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## Spoorthi Priya FB grievance officer

NEW DELHI: Social media giant Facebook has named Spoorthi Priya as its grievance officer for India on its website. The move comes in the backdrop of the new IT rules coming into effect recently that require significant social media intermediaries - those with over 50 lakh users - to appoint a grievance officer, nodal officer and a chief compliance officer. These personnel are required to be residing in India. As per Facebook's website, users can contact Spoorthi Priya - who is the Grievance Officer - through an e-mail ID. Additionally, users can also contact Facebook in India via post at an address in New Delhi, as per the page.



## Over 50 killed in Pak train crash

KARACHI: Two passenger trains collided in Pakistan's southern Sindh Province on Monday morning, killing over 50 people and injuring 70 others, prompting authorities to call in the Army and paramilitary forces for the challenging task of rescue and relief operations. The accident occurred when the Millat Express train from Karachi to Sargodha derailed and fell on the opposite track and collided with Sir Syed Express headed from Rawalpindi to Karachi, a spokesperson of Pakistan Railways said. The collision, in which bogies of the Millat Express train overturned, took place near Dharki, a city located in the Ghotki district of upper Sindh.

## Harris' plane returns after tech glitch



JOINT BASE ANDREWS: A technical problem that involved "no immediate safety issue" forced Vice President Kamala Harris' plane to return to Joint Base Andrews in Maryland about 30 minutes after she had left Sunday on a trip to Guatemala and Mexico. Air Force Two landed safely and she gave a thumbs-up when she got off. "I'm good, I'm good. We all said a little prayer, but we're good," she said. The Vice President departed in another plane about an hour and a half later. "While there has no immediate safety issue, out of an abundance of caution they returned to JBA where they have all the parts and mechanics they need to fix the issue," reports said.



## BCCI mulls Oct 15 IPL final

# FREE VAX JAB FOR ALL: PM

## Centre to propel vaccination drive from June 21

NEW DELHI

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Monday announced that the Central government will provide free coronavirus vaccine to states for inoculation of all above the age of 18 from June 21 and asserted that the vaccine supply would be increased significantly in the country in coming days.

"The Union government itself will buy 75% of the total vaccine production from vaccine manufacturers and give it free to the state governments," Modi said.

The Prime Minister hit out at the Opposition states for indulging in 'vaccine politics'. "In the midst of decreasing coronavirus cases in the country, different suggestions started coming before the Central government, different demands started being made," Modi said, referring to demands of decentralisation of the vaccine process by various state governments.

He said that there was opposition to the Centre deciding the age limit for vaccination, as well.

"Starting from January 16 this year till the end of April, India's vaccination programme ran mainly



### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana extended till Diwali to ensure free ration to 80 crore people
- India fought its battle against pandemic on multiple fronts and we have lost many people
- UDID Card included in list of documents required for Covid-19 vaccination
- Developed medical infra to save millions of lives. In April to May, we witnessed shortage of medical oxygen and made many efforts to arrange it in a short time
- Vaccine supply will increase even more in the coming days. Today, seven companies in the country are producing different types of vaccines. Trial of three more vaccines are also going on

## Foodgrains to 80 cr people free till Diwali: Modi

NEW DELHI

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Monday announced that the Union government will distribute free foodgrains to around 80 crore people till Diwali for providing relief to the poor amid the second wave of Covid-19. In April, the Centre had

announced the distribution of free foodgrains for the months of May and June under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMKAY). In his address to the nation, the Prime Minister announced the government's decision to extend the scheme till Diwali.

Last year when the lockdown was imposed due to coronavirus, free ration was provided to more than 80 crore people for eight months under the PMKAY, Modi said. "This year too due to the second wave (of the pandemic), the scheme was implemented for May and June.

under the supervision of the Central government. The country was moving ahead on the path of providing free vaccine to all.

The citizens of the country, following discipline, were getting the vaccine when it was their turn," Modi said.

"However, from now on, it has been decided that the Government of India will also bear the responsibility of 25% of

## AP Lockdown till June 20

### Govt offices & businesses to function between 6 am & 2 pm from Friday

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
AMARAVATI

THE State Government extended lockdown till June 20. This decision was taken after a review meeting chaired by Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy.

While extending the lockdown, the govern-

ment decided to permit all government offices and commercial establishments to function between 6 am to 2 pm from June 11. The lockdown was first imposed on May 5 to stem the rising infections.

Notably, in the past two weeks, there has been a significant decline in the daily count of Covid cases. There is a large availability of beds, both general and ICU and also the demand for oxygen which had shot up to 700 tonnes a day has come down to 400 tonnes now.

the work related to vaccination with the states. This arrangement will be implemented in the coming 2 weeks," the PM added.

He said that in these two weeks, the Central and state governments will together make necessary preparations according to the new guidelines.

Modi said the private sector hospitals can continue to procure 25 per cent of vaccines, but their service charge would be capped at Rs 150 per dose over the fixed price of the vaccine.

As several states take cautious steps towards unlocking and easing of restrictions with a decline in Covid-19 cases, the prime minister said vaccination is like a protection shield against the virus and asserted that vaccine supply would be increased significantly in India in coming days.

Modi said seven companies are producing various vaccines against the coronavirus in the country and trial of three more vaccines is at an advanced stage.



## CM moots 3 paediatric care centres to tackle third wave

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
AMARAVATI

KEEPING in view of the threat of third wave striking the country which according to experts may affect children more, the State Government has decided to set up paediatric care centres at Visakhapatnam, Tirupati and Krishna- Guntur regions.

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy directed the officials to prepare an action plan for the construction of each hospital at a cost of Rs 180 crore.

Earlier, the officials briefed the Chief Minister on the information they have regarding the possible third wave and discussed the measures to be taken to protect children. They said that the State Government needs to be in a state of full preparedness in case of third wave sets in. The Chief Minister directed the officials to create awareness among the parents on the measures they need to take to protect children from getting affected by the third wave. He also asked the officials to provide training to ASHA and health workers on identifying symptoms among children.

He said paediatric wards should be set up in all teaching hospitals following national standards. He further asked officials to inspect PHCs and area hospitals and make arrangements to provide treatment to children. Attention should also be paid to procure required medicines in advance and recruit doctors considering the impending threat of the third wave, he added

## CBSE Class 12 practicals to be held online only

### Schools told to submit marks by June 28

NEW DELHI

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) on Monday announced that schools that have not completed the practicals or internal assessment components for Class 12 exams should conduct the remaining assessments in an online mode only and upload the marks by June 28.

On Monday, the board issued a circular stating that "schools with pending practicals/internal assessments are permitted to conduct the same now in only online mode."

For those practicals and subjects that need external evaluation, the external evaluators will decide on an exam date in consultation with the internal examiners and conduct

viva voce through an online meeting. For others, the teacher concerned will conduct the internal assessment through an online mode.

"Both the examiners should keep in mind that the marks allotted should not bunch towards the maximum marks which is highly unlikely in view of diverse levels of students," the board stated in a letter to the heads of all CBSE-affiliated schools. Many schools have not completed their practicals, which were to be conducted physically in schools, as most states, including Delhi, ordered a return to complete closure of schools when Covid-19 cases surged again in April.



## Antigua orders probe as Choksi names kidnappers

NEW DELHI: The Royal Police Force of Antigua and Barbuda has started investigations into the alleged abduction of absconding diamond merchant Mehul Choksi to neighbouring Dominica on a complaint filed by his lawyers, Prime Minister Gaston Browne told a local media outlet.

Browne said that Choksi's lawyers gave the names of people involved in the alleged abduction to the police commissioner in a complaint, the Antigua News Room reported. The Antigua and Barbuda PM also said that if the claims are true, then it is a serious matter. Browne said the police are taking the complaint seriously, the report said. "Choksi has filed a complaint with the Royal Police Force of Antigua and Barbuda to the extent that he was abducted. He made a formal claim through his attorneys that he was abducted from Antigua and taken to Dominica so it is a report that police is taking seriously and they are currently investigating the abduction," Browne said.

## AIIMS begins screening of children for Covaxin trials

NEW DELHI

THE screening of children for trial of Covaxin, India's first indigenously developed Covid-19 vaccine, among those aged between 2 and 18 started at the AIIMS here on Monday. Participants would be given the vaccine after their screening report comes. The trial is to be conducted on 525 healthy vol-



unteers. In the trial, the vaccine will be given by intramuscular route in two doses at day 0 and day 28.

"The screening of children

for conducting trial of Covaxin has started. Participants would be given the vaccine after their screening reports come," Dr Sanjay Rai, Professor at the Centre for Community Medicine at AIIMS, said. India's drug regulator had granted permission for conducting the phase 2/3 clinical trial of Covaxin in the age group 2 to 18 years on May 12.

## 18 dead in fire at Pune sanitiser firm

PUNE

AT least 18 employees of a chemical factory in Maharashtra's Pune have died and several are missing as a massive fire broke out in the sanitiser-manufacturing unit of the firm, police said.

A big contingent of the local fire department was present on the spot to fight the blaze and rescue those stuck inside, officials said. At least six fire engines were rushed to the plant of SVS Aqua Technologies in Pune.

The local fire department said that 37 employees had

### Rescuers search for missing staff



been working inside the unit when the fire broke out; 20 of them were rescued. "According to company officials, at least 17 of their workers were missing after the blaze broke out," an official said. In visuals,

a thick plume of black smoke is seen over the campus of the sanitiser firm. People run towards safety near the gate, while others stand still to watch the fire. He said six to seven fire tenders were rushed

to the chemical unit, where flames were doused but the search is underway for the missing workers. Asked about the possible cause of the blaze, Potphode said as per the company officials, the fire started during packing of plastic materials in the premises.

"Due to some spark at the (packaging) section, the fire broke out and as there was plastic around, it spread rapidly," said Potphode. Dr Abhinav Deshmukh, Superintendent of Police, Pune district, said the plant is engaged in producing chlorine dioxide for water purification.

## Climate change to make monsoons more erratic: Study

NEW DELHI

The Indian monsoon is likely to get much more dangerous and wetter as global warming alters the system, new research says. India has witnessed a change in monsoon pattern over the years as climate disruptions take a toll on the system in the sub-continent.

The research published in the journal Science Advances stated that scientists analysed changes in the past million years to conclude that monsoon is set for the worse. "We find that the projected monsoon response to ongoing ice melt and rising

carbon dioxide levels is fully consistent with dynamics of the past 0.9 million years," the research paper said.

Led by Steven Clemens, a professor of earth, environmental and planetary sciences at Brown University, the team of researchers analysed mud samples recovered from the Bay of Bengal to reach the conclusion. The team drilled 200-meter long core samples during a two-month research tour on a converted oil-drilling ship, the JOIDES Resolution. The samples provided an in-depth analysis of monsoon rainfall. Scientists analysed the fossils of



plankton embedded in the sample that had died over hundreds of years as monsoon rains put more freshwater into the bay, reducing

the salinity at the surface. The samples provided an in-depth analysis of monsoon rainfall.

Analysing the samples, re-

searchers found that the high rainfall and low salinity came following a period of high carbon dioxide concentration in the atmosphere

and falling ice volumes. "We can verify over the past million years that increase in carbon dioxide in the atmosphere have been followed by substantial increases in rainfall in the South Asian monsoon system. The predictions of the climate models are wonderfully consistent with what we see in the past million years," Clemens was quoted as saying by New York Times. The Indian monsoon, which is one of the prime cause of floods in several parts of the countries as rivers get inundated from excessive rainfall, could emerge as a major worry for people as the risk of danger-

ous season grows. The monsoon is also key in agriculture that is dependent on seasonal rains for irrigation.

Meanwhile, the Indian Meteorological Department said the Southwest Monsoon has covered the north-east region, nearly four days after its normal date. The Southwest Monsoon made an onset over Kerala, which marks the beginning of the four-month rainfall season, on June 3 after a delay of two days. The system has already covered Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu and parts of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana since its arrival just days ago.



# Womenia

## I am born with music in me: Sanika Kulkarni

SUKANT DEEPAK

Starting her classical training at the age of five, this third generation musician who completed her ‘Sangeet Visharad’ at age of 17 smiles, “I think I am born with music in me,” says Sanika Kulkarni.

While she got her initial training from her father, Sarod maestro Pandit Rajan Kulkarni, her mother too is a singer. “I grew up listening to music, and it became an indispensable ‘part’ of me. I could never separate it from myself. Later, I started learning from Veena Sahasrabuddhe, and had a supportive family every step,” says this Hindustani classical vocalist.

Stressing that her journey has only begun, Kulkarni, whose training under Veena has led her to learn fine techniques and nuances in Gwalior gayaki - swarlagav, presentation of bandishes, raag vistaar, meend, gamak, and expression of raag is currently being trained by Omkar Dadarkar.

Recipient of the YuvaGayikaPuraskar and Sur RatnaPuraskar in 2020, the young singer feels that a wholesome approach needs to be discovered in order to generate funds for the classical arts. Adding that while more and more youngsters are ready to take up the classical arts as their profession, Kulkarni, who

Private companies must take similar initiatives and support our heritage and artists as well

was recently a part of HCL Baithak, adds, “It is very hard to find time and space for music, and that too classical. All the impetus in the entertainment industry is shared between films, web-series or Bollywood music. Is it not anyone’s responsibility to find new avenues where traditional arts can thrive in this era?”

The lockdowns have been a time of break and space for learning and reflecting on her music. “For artists like us, who live on the wheels, this time has been very ‘new’, but eventually, we all had to accept it. Of course, digital concerts were and still are on a rise, and they have been instrumental in keeping us connected with our audience. I feel if you have a positive frame of mind,

everything falls into

place.”

Adding that ‘future’ for her means working everyday in order to be a fine artist and hoping to reach new audiences,

Kulkarni, who looks upon Veena Sahasrabuddhe, Kumar Gandharva, Ashwini Bhide, Kaushiki Chakraborty and Niladri Kumar as her idols is glad that



TWEET PATROL

**RAVEENA TANDON**  
**@TANDONRAVEENA**  
Condolences.. May Ishwar give strength to the families of the victims to cope with the loss of their loved ones

## Ensure you always look stylish

Gain confidence in your style with fashion advice for styling every look in your closet.

**Work your capsule wardrobe**  
Make sure you have reliable wardrobe staples: an iconic little black dress, a pair of jeans that fit perfectly, a classic blazer, simple T-shirts and button-downs in neutral colours, and an effortless leather jacket (or denim jacket). Investing in a capsule collection of mix-and-match basics (and learning how to style them) is the key to looking put together.

**Make sure your clothes fit perfectly**  
One trick to making any item of clothing look amazing is to hire a good tailor. Tailored clothing not only looks polished, but it also feels more comfortable. Pants that drag on the ground and dresses that bunch up awkwardly won't make you feel stylish. If your capsule wardrobe fits you well, you can start to play with over- and under-sized items in a way that feels fashionable, not sloppy.

**Add a belt**  
Adding a belt to your look is one of the easiest ways to make any outfit look more put-together. It's also a great trick for bringing balance to a look that otherwise might not work—like a long cashmere sweater and billowy midi skirt.

**Play with colour**  
If you're nervous about adding colour to your look, start with just one colorful piece, and keep the rest of your look neutral. As you get more comfortable with colors, you'll learn which color combina-



tions work best for your style. Take a look at a colour wheel for inspiration.

**Mix patterns and textures**  
The days of matching your handbag to your shoes are over. Clashing textures and prints make a bold fashion statement. Start

small with neutral patterns like stripes and low-key textures like leather and knits, adding in the sequins and paisleys in small amounts (like a scarf, tie, or clutch) until you learn what works for you.



## Neem and Aloe Vera, your skin care essentials

N LOTHUNGBENIHUMTSEO

Tired of investing in expensive skin and body care products that assure results but fail to give any? Your answer lies in simple, inexpensive natural ingredients which pack a host of benefits and aren't going to load your skin with chemicals.

Summers in India are getting hotter with each passing year and the monsoons are almost upon us in some ways.

The heat causes our skin to become rough and tanned, the sweat and grime clogs pores, ultimately resulting in an uneven skin tone. Before you purchase your next 'expensive-so-must-be-great' product, it's time to check out the kitchen garden for some humble Neem and Aloe Vera.

Aloe vera contains 75 potentially active constituents: vitamins, enzymes, minerals, sugars, lignin, saponins,

salicylic acids and amino acids.

It contains vitamins A (beta-carotene), C and E, which are antioxidants. So basically, it packs in the power of the multiple serums and masks we use into one refreshing gel. Neem, especially in the oil format contains fatty acids (EFA) and is high on the disinfection quotient.

A combination of the two can help with a myriad of skin issues that concern us during these months.

**Clearing the skin, unclogging pores**

Neem helps with clearing our bacteria and microbes that cause acne and eruptions of the skin; the good acids in aloe vera help with skin regeneration and overall smoothness. When combined, these magic ingredients clear out pores, remove blackheads/whiteheads without drying out the skin or leaving flaky peels. Prolonged use leaves the skin brighter,

even toned and smooth.

**Acts as an anti-pollutant**

The antioxidation properties of Aloe Vera reverses effects of sun burns and tan. Neem helps remove the germ/grime buildup on the skin caused by sweat and grime and is anti-inflammatory. Therefore gives lasting protection from environmental damage especially when used in everyday skin/hygiene products like in a body wash.

**Rejuvenating**

The collagen from the EFA in the neem and the antioxidants in aloe vera help in restoring skin elasticity, improves skin texture and appearance, puts back vitality in skin and helps in plumping the skin to make it look vibrant.

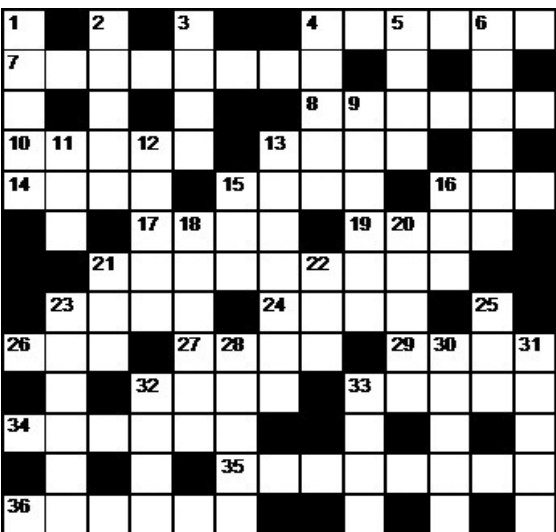
**Hydrating**

The most critical summer skin care

need is always hydration without an oily finish. Our humble aloe vera and neem serves this function too! It moisturizes and freshens the skin especially when used pre-or during daily baths.

Now that you know the benefits, it's time to incorporate these humble ingredients.

If you don't have them readily available, do consider planting them in pots or seek out every day, easy-to-use products like the Vivel Neem Oil and Aloe Vera body wash online or instore.



S E R I F S G I G B  
O U L A V A L A R K  
C A B M E N U U O  
I B A T O N E M E N T  
A R I A A F T C  
L S T U F F B A T H E  
W H O E F S R I  
C R Y P T E E R I E B  
I T I N E R R Y A M M O  
I T I N E R R Y A M M O  
H O N O A K L E Y  
P E S O S L U R E E  
D K I T S E N D E R

SOLUTION TO JUNE 7

### CROSSWORD

Across

- Bicycle seat (6)
- An educated class (8)
- Not these (6)
- Haji destination (5)
- To roll up a sail, or an umbrella! (4)
- Egyptian symbol of life (4)
- Cab (4)
- Project (3)
- Fratricide victim (4)
- Coil (4)
- A type of bomb - "go bed loud" anagram ? (9)
- Japanese sauce (4)
- British actress Nell (4)
- British parent, familiarly (3)
- Faithful (4)
- Poultry building (4)
- Sailor's greeting (4)
- Bowler hat (5)
- Nonetheless (4,2)
- Impetus (8)
- Explosions (6)

Across

- South American animal (5)

### SUDOKU

3						9
	9			8		1
		5	6		7	3
1						2
	3	4			9	5
9						8
		3	2		5	4
	2			4		7
4						1

SOLUTION TO JUNE 7

7	9	6	1	5	8	4	3	2
4	1	8	2	6	3	9	5	7
2	3	5	4	9	7	1	8	6
1	4	9	7	3	6	5	2	8
8	5	3	9	2	1	7	6	4
6	2	7	8	4	5	3	1	9
5	6	2	3	7	9	8	4	1
3	7	1	6	8	4	2	9	5
9	8	4	5	1	2	6	7	3

## Best Friends Day

Life wouldn't be the same without best friends. They're the friends that can be counted on to be there at a moment's notice. The ones who love, laugh, support, and cherish – in both good and bad times.



Friendships are an indestructible bond that join many people together in beautiful ways. Celebrating best friends day is just one of the ways you can acknowledge your awesome sidekick and show them how much you love them.

Take a moment right now to think about that one important person who is there by your side no matter what. They are the person you want to go on vacation with, you turn to them when you are having trouble with relationships and you always want to share secrets with them.

A best friend is the person who you would even share your last cookie with (now that's friendship!). They are the Batman to your Robin, the sugar to your spice, and the sand to your sea! Who is that person for you? Chances are that person that springs to mind first and foremost is most definitely your best friend.



# ‘Toycathon 2021’ to introduce Indian culture in toys

VARANASI

EFFORTS are being made to introduce an element of Indian culture in toys and games.

Training will be given by design professionals on topics like introduction of Indian culture in toy and games, improving the play factor in toy and games, developing and manufacturing; marketing and intellectual property etc.

Dr Manish Arora, an assistant professor of the faculty of Visual Arts in the Banaras Hindu University (BHU), is one of the trainers of the ‘Toycathon 2021’, for which an online nationwide training camp was recently organised.

Arora, who is also the convener of Institute’s Innovation Cell-BHU, said that faculties from the leading institutions of the country including Austin Davis of National Institute of Design, Bikram Pal of Shrishti Manipal Institute of Art, Design and Technology will train the participants.

Apart from the faculties, participants will also be trained by industry experts and independent artists, he said.

Arora said that today India’s toy market is estimated to

be of around \$1.5 billion, however, a large part of it is dominated by imported toys.

Despite India being the originator of the world-renowned games like Chess, Ludo, Snakes and Ladders, India is not one of the leading manufacturers of toys.

Most of the toys sold nationally, and globally, do not represent the Indian heritage, civilisation and value systems.

Keeping this in mind, ‘Toycathon-2021’ has been conceived under the ‘Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan’ launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Toycathon-2021 is an inter-ministerial initiative organised by the Innovation Cell of the Ministry of Education in collaboration with All India Council for Technical Education, Ministry of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Ministry of MSME, Ministry of Textiles and Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

Its main objective is to develop the concept of games and toys based on Indian civilisation, history, culture, mythology and ethos, to challenge the innovative minds of the young citizens of India for innovation in the production of games

and toys.

He said that in order to make India self-reliant in the field of toys, Toycathon-2021 is providing an opportunity for students, teachers, start-ups and toy experts/professionals of India to present their innovative toys and game concepts.

A provisional prize money estimated up to Rs 50 lakhs has also been designated for this scheme.

Arora said that the Innovation Cell of the Ministry of Education has planned to accelerate the manufacture and production of sports toys in the country, in which the faculty of Visual Arts of Banaras Hindu University would be involved in training the participants from all over the country.



# Herbal sanitiser units in rural interiors of UP

LUCKNOW

THE Central Institute of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (CIMAP) in Lucknow will help set up herbal sanitizer manufacturing units in rural parts of the state. The idea behind this is to generate employment for local youths. According to CIMAP officials, the initiative was part of the aroma mission, aimed at propagating farming and use of aromatic and medicinal plants across the country.

CIMAP will also provide training regarding farming for aromatic plants to people across the country.

Experts at CIMAP had developed herbal sanitizer last year and subsequently shared the technology with a private firm with whom it has also inked a pact for mass production of herbal sanitisers. The private firm, along with the institute,



is planning to set up at least two dozen manufacturing units across the state by the year end and hopes to employ nearly 300 educated rural youths.

Manoj Semwal, principal scientist at CIMAP, said: “The plan is to provide technological help to youngsters living in village areas so that they could convert it into an

employment opportunity. We will also share the expertise about the process so that they could expand their business in coming days.” He further said, “The progressive farmers from across the state who are in touch with the institute will be given a preference in the project.”

CIMAP will share technological expertise while the firm will help in setting up machinery and sourcing raw material for the manufacturing plants. The villagers who will get employment at these units can also sell the herbal plants grown in their fields to manufacturing units. In the first phase, the firm has identified villages close to Lucknow, Kanpur, Ghaziabad, Agra and Aligarh to set up the manufacturing units.

Eight manufacturing units will be set up in the first phase and plan is to set up these units by August.

# Punjab extends statewide curbs till June 15, gives some relaxations

CHANDIGARH

ADOPTING a graded approach to reopening, Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Monday ordered extension of Covid-19 statewide restrictions to June 15 with certain relaxations, including allowing opening of shops till 6 p.m. and private offices functioning at 50 per cent strength. However, night curfew will remain in force from 7 p.m. to 6 a.m. on weekdays, including Saturdays, and a regular daylong weekend curfew on Sundays, he announced.

With case positivity declining to 3.2 per cent and active cases also coming down, the Chief Minister allowed gatherings up to 20 people, including weddings and cremations. Entry restrictions (negative Covid test or vaccination) for arrivals in the state have also been done away with.

Recruitment exams will be allowed to be held subject to adherence to social distancing and other appropriate norms, though the online mode should be preferred.

Sports training for national and international events has also been permitted and the Department of Sports and Youth Affairs has been asked to issue the necessary instructions and guide-



lines, which have to be strictly adhered to. Reviewing the Covid situation virtually, with ministers, senior police and administrative officials, and health experts, the Chief Minister said district administration may determine opening of non-essential shops, including on weekends, on the basis of local situation, while ensuring that crowding, leading to spread of Covid, is avoided. On government offices, he said that attendance

can be decided by the head of the office but co-morbid or disabled employees at risk may be exempted. Further relaxations will be allowed in the coming weeks depending on the outcomes, if the cases continue to decline, said Amarinder Singh, adding that gyms and restaurants could be opened after a week with 50 per cent, and other conditions as per expert advice, if the situation improves further. Owners and workers of gyms and restaurants should get themselves vaccinated prior to the reopening, he added. Asserting that Punjab could not afford to let its guard down despite the decline in case load and increasing in testing, the Chief Minister said the virus mutations were a matter of concern, even though the case fatality rate (CFR) was lower than the first wave.

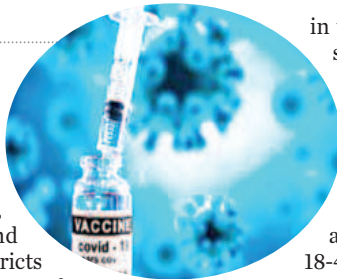
# Punjab to prioritise vax to students travelling abroad

CHANDIGARH

STUDENTS wanting to go abroad for studies from Punjab will now be prioritised in the vaccination process for the 18-45 group, Chief Minister Amarinder Singh announced this on Monday.

At a high-level virtual Covid review meeting, the Chief Minister directed the Health and Medical Education Departments to allow districts to use up to 10 per cent of the doses for 18-45 group for priority categories other than those approved at state level.

Besides students seeking to go abroad, caregivers of elderly persons and other urgent priority groups may be included in this list, he added. Amarinder Singh also asked the departments concerned to proactively vaccinate all persons



in the categories already prioritised by the state government in this age group, based on vaccine availability. This, he stressed, was essential to keep the risk of spread low as the restrictions are eased in the state.

The state had initially prioritised construction labour, co-morbid individuals and families of healthcare workers in the 18-45 age group, and has already vaccinated over 4.3 lakh individuals in these categories. The list was subsequently expanded to include shopkeepers and their staff; staff working in the hospitality industry (hotels, restaurants, marriage palaces, caterers), including cooks, etc; industrial workers; other street vendors especially those serving food items-juice, chat, fruit, etc

ARCHANA SHARMA  
JAIPUR

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haven.

In fact, two youths have been arrested in the case and after interrogating them, officials believe that the role of Pakistan Rangers is suspicious. Both of them have been sent to remand after they were produced before the court.

Speaking on this, a senior official confirmed, “The matter is under investigation by the NCB. We cannot say it with certainty at the moment, but there is a Pakistani post situated just fifty meters away from the place where this drug consignment was seized. Soldiers are sta-

tioned here round the clock. This indicates that it should be in the knowledge of Rangers,” he added.

Other officials confirmed that the dossier is being made ready and if required Interpol help will also be taken to reach the last person involved in this case.

Meanwhile NCB team was here at the site to probe the matter.

NCB deputy director Gyaneshwar Singh reached the BSF office and investigated the evidence seized from the two accused. Thereafter, he along with BSF DIG Pushpendra Singh

Rathore called a joint press conference where the two said that all efforts shall be taken to reach the last person in this chain.

Gyaneshwar Singh said, “India is situated between the ‘Golden Crescent’ and the ‘Golden Triangle’ where the former signifies nations of South Asia namely Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan while the latter is the area where the borders of Thailand, Laos and Myanmar meet at the confluence of the Ruak and Mekong rivers.

Afghanistan is the biggest producer of heroin. From Afghanistan, the drug consign-

ment generally reaches Pakistan and from Pak, it reaches India. India is a major transit point, he said adding that the biggest ever recovery of such a consignment from near the Rajasthan frontier along the International Border (IB) makes this case sensitive. Two accused have been arrested in the case.

We are making all efforts to find main suppliers and main receivers to expose the gang. All those involved in the chain will be brought to fore. Presently, we think the links in this case are connected to Punjab, he added.

# Gangster involved in BSP Leader’s murder shot dead

GORAKHPUR

A dreaded gangster and accused in the murder of a BSP leader, who had been operating from Nepal, has been shot dead by the Uttar Pradesh Special Task Force (STF) in an encounter.

Sharpshooter Pervez Ahmed had escaped to Nepal after killing BSP leader Jugaram Mehndi and the police had declared a reward of Rs 1 lakh on his arrest.

STF DSP Dharmesh Kumar Shahi told reporters that Pervez Ahmad was killed in an



encounter at Sarharai Road in Pipiganj of Gorakhpur area on Sunday when he was seen on a motorcycle with one of his

associates. Ahmad, a resident of Makhdoomnagar in Ambedkar Nagar district, was also a close aide of under-

world don Khan Mubarak.

He operated from Nepal and smuggled fake currency notes in Uttar Pradesh districts and Nepal. STF sources said that Ahmad had come to Gorakhpur from Nepal to meet someone and the Pipiganj police surrounded him at Chiluatal area. The police asked them to surrender, but he opened fire at the police team. Ahmed was killed in retaliatory firing, the police said.

The police also recovered one 0.32 mm pistol, one 9mm pistol along with Rs 500 from his possession.

# Covid recovery improves to 99.08% in Gurugram

GURUGRAM

THE recovery rate of Covid-19 in Gurugram district is constantly improving and on Monday it was 99.08 per cent as compared to 98 per cent during the week, according to the district health department.

The health officials said that to curb Covid infections, an action plan has been prepared by the district administration which focuses on testing, tracing and treatment.

The number of total active cases in Gurugram district is 812 out of which 731 patients are in home isolation.

According to official data of the health department, during the first six days of June, 783 patients recovered from the deadliest virus,



According to the daily health bulletin, 1,78,652 people have recovered so far in Gurugram.

Health officials said, in May, the pace of recovery of

whereas in May, around 91,000 patients were cured. The officials said, so far, 15,48,305 Covid tests have been conducted in Gurugram, of which 13,63,535 have come negative. In the last 24 hours around 4,458 tests were conducted in the district.

Also, a total of 7,53,781 people have been administered covid vaccines, including 7,853 on Sunday.

patients started gaining momentum gradually. In a single day, maximum 5,000 patients were also cured in May. As a result, the recovery rate of the district has increased to 99.08 per cent.

“Every effort is being made to break the chain of infection and control through testing, tracing and treatment,” said Virender Yadav, civil surgeon Gurugram.

# Gurugram to soon launch portal for Covid info

GURUGRAM

The residents of Gurugram will no longer have to visit different websites for information related to Covid-19.

To overcome this problem, the district administration is preparing a website with all features including information on Covid tests, vaccination camp and information about dedicated Covid hospitals. The website is expected to be operational by the first week of July.

The administration officials said once the website is operational every Covid related information will be available with just a single

click.

Deputy Commissioner Gurugram Yash Garg informed that the website is being prepared for the convenience of the residents. They will get all the health related information on this single platform.

“With a single click on the website, it will be known where the vaccine camps are being held. Where are the Covid tests being held? The report will also be available on the web portal. Apart from this, information about Covid hospital, hospital number, status of beds as well as helpline number will also be available,” Garg said.

At present Covid cases,

recovered patients and other information can be seen on the administration’s ‘covidGGN’ portal. One has to go to the ‘OneMap’ app for the report. Apart from this, one has to visit the website of the state government for the state bulletin.

“In such a situation people have to face difficulties. A new website is being created to overcome this problem. As soon as the website starts, people will get the right information along with convenience on time. The website will also have helpline number for those people who are not familiar with the Internet,” Garg said.



# Heavy police presence in Aligarh village

ALIGARH

A strong police presence has been ensured at the road leading to Noorpur village in Aligarh to counter attempts to disturb the law and order, following VHP leader Sadhvi Prachi’s announcement to perform ‘havan’ at a mosque there which was at the centre of a row involving people of two different communities.

Though Sadhvi Prachi did not reach Noorpur as announced, several right-wing activists reached the outskirts of the village but were sent back by the police.

The row began on May 26 when a wedding procession of a Dalit family was allegedly asked to stop the music for a while near a mosque since people were offering prayers.

This led to a major altercation and some people in the wedding procession claimed that they were attacked by the people of the other community.

Later, local police intervened and booked 11 people. It also claimed that the matter has been settled.

A few days later, ‘house for sale’ signs came outside some houses belonging to Dalit families.

Attempts were also made to whip up communal passions. A local AIMIM leader gave a controversial statement and BJP MP Satish Gautam visited the village along with local MLAs to assure the Dalit community.

# Pak pushing narco-terrorism via Rajasthan, say officials



ARCHANA SHARMA  
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# Is India about to witness next round of vaccination politics?

AFTER losing precious five months of time and after avoidable politics surrounding the distribution of vaccine, the Prime Minister finally announced that the Centre will buy 75 per cent of jabs from vaccine makers, including 25 per cent of the State quota and give it free to State governments. Why this 'Kolaveri'? the Centre needs to explain.

The saffron brigade may hail the decision of the PM and the opposition parties and state governments may claim that the Centre has finally accepted their demand, but both the Centre and States need to take the blame for the pathetic situation and confusion the country has been pushed into in regard to its vaccination policy.

The first mistake was that there was no transparent and clear policy framed by the Centre regarding distribution of vaccine. Across the globe, the federal governments took full charge of procurement and distribution of vaccine. India also started on a positive note by Centre going in for procuring vaccine but allowed politics to creep in.

The first mistake of the Centre was that in the name of Atmanirbhar Bharat it failed to enter into MoU with foreign vaccine manufacturers in time. Now when it wants to import, the companies are not able to supply. The PM said more vaccines are in pipeline. But none

of them will be available in the market before year end.

The State governments too without understanding the gravity of the situation or studying the problems of supply chain, went on demanding that distribution be decentralised since health was State subject. But no officer either told any of the State governments or no government tried to understand the fact that in pandemic situation, health cannot be state subject as it spreads from one place to another and that is why disaster management act has been rightly enforced and under such situation, it is the Centre that has to manage procurement and distribution.

The Centre committed another mistake of creating a competition in procuring vaccine by fixing different rates for States and private hospitals to procure vaccine. This resulted in the companies preferring supply on priority basis to private hospitals since they offered more price.

Even now the PM blames the states saying that it was decentralised because they demanded and is being centralised as they realised their mistake. What was Centre doing all these days if it knew that states were committing a mistake? Why did he not convene a meeting of all State CMs, explain the situation and come up with a policy that was endorsed by all?

Another mistake committed by Centre was that it

did not remain aloof from politicking regarding vaccine distribution. It gave priority to States where elections were due and this led to starving other states of supply. If a non-partisan policy was adopted by Centre and if the process of distribution was transparent, many lives could have been saved. Even now the politicking will not end unless the Centre and States sit together and work out a uniform policy of distribution of vaccine.

Another issue is why not supply free vaccine to private hospitals and allow them to charge service charge with a cap as has been announced today? Why should they be asked to procure directly from manufacturers? During second wave the state and centre remained mute spectators when private hospitals fleeced Covid patients. Now again, they want the private hospitals to allow charging higher fees.

Guidelines may say that only Rs 150 above the MRP should be charged but there are many ways for the private hospitals to charge more money in the name of vaccination. It is unfortunate that even in such pandemic situation the Centre and States refuse to arrive at a consensus on such important issues. The virtual meetings the PM had with CMs on Covid never discussed such policy issues. Its time the PM and CMs come to an agreement and put the vaccination drive in fast forward mode.



# Special police station in Rajasthan to check water theft!

ARCHANA SHARMA

THIS may sound bizarre but is true that a special police station is coming up in Hanumangarh district of Rajasthan to prevent water theft.

The Rajasthan government shall open this unique police station to prevent theft of irrigation water which flows through the Indira Gandhi canal running in the area.

A staff of 60 policemen will be deputed to take immediate action on rampant water theft cases reported frequently in this area.

The new police station coming up to check water theft will be headed by a CI and will have a staff of 5 sub-inspectors, 8 head constables and 40 constables, said Nohar MLA Amit Chachan, adding that "Influential and dominating farmers take water to their fields leaving other farmers to suffer."

Officials confirmed that it is for the first time that a police station has been started to stop water theft in any state.

Recently, 12 new police stations were sanctioned in the state and this unique police station is one amongst them.

In the last four years, 74 cases of water theft were registered in Hanumangarh district alone. Of these, 28 have been registered in Bhirani police station.

Additional SP (Hanumangarh) Jassaram Bose says that the theft incidents are higher in Nohar and Bhadra Vidhansabha areas as there is no 'chakbandi'. "A few people from Haryana steal water leading to water crisis in the tail areas here. People caught stealing water are registered under IPC section 397," he said.

Water theft cases have also been reported from Sriganganagar and Hanumangarh districts. In such a situation, the number of such police stations will increase in future as the Canal Department also wants the police to be stationed at a certain distance from the canal.

Police sources say that a long pipe is inserted into the canal and water is taken into the field, surreptitiously.

Indira Gandhi canal is the longest canal of India which traverses through seven districts of Rajasthan including Barmer, Bikaner, Churu, Hanumangarh, Jaisalmer, Jodhpur and Sriganganagar.

Around 650 km long, it starts from Harike Barrage in Punjab and terminates in irrigation facilities at the Thar Desert in Rajasthan.



# West Bengal proposes green lanes for e-vehicles

IN an effort to encourage e-vehicles and reduce the dependability on traditional fossil-fuel driven vehicles, the West Bengal government has proposed special inter-city corridors which can be used only by electric vehicles, with charging stations every 25 km.

The state has already introduced sophisticated e-vehicles in different state government transport facilities and has a target of 10 lakh battery-powered vehicles by 2030.

"The state government has always wanted a pollution free state and this policy will take forward our fledgling dream of zero-emission transportation. E-vehicles will not only give us a greener and cleaner environment but at the same time it will keep us immune from the ever-rising fuel prices, which are pushing up prices of every commodity. This is the future of vehicles. We all must work together to achieve this common goal at the earliest," said Transport Minister Firhad Hakim.

Initially the government has proposed to develop the environment-friendly lanes along two popular routes, one from Kolkata to Asansol - a distance of 215 km and the other from Kolkata to Digha - a distance of 185 km. Along these routes, electric vehicles are planned to have priority movement channels, and rapid charging stations will be set up every 25 km. There will also be green zones which might be developed into parking areas or other facilities where only battery-powered vehicles will be allowed.

The tariff for charging or input electricity tariff for public charging stations could be kept low to contain operating costs and more people could go for such cars, an official said. "We will try to keep the fare as low as possible because the state government wants to promote e-vehicles for smoother, greener and cleaner transport facilities," the official added.

The policy identified Kolkata, Howrah, Asansol and Darjeeling as model e-mobility cities, New Town being the pilot city for all the initiatives, said an officer of Bengal's power department, the project's nodal body that drafted the policy.

WBSEDCL is the state-level nodal agency for the charging infrastructure. At present, stated the electric vehicle policy, 2021, the number of such vehicles in Bengal was 37,400, of which 36,000 were e-rickshaws or totos. The state aimed at setting up one lakh public or semi-public charging stations while implementing the policy.

Bengal, the policy document stated, aimed to be among the top three states in India in having electric mobility penetration by the end of FAME II implementation year 2022. The state also targets to be the best in electric mobility penetration by 2030.

The policy also emphasised the use of other renewable energy sources like hydrogen generation and refuelling stations, the first few to be developed by the government. Private developers will also be allowed to set up hydrogen stations in coordination with central guidelines and adhering to state safety standards. (IANS)



Madabhushi Sridhar Acharyulu

wiped out, except for three seats out of 70. All other political parties lost their electoral existence.

With huge majority, Arvind Kejriwal was not allowed to rule Delhi, all kinds of problems were created for him. Every major decision was litigated. Bureaucrats were pressurised, defections were engineered, central power was misused and abused, then LG was made an instrument of obstruction or oppression of democratically elected Chief Minister and his cabinet. Centre harassed small and big officers who actively associated with the Delhi Administration under Kejriwal.

Court cases, disciplinary proceedings, sudden withdrawal of deputation orders, recall orders etc were unleashed to weaken the administration. When CM appointed some parliamentary secretaries from out of MLAs, Centre used 'office of profit' issue by misinterpretation and tried to create political crisis in AAP legislature party. AAP survived all these tricks and political atrocities and still won the hearts of the people with their sincere efforts on education and medical reforms. Their policies towards middle income groups, small and medium businessmen were quite popular. As last resort even communal riots were also engineered to disturb and destabilize the peace and governance in Delhi.

When AAP was seeking re-election, former IPS officer Kiran Bedi was brought into the fierce battle as the contending CM candidate and dozens of Central ministers concentrated to use all the powers to unseat AAP but miserably failed. Because of the litigation involved by the central government, the AAP administration was stranded and troubled for years and in spite of two emphatic judgments of Supreme Court on powers of Delhi Government and those of LG, no smooth administration was allowed.

Defeated Bedi was sent as an Administrator to Pondicherry where a democratically elected government was harassed all through and finally the CM and the Government was pulled down with engineered defections just before recent elections. Now BJP is happy because the Government they wanted has been elected by hook or crook. Even Bedi could not stand the political strategies on Pondicherry and had to resign and go.

With electorate supporting the AAP Government in Delhi and Supreme Court's clear warning that the democratically elected government have more powers than the LG, the Centre resorted to Amendment to the Constitution to give more powers to the LG against the original scheme of Constitution for Union Territory of Delhi and democratic norms. New Bill says Government means

LG. By nomenclature it is true. Governor is the head of State and President is head of nation.

It does not mean they will have final powers in decision making. They have to depend upon the aid and advice of elected Chief Minister and his council of Ministers. They are titular heads. But this Bill makes LG the real ruler and the elected cabinet is reduced into dummy. BJP at centre was sparring with National Capital's AAP Government since 2015 before the Delhi HC and Supreme Court. Special status was given to Delhi through Article 239AA which was inserted by 69th Amendment in 1991. LG is the administrative head of NCT Delhi and Assembly is created for representative governance in tune with parliamentary democracy.

## A bill that kills democracy in Delhi

A clever language is incorporated in the Bill to empower the LG to reserve any bill for President, which was confined earlier to only three categories. By Section 33 the Legislative Assembly is barred from making any rule to consider day to day administration or conduct inquiries into administrative decisions, which means that Legislative Assembly and Government cannot function at all. It cannot conduct inquiries. Supreme Court in 2018 held that LG has to act on aid and advice of the council of ministers on all matters except land, public order and police. In all other subjects, the SC held that Delhi Government will have complete executive powers. In another judgment SC in 2019 said that the power to appoint a Special public prosecutor will lie with NCT government, and Centre will have executive authority over ACB and powers to set up commissions of inquiry. Issue of who controls civil services is still pending inquiry before SC.

Section 6 of Article 239AA states that the Council of Ministers "shall be collectively responsible to the Legislative Assembly". But this amendment violates Article 239AA(6). It is a "complete subterfuge" of that Article and democratic scheme of administration of UTs as per the Constitution.

When Kejriwal government has initiated inquiry into communal riots, the Centre opposed it as unconstitutional and stood by 'Facebook' challenging the inquiry itself. Constitutional expert Gautam Bhatia said that this provision is "specifically designed to nix the ongoing inquiry by the Delhi assembly into the 2020 riots". The Delhi Legislative Assembly has earlier constituted a nine-member 'Peace and Harmony Committee' in March last year to conduct an inquiry into the riots as well as consider the factors which could potentially disrupt communal harmony in Delhi. This Committee had summoned the Facebook India Vice President Ajit Mohan in September last year. The central government as well as Facebook had told the Supreme Court that the committee itself was unconstitutional.

## Power to reserve any matter

The SC in its 2018 judgment, had clarified that the power under the proviso to Article 239AA(4) can only be exercised in



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exceptional circumstances. "The lieutenant governor should not act in a mechanical manner without due application of mind so as to refer every decision of the Council of Ministers to the President," the bench added.

Earlier Governor had power to reserve decisions on only a few prescribed matters for consideration of President. The proviso in the Bill allows the L-G to reserve "any matter" for consideration of the President where the former has a difference of opinion with the council of ministers.

## Consent of LG

The Supreme Court held that the decisions of the council of ministers had to be communicated to the L-G but the latter's concurrence was not required. But the new Bill makes it mandatory to get the L-G's opinion in terms of the proviso to Article 239AA(4) on certain matters, before taking any executive action under any law in force in the national capital. The lieutenant governor himself is required to issue a special or general order on what these matters would be. This means the Chief Minister or his cabinet has to take LG's opinion before taking any decision. The LG will decide on what matters he has to be consulted.

Senior Advocate of Supreme Court Rajeev Dhavan analysed that "the L-G only has the right to be informed after the decision is taken. If he disagrees with it, he can go up to the President." He further commented: "The very democratic basis of the earlier judgment is being sought to be reversed by making the L-G now a per-

son who will preview everything...This is just trying to inhibit the Delhi government, rendering it as relevant as it was before the (Supreme Court) judgment".

The bill has an effect contrary to the text and scheme of Article 239AA of the Constitution as well as the Constitution (five-judge) bench judgment of 4 July and the division bench judgment of 14 February, opined another senior lawyer Shadan Farasat. The statement of objects and reasons says that this is in pursuance of those orders, in fact the Bill does the opposite of what those judgments say. Advocate says: "If here it means L-G acting on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers, then there's no problem. That's the present position. But if the attempt is to say L-G acting on his own discretion, then it is clearly unconstitutional."

This provision disallows the Legislative Assembly from considering matter related to the day-to-day administration of Delhi. If this is the law, what the legislature and the executive elected from legislature was expected to do? What will happen to accountability of the council of ministers and the executive should be answerable and accountable to the legislature? Where the LG would be answerable to Assembly? How can an elected government serve only as a subordinate performing clerical duties to the nominated head who is supposed to be nominal head? Farasat said that it was better to wind up the statehood.

(The writer is Professor of Law, Bennett University and former Central Information Commissioner)

# LETTERS

## Tenancy Act not friendly

THE Model Tenancy Act notified by the government recently is likely to open up rental housing since the Act clearly defines roles and responsibilities of the landlord and the tenants and standardises the terms. This is expected to reduce disputes and induce landlords who hitherto were reluctant to come forward to rent out their properties. This also will open up demand for short term tenancy as security deposit is capped low at two months' rent. The Act also lists out who will carry out a work relating to the property reducing chances of disputes.

Nevertheless the Act is not friendly for small landlords as there is no long term commitment for the tenant as he can terminate the arrangement by giving a month's notice whereas similar option is

not available for the landlord. Further the advance deposit is fixed at two months' rent (one month for non-residential) which is low considering the cost of the property. This should depend on location of property viz urban, rural, city etc. In the changing circumstances engaging Property Manager may become essential which will add up to the cost. The State governments, while adopting the new bill, may provide for changes in the provisions wherever necessary.

M Raghuraman, Mumbai

## Bureaucratic politics

PROPOS IYR's article on role of CS vis-a-vis PM and CM, the author had cleverly castigated his IAS colleagues as those having Left leanings or those who are beneficiaries of earlier regimes. He feels that they are upright and meritori-

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ous, they are not objective in their analysis on many subjects like Central Vista project, Lakshadweep administration etc. Their objective is to oppose anything under the Sun bearing Modi stamp. He affirms his association with BJP and because of that whether we should consider his views objective.

For IAS cadre, Centre is like birthplace while the state where they make their career is like her husband's home or rather her own. Sometimes, though she knows her husband to be wrong, she sails along with him. She may respect her parents, but her loyalties lie with her husband where she has grown to be her own. The position of CS is highest in the state hierarchy and it is naturally bestowed on one who enjoys CM's trust, even though seniority is criteria. There are many instances when seniority is by passed in selection of CS.

Given the political situation, the loyalties are bound to be strong and one tends to be loyal to the boss who gave

him that position, notwithstanding what the rule book says, you tend to stand by those who stood by you is a natural human tendency. The West Bengal CS had followed the same and duly protected by his boss. It is not fair to call CM Mamata as intransigent. She was only reacting to the treatment meted out to her by Modi Sarkar.

Not long ago, Modi heckled her calling 'Didi oh Didi'. Her injury was ridiculed. Soon after when she formed the government, her ministers were arrested by CBI in a sudden spurt of activity in a old case. Yet, according to author she is expected to sit with folded hands. Of course, she said she is willing to touch the feet of Modi for development of the state. IYR as CS bore many insults with dignified silence. Others may be different. All said and done it is for people in bigger positions to show magnanimity and gravitas. If PM shows the way, others will follow.

Vinay Bhushan Bhagwat, Hyderabad



## SDIF donates 10 oxygen cylinders to Narayanpet



SDIF Director Azam Khan handing over oxygen cylinders to the district hospital authorities in Narayanpet on Monday. District Collector Harichandana also seen

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
NARAYANPET

THE authorities of Social Data Intuitive Forum (SDIF) from Hyderabad have donated 10 oxygen cylinders to Narayanpet district on Monday.

The SDIF NGO authorities handed over 10 oxygen cylinders to the district government hospital authorities in the presence

of District Collector Harichandana and District Immunisation Officer (DIO) Dr Sailaja at a programme at the district Collectorate. Speaking on the occasion, SDIF Director Azam Khan said that after noticing severe shortage of oxygen cylinders across the country, the SDIF Foundation came forward to donate cylinders to the government and

ensuring that there is no shortage of oxygen for Covid patients.

Collector Harichandana thanked the SDIF for providing a helping hand to save the lives of people at this juncture of healthcare emergency in the district.

Asia Kha, Feroz Baig, Ibrahim, Dr Ranjit and others were present on the occasion.

## Cong demands free Covid treatment to BPL families

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
MAHBUBNAGAR

DISTRICT Congress leaders launched 'Satyagraha Deeksha' at the district party office here on Monday and demanded the State government to provide Covid-19 and black fungus infection treatment free of cost to the people of below poverty line.

Devarkadra Constituency Congress in-charge and Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) secretary G Madhusudhan Reddy said the State government was totally failed in containing the spread of coronavirus during the second wave. "Despite the impact created by Covid-19 during first wave, the State and Central governments have failed to learn lessons and because of their negligent and easy-going attitude, today we are witnessing the gravest health care situation, which is badly impacting rural areas.

The poor and families under BPL are badly impacted with the second wave," he said. Following the call given by TPCC



Devarkadra constituency Congress in-charge G Madhusudhan Reddy speaking to the media during Satyagraha Deeksha in Mahbubnagar on Monday

and District Congress Committee, Congress leaders and activists of the district participated in Satyagraha Deeksha at district Congress party office here. TPCC secretaries Vinod

Kumar and Nayeem, Congress Women district president Anita, party town president Laxman Yadav, district SC cell president Saibaba, Rangareddy district legal cell chairman Imanual, TPCC Minority secretary Sadiq,

NSUI district president Awaz Ahmed, DCC principal secretary Siraj Khadri, Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) president Ramulu Yadava and others took part in the deeksha.

## Eight traders held for selling unlicensed chilli seeds

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
KHAMMAM

POLICE arrested eight traders and seized chilli seeds worth Rs 16 lakh from different traders in the erstwhile Khammam district. Commissioner of Police (CP) Vishnu S Warrior briefed the media here on Monday that police along with agricultural officials have conducted on June 1 at Enkoor in the district. A trader, Kushinni Rosaiah of Enkoor was arrested for selling chilli seeds without bills.

Based on the information given by him, Farmson Seeds India Private Limited Director Pallapothu Ravi Kumar; Guguloth Murali of Manchukonda; Bhukya Kishore of Ramkya Thanda in Raghunathapalem mandal; Padala Srinivasa Rao of Tallada; Kunuku Srinivas of Kalvoddu

area in Khammam district; Adapa Suresh of Julurpad; and Rangiseti Mukesh of Chandrygonda in Kothagudem district were arrested.

Farmson Seeds company Director Ravi told the police that the company MD G Chandrashekar of Davanagere in Karnataka State was the main accused in the sale of unlicensed seeds and he was absconding. Around 2,550 seeds packets of the company sold with the names DS Red Star and others were seized.

The CP appreciated Kallur ACP Venkatesh, Task Force ACP Ramanujam, CIs Venumadhav and Karunakar, SI Srikanth, constables Venkateshwara Das and Bhaskar and others for nabbing the accused. CP Warrior asked the farmers not to buy unlicensed seeds and seeds sold without bills.

## Efforts on to develop towns, cities: KTR

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
JAGTIAL

UNDER the guidance of Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao, efforts were being made to develop model towns and cities in Telangana, asserted Municipal Administration and Urban Development Minister KT Rama Rao. Despite Covid-19 pandemic's impact on revenues, the State government had accorded priority to development of urban areas with focus on sanitation, greenery, drinking water and improving basic amenities, he said. On Monday, KTR launched several development works in Korutla and Metpally municipalities and inaugurated Faecal Sludge Treatment Plant (FSTP) at Korutla and laid foundation for the construction of vegetable and meat market in Metpally.

Speaking to the media at Metpally, the Minister noted that before the formation of Telangana



State, there were only 68 municipalities and now there are 142 urban local bodies (ULBs). Rs 148 crore was being released to the ULBs by the government under Pattana Pragathi, he informed.

Except Hyderabad, a budget of Rs 200 crore was allotted to 141 municipalities to construct Vaikunta Dhamams for conducting funerals in a dignified manner. It was planned to complete these constructions in this year, he said. Minister KTR informed that the

FSTPs were being set up with a cost of Rs 325 crore to ensure disposal of faecal sludge in a scientific manner in all municipalities in the State. Similarly, vegetable and meat markets were being constructed in all the municipalities by spending around of Rs 500 crore. In addition to different development works under Palle Pragathi and Pattana Pragathi, the State government is focussing on improving public health infrastructure.

## VVC Group COO passes away

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
KHAMMAM

Venkata Ramana Automobiles and VVC Group Chief Operating Officer (COO) of Khammam and Nalgonda districts, M Venkateswarlu died of heart attack in Hyderabad on Monday. He is survived by wife and two sons.

The groups of VVC & VVR Managing Director Vankyalapati Rajendra Prasad expressed condolences to Venkateswarlu's family members on his sudden demise. Speaking at a programme conducted by the company, he recalled his services for the company and said that Venkateswarlu joined the



VVC & VVR Groups COO M Venkateswarlu

company as a clerk and grew as the COO.

Company GMs and staff expressed condolences to his family members.

## AP JUDA serves strike notice

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
TIRUPATI/VIJAYAWADA

ANDHRA Pradesh Junior Doctors' Association (AP JUDA) has served strike notice to the director of medical education on Monday stating that they will boycott the duties from June 9 in a phased manner if their demands are not met before that. The general secretary of the association, Dr D Venkata Saiteja, said that they were demanding ex-gratia/health insurance for all frontline workers.

Association president Dr Rahul Roy requested the Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy to look in the various issues of junior doctors association and resolve their grievances at the earliest.

Also, the JUDA has been seeking Covid incentives for all the junior doctors including postgraduates and interns. They want increased security measures in hospitals to pre-

- To boycott duties from June 9 in a phased manner, stop even Covid emergencies from June 12
- The association is seeking ex-gratia, health insurance, Covid incentives and increased security measures

vent untoward incidents and are looking for TDS issue in stipend pay to be resolved.

However, they thanked the government for the positive response towards some of their requests like senior resident (SR) stipend hike and final year postgraduates for consideration as SR and equivalent stipend pay. Still, he said that their utmost and important and genuine demands were not yet addressed due to which they have no option but to go for boycotting the duties.

While many neighbouring states have been taking initiative to encourage the Covid warriors by providing incentives, ex-gratia to boost their morale, he said that they have been looking for similar steps from the AP government as well. "We are all rendering our services to combat the Covid pandemic since the first wave without any additional benefits at the cost of our lives and precious academic career, which cannot be compensated," he maintained. In this situation, they have decided to boycott non-Covid electives from June 9, Covid electives from June 10, non-Covid emergencies from June 11 and Covid emergencies from June 12 if their demands are not addressed before that.

Meanwhile, they held a candle light protest on Monday at Ruia hospital in Tirupati which will be followed by another protest by wearing black badges on Tuesday.

## RIISING FUEL PRICES ADD TO THE WOES OF LOCKDOWN-HIT PEOPLE

V PRADEEP KUMAR  
TIRUPATI

THE price of petrol has crossed century-mark after it has gone up 18 times in May and twice in the first week of June after the elections in five states are over while the diesel price is also racing towards the triple digit mark. This huge hike in petrol and diesel prices in the country can have a cascading effect on a number of sectors, ultimately impacting citizens.

The people have already feeling the heat of the prices and expressing their disgust with this kind of daily increase. It has become a double whammy on various sections who were already worst-hit with the Covid pandemic for over a year now. Farmers have been facing the brunt of the price burden with the rents on tractors and other vehicles going up which has been making the cultivation even more burdensome. Besides, transport of crops



like vegetables and fruits has become costly, impacting both cultivators and consumers.

Every family is having a minimum of one two-wheeler and the rise in petrol prices has invariably affected their monthly budgets. The increase in transport costs has an adverse impact on the prices of various essential commodities as well with which the people have to bear a huge additional burden on their meagre monthly incomes. An auto-rickshaw driver has

commented that he never thought that life would become so burdensome with the Covid situation which saw incomes falling steeply and all prices rising sharply. He could not earn even the diesel cost daily with the lockdown restrictions and finding it very difficult to pay the monthly instalment on the loan of the vehicle.

In Chittoor district itself, the price of petrol has gone up from Rs 96.56 on May 1 to Rs.101.64 on June 6. During the same period,

diesel price has gone up from Rs 90 to Rs 95.86. From June 2020 to June 2021 petrol prices have witnessed a rise of Rs 28 while diesel has gone up by Rs.26.

The additional burden with such an increase in petrol prices was said to be in hundreds of crores in one district alone as the daily consumption of petrol is to the tune of 14.02 lakh litres and that of diesel 23.05 litres in about 300 outlets in Chittoor district.

In January this year, the prices were increased 10 times and 14 times in February. Probably due to elections in five states, there was no hike in March and April and after that May witnessed a record number of 18 hikes.

Saying that the fuel price hike has already impacted the prices of various commodities, an employee Rama Krishna has expressed his apprehensions that it will not stop here. APSRTC and railways also will soon come up with huge revision of fares anytime soon, he said.

## Distribution of Anandaiah's Covid medicine begins

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
NELLORE

TRADITIONAL herbal practitioner Bonigi Anandaiah officially launched distribution of the medication in Sarvepalli constituency in the district on Monday along with the Sarvepalli MLA and YSR Congress leader Kakani Govardhan Reddy on the premises of Venkaiah Swamy temple at Golagamudi village in Venkatachalam mandal of Nellore district.

MLA Govardhan Reddy, who sponsored and participated in the programme, informed that the concoction would be distributed to 1.80 lakh families of Sarvepalli constituency in the first phase. He thanked the family members of Anandaiah for providing the concoction to the families in the constituency on priority basis.

The MLA, who is involved with verbal dual with his long-time rival and TDP leader Somireddy Chandramohan Reddy over the medicine, made it clear that he had no selfish motives behind the



Sarvepalli MLA K Govardhan Reddy distributing Anandaiah's concoction at Golagamudi in Nellore district on Monday

distribution of the remedy other than the welfare of people but some people have been trying to defame him for supporting Anandaiah's medicine. "I felt that this is my prime responsibility to provide the medicine to all the people in my constituency. Some political leaders have mentally harassed Anandaiah with their baseless comments," the MLA added.

He also reminded that he had

started the distribution of essentials to the people of Sarvepalli constituency starting from Bhagavan Venkaiah Swamy temple in Venkatachalam mandal and successfully completed the programme during the lockdown period. YSRCP leader M Vishnuvardhan Reddy and the team members of Anandaiah strived hard for preparation and distribution of the concoction, MLA appreciated.

### POLAVARAM R&R FUNDS

## Massive loot by ruling party leaders alleged

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
MANGALAGIRI

TDP national spokesman K Pattabhi Ram on Monday expressed concern that the ruling YSRC leaders were breaking new records in cheating and corruption going by how they were setting their eyes on the rehabilitation and resettlement (R&R) package funds of the innocent tribal evacuees under the Polavaram irrigation project.

Pattabhi Ram alleged that the YSRC leaders were creating false land documents to loot the R&R funds without the knowledge of the local tribal population. Unfortunately, local YSRC MLA Balaraju and some unscrupulous officers were resorting to this looting with active support from the government.

Addressing a press conference at the party

- TDP spokesperson Pattabhi says compensation to tribal evacuees is withdrawn from their accounts unauthorisedly
- Cites incidents of two tribals from whose bank accounts Rs 1.16 cr and Rs 99 lakh have been withdrawn from a bank account in Bhadrachalam

headquarters here, the TDP leader said that the officials opened a bank account in HDFC's Bhadrachalam branch in the name of tribal woman evacuee Maccha Mahalakshmi on July 13, 2020. Over Rs 1.16 crore was deposited into her account towards R&R compensation. All this money was withdrawn without authorisation and without her knowledge by December.



Similar was the case with Madakam Savitri into whose account Rs 99 lakh was deposited and later diverted. Pattabhi demanded the ruling party MLA and the government to explain the unauthorised transfer of funds from the bank accounts of the Polavaram tribal evacuees. Details of the bank accounts to which the tribal funds were transferred should be made public. The government should order a CBI probe to bring out the facts in this massive cheating.

The TDP leader demanded the Union Jal Shakti minister, the Central Water Commission and the Polavaram Project Authority to give their immediate response on the cheating of the tribals' R&R funds. Irrigation minister P Anil Kumar Yadav and Chief Minister's Advisor Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy should come out with their clarifications on the open swindling of tribals' funds, he said.



# Ivermectin, HCQ dropped from one Covid treatment list

NEW DELHI

THE Union Health Ministry's Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) has issued revised guidelines for the management of Covid patients, dropping ivermectin, hydroxychloroquine and favipiravir - three widely-used drugs - from its list of approved treatment options. The guidelines, however, differ from those provided by the Health Ministry, which recommends both ivermectin and hydroxychloroquine.

The new guidelines, which were

issued on May 27, also do not mention taking steam inhalation and the use of vitamins for Covid treatment, which again contradicts the advisory on the Health Ministry website. Ivermectin, hydroxychloroquine and favipiravir - used for asymptomatic and mild cases - were removed from DGHS guidelines after experts found they did not help patients infected with the coronavirus, according to officials.

Under the new DGHS guidelines, asymptomatic Covid patients (except those with comorbidities) have been advised against taking any



medication.

Those with mild cases may take antipyretic (medication used to prevent, or reduce fevers) and antitussive (to relieve or suppress coughing) for symptomatic relief. Those with cough may inhale 800 mcg of budesonide (via metered-dose inhaler with spacer device) twice a day for five days.

"No other COVID-19-specific medication is required. The patient may have to be investigated further if symptoms persist or deteriorate," the guidelines said.

Remdesivir, an antiviral drug in

great demand in India - is to be used only in select cases - specifically for hospitalised Covid patients with moderate or severe symptoms, and who were placed on oxygen support within ten days of the disease onset, the guidelines add.

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On the use of tocilizumab - which is also in high demand - the DGHS said it should be used only for severely and critically ill patients.

The new guidelines also warn against the unnecessary use of high-resolution CT scans.

## WINDOWS

### Former JD-U MP's brother gunned down

PATNA

FIVE unidentified persons gunned down the brother of former Janata Dal-United MP Ashwamedh Devi in Bihar's Samastipur district on Monday, the police said.

The deceased Sunil Kumar, was the owner of a Customer Service Point (CSP), and was carrying Rs 3.6 lakh cash when he was attacked in Sultanganj locality under Sarairanjan police station in the district around 1 p.m.

According to an officer of Sarai Ranjan police station, Sunil Kumar was on the way to the bank to deposit the money.

"The attackers knew about the money being carried. Hence, they took up position on the route from the CSP office to the bank," SHO of Sarairanjan police station, RC Singh said.

### FIR against Suwendu Adhikari for theft

KOLKATA

AN FIR has been registered against BJP MLA and leader of opposition in West Bengal assembly Suwendu Adhikari for his alleged involvement in theft of cyclone 'Yaas' relief material from a store of Contai Municipality in Purba Medinipur district, police said on Monday. The FIR lodged at the Kathi Police Station also mentioned names of Suwendu's brother Soumendu Adhikari, a former chief of the civic body, and two others, a senior officer said. The FIR was registered on a complaint filed by Ratnadip Manna, a member of the board of administrators of the municipality, on June 1. He had alleged that tarpaulin worth around Rs two lakh was stolen from a store managed by the municipality on May 29. All of those named in the FIR have been booked under sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and the Disaster Management Act, 2005.



MAHARASHTRA Minister and Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader, Hasan Mushrif on Monday alleged that Serum Institute of India's Chief Adar Poonawalla was forced to leave the country as he was receiving threats from the Centre for promising to supply 1.5 crore vaccine doses to Maharashtra. Addressing a press conference in Ahmednagar, Mushrif said, "Our Serum Institute of India's Chief Adar Poonawalla, whose Covishield is being inoculated across the country, was forced to flee to England following death threats by the Centre. Poonawalla is a good friend of NCP chief Sharad Pawar ji. Serum Institute chief had promised to provide 1.5 crore doses of Covid vaccines to Maharashtra. However, following the threats by the Centre, this proposal did not happen." Talking about the ongoing Covid-19 vaccination drive in the state, the state's rural development and labour minister said, "Maharashtra government has commenced the 'Un-lock' in a state after some relaxations. However, if Covid cases rapidly escalate in the coming days, we will take the necessary action. Maharashtra's government aims to vaccinate people aged above 45 years on a priority. Vaccines by Pfizer, Johnson & Johnson etc need to be jabbed soon." A total of 28,252 cases of mucormycosis have been reported in India so far from 28 states in which 86 per cent have a history of Covid-19 infections and 62.3 per cent of diabetes, the Central government said on Monday. India reported 1,00,636 fresh COVID-19 cases, the lowest in 61 days, taking the infection tally to 2,89,09,975, while the number of active cases dropped to 14,01,609, according to the Union Health Ministry's data. The death toll due to coronavirus reached 3,49,186 with 2,427 new fatalities, the lowest in around 45 days, the data updated at 8 am showed. A total of 96,982 new cases were recorded in a span of 24 hours on April 6. Also, 15,87,589 tests were conducted on Sunday, taking the total cumulative tests conducted so far for detection of COVID-19 in the country to 36,63,34,111, while the daily positivity rate was recorded at 6.34 per cent.

As Covid-19 continues to recede across the country, there is a North-South divide in the failing cases. The North Indian states are witnessing a steady decline in compared to Maharashtra and Southern States. The highest downfall of seven day rolling average of daily cases in Haryana has declined at an average rate of 8.9 percent each day. The decline has been high in Rajasthan (8.5%), Delhi (8.2%), Bihar (8.1%), UP (7.8%) and Uttarakhand (7.6%).

# 'Adar got threats for promising 1.5cr vax to Maha'



People on a street at Chandni Chowk in Old Delhi on Monday. The Delhi government has allowed to open shops and malls on the odd-even basis and private offices with 50 percent capacity as part of phased unlocking process.

### TN MLA converts his office into hospital

CHENNAI: Vilathikulam MLA and DMK leader G.V. Markandayan has converted his MLA hostel into Government Kalaigarn Hospital to treat Covid-19 patients. The hospital was inaugurated on Sunday by Kanimozhi, the DMK MP and daughter of former Chief Minister Late M. Karunanidhi in whose memorial, the MLA has converted his office into a hospital. The hospital with 30-bed strength functions from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. and has a doctor and a nurse to treat patients. Covid swab tests and vaccination will be conducted from the hospital. This is the first time that an MLA has converted his office into a Covid treatment hospital. Markandayan while speaking to IANS said, "The second wave of the Covid pandemic has affected the lives of several people including those who are in the middle and young ages. I don't want people from my constituency to suffer due to lack of."

### Gold coin, fridge for vaccine takers

PATNA: The Sheohar district administration in Bihar has decided to give gold coins and other home appliances to those who take corona vaccine and are 45 years of age and above. The idea is to promote corona vaccine in the district as many villagers have declined to take it. Sajjan Rajshiekher, the district magistrate of Sheohar said: "We are aiming to vaccinate cent-per cent people of 45 years of age and above in the district by July 15. Sheohar is flood affected district in Bihar with majority of land go under water after monsoon sets in." "Every year, monsoon starts from July 15 and hence we have set the target for that date. Once the monsoon starts here, it will be extremely difficult to reach to those villages. We witnessed 43 village Panchayats out of 53, which were affected by flood last year," Rajshiekher said. Sheohar has 60,369 persons above 45 years and some of them have already taken the shot.

### Kerala extends curfew till June 16

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: The lockdown in Kerala, which was to have ended on June 9, has been extended by a week, while the Covid death toll in the state crossed 10,000 on Monday. In a statement issued here, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said that 9,313 people turned positive after 70,569 samples were sent for testing in the past 24 hours, taking the total active cases to 1,47,830. The day saw 221 Covid deaths, taking the total death toll to 10,157. Vijayan had, last month, warned that the death rate has every chance to go up as the number of daily cases last month had crossed 40,000. The lockdown extension came though Vijayan last week indicating that the stringent restrictions would be withdrawn if the test positivity rate for three successive days comes below 15 per cent and the total number of active case drops below two lakh.

## Unique Disability ID card also allowed for getting Covid shot

NEW DELHI

WITH a view to facilitate access to vaccination for persons with disabilities, the Central government on Monday directed all states and Union Territories (UTs) to include the Unique Disability Identification (UDID) card in the list of prescribed photo ident documents for Covid-19 vaccination. Union Health Ministry, in a letter, told states and the UTs to include the UDID card as a photo ID while registering on CoWIN 2.0. As per the guidance note for CoWIN 2.0 issued on March 2 this year, seven prescribed photo IDs were specified and prescribed for verification of beneficiary prior to their vaccination. In its letter, the Union Health Ministry stated that the UDID card, issued to persons with disability by Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, has all the necessary features such as the name, year of birth, gender and photograph of the person, and meets the criteria for use of identification in Covid-19 vaccination. "The necessary provisions for same are being made and would be available in CoWIN shortly," it said.

The Health Ministry has also advised states and the UTs to widely publicise the use of UDID card as a permissible photo ID for accessing Covid vaccination.

The move is another step taken by the Central government under its approach for ensuring smooth and effective Covid-19 vaccination drive which started on January 16. The government has developed the CoWIN digital platform to streamline the process of vaccination for various categories of beneficiaries across the country, and it provides the technological backbone to effectively roll out and scale up the mechanism for the Covid vaccine distribution system.

## Lakshadweep row: BJP workers join protest



THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

THE "entire" Lakshadweep was, on Monday, undergoing a 12 hour hunger strike against the Union Territory administration and Administrator Praful Khoda Patel who was bringing in "anti-people" policies, protesters said. Talking to IANS over telephone from the island, a 60-year-old resident, who did not want to be identified, said this is the first time in his entire life he is seeing such a protest.

"Monday is being observed as a complete lockdown and all shops, and private establishments are closed while the vehicles are also off the road. All of us are sitting in our homes and are on a day long hunger strike since morning," he said. Even BJP workers had joined the protest, he said.

"We are not at all against any sort of development. All what we

are saying is every place in the world cannot be made into a modern day Singapore. Coral reef is something that has to be protected... we and our forefathers have been preserving it for ages. Don't we know what we want or is it someone who comes from elsewhere decides what development we need," asked the angry islander.

Another islander said the development the new administrator is talking about is "doubtful".

"I know there are so many projects that have been proposed in the past which will bring in development. Wish to know why such projects which are sustainable in nature are not taken up and only the ones that are now proposed will be good. This attitude is what we oppose," said the islander on condition of anonymity. According to the 2011 Census, the islands have a population of 65,000.

## 30K children orphaned, abandoned or in distress amid Covid, SC told

NEW DELHI

THE National Commission for Protection of Children's Rights (NCPCR) told the Supreme Court that as many as 3,621 children were orphaned, 274 were found abandoned and 26,176 lost either parent since April 1, 2020 and June 5, 2021, amid the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. The child rights panel, in an affidavit, said it is presenting the number of children who have lost either their mother or father or both parents, based upon the information uploaded on "Bal Swaraj" portal up to June 5. It said there are 30,071 children, who need care and protection, after collecting data from the states and Union Territories, on the portal.

Among the states, Maharashtra recorded highest number (7,084) children under distress, which included 217 children who became orphans, 6,865 who have lost either of their parents and two were abandoned. In Uttar Pradesh, there were 3,172 children, followed by Rajasthan with 2,482 children,



who have either orphaned or lost either parent during the Covid-19 pandemic. In Madhya Pradesh, 706 children were orphaned, and 226 children were abandoned during the pandemic.

In Karnataka, 99 children were orphaned, and six were found abandoned during this period, while 555 kids lost a parent. In

Delhi, five children were orphaned and 12 lost a parent amid the pandemic. The commission's response came on a direction issued by the top court seeking information on status of children amid the pandemic. "The Commission is also concerned to note that several NGOs are seeking monetary support in the name of children im-

pacted by Covid. However, there is no disclosure to authorities regarding actual beneficiaries, as mandated under the JJ Act, 2015," it said in the affidavit. The commission said considering that the children in distress situations are wards of state, it is imperative for all concerned to immediately inform the statutory authority about any such child noticed by them.

It urged the top court to direct the NGOs, if they find a child in need of care and protection, then state/district authorities must be alerted in consonance with the government's instructions to states. "It is most humbly submitted that the states/UTs may be directed to create State Juvenile Justice Fund under Section 105 of JJ Act, 2015 and the bank account details, name of the account holder, IFSC code and other such requisite details of State Juvenile Justice Fund or any other fund created under Section 105 of the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015," the NCPCR affidavit said, adding that the identity of the child must not be disclosed.

## 'Covishield produced more antibodies than Covaxin'

NEW DELHI

THE Covishield vaccine produced more antibodies than Covaxin, according to a preliminary study by Coronavirus Vaccine-induced Antibody Titre (COVAT) involving healthcare workers (HCW) who have received both doses of either of the two vaccines.

Seropositivity rates to anti-spike antibody were significantly higher in Covishield recipients compared to Covaxin after the first dose, the study claimed.

The study is a preprint and has not been peer-reviewed, so should not be used to guide clinical practice.

It said that both vaccines - Covishield and Covaxin - elicited a good response after two doses, but seropositivity rate and median anti-spike antibody were significantly higher in Covishield.

"Amongst the 552 HCW (325 Male, 227 Female), 456 and 96 received the first dose of Covishield and Covaxin respectively. Overall, 79.3 per cent showed seropositivity after the first dose. Responder rate and median (IQR) rise in anti-spike antibody were significantly higher in Covishield vs Covaxin recipient (86.8 vs. 43.8 per cent; 61.5 vs 6 AU/ml; both p<0.001)," the study said.

appointee OSDs in personal staff are relatives is factually wrong. OSDs are from three states and belong to four different castes. None of them is part of close family. Four of them are not from my caste or state." "This is unfolding of "distraction strategy" to divert attention from alarming law and order scenario @MamataOfficial.

## Personal staff not my relatives: WB Guv

hail from three states and are not part of his close family. He further said that Moitra's allegation aims to divert attention from the alarming

law and order situation in West Bengal. Taking to Twitter, the governor said, "Assertion @MahuaMoitra in tweet and media that six coterminous



## TODAY's QUOTE

### Global crude price surge fuelling petrol rates

“THE prices of petroleum products have gone up. The main reason is that the price of crude oil has gone over \$70 per barrel in the international market. GST Council will decide whether the fuel should be brought under GST, which many believe, would substantially bring down the prices

— Dharmendra Pradhan, Union Minister



## DNS THREAT

### 90% cos experience DNS attack

Almost 90% of organizations have experienced a DNS attack, a rise from last year according to 2021 Global DNS threat report. India is among top three countries in Asia which experienced highest cost of attacks. Vulnerabilities from remote working and cloud usage have led to rapid increase in phishing, DNS domain hijacking.

FOREX (buy rates in ₹)			
US Dollar	73.56	South	
Euro	89.44	African Rand	6.22
UAE Dirham	20.42	Hong Kong Dollar	10.8
Thai Baht	2.57	Japanese Yen	0.77
British Pound	103.97	New Zealand Dollar	53.05
Australian Dollar	57	Saudi Riyal	21.35
Canadian Dollar	60.82	Swedish Krona	10.13
Swiss Franc	81.77	Singapore Dollar	56.11

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## BIZ BRIEFS

### SBI invests in Cashfree

Cashfree, a digital payments and banking technology company, has announced that State Bank of India has made an investment in the organization. The move reinforces their shared vision of promoting digital modes of payments. The company provides a full-stack payments solutions platform enabling over 100,000 growing businesses in India and across the globe to accept and disburse payment online through a single integration. It does transactions worth \$20 billion annually. “We are excited about our partnership with the country’s trusted and leading lender SBI. The investment from India’s largest bank shows its trust in Cashfree’s innovation and the way we are rapidly scaling up the payments business. This also underscores Cashfree’s role towards building a payments ecosystem that enables the fastest and easiest way to collect payments,” says Akash Sinha, Co-Founder, CEO, Cashfree.

### Vivo onboards Sara Ali Khan

Vivo has on-boarded Bollywood actress Sara Ali Khan as its chief style icon for its upcoming Y-series smartphones. As part of the association, Sara will be seen across the marketing campaign of upcoming Y series smartphones, starting from Y73. The association will focus on showcasing the style and design of Y-Series, while offering the latest technology to consumers. Nipun Marya, Director-Brand Strategy, Vivo India, said: “We are excited to have Sara Ali Khan on board for the upcoming Y-Series range. Working with her in the past has brought the desired style statement for our design-centric series. Our focus is always to meet the evolving consumer needs and preferences, and we are committed to bringing joy to our consumers’ lives.”

### Online Ludo sharpens skills

Online Ludo has gained popularity among the online gamers, especially those looking to play competitive skill-based games. The online game is similar to the board game, with the key difference being the preponderance of skill, application of mind and strategy in winning. According to a study done by two Italian researchers, they found strategy and socialization to be the main motives for choosing skill-based games. The number of users of online competitive Ludo games increased during the Covid-19 pandemic. “India has a long and rich history of cultural and social games used for recreation, entertainment and social engagement such as Ludo, Carrom and Snakes and Ladders. Modern day technology has allowed these games to come alive in their online forms,” said Rameesh Kailasam, CEO, IndiaTech.org.

### AESL opens new centre

Aakash Educational Services Limited has opened its first information centre in Mancherial in Telangana. The information centre will cater to students and provide them with all the major details related to Aakash, its offerings, courses, locations etc. Students will have the option to opt for medical and engineering as well as foundation-level courses at Aakash. Aakash Chaudhry, Managing Director, Aakash Educational Services Limited said: “The new information centre in Mancherial will be a big boon for local students aspiring to become doctors and IITians. It will help students to be on the right track and provide them with all the needful assistance. Today, Aakash is widely known for providing quality education throughout the country.”

# Flipkart looks to raise \$3bn for expansion

SARITHA RAI

FLIPKART, the Indian e-commerce giant controlled by Walmart Inc., is in talks to raise at least \$3 billion from investors including SoftBank Group Corp. and several sovereign wealth funds, according to people familiar with the matter.

The startup is targeting a valuation of about \$40 billion and is in discussions with Singapore’s GIC Pte., Canada Pension Plan Investment Board and the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority, said the people, asking not to be named because the discussions are private. Japan’s SoftBank, which had previously backed Flipkart before selling its stake to Walmart, could invest \$300 million to \$500 million of the total through its Vision Fund II, one of the peers said. Flipkart plans to raise the additional capital ahead of an initial public offering, now planned for next year, they said. The company had targeted an IPO as soon as the fourth quarter of this year, but those plans have been delayed by the Covid resurgence in India. The fundraising discussions are not yet finalised and could still change, the people with the knowledge said.

SoftBank and GIC declined to comment, while Flipkart did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

The e-commerce market has boomed over the past 18 months, one of the clear beneficiaries of the pandemic. Shares of Amazon.com Inc., which competes with Flipkart in India, soared more than 70 per cent during that period to a market

## In talks with SoftBank, several sovereign wealth funds



### FLIPKART FUNDAMETALS

● Flipkart plans to raise the additional capital ahead of an initial public offering

● The fundraising discussions are not yet finalised and could still change

● The e-commerce market has boomed over the past 18 months, one of the clear beneficiaries of the pandemic

value of \$1.6 trillion. One of the most successful IPOs this year was South Korea’s Coupang Inc., another SoftBank-backed e-commerce provider.

India has enormous potential for growth, as demonstrated during the pandemic. The population of 1.3 billion is rapidly adopting digital technologies as the standard of living rises, while traditional retailers are not as established as in markets like the US. Walmart paid \$16 billion for 77 per cent stake in Flipkart. That has helped fuel the interest in Flipkart from investors at the targeted \$40 billion valuation. If the company makes its debut in the public markets next year as planned, it could be the largest IPO of an Indian startup. The deal would mark an unlikely return for SoftBank. The Japanese company agreed to sell its stake in Flipkart to Walmart in 2018, reaping a profit of about \$1.5 billion in the span of a year.

Flipkart was founded in 2007 by two former Amazon engineers and

acquired by Walmart 11 years later in the American retailer’s largest acquisition ever. Walmart has since invested more than \$1.5 billion in the retail platform, at the same time Amazon has pumped billions into its local business. Today, Flipkart includes the fashion retailer Myntra and Flipkart Wholesale, its digital marketplace targeted at small and medium businesses. Flipkart also owns a substantial stake in digital payments provider PhonePe.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, Flipkart and its peers have expanded further into smaller Indian cities. The online retailer is increasingly seeing first-time internet users shop on Indian language versions of its service - it currently offers 11 languages - and also voice-enabled shopping. Annual revenues are at about \$15 billion, according to one of the persons, driven mostly by sales of electronics and fashion but, increasingly, also home furnishings, health care and groceries. (Bloomberg)



### UCO Bank announces new initiatives

HANS BUSINESS HYDERABAD

UCO Bank has taken various initiatives to supplement government’s effort to combat the second wave of Covid-19. The bank has restructured its stressed accounts according to RBI guidelines and extended relief under Resolution Framework 2.0 to 2314 accounts amounting Rs 127 crore.

UCO bank has come up with three new credit schemes to resolve the urgent fund requirement of the healthcare sector as UCO Sanjeevani, Aarogya, Kavach and deposit product UCOVAXI-999. The bank is also offering health insurance products such as Corona Kavach & Rakshak, Group care 360, Star Group Health Insurance, UCO Health Suraksha, Group Credit life insurance policies.

Bank also announced a compensation of Rs 20 lakhs as a financial assistance to family members of employees who succumbed to Covid-19. Under CSR activities, the bank donated food grains and staple food items to needy people affected by lockdowns. UCO also provided financial help to Ramakrishna Mission Sevashram, which provided cooked food to affected people of cyclone Yaas.

# Indices at new peak amid falling Covid cases

## RIL leads charge; Sharp recovery in rupee adds to momentum; Lacklustre global cues cap gains

MUMBAI

EQUITY markets mustered solid gains to close at all-time highs on Monday as risk sentiment improved after multiple states began easing Covid-19 restrictions amid falling cases.

A sharp recovery in the rupee added to the momentum, even as lacklustre global cues capped the gains, traders said. After starting on a tepid note, the 30-share BSE Sensex saw good buying in energy, IT and bank stocks in afternoon trade. It finally finished 228.46 points or 0.44 per cent higher at its new closing record of 52,328.51.

Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty surged 81.40 points or 0.52 per cent to its all-time peak of 15,751.65. PowerGrid topped the Sensex gainers’ chart with a jump of 4.44 per cent, followed by NTPC, UltraTech Cement, Reliance Industries (RIL), IndusInd Bank, HCL Tech, Tech Mahindra and L&T. Index heavyweight RIL contributed around half of the benchmark’s gains. On the other hand, Bajaj Finance, Bajaj Finserv, HDFC, Dr Reddy’s, SBI and ONGC were among the laggards, tumbling up to 4.43 per cent. “Domestic equities extended gains with benchmarks recording fresh all-time highs as sharp decline in daily caseload and states started easing business curbs lifted sentiments,” said Binod Modi, Head - Strategy at Reliance Securities. A sharp rebound was seen in private banks, auto and IT which supported market, while

metals and pharma witnessed profit booking. He further noted that mid-cap and smallcap stocks were again in focus as investors appeared to be lapping up these counters in the backdrop of improved visibility of earnings recovery. Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said, “Domestic equities extended its gains in today’s volatile session ahead of PM Modi’s address to the nation. Hopes of easing restrictions and Centre’s Covid-19 vaccination policy pumped optimism into the market.”

Sector-wise, BSE utilities, power, telecom, energy, oil and gas, industrials and IT indices surged as much as 3.33 per cent, while realty, finance and metal ended in the red. Broader BSE midcap and smallcap indices rallied up to 1.38 per cent.

World stocks were in wait-and-watch mode after the G7 economies agreed on a minimum global corporate tax rate of 15 per cent, even as experts said a lot of ground needs to be covered before G20 nations reach a similar agreement. Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Shanghai, Tokyo and Seoul ended with gains, while Hong Kong was in the red. Stock exchanges in Europe were largely trading with losses in mid-session deals. International oil benchmark Brent crude was trading 0.58 per cent lower at \$71.47 per barrel.



## We perform 27 tests on milk: Sid’s Farm

HYDERABAD

SID’s Farm, a premium dairy brand based in Telangana has announced that the company performs 27 tests based on FS-SAI (Food Safety and Standards Authority of India) legal standards of milk and milk products. With a huge presence in Hyderabad, Sid’s Farm aims to provide the millennium consumers with the purest form of milk that has no hormones, no preservatives, no antibiotics. The brand has 100 stores across the Telugu States and ecommerce platforms like Bigbasket, Amazon, and Flipkart.

The milk at a daily basis undergoes physical testing, chemical testing and microbiological testing. These tests rule out any common additives that are used in the market such as fat and solids-not-fat (SNF), urea, sugar, maltodextrin, antibiotics, ammonium compounds, pesticides, toxic chemicals and bacterial contamination. Moreover long-term exposure to such impure milk is a health threat, which is particularly important as milk is a staple in most Indian households.

# NCLT approves Piramal Group’s offer for DHFL

MUMBAI

THE National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) on Monday gave its approval to Piramal Group’s bid for bankrupt-DHFL, subject to certain conditions.

The tribunal’s Mumbai bench, chaired by H P Chaturvedi and Ravikumar Duraisamy, said the approval is subject to the final judgement from the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) and the Supreme Court’s judgement on Kapil Wadhawan in the matter. In its order, NCLT asked DHFL’s (Dewan Housing Finance Corporation Ltd) Committee of Creditors (CoC) to consider giving more money to small fixed deposit holders under the approved resolution plan. “We are not remanding the plan back to CoC, we respect their commercial wisdom,” it said. NCLT also rejected former DHFL promoter Kapil Wadhawan’s plea to get access to a copy of the resolution plan. On May 25, NCLAT stayed the direction of NCLT asking the lenders of DHFL to consider the offer by Wadhawan. The appellate tri-



bunal had also clarified that its order should not come in the way for NCLT to decide on approval for the resolution plan selected by the CoC. NCLAT’s direction had come on an urgent petition moved by the Union Bank of India on behalf of the CoC.

On May 19, NCLT asked the RBI-appointed administrator of DHFL to present the settlement plan offered by Wadhawan to the CoC. In January this year, the CoC voted in favour of selling DHFL to the Piramal Group under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code. Last year, Wadhawan had made his settlement offer to the CoC. The offer was rejected by the creditors, citing lack of credibility and the valuations attached to the proposed asset sales. In the plan, Wadhawan had proposed to repay lenders by selling assets. In November 2019, RBI had referred DHFL then the third-largest pure-play mortgage lender for resolution under the Code. DHFL had gone bankrupt with more than Rs 90,000 crore in debt to various lenders, including banks, mutual funds and individual investors who kept fixed deposits with the company.

# CIE-IIITH, SucSEED to fund deep-tech startups

## Early-stage formal VC funds and the structured support of such funds fix a serious gap in the tech startup ecosystem today

HANS BUSINESS HYDERABAD

CIE (Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship) and IIIT Hyderabad, a deep-tech academic incubator in India, and SucSEED Indovation Fund, an Angel Fund registered with SEBI as Category-I AIF-VC Fund- Angel Fund have partnered to fund and support early-stage deep-tech startups through the accelerator programs of CIE (Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship). SucSEED Indovation will be the investment partner of this program, and will jointly invest up to Rs 40 lakh in the pre-revenue stage of very promising deep technology startups in AI and other emerging technologies.

In the past 13 years CIE has helped over 300 startups to seed and scale. More than 40 startups actively engaged with the deeptech research labs of IIIT Hyderabad to build innovative technology solutions. CIE has invested more than Rs 10 crore



The CIE-IIITH and SucSEED team

in multiple startups at various stages in the form of equity investments and grants. CIE is well connected to the broader Deep Tech Ecosystem in Hyderabad and beyond.

Commenting on the association Prof CV Jawahar, CEO, CIE-IIITH said, “Early-stage formal VC funds and the structured support of such funds resolves a serious gap in the tech startup ecosystem today. Extremely glad to see SucSEED Indovation Fund filling this gap. We are happy to have partnered with SucSEED in our journey to support deep tech and research-based start-

ups” “There’s lot of common synergy between us and CIE-IIITH. As an early-stage fund, we are looking for sustainable innovative solutions around problem statements of the world and invest in startups, primarily from India, that could turn beneficial for people. Our purpose under this partnership is to anticipate deep-tech trends and focus on them collaboratively as much as we can to shape their rapid growth through our experiences of supporting entrepreneurship,” said Vikrant Varshney, Co-Founder and Managing Partner, SucSEED Indovation Fund.

# Hurdles ahead of PSBs’ privatisation: Fitch

## The process may also face risk of delay due to political opposition and structural challenges

NEW DELHI

FITCH Ratings on Monday said the plan to privatise two State-owned banks in the current financial year ending March 2022 could face delays amid renewed challenges for the Indian banking sector due to the second wave of Covid-19.

The government in the budget announced plans to privatise two public-sector banks. NITI Aayog has been entrusted with the task of selecting the banks and one general insurance company for the privatisation.

“The Indian government’s plan to privatise two state-owned banks in the current financial year (FY22, ending March 2022) could face delays amid renewed challenges for the Indian banking sector,” Fitch

said in a statement. Fitch said the current privatisation plan is an extension of the government’s broader agenda to reform the Indian banking sector and reduce the number of state-owned banks further, which have come down from 27 in 2017 to 12 in 2020 after three successive rounds of consolidation.

“Nonetheless, the bold move to privatise State-run banks faces risk from political opposition and structural challenges including heightened balance-sheet stress due to the Covid-19 pandemic, which is likely to keep bank performance subdued for the next two to three years,” it added.

Fitch believes that political support in favour of legislative changes



to the Act, which are required in order to go through with the sale, could be a significant hurdle for the government.

“There could also be more resistance from the trade unions this time around, who will be against the safety-net withdrawal of State ownership. Success of the plan would also require sufficient inter-

est from investor(s) willing to acquire large stake(s) in State-owned banks and run them,” it added.

The rating agency said that State banks in general have long been plagued with muted investor appetite due to structurally weak governance frameworks which have resulted in persistently weak performance, reflected in significant asset-quality problems. The Covid-19 pandemic has further dampened business and consumer confidence, with the impact on reported impaired loans manifesting potentially over an extended timeframe, considering the various forbearance and relief measures by the authorities.

# Union Bank posts Q4 net at ₹1,330 cr

NEW DELHI

STATE-OWNED Union Bank of India on Monday reported a standalone net profit of Rs 1,329.77 crore for March quarter 2020-21. It incurred a net loss of Rs 2,503.18 crore in the year ago quarter. Union Bank said the results of the quarter and year ended March 31, 2021 include operations of the erstwhile Andhra Bank and Corporation Bank, and hence are not comparable with the corresponding periods of previous year. These two banks were amalgamated into Union Bank of India with effect from April 1, 2020.

Total income during March quarter 2020-21 was at Rs

20,025.99 crore. In the year-ago period it was Rs 11,306.99 crore. For the full year 2020-21, there was a net profit of Rs 2,905.97 crore on a standalone basis. In 2019-20, the bank reported a net loss of Rs 2,897.78 crore, as an unamalgamated entity. Total income during the year was recorded at Rs 80,104.19 crore as against Rs 42,491.91 crore in 2019-20. In terms of asset quality, there was an improvement as the gross non-performing assets fell to 13.74 per cent of the gross advances as of March 2021 as against 14.15 per cent by the end of same month last year. Net NPAs or bad loans came down to 4.62 per cent from 5.49 per cent.





