and parks to visit... once the lockdown is lifted!

SHORT TAKES

'Positivity rate to be below 1%'

Kakinada: East Godavari District Collector D. Muralidhar Reddy exhorted officials to continue the fever survey effectively and carry out not fewer than 10,000 Covid-19 tests a day. Though there is a sharp decline in new cases, the officials should not become complacent in the matter of curbing the spread of Coronavirus in the district, he said. He along with the Joint Collectors Ch. Keerthi, G. Lakshminisha and G. Rajakumari conducted a meeting with the officials through virtual mode on Thursday and said that village secretaries, volunteers, Asha workers and others should conduct the fever survey every day. He instructed the medical and health officials to strive to bring down the Covid-19 positivity rate to below 1 per cent by the end of June. He said the nodal officers should take steps for better medical treatment to patients in private hospitals and implement the fees fixed by the government.

16 REVELLERS HELD FOR FLOUTING RULES

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, JUNE 17

The Mummidivaram police arrested 16 persons, most of them teenagers, for participating birthday celebrations in violation of Covid-19 guidelines. Amalapuram DSP Y. Madhava Reddy said that on the midnight of June 15, Yallamilli Durga Prasad of Mummidivaram in Konaseema area celebrated his birthday along with his 19 friends at Thillamma Cheruvu and cut a cake with swords (talwars) which are used for "Chedim Talimkhana" during the Dasara festival. They also took photos and videos with the swords in the opposite street of Mummidivaram police station. Superintendent of Police Adnan Nayeem Asmi took a serious view of the incident and asked the police to act against the revellers. A team led by Circle Inspector M. Janaki Ram identified the 19 persons and of them 16 were arrested on Thursday and produced before the magistrate court which sent them in remand for 14 days. Janakiram said that one day, four motor bikes, four talwars and others were seized from them.

MAYOR ASSURES TO DEVELOP COLONIES

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 17

Vijayawada Municipal Corporation Mayor Rayana Bhagyalakshmi assured people to resolve their issues and provide all basic amenities in colonies. The Mayor along with 37th division corporator Mandepudi Chatterji visited various areas on Thursday and interacted with the public. Bhagyalakshmi instructed VMC officials to shift the sanitary division office into a commercial complex opposite to Chitturi Complex and construct extra floors at VMC shopping complexes in Park and Bhavanarayana Street.

Beach time!



Children and elders making a splash in the waters at the seashore at Ramakrishna Beach in Visakhapatnam on Thursday.

Hopes high on Cabinet berth for Trimurthulu

The former MLA is likely to be sworn in as MLC today

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, JUNE 17

YSRC leaders and cadre in Ramachandrapuram and Mandapeta Assembly constituencies are very hopeful that former MLA Thota Trimurthulu, who is now an MLC under Governor's quota, would be inducted into Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy's cabinet. Trimurthulu is reported to be sworn-in as MLC on Friday. He was under the good looks of the Chief Minister as he ensured YSRC triumph in Mandapeta municipality from the clutches of Telugu Desam, which enjoyed a stranglehold. Reddy gave the Mandapeta Assembly seat nomination to Kapu leader Girijala Venkata Swamy Naidu in the 2014 elections and Pilli Subhashchandra Bose in 2019 elections. However, both lost to TD candidate Vegulla Jogeswara Rao. In the 2014 elections, Trimurthulu contested on Telugu Desam ticket from Ramachandrapuram constituency and was defeated by Ch. Srinivasa Venugopala Krishna. Meanwhile, the Chief Minister accommodated Bose in the cabinet as Deputy Chief Minister and Revenue Minister

ANGER OVER MLC POST FOR THOTA, TONSURING CASE HEARING ON JUNE 25

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 17

Several Dalit organisations on Thursday staged a dharna at Gandhi statue near RTC Complex here, protesting against the government move to nominate Thota Trimurthulu to the legislative council. They said he was accused of tonsuring two Dalits and the case was still being tried by a SC/ST special court. Recalling the incident, one of the victims, who was present at the agitation, said that after winning as an independent candidate, Trimurthulu tonsured two Dalit youths Koti Chinnaraja and Dandala Venkataratnam on December 29, 1996. Another youth Pattabhi was beaten up but not tonsured. After a hue and cry was raised by the Dalit organisations, an FIR was filed in Draksharamam police station on January 4, 1997. He was sent to

Rajahmundry central jail where he spent 86 days. The case came up for trial in the special SC/ST court in Visakhapatnam four years ago, 21 years after the incident. In 2017, Trimurthulu challenged that the youths were Christians and not Dalits. On June 25, 2019, the revenue department of East Godavari issued certificates that they were Dalits. The very next day on June 26, he obtained an interim stay on the court proceedings stating that the procedure of issuance of certificates was not proper. The court would hear the case on June 25 and a public prosecutor would seek recall of the stay and ask for resumption of further arguments in the case. "Instead of expediting the case, the Chief Minister, Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, honoured him with an MLC post offending the entire Dalit community," the victims told this correspondent on Thursday.

made MLC. "Trimurthulu has tremendous leadership qualities. Considering his abilities, Jagan

before sending him to Rajya Sabha. Later, Venu Gopalakrishna was given a cabinet berth and Trimurthulu was

Political controversy over Anandaiah's concoction

7DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, JUNE 17

With the leaders of YSRC and opposition parties locking horns over the distribution of Bonigi Anandaiah's herbal Covid-19 mix at a few places in Chittoor district, the miracle drug is once again embroiled in political controversies. Opposition party leaders and even YSRC rebels, who managed to bring the Krishnapatnam medicine and distributed it to people in their respective regions, were allegedly facing obstacles from ruling party leaders

and the police at every step. Badi Sudha Yadav, sarpanch of Pudipatla village, alleged that he had a bitter experience when police obstructed him while distributing the herbal mix to people in Pudipatla panchayat, which is a part of Chandragiri constituency, represented by YSRC Legislator and TUDA chairman, Chevireddy Bhaskar Reddy. One Ganesh Yadav, a leader from Janasena, also alleged that he too had a bitter experience when ruling party leaders created obstacles for him

in Palamaner. Apart from them, quite a few opposition leaders in the district are also alleging that they were facing hardships despite the best of their intentions. It may be recalled that Bhaskar Reddy has taken up the making of Anandaiah's herbal mix, but he confined its distribution to just his constituency. Now, the concoction is officially being distributed to every household in his constituency. The MLA assured that the herbal mix will be distributed to over 1.60 lakh families in his constituency.

ANIMAL CARE

Meeting held on elephant deaths, loss of human lives, crop damage

Need solution to jumbo menace: Collector

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, JUNE 17

Expressing concerns over frequent trespassing by wild elephants in villages across Chittoor, Kuppam and Palamaner under Koundinya wildlife division, district collector Hari Narayanan on Thursday advised forest officials to chalk out an action plan to both protect the wildlife and save human life. The collector held a

review meeting with forest officials on matters like elephant deaths, loss of human lives and crop damage in the district. DFO Ravi Shankar said the Koundinya elephant zone spread across 6,000 hectares on the western part of the district had only eight elephants in 2012, but the count has risen to 70-90 by now. According to the DFO, since 2013, nine elephants have died due to various reasons. Also, 10 people

and 37 cows were killed and 9 persons were injured in elephant attacks. Of the 4,610 hectares of forest area in Palamaner region, fencing has been done for 3,426.8 hectares. Elephants have been entering human habitations from forests due to lack of fencing and trenches. The DFO also said that despite having abundant water bodies and elephant fodder plantations

in this forest area, the elephants are attracted to the flavours of paddy, sugarcane, banana, mango and beans crops. The herds come in and damage crops and sometimes trample on people. He said farmers have to protect their crops from elephant attacks. They attack elephants at times, and get killed by elephants too in counter-attacks. The families of farmers

who lost their lives in elephant attacks are being compensated. But farmers are seeking better amounts as compensation for loss of lives and damage to crops. The collector asked the officials to prepare a report within a week on what action should be taken in such areas and what more could be done by way of compensation, to be forwarded to the government.

Endowment lands in Vizag to be reviewed: Vellampalli

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 17

Minister for Endowments Vellampalli Srinivasa Rao has said that all lands under the endowment department will be reviewed afresh to ensure their better utilisation. Talking to reporters after a meeting along with his cabinet colleagues K. Kannababu and Muttamsetti Srinivasa Rao, he said that in order to enhance income from these lands, the government would lease them in a most-transparent manner. "The lands which were grabbed or encroached would be taken back and

fenced in order to prevent any further irregularity," Vellampalli said. He said the lands in the city limits would be protected with Common Good Fund or under PPP mode. He said that the management of MANSAS was not transparent and the government would soon conduct an audit into its accounts. The minister earlier visited Simhachalam temple and told the media there that Ashok Gajapati Raju could not digest when his own niece became the chairperson of both MANSAS and Simhachalam. He has been unnecessarily blaming the

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy over affairs concerning the temple, he said. "Raju has to spell his stand on the Panchagrama lands, a contentious issue pending for decades," the minister said. He said that the temple priests have told him that the income of the temple would increase fourfold if the land issue was solved. He condemned the TD leader for spreading rumours that the temple earnings were used for Vahana Mitra scheme. "Gone are the days of princely states. He is still thinking that he is a king," Vellampalli said.

THUNDERSHOWERS LIKELY IN COASTAL AREAS TODAY

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 17

Strong surface winds reaching 30-40 kmph are likely to prevail over west-central Bay of Bengal along and off Andhra Pradesh coast on June 18, according to an IMD official release here on Thursday. Many areas in Visakhapatnam already received light to moderate rainfall under the influence of the active monsoon. Salapuvanipalem in Paravada mandal in the district received the state's highest rainfall of 17mm while Visakhapatnam city received 16.25mm of rainfall on Thursday evening. Speaking to DC, IMD Amaravati Centre director S. Stella said light to moderate thundershowers would occur at one or two places along the north and south coastal Andhra Pradesh in the next two days till June 19. Rayalaseema region would receive light to moderate rains during the period.

● **MANY AREAS** in Visakhapatnam already received light to moderate rainfall under the influence of the active monsoon. Salapuvanipalem in Paravada mandal in the district received the state's highest rainfall of 17mm while Visakhapatnam city received 16.25mm of rainfall on Thursday evening.

₹3,000-CR WORKS WILL BE READY BY DEC.: MINISTER

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 17

In-charge minister for Visakhapatnam district, agriculture minister K. Kannababu said that ₹3,000 crore worth works under GVMC limits would be completed and grounded by the end of the year. Participating in a review meeting here, the minister said ₹600 crore works would be completed in the next two months. The idea is to develop Visakhapatnam into a city that boasts of international standards, he said. "We will develop all the open spaces by constructing convention centres in each zone worth ₹5 crore and create parks all over the city. We will also plant saplings in front of all residential homes to improve the ambience," the minister said, while adding that a grandiose plan for development of Mudasarlova is underway. He said a butterfly park and freedom fight-

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E- Tenders from the experienced Contractors are invited by the undersigned for the following works:	
1. Tender No. : C/E-221/ELS/ LGD/ RC/337, Dt.14.06.2021	Description of work : Reconditioning of pit wheel lathe followed by one year warranty. Tender value : ₹. 24,17,242.27 EMD : ₹. Nil Cost of tender form : Nil Completion period : Six months Date & time of closing & opening : 12.07.2021 15.00 hrs & 12.07.2021 15.15 hrs
2. Tender No. & Dt. : C/E-221/ELS/ LGD/RC/307, Dt.14.06.2021	
Description of work : Rewinding of Auxiliary motors of 3-Phase locomotives, Qty:137 nos for two years Tender value : ₹. 29,22,756 EMD : ₹. Nil Cost of tender form : Nil Completion period : 24 months Date & time of closing & opening : 12.07.2021 15.00 hrs & 12.07.2021 15.15 hrs	
Validity of offer : 63 days from the date of opening of tender	
Submission of tender document : Through IREPS website at "www.ireps.gov.in"	
Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer, A059421 ELS/Lalaguda, Secunderabad	
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SHORT TAKES

PASHUPATI KUMAR ELECTED AS LJP PRESIDENT

NAYEAR AZAD | DC
PATNA, JUNE 17

Hajipur MP Pashupati Kumar Paras, younger brother of late union minister Ram Vilas Paswan was elected as Lok Janshakti Party (LJP) national president on Thursday amid an ongoing rift with his nephew Chirag Paswan.

The decision was taken during the party's national council meeting in Patna which was chaired by former LJP MP Surajbhan Singh. Chirag's co-union Prince Raj who is in the soup over allegations of sexual harassment did not attend the meeting, party leaders said. The development comes after Paras along with four other MPs of the party staged a political coup against Chirag Paswan and deposed him as LJP president.

On Sunday four LJP MPs — Veena Devi, Chandan Singh, Chaudhary Mahboob Ali Kalser and Prince Raj had backed Pashupati Paras as their leader. Pashupati Paras had reached Patna on Wednesday and filed a nomination on Thursday, party insiders told this newspaper that he was elected unopposed.

"I assure you that there is no dispute within the party. I have been given a big responsibility to carry forward the work started by my elder brother Ram Vilas Paswan. Therefore, it's my duty to work for the backward and downtrodden people," Pashupati Kumar Paras told reporters after he was elected as LJP's national president on Thursday.

RAUT JUSTIFIES ATTACK ON BJP WORKERS

SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC
MUMBAI, JUNE 17

A day after the clash between the Shiv Sena and the BJP workers, the Shiv Sena said that the Sena Bhavan in Mumbai is not just a headquarter of a political party but pride of Maharashtra. The Sena spokesperson Sanjay Raut said that those who try to attack the Sena Bhavan will be rebuffed in the same manner.

The Sena and BJP workers had clashed on Wednesday outside the Sena Bhavan after the BJP youth wing held a protest march against "offensive" remarks in Sena mouthpiece *Saamana* about a land deal controversy in Ayodhya. Accusing the Sena workers of hooliganism, the opposition party BJP in Maharashtra had also alleged that they had assaulted a woman member of the party.

The Sena leader defended his party activists for their behaviors and actions saying that they are certified goons as far as Maharashtra's identity and Hindutva are concerned. "We do not need anyone's certificate to prove that we are goons. We are certified goons. Mumbai is in Maharashtra because of *goondagiri* of Marathi *manos* (Marathi speaking people). As we do *goondagiri*, therefore, the voice of Marathi *Manos* is at a high level in Maharashtra. If anyone tries to suppress our voice, we will have to do *goondagiri*," he added.

2-DAY ARMY COMMANDERS MEET STARTS

PAWAN BALI | DC
NEW DELHI, JUNE 17

Amidst stand off with China, Indian Army's crucial two days Army Commanders Conference began on Thursday at the Army Headquarters in the national capital to review the operational situation on Northern (China) and Western Fronts (Pakistan).

The conference is being attended by all top commanders of the Army in the county and is being chaired by Army chief Gen M.M. Naravane. Typically Army Commanders Conference besides, operational situation also discuss administrative issues, modernisation, and HR among other issues.

However, this time focus of the conference is only on operational situation at the borders.

The conference is being held on the eve of the first anniversary of the Galwan Valley clash on June 15 when 20 Indian soldiers were killed in brutal hand to hand fight with the Chinese troops.

India has deployed 50,000 soldiers at Ladakh as there are no signs of de-escalation by China in near future at the LAC.



People crowd at Chandni Chowk market in New Delhi that reopened after state government eased some restrictions on Thursday.

— PTI

Twitter India MD questioned over 'Covid-19 toolkit' case

Maheshwari was questioned on May 31; Cops did not divulge further details

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 17

Twitter India MD Manish Maheshwari was questioned by the Delhi Police in connection with the probe into the alleged 'Covid toolkit' matter, officials said.

A team of Delhi Police's Special Cell which is probing the matter was sent to Bengaluru where the Twitter India MD was questioned on May 31 in connection with the alleged 'Covid toolkit' matter, a senior police officer said.

The police, however, did

● **DELHI POLICE** had also issued an official statement earlier saying the statements by Twitter on the ongoing probe in the 'toolkit' case were 'mendacious', and designed to impede lawful enquiry & seek 'dubious sympathy'.

not divulge further details of the questioning but said he was also questioned about the company's policy behind flagging tweets as 'manipulated'.

The Delhi Police had also issued an official statement earlier saying the

statements by Twitter on the ongoing probe in the 'toolkit' case were "mendacious", and designed to impede the lawful enquiry and seek "dubious sympathy".

The strongly-worded statement, which also termed Twitter's conduct "obfuscatory, diversionary and tendentious", came after the social media firm Thursday called the recent "visit" by a Delhi police team to its offices a form of "intimidation". Twitter also said it was concerned about its employees and the potential threat to freedom of expression.

The row over the purported 'Covid toolkit' escalated after the Delhi Police's Special Cell visited two Twitter India offices on May 24 and served a notice, asking it to share information based on which it had classified a related tweet by Sambit Patra as "manipulated media".

The police action drew sharp criticism from the opposition Congress and Left which accused the government of trying to stifle free speech and indulge in intimidation.

Last month, Twitter was labelled as "manipulated

media" a tweet by Patra on the alleged 'toolkit'. Twitter says it "may label Tweets that include media (videos, audio, and images) that have been deceptively altered or fabricated".

The Congress had claimed it was a vindication of its stand.

But the government had asked Twitter to remove the 'manipulated media' tag as the matter is pending before the law enforcement agency, and made it clear that the social media platform cannot pass judgment when the issue is under investigation.

India slams Pak's Bill on Jadhav

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 17

Slamming Pakistan's Review and Reconsideration Bill 2020 passed recently by the Pakistani National Assembly as violating the judgement of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in the case pertaining to imprisoned former Indian naval officer Kulbhushan Jadhav, India on Thursday said the Bill "does not create a machinery to facilitate effective review and reconsideration" of the Jadhav case, "as mandated by the judgement of the ICJ".

According to reports, the Bill was passed in the Pakistani Parliament last week to provide a right to appeal to Jadhav who was sentenced in 2017 by a Pakistani military court to death on charges of "espionage and sabotage".

India called upon Pakistan to take appropriate steps to address the shortcomings in the Bill and to comply with the judgement of the ICJ "in letter and spirit". Explaining its position, New Delhi said the "Bill

invites the municipal courts in Pakistan to decide whether or not any prejudice has been caused to Jadhav on account of the failure to provide consular access". This, the MEA said, was "clearly a breach of the basic tenet that municipal courts cannot be the arbiter of whether a State has fulfilled its obligations in international law". New Delhi took strong objection to the fact that the Pakistani Bill "further invites the municipal court to sit in appeal, as it were, over the judgement of the ICJ".

It may be recalled that in a major victory for India two years ago, the ICJ at The Hague in the Netherlands had on July 17, 2019, held Pakistan guilty of violation of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations for its failure to give India consular access to Jadhav while directing Pakistan to provide "effective review and reconsideration" of the conviction and sentence" (of death penalty) awarded earlier by a Pakistani military court to Jadhav.

Student-activists walk out of Tihar, thank Delhi High Court

SHWETA SINGH & SANJAY KAW | DC
NEW DELHI, JUNE 17

Two days after being granted bail by the Delhi high court, student activists Natasha Narwal, Devangana Kalita and Asif Iqbal Tanha walked out of Tihar jail in Delhi on Thursday, but only after a sessions court ordered their immediate release, ignoring Delhi Police's plea for more time to verify their permanent addresses.

Pinjra Tod activists Natasha Narwal and Devangana Kalita, and Students' Islamic Organisation activist Asif Iqbal Tanha had been booked under the UAPA anti-terror law for their alleged role in the Delhi riots last year. They were arrested in May 2020.

While granting bail to the student activists on Tuesday, the high court had observed that "in the anxiety to suppress dissent, the state has blurred the line between right to protest and terrorist activity" and if such a mindset gains traction, it would be a "sad day for democracy".

The Delhi Police, which is the investigating agency



Student activists Natasha Narwal, Devangana Kalita and Asif Iqbal Tanha outside Tihar prison in New Delhi on Thursday.

— PTI

in the case, has challenged the high court bail order in the Supreme Court, which is expected to come up for hearing today.

"This shows the desperation of the government... We are women who are not scared of them... We survived because we received tremendous support from friends, from well-wishers. I thank them all," Kalita said soon after she came out of the prison.

Refusing to comment on the case, Kalita said, "We would like to thank the

Delhi High Court for upholding what we believe in. Any such protest that we have done is not terrorism. It was a democratic protest, led by women."

"They won't be able to threaten us with jail. If they threaten to incarcerate us, that will only strengthen our resolve to carry on our fight," said Narwal, whose father died of Covid in May this year while she was in jail. Her brother, who came to receive her, said they miss their father, who if alive

would have come to greet her on walking out of jail.

In the Karkardooma court, additional sessions Judge Revinder Bedi pulled up the Delhi Police for delay in verification of addresses and sureties of the students. On the police's application seeking more time before releasing them on bail, the judge said, "I would say that this by itself cannot be a plausible reason for the accused to be kept imprisoned till the time such reports are filed."

SII to begin Novavax trials on kids from July 15

DC CORRESPONDENT
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, JUNE 17

There was a slight rise in the daily Covid-19 infections in India, with 67,208 cases reported in the last 24 hours, along with 2,330 deaths. There is, however, a continuous fall in the country's active caseload, that stood at 8,26,740 on Thursday. This is the lowest decline in active cases after 71 days.

The health ministry said a net decline of 38,692 cases was seen in the last 24 hours, and active cases are now only 2.78 per cent of the country's total positive cases.

Delhi reported 158 new cases and 10 deaths, as its positivity rate dipped to 0.20 per cent. However, after a brief respite, Mumbai's Dharavi has started reporting fresh cases again.

While it may be too early to predict another wave now, health experts say that crowding and not using masks at public places after the unlocking can prove to be disastrous.

However, the next wave is unlikely to disproportionately affect children than adults, a sero-prevalence study by the World Health Organisation and All India Institute of Medical Sciences has revealed.

The SARS-CoV-2 seropositivity rate among children was high and was comparable to the adult population in the survey, that was held in five states with a total sample size of 10,000.

The data of 4,500 participants were taken for the results of the time of the mid-term analysis from four states of India and more results are likely to come in the next two-three months.

It was found that in resettlement colonies in South Delhi urban areas, which have a very con-

MP REPORTS 1ST DELTA PLUS CASE

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, JUNE 17

Madhya Pradesh has reported the first case of Delta Plus, a new variant of coronavirus.

The advanced Delta variant was detected in a 65-year-old woman in Bhopal during the genome sequencing of samples sent from Madhya Pradesh to National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), a senior health department officer said here on Thursday.

State medical education minister Vishwas Sarang has confirmed the report.

"A new variant of coronavirus has been detected in Bhopal", Mr Sarang said, citing a report of NCDC. This was the first case of Delta Plus in Madhya Pradesh and seventh in India detected till June 7, the health department officer said.

Madhya Pradesh on Thursday reported 145 new cases taking the tally of cases to 7,88,954.

gested population, there was a very high (highest reported yet in any sero-assessment) seroprevalence of 74.7 per cent, said Dr Puneet Misra, professor of community medicine at AIIMS, who led the survey.

The Serum Institute of India says it will begin Novavax trials on children from July 15 and hopes to introduce its Indian version — Covavax — by September.

Sputnik V has said it will soon offer a booster shot, adjusted to work against the Delta Covid variant, to other vaccine manufacturers.

IN ODISHA TOWN, 'NO JABS MEAN, NO BUSINESS FOR TRADERS'

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC
BHUBANESWAR, JUNE 17

Odisha's Sundargarh Municipality authorities have come out with an idea to create mass awareness regarding Covid-19 vaccination.

In order to motivate more and more people to take jabs to defeat Coronavirus, the district administration has announced that owners of businesses houses and shops of the town who have not taken vaccines shall not be allowed to open their establishments.

"Shopkeepers will be made aware that those who have not received jabs and also not ensured vaccination to the sales executive working under them will not be allowed to open their businesses," Sundargarh Sub-Collector Abhimanyu Behera said on Thursday.

"The first norm of the Covid management protocol is that it is executed for the welfare of the public, so people need to be aware and cooperate with the authorities be it for enforcement of guidelines or vaccination. The initiative is aimed at motivating people to align with the norms of the government, especially some sections of people who are hesitant to the inoculation drive," he said.

A few days ago, in one such step to shake off reluctance among the general masses to take the vaccine and create greater awareness about the importance of vaccination, some shopkeepers in Hinjili area in Ganjam district were seen offering a discount of at least 5 per cent to fully vaccinated people upon purchase of grocery items.

VACCINE | HESITANCY

Campaign poster reads vaccination is a religious, human obligation to save lives

Kashmir clergy launch drive to end 'jab fears'

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC
SRINAGAR, JUNE 17

Islamic religious leadership of Kashmir is formally launching a Valley-wide campaign on Friday to end the Covid-19 vaccination timidity and encourage people to get vaccinated to protect themselves against the deadly virus.

The campaign under the banner of 'Mutahida Majlis-e-Ulema' (MMU), an amalgam of religious organisations and leaders, will begin with special sermons to be delivered by

the imams and preachers before congregational Friday prayers to highlight the importance and urgency of the vaccination.

"At each masjid (mosque) and other places of worship the aima (Islamic leaders) will tell the faithful the wellbeing and safety of human lives is a religious and human obligation. In fact, Shariat (Islamic canonical law based on the teachings of the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad often referred to as Hadith and

Sunna) lays special emphasis on it," said Kashmir's chief Muslim cleric Mirwaiz Umar Farooq who is also the head of the MMU. He added that the Friday prayers would be offered strictly under the Covid guidelines and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

The amalgam has also issued a poster carrying a passionate appeal to the people to shun 'vaccine hesitancy'. Mirwaiz Umar said this is being done as many people are reluctant to take vaccines

apparently because of some false illusions or hearsay.

The poster written in Urdu says that in view of the surge in the number of deaths due to Covid-19 and positive cases and in order to defeat the virus it is imperative to get vaccinated by one and sundry. It also says vaccination is neither us-Islamic nor is there any baseness in it under the Sharia law but, in fact, it is a religious and human obligation to save human lives.

Referring to official sta-

tistics, it says that less than 50 per cent of the population of Srinagar district has got vaccinated against Covid-19, so far. It points out that about one thousand people have died of Covid-19 in Srinagar city alone and 98 per cent of them had not been vaccinated.

Expressing serious concern over the reluctance of the majority of people in Srinagar to get vaccinated against Covid-19, the MMU has stressed upon the masses to "shun vaccine hesitancy and get

administered for the shots to save themselves, their fellows and society from the deadly virus".

It said that the amalgam has, on the directions of Mirwaiz Umar Farooq who remains under house detention since August 5, 2019, in order to spread awareness regarding the importance of vaccination started a campaign through posters and social media "so that the people realise the seriousness of the issue and not exhibit any kind of carelessness in this regard".

SHORT TAKES

CHINA CREWED
SPACESHIP DOCKS
WITH SPACE STN

Jiuquan (China), June 17: State media say a Chinese spaceship carrying a three-person crew has docked with the country's new space station at the start of three-month mission.

The Shenzhou-12 craft connected with the Tianhe space station module about six hours after takeoff Thursday. The crew will carry out experiments, test equipment, conduct maintenance and prepare the station for receiving two laboratory modules next year. The mission brings to 14 the number of astronauts China has launched into space since 2003.

SHIP SINKS,
PROMPTS LANKA
POLLUTION FEAR

Colombo, June 17: A container ship carrying chemicals sank off Sri Lanka's capital on Thursday nearly a month after catching fire, raising concerns about a possible environmental disaster, officials said.

The ship's operator said the wreck of the Singapore-flagged X-Press Pearl "is now wholly sitting on the seabed at a depth of 21 metres (70 feet)". A salvage crew was at the site to deal with any debris and report any spill, X-Press Feeders said.

The head of Sri Lanka's Marine Environment Protection Authority, Darshini Lahandapura, also confirmed that the ship had sunk.

She said it was currently unsafe to remove the wreck because of rough monsoon seas. "The sea is very violent. In the rough season, we can't do anything," she said.

DOZEN KILLED IN
BHUTAN, NEPAL
MONSOON RAINS

Thimpu, June 17: At least a dozen people have been killed in Bhutan and Nepal and several others are missing as torrential monsoon rains hit the region, triggering landslides and inundating homes, officials said Thursday.

The annual monsoon season is crucial to replenish water supplies across South Asia, but it also causes death and destruction. Ten collectors of cordyceps — a fungus valued for its alleged aphrodisiac properties — died when their remote mountain camp north of Bhutan's capital Thimpu was washed away early Wednesday.

Five others were injured and were in a stable condition in hospital, officials said.

ONE LIFE LOST
IN BALTIMORE
SHOOTING

Baltimore (US), June 17: One person was killed and five others were wounded when gunmen walked up a street and opened fire on a Baltimore block from an intersection, the city's police commissioner said.

Commissioner Michael Harrison said the shooting on Wednesday erupted in a west Baltimore neighbourhood and the conditions of the five wounded ranged from serious to critical. He declined to release the identities of those who were shot.

Officers responded to reports of gunshots after 2 pm Wednesday and found two people shot, Harrison said. Those two were taken to hospitals, and the four others arrived separately in private vehicles, he said. So far investigators have learned that the six people were together on the tree-lined block of rowhouses when at least two or three people began firing.

13 WORKERS DIE
IN CHINA IRON
MINE ACCIDENT

Beijing, June 17: All 13 workers, who were trapped in an iron mine in north China's Shanxi Province, have been confirmed dead, according to the local authorities. The bodies of the workers were lifted out of the well that flooded the Dahongcui iron mine in Daixian County on June 10. A rescue team comprising 1,084 people worked for six straight days.

The DNA confirmation has been completed, according to the local rescue headquarters. Police have detained 13 suspects. An investigation into the cause of the accident is underway, the state-run *Xinhua* news agency reported on late Wednesday night.

Chinese coal mines are one of the deadliest in the world. In 2009, China had the most mining accident fatalities in the world, with a total of 2,631 coal miners dying in accidents.



People have dinner in Tokyo's Shinjuku area on Thursday, after Japan announced that a virus state of emergency in Tokyo and several other regions will be lifted on June 20.

— AFP

Delta variant infections in
England doubling in 11 days

London, June 17: The number of people infected with the Coronavirus is increasing rapidly in England, doubling every 11 days, which coincides with the Delta variant of Covid-19 becoming dominant in the country, a new study reports on Thursday. The Imperial College London led Real-time Assessment of Community Transmission (REACT-1) analysis, based on over 100,000 home swab tests taken between May 20 and June 7, estimates that 0.15 per cent of people have the deadly virus, or roughly 1 in 670.

It found that the link between infections, hospitalisations and deaths had been weakening since February, but since late April, the trend has been reversing for hospitalisations. "We found strong evidence for exponential growth in infection from

W.H.O. WARNS OF FRESH INDONESIA
SPIKE FED BY CORONAVIRUS STRAINS

Jakarta, June 17: Indonesia's president ordered authorities to speed up the country's vaccination campaign as the World Health Organisation warned Thursday of the need to increase social restrictions in the country amid a fresh surge of Coronavirus infections caused by worrisome variants.

We need vaccination acceleration in order to achieve communal immunity, which we hope can

late May to early June in the REACT-1 study, with a doubling time of 11 days on average for England," said Professor Paul Elliott, director of the REACT programme from Imperial's School of Public Heal-

th. "These data coincide with the Delta variant becoming dominant and show the importance of continuing to monitor infection rates and variants of concern in the community," he said.

Widodo said he ordered his cabinet ministers and local governments to increase the number of people vaccinated each day to 1 million by next month. He said Indonesia is currently vaccinating half a million people a day.

— AP

The findings come days after UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced a month-long delay to an end to lockdown restrictions, citing the rising number of cases of the Delta variant — first identified in India. "These findings highlight the stark context in which we took the difficult decision to delay Step 4 of the roadmap out of lockdown," said UK Health Secretary Matt Hancock. "Cases are now rising, but thanks to our incredible vaccination programme and enhanced response package, including surge testing, we have the tools to curb the spread of this virus. We all must hold our nerve that little bit longer as our vaccine rollout continues and I urge everyone to keep observing hands, face, space and fresh air, and make sure you receive both doses," he said.

— PTI

S'PORE TO SACK
LECTURER OVER
RACIST REMARKS

Singapore, June 17: A lecturer at a polytechnic in Singapore is being sacked for serious misconduct for allegedly making racist remarks against China and Hong Kong, in response to a crackdown on civil liberties in the semi-autonomous Chinese city.

Apple Daily has often criticised the Chinese and Hong Kong governments for tightening control over the city and walking back on promises by Beijing that the territory could retain its freedoms when it was handed over from Britain in 1997.

Apple Daily founder Jimmy Lai is currently serving a 20-month prison sentence for his role in unauthorised assemblies in 2019, during a period when Hong Kong saw massive anti-government protest calling for universal suffrage and democratic freedoms. Police also froze \$18 million Hong Kong dollars (\$ 2.3 million) worth of assets belonging to three compa-

nies linked to *Apple Daily*, said Li Kwai-wah, a senior superintendent at Hong Kong's National Security Department. More than 200 police officers were involved in the search of *Apple Daily's* offices, and the government said a warrant was obtained to look for evidence of a suspected violation of the national security law.

Those arrested included *Apple Daily's* chief editor Ryan Law, Next Digital CEO Cheung Kim-hung, the publisher's chief operating officer and two other editors, according to *Apple Daily*, the *South China Morning Post* and other local media. Hong Kong Security Minister John Lee told a news conference that police will investigate both people in the *Apple Daily* companies and others to establish if they have assisted in instigating or funding the offences.

— AP

Oli defends dissolution,
says courts can't name PM

Kathmandu, June 17: Nepal's embattled Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli on Thursday defended his government's controversial decision to dissolve the House of Representatives and told the Supreme Court that it is not up to the judiciary to appoint a premier as it cannot undertake the legislative and the executive functions of the state.

President Bidya Devi Bhandari, at the recommendation of Prime Minister Oli, dissolved the lower house for the second time in five months on May 22 and announced snap elections on November 12 and November 19.

Prime Minister Oli is

● ON JUNE 9, the apex court issued a show-cause notice to the Office of the Prime Minister and the President's Office to furnish a written response within 15 days.

heading a minority government after losing a trust vote in the House.

On June 9, the apex court issued a show-cause notice to the Office of the Prime Minister and the President's Office to furnish a written response within 15 days.

Furnishing a written reply to the Supreme Court on Thursday as demanded by the Constitutional Bench, Oli said the

court cannot appoint a Prime Minister as it cannot undertake the legislative and the executive functions of the state.

The apex court received Oli's response via the Office of the Attorney General. "The Court's duty is to interpret the Constitution and the existing laws, it cannot play the role of the legislative or the executive bodies," 69-year-old Oli said in his response.

"Forming governments on the basis of parties is the fundamental characteristic of the parliamentary system and the Constitution does not imagine party-less practices," he added.

— PTI

India's \$100 mn aid
for Lanka projects

Colombo, June 17: India has extended a \$100 million Line of Credit to Sri Lanka to help the island nation finance various projects in the solar energy sector and ensure that the country's 70 per cent power requirements are fulfilled by renewable energy sources by 2030.

An agreement signed between the Sri Lankan government and the Export-Import Bank of India was exchanged by High Commissioner of India to

Sri Lanka Gopal Baglay and Secretary to the Treasury S.R. Attaygalle in the presence of Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa on Wednesday.

It will help finance various projects in the solar energy sector, including those announced during the Founding Conference of the International Solar Alliance held in March 2018, such as rooftop solar photo-voltaic systems for households and government buildings.

— PTI

PIO to lead US EPA's water office

Washington, June 17: The US Senate has confirmed Indian-American water issues expert Radhika Fox as head of the Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Water. The Senate, bitterly divided on party lines, confirmed Fox's nomination on Wednesday by 55 to 43 votes after seven Republican Senators supported her candidature. Two Democratic Senators did not cast their votes. "Ms Fox brings with her an impressive professional record of service and accomplishment, spa-



Radhika Fox

nning over two decades, working on water issues at the local, state and federal level," Senator Tom Carper, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, said. "We have the oppor-

tunity today to confirm a truly gifted leader and put her to work serving our country right away," he added. On April 14, President Joe Biden nominated Fox for the post of Assistant Administrator for Water, Environmental Protection Agency. Fox currently serves as the Acting Assistant Administrator for Water. The EPA's Office of Water works to ensure that drinking water is safe, waste water is safely returned to the environment, and surface waters are properly managed and protected.

Prior to joining EPA, Fox served as the Chief Executive Officer for the US Water Alliance, where she established herself as a widely recognised national thought leader on complex water issues, from equitable water management to investing in the nation's water infrastructure. Her work has helped address the most salient water issues facing the US, including climate change, affordability, equity, governance, innovative finance and the evolution of the One Water movement.

— PTI

Net outages hit
websites, apps

As most services come online, probe on

Hong Kong, June 17: A wave of brief internet outages hit the websites and apps of dozens of financial institutions, airlines and other companies across the globe Thursday.

The Hong Kong Stock Exchange said in a post on Twitter Thursday afternoon Hong Kong time that its site was facing technical issues and that it was investigating. It said in another post 17 minutes later that its websites were back to normal.

Internet monitoring websites including ThousandEyes, Downtetector.com and fmg.com showed dozens of disruptions, including to US-based airlines. Many of the outages were reported by people in Australia trying to do banking, book flights and access postal services. Australia Post, the country's postal service, said on Twitter that an "external outage" had impacted a number of its services.

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further problems.

Banking services were severely disrupted, with Westpac, the Commonwealth, ANZ and St George all down, along with the website of the Reserve Bank of Australia.

Services have mostly been restored. Virgin Australia said flights were largely operating as scheduled after it restored

access to its website and guest contact centre. "Virgin Australia was one of many organisations to experience an outage with the Akamai content delivery system today," it said.

"We are working with them to ensure that necessary measures are taken to prevent these outages from reoccurring." Akamai counts some of the world's biggest companies and banks as customers. Calls to Akamai, which is headquartered in Cambridge, Massachusetts, but has global services, went unanswered. The disruptions came just days after many of the world's top websites went offline briefly due to a problem with software at Fastly, another major web services company.

The company blamed the problem on a software bug that was triggered when a customer changed a setting. Brief internet service outages are not uncommon and are only rarely the result of hacking or other mischief. But the outages have underscored how vital a small number of behind-the-scenes companies have become to running the internet.

— AP

HK pro-democracy
paper editors held

Hong Kong, June 17: Hong Kong police used a sweeping national security law against a pro-democracy newspaper for the first time Thursday, arresting five editors and executives on charges of collusion with foreign powers. Police said they had strong evidence that more than 30 articles published by *Apple Daily* played a "crucial part" in a conspiracy with foreign countries to impose sanctions against China and Hong Kong, in response to a crackdown on civil liberties in the semi-autonomous Chinese city.

● APPLE DAILY has often criticised the Chinese and Hong Kong governments for tightening control over the city and walking back on promises by Beijing that the territory could retain its freedoms when it was handed over from Britain in 1997.

nies linked to *Apple Daily*, said Li Kwai-wah, a senior superintendent at Hong Kong's National Security Department. More than 200 police officers were involved in the search of *Apple Daily's* offices, and the government said a warrant was obtained to look for evidence of a suspected violation of the national security law.

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— AP

U.S. CONGRESS
NOD TO MAKE
JUNETEENTH A
FED. HOLIDAY

Washington, June 17: The United States will soon have a new federal holiday commemorating the end of slavery. The House voted 415-14 on Wednesday to make Juneteenth, or June 19th, the 12th federal holiday.

The bill now goes to President Joe Biden's desk, and he is expected to sign it into law. Juneteenth commemorates June 19, 1865, when Union soldiers brought the news of freedom to enslaved PoC people in Galveston, Texas — two months after the Confederacy had surrendered. That was also about 2 1/2 years after the Emancipation Proclamation freed slaves in the Southern states.

It's the first new federal holiday since Martin Luther King Jr. Day was created in 1983.

"Our federal holidays are purposely few in number and recognise the most important milestones," said Rep. Carolyn Maloney, D-N.Y. "I cannot think of a more important milestone to commemorate than the end of slavery in the United States."

Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee, D-Texas, speaking next to a large poster of a PoC man whose back bore massive scarring from being whipped, said she would be in Galveston this Saturday to celebrate along with Republican Sen. John Cornyn of Texas.

"Can you imagine?" said the rather short Jackson Lee.

— AP

SC DISMISSES
CHALLENGE TO
OBAMACARE

Washington, June 17: The Supreme Court has dismissed a challenge to the Obama era health care law, preserving insurance coverage for millions of Americans.

The justices, by a 7-2 vote, left the entire law intact Thursday in ruling that Texas, other Republican-led states and two individuals had no right to bring their lawsuit in federal court. The Biden administration says 31 million people have health insurance because of the law known as "Obamacare."

Major provisions include protections for people with pre-existing health conditions, a range of no-cost preventive services and the expansion of the Medicaid programme.

— AP

DUTCH | CONTROVERSY

The carriage underwent extensive restoration in September 2015

Golden Coach exhibition revives racism debate

Amsterdam, June 17: On a blustery autumn day in 2015 Dutch King Willem-Alexander and Queen Maxima for the last time stepped out of the golden coach which traditionally transported them to the opening of parliament.

Nearly six years later, the monarch was back on Thursday to unveil a newly restored carriage — but this time as the centrepiece of an exhibition at the Amst-

erdam Museum exploring the Netherlands' troubled relationship with its colonial past.

The horse-drawn carriage called the "De Gouden Koets" has been embroiled in a racism controversy over a picture on the left-side panel of the opulent coach, which has undergone an extensive refit.

Called "Tribute of the Colonies", the image depicts kneeling PoC people

handing over produce like cocoa and sugarcane to their white masters — including to a young white woman on a throne representing the Netherlands.

Next to her, a young white man is seen giving a young PoC boy a book as he is presented by his subservient father, an image which painter Nicolaas van der Waay in 1896 said was meant to portray "civilisation."

Margriet Schavemaker, artistic director of the Amsterdam Museum, said the carriage used by the Dutch royals for baptisms, marriages and other occasions "has also become an object of controversy."

"In ongoing debates it has become known that one of the panels depicting the Dutch colonial past is making a large group in the Netherlands uncomfortable," Schavemaker said.

The carriage underwent extensive restoration in September 2015 shortly after its last parliament trip, in a day marked by pomp and ceremony when the Dutch royals are traditionally driven through the streets of The Hague.

Last year the government announced that, amid the controversy, its return to ceremonial duties would be postponed following the refit and it would go on

show at the museum instead. The Amsterdam Museum show also comes as the Netherlands faces a reckoning with its history as a colonial and slave-trading power in Asia, the Caribbean and South America.

Several other Dutch museums have launched similar projects, including the famed Rijksmuseum which recently opened an exhibit entitled "Slavery".

— AFP

DECCAN Chronicle

18 JUNE 2021

Pragmatism in Geneva as Biden, Putin stabilise ties

America's President Joe Biden and Russia's boss Vladimir Putin, showing a remarkable order of statesmanship and good sense, avoided any temptation to offer drama and guaranteed failure in their first (business-like) meeting in Geneva on Wednesday, an outcome which may have pleased the liberal extremists of America, no matter how bad it may have been for the world.

Instead, they provided a low-key, "pragmatic", way forward in their bilateral relationship which can probably only move forward in cautious, incremental steps, so deep is the mutual mistrust accumulated in the three decades since the collapse of the USSR and the birth of Russian capitalism which does not privilege a political system that exalts Western-style individualism.

With the perpetually drunk Boris Yeltsin the new czar in Moscow when Communism ended, the US sensed they had in the bag the only country, which was its military equal and exercised geostrategic influence as well. With his early exit and the arrival on the scene of Mr Putin, a former middle-rank KGB agent,

Mr Biden was adroit. He took Mr Putin for what he was and was not out to change him or Russia, but rather to reach preferred goals.

expectations from the new Russia faded as this leader fortified himself on the plank of Russian nationalism.

President Biden has played his hand with finesse. He planned his first face-to-face contact with Mr Putin very early in his presidency — and not long after calling the Russian leader "a murderer". This bolstered his liberal credentials (and his constituents loved it), and situated him as an emphatic counterpoint to his disastrous predecessor, Donald Trump, who had foolishly given credence to Moscow's assessments on bilateral issues over those

of his intelligence agencies, making the West squirm. But the choreographed personal insult led Mr Putin to withdraw the Russian ambassador in Washington and a tit-for-tat recall of the American ambassador followed. The dyke in relations widened. In this background, the course that the intense three-hour long conversation between the two leaders with their key foreign policy and national security aides in tow, can only be viewed positively — more than just a glass half-full.

At separate press conferences, they confirmed this. Mr Biden used "positive" and "good" to describe the event. Mr Putin, responding to an ambush question from a prominent US news outlet, denied that the talks were marked with "hostility", and said the leaders had a "constructive" conversation. Both Presidents called the outcome "pragmatic". Mr Biden also said that Russia was not looking for "a new Cold War". A "joint communiqué" issued after the separate press conferences noted that talks will commence on restoring "strategic stability" in order to prevent unintentional conflict. At their meeting, the two leaders decided to send back their ambassadors. This is important in conducting state-to-state relations.

An important American concern was met when the Presidents agreed to institute a committee of experts to look into the issue of cyber-attacks that the US has attacked Russia for, including in meddling with its elections. Mr Biden wisely indicated that "the proof of the pudding was in the eating" and that it would become clear in a relatively short time if Moscow meant business on this. It appears the leaders of America and Russia have hinted at being constructive in dealing with trouble spots such as Afghanistan and Libya, although Syria can be more difficult.

Mr Biden was adroit. He took Mr Putin for what he was and was not out to change him or Russia, but rather to reach preferred goals. Mr Putin quoted Tolstoy to suggest "there is no happiness in life, there is only a mirage on the horizon, so cherish that". This is a realistic start. If US-Russia hostilities remain restricted, a country like India can have a broader bandwidth to operate in.

Women priests: TN's bold move

Welcoming women to the sanctum sanctorum, Tamil Nadu's minister in charge of temples, P.K. Sekar Babu, recently heralded the breaking of another glass ceiling on the distaff side. Knowledge of Agama Sastra alone will be the qualifier to be a priest and not gender, he declared, opening a Pandora's Box. Out came the naysayers with their own objections based on custom, least considering the fact that women priests are already there in substantial numbers in the country.

Apart from performing priestly duties in small temples in the state, women have also been solemnising weddings for celebrities in big cities. Very recently, Bollywood actor Dia Mirza's wedding to Vaibhav Rekhi in Mumbai was conducted by a woman priest. Earlier on, actor Aparna Sen's daughter was united in wedlock by a woman priest. Closer home, a woman who stepped into the shoes of her deceased father and took over as priest of an Amman temple near Madurai in 2006 got her right to succession ratified by the Madras high court. When the presiding deity is an Amman with the form of a woman, why should a woman not perform pujas, the judge had asked.

Yet minister Sekar Babu's idea is facing opposition. Even if he has made it clear that women priests would be given leave on the five days of their menstruation, their storming Agama temples is not that easy. Even the locus standi of a secular government in taking such a decision has been questioned. But in the land of Periyar E.V. Ramasamy, a woman inside the sanctum sanctorum might just become a reality.

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Subhani



RSS, BJP & Yogi factor: Key to 2024 lies in UP

Anand K. Sahay

Far & Near



The summoning of Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath to New Delhi recently in the wake of widespread anxiety being expressed in the state BJP over its Assembly poll prospects in a few months, given the CM's disastrous Covid-19 management, naturally became a high-profile political event. The stakes were rightly deemed to be high. A slip in UP can ricochet at the Centre, and who knows how the pieces will fall.

The CM showed up when called — but after that the story dries up. It didn't matter that the UP leader had held really long conversations with those at the very top — Prime Minister Narendra Modi (well over an hour), home minister Amit Shah (even longer), and BJP president J.P. Nadda. Here was rich material to be tapped for political reporting, speculation, or comment, but no one did — as if on cue.

For comparison, look at Punjab, whose CM and MLAs were recently summoned to Delhi by the Congress leadership because there seems to be a crisis brewing. The news pages were filled with plausible and implausible stories or just plain repetitions for want of anything new to say. "Hold the dateline!" is an old newsroom mantra, and the media did not let go.

In the case of UP, however, there was nothing at all — not even the regurgitating of back-ground as is frequently done, or clever words extolling the power duo at the Centre about how well they had handled the UP crisis (since nothing less than gushing praise will do in

their case).

It is noteworthy that there was resounding silence on this front even after the chief minister returned to Lucknow. Top-rung BJP politicians who had just days earlier bitterly complained to their high command — and above all to the RSS bosses — about Yogi's general high-handedness, his arrogant mismanagement of the Covid crisis, and his many caste-slanted actions, seemed clueless about what had transpired in Delhi, or preferred to stay quiet if they knew. Busy newshounds, who had waxed eloquent about a PM-CM tussle and other such astounding things, fell silent.

Is the overall motif of silence in this important matter a part of a well thought out strategy crafted by the BJP, or indeed the RSS, since it is the RSS cadre on the ground who will be required to do the heavy lifting at election time? After all, it is the RSS — rather than the formal shell of the BJP — which really exercises supervision or control over the main body of legislators, and typically it is the low-key RSS organiser who plays pastor. The pastor offers counsel and keeps his superiors informed about the goings-on. He meddles, but not in full view.

Evidently, since senior BJP leaders in UP had publicly complained against the CM's mismanagement and his autocratic style, it wouldn't have done to keep quiet and do nothing; hence the directive to the CM to go to Delhi to explain himself to the big shots. This was a triumph of form over substance, and also careful choreography and convenient optics.

If any action — or concession — follows at Yogi's end as a consequence of the Centre's supposed advice, it is likely to be only about as cataclysmic as tinkering with his council of ministers. And look at what Yogi has got in return. His actions say it all. The man had the gump to calmly hand his three principal interlocutors, as well as the President of India, some so-called Harvard University report commending his management of the pandemic which no one believes, but that's hardly the point.

The point is that Yogi was summoned but was also pandered to. He was permitted to create the impression that he was on a goodwill mission to New Delhi, and not summoned as a boy to be chastised, which is usually the fate of erring CMs of the same party as the one that rules at the Centre. It is well understood that UP is Mr Modi's first line of defence. It has already fallen in the recent pan-chayat elections, with BJP performing poorly. If it falls in the Assembly election too, reputations can roll in Delhi, and the fallout can be uncertain.

There are also other reasons why Yogi couldn't have been ticked off. He is an extreme egoist, a far-right maverick, who runs his own outfit, the Hindu Vahini. He is not of RSS-BJP stock. He is a stranger to institutional or collegial functioning. If he is stung, he can fight the Assembly election on his own if

If Yogi is stung, he can fight the Assembly election on his own if only to spite the BJP and deny it the votes of the ultra-right Hindu constituency. Confident of this ability, he did not need to genuflect in Delhi.

only to spite the BJP and deny it the votes of the ultra-right Hindu constituency. Confident of his ability to do so, the saffron-robed monk CM did not need to bend or genuflect in Delhi.

Whatever the UP BJP, or the national BJP, may think of Adityanath and his usefulness to the party in UP, the RSS's assessment of this matter is not known. It may or may not be exactly the same as that of the BJP. Indeed, the RSS's assessment of the performance of the Union government under the present leader, especially on the handling of the pandemic, steep unemployment and inflation, surrendering of territory to China in Ladakh, and worsening relations even with Nepal, is also not known.

On this subject, of no little importance, we have just one clue. A few weeks ago, in a well-publicised address, the RSS chief, Mohan Bhagwat, held the people, the administration, as well as the government, responsible for the surge in the Covid second wave numbers and the exceptionally high death figures. This forced the government to stop in its tracks in the planning of a false propaganda blitz on the handling of the pandemic.

But the Prime Minister did not fail to fire a riposte at Mr Bhagwat in his June 7 address to the nation. Without any reference to the latter, he sang his government's praises and ran down its opponents and critics. Such an open, daring, even insolent, defiance of the RSS *sarsanghchalak* by a BJP or Jan Sangh leader, mounted in full public view, has not been encountered before.

It will be interesting to know how Mr Bhagwat has taken the insult, and whether the RSS organisation is behind him foursquare. The untangling of this puzzle can tell us something about how things might shape in UP, or indeed in Delhi.

LETTERS

PROPERTY TAX HIKE

In this pandemic, hiking property tax depresses the middle and below middle class people. The AP government is trying to get money for welfare schemes by increasing taxes (*New tax hike limited to 15% of existing rate, says Botsa, DC, June 17*). It must tap income from other sources like tourism, liquor, mining, industrialization, etc., for welfare schemes.

D. Ravikumar
Visakhapatnam

HC GIVES HOPE

The Delhi HC's "visionary" verdict will be written in gold in the annals of judiciary (*Delhi HC says state blurred line between protest, terror, DC, June 17*). It has defied the establishment that has the dubious distinction of getting conviction in 2.2 per cent cases only under UAPA and 70 per cent of jail inmates are undertrials.

K. Nehru Patnaik
Visakhapatnam

VACCINE POLICY

First the gap between first and second doses of Covishield had to be 4-6 weeks (*Gap between jabs stirs row again, DC, June 17*). Then, there was a dearth of vaccines and the gap was increased to 8-12 weeks. Later, it was changed to 12-16 weeks. Now, they are planning to return to square one. Is it not vagaries of vaccine time warp?

Dr C. Ghanshyam
Visakhapatnam

50 YEARS AGO IN

DECCAN Chronicle

Charminar to be lightened

By a staff reporter

HYDERABAD, June 17. The historic Charminar is to be lightened within two months.

Two points have not been finalised from where light would be focussed on the monument from Mecca Masjid side and a point next to the bus stand. Internal illumination is also being arranged.

The Charminar was constructed in 1591 by the founder of Hyderabad, Quli Qutub Shah. There has been public clamour that the monument should be beautified by laying parks around it as it was visited by thousands of tourists.

Mohan Guruswamy



India's culture & how it evolved... Yoga is exercise, it's not Hinduism

Most of India's culture has been much influenced and shaped by the successive waves of invasions from the northwest. How we look at it depends on how far back we want to go. The northwestern waves were a continuous process till continental Indian power was consolidated by the rise of the British in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

These hordes were mostly not encumbered by religious ideology or cultural baggage and the Brahmanical elite quite willingly assimilated them into the Hindu fabric and gave them a place in the Hindu social hierarchy. Possibly the last of these hordes were the Buddhist Kushans led by Kanishka who established their dominance over the Aryavarta region, stretching from the Indus to Pataliputra. Kanishka was a descendant of Kujula Kadphises, founder of the Kushan dynasty that ruled much of Central Asia, including Afghanistan. Buddhism and Brahminical Hinduism had a long history of theological intermingling and cultural exchange.

The waves after this came armed with Islam and the process of complete assimilation ceased. The Afghan and Mughal kings of Delhi too shared pret-

ty much the same geographical origins as Kanishka and those before him. But Islam made them different. This difference gave rise to a new era of, for lack of a better description, separate development, which was what apartheid was also meant to be. That separatism can be seen even today. But it wasn't as if racial and cultural intermingling ceased. While it was common, it was no longer the norm. Yet the pre-British story of India was how these two great theologies and cultures fused to give the region new languages, art forms, literature, music and architecture. Among the greatest exponents of our ragas and sangeet were Muslims, just as Hindus like Firaq Gorakhpuri (Raghupati Sahay) and Ram Prasad Bismil became great writers in Urdu. Only our theologies became impervious and separate dogmas. Bade Ghulam Ali Khan and Bismillah Khan were not singing Hindu songs and playing Hindu ragas, just as Wadali Brothers, Puranchand and Pyarelal, were not singing Muslim songs. Unfortunately, of late we have seen an acceleration towards separation when with time we should be seeing more creative fusion.

The All-India Muslim Personal Law Board, the VHP's Muslim version,

opposes the celebration of International Yoga Day on June 21. This is utterly misguided, unfortunate and silly. It calls yoga a religious symbol. It is not. Today it's just a school of balance-focused exercises, pure and simple. Like Tai Chi. I wonder what they would say about Hyderabad's Nawab Sadig Jung Bahadur "Hilm", who wrote: "*Kanhaiya yaad hai kuch bhi hamaari*"; or Mah Laqa Bai or Chanda Bibi, who had a diwan or collection of poems in Dakhni called "Gulzar-e-Mahlaqa".

Yoga, like jihad, takes different meanings by what is prefixed or suffixed to it. Jihad is an Arabic word that just means "striving" or "struggling", especially with a praiseworthy aim. It was meant as self-betterment, but in the Islamic context it has acquired very different meanings. Yoga as exercise is a physical activity — mainly of postures in sequences that are sometimes accompanied by breathing exercises. It's this yoga that has become familiar worldwide, especially in Europe and the United States. It is derived from the postures used in the medieval spiritual discipline of Hatha Yoga.

The AIMPLB specifically cites Surya Namaskar as offensive, but it's just a common sequence of asanas. Most

Hindus revere the Sun as it is the giver of life and sustenance. Due to this, some Hindus set aside a part of their daily worship for salutations to the Sun by prostrations. This method of adoration affords them so much muscular activity that it takes to some extent the place of physical exercise. Muslims can practise these same asanas without worshipping the Sun. But before they reject the Sun salutation, they'll do well to recall Allama Iqbal, who wrote: "*Ai aaf-taab! Hum ko zia-e-shaor de/ Chasm-e-khird ko apni tajjali se noor de*." ("O radiant one! Grant us the grace of wisdom/Let our eyes see reason in your resplendent glow.")

I only hope some of the "grace of wisdom" will penetrate the dark recesses of minds in the AIMPLB. Muslims as whole will do well to listen to saner voices in the community like Prof. Mohd Abbas Niazi of AMU, who said: "Yoga is an exercise, and no religion is against a healthy lifestyle." Or quietly just don't do yoga, without making a hullabaloo over it. But don't dismiss it as unsecular. Yoga is no extension of Hinduism, just as a raga isn't. The Brihaddeshi describes raga as "a combination of tones which, with beautiful illuminating graces, pleases people". Modern yoga practices' only link

with Hinduism is that it evolved in India. By this standard, they must oppose many mathematical principles that evolved in ancient India and think of algebra as an exclusive Islamic discipline. Yoga is a non-sectarian physical and mental health-oriented set of exercises. If yoga is Hindu, then karate is Buddhist, kung fu is Confucian and taekwondo also Buddhist. Will the AIMPLB seek a ban on them too?

The RSS and BJP governments all over India are trying to impose yoga as an exercise in schools. Like any exercise, this too should be optional. Those who want to skip yoga can use it for some other form of exercise. But exercise is a must. When I was in school, we used to have an exercise period every day. Some played soccer, others played kabaddi, some just marched about, drilled by the NCC instructor. We didn't have yoga then. It was still a Western fad.

The writer, a policy analyst studying economic and security issues, held senior positions in government and industry. He also specialises in the Chinese economy.

Monday, June 21, is International Yoga Day

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	52,323.33	-0.34
Nifty 50	15,691.40	-0.48
S&P 500*	4,224.04	0.01
Dollar (₹)	74.07	-1.03
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.51	-0.02
Euro (₹)	88.53	0.42
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	46,863▼861	1.83
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	72.73	-2.23
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.019	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.504	-0.065

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Top 5 IT firms to add over 96,000 staff: Nasscom

Nasscom said the sector continues to be a net hirer of skilled talent, and that the top five Indian IT companies are planning to add over 96,000 employees in 2021-22. "With the evolution of technology and increasing automation, the nature of traditional IT jobs and roles will evolve overall leading to creation of newer jobs. The industry continues to be a net hirer of skilled talent, adding 1,38,000 people in FY2021."

Tariff value for edible oil import slashed



The government has reduced the tariff value for import of edible oil, including palm oil, by up to \$112 per tonne, a move which can lower domestic prices. The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs, through a notification, has cut the tariff import value of crude palm oil by \$86 per tonne, and of RBD and crude palmolein by \$112 per tonne each. It also reduced the base import price of crude soybean oil by \$37 per tonne.

Mis-selling: HDFC Bank to refund GPS commissions

HDFC Bank announced a refund of the controversial 'GPS device commission' charged to auto loan borrowers for six years. The bank's then chief executive Aditya Puri had last year admitted to irregularities in the auto loan disbursements by its team. The bank was also fined Rs 10 crore by the RBI earlier this year. The lender announced the refund in a public notice published in newspapers.

UP gets ₹13,408 cr investment proposals in mfg

Uttar Pradesh has emerged as the top investment destination and has received 98 investment proposals worth Rs 13,408.19 crore in the manufacturing sector during the past three-and-a-half years, an official statement said. "Big industrialists of the country and abroad are investing in infrastructure, food processing, textile, electronic manufacturing, real estate, power and manufacturing sectors in UP in a big way," they said.



Rupee loses 76p, to remain weak Hawkish US Fed comments trip ₹

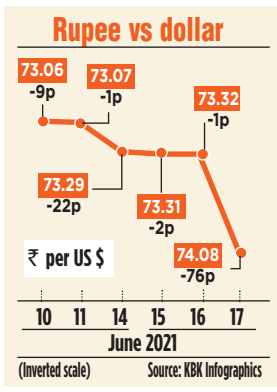
FALAKNAAZ SYED
MUMBAI, JUNE 17

The rupee fell sharply on Thursday breaking the 74-mark after the US Federal Reserve held rates unchanged but turned a little hawkish in its monetary policy commentary, indicating two rate hikes in 2023.

Federal Reserve chairman Jerome Powell said that there had also been initial discussions about when to pull back on the Fed's \$120 billion in monthly bond purchases, a conversation that would be completed in coming months as the economy continues to heal.

The surprisingly hawkish tone drove US treasury yields and the dollar up, weakening the Indian currency to its lowest level since early May and making it a top loser among Asian emerging market currencies. The Fed's comments came in conjunction with the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) reiteration of its forex stance in its latest bulletin, in which it indicated that India's record \$600 billion foreign exchange reserves might not be good enough, as it falls short on some measures, including import cover and liability outflows. Analysts expect the rupee to remain an underperformer among emerging market currencies.

At the interbank forex market, the domestic unit opened weak at 73.65 against the American currency, then lost further



ground and finally closed at 74.08, losing 76 paise over its previous close.

On Wednesday, the rupee had settled at 73.32. The domestic currency has lost 128 paise in the last eight trading sessions.

Weakness in global equity markets—after the Fed surprised investors by signalling faster-than-expected rate hikes—and the sharp drop in the rupee sapped the risk appetite of stock traders in Mumbai. The Sensex ended 0.34 per cent lower at 52,323.33 and the Nifty-50 declined 0.48 per cent to 15,691.40.

The Dollar Index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, rose 0.6 per cent to 91.67.

"While foreign exchange reserves provide cushions against unforeseen exter-

nal shocks, levels are often deceptive," RBI researchers, led by deputy governor Michael Debabrata Patra, wrote in the RBI Bulletin for June 2021, released on Wednesday. "A better gauge of external vulnerability is an assessment of specific indicators."

Forex reserves surged to \$605 billion in the week to June 4 as the RBI mopped up dollars flowing into the nation's booming stock market as well as via foreign direct investments. The pile is the world's fifth-biggest after China, Japan, Switzerland and Russia, and is enough to cover 15 months of imports. But that's less than the 39 months cover offered by Switzerland's reserves, 22 by Japan's, 20 by Russia's and 16 months by China's pile, said the RBI researchers.

"This (the Fed's comments) comes in conjunction with RBI's reiteration of its FX stance in yesterday's bulletin, where it indicated that FX reserves are still not adequate enough when seen in the light of cross country comparison ratios, high net international investment position of (-)12.9 per cent of GDP and random shocks amid heightened global uncertainty—all of it implying that RBI's tactical forex intervention in forex will be biased towards dollar purchases, keeping INR subdued/EM underperformer even in case of healthy EM flows," said Madhavi Arora, lead economist, Emkay Global.

OIL TUMBLES 3% FROM MULTI-YEAR HIGHS

SCOTT DISAVINO
SINGAPORE, JUNE 17

Oil prices slumped nearly 3 per cent from their highest level in years on Thursday as the US dollar strengthened after the Federal Reserve signalled it might raise interest rates as soon as 2023 and hopes the United States and Iran could come to a nuclear agreement.

But an upcoming election in Iran on Friday could scuttle the nuclear talks and leave US sanction on Iran's oil exports in place.

Brent futures fell \$2.07, or 2.8 per cent, to \$72.32 a barrel by 12:22 pm EDT (1622 GMT), while US crude fell \$2.00, or 2.8 per cent, to \$70.15.

On Wednesday, Brent settled at its highest since April 2019 and WTI at its highest since October 2018.

The US dollar strengthened to its highest since mid-April against a basket of other currencies after the Federal Reserve signalled it might raise interest rates at a much faster pace than assumed. A firmer greenback makes oil more expensive in other currencies, which could dent demand.

Indirect talks between Tehran and Washington on reviving the 2015 Iran nuclear deal have come closer than ever to an agreement, but essential issues remain to be negotiated, the top Iranian negotiator said on Thursday. —Reuters

CII pitches for ₹3L cr stimulus to spur growth

New Delhi, June 17: The Indian economy requires a Rs 3 lakh crore fiscal stimulus, including cash transfer to households through Jan Dhan accounts to spur economic growth amid the pandemic, industry chamber CII said on Thursday and pitched for appointment of a 'Vaccine Czar' for speedy vaccination coverage.

CII president T. V. Narendran also said the chamber expects GDP to grow at 9.5 per cent in 2021-22 as the strong growth in the second half of the fiscal year will be supported by robust external demand and large-scale coverage of vaccination, allowing resumption of economic activity.

He also advocated for appointment of a 'Vaccine Czar' for speedy vaccination coverage.

The new president said suitable fiscal measures to alleviate the stress of people impacted by the second wave of Covid-19 are the need of the hour.

The Indian economy is a consumption-led economy and the pandemic has impacted the consumer demand and due to this, the chamber has called for measures such as cash transfer as a number of actions are needed to deal with this demand shock, he told reporters.

"Fiscal stimulus of Rs 3 lakh crore is required...There is room for administering additional fiscal stimulus of up to Rs 3 lakh crore," he said adding the RBI should expand its balance sheet to accommodate the increased stimulus so that lending costs are contained. Measures suggested by it

INDUSTRY VOICE

■ Economy requires ₹3 lakh crore fiscal stimulus, including cash transfer to households through Jan Dhan accounts to spur growth

■ A 'Vaccine Czar' be appointed for speedy vaccination coverage

■ Other suggestions include enhanced MNREGA allocations; short-term GST cuts to boost demand; time bound tax relief/interest subvention/stamp duty concession for home buyers



T. V. Narendran

include enhanced MNREGA allocations from the budgeted amount; short-term and focused GST cuts to boost demand; time bound tax relief/interest subvention/stamp duty concession for home buyers; LTC cash voucher scheme like last year; and extension of the Atmanirbhar Bharat Rozgar Yojana till March 31, 2022.

Narendran also asked for ensuring timely payment to companies, including MSMEs; accelerating public works programmes to ensure implementation of NIP; hiking ECLGS (Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme) amount to Rs 5 lakh crore, reduction in excise duty on fuel and

inclusion of ATF (aviation turbine fuel) and other fuel products in GST (Goods and Services Tax).

On vaccination, he said there should be minimum 71.2 lakh average daily vaccination doses from now till December 2021 to cover the entire adult population.

"The Vaccine Czar (or minister) should be empowered to undertake actions like in the UK on a daily campaign to track domestic vaccine production and import supplies; equitable distribution of vaccines; track progress on vaccine deployment and administration; and using a dashboard approach and share progress reports daily," he said.

He said vaccination is a complex process as it needs coordination among different agencies, states, Centre, private and public sectors. "Lot of players are involved in the process... So for all that a single person contact is required with whom everyone can deal with," the CII president, who is also CEO and MD of Tata Steel, said.

He also called for incentivising people to get vaccinated—at the bottom of the pyramid, there should be cash/ food/ insurance incentive for those taking two doses and for the relatively better off, the government could offer rebate on air/train travel within the country.

He said the cumulative impact of the two Covid waves on incomes and consumer sentiment, coupled with the rise in household medical expenses in the second wave, may affect consumer demand and for some time. —PTI

More Telangana firms plan public issue

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, JUNE 17

Companies from the Telangana State are queuing up for stock market debut after the recent successful listing of Gland Pharma and MTAR Technologies.

Hyderabad-based KIMS Hospitals and Dodla Dairy's initial public offerings (IPOs) are currently open for subscription.

Vijaya Diagnostics Centre, Gemini Edibles &

Fats India and MedPlus Health Services may tap the primary market in the near future to raise about Rs 3,850 crore, according to market sources.

Vijaya Diagnostics filed the draft red herring prospectus with the Securities and Exchange Board of India in early June. It has a network of 80 diagnostics centres and 11 reference laboratories across 13 cities and towns in Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, NCR and Kolkata.

Vijaya Diagnostics' Rs 1,000 crore public offer is an offer for sale by promoter S. Surendranath Reddy and private equity investor Kedaara Capital.

Hyderabad-based edible oil company Gemini Edibles & Fats India produces and markets rice bran oil. The company is looking to raise around Rs 850 crore from the primary market, sources said.

Hyderabad-based MedPlus Health Services, an online pharmacy and

general store, is planning to raise around Rs 1,500 crore from the primary market and has shortlisted merchant bankers for the public offer. The company may file its draft offer document by August.

MedPlus Health Services was started by Dr. Madhukar Gangadi in 2006 with its first pharmacy store in Hyderabad. MedPlus is the second largest pharmacy retail chain in the country with over 2000 pharmacy stores.

Tide turns for banker who quit and got \$1.6 mn in litigation

GASPARD SEBAG
JUNE 17

A Paris banker who quit Mediobanca SpA's Messier Maris & Associes won a 1.3 million euros (\$1.6 million) payout after convincing judges he'd been unfairly treated by the M&A boutique.

But that was 2018. Last week, a Paris court put the finishing touches on a costly turnaround that left Laurent Azout losing all but a fraction of his award and even owing the

company thousands of euros for not working his three-month notice period. The legal saga puts the spotlight on a French provision called a "prise d'acte," often used by white-collar workers to complain that their employer's behaviour is so egregious they simply can't stay. In effect, employees can quit while blaming their bosses for their departure and subsequently collect unfair-dismissal payouts in court. The provision allows an

employee to terminate a job contract if the employer carries out "sufficiently serious breaches," the Paris judges had ruled.

After joining Messier Maris in 2011 to run the newly created structure's telecom, media and technology sector, Azout got nearly 1.7 million euros over four years through a so-called guaranteed-bonus programme. The awards were meant to ensure his pay was sufficient as he built up a new clientele after leaving

Lazard Ltd and until he started collecting performance-based "origination" bonuses.

The judges considered in their ruling that the phasing out of the guaranteed bonus was justified given that Azout had received a 1.1 million-euro origination bonus in 2015.

The 43-year-old was ordered in the Paris appeals court last week to pay Messier Maris \$5,999.99 euros for not working his three-month notice period. —Bloomberg

Adani juggernaut will roll on but it needs quality investors

ANDY MUKHERJEE
JUNE 17

Gautam Adani's debt-fuelled empire received a jolt this week when the *Economic Times* reported that three of the six Mauritius-based funds that have invested most of their money in the Indian billionaire's stocks had seen their accounts frozen by the national share depository.

The Adani Group refuted the report as "blatantly erroneous," helping to put a floor below plunging share prices. But not before \$6 billion of wealth was lost on Monday. The jitters returned the next day and continued through Thursday.

A temporary bout of nervousness in the stock market won't shake Asia's second-richest man, who

has managed to sustain - without any visibility on future profit - a decade-long entanglement in a controversial and costly coal mine investment in Australia. Behind that confidence lies the workhorse of the group, Adani Ports & Special Economic Zone Ltd. is spewing \$1 billion of cash annually, a nine-fold jump from 2014.

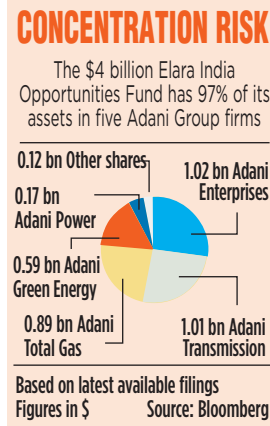
All that the businessman needs to make his bets pay off is a decade-long dream run in which India goes from lower-middle-income economy to higher-middle-income nation.

That jump in per capita income may have been delayed even before Covid-19. Still, when the growth spurt eventually comes, it should trigger a hunger for commodities similar to what China wit-

nessed between 2006 and 2016. By supplying electricity to 1.4 billion Indians when they're sleeping, providing them with piped gas when they're sitting down for breakfast, and hosting their data when they're browsing the Internet and waiting for a flight to take off from one of his airports, Adani will collect the cash that will justify the estimated \$20 billion debt in the group's listed companies.

That's why the turbulence this week isn't entirely without significance. In case of lingering damage to investor confidence, the conglomerate may need to taper its breathless expansion, lest financiers turn skittish as well. And that won't do for Adani.

In less than three



decades, his low-key trading firm has transformed itself into a massive owner of energy and transport assets in the country. Now the businessman wants to expand into cement manufacturing, presumably making

use of the fly ash produced by his power plants. An initial public offering for the airport business may also be on the cards.

It would be a typical move. To grab the capital-guzzling opportunities that have come its way, the original firm, Adani Enterprises Ltd, has spun off several units into the public market. But the list of shareholders

of these stocks, which have risen 200 to 900 per cent in value in the past year, need some explaining. Take Adani Green Energy Ltd, which wants to be the world's largest renewable energy producer by 2030. Earlier this year, the firm sold a 20 per cent stake to Total SE. That's a solid name. As are Vanguard Group Inc

and Blackrock Inc, which have small shares.

Sandwiched between them, however, are the likes of Elara India Opportunities Fund. The \$4 billion investment vehicle seems to have found most of its opportunities in Adani group shares. Look beyond the 97 per

cent of the fund's assets that are parked in five of them, and it doesn't hold even a \$1 million stake in what other fund managers would typically buy in India.

Elara isn't alone. Six Mauritius-based offshore funds have put more than 95 per cent of their assets (\$2 billion to \$4 billion) into Adani's firms.

In an interview with CNBC, Jugeshinder Singh, the CFO of Adani

Group, said that more high-quality institutions will come as the firms establish a longer track record in public markets. He also argued that the questions that are being asked of him about obscure fund managers should ideally be answered by the investors themselves. Trouble is, where do we find them? I could have asked analysts, but I couldn't find a single one who covers the Adani Green stock the market values at \$25 billion.

The Adani juggernaut will roll on. However, as the group gets bigger—and more covetous of cash-generating assets—it would need larger dollops of outside equity. It would be helpful if it comes from investors who at least have a website. —Bloomberg

SHORT TAKES

Eight new girls in India hockey team

Bengaluru: India on Thursday named eight Olympic debutants and as many veterans in its 16-member women's hockey squad for the Tokyo Games to be held from July 23 to August 8. The squad is a perfect mix of youth and experience and includes as many as eight players who had represented India in the 2016 Rio Olympics. The team will be captained by star striker Rani Rampal in the quadrennial Games. The eight Olympic debutants include drag-flicker Gurjit Kaur, Udita, Nisha, Neha, Navneet Kaur, Sharmila Devi, Lalremsiami, the first player hailing from Mizoram in the team, and Salima Tete. Tete had led the Indian team at the 2018 Youth Olympic Games at Buenos Aires to a silver medal performance. — *PTI*

Nurse says docs 'killed Maradona'

San Isidro: A lawyer for a nurse under investigation in the death of Argentine football great Diego Maradona said on Wednesday that doctors killed him through negligence. "They killed Diego," attorney Rodolfo Baque told reporters after his client, nurse Dahiana Gisela Madrid, was questioned by prosecutors. Maradona died of a heart attack last November at the age of 60, weeks after undergoing brain surgery for a blood clot. Madrid, 36, is one of seven people under investigation for manslaughter after a board of experts looking into Maradona's death found he had received inadequate care and was abandoned to his fate for a "prolonged, agonising period." Baque insisted it was the doctors treating Maradona while he recovered from the brain operation, not his client, who were to blame for the football legend's death. — *AFP*

Ledecky locks up two Games spots

Omaha, United States: Katie Ledecky powered through a punishing and unprecedented double at the US Olympic swimming trials Wednesday, winning the 200m and 1,500m freestyles to keep building her Tokyo programme. Little more than an hour after winning the 200m free, Ledecky returned to win the 1,500m in 15min 40.50sec, shaving five-hundredths of a second off her previous best this year. Ledecky launched her night by adding the 200 metres to the 400 metres freestyle victory she claimed on Monday, giving herself a chance to defend two of the four titles she won in Rio de Janeiro in 2016. — *AFP*

Skipper Ramos to leave Real Madrid

Madrid: Sergio Ramos broke down in tears, saying leaving Real Madrid was one of the most difficult moments of his life as he bid farewell on Thursday after 16 years at the club. He played 671 games for Real Madrid and will be remembered as one of the club's greatest ever players, having won five La Liga titles and four Champions Leagues. The 35-year-old was unable to agree an extension to his contract and will become a free agent on July 1. Ramos and Real Madrid president Florentino Perez delivered short speeches in a presentation room at the club's training ground, with Ramos' family in the audience. "The moment has come, one of the most difficult in my life, because you are never ready to leave Real Madrid," Ramos said. — *AFP*

Live on TV

CRICKET
World Test championship final: India vs New Zealand, Day 1, from 3pm on Star Sports 1, HD1

EURO
Group Stage: Sweden vs Slovakia from 6.30 pm; Croatia vs Czech Republic from 9.30 pm; England vs Scotland from 12.30 am (Saturday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

COPA AMERICA
Group Stage: Chile vs Bolivia from 2.30 am (Saturday) on Sony Ten 1, 2; Argentina vs Uruguay from 5.30 am (Saturday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

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ULTIMATE TEST

India, NZ in battle for legacy as WTC final begins today

Southampton, June 17: Virat Kohli carries the expectations of a billion while cricket romantics will pin their hopes on Kane Williamson when India and New Zealand engage in a battle to create a lasting legacy in pristine whites in the inaugural World Test Championship final starting here on Friday.

For the connoisseurs of the glorious game, Test cricket is the ultimate format and despite its aura, the 144-year-old history needed a facelift along with a context which the World Test Championship provided despite various bottlenecks, including the Covid-19 pandemic.

For Kohli, India's most successful Test captain, a trophy-less cabinet doesn't do justice to the champion performer that he has been for a decade.

Lest one forgets, he has been a fine leader in his own right even though Mahendra Singh Dhoni may forever remain a sentimental favourite. Kohli needs a global triumph. Every captain needs it but perhaps the Indian captain wants it more.

It's how history will remember him just like it remembers Dhoni with a lot of respect and utmost fondness for those heroic World title wins.

Williamson stands in his way with a bunch of fine cricketers and the most amiable set of players that one would come across in international cricket.

They are India's rivals but when Williamson hits those cover drives, Devon Conway teases a Ashwin or Jadeja, Boult gets one banana inswinger aimed at Rohit Sharma's bootlaces, the crazy fans of a cricket-mad nation wouldn't possibly be able to hate them. — *PTI*

INDIA'S PLAYING XI

Rohit Sharma
Shubman Gill
Cheteshwar Pujara
Virat Kohli (captain)
Ajinkya Rahane (VC)
Rishabh Pant
Ravindra Jadeja
R. Ashwin
Mohammad Shami
Ishant Sharma
Jasprit Bumrah

FOR THE RECORD

Devon Conway has scored 306 runs at an average of 76.50 in four innings since his debut.



R. Ashwin who has taken 48 wickets at an average of 16.97 in 11 innings of six Tests needs just two wickets to become the fourth Indian bowler to complete a half century of wickets against New Zealand.



India skipper Virat Kohli (right) and his New Zealand counterpart Kane Williamson pose with the ICC mace that is to be awarded to the World Test champions. — *ICC*

Just another game: Virat

Southampton, June 17: India captain Virat Kohli on Thursday asserted that one Test match is not a "true reflection" of his team even if it happens to be the World Test Championship final against New Zealand here and he is treating it as "just another" game.

For the Indian captain and his team, the WTC final is like their Test debuts as young players trying to come up the ranks.

"One game over five days. It's not going to reflect anything and those who understand the game know and also what has gone over the period of last four to five years," Kohli said on the eve of the big final against the Black Caps.

"If we win, cricket will

not stop and if we lose also, cricket won't stop. We are playing in quest of excellence and understand who we are as a team," he added.

He was not forthcoming when a question on team combination was posed based on a previous answer that the team would select a composition "with all bases covered" regardless of the weather forecast of rain on opening day.

"... A team with enough batting depth and bowling resources," he said when asked if he would factor in the rain and overcast conditions.

He was also dismissive when asked if this was the biggest cricketing event of his illustrious career.

"This is just another

Test match. All these things (WTC final) look good from the outside. One game can't become a do-or-die game."

KANE PLAYS DOWN FAVOURITES TAG

New Zealand skipper Kane Williamson on Thursday said a place in the final against India is a testament to the team's growth over the past two years but he is not reading too much into the favourites tag given to his side.

"Firstly, we are really looking forward to the match, it's been quite a long time coming. In terms of favourites, these tags that come about. We are much more concerned with the cricket that we want to play," Williamson said. — *PTI*

TRACK RECORD

HIGHEST TOTALS

► **India** 583-7 decl. at Ahmedabad in 1999-00.

► **NZ** 680-8 decl. at Wellington in 2013-14.

LOWEST INNINGS TOTALS

► **India** 81 at Wellington in 1975-76.

► **NZ** 94 at Hamilton in 2002-03.

HIGHEST INDIVIDUAL SCORES

► **India** 231 Vinoo Mankad at Chennai in 1955-56.

► **NZ** 302 Brendon McCullum at Wellington 2013-14.

BEST BOWLING IN AN INNINGS

► **India** 8-72 S. Venkatraghavan at Delhi in 1964-65.

► **NZ** 7-23 Richard Hadlee at Wellington in 1975-76.

— *S. PERVEZ QAISER*

WOMEN'S | ONE-OFF TEST

Debutant Shafali falls short of ton

Bristol, June 17: Debutant Shafali Verma fell agonisingly short of what would have been a sensational Test hundred against England in the one-off Test on Thursday. Shafali was dismissed for 96 after she put on a brilliant opening stand of 167 runs with Smriti Mandhana.

In pursuit of England's mammoth 396 for nine in their first innings, India were 167 for one in 50 overs when Shafali walked back to the pavilion. India still trail by 229 runs. Mandhana was unbeaten on 66.

Shafali and Mandhana had provided India a confident start but the visitors still have a mountain to climb.

England's total of 396 was the highest-ever total scored by a team against India in Test.

Verma was at her usual aggressive self as she cut and pulled in her own inimitable style. The 17-year-old not only presented the straight bat for defence with grace, she also hit a six off Nat Sciver with remarkable ease.

It was only the second six hit by an Indian woman in Test cricket. Mandhana was cautious yet fluent. She got her first boundary when she punched one off Sciver in the cover region.

When she got the opportunity, Mandhana did not hesitate to pull. Her elegant drives were a delight to watch.

She raised the team's fifty with one such well-

BRIEF SCORES

England 396/9 decl. (Beaumont 66, Heather 95, Sophia 74 (not out); Sneha 4/131, Deepti 3/65) vs India 167/1 in 50 overs (Smriti 66 (batting), Shafali 96).

timed shot off Kate Cross.

Cross missed a chance to dismiss Mandhana (when on 23) when she dropped the left-hander in her follow-through.

This was after Indian bowlers were made to put in some hard yards for the second consecutive day.

Debutant Sophia Dunkley (74 not out) led the charge with a resolute unbeaten half-century and two crucial partnerships with tail-enders after England resumed at the overnight score of 269 for six.

Dunkley first added 56 runs for the eighth wicket with Sophie Ecclestone (17) and then forged a 70-run stand with Anya Shrubsole, who punished the Indian bowlers in her career-best 47.

England declared their innings when Shrubsole was bowled by Sneha Rana, who ended up as India's best bowler with a four-wicket haul.

Shrubsole was aggressive in the post-lunch session, punishing spinner Rana for two hours and a six. She also creamed off boundaries off pacer Shikha Pandey.

— *Agencies*



Shafali Verma en route to her brilliant 96 against England in the one-off Test at Bristol on Thursday. — *BCCI*

Nadal out of Oly and Wimbledon

Paris, June 17: Rafael Nadal said on Thursday he was withdrawing from Wimbledon and the Tokyo Olympics in a bid "to prolong my career".

The 35-year-old Spaniard, who won Olympic gold and Wimbledon in 2008, triumphing again at the All England Club two years later, revealed his decision on Twitter. "I have decided not to participate at this year's Championships at Wimbledon and the Olympic Games in Tokyo," he tweeted.

"It's never an easy decision to take but after listening to my body and discussing it with my team I understand that it is the right decision."

World number one Novak Djokovic last week ended Nadal's four-year reign as French Open champion

and went on to seal his 19th Grand Slam.

"The goal is to prolong my career and continue to do what makes me happy, that is to compete at the highest level and keep fighting for those professional and personal goals at the maximum level of competition," said Nadal.

SUPERSTAR NEYMAR TO MISS GAMES

Paris Saint Germain striker Neymar, the world's most expensive footballer, will not play for Brazil at the Tokyo Olympics, but veteran Daniel Alves did make the squad announced Thursday. Neymar's PSG teammate Marquinhos, who also landed a gold medal in Rio five years ago, is another name not on coach Andre Jardine's list. — *AFP*

ERIKSEN TO BE FITTED WITH ICD HEART-STARTER DEVICE

Copenhagen, June 17: Christian Eriksen will be fitted with an implantable device to monitor his heart rhythm, the Danish football federation said on Thursday.

Eriksen is recovering in a Copenhagen hospital after suffering cardiac arrest during Denmark's game against Finland at the European Championship.

The Danish federation said doctors have determined that Eriksen needs to have an ICD implantable cardioverter-defibrillator. "This device is necessary after a cardiac attack due to rhythm disturbances," the federation said in a statement.

"Christian has accepted the solution and the plan has moreover been confirmed by specialists nationally and internationally who all recommend the same treatment. We encourage everybody to give Christian and his family peace and privacy the following time," it said.

An ICD monitors a person's heartbeat and can send electrical pulses to restore a normal rhythm if necessary. — *AP*

Locatelli blow for Swiss

Rome, June 17: Manuel Locatelli scored a brace and Ciro Immobile added a late third as Italy sealed their place in the Euro 2020 last 16 on Wednesday with a game to spare after a 3-0 win over Switzerland in Rome.

Sassuolo midfielder Locatelli put the Azzurri ahead after 26 minutes in the Group A clash, adding a second just after the break with Immobile scoring for the second consecutive game a minute from time.

Roberto Mancini's side are top of Group A with six points from two games, with six goals scored and none conceded, two points clear of Wales who beat Turkey 2-0 earlier.

Italy will advance as Group A winners if they avoid defeat against surprise Euro 2016 semi-finalists Wales at the Stadio Olimpico on Sunday.

The only bad news for the Italians in a game they dominated was the loss of captain Giorgio Chiellini who hobbled off the pitch with a muscle injury in the first half.

The 36-year-old Juventus defender had a 20th-minute goal ruled out for handball by VAR and four minutes later asked to be replaced, holding his thigh.

Lazio defender Francesco Acerbi took his place, making his debut in a major international tournament at the



Italy's Manuel Locatelli celebrates after scoring a goal against Switzerland in Euro on Wednesday. — *AP*

age of 33, with the captain's armband handed to Juventus teammate Leonardo Bonucci.

WALES CLOSE IN ON KNOCKOUTS

Aaron Ramsey and Connor Roberts scored as Wales took a huge step towards reaching the last

16 with a 2-0 win over Turkey in Baku.

Wales, semi-finalists five years ago, moved top of Group A before Italy host Switzerland later in the day in Rome.

Captain Gareth Bale missed a penalty before setting up Roberts for his goal during injury time. — *AFP*

THE RESULTS

Ukraine (Yarmolenko 29, Yaremchuk 34)	2
North Macedonia (Alioski 57)	1
Italy (Locatelli 26, 52, Immobile 89)	3
Switzerland	0
Turkey Wales	0 2
(Ramsey 42, Roberts 90+5)	

"We've given ourselves a brilliant opportunity tonight," Ramsey said.

"It (the penalty) was a big moment in the game but we dug in, to a man we left everything out there. That's what we've built our success on."

NERVY WIN FOR UKRAINE

Andriy Yarmolenko scored one goal and set up Roman Yaremchuk for another as Ukraine defeated North Macedonia 2-1 to boost their last-16 hopes. The West Ham forward grabbed the opener on 29 minutes in Bucharest and then teed up Yaremchuk with a brilliant first-time pass to double the lead five minutes later.

Ezgjian Alioski pulled a goal back for North Macedonia just before the hour as he converted the rebound from his missed penalty. — *AFP*