

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | WEDNESDAY 9 | JUNE 2021

## WEATHER



**Max:** 33°C  
**Min:** 22°C  
**Rainfall:** 6%

## ASTROGUIDE

**Pilava:** Vaikasi 26  
**Tithi:** Sathurthasi  
**Star:** Karthigai  
**Rahukalam:** 12 noon to 1.30 pm  
**Yamagandam:** 7.30 am to 9 am

### PRAYERS

**Fajar:** 4.23 am  
**Luhar:** 12.12 pm  
**Asar:** 3.30 pm  
**Maghrib:** 6.32 pm  
**Isha:** 7.50 pm

**SUNSET TODAY** 6.44 PM  
**SUNRISE TOMORROW** 5.59 AM  
**MOONRISE TODAY** 4.58 AM  
**MOONSET TOMORROW** 6.45 PM

## CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+89,365)	(+2,046)
2,90,84,822	3,53,381

covid19india.org

### STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+18,023) 409  
**TN:** 22,74,704 27,765

### WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

17,45,72,459

### DEATHS

37,56,686

COUNTRIES  
AREAS WITH  
CASES 219

worldometers.info

### UNSC recommends UN chief Guterres for 2nd term

**New York:** The United Nations Security Council on Tuesday recommended Secretary General Antonio Guterres for a second five-year term as chief of the world organisation beginning January 1, 2022. The 15-nation Council held a closed meeting where it unanimously adopted a resolution recommending Guterres' name to the 193-member General Assembly for a second term as Secretary General. 'India welcomes the adoption of @UN #SecurityCouncil resolution recommending a second term to #UnitedNations Secretary-General @antonioguterres,' India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador T S Tirumurti tweeted.

## COUNTER POINT



**Take action not only against the cartoonist but also those who laugh over his cartoons!**



### STATE | 3

**₹47,000 acres of land belonging to TN temples missing'**



### WORLD | 5

**India elected to Ecosoc for '22-24 term**

### SPORT | 8

**Chhetri surpasses Messi's tally**



# Centre places orders for 44 crore more doses of Covid-19 vaccines

**Government fixes maximum rates private hospitals can charge for jobs**

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
WITH AGENCY INPUTS  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 8

Following up on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's announcement on Monday that the government will procure 75 per cent of the vaccines needed for inoculating people aged above 18, the health ministry on Tuesday said fresh orders for vaccines have been placed.

"In an immediate follow-up of the Prime Minister's announcement of the changes in the guidelines for the national Covid vaccination programme, the health ministry has placed an order with the Serum Institute of India for 25 crore doses of Covishield and with Bharat Biotech for 19 crore doses of Covaxin. These 44 crore doses of Covid-19 vaccines will be available till December 2021, starting now. Additionally, 30 per cent of the advance for procurement of both the Covid vaccines has been released to the Serum Institute of India and Bharat Biotech. Apart from these two vaccines, an order for 30 crore vaccines have been placed with Biological E's Corbevax. Combining all the three vaccines, we will have 74 crore doses," said Dr V.K. Paul, the Niti Aayog's member (health). The government has also set the maximum price private hospitals can charge for the three Covid-19 vaccines currently available in the country -- Covishield Rs 780 per dose, Covaxin Rs 1,410 and Sputnik V Rs 1,145.

In a letter to all states and Union territories on Tuesday, the health ministry suggested that appropriate strict action be taken against private vaccination centres for overcharging.

The official said the union government has been supporting the efforts of states and Union territories for an effective vaccination drive under the "whole of government approach" since January 16 this year.

# Pasteur Institute can make Covid vax, TN tells Centre

**T.SUDHEESH | DC**  
CHENNAI, JUNE 8

After Integrated Vaccine Complex (IVC) run by HLL Biotech Limited at Chengalpet, the state government has taken up the matter of the century-old vaccine maker the Pasteur Institute of India (PII) in Coonoor with the Union government for ramping up Covid-19 vaccine manufacturing capacity.

Health minister Ma. Subramanian, who along with health department officials visited the facility on Monday, said a proposal has been sent to the Union government to

make Covid-19 vaccine there.

"PII can manufacture one crore doses of vaccines a month," the minister said. "The state will request the Centre to provide the know-how and raw materials to PII so that it could help the state ramp up vaccine production," he said.

An institute under the Union ministry of health and family welfare, the PII became operational in 1907. The institute, set up on a sprawling 16 acres, was given autonomous status in 1977.

PII director Dr S. Sivakumar told DC that the institute has voluntari-

ly proposed to the Union government to make use of the facility. "Our proposal is under the active consideration of the government," he said. "The state government has shown interest in taking our proposal forward."

The PII has been manufacturing the DPT (diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus) DT and TT vaccines since 1982. It currently produces 80 to 100 million DPT groups of vaccine doses per annum.

Chief Minister M.K. Stalin has already written letters to the Centre to restart the Integrated Vaccine Complex.

## COVID NUMBERS FALL BELOW 1 LK AFTER 63 DAYS

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 8

India on Tuesday reported less than one lakh daily new cases of Covid-19 after 63 days, with 86,498 fresh detections in the last 24 hours. This figure was the lowest in 66 days. India's active caseload has declined to 13.03 lakh and 1.82 lakh patients recovered in the last 24 hours. The health ministry said recoveries continue to outnumber daily new cases for over 26 days and the national recovery rate is now 94.29 per cent. The nation's daily positivity rate has fallen to 4.62 per cent.

The director of New Delhi's All-India Institute of Medical Sciences Dr Randeep Guleria said there is no data to show that children will be seriously infected in subsequent Covid-19 waves.

"It is a piece of misinformation that subsequent waves of the Covid-19 pandemic are going to cause severe illness in children. There is no data -- either from India or globally -- to show that children will be seriously infected in subsequent waves," Dr Guleria said.

# DOOR-TO-DOOR VACCINATION NOT POSSIBLE BUT PLANNING NEAR-TO-DOOR CAMPAIGN: CENTRE

**Mumbai, June 8:** The Union government told the court said the National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration (NEG-VAC) has considered the issue of door-to-door vaccination and opined that "near-to-door" vaccination would be an appropriate solution, and not door-to-door vaccination.

The court noted that almost 25 crore people have been vaccinated in India. "Which other country has been able to do so with so much population. The government can do this (door-to-door vaccination) too. You (government) need to find your own way," Chief Justice Dipankar Datta said. — *PTI*

# Class 5 student's 'thank you' floors CJJ

**PARMOD KUMAR | DC**  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 8

Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana has lauded a 10-year schoolgirl from Kerala for her "beautiful letter" to him that has "a heart-warming illustration of the judge at work."

Lidwina Joseph, a class V student, wrote to the Chief Justice about how "happy and proud" she felt to see the Supreme Court make vital interventions to alle-

viate the sufferings of her fellow citizens in the grip of the pandemic.

"I am happy and feel proud your honourable court has moved orders for supply of oxygen and saved many lives. I understood the honourable court has initiated effective steps in bringing down Covid-19 and the death rate in our country, especially in Delhi. I thank You Honour for this. Now I feel very proud and happy," Ms

Joseph, a resident of Thrissur in Kerala, wrote in her letter that the Supreme Court received towards May-end.

Ms Joseph was "much worried" about the deaths caused by the virus, says the hand-written letter, in the form of a scroll, accompanied by a colourful illustration showing a bespectacled judge using his gavel to give the Coronavirus a knock on its head.

The Chief Justice wrote

back to Ms Joseph, saying that he was impressed by the way she kept track of the happenings in the country, particularly her concern for the well-being of her compatriots.

"I am sure you will grow up into an alert, informed and responsible citizen who will contribute immensely towards national-building," CJJ Ramana wrote in his reply and sent her a signed copy of the Constitution of India.

# POCSO slapped on Chennai teacher

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI, JUNE 8

Kilpauk all-women police on Tuesday arrested the commerce teacher of a city school for sexually harassing a girl student. He has been booked under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences

**● The police acted on a complaint from a former student of Maharishi Vidya Mandir in 2014 against J. Anand, a commerce teacher**

(POSCO) Act. The police acted on a

complaint from a former student of Maharishi Vidya Mandir in 2014 against J. Anand, a commerce teacher, for sexually harassing her.

The accused man had been accused of sexual harassment by the former students of the school. Some of them had posted

on social media about his sexual advances and harassments.

Following the allegations, the school management had suspended the teacher.

The accused was arrested by the police on Tuesday. He was remanded in judicial custody.

# Chinese Air Force holds border show

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 8

Around 24 Chinese fighter jets, including J-11s and J-16s, recently held exercises near eastern Ladakh amid the heavy deployment of forces on the ground at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) by both countries. The exercises come when both sides have been engaged in a military standoff for over a year now at the LAC in Ladakh.

Reports said that several Chinese airbases, including Hotan, Gar Gunsa and Kashgar, were used for these exercises. The use of these bases is significant as they were used to support the People's Liberation Army's incursions into Ladakh last year. All these bases have been upgraded to carry out operations by all types of Chinese fighter aircraft. Besides these, four other bases -- Shigatse, Lhasa Gongkar, Nyingchi and Chamdo Pangta -- were also used. All seven bases are located in Tibet and Xinjiang.

While none of the Chinese warplanes crossed over into Indian airspace, the Indian Air Force remained on high

alert and closely watched the Chinese exercises. The Indian security agencies also kept a close watch, with the help of satellites and other forms of surveillance.

China has already deployed its air defence system, including HQ-9 and HQ-16, in the sector, which can target aircraft at long range.

India has also deployed air defence missiles, including the Akash missile system, which can take down fast-moving combat aircraft and drones in a few seconds. The IAF's Rafale fighters also conduct sorties over Ladakh in a boost to Indian capabilities all along the LAC. The IAF now has 24 Rafales, which are armed with the most advanced beyond visual range Meteor air-to-air missiles with a range of upto 150 km and can hit intruding aircraft.

The Indian Air Force has a geographical advantage over the PLA Air Force in Ladakh as the Chinese jets have to fly and take off from very high altitudes, while the Indian warplanes can take off from the plains and reach the mountainous region swiftly.

### WRITES TO NON-BJP CMS

# Stalin for MSME loan moratorium

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI, JUNE 8

In a bold move, Chief Minister M.K. Stalin has sought to mobilise his counterparts in 12 non-BJP ruled states to "show our collective strength at this hour of great need" on demanding a moratorium on loan repayment for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and small businesses.

In a letter to the chief ministers of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Jharkhand, Kerala, Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Telangana and West Bengal on Tuesday, Mr Stalin stressed on the need to come together.

Stating that the collective efforts of the states made the Union government and Prime Minister Narendra Modi reverse the earlier policy on vaccine procurement, he said: "I believe all the state governments should again come together on the pressing issue of asymmetry in treatment of borrowers, particularly MSME units and small borrowers, during the first and second waves of Covid-19."

"In April/May, 2020 when the government of India had announced the nationwide lockdown, a moratorium was offered on repayment of loans for



such borrowers. However, in April-June, 2021 when lockdowns are being imposed based on local conditions by the respective states similar relief to borrowers is not being provided for," he pointed out.

He said that he had taken up the issue with the Union government with a request to provide a moratorium on repayment of loans and urged all the chief ministers to write to both the Union finance minister and the governor of the Reserve Bank of India to offer moratorium on repayment of loans for at least the first two quarters of 2021-2022 to small borrowers with an outstanding up to Rs 5 crore.

"The absence of such relief measures would force many businesses to close and would lead to widespread economic distress," he said in the letter. "These MSMEs and small businesses are the mainstay of our economy and employment generation."

# Jaishankar begins Kuwait visit today

**New Delhi, June 8:** External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar will carry a personal letter from Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Kuwaiti Emir Sheikh Nawaf al-Ahmad al-Sabah when he travels to the oil-rich Gulf nation on Wednesday on a three-day visit to explore ways to further boost bilateral ties. It will be Dr Jaishankar's first visit to Kuwait as the external affairs minister.

"External affairs minister Dr S. Jaishankar will

visit Kuwait on June 9-11 at th invitation of Sheikh Ahmed Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, Foreign Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs, State of Kuwait," the ministry of external affairs said.

"During the visit he will hold high-level meetings and also address the Indian community in Kuwait," the MEA said, adding Dr Jaishankar will also carry a personal letter from the Prime Minister to the emir of Kuwait. — *PTI*

## FIX GLITCHES IN I-T SITE, SITARAMAN TELLS NILEKANI

**New Delhi, June 8:** Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday asked Infosys and its chairman Nandan Nilekani to fix technical glitches being encountered on the income tax department's new e-filing website, after users flooded her Twitter timeline with complaints.

Infosys was in 2019 awarded a contract to develop the next-generation income tax filing system to reduce processing time for returns from 63 days to one day and expedite refunds.

The portal went live on Monday evening.

Early on Tuesday morning, Ms Sitharaman took to Twitter to announce the launch of the new portal www.incometax.gov.in, saying the "important milestone to make the compliance experience more taxpayer-friendly" went live at 2045 hrs on Monday.

But soon, her timeline was flooded with user complaints.

"I see in my TL grievances and glitches. Hope @Infosys & @NandanNilekani will not let down our taxpayers in the quality of service being provided," she tweeted later. — *PTI*

# MVA sees no threat in Uddhav-PM meet

**New Delhi, June 8:** Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray met Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday and discussed issues related to the Maratha reservation, Metro car shed and GST compensation.

Deputy chief minister and senior NCP leader Ajit Pawar, and senior Congress leader Ashok Chavan accompanied Thackeray.

"Discussed issues related to the Maratha reservation, Metro car shed, GST compensation with the prime minister," Mr Thackeray said.

Mr Pawar, who is also the finance minister of Maharashtra, said issues pertaining to GST compensation was also discussed in the meeting.

As his one-on-one meeting with Mr Modi drew intense



Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a meeting with Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar and Cabinet Minister Ashok Chavan (L) in New Delhi, Tuesday

interest in political circles, Mr Thackeray said there was nothing wrong in having such interaction, adding snarkily that he had not gone to meet Pakistani leader Nawaz Sharif. He said although his party

and the BJP may have parted ways, "the relationship has not ended".

During the 90-minute interaction, Thackeray also had a one-on-one meeting with the Prime Minister. Responding to a question

on his meeting with Mr Modi, mr Thackeray said, "Today, politically we are not with them but that does not mean our relationship has ended.

"There is nothing wrong to meet (Mr Modi) one-on-one.

I had not gone to meet (former Pakistan Prime minister) Nawaz Sharif. What is wrong if I have to meet him personally (one on one)? What is wrong in it?"

Meanwhile, the Shiv Sena and the NCP said the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government will complete its full term of five years with NCP state president Jayant Patil saying there is nothing to be "afraid" about the personal meeting.

Speaking to reporters in Mumbai, Sena MP Sanjay Raut said the MVA government, comprising the Sena, the NCP and the Congress, will complete its five-year tenure. Maharashtra NCP president and water resources minister Jayant Patil said "Our commitment is to serve for five years and we will complete that tenure." — *Agencies*



## OTHER STORY

## Udavum Karangal donates medical equipment to KMC

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, JUNE 8

Udavum Karangal, a charitable trust based in Chennai on Monday donated Covid-19 related medical equipment and wheelchairs to the Kilpauk medical college and Hospital.

Vidyaakar, Founder of Udavum Karangal handed over the medical equipments to Dr R. Santhimalar, Dean of KMC Hospital, Chennai, in the presence of Dr R. Narayana Babu, Director of Medical Education and Dr Thirunavukarasu, Medical Supdt. KMCH.

Udavum Karangal provided equipments such as Contour Plus Glucometer, Contour Plus Test Strips — 20 nos, CPAP (large), B Type Flowmeter , Central Line O2 Flowmeter , Thermal Scanner , Wheelchair Stainless 3 Ply Surgical Masks at the cost of ₹12.78 lakh.

## KCLAS organises panel discussion for Environment Day

**Coimbatore:** The School of Social Work, Kumaraguru College of Liberal Arts and Science, Coimbatore to commemorate World Environment Day, organized a panel discussion on 'Understanding Climate Action in the Indian Context'.

The discussion focused on the various sectors of climate action, differentiated vulnerabilities and undesirable consequences associated with it, and the problems faced to implement future preventive measures and also the engagement of students and larger communities on the same.

This discussion was organised in collaboration with South Asian People's Action for Climatic Crises (SAPACC), Citizen Consumer and Civic Action Group, Chennai (CAG), Kovilpalayam, Neer Nilai Pathukappu Amaippu (KNNPA). The outcomes and the panel discussion suggested that there needs to be an approach that should be implemented to save Climatic Crises from their Perverse Consequences in India. The panel members enlightened the young generation to take climate action and prepared them for the challenges we are facing. This event was live-streamed on YouTube.

## Centre deviates from vaccine policy, says Stalin

From P1

He recalled the Union government's original undertaking to vaccinate all frontline workers and the general population above the age of 45 free of cost and subsequently deviating from the policy and shifting the responsibility to procure and administer vaccines to people in the age group of 18 to 45 to the state governments.

"Many amongst us pointed out the fact that the most appropriate monosopnic purchaser would be the government of India. Further, considering that the Union government also has considerably larger fiscal resources and a budget provision of ₹35,000 crore in the Union budget for 2021-2022, it was further emphasised by us that the Union government should purchase the vaccines centrally and issue them free of cost to all states."



Health minister M Subramanian along with health secretary Dr J. Radhakrishnan on Tuesday inspects the Government Multi-Super-Speciality Hospital site proposed on King Institute premises. — DC

## State expects six lakh doses vaccines this week

DC CORRESPONDENT,  
CHENNAI, JUNE 8

State is expecting to deliver 6.6lakh doses of vaccines from the Centre's June allocation this week, said Ma.Subramanian, health minister on Tuesday.

Talking to reporters here, the minister said that the Centre had issued a schedule that the state would be provided 6.6lakh doses between June 9 and 13.

The state is running short of vaccines. As

many as 34 districts are left with zero stock of vaccines. State has been allotted 42lakh doses of vaccines as per the June's allocation. Out of this, 5.5lakh doses have been received so far. State has already inoculated over 95lakh doses of vaccines while it received 1 crore doses so far. So we hope that the state will receive enough doses in the coming days. We are also welcoming Centre's decision to provide vaccines to the state at free of cost, said the minister.

Subramanian also said the health department had identified 4 acres of land on the premises of King Institute, Guindy to construct a new super speciality hospital spending ₹750 crore on the basis of Chief Minister M.K. Stalin's announcement.

Currently, the Covid care centre in King Institute spreads over 8.6 acre of land. With the new hospital coming up, the hospital will be made a model government hospital across the country, minister said.

## Oxygen produced at Sterlite supplied to govt hospitals in 17 districts

M. ARULOLI | DC  
THOOTHUKUDI, JUNE 8

Sterlite plant producing oxygen since May 12 has supplied a total of 561.32 MT of liquid medical oxygen to government hospitals in 17 districts till June 8.

It commenced production of liquid medical oxy-

The bottling plant commissioned on June 3 at Sterlite to capture the oxygen in gaseous state, earlier vent out in the atmosphere as a byproduct of LMO, further enhanced the supply of oxygen filled in cylinders

gen (LMO) 22 days ago on May 12. The daily average

production of LMO by Sterlite was 27.10MT. The total production of LMO at the copper company till 6 am on June 8 was 596.21 MT, of which 561.32 MT has been supplied to the government medical college hospitals and government hospitals in the 17 districts.

The bottling plant com-

## Call to junk India's neutrino observatory grows louder

OP. ARULN | DC  
CHENNAI, JUNE 8

Environmental activists have urged the state government to reject an application seeking wildlife clearance from the state for implementing India-based neutrino observatory (INO). They have also sought the state government to revoke the forest department permission already granted.

G. Sundarrajan, of Poovulagin Nambargal, an NGO, said the Union government has been making steps to set up the multi crore project in Western Ghats at Ambarappur Hill, Pottipuram village in Theni district since 2010. Various political leaders, local residents and environmental activists had opposed the project alleging that it would cause irreparable damage to the pristine hill and affect people, flora and fauna in the area.

Based on a petition of Poovulagin Nambargal, the National Green Tribunal in 2018, directed authorities that the project will not be implemented until and unless the approval of National Board for Wildlife is received since the project site is within the eco sensitive zone of the National Park in Kerala. However, the NGT upheld the environmental clearance granted to the project. A case against the NGT's order upholding environmental clearance

## More about the INO project

The INO project is a multi-institutional effort aimed at building a world-class underground laboratory with a rock cover of approximately 1200 m for non-accelerator based high energy and nuclear physics research in India. The project is jointly funded by the department of atomic energy and the department of science and technology.

The project includes construction of an underground laboratory and associated surface facilities at Pottipuram in Bodi West hills of Theni dis-

trict. The underground laboratory will consist of a large cavern of size 132m X 26m X 20m and several smaller caverns, the approach to which will be by a 2100 m long and 7.5 m wide tunnel.

The construction of a Iron Calorimeter (ICAL) detector for studying neutrinos, consisting of 5,000 tonnes of magnetized iron plates arranged in stacks with gaps in between where Resistive Plate Chambers (RPCs) would be inserted as active detectors, the total number of 2m X 2m RPCs being

around 29000, and setting up of an Inter Institutional Centre for High Energy Physics (IICHEP) at Madurai, for the operation and maintenance of the underground laboratory. human resource development and detector R&D along with its applications. Starting with the study of neutrinos, the underground facility is expected to develop into a full-fledged underground science laboratory for other studies in physics, biology, geology and hydrology over the years.

Assessment Notice, the project was renamed as category B and is of national importance.

The Union government had declared the Mathikettan Solai National Park on the Tamil Nadu-Kerala border as an ecologically important area, except for the forest area in the Tamil Nadu.

Thus, the Union Government intends to implement this project against the interest of the people and the state. The safety of Western Ghats and the surrounding dams would be under severe threat if the project is implemented.

In a statement on Tuesday, Vaiko, who had

led that march in 2018, reminded the Chief Minister of the statement issued by him in 2019 against the project and asked him to make the government's stand clear by following up on the case against the INO implementation at the Supreme Court.

DMK president M.K. Stalin took our procession against the project and in a statement in July 2019 he urged the Union Government to abandon the neutrino project.

Sundarrajan said the state government must clearly state its stand in the case pending in the Supreme Court and revoke environmental clearance already granted.

## Grand wedding, temple fest celebrated violating Covid norms

M. ARULOLI | DC  
TIRUNELVELI, JUNE 8

It was a big fat wedding with a lot of pomp and dazle, near Alangulam, conducted by an influential financier and the traders' association secretary, Arumuga Pandian, for his son, violating all Covid-19 protocol on June 6.

Flaunting his political clout, Pandian also arranged a procession in which the bridegroom came on an elephant at his native village Kasiyapuram. More than 500 of his relatives and friends, including local politicians, participated in the procession, though no policeman was present to stop the extravaganza.

Pandian is a supporter of the local MLA, whose name was printed in the marriage invitation card as the chief guest, though the legislator did not turn up for the function.

Similarly, the lockdown rules were thrown to the

wind the same day at Nagalapuram village near Vilathikulam in Thoothukudi district, where around 1,000 villagers, including children, gathered to celebrate the village temple festival.

Least bothered about the ban on temple festivals in the state, the villagers of Nagalapuram gathered in usual fervour for the special pooja at the Arulmigu Kaliyamman temple. Followed by a special pooja and pongal, sports events like tug of war, separate for village women and men, were conducted and a kabaddi tournament was also organised the same night. The devotees were least bothered about maintaining social distance and wearing masks.

The villagers claimed it is their right to participate in the temple festival saying they fear 'kaliyamman' (goddess) more than coronavirus.



New Stone Age equipment unearthed at Javadhu mountain in Tirupattur on Wednesday. — K. Senthil Nathan

## 13-year-old girl electrocuted

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, JUNE 8

A 13-year-old girl was electrocuted to death after he came in contact with a wet light pole on Monday evening, police said. The teenager, identified as Sanjana, a class 7 student of a private school in Selayur was playing with her 10-year-old brother Prabanjan on the terrace after rain when the accident happened.

According to police, when they were playing on the terrace, Sanjana accidentally touched a wet pole. She suffered an electric shock and fell down. Hearing Prabanjan's cries, the duo's mother Sasikala rushed to the terrace and with the help of the neighbours, took Sanjana to a private hospital in Chromepet. However, the doctors declared her dead on arrival. Chitlapakkam police registered a case. They had sent the body to a government hospital for an autopsy. Further investigations are underway. Sasikala's husband Bharanidharan, an Army personnel, died four years back while on duty, sources said.

## Girl ends life after morphed photo appears on Instagram

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, JUNE 8

A 20-year-old girl allegedly ended her life by jumping into a well after morphed images of her were put up on Instagram.

According to police, the victim, Swathi (name change) a final year B.com student from Chengalpet district decided to take her life after doctored images of her along with

her friend were put up in an Instagram account that started against her name by unknown persons.

Police sources said after being alerted by a few friends, Swathi was shocked to find out the fake account with obscene pictures of hers with her friend. This upset her deeply. She was depressed about the photos making rounds online.

Meanwhile, on Sunday

she went missing. After an intensive search by the parents and friends failed, a complaint was lodged at the Chengalpet taluk police station by her father. Based on the complaint, the police registered a case and launched a search for the girl.

On Monday morning, based on the alert by the locals that the body of Swathi was found in the well, a police team rushed

to the spot. Her body was recovered from the well and then sent to Chengalpet government hospital for post-mortem.

Chengalpet taluk police have begun an investigation to identify the unknown persons, responsible for uploading the morphed photo. Police said they have sought the help of cybercrime police to identify the culprits. Further investigations are on.

## Recoveries cross 20 lakh mark in TN

**Chennai, June 8:** Tamil Nadu has registered 18,023 new Covid-19 infections, including a returnee from Andhra Pradesh, pushing the caseload to 22,74,704 while 409 deaths pushed the toll to 27,765 the Health department said on Tuesday.

Recoveries went past the 20

lakh mark, with 31,045 people recovering on Tuesday, taking the cumulative number to 20,28,344, a medical bulletin said.

The number of active cases stood at 2,18,595. Tamil Nadu reported its highest daily infection at 36,184 cases on May 21 and since then it has been witnessing a declining

trend. On May 30, the state saw its daily cases dropping below the 30,000 mark and on June 7 below 20,000.

Three districts constituted the bulk of new cases with Coimbatore adding 2,439 new cases followed by Erode (1,596) and Chennai (1,437). The state capital, however, leads in the number of total

infections among districts with 5,19,574 cases overall. The number of deaths also remains high in Chennai with 7,560 fatalities till date. The number of samples tested today was at 1,70,112 pushing the cumulative number of specimens examined so far to 2,90,62,609. — PTI

## LGBTQIA+ verdict: Millstone into judicial milestone



Sanjay Pinto

As judges are drawn from society, wouldn't their judgments inevitably reflect societal biases and stereotypical mindsets? That view has been turned on its head by Justice Anand Venkatesh of the Madras High Court. Even before pronouncing a seminal verdict in S.Sush-

ma & Seema Agarwal Vs Commissioner of Police (2021) his public admission that he was probably not fully 'woke' and his consequential voluntary psychological sessions to change his "preconceived notions" and start looking at the LGBTQIA+ community "as they are", converted what would have been a prejudicial millstone around one's neck into an epoch making milestone in judicial history.

For a judge to not just admit inherent cobwebs but step out of his comfort zone, and at the end of the exercise, to label the petitioners



and the psychologists as his "gurus" who helped him in this "process of evolution" and pulled him "out of darkness" reflects com-

mendable humility. The shouldering of the 'collective conscience' of society, in sync with the times and looking at the LGBTQIA+ community beyond the prism of sexual relations, has made this verdict path breaking and unprecedented.

In a sense, it picks up the threads from the landmark Supreme Court Constitution Bench decision which while decriminalising Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code in Navtej Singh Johar Vs Union of India (2018) had noted that "History owes an apology to

the members of this community and their families, for the delay in providing redressal for the ignominy and ostracism that they have suffered through the centuries...The LGBT persons deserve to live a life unshackled from the shadow of being 'unapprehended felons'."

On the ground, the judgment is a clear message against moral policing. The foremost of the 8 comprehensive interim directions is to the police to close complaints of 'missing persons' involving the LGBTQIA+ community without sub-

jecting them to harassment. The roping in of NGOs with relevant expertise through an institutional mechanism will destigmatize pleas for intervention. As would the provision for legal aid. Another practical hurdle that has been addressed is the guideline on accommodation for the community. The indicative but not exhaustive list of measures to sensitize stake holders like the police, judiciary, educational institutions and health care professionals are designed to strike at the root of discrimination. Significantly, the spotlight

has been placed on the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 and Rule 10 of Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Rules, 2020, with an obvious intention to flag loopholes and review its implementation.

The Counsel for the Petitioners in the Madras High Court case - Manuraj Shunmugasundaram, who happens to be the son of Tamil Nadu Advocate General R.Shunmugasundaram, also deserves a pat for his role in the march of law.

What this interim order has driven home is the right

to self-perceive and preserve one's gender identity and sexual orientation, bereft of intrusive attempts to 'course correct'. It is in line with German philosopher Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's gem that the Supreme Court had so appropriately quoted in its Navtej Singh judgment: "I am what I am, so take me as I am." Justice Anand Venkatesh's order is a 'Daniel come to judgment'.

(The writer is an advocate at the Madras high court, columnist & author)



## SHORT TAKES

## DMK spokesman's wife ends life

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, JUNE 8

DMK spokesman's wife was found at her house in Erukkanchery in North Chennai on Tuesday morning. The deceased identified as Nadhiya (35), ended her life by hanging at her residence. Her husband, Tamilan Prasanna, a lawyer, is the state joint secretary of the public relations wing of the DMK party. He used to regularly participate in TV debates representing the party. Acting on information, police rushed to the spot and sent her body to the government hospital for post mortem. Kodungaiyur police have registered a case and are questioning Tamilan Prasanna.

## Consignment of Sputnik V vaccine arrives in Chennai

**Chennai, June 8:** A consignment of Russia's Sputnik V Covid-19 vaccine, said to be the first such one for Tamil Nadu, arrived here by a private airline from Hyderabad on Tuesday. The processing of the shipment at the Chennai airport was completed quickly and it was handed over to a transport agency, airport-sources said. It was taken to a private laboratory at Periyapanicheri in Chennai by vehicle. Later, one box of vaccines was dispatched to Coimbatore, sources said. Scheduled to be rolled out by mid-June, the Sputnik V vaccine was accorded emergency use authorisation by the Drugs Controller General of India and it joins Covishield and the indigenous Covaxin in the battle against COVID-19. The first dose of the imported vaccine was administered in Hyderabad last month. The vaccine, developed by Russia's Gamaleya National Research Institute of Epidemiology and Microbiology, is said to be 91.6 per cent efficacious - the highest among Covid vaccines available in India. —PTI

## DMK cracks whip on errant functionary

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, JUNE 8

An errant DMK functionary, R Balu, of Mylapore was removed from all party posts, including primary membership, for allegedly demanding money from an ophthalmologist who was building a house. The local functionary, who was holding the post of representative in the DMK South West district, had reportedly threatened the ophthalmologist working for Sankara Netralaya, that he would not be able to continue the construction work without paying him off. The doctor brought the matter to the attention of Chief Minister M. K. Stalin, who asked his party leadership to look into it and take immediate action. Following that, party general secretary Duraimurugan suspended Balu from all party posts and primary membership and it was announced to the party cadre through DMK's official newspaper 'Murasoli.' The quick action Balu, who was the Mylapore East region district representative, has sent shivers down the spine of many party functionaries who had been intimidating people and demanding money in their respective fiefdoms. Party functionaries now fear that if the party high command came to know about their illegal activities their political career in the DMK would be finished since Stalin is now determined to provide a clean administration in the State.

## ■ HC shocked over averments made in affidavit

## '47,000 acres of temple land missing in TN'

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, JUNE 8

Expressing shock over the averments made in an affidavit filed before the court that 47,000 acres of lands belonging to the temples in Tamil Nadu are missing, the Madras high court has directed the authorities including the Hindu Religious & Charitable Endowment department to file a counter affidavit in this regard.

A division bench comprising Justices N.Kirubakaran and T.V.Thamilselvi gave the directive on a petition, which sought a direction to the authorities to take appropriate steps to find out the whereabouts of temple lands to an extent of 0.47 lakh acres on the basis of the government's policy note of the year 1984-85 and 2019-2020 and remove the encroachment and restore the same to the respective temples.

The bench said it was specifically alleged by the petitioner that in the policy note placed before the Assembly in the year 1985-87, it has been stated that 5.25 lakh of acres of lands belonging to the religious institutions, were available in the state. However, in the policy note of the year 2018-19 and 2019-20, it was mentioned that Hindu Religious Institutions have an extent of 4.78 lakh of acres of lands only and there was no explanation

## Temple land records to be made public

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, JUNE 8

The Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowment (HR & CE) department will start uploading documents relating to the lands owned by the temples across the State on Wednesday, enabling the public to view them and also download them if they want.

According to an official press release, there are

over 36,000 temples that own a total of 4,78,272 acres of land.

During the checking of the land records and the property documents of the temple land, which has been going on in full swing, it has been found that 72 per cent of the land have documents that match with the revenue department's land records.

Those documents relating to 3,43,647 acres of temple

from the HR & CE department regarding the balance of 0.47 lakh of acres of land viz., 47,000 acres of land, the bench added.

The bench said, "If what the petitioner states is correct, then it is really a shocking fact. If the policy note speaks about the missing of 47,000 acres of lands, the same has to be identified and retrieved to the Hindu Religious Institutions'. However, Government Advocate Richardson Wilson appearing for the authorities submitted that a Division Bench of this court, specially constituted for looking into the temple matters, already issued a direction with regard to 4, 78, 462.46 acres of land belonging to the Hindu Religious Institutions in Suo motu petition and batch dated June 7, 2021. Per contra, it was submitted by

the petitioner that the said direction was only with regard to 4.78 lakh of acres of land which has been mentioned in the policy note of the year 2018-19 and 2019-20, whereas the petitioner would rely upon the policy note of the year 1985-87 to submit that HR & CE department had already been submitted before the Assembly that 5.25 lakh of acres of land was owned by Hindu Religious Institutions in Tamil Nadu. Therefore, prima facie, it was clear that 47,000 acres of land were missing from the extent mentioned in the subsequent policy notes. Therefore, the authorities shall file a counter in this regard specifically giving the details of extent of land mentioned in the policy note of the year 1985-87 along with survey numbers and also the details of

land would be uploaded on Wednesday in the HR & CE department website.

The remaining documents would be uploaded after ascertaining the documents through verification and after ensuring that they match with the revenue department records. As of now some of the documents are partially in agreement with the revenue records and the others were not in agreement.

the extent of land mentioned in the policy note in the year 2018-19 and 2019-20 along with survey numbers, the bench added.

The bench said however, Richardson Wilson submitted that there was no specific details regarding the extent of lands. Since the petitioner was only sincerely working regularly for retrieving properties of the Temples, he can give the facts which were known to him only whereas the HR & CE department should be in possession of all the details with regard to the allegations made in the petition especially with regard to the specific allegations made in the affidavit about the missing of 0.47 lakh of acres of land, the bench added and gave the above directive and posted to July 5, 2021, further hearing of the case.

## Coping with Covid



City traffic police organises medical camp for traffic cops at their workplace in Broadway on Tuesday.

—DC

## HC: Educate hotel staff on packing food items

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, JUNE 8

The Madras high court has disposed of a petition, which sought a direction to all the hotels, restaurants, bakeries, groceries and all types of Food Packaging Industries to instruct and educate its employees not to dip the tongue by finger to separate all types of covers and not to blow to enlarge the covers which are used to pack food items.

The first bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjib

Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar Rama moorthy disposed of the petition filed by advocate B.Ramkumar Adityan.

The bench said the petition, filed in public interest, refers to the usual practice of employees at hotel, restaurants, bakeries, groceries and food packaging industries seeking to separate paper or open covers by either touching their fingers to the tongue or by blowing into the covers. The petitioner says that this could be a reason for spreading

the pandemic as the virus could travel into the cover and may affect the contents of the cover. As far as the petition was concerned, the State should take note of the suggestion and create awareness or issue instructions to all businesses where such practice may be in vogue to encourage the management to educate the employees so that they refrain from continuing with the practice, the bench added and disposed of the petition.



Samples collected from a captive elephant at the elephant camp at MTR in Nilgiris on Tuesday.

—DC

## Samples taken from MTR elephants for Covid test

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC  
OOTY, JUNE 8

Samples were lifted from 28 captive elephants at the elephant camp in Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (MTR). While the e-pass regime is back in Nilgiris from this week, efforts are underway to vaccinate all the tribesmen in Nilgiris.

At this era of Covid-19 crisis, the sampling and testing have become mandatory now for the captive wild animals, Tuesday morning turned out to be a busy morning at the elephant camp at MTR, as the veterinary team assisted by the foresters plunged into quick action to collect samples from the 28 captive elephants( including the kumki jumbos) at the

camp. The tamed elephants in the camp co-operated well with the veterinary team for lifting samples. MTR sources said that nasal and anal samples from the captive elephants were collected. All the samples which had been collected will be sent to the Indian Veterinary Research Institute at Izzatnagar in Uttar Pradesh for Covid-19 virus analysis. The report from IVRI is expected to arrive soon. While the two year old Bommi is the youngest captive elephant to give samples, 72 year old Bama is the oldest elephant in the camp to give samples for analysis, sources added.

Meanwhile, e-pass regime is back in Nilgiris

after a gap of seven months. As the Covid second wave is keeping the hills here in all scare, the e-pass regime is expected to control the flow of motorists crossing borders at their will.

J.Innocent Divya, the Collector of Nilgiris, said that as per the advice given by health minister M.Subramanian, who visited the hills on Sunday, efforts will be made to vaccinate all the tribesmen in the district. "Since all the six tribal communities who live in the Nilgiris are primitive tribes and there is an urgent need to take care of their health at the time of Covid-19 crisis, focus will be on them for vaccination against Covid-19," she added.

## Nurse cuts baby girl's thumb while removing IV line

**Thanjavur, June 8:** A portion of the left thumb starting from the middle and ending at the tip of a two week-old baby girl got severed when a nurse removed the Intravenous Line using scissors, a state run hospital chief said here on Tuesday. The baby's father told reporters that the thumb got cut "due to the nurse" and requested appropriate action against her. A doctor performed a surgical procedure to get the severed part attached to its original position, he said. Dr G Ravikumar, Thanjavur Government Medical College Dean, said the baby shuddered while the Intravenous Line was removed by the nurse using scissors and the tip portion of the thumb, starting from the middle, got cut. "We have started an inquiry," he told journalists, adding that a committee has been formed to look into the matter. The nurse has gone on leave and appropriate action would be taken based on the outcome of the inquiry, he said. On the probability of the successful reattachment of the severed portion of the thumb to its right position following the surgery, he told PTI, "we will be able to know after two-three days. At least two days we should not disturb. There are chances.. we are waiting. We will examine the baby." The incident occurred on Monday afternoon when the baby was ready to be discharged, he said, answering a question. The enquiry panel comprises senior doctors and the nurse would be questioned, he said.

The entire sequence of events, leading to the thumb portion getting cut, would be ascertained and appropriate action taken, based on the outcome of the enquiry, he said. —PTI

## Kanchi dt: Two killed as sand quarry caves in

SINDHIYA SAMUEL &  
P.A. JEBARAJ | DC  
CHENNAI, JUNE 8

Two persons died at a private sand quarry in Kanchipuram district after the sand caved in due to heavy rains in the city and suburbs on Monday evening. The body of one of the persons was recovered and an operation is underway to remove another body from the debris.

According to police, a private sand quarry (R.S Mines) is functioning at Patta Village, near Chithamoor, in Kanchipuram district. On Monday evening, three workers later identified by the police as, Sher Khan Ansari (19) of Jharkhand, Sunil Kumar (30) of Madhya Pradesh and Tamilvendhan of Chengalpet were working on the premises standing near an earth mover. All of a sudden, a portion caved in and the sand tumbled down on those working.

Tamilvendhan managed to escape, while the other two were trapped under the debris. On receiving information about the mishap, Salavakkam police and the Uthiram-

erur fire department rushed to the spot to rescue the men. Kanchipuram Superintendent of police, Sudhakar and other Senior police officials inspected the spot.

Due to the rains, the officials were unable to continue the rescue operations at night. They resumed the operations on Tuesday morning and managed to pull out one of the bodies around 2:30 pm, the police said.

Talking to the media, Kanchipuram DIG Sathya Priya said that engineers from the department of geology and mining have been called in to check the stability of the quarry. Depending on the report, we will take action," she said. She said the police will also initiate an inquiry to find out if the quarry has the permit and whether all safety norms were followed.

In February, there was a similar incident where a worker was killed and two others suffered injuries after a stone quarry caved in at Kancheepuram district. The accident took place while the workers were breaking stones on the premises and suddenly a portion of the quarry caved in.



Greater Chennai Corporation Commissioner Gagandeep Singh Bedi along with officials inspect the long-pending Kolathur-Villivakkam railway overbridge work on Tuesday.

—DC

## HC directs directorate of industrial safety to visit Renault-Nissan

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, JUNE 8

The Madras high court has directed the directorate of industrial safety to deputy its representatives to visit the manufacturing facility of Renault-Nissan in Oragadam in course of this week and also visit the manufacturing facilities of other comparable passenger vehicle manufacturing units to ensure that uniform guidelines are imposed and if a departure from the uniform is necessary, indicate the special reasons therefor.

"Till such time, the present norms being followed may not be tweaked by the management" said, the first

bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy while passing further interim orders on a petition filed by Workmen of Renault-Nissan (India) Pvt.Ltd.

The bench said pursuant to the initial disagreement between the petitioning workmen and the management at the Renault-Nissan manufacturing facility in Oragadam, production was now going on upon a tentative modus operandi on trial basis being put in place under the aegis of a senior official of the directorate of industrial safety.

The bench said it was submitted on behalf of the management that the 3:1

pitch suggested and now maintained was impeding production and may not be necessary in view of the other measures adopted at the manufacturing facility in respect of both the assembly lines in operation. It was the further submission of the management that no gap was required to be maintained in the comparable manufacturing units of other automobiles operating in the state and in and around Chennai and it was unfair to single out this particular manufacturing facility to provide the gap and maintain the 3:1 pitch. On the other hand, it was submitted on behalf of the workmen that all the gap provides was additional



time to the workmen to complete the works in the previous three vehicles on the line so that two workmen do not have to come close to each other and work simultaneously in derogation of the social distancing norms required to be maintained. It was further submitted on behalf of the workmen that in a lock-

down situation, where only essential production was permitted, it was unreasonable for the management to continue production at the same rate by citing export orders or the like. At any rate, the workmen submitted that since the present temporary arrangement has been arrived at upon discussion between the workmen and the management in the presence of officials from the directorate of industrial safety, the court should not indulge the management by easing any of the conditions that may have been imposed, the bench added.

The bench said the management was agreeable that senior representatives of

the directorate of industrial safety visit the manufacturing facility to appreciate whether other changes introduced by the management may be good enough to take care of the workmen's concerns and avoid the gap in the assembly line after every third unit. The management contended that if such a norm was not necessary in respect of other automobile manufacturers, Renault-Nissan should not be singled out in such regard merely because its workmen desire it. The submission was for a uniform set of guidelines to be put in place for the industry as a whole and for all assembly line production of passenger vehicles, the bench

added. The bench said there was a temporary arrangement which satisfies the workmen and the production has also resumed. There was no doubt that the quantum of production may have fallen slightly as a result of the gaps being introduced in the assembly lines, but it was evident that the 3:1 pitch has been put in place upon discussion between the workmen and the management in the presence of officials from the directorate of industrial safety. This position cannot be changed at the unilateral insistence of the management and without reference to the Directorate of Industrial Safety or the con-

cerns of the workmen. At the highest, senior representatives of the directorate may be requested to make further visits to the Renault-Nissan manufacturing facility and also visit the manufacturing facilities of other automobile manufacturing units in the vicinity so that a uniform set of guidelines need be imposed everywhere. It must also be borne in mind that the conditions prevailing in a certain manufacturing facility may not be identical to those prevailing in another manufacturing facility and oranges and apples may not be dealt with merely by the numbers, the bench added and gave the above directive.



## IN BRIEF

## CORRECTION

TMC MP Abhishek Banerjee was inadvertently referred to as Abhijeet on June 8, 2021 edition. The error is regretted. - Editor.

## KANNUR MP SUDHAKARAN IS KERALA CONGRESS CHIEF

**GILVESTER ASSARY I DC**  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JUNE 8

In a decision aimed at reviving the Congress in Kerala post Assembly poll debacle, the party high command on Tuesday appointed Kannur MP and firebrand party leader Mr K. Sudhakaran as PCC chief.

The decision to appoint Sudhakaran as PCC chief was conveyed by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi over phone.

Sudhakaran, 73, replaces Mr Mullapally Ramachandran. After the massive defeat of Congress-led UDF in the recent Kerala Assembly polls, there was strong demand from a number of leaders, party rank and file for change in leadership.

Congress high command had deputed observers headed by party incharge for Kerala and AICC general secretary Mr Tariq Anwar to elicit views of leaders including MLAs, MPs, and office bearers on the new PCC chief.

There was overwhelming response in favour of Sudhakaran especially from Congressmen at the grassroots level.

Though the prominent "A" and "I" groups in the Congress led by former chief minister Mr Oommen Chandy and former opposition leader Mr Ramesh Chennithala respectively were not in favour of Sudhakaran, the high command went with the general mood for leadership change expressed by majority of the leaders and workers.

## HC CANCELS NAVNEET RANA'S CASTE CERTIFICATE

**SHAHAB ANSARI I DC**  
MUMBAI, JUNE 8

The Bombay High Court on Tuesday imposed a cost of ₹two lakh and cancelled the caste certificate of Navneet Kaur Rana, an independent member of Parliament from Amravati in Maharashtra saying it was validated fraudulently. The court had directed her to surrender her certificate within six weeks.

Meanwhile, Kaur said she would approach the Supreme Court against this order.

A division bench of Justice R.D. Dhanuka and Justice V.G. Bisht said, "In our view, since the respondent no.3 (Kaur) has obtained the caste certificate fraudulently and got the said caste certificate validated fraudulently from Caste Scrutiny Committee by producing fabricated and fraudulent documents, such caste certificate is cancelled and stands confiscated."

The bench also imposed a fine of ₹2,00,000 which she needs to pay to the Maharashtra Legal Services Authority within two weeks.

Reacting to the court's judgement Ms Kaur stated that she respects the court's order as a citizen of this country.

"I will approach the Supreme Court. I am confident that I will get justice," she said.

The HC passed this order on the petition filed by veteran Shiv Sena leader Anandrao Adsul.

Rana, the former Telugu actress, defeated Adsul in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. She won as an Independent candidate with support from the Congress and the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP).

# Unlock in Bihar begins as Nitish eases Covid-19 curbs

Restrictions eased by government after almost 35 days of lockdown

**NAYEAR AZAD**  
PATNA, JUNE 8

After almost 35 days of lockdown, the Bihar government on Tuesday decided to ease restrictions in the state.

The announcement was made by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar after he held a review meeting with the crisis management group.

Announcing his decision on social media Mr. Kumar said that, "Since there has been a decline in coronavirus cases we have decided to end lockdown in Bihar. But night curfew would remain in place from 7 PM to 5 AM. The government and private offices would be opened with 50 percent attendance till 4 PM but malls and other educational institutions, religious places, malls, and cinema halls would remain closed".

The state government has also allowed the movement of private vehicles during the day.

"Teams have been formed to keep a tab on those who violate COVID guidelines during the relaxation of lockdown. Cases have gone down but to wipe out the COVID infection people should strictly follow the guidelines", officials said after the state government announced the lifting of lockdown.

On May 5 when the lockdown was imposed the COVID cases had exceeded one lakh. However, the latest data shows a significant fall in the number of cases and the recovery rate has also increased.

On Monday 762 new COVID cases and 43 deaths were recorded. Reports suggest that active cases have declined to 8230.

Bihar government's decision to ease lockdown restrictions was welcomed by the BJP and other NDA partners.

## K'taka to take final call on unlock

**Bengaluru, June 8:** Amid talks that Karnataka may start the unlock process by lifting restrictions after June 14, Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa is likely to hold a meeting in a day or two, to discuss the matter and take a call.

The state is currently under lockdown till June 14, and there are indications that the government is likely to go for graded relaxation of restrictions, in districts that have less positivity rate to begin with.

"The Chief Minister, after discussing with everyone, will take a decision on what measures need to be taken in this regard, by taking everyone into confidence," Deputy Chief Minister C N Ashwath Narayan said on Tuesday in response to a question on unlocking.

Speaking to reporters here, he said, the Chief Minister is likely to call a meeting (with experts, Ministers and officials), in a day or two, during which all aspects will be dis-

cussed and the outcome will be made known.

"In most of the districts, other than a few, the numbers have come down... we will also have to ensure that the cases don't increase again, it will also be looked into," he added.

Yediyurappa had earlier said that the state will start its unlock process only in those districts where the COVID-19 positivity rate drops below 5 per cent.

The Karnataka government had initially

announced 14 days "close down" from April 27, but subsequently imposed a complete lockdown from May 10 to May 24, as the COVID cases continued to spike.

Citing that lockdown is yielding results and according to experts advice, it was further extended till June 7 and then again till June 14.

Karnataka on Monday had reported 11,958 fresh cases and 340 fatalities, taking the tally to over 27 lakh and the toll to 31,920. —PTI



An IUMI activist pulls a trolley with a scooter on top to protest against petrol and diesel price hike, in Kozhikode, Tuesday.

—PTI

## Odisha offers spl aid for street vendors

**AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO I DC**  
BHUBANESWAR, JUNE 8

Bringing a sigh of relief to thousands of street vendors in the 164 urban areas of state, Odisha chief minister Naveen Patnaik on Tuesday sanctioned a financial assistance of Rs 26.29 crore for them.

The livelihoods of the street vendors have been seriously affected due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The aid will be provided from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund (CMRF).

The decision will benefit as many as 87,657 street vendors in the state. Each street vendor will get an assistance of Rs 3,000.

Odisha Uthadokani Mahasangha, an organisation of the street vendors, welcomed the decision and appealed to the chief minister to extend the assistance to those who have been left over.

"There are nearly two lakh street vendors in Odisha. In fact, the Odisha government was carrying out a survey before the pandemic period set in. It was stopped mid-way because of the pandemic situation. As a result, nearly 1.20 lakh street vendors could find a place in the government's list. We appeal to the chief minister to order for resumption

● Covid-19 single-day cases continued to dip in Odisha for the sixth consecutive day with the state recording 5,896 new cases

of the enumeration process so that the interest of the street vendors could be saved," said Pratap Sahu, president of Odisha Uthadokani Mahasangha.

Meanwhile, the Covid-19 single-day cases on Tuesday continued to dip in Odisha for the sixth consecutive day with the state recording 5,896 new cases. With this, the positive tally in the state surged to 8,25,110.

However, with at least 45 patients undergoing treatment for Covid-19 succumbing in the last 24 hours, the death toll has surged to 3,080 in the state.

Of the fresh cases detected across 30 districts of the state on Tuesday, a total of 3,332 cases were reported from quarantine centers, while the rest 2,564 were local transmission cases. Khordha district with 853 infections in the last 24 hours has the maximum cases among all districts followed by Jajpur (413), Angul (385), Balasore (373), Bhadrak (370), Cuttack (349) and Dhenkanal 306 cases.

## Uttar Pradesh relaxes Covid lockdown in all 75 districts

**Lucknow, June 8:** The Uttar Pradesh government on Tuesday extended relaxation in Covid restrictions to all 75 districts of the state, with the active cases coming down the 600-mark in each of these districts.

The night curfew from 7 pm to 7 am and weekend curfew (for the entire day) will, however, continue throughout the state, an official spokesman said.

By Monday, the relaxation was extended to 72 districts barring Meerut, Lucknow and Gorakhpur.

"There will be relaxation in coronavirus curfew in all the districts of the state from Wednesday onwards, from 7 am to 7 pm, for five days as the active Covid cases have come below 600," the spokesman said.

In a high-level meeting convened through virtual medium on Tuesday, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath reviewed the COVID-19 situation and decided to

● "Only 797 new cases were reported in the state in the past 24 hours. Now, there are 14,000 active cases in the state" an official spokesman said adding night curfew will continue.

give the relaxations in the Covid curfew.

The spokesman said in view of the decreasing infection rate, a standard of 600 active cases was set for having coronavirus curfew effective in the districts.

"Only 797 new cases were reported in the state in the past 24 hours. Now, there are 14,000 active cases in the state," he said.

"On Monday, 2.85 lakh Covid tests were done. The positivity rate of the state is 0.2 per cent, while the recovery rate has gone up to 97.9 per cent," he added.

In an order issued in this regard by Additional Chief Secretary, Home,

Awanish Kumar Awasthi said the curfew will be relaxed as per the conditions mentioned in the government order issued on May 30 by Chief Secretary R K Tiwari.

According to the order issued by Tiwari, shops and markets outside containment zones would be allowed to open for five days (Monday to Friday).

Instructions were issued that over the weekend, cleanliness, sanitisation and fogging campaigns will be carried out.

Shopkeepers and their employees will have to wear masks, maintain two-yard distance with each other and customers, and ensure the arrangement of hand sanitisers.

While there would be full attendance for front-line workers, for the rest of the government employees, there would be 50 per cent attendance on rotation. A COVID help desk must also be established at all offices. —PTI

## Newly-wed woman pleads for aid to save husband

**AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO I DC**  
BHUBANESWAR, JUNE 8

A newly-wed woman in Odisha has appealed people for financial assistance to take her critically Covid-19 infected husband to a hospital in Kolkata for better treatment.

Mousumi Mohanty, the newly-wed woman, said around Rs 1 crore is required to treat her husband Abhishek Mohapatra.

Abhishek requires urgent ECMO (Extracorporeal Membrane Oxygenation) treatment. He is planned to be shifted to Kolkata from Bhubaneswar on road as fund crunch has posed hindrance for his airlifting to West Bengal.

Abhishek will be wheeled to Kolkata through a special ambulance with ECMO support on Tuesday evening, said his family members seeking help from the public for the costly treatment. Hospital sources said his treatment will cost around ₹1 crore.

"We belong to a middle class family. We can't arrange such a huge amount for the expensive treatment of my husband. I have arranged as much as I can. We can't afford airlifting him to Kolkata

and planning to take him there by road tonight. I request all brothers and sisters to extend some financial assistance so that I can treat my husband. Your small assistance can help my husband's safe return home," Mousumi pleaded to the public.

Noted Odia cine artist Bobby Mishra also appealed to people to extend a helping hand to Abhishek.

"Abhishek is currently undergoing treatment at a private hospital in Bhubaneswar. As his condition is deteriorating he needs ECMO treatment. I request all of you to help him as per your ability," Bobby said.

Those who want to lend financial assistance for the youth can visit MILAP.ORG/FUNDRAISERS / SUPPORT - ABHISEK-MOHAPATRA. People can also donate through mobile apps like PhonPe/GooglePay with Mobile no-9583596886.

Abhishek had married only a month ago. Eight days after his marriage, he was found infected with Covid-19 and subsequently admitted to a private hospital in Bhubaneswar after his health condition worsened.



Workers put sandbags on the bank of river Brahmaputra to control soil erosion ahead of the monsoon season in Guwahati on Tuesday.

—PTI

### LEGAL | DEMAND

**Punjabi singer had frequently tweeted in support of farmers' protests**

## Twitter blocks JazzyB, three other accounts

NEW DELHI, JUNE 9

Microblogging platform Twitter has "withheld" the accounts of Punjabi singer JazzyB, hip-hop artist L-Fresh the Lion and two others in response to a legal demand in India, even as it draws flak over delay in complying with the new IT rules in the country.

According to an information on Lumen database, Twitter received legal request from the Indian government on June 6 for

actioning four accounts, including that of JazzyB. Requests received by Twitter for withholding content are published on Lumen database - an independent research project studying cease and desist letters concerning online content. Users checking Jazzy B's account are shown a message saying "account has been withheld in India in response to a legal demand". When contacted, a Twitter

● Earlier this year, more than 500 accounts were suspended and access to hundreds of others in India blocked after the government ordered the microblogging platform to restrain the spread of misinformation related to farmers' protests

spokesperson said when it receives a valid legal request, it reviews it under both the Twitter Rules and

local law. "If the content violates Twitter Rules, the content will be removed from the service. If it is determined to be illegal in a particular jurisdiction, but not in violation of the Twitter Rules, we may withhold access to the content in India only," the spokesperson added. The spokesperson noted that in all cases, it notifies the account holder directly so that they're aware that the company has received a

legal order pertaining to the account. "We notify the user(s) by sending a message to the e-mail address associated with the account(s), if available... Twitter is committed to the principles of openness, transparency, details of the requests to withhold content have been published on Lumen," the spokesperson said. Reports suggest that Jazzy B had frequently tweeted in support of farmers' protests. —PTI

# Himanta advises Rahul to not 'knit-pick like immature kid'

**MANOJ ANAND**  
GUWAHATI, JUNE 8

Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma who took Congress leader Rahul Gandhi by disclosing as to how he was busy feeding his dog when Assam government wanted to discuss urgent issues with him in 2015, on Tuesday told him to not 'knit-pick like an immature kid'

while referring to his remark on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's announcement on free universal vaccination for all adults in India.

While many Opposition leaders lauded Prime Minister Narendra Modi's announcement of free universal vaccination for all adults in India and centralisation of vaccine procurement, some also accused the

government of 'wasting crucial time'. Mr Modi also announced the private sector's role in the national vaccination programme by allocating 25 per cent to it.

However, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi in his reaction on twitter said he had-- "one simple question- If vaccines are free for all, why should private hospitals charge for them?"



<b>GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU - PERIYAKULAM MUNICIPALITY</b>		<b>Dated: 07.06.2021</b>				
<b>Rec No: 0043/2021/H1 E-Tendering Notice (Procurement)</b>						
<p>Periyakulam Municipality has sanctioned a <b>GENERAL FUND</b> to the Municipality for the year 2021-2022. Under Door to Door Collection of Garbage, Segregation and disposal in Municipal solid waste projects, collection, sorting, weighing and disposal of Municipal Solid Wastes by way of 1000 (one thousand) contract labourers in the Rural-urban Corporation, Periyakulam. The work is to be completed by 30.06.2021.</p>						
Sl. No	Type of Work	Estimate Amount Rs. in Lakhs	Tender Processing Fee in Lakhs	Tender opening available from	Pre-bid Meeting Details	Period of Completion
1	Door to Door Collection of Garbage, Segregation and disposal in Municipal Solid waste projects, collection, sorting, weighing and Disposal of Municipal Solid Wastes by way of 1000 (one thousand) contract labourers	150.00	0.40	15.06.2021	15.06.2021 09:11 AM to 01:00 PM at the Office of Municipal Engineer	30.06.2021 03:30 PM
<p>*Tender document and e-catalogue available at: <a href="http://tenders.municipal.gov.in">http://tenders.municipal.gov.in</a> can be downloaded at the cost of Rs. 155.86/-. The bidding document will be received by the Commission: Periyakulam, by 09:11 AM and e-auction starts on 20.06.2021 at 10.30 AM. 1.30 PM. Earnest Money Deposit: 10% of the value of work and Processing Fee Rs.40,000/- should be paid along with the tender. If tenderer, the EMD will not be deposited - the tenderer should before closure of sale, at 1.30 PM on 20.06.2021. Evaluation should be done as per "Tender Processing Fee 1998 of Government of Tamil Nadu" and the terms, in the tender notice. The success will be opened on next working day. The Municipality Commission reserves the rights to accept or reject any tendering document at any time without assigning any reason there to. E-bids by other means and other acts can be said on the Disputed document.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>EMD Amount &amp; Processing Fee: DD in Favour of: The Commission, Periyakulam - District: Nilgiris</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">For other details contact e-mail address: <a href="mailto:commission.periyakulam@gmail.com">commission.periyakulam@gmail.com</a> Contact No: 09445-233120, 231213.</p>						
<b>Special Officer &amp; Commissioner, Periyakulam Municipality</b>						



## DECCAN Chronicle

9 JUNE 2021

### A welcome shift in vaccine policy, but hurdles remain

The Union government's decision to rework its "liberalised vaccine policy" and return to centralised procurement of vaccine doses for all people aged above 18 years is welcome. This is perhaps for the first time that the government has chosen to reverse its policy seeing its adverse impact on the people. It is no secret that the Supreme Court's tough stance that it will have to subject the government decision to exclude a section of people from its vaccination policy to judicial review based on Articles 14 and 21 which guarantee the right to equality and the right to life, respectively, which led to this crucial policy change.

The court's decision to call for files that led to the questionable decision must have rung alarm bells in the corridors of power, though the court has repeatedly assured the government that it had no plans to interfere with its executive functions. The court's insistence that the government produce an account of the ₹35,000 crores earmarked in the 2021-22 Union Budget for vaccine purchase might, too, have forced the Centre's hand. Credit must be

**As per the government's own records, there are about 13,000 villages in the country where there is not a single common service centre through which the people there can register themselves on the CoWin app**

given to the political Opposition, led by Kerala chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan, who first suggested that the Union government should procure the vaccine for the states, too, which was endorsed by several other chief ministers including Tamil Nadu's M.K. Stalin and Odisha's Naveen Patnaik.

The job is half done now, and the governments at the Centre and in the states have a lot of distance to cover to secure Indian people. We are into the sixth month of the "world's largest vaccination programme" but have been able to fully inoculate only 3.3 per cent of the population; the figure for the share of population who have been given at least one dose is below 12 per cent. This is not a satisfactory pace by any reckoning. Given that a third wave could hit the children, too, and they also need to be given the jabs, the figures fall to pathetic lows when the number of children eligible for vaccination becomes part of the denominator. Added to this is the issue of digital divide, which the Supreme Court has flagged: This could deprive the most marginalised sections of society of vaccination. As per the government's own records, there are about 13,000 villages in the country where there is not a single common service centre through which the people there can register themselves on the CoWin app.

The challenges are formidable but not insurmountable. The government has taken some baby steps to address them, which included the agreement it recently signed with Hyderabad-based Biological E. for the purchase of 30 crore doses of the vaccine which is in the advanced stages of clinical trials and the upfront payment of ₹1,500 crores. It is also getting Covaxin produced in more facilities. The government has now to prepare a workable schedule on the procurement and administration of the vaccine to meet the deadline of December 31 which it itself has fixed for the universal vaccination before it gets back to the Supreme Court on June 30 for the next hearing.

### Winning new frontier in space

The founder of Amazon who revolutionised the way people shop in the new millennium will be beating fellow billionaires Richard Branson and Elon Musk to blast off into space, fly 105 km up, spend three breathtaking minutes of weightlessness in about 10 minutes or so at the apogee of the flight and return to planet earth. The race to create space tourism 60 years after Yuri Gagarin became the first man to travel into space may be heralded by the seeming vanity of a rich owner of a spacecraft taking a thrilling ride into the sky along with his brother Mark, besides the highest bidder in an online charity auction which is now at \$2.8 million, and two pilots.

Non-astronaut civilians have flown into space before but if the world's richest man is prepared to do it while possessing some \$200 billion of assets on the ground it might just signal increasing confidence in man's mastery over space flights just as an expensive tourism industry is set to expand. What we do for science in terms of spacecraft exploring Mars and space probes flying a lot further may be a lot more productive. But it is in taking untrained civilians along for up-and-down flights that earth will resonate with stories from space to rekindle the imagination. When Armstrong stepped on the man, the whole of humanity was figuratively with him.

The flight will usher in the crossing of a frontier signalling human capabilities in engineering safety and reliability in space. Several astronauts who have enjoyed the thrill of viewing our planet from way above have waxed eloquent about their experience. The Bezos brothers and others will have even better viewing seats in the roomy Blue Origin's New Shepard capsule with very large windows. What opening the door for rich civilians to tag along means is that the human endeavour to explore space would get a fillip and further propel the human race towards a long stated ambition of colonising Mars and other planets that seemed way beyond reach in billions of years.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

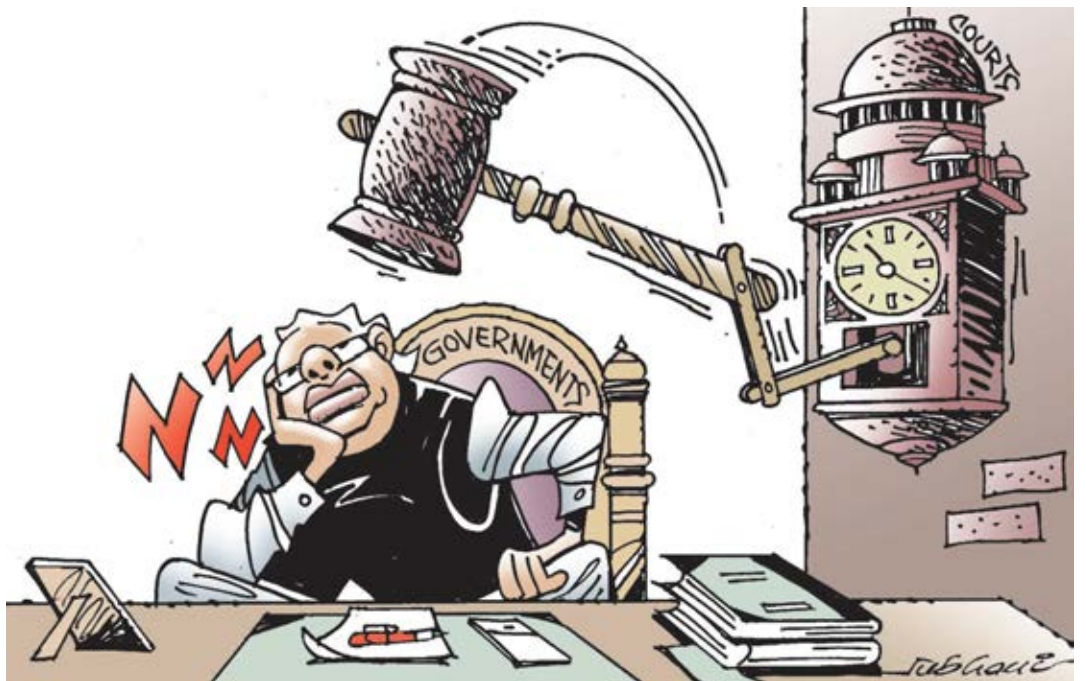
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Subhani



## Turbulent Afghanistan could impact Kashmir



Syed Ata Hasnain

One feels glad to see Jammu and Kashmir drop steeply in the hierarchy of India's security concerns. I am not going to spoil the party by suggesting that the current situation is just a smokescreen behind which lie many scheming ideas and thoughts to take it all back to 2001. Why 2001? It is simply because that is a landmark year recorded as the one with the highest terrorist casualties (2,100 killed); or, in other words, the year with a disproportionately high number of engagements, contacts, gunbattles. It was also the year when we saw the beginning of the Nato onslaught into Afghanistan (then usually referred as AfPak) after 9/11. Afghanistan and J&K have a long association; I am not alluding to their deep history but only to recent times. It's the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan at the end of 1979 that brought the mercenaries, often called jihadis, to Afghanistan under the sponsorship of the United States and Saudi Arabia. The rise of Islamic obscurantism can be traced back mostly to the 1980s when the refugee camps on the Pak-Afghan border became the centres of conversion to more radical beliefs of Islam. Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence gained much of its experience in handling tricky intelligence and operations related situations in Afghanistan. As soon as the war ended with the Soviet defeat, the mercenaries were available for a song and became the new jihadis in J&K. People unaware of the nuances of the issues in J&K over the last 30 years need to be informed that the original separatist movement of 1989 was largely indigenous and may have been controlled, but for the sudden availability of the merce-

nary jihadis freed from the war in Afghanistan. The ISI got them together with funds, weapons and military wherewithal no one had control over. They were then infiltrated into Kashmir from every conceivable direction to add to the growing footprint of terror. Many of them were Afghans who had no love lost for Kashmiris. The Indian Army and its fledgling anti-terror force, Rashtriya Rifles, neutralised hundreds as intelligence on them was never far, with them getting on to the wrong side of many in the local population, especially women. The pipeline of so-called jihadi dried up by 1996, when the remnants of the mercenaries who fought the Soviet Army in Afghanistan had either met their end or returned to do service with the Taliban when it came to power. The infiltration of foreign terrorists from 1996 onwards was mainly that of Pakistanis who flooded North Kashmir, in particular in the Bandipur, Sopore, Lolab and Handwara tracts.

Kashmir's proactive media repeatedly queried me in 2010-12 about the then situation in Afghanistan and how it would affect Kashmir if the US troops withdrew. Those were the days when Gen. David Petraeus was in charge of the US Central Command and the principles of the "COIN" (counterinsurgency) doctrine were in full flow in Afghanistan. I always answered with the stock reply that almost became a byline: "When you throw a stone into water there are ripples in every direction. Ripples from the conflict in Afghanistan will invariably travel to J&K." I usually left it at that, and if someone persisted, I would usually say: "Let no one imagine that 2011 is 1989, we are far superior in deployment and even

more in experience." All these words are coming back to me in bits and pieces to create a picture for the region once the Americans are out of Afghanistan. That is expected largely by July 2021, without waiting for President Joe Biden's September 11, 2021 deadline.

So, is a resurgence of extremist violence in the region likely after July? The American presence being sought at some Pakistani airbases to afford drone operations and possibly other forms of aerial warfare including Special Forces is with a view to ensure that Afghan territory, and maybe some Pakistani territory as well, is not used to conduct activities that are detrimental to US interests. It's to keep a vigil over these areas which have provided much sorrow to the world in the last two decades. Of course, this will never be sufficient to have full regional coverage, but the US can always be advised to include India in its coverage too, simply as emerging strategic partners, and Pakistan is in no position to resist that, given its precarious financial position.

The current 2021 season has thus far seen minimal activity in Kashmir. The infiltration season began almost two months ago but attempts have been few and far between. Obviously, the flavour for jihadism is low at present, but it would be incorrect to assume it is all over. In 2011 too, the infiltration picked up in the July-October period. Pakistan's attention is focused on Afghanistan, where mistakes can cost

it dearly. On the J&K front, a season of low-profile activity can be accepted, and the separatist infrastructure can remain intact with infusion of money and wherewithal through some routes which are extremely difficult to neutralise. What really makes the difference is the absence of human resources. If enough rebels are not being recruited locally, there won't be sufficient resources for guidance, logistics and overground work. 2021 is not 1989 either as far as the Line of Control is concerned. The counter-infiltration layout and network is smart, extensive, integrated and efficient. Twenty per cent attempting infiltration could yet get through, but unless huge resources are deployed for this by the ISI, the impact will be low. That big effort is difficult in view of the visibility today and efforts by outfits like FATF to keep vigil internationally. It won't be easy for Afghan or any other foreign terrorists to function in Kashmir, especially with dilution of the extensive OGW networks. Besides, no one really trusts these jihadi elements in Kashmir nowadays, especially in the urban areas.

Diplomatically, India like all other interested nations have to address the situation of having to deal with an Afghan leadership other than the current one. Back channels would have been established by some nations and exchange of information would be in practice. What one really fears is bloodshed and civil war-like conditions in Afghanistan which could persist for some years. In such a situation it would become extremely unpredictable on what the fallout on Kashmir could be. We should make the best of the current situation, focus on development activity, and outreach to people with sufficient messaging that India's stable climes are far better than the turbulence of the neighbouring region.

*The writer, a retired lieutenant-general, is a former GOC of the Srinagar-based 15 Corps*

**We should make the best of the current situation, focus on development activity, and outreach to people with sufficient messaging that India's stable climes are far better than the turbulence of the neighbouring region**

### LETTERS

#### PROTECT NATURE

World Environment Day is observed on June 5 every year. The day is observed to remind people about the importance of nature and to create awareness and highlight the significance of why nature should not be taken for granted. Since 1974, World Environment Day has been celebrated, engaging governments, businesses and citizens in an effort to address pressing environmental issues. With the outbreak of the Coronavirus and people being confined indoors, mother earth seems to have benefitted considerably, as in the absence of human activities outdoors due to recurring lockdowns, nature has been able to clean itself and reclaim its space. Perhaps, Covid-19 pandemic has taught an important lesson to mankind that nature can exist without us, but we can't exist without nature. Said environmentalist Jonathan Porritt: "Humankind's greatest priority is to reintegrate with the natural world."

**R. Sivakumar, Chennai**

#### BIASED COMMENTATORS

It is really unfortunate that we have some biased commentators like Sanjay Manjrekar, who have nothing but criticism against players from the South. If a cricketer from North fails on the field, they continue to defend such failures stating that he got out to an unplayable ball or excellent catch. At the same time, if a player from South gets out to even the beauty of a ball, these commentators start to criticise footwork, etc. Incidentally Ravichandran Ashwin is a shining star of our Indian team, whether it is Test, ODI and even T-20 cricket. He has more than 400 test wickets with 2,600+ runs during his career, which is better than Sanjay Manjrekar or any other bowler he may compare him to. Less said about Manjrekar's fielding the better as he had dropped catches left and right, whereas Ashwin has safe hands.

**N. Mahadevan, Chennai**

Rod Liddle



### Big Tech now turning into a Big Brother: Will world act?

The Big Tech social media giants are having to rethink their policy of censoring anybody who suggests that Covid-19 originated from a lab near Wuhan. This is because it now seems quite possible, if not probable, that the virus was kindly bestowed upon us by Chinese scientists. I don't know either way, but I would suggest that a suspicion that the virus was man-made, given the proximity of the Wuhan Institute of Virology, scarcely qualifies as a lunatic conspiracy theory to be banned from public utterance. But that's what the Big Tech companies decided — almost certainly for political reasons.

By and large major liberal institutions concurred: the utterly hopeless World Health Organisation refused to entertain the suggestion that the virus had leaked from the WIV and the major liberal broadcasters in the United States scarcely covered the suggestion at all. A couple of leftist American journos were invited into the WIV and marvelled at how clean everything was, what nice space suits everyone wore and how people defi-

nately weren't throwing chunks of Covid-19 out of the windows every few minutes, and thus gave it a clean bill of health. The idea got pushed into the conspiracy theory dungeon, a realm of racists and reactionaries. The banning of this idea, that the virus was man-made and leaked from a Chinese lab, was not because it was wrong, necessarily, but because it came from the political right and challenged the liberal view. How kind it is of them, then, to think again.

This perpetual, shameless, censorship on purely political grounds by the likes of Facebook, Google, Twitter and Instagram worries me rather more than the pandemic does, because there seems to be no readily available vaccine for it. If you had thought that Twitter and Facebook's deliberate suppression of stories regarding Hunter Biden's lucrative dealings in Ukraine, along with a serving US President's astonishing removal from all social media sites because they didn't like what he was saying, was simply the consequence of a peculiarly fraught US election, think again. They are still at it now, even more so. Theories which

they do not like because of their political consequences, or provenance, are banned under the heading "false news". It is increasingly the case that "false news" is simply news that liberals do not wish you to hear about. Nor do facts count for very much when these dweebs are deciding what you can and can't say. Try advancing the strictly scientific point of view regarding the correct gender of a man who has transitioned into being a "woman" — and see how long before you are banned too.

But it is Covid-19 which has given the liberals the greatest scope for their authoritarianism. Quite a lot of what has happened in these past 12 months or so — from the official adulation of the Black Lives Matter movement and footballers "taking a knee", to the hilarious "decolonisation" projects — has happened under the shroud of disease, and therefore not subject to public scrutiny. But it is the disease itself which has provoked the most injurious acts of censorship — which have occurred ever since the pandemic was politicised into a left versus right argument.

It is surely not a conspiracy theory nor an expression of "false news" to have one or two doubts on being zapped by a vaccine which has received nothing like the usual longitudinal testing procedures and is, basically, a clever, perhaps brilliant and lifesaving, experiment on the entire world. I'd go further and suggest that if you do not have one or two doubts, then you must be a bit thick. By this I do not remotely mean to say that we should all refuse our vaccines — I have had mine and I'm no worse than usual, so far. But in lieu of the usual testing procedures, it would be nice to think that questions raised by worried members of the general public and opinions from scientists which run counter to the apparent majority might be listened to and debated and discussed.

The opposite, though, has happened. Express one or two doubts about the vaccine, perhaps citing the number of people who have died from blood clots as a consequence of receiving it, and Twitter has your card marked. According to its protocol, any comments which "make false claims that have been widely debunked" will be

deleted. What, such as a worry that the virus may be man-made? Or — and think back to when the AstraZeneca rollout began — that there may, just may, be a link between the vaccine and blood clots. Denied outright at the time — and now entirely accepted, which is why people under 40 in Britain are being offered alternative jabs.

Meanwhile, leaked emails from Facebook have revealed that it is using an algorithm to censor those who are merely "vaccine hesitant". Amazon had a head start on this: a couple of years ago it pulled from its roster a film called *The Greater Good* in which a bunch of perfectly respectable scientists question the efficacy of mass vaccination programmes. Urged to take ever more censorious action by the left, these companies gladly succumb; it is their equivalent of taking a knee.

We need a law such as the one they are pushing through in Poland right now. If any social media company censors someone for saying anything not prosecutable under state law, they get fined. That would be a start.

*By arrangement with the Spectator*



quick  
BITES

## INDICATORS

		%
Sensex	52275.57	-0.10
Nifty 50	15740.10	-0.07
S&P 500*	4,229.93	0.08
Dollar (₹)	72.89	-0.10
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.04	-0.06
Euro (₹)	88.74	-0.22
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	49,113.30	0.06
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	71.90	0.57
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.006	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.533	-0.037

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

CCI clears Byju's  
buyout of Aakash  
Educational

The Competition Commission of India has approved ed-tech startup Byju's proposed acquisition of Aakash Educational Services Ltd (AESL). The \$1 bn deal, which will bolster Byju's presence in the test preparation segment, was announced in April this year. The CCI said it has approved the proposed combination relating to Think & Learn Pvt Ltd (Byju's) acquisition of certain stake of AESL and thereafter their merger.

■ 460 claims cleared for ₹50 lakh insurance cover  
Over ₹200 cr death claims  
paid for Covid warriorsMADHUSUDAN SAHOO  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 8

With increasing fatalities of health workers fighting Covid-19, the government has fast-tracked settlement of Covid death claims under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package (PMGKP), which provides an insurance cover of Rs 50 lakh to Covid frontline warriors.

India's largest non-life insurer, New India Assurance Company Ltd (NIACL), has so far settled 419 claims under the scheme, disbursing around Rs 210 crore to the claimants.

The PMGKP covers almost all healthcare workers, including doctors, nurses, paramedics, community health workers and even daily wage staff engaged in Covid duty. This scheme covers loss of life due to Covid-19 and accidental death in the line of duty. This is scheme managed solely by the NIACL, with the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare paying the entire premium for over 22



lakh health workers covered under the scheme.

According to Atul Sahai, chairman and managing director of NIACL, "The NIACL has received over 1,100 claims intimations approximately, though only 600 claims were supported by the documents. Of this, we have paid a sum of Rs 209.5 crore for 419 claims as on the date, and 41 more claims stand approved awaiting either nomination documents or claimants' bank details. Some 140 claims have been turned down as the same were not covered under the policy, like the claimant wasn't a frontline healthcare worker or the death wasn't due to Corona."

"We have already

received Rs 350 crore from the government in three tranches in the form of premium for the scheme so far. A total of 22.12 lakh health workers across the country are covered under the scheme by NIACL," Sahai added.

Though the claim documents were simple to access-like a laboratory test report and death summary by the hospital-getting them approved through the competent state authority was proving to be time-consuming. So, the government has from this month further simplified the claims procedure by routing them through the district collector. This is expected to improve the claim settle-

ment ratio, which is now less than 55 per cent.

"Now, the government has decided to ease the claims procedure that was finalised between the concerned company and MoH&SW, and the district collectors have to verify that claim documents, counter verified by the state health nodal agencies in just one single page document. The documents shall remain carefully recorded at their office. It's a welcome step for speedy settlement of the claims," Sahai said.

However, health workers are concerned that the scheme does not cover death from post-Covid complications. Explaining, a senior doctor from Faridabad's Escort Heart Institute said, "Insurers now ask for all Covid-19 related documents immediately after the patient's death. So, there is no question of claim settlement from insurers if the patient dies of post-Covid-19 complications. Besides, any type of treatment or quarantine cost is not covered."

## FM ASKS INFOSYS TO FIX TECH GLITCHES ON NEW INCOME TAX E-FILEING PORTAL

New Delhi, June 8: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday asked Infosys and its chairman Nandan Nilekani to fix technical glitches being encountered on the income tax department's new e-filing website, after users flooded her Twitter timeline

with complaints.

Infosys was in 2019 awarded a contract to develop the next-generation income tax filing system to reduce processing time for returns from 63 days to one day and expedite refunds.

The portal went live Monday evening.

Early on Tuesday morning, Sitharaman took to Twitter to announce the launch of the new portal, [www.incometax.gov.in](http://www.incometax.gov.in), saying that the "important milestone to make the compliance experience more taxpayer-friendly" went live at 2045 Hrs on Monday.

But, soon, her timeline was flooded with user complaints.

"I see in my TL grievances and glitches. Hope @Infosys & @NandanNilekani will not let down our taxpayers in the quality of service being provided," she tweeted later. — PTI

Privatisation-bound banks  
may come out with VRS

New Delhi, June 8: Two state-owned banks being picked up for privatisation by the government are likely to come out with an attractive voluntary retirement scheme (VRS) to get rid of the extra flab, sources said.

Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman while unveiling Budget 2021-22 on February 1 had announced that the government proposed to take up the privatisation of two public sector banks (PSBs) and one general insurance company.

An attractive VRS will make them lean and fit for takeover by the private sector entities that are keen to enter the banking space, the sources said.

VRS is not forced exit but option for those who would like to take early retirement with good financial package, the sources said, adding that it has been done in the past before the consolidation of some of the PSBs.

The Niti Aayog, which has been entrusted with the job of identifying suitable candidates for the privatisation, has recommended the names to a high-level panel headed by Cabinet secretary Rajiv Gauba.

Central Bank of India, Indian Overseas Bank, Bank of Maharashtra and Bank of India are some of the names that may be considered for privatisation by the Core Group of Secretaries on Disinvestment.

Following clearance from the Core Group of Secretaries, the finalised names will go to the Alternative Mechanism

Banks asked to keep CCTV  
recordings of DeMo period

Mumbai, June 8: The RBI on Tuesday asked banks to preserve the CCTV recordings of their branches and currency chests from November 8, 2016, to December 30, 2016, till further orders with a view to assisting the enforcement agencies to take actions against persons involved in illegal activities during the demonetisation period.

The government had demonetised the then in circulation high value currency notes of Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 on November 8, 2016. As part of the exercise, the government gave the opportunity to the people to exchange junked currency notes or deposit them in their bank accounts. Huge crowds were witnessed at bank branches across the country for exchanging or depositing the demonetised currency.

On the basis of various inputs, the investigative agencies also started probing matters relating to illegal accumulation of new currency notes.

In order to facilitate such investigations, the RBI has asked the banks not to destroy the CCTV recordings of the period of demonetisation till further orders.

The present order is a continuation of an earlier advisory issued to the lenders in December 2016 to preserve the CCTV footage of operations at bank branches and currency chests.

Of the Rs 15.41 lakh crore worth Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 notes in circulation on November 8, 2016, when the note ban was announced, notes worth Rs 15.31 lakh crore have been returned.

— PTI

(AM) for its approval and eventually to the Cabinet headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the final nod.

Changes on the regulatory side to facilitate privatisation would start after the Cabinet approval.

## COFFEE-BREAK

Your day today By Dr C.V.B. Subrahmanyam



**Aries:** If love doesn't go your way today see the situation from a different perspective. If things don't go your way don't complain and rather just go with the flow.



**Taurus:** Keep the details of your life private. Today, the cards prompt you to follow your heart. Work on the problems in your relationship.



**Gemini:** Beware of being overly generous. You need to control your unlimited desires. Don't stray into a situation that may not be as good as it looks.



**Cancer:** Think about romantic situations practically instead of thinking from your heart. The problems today will turn into opportunities for you in the long run.



**Leo:** Avoid taking stress. Keep your presence of mind to achieve the expected results. Strenuous physical exercise may appeal, but go easy.



**Virgo:** Your ability to easily comprehend problems is the key to your success at work today. You may fail to benefit from the potential opportunities to prove your mettle on the professional front.

## You share your b'day with

John Depp II is an American actor, producer, and musician. He has been nominated for ten Golden Globe Awards, winning one for Best Actor and has been nominated for three Academy Awards for Best Actor.



**Libra:** Your search for a true, romantic partner may continue. Do not rush through things in your business. Few of you will land a lucrative job.



**Scorpio:** Unexpected financial burden may arise as you might be forced to change an old machinery. Anger on your part could invite some unavoidable tensions.



**Sagittarius:** You will benefit immensely by practicing meditation and yoga. You will have to take parental help to sort out domestic misunderstandings.



**Capricorn:** Be aware of investing in dubious financial schemes. Involvement in social service will be beneficial. Hard work without a positive attitude will not bring you any professional success.



**Aquarius:** Supporting contradictory opinions would go against you. You will have to toil hard to keep financial gains from slipping out of your hands. Careless investment will lead to losses.



**Pisces:** Earning monetary gains far beyond your expectations is on the cards. Avoid unnecessary worry about family members. It is time to develop healthy relations with children.

bridge  
PHILLIP  
ALDER

SOMETIMES,  
YOU HAVE  
TO DO THE  
DIFFERENT

It is fun when something unexpected works well. I hadn't watched "Jeopardy!" for years because I was not fond of the presenter. But now I am back to the show, and by far my favorite questioner has been Aaron Rodgers, the Green Bay Packers quarterback. The more quickly he hangs up his helmet and hosts "Jeopardy!" the better!

Today's deal features a surprising play -- a Hail Mary.

What should the quarterback do in three no-trump after West leads a fourth-highest heart six?

North has just enough to raise to three no-trump. Obviously, it might not make, but the game bonus is so huge that it pays to gamble.

The run-of-the-mill declarer will play low from the board at trick one, to guarantee a heart trick. However, East wins with the queen and returns the suit, West taking

## Word Mine

O  
E D C  
I U L I S

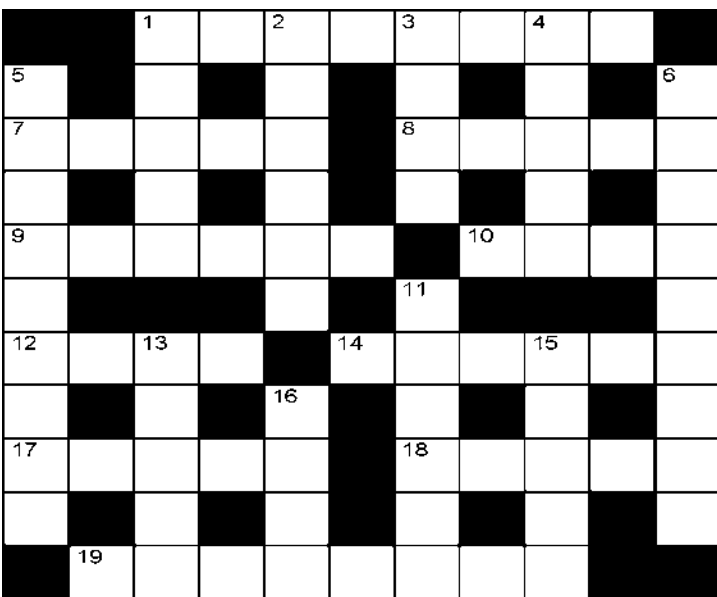
TODAY'S RATINGS: 27 AVERAGE: 30  
GOOD: 34 OUTSTANDING

How many words of four or more letters can you make from the letters shown in today's puzzle? In making a word, each letter may be used once only. Each word must contain the letter at the top of the pyramid. There should be at least one nine letter word. Plurals, foreign words and proper names are not allowed.

South: 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343, 344, 345, 346, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361, 362, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369, 370, 371, 372, 373, 374, 375, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 386, 387, 388, 389, 390, 391, 392, 393, 394, 395, 396, 397, 398, 399, 400, 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 408, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 429, 430, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436, 437, 438, 439, 440, 441, 442, 443, 444, 445, 446, 447, 448, 449, 450, 451, 452, 453, 454, 455, 456, 457, 458, 459, 460, 461, 462, 463, 464, 465, 466, 467, 468, 469, 470, 471, 472, 473, 474, 475, 476, 477, 478, 479, 480, 481, 482, 483, 484, 485, 486, 487, 488, 489, 490, 491, 492, 493, 494, 495, 496, 497, 498, 499, 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 506, 507, 508, 509, 510, 511, 512, 513, 514, 515, 516, 517, 518, 519, 520, 521, 522, 523, 524, 525, 526, 527, 528, 529, 530, 531, 532, 533, 534, 535, 536, 537, 538, 539, 540, 541, 542, 543, 544, 545, 546, 547, 548, 549, 550, 551, 552, 553, 554, 555, 556, 557, 558, 559, 560, 561, 562, 563, 564, 565, 566, 567, 568, 569, 570, 571, 572, 573, 574, 575, 576, 577, 578, 579, 580, 581, 582, 583, 584, 585, 586, 587, 588, 589, 590, 591, 592, 593, 594, 595, 596, 597, 598, 599, 600, 601, 602, 603, 604, 605, 606, 607, 608, 609, 610, 611, 612, 613, 614, 615, 616, 617, 618, 619, 620, 621, 622, 623, 624, 625, 626, 627, 628, 629, 630, 631, 632, 633, 634, 635, 636, 637, 638, 639, 640, 641, 642, 643, 644, 645, 646, 647, 648, 649, 650, 651, 652, 653, 654, 655, 656, 657, 658, 659, 660, 661, 662, 663, 664, 665, 666, 667, 668, 669, 670, 671, 672, 673, 674, 675, 676, 677, 678, 679, 680, 681, 682, 683, 684, 685, 686, 687, 688, 689, 690, 691, 692, 693, 694, 695, 696, 697, 698, 699, 700, 701, 702, 703, 704, 705, 706, 707, 708, 709, 710, 711, 712, 713, 714, 715, 716, 717, 718, 719, 720, 721, 722, 723, 724, 725, 726, 727, 728, 729, 730, 731, 732, 733, 734, 735, 736, 737, 738, 739, 740, 741, 742, 743, 744, 745, 746, 747, 748, 749, 750, 751, 752, 753, 754, 755, 756, 757, 758, 759, 760, 761, 762, 763, 764, 765, 766, 767, 768, 769, 770, 771, 772, 773, 774, 775, 776, 777, 778, 779, 780, 781, 782, 783, 784, 785, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790, 791, 792, 793, 794, 795, 796, 797, 798, 799, 800, 801, 802, 803, 804, 805, 806, 807, 808, 809, 810, 811, 812, 813, 814, 815, 816, 817, 818, 819, 820, 821, 822, 823, 824, 825, 826, 827, 828, 829, 830, 831, 832, 833, 834, 835, 836, 837, 838, 839, 840, 841, 842, 843, 844, 845, 846, 847, 848, 849, 850, 851, 852, 853, 854, 855, 856, 857, 858, 859, 860, 861, 862, 863, 864, 865, 866, 867, 868, 869, 870, 871, 872, 873, 874, 875, 876, 877, 878, 879, 880, 881, 882, 883, 884, 885, 886, 887, 888, 889, 890, 891, 892, 893, 894, 895, 896, 897, 898, 899, 900, 901, 902, 903, 904, 905, 906, 907, 908, 909, 910, 911, 912, 913, 914, 915, 916, 917, 918, 919, 920, 921, 922, 923, 924, 925, 926, 927, 928, 929, 930, 931, 932, 933, 934, 935, 936, 937, 938, 939, 940, 941, 942, 943, 944, 945, 946, 947, 948, 949, 950, 951, 952, 953, 954, 955, 956, 957, 958, 959, 960, 961, 962, 963, 964, 965, 966, 967, 968, 969, 970, 971, 972, 973, 974, 975, 976, 977, 978, 979, 980, 981, 982, 983, 984, 985, 986, 987, 988, 989, 990, 991, 992, 993, 994, 995, 996, 997, 998, 999, 1000.

Opening lead: ♠ 4

## QUICK CROSSWORD



Across

- Cumbersome (8)
- Bid (5)
- Sword (8)
- Irregular in quality (6)
- Engrave with acid (4)
- Hankering (4)
- Beer maker (6)
- Skin abrasion (5)
- World-weariness (5)
- Filip (8)

Down

- Out of condition (5)
- Deserving (6)
- Facilitate (4)
- First appearance (5)
- Closing up (anag) (9)
- Sluggish (9)
- Trying experience (6)
- Map (5)
- Tapers off (5)
- Appear to be (4)

## YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

Across: 1. Walkover, 6. Lint, 7. Nearly, 9. Order, 11. Cheer, 12. Issue, 13. Ogres, 16. Grotto, 18. Kiwi, 19. Daybreak.

Down: 1. Welcoming, 2. Lined, 3. Vent, 4. Roadhog, 5. All, 8. Yardsick, 10. Erupted, 14. Raise, 15. Cosy, 17. Raw.

## jumble

GTHTI  
TLASN  
CCNIOI  
RUENNO



Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

(Answers tomorrow)

that trick and playing a third round to declarer's jack. South, stuck in his hand, cannot win more than eight tricks. An erudite East, looking at the club king, won't play the heart ace on dummy's four at trick one. As usual, the hurry-up offense cost another contract. Take a timeout. Declarer must risk looking stupid -- he must immediately punt with dummy's heart king. If it loses, an extra undertrick will

be conceded. But when it wins, South can take the club finesse. However, he mustn't fumble. He must run the club nine, the lowest card on the board that can win the trick if the finesse is working. Then declarer continues with the club jack and a third club. He will take two spades, one heart, two diamonds and four clubs -- touchdown!



## SHORT TAKES

## English umpires for WTC title clash

**Dubai:** England's Richard Illingworth and Michael Gough will be the on-field umpires for the World Test Championship final between India and New Zealand, starting June 18 in Southampton. Former England opener Chris Broad will be the ICC match referee for the marquee game. Richard Kettleborough, also a member of the elite panel, will be the TV umpire, and Alex Wharf of the Emirates ICC International Panel of Umpires the fourth official, the ICC said in a statement. ICC Senior Manager (Umpires and Referees), Adrian Griffith said: "We are pleased to announce an experienced team of match officials for the final of the World Test Championship." — *PTI*

## ISL teams to field 7 Indian players

**Mumbai:** The Indian Super League's 2021-22 season will witness an increase in local players' on-field participation thanks to a new set of guidelines that mandates clubs to field a minimum of seven footballers at one time from the previous six. A rise in the number of Indian players means one spot less for foreign stars which will now be capped at four. "Indian Super League 2021-22 will witness an increase in number of Indian players in the playing XI, as the new Coach & Player Selection Guidelines of Football Sports Development Limited (FSDL) now mandates clubs to have a minimum of seven Indian players on the field at any point of time," the ISL said in a release — *PTI*

## SL players agree to tour England

**Colombo:** The Sri Lankan cricketers have agreed to compete against England on a tour-specific contract but would not sign the annual contracts unless governing body SLC explains the evaluation process. Sri Lanka are scheduled to tour England for three Twenty20s and as many ODIs between between June 18 and July 4. Following a stormy round of talks, the players were told by the management that they would either call off the England tour or send a third string side. The players told the management they would sign a tour-specific contract but need more time to sign the annual contracts. — *PTI*

## Boxer Punia pulls out of Poland Open

**Warsaw:** Olympic-bound Indian wrestler Deepak Punia on Tuesday pulled out of the Poland Open here to avoid aggravating his left-hand injury that he carried into the last Ranking Series event before the Tokyo Games. Punia was to take mat for the 86kg event but forfeited his quarterfinal against American Zahid Valencia. It has been learnt that the 2019 World championships bronze-winner had suffered the injury two-three days before leaving for Warsaw during practice. "He did not want to aggravate the injury and had informed the Federation that he will take a call on competing after reaching. After assessing his hand, he decided not to take the mat," a source said. — *PTI*

## BAI asks IOA to allow 4 coaches

**New Delhi:** The Badminton Association of India (BAI) has written to the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) for sanction of four travelling coaches, including chief national coach Pullula Gopichand, and two physios to travel with the Indian badminton contingent to the Tokyo Olympics. Apart from Gopichand, who has been to the last three Olympics, the three foreign coaches — Agus Dwi Santoso (Indonesia), Park Tae Sang (Korea) and Mathias Boe (Denmark) were named in the letter, besides the two physios Sumansh Sivalanka and Evangline Baddam. "Badminton has best shot at medals in Tokyo and a letter was sent to IOA to this respect mentioning the six member support team that also includes chief coach Gopichand's name along with the squad of four players," a BAI source said. — *PTI*

## TRAILBLAZER

## Zidansek becomes first Slovenian woman in Slam semi-finals

**Paris, June 8:** World number 85 Tamara Zidansek became the first woman from Slovenia to reach the semi-finals of a Grand Slam at the French Open on Tuesday, while Stefanos Tsitsipas hopes to stay on course for a first major final when he meets rival Daniil Medvedev. The unheralded Zidansek advanced 7-5, 4-6, 8-6 against Spain's Paula Badosa and will play Kazakh 21st seed Elena Rybakina or 31st-seeded Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova of Russia for a place in Saturday's final.

"I'm really, really happy to be in the semi-finals," said Zidansek, who had never gone beyond the second round of a Slam before this year's Roland Garros.

Zidansek recovered from 3-0 and a double break down in the first set and then saved three break points at 6-6 in the decider against Badosa, the 33rd seed with the most clay court wins (17) on the WTA tour this season.

The Slovene took her second match point to continue her breakout performance. She is two wins away from emulating Maribor-born Mima Jausovec, who won Roland Garros in 1977 while representing Yugoslavia.

Later, Greek fifth seed Tsitsipas will try to reach a third successive major semi-final, having lost a thrilling a five-setter to Novak Djokovic in Paris last year.

Blocking his path is second seed Medvedev, the Russian who hadn't won a match in four previous visits to the French Open but has looked increasingly assured on clay over the past week. Medvedev, a runner-up at the 2019 US Open and this year's Australian Open finalist, holds a 6-1 head-to-head advantage over Tsitsipas.

He beat the Greek in straight sets in the last four in Melbourne in their most recent meeting.

"He does serve extremely well, I have to say. He has improved over the years with his serve. This is going to be something that I will have to face," said Tsitsipas, who compared Medvedev's serve to that of John Isner.



Tamara Zidansek returns the ball to Spain's Paula Badosa during their quarterfinal match of the French Open at the Roland Garros stadium on Tuesday. — *AP*

## THE RESULTS

**Women's quarterfinals:** Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova (RUS x31) bt Elena Rybakina (KAZ x21) 6-7 (2/7), 6-2, 9-7; Tamara Zidansek (SLO) bt Paula Badosa (ESP x33) 7-5, 4-6, 8-6.

"Of course, myself playing well, I feel like I don't have to think against who I'm facing or not, I just have to play my game, let the rest be witnessed."

Medvedev could take over the number one ranking if he reaches the final and Djokovic does not.

## 'HOPE IT'S BETTER EVERY YEAR'

He has a career win-loss record of 15-20 on clay, but the return of Roland Garros to its traditional May-June slot and far

warmer temperatures have helped the Russian shake off bad memories of past editions.

"I'm able with these balls, with these conditions, to make shots that are not going to let my opponent attack me straightaway. Then I can take control of the game and be a great mover on clay," he said.

"Definitely a better feeling than losing the first round, going home on Tuesday like I think two or three times I lost here

Sunday. It's not a good feeling. I hope it's going to be better with every year."

The winner of the night match, the last to be played behind closed doors before the easing of a nationwide curfew, will go on to play Alexander Zverev or newcomer Alejandro Davidovich Fokina for a spot in Sunday's final.

Zverev, seeded sixth, is through to the French Open last eight for the third time in four years. He has won his past 12 sets

after recovering from two sets down against qualifier Oscar Otte in the first round.

"If I play my best tennis I'm difficult to beat," said the German.

Spain's Davidovich Fokina, who turned 22 last week, is appearing in his first Grand Slam quarterfinal.

World number 22 Rybakina, who denied Serena Williams in her latest bid for a record-tying 24th Grand Slam title, is the highest-ranked player left in her half of the draw.

The 21-year-old made the final at four of her first five events in 2020, but her momentum was then stalled by the Covid-19 shutdown.

Born in Russia, but representing Kazakhstan, Rybakina has advanced here without losing a set. She next meets doubles partner Pavlyuchenkova, back in the French Open quarter-finals for the first time since 2011.

"The end goal is always to win the tournaments and dream and go of course to win the Grand Slam," said Rybakina.

"So every time I step in on court I try not to think against who I play. Just try to do my work, follow the plan which we have. If it works well, I'm winning, and if it's not, I'm just learning."

## ANASTASIA IN SEMIS AFTER 52 ATTEMPTS

Russia's Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova reached her first Grand Slam semi-final at the 52nd attempt on Tuesday with a three-set win over doubles partner Elena Rybakina at the French Open.

Pavlyuchenkova, the world number 32, won 6-7 (2/7), 6-2, 9-7 and will face 85th-ranked Tamara Zidansek of Slovenia for a place in the final.

"There are so many emotions to reach a Grand Slam semi-final for the first time," said 29-year-old Pavlyuchenkova who had fallen at the quarter-final stage at the majors on six previous occasions since her 2007 debut.

"It's tough to play against your friend." She added: "Mentally I'm probably more solid now. Just trying to play smarter tennis. I'm working harder." — *AFP*

## RACIAL | ABUSE

## Second player under scanner

**London, June 8:** One more current England player is being investigated by the country's cricket board for his allegedly racist remarks on Twitter as a teenager after Ollie Robinson was suspended for similar conduct.

The old tweets of the player in question were unearthed by wisden.com, which did not reveal the identity of the cricketer since he had not reached the age of 16 at that time.

The website posted screenshots of the tweet without revealing the player's identity.

".....your going out with a asian," the player seem to have posted with hashtags of #asianthroughhand-through #hweello #chinky.

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) is now investigating the matter.

"It has been brought to our attention that an England player has posted historic offensive material on their social media account. We are looking into it and will make a further comment in due course," an ECB spokesperson was quoted as saying by the website.

The offensive posts came to fore hours after the ECB suspended Robinson pending an investigation into his racist tweets in 2012 and 2013. Robinson has already apologised for his behaviour after his old tweets emerged. — *PTI*

## OLLIE HAS FULL SUPPORT OF THE TEAM: ANDERSON

**London, June 8:** Veteran England pacer James Anderson says the team has unanimously accepted Ollie Robinson's apology for posting racist and sexist tweets as a teenager nine years ago and the suspended pacer has full support of the side.

"He stood up in front of the group and apologised and you could see how sincere he was and upset he was, and I think as a group we appreciate that he is a different person now. He's done a lot of maturing and growing since then, and he's got the full support of the team."

The UK's political class also weighed in on the issue urging ECB to reconsider its decision of suspending the bowler. — *PTI*



James Anderson

## INDIA MIGHT HAVE TWO FLAG-BEARERS AT TOKYO

**New Delhi, June 8:** In a first, India might have two flag-bearers — one male and one female — at the upcoming Tokyo Olympics to ensure "gender parity", Indian Olympic Association chief Narinder Batra said on Tuesday.

The names will be revealed "soon", Batra said. "It's not yet decided. The matter is still in consultation stage but there is a possibility that this year there would be two flag-bearers — one male and one female for gender parity," Batra said.

Abhinav Bindra was the flag-bearer at the opening ceremony of the 2016 Games in Rio de Janeiro. — *PTI*

## Indian players to get 3-week break

**London, June 8:** The Indian team management has decided to give a three-week break to its players after the World Test Championship final in a bid to address the mental fatigue that might be triggered by lengthy spells in a bio-bubble.

The WTC final against New Zealand will be held from June 18-22 at the Ageas Bowl in Southampton and the members of the Indian squad will disperse for close to three weeks (20 days) before regrouping on July 14 to prepare for the five-match series against England starting in Nottingham from August 4.

"As skipper Virat Kohli and coach Ravi Shastri had told the media at the pre-departure press conference, there will be a break. There is a six-week gap between WTC final and opening Test against England, so we had to address the issue of players' well-being. Within UK, they can disperse off, go for a holiday, meet friends and family," a senior BCCI official said.

Obviously, there could be some team get-togethers also but players would be free to choose how they want to spend their time. "Most of them have come to UK for multiple times and have friends and acquaintances around the country. It's only fair that they can switch off."

Kohli on June 2, during the pre-departure, had answered a query if the 42-day gap between the two assignments would affect the team's preparations. "I feel like after you are done with WTC, it's a great opportunity to refresh and restructure. If things are okay, out in England, we would have finished our quarantine period and just for the guys to be normal for a few periods of time just disconnect again," Kohli had said back then. — *PTI*



Tamil Nadu Basketball Association secretary and managing director of Arise Investment and Capital Private Limited, Aadhav Arjuna hands over a cheque for ₹1 crore to TN Chief Minister M.K. Stalin. Aadhav contributed the amount towards CM's special scheme for the Covid-orphaned children.

## Chhetri goes past Messi's goal tally

**Doha, June 8:** Indian football talisman Sunil Chhetri has surpassed Argentina's global superstar Lionel Messi to become the second-highest active international goal-scorer with 74 strikes, adding another feather to his illustrious career.

The 36-year-old Chhetri achieved the staggering feat with his brace against Bangladesh in the joint preliminary qualifying round match for 2022 FIFA World Cup and 2023 AFC Asian Cup here on Monday night.

The seasoned striker, who helped India register their first win in six years in World Cup qualifiers, now stands only behind Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo (103) in the active international goal-scorer list. Chhetri leads Barcelona star Messi by two goals and sits a place above Ali Mabkhout of the UAE, who is third on the list with 73 strikes to his name.

Messi scored his 72nd international goal in a World Cup qualifier against Chile last Thursday, while Mabkhout added to his tally against Malaysia, also last week.

At the Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium on Monday, Chhetri broke the deadlock in the 79th minute when he headed in Ashique Kuruniyan's cross from the left, and then sealed the victory by curling in a shot from



Sunil Chhetri

long range in added time.

"The India captain is also just goal away from entering world football's all-time top-10. He is behind Hungary's Sandor Kocsis, Japan's Kunishige Kamamoto, and Kuwait's Bashar Abdullah, who all have 75 goals.

## I DON'T COUNT NO. OF GOALS: CHHETRI

Chhetri has never liked counting his goals and he prefers to keep it that way even after surpassing the great Lionel Messi as the second highest scorer in international football.

The skipper said he will get down to counting his goals probably 10 years down the line. "I do not count the number of goals. 10 years later, we will sit together, have a chat and then count," he said.

Instead of his goals, Chhetri focussed on the many lessons his team will take home from Monday's game. — *PTI*

## Manu feels Croatia tour 'perfect' before Olympics

**New Delhi, June 8:** One of India's strongest Olympic medal hopes, ace shooter Manu Bhaker feels preparations "cannot get better" than the ongoing training-cum-competition tour of Croatia as she works on her consistency ahead of the Tokyo Games.

Thirteen Olympic-bound pistol and rifle shooters are currently training in Zagreb after having participated as guest invitees in the European Championship recently in Osijek. They will also compete in the ISSF World Cup, also scheduled in Osijek from June 22 to July 3. The Croatia tour was arranged after the National Rifle Association of India realised that it was not possible to hold camps in India amid a deadly second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic.

"The tour is very helpful. We are well looked after, our health and fitness needs are taken care of and, most importantly, we are getting to train at a very good shooting range and with some good competition as well," Bhaker said from Zagreb.

"So, I believe it cannot get better, leading up to the Olympic Games." When Bhaker says she wants to live up to her own expectations, the remark can be interpreted as a burning desire to win the gold medal, and it has often panned out that way in a stellar career seeking its zenith in a few weeks' time.

In an ominous sign for her challengers ahead of the Tokyo Games, the champion Indian shooter says she is wants to avoid being weighed down by



expectations. "I just want to meet my own expectations. I am not thinking about anything else but focusing on giving my best for India in the Games."

The 19-year-old pistol ace will enter Tokyo as one of India's biggest medal hopes having won almost everything one can after a sensational start to her career.

According to the champion shooter, many of her teammates stand a chance of finishing on the podium in Tokyo and given the Indian shooters' form in recent years, she is not far-fetched in her thought.

"I don't think I am the biggest medal hope... that is unfair. In our shooting team itself, I don't see anyone who is not the biggest medal hope. Then there are world class athletes in other sports as well for example badminton, weightlifting, wrestling, archery, boxing and the like," she said. — *PTI*

## ROADS AROUND VENUES CLOSED

Roads were being closed off on Tuesday around Tokyo Olympic venues, including the new \$1.4 billion National Stadium where the opening ceremony is set for July 23.