

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

KARIMNAGAR | SATURDAY | 12 JUNE 2021

## WEATHER

**Max:** 30.7°C  
**Min:** 22°C  
**RH:** 81%  
**Rainfall:** 19 mm

**Forecast:** Cloudy sky with moderate rain. Max/Min temp. 29/21 °C

## ASTROGUIDE

**Plava:** Uttarayana  
**Tithi:** Jyestha Shuddha Vidiya till 8.15 pm  
**Star:** Ardra till 4.54 pm  
**Variyam:** Nil  
**Durmuhurtam:** 5.45 am to 7.29 am  
**Rahukalam:** 9 am to 10.30 am  
**HUIRI CALENDAR**  
**Shawwal** 30, 1442 AH  
**PRAYERS**  
**Fajar:** 4.31 am  
**Zohar:** 12.26 pm  
**Asar:** 4.52 pm  
**Maghrib:** 6.56 pm  
**Isha:** 8.13 pm  
**SUNRISE TOMORROW** 5.41 AM  
**SUNSET TODAY** 6.50 PM  
**MOONSET** 7.45 PM  
**MOONRISE** 6.10 AM

## COUNTER POINT



**Bumper offer! You will get a party ticket and a ministry if you defect with a few more leaders!**

## SHORT TAKES

### SC refuses loan moratorium

**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court Friday refused to pass direction on a plea seeking remedial measures to redress the financial hardship faced by borrowers during the second wave of Covid-19 pandemic, saying it is in the realm of policy decision. Government has many things to do. They have to spend money on vaccine, they have to spend money on migrant labourers. We cannot do it like this, the apex court said, adding that it is for the Centre and the RBI to consider the issue.

### SC postpones INI CET exam

**New Delhi:** The SC termed as "arbitrary and discriminatory" the fixing of June 16 for conducting INI CET 2021 and directed All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) to hold the post graduate medical entrance test after one month. A vacation bench of Justices Indira Banerjee and M.R. Shah disposed of a plea filed by doctors seeking admission to PG medical and challenging the notification of fixing June 16 as date of INI CET 2021.

### Ex-IL&FS chief arrested by EOW

**Chennai:** Former chairman of bankrupt Infrastructure Leasing and Financial Services (IL&FS) Ravi Parthasarathy was arrested by the Economic Offences Wing-II, here, following a complaint by 63 Moons Technologies. "The kingpin and mastermind of IL&FS and ITNL financial scam Ravi Parthasarathy was arrested by the (EOW-II) Chennai," a release said.

### ED slaps notice on crypto exchange

**New Delhi:** The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday said it has issued a show cause notice on India's largest cryptocurrency exchange for undertaking transactions worth over ₹2,790 crore in alleged violation of the Foreign Exchange Management Act. WazirX is as a domestic crypto currency and bitcoin exchange start-up registered under Zanzai Labs Pvt Ltd that was incorporated in December, 2017.

## WORLD | 5

**G7 to donate 1 billion jobs**

## SPORTS | 8

**Neeraj nails gold at Lisbon meet**

## TABLOID

**Why should house husbands be praised**

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Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana receives a replica of veena from Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao at Raj Bhavan in Hyderabad on Friday. Justice Ramana's wife Shivamala is also seen in the picture. — DC

## City pulls out all stops to welcome *mana* CJI

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 11

Chief Justice of India Justice N.V. Ramana was given a rousing reception at Raj Bhavan on Friday.

Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan and Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao accorded a grand welcome to Justice Ramana who received a ceremonial salute from the police at Raj Bhavan.

This is Justice Ramana's maiden visit to Telangana state after becoming the Chief Justice of India on April 24. He was accompanied by his wife Sivamala. He

will stay at the Raj Bhavan for three days.

Telangana High Court Chief Justice Hima Kohli, ministers K.T. Rama Rao, A. Indrakaran Reddy, Mohd Mahmood Ali, Sabitha Indira Reddy, Puvvada Ajay Kumar, Talasani Srinivas Yadav, MLAs, Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar, Director General of Police M. Mahendar Reddy and several other dignitaries and officials accorded a grand welcome to Justice Ramana on his arrival at the Hyderabad International Airport earlier.

Justice Ramana proceeded straight to the Bhavan where the Gove-

rnor, HC Chief Justice, Chief Minister, ministers and other dignitaries extended a warm welcome by presenting bouquets.

Justice Ramana landed in Hyderabad from Tirupati where he stayed on Thursday night. The pride among Telugu people was palpable as the son of the soil reached the pinnacle of the judiciary. There were huge hoardings along the major junctions and stretches in the city set up by the state government, welcoming Justice Ramana.

■ **Page 2: Banners thanked CJI for new HC judges**

## MAMATA BEGINS GHAR WAPSI DRIVE IN WB

**RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC**  
KOLKATA, JUNE 11

Dealing a severe blow to his party a month after its whitewash in the West Bengal Assembly elections, BJP national vice-president Mukul Roy along with his son Shubhrangshu Roy quit the party and returned to his Trinamul Congress roots in a grand welcome by its supremo and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

The newly-elected Krishnanagar North MLA's defection to the state's ruling TMC, which has reduced the BJP to 74 MLAs in the House, came after he did not get the Leader of the Opposition post which went to Nandigram MLA Suwendu Adhikari. Even a recent call from Prime Minister Narendra Modi inquiring about his ailing wife Krishna failed to stop Mr Roy from maintaining his distance from the BJP.

Mr Roy, who had switched to the BJP from the TMC in November 2017 and engineered a series of defections later, visited Trinamul Bhavan from his home in Salt Lake on Friday.

The TMC chief, who had already reached there, greeted her most trusted lieutenant of earlier days to welcome him back to her party in the presence of a few selected leaders, including her MP nephew Abhishek Banerjee. Ms Banerjee, however, said that those who defected to the BJP ahead of the polls but wish to return to her party, will not be taken back.

## TRS gets most donations in TS

**TS party got ₹89.5cr, YSRC received ₹8.9cr**

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 11

The ruling Telangana Rashtra Samiti (TRS) received ₹89.55 crore in donations from corporates and individuals in 2019-20, according to the latest annual funding report submitted to the Election Commission of India (ECI). Interestingly, no other regional party in both the Telugu states stands anywhere near the TRS on this count.

The ruling YSRC in Andhra Pradesh received ₹8.92 crore and the opposition Telugu Desam ₹2.60 crore.

The All India Majlis-e-Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen (AIMIM), on the other hand, received ₹13.85 lakh donations.

The TRS accepted donations of over ₹20,000 each

from 41 individuals amounting to ₹39.92 lakh while it received ₹89.15 crore from corporates via electoral bonds totalling ₹89.55 crore. However, it did not disclose the details of corporate houses which donated funds but listed the names of 41 individuals who donated amounts of over ₹20,000 each. Among them, TRS working president K.T. Rama Rao donated the highest amount of ₹2.5 lakh.

One K. Naveen Kumar also donated ₹2.5 lakh. The rest of the individual donations were in the range of ₹20,000 to ₹2 lakh.

For the YSRC, the highest amount donated by a corporate was ₹2.50 crore. The amount was donated by JSR Infra Developers Pvt Ltd, a Chennai-based firm. Among individual dona-

tions, one P. Sivakumar Reddy from Guduru town donated ₹1 crore. Arimenda Varaprasad Reddy and his wife Vijaya Sarada Reddy, who run a chain of engineering colleges in Hyderabad, donated ₹60 lakh each.

The TD received the highest donation of ₹1 crore from Triumph Electoral Trust, Chennai. Balaram Vemuri from Vijayawada donated ₹80 lakh, Janachaitanya Housing Pvt Ltd from Guntur donated ₹20 lakh and Anil Swati Balaram Foundation donated ₹20 lakh.

The AIMIM received donations of ₹3 lakh each from four individuals towards helicopter rent from Jharkhand and Maharashtra, where AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi held election rallies.

## Speculation is rife on Centre splitting UP into 2 new states

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 11

Amid growing speculation of a possible rejig in the BJP-led Uttar Pradesh government, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Friday met Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP president J.P. Nadda.

Crucial Assembly polls in Uttar Pradesh are scheduled early next year and the party leadership, it was learnt, discussed various issues with Mr Adityanath who has faced criticism over his state's Covid management and has also been asked to fine-tune the caste arithmetic before the polls.

There is intense speculation in New Delhi that the Centre might consider the division of Uttar Pradesh, which has the largest number of parliamentary seats, and that the UP CM was consulted on this at his meeting with Mr Shah on Thursday. The buzz is that

The buzz is that the Centre might consider the division of the state into two parts — Purvanchal and Harit Pradesh. A similar proposal was pushed by then CM Mayawati in the Assembly in 2011.

the Centre might consider the division of the state into two parts — Purvanchal and Harit Pradesh.

A similar proposal was pushed by then CM Mayawati in the state Assembly in 2011, but the issue failed to get momentum after the BSP lost power. Yogi Adityanath had, Incidentally, ruled out any plan to split the state in January this year.

The CM, sources said, discussed his government's Covid management, in particular steps taken during the second wave with the PM and Mr Nadda among

other state related issues. Later, in the evening, Mr Nadda and Mr Shah met the PM.

Sources said Mr Nadda, Mr Shah and a few other Union ministers have been meeting the PM almost daily over Covid related issues.

After his meeting with the Prime Minister, the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister tweeted: "Today, I had the privilege of meeting respected PM Modi and seek his guidance. I wholeheartedly thank him for taking out time from his busy schedule for the meeting and the counsel."

The BJP's Central leadership, it was learnt, had been receiving complaints from a section of party leaders regarding the UP chief minister's style of functioning and the perceived neglect of the Brahmin votebank, which is considered one of the core votebanks of the party.

## Half a day rain shows chinks in Warangal civic body's armour

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
WARANGAL, JUNE 11

The Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation (GWMC) has not taken any preventive measures before the arrival of the monsoon season this year. As a result, the heavy rains on half a day of Wednesday caused flooding several colonies.

Instead of clearing the silt from the drains and preventing colonies from get-

ting inundated, the GWMC prepared DRF teams with boats to rescue people from inundated areas. Citizens are criticising the officials and public representatives who made plans to rescue people from floods but not prevent the floods itself.

During July and August last year, the city experienced heavy rainfall and at least 120 colonies remained inundated for several days. Several roads were washed away cutting off transport.

Minsiter K.T. Rama Rao visited the city to take stock of the damage and directed officials to take large scale measures to prevent such a situation again. However, no steps in that direction were taken. With the arrival of rains this week, the municipal officials woke up from their slumber and started works which are likely to be expedited hastily.

■ **Page 2: Banners thanked CJI for new HC judges**

## COVID | FIGHT

## US turns blind eye to Covaxin's use in India, seeks more data

## FDA's prejudice for Indian vaccine

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 11

In what is seen as an instance of the West denying "due recognition" to Indian technological prowess, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has refused to allow Indian vaccine-maker Bharat Biotech to sell its Covid-19 vaccine there.

The grant of an "emergency approval use" (EAU) would have allowed the Hyderabad-based firm to sell Covaxin in the US with immediate effect.

The FDA, however, recommended Bharat Biotech's American partner, Ocugen, to submit a biologics licence application or take the full approval route with additional data. Ocugen said in an official release on Friday that this may delay the launch of Covaxin in the US.

Explaining the process of granting an EUA on its website, FDA said that it "may allow use of unapproved medical products, or unapproved uses of approved medical products in an emergency to diag-

nose, treat, or prevent serious or life-threatening diseases or conditions when certain statutory criteria have been met, including that there are no adequate, approved, and available alternatives."

Under this process, the FDA has granted emergency authorization to vaccines of Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna and Janssen. However, none of these has proven its efficacy for the highly transmissible Delta variant that was initially found in India and spread to many other countries.

Though the FDA cites the unavailability of alternatives as a criteria for granting emergency approval, it turned a blind eye to the fact that Covaxin has been proven to be effective against the Delta variant.

The FDA's move shows the distrust that the US harbours for Indian products, especially those in the field of cutting-edge technology.

Covaxin has been administered to millions of people in India and it was given approval for emergency use in 14 countries.

"No vaccine manufac-

tured or developed from India has ever received EAU or full licensure from USFDA. When approved, it will be a great leap forward for vaccine innovation and manufacturing from India," Bharat Biotech said in its statement.

Covaxin is also facing prejudice at the top global health entity dominated by the West: The World Health Organisation (WHO). The global health body has not yet included Covaxin in the list of the vaccines that are approved for international travel.

## Fake seeds cost farmers heavily

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
ADILABAD, JUNE 11

Shockingly, it is found that some seed companies which have approval from the government only to produce tomato seeds have also been into manufacturing cotton seeds and selling them without any hurdle for years.

Old Adilabad district has become a hub for illegal stocks of cotton seeds and also spurious cotton seeds. Police teams are now unearthing these illegal

stocks and seizing spurious seeds every day.

One Tierra seed company is found supplying cotton seeds with fake approval to agencies which are in turn passing them on to gullible farmers.

The agriculture department issued orders banning the company from supplying cotton seeds. There are said to be so many such companies thriving with official nexus.

■ **Page 2: Traders collude with fake seed firms**



## IN BRIEF

### Banners hail CJJ for new HC judges

**From Page 1**  
Justice Ramana recently cleared a proposal of increasing the judges' strength in the Telangana High Court by 70 per cent to 42 from the existing 24. Banners were put up on Metro Rail pillars thanking him for the move. The Chief Minister thanked Justice Ramana saying the increase in bench strength would help expedite resolution of pending cases. The CM attended a dinner hosted for Justice Ramana by the Governor.

## Hair ball removed from girl's stomach

**Hyderabad:** A two-kg ball of hair was removed from the stomach of a 17-year-old girl at Osmania General Hospital. The patient, a resident of Shamshabad, she had undergone treatment for Covid-19 during the first wave of the pandemic. After that she came to the hospital with complaints of vomiting. Doctors found that she was suffering from trichobezoars or Rapunzel syndrome, where she had got into the habit of eating and swallowing her own hair. Dr P. Naik, senior anesthetist says, "She was psychologically weak and would eat her hair when hungry. She underwent surgery as the hair penetrated through the stomach to the intestine." Dr B. Nagendra, OGH superintendent, said, "Rapunzel syndrome is an extremely rare case and in our records show 68 cases.

## TRADERS COLLUDE WITH FAKE SEED FIRMS

**From Page 1**

If the rains are intensified by joint teams of police and agriculture officers, it would yield huge illegal stocks as well as spurious cotton seeds, say observers.

Farmers are losing heavily as fake seeds are not germinating. This came to light when Utnoor DSP Uday Reddy raided three fertilisers and pesticide shops in Ichoda and Neredigonda. He said Tierra has permission only for tomato seeds but it is also supplying cotton seeds without any approval. Fertilisers and pesticide traders are colluding with them. Police seized cotton seeds worth ₹19 lakh from five shops in Ichoda circle. They also sealed Algurwar and Nikhil fertilizers shops in Adilabad town on June 10. The police said Nikhil Fertilisers owner took an undertaking from farmers that he would not be held responsible if there was no germination of seeds or any loss. Algurwar owner was selling spurious cotton seeds by fixing their own prices and tampering with markers on the seed bags and lot numbers. Adilabad police led by DSP Venkateshwarlu seized illegal cotton seeds worth of Rs 1.5 lakh in Kuchulapur village in Talamadugu mandal. Rural CI Purushotham Chary and SI Divya took part in the raid in Kuchulapur on Friday.

## OFFICIALS TO FILE A CONTEMPT PETITION

**From Page 1**

*Deccan Chronicle* had on Friday reported details of the landfilling carried out by the builder in the report titled 'Builder Shanta Sriram disregards SC's order'. Hyderabad collector Swetha Mohanty directed officials to visit the site and make the builder stop the works.

Sources said the owners of the neighbouring parcel of land had submitted evidence in support of their claims that the builder had violated the status quo order. Video recordings of the personnel filling land and erecting new blue sheets were collected by the official team. "We will file a contempt petition against the builder if he continues work," a district official told *Deccan Chronicle*.

Meanwhile, GHMC zonal officials submitted a report on the builder trying to fill a nala to the rear of the plot. A compound wall was built on the rear side obstructing the flow of the nala. "We got budgetary sanction to take up civil works to streamline the nala," a GHMC official said. Meanwhile, the owner of the plot which was allotted by the state government to a differently-abled sportsperson also approached the Supreme Court challenging the High Court's April 1 order conferring ownership of private claimants.

# City hires kids to work, TS mandal shows way

## Eminent personalities show bad example, employ children

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 11

The year 2021 is marked as the international year for elimination of child labour, and June 12 is observed as World Day Against Child Labour. While many eminent personalities delivering strong speeches on this day, on well-decorated podiums, about the social evil called child labour, many children are sweating in some automobile garages, bangle and jewellery workshops or welding shops. Many children are working as domestic workers or babysitters.

Sheik Ayoub, 22-year-old, working in a jewellery workshop at Abids, has been into this trade for the past ten years. "I work in a jewellery workshop in Hyderabad, my father sent me to work here. I am West Bengal," he said.

"Parents in villages of West Bengal cannot take care of their children due to utter poverty. Employers in Hyderabad encourage migrant workers to get children from their villages, by promising better care, and pay them around ₹5,000 to ₹10,000 per year. There are hundreds of children working in the old city, especially in Gulzar Houz and Kali Kaman areas, in bangle and gold jewellery workshops," he said.

In Bholakpur Market, which has several scrap depots, children work to segregate scrap material. It is estimated 3.37 lakh children are working in the state of Telangana.

Aruna Ravi Kumar, social commentator and author, says, "We find children working in the houses of many people who are having responsible positions in the society, including bureaucrats and politicians, as well as anchors, cinema personalities and celebrities. What example are they setting for society?"

G. Ashok Kumar, former district collector of Nizamabad, said, "In 2001, Veilpur was declared a child labour free mandal, followed by surrounding mandais. People participated and owned the movement. Villages came out with signboards "no child labour exists in this village, even after 20 years those mandais are child labour free."

He said, "To make one city or village child labour free, people must be educated and sensitised about it. People should take ownership of such movements."



Children sell fruits on a push cart on the eve of World Day Against Child Labour in Hyderabad on Friday.

— R. PAVAN

## ‘Child labour up 35% in Covid’

**SANJAY SAMUEL PAUL | DC**  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 11

Child labour is one of the several issues that the authorities try to resolve all the time, but fail to find a permanent solution. Though the issue has always been a topic of major debates across various platforms, for the authorities, it remains a daunting task.

In an exclusive interview with this correspondent, Dr E. Gangadhar, joint commissioner of labour & director, state resource centre for eliminating of child and bonded labour, spoke about the challenges before the department in dealing with the issue in Hyderabad which has considerable migrated population on the eve of World Day Against Child Labour on Friday. Excerpts:

**Who are classified as child labourers and why does this system exist?**

A child below the age of 14, who is in any occupation, is considered as child labour. An adolescent falling under the age group of 15 to 18 years and involved in hazardous occupations is also regarded as child labour. The reasons for people to opt for child labour are, the wages are cheap, they can extract more working hours and more work. They can be mend easily.

**What is the percentage of child labour in Hyderabad city? Has child labour percentage decreased after the**



Dr E. Gangadhar

**new state was formed?**

This city is considered as a hotspot for child labour. As per 2011 census, 3.37 lakh children are working in Telangana region, 50 per cent of them are in agriculture sector. Other areas are brick kilns, construction sites, bangle and jewellery workshops, firecracker and agarbatti making, mechanic workshops, welding shops and rag picking. Another area is domestic help and babysitting. The incidents of child labour have decreased by 36 percent before the pandemic.

**Does the Covid pandemic have any impact on child labour?**

Yes, there has been huge impact on child labour during this 15-month period. It has come to our notice that child labour has increased to 30 to 35 percent during pandemic. Parents who lost their earnings due to Covid are forcing their children to work. Many children are begging on the street. This is

a serious concern and we are working on this.

**What would be your immediate action when you come to know that child labour is existing at a particular place?**

As soon as we receive complaints from the public through child helpline 1098, our officers jump into action, raid that place along with enforcement drivers on regular intervals. Special drives are conducted in the month of January and July every year as 'Operation Muskan' and 'Operation Smile'

**What are the measures you are taking to curb child labour?**

People should be educated and sensitised on this issue. They should consider it as a social evil. Moreover, a child is a child, consider him or her as your own child. Community participation plays a major role along with the department enforcements.

**What are the challenges you face in making the city 'zero child labour' one?**

Rapid migration, huge population, insensitivity of people towards the burning issue of child labour are some of the major causes of child labour. Many from elite classes in the city engage child labour and assume that they are providing better lies for them. However, they are destroying the precious lives and beautiful childhood of several children.

## IIT-H BETTERS STANDING IN QS RANKINGS

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 11

The IIT-H, has improved its QS Quacquarelli Symonds World University Ranking from 600-650 category in 2021 to 591-600 in 2022. Besides, for the second consecutive year, it maintained its position within the top 10 technical institutes in the country and as the best among the second generation IITs.

IIT-H said there had been a significant improvement in the institute's standing in the QS rankings over the last four years from 1300+ to 600. The institute stood at the 163th position globally in the citations per faculty.

● **ROADS ARE** closed in most of the MCZs to prevent entry of vendors and common people.

It will take some time for rural areas to come out of the Covid-19 situation. Doctors are surprised at the spread of disease in rural areas. They are still trying to understand how the virus attacked these zones.

Public health specialist Dr Santosh Kraleeti said, "We have 26,000 ASHA workers and each of them covers 1,000 people. They must be equipped with oximeters and thermometers to check on patients." Controlling Covid-19 in the rural belt is expected to take time. It will require aggressive monitoring and vaccination, experts say.

# Koushik, KTR meet triggers speculation

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 11

P. Koushik Reddy, who contested the Assembly elections as the Congress candidate from Huzurabad, met IT minister K.T. Rama Rao on Friday, triggering rumours of his joining the TRS. Photographs of the meeting went viral on social media, with reports of the Congress leader joining the pink party. It is said that Koushik Reddy is hoping to get a TRS ticket in the upcoming byelections to the Huzurabad constituency.

After an hour, Koushik Reddy clarified how the pictures came to be taken.

Speaking to this newspaper, Koushik Reddy said he attended the 11th day death cer-



Congress leader P. Koushik Reddy met with TRS working president K.T. Rama Rao.

emony of the father of his neighbour and close friend Srinivas Rao at their gated community clubhouse.

Rama Rao was a relative of Rao and had attended the ceremony.

Koushik Reddy said he sat with Rama Rao during lunch and had not discussed politics. He made it clear that he wanted to contest from the Congress in the Huzurabad bypoll and appealed to the party cadre not to

believe propaganda against him.

Koushik Reddy is the cousin of Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee chief N. Uttam Kumar Reddy and had contested in Huzurabad against Etala Rajendar in 2014 and 2018.

It may be recalled that after the sacking of Rajendar from the state Cabinet, Koushik Reddy had attacked the former minister and alleged that he was a land grabber.



BJP state in-charge Tarun Chugh addresses the media at leader Etala Rajendar's house in Shamirpet as the former minister looks on.

— DC

# BJP reaches out to Rajendar at home

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 11

BJP Telangana affairs in-charge Tarun Chugh on Friday declared that there is a struggle going on between self-esteem of Telangana and the arrogance of one person.

He appreciated former minister Etala Rajendar for speaking out against the dictatorial tendencies of Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao not only within the party but also in public forums.

Chugh was speaking after he and BJP

national organising joint secretary general Sivaprakash held a meeting with party MLAs Raja Singh and Raghunandan Rao. Former MPs Vivek Venkataswamy, Vijayaraj Reddy and Vijayashanti were present.

Chugh, accompanied by party vice-president D.K. Aruna, party OBC Morcha chairman K. Laxman and BJP MLAs, visited Shamirpet and met Rajendar at his residence. The party in-charge made it clear that their meeting with the former minister is official.

He accused Chandrasekhar Rao of suppressing voices that are critical of him and the government. He said the aim of CM is to perpetuate family rule. But the people will overthrow such a dictatorship in the next elections. Chugh made it clear that BJP's preferred development and corruption-free rule in Telangana.

Earlier in the meeting, state party leaders explained to Chugh and Sivaprakash how the BJP can become a strong force and come to power in Telangana in 2023.

# There is no holding AP boozers from thronging TS belt shops

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
KHAMMAM, JUNE 11

Ganeshampadu, a village in Penuballi mandal in this district, adjacent to Kokilampadu in Tiruvuru mandal in Andhra Pradesh, is seeing intense activity in the Covid19 situation.

Nearly 100 people from Kokilampadu used to come to belt shops in Ganeshpadu for booze every day. Double or treble this number arrives from other villages of Tiruvuru mandal to liquor shops in Ganeshpadu. The flow of such people continues even in these pandemic times.

There are 48 such villages near the AP borders in Sattupalli and Madhria assembly segments that are identified as Covid19 super spread areas by the Telangana govern-

ment.

Though the government asked excise officials to stop the belt shops in these villages, it was not easy. Many are evading the check posts on the Telangana side and reaching the belt shops through interior routes.

The belt shop owners stopped their activity two days after police and excise officials swooped down on the area, but resumed sales later.

Supplying liquor to belt shops is more lucrative than selling it to boozers coming to the liquor shops in the mandals like Vemsoor, Penuballi, Madhira, Kallur, Tallada, Bonakal, Mudigonda and Nelakondapalli in Khammam district.

Nearly 50 to 60 Covid19 positive cases are being reported from these two constituencies every day.

The state medical and health principal secretary and director visited the two constituencies and asked officials to check the pandemic spread there.

Interestingly, however, the government has not relaxed the timings for opening of shops in Madhira and Sattupalli assembly constituencies on par with those in the other areas. The lockdown in these segments is from 2pm to 6am in these two segments against 6pm to 6am in the remaining parts of the state.

Social activist in Penuballi, Prasad, said closing of licensed liquor shops during the lockdown is the only way to check the menace.

"Belt shops will prevail even in lockdown until the time the licensed shops are opened," he said.

# Three held for supply, sale of fake seed in TS from AP

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
ADILABAD, JUNE. 11

The Ramagundam police on Friday booked three spurious cotton seeds traders under Preventive Detention (PD) Act. An accused who hails from Andhra Pradesh is supplying spurious seeds to villages in Mancherial district. In a statement issued,

police commissioner V. Satyanarayana said the accused were selling spurious cotton seed in Bellampalli and Thallagurijala.

The accused are Pusa Subbarao of Giddalur mandal in Prakasham district is now residing in Venkatapur village in Bheemini mandal in Mancherial district and Chowdhary Dinesh an owner of

fertilizer shop in Bheemini and Pathireddy Prabhakar Reddy of Inklina basti in Bellampalli of Mancherial district.

Three accused formed as a group and are transporting spurious cotton seeds from Kurnool of Andhra Pradesh and selling them in the villages under Mancherial district.



## OTHER STORIES

## SISTER KILLS BRO FOR SEXUALLY ASSAULTING HER

**Karimnagar:** In instances involving two alcoholics assaulting their own family members during the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic in Karimnagar district, a sister killed her blood brother when the latter tried to sexually assault her. In the other instance a husband killed his wife suspecting her fidelity.

The brother, identified as 35-year-old Ritish (name changed), reached home late on Thursday night in Vidyannagar area of Karimnagar city after consuming alcohol. Under its influence, he tried to sexually assault his own sister. His parents warned him but when he continued to force himself upon her, the sister picked up a stone pestle and hit Ritish on his head. He died on the spot. On receiving information from neighbours, police reached the spot and took Ritish's sister into their custody. The other incident took place at Javaripet village in Yellan-thakunta mandal in Rajanna Sircilla district. An alcoholic husband had been suspecting the fidelity of his wife. On Thursday, he came home drunk and picked up a quarrel with his wife. He then picked up the stone pestle in the house and hit her, causing her death. As neighbours reached the spot on hearing the cries, the husband escaped. Police have sent the body for post-mortem, registered a case and have launched a manhunt for the husband.

## Spl shelters sought for Kolam women during their periods

DC CORRESPONDENT  
ADILABAD, JUNE 11

Telangana State Commission for Women (TSCW) member Kumra Eshwari Bai of Adilabad district has come out with a special request for Divya Devarajan, Commissioner of Women and Child welfare. She is seeking construction of 'special shelters' beside anganwadi centres for Kolam adivasi women for their stay during their menstruation period.

Kolam Tribe is considered as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG).

There is a tradition among the Kolam adivasi that Kolam women should stay in a temporary hut or shed outside the home or at some distance of the village during the menstruation period.

They will not be allowed inside their house till the period is over. Eshwari Bai said that a married Kolam woman Atram Sunitha died of snakebite in a temporary hut during the menstruation period in her village Dharamadugu in Gudihathnoor mandal

recently and added that many such incidents have taken place across old Adilabad district but they did not come to light.

She said that the special shelters will provide safety and security to Kolam women since they were more prone to risk with their age-old tradition.

She met Devarajan and submitted a memorandum on the subject. Eshwari Bai said that the Commissioner responded positively to her request for special shelters.

It is hard to digest that even today, Kolam adivasi women have to face hardships during their menstruation period. Most of the time, they have to stay in a hut made of leaves and polythene cover away from the village. Food and water are provided by some other women.

Except a handful, almost all Kolam adivasi are still living in interior villages on the fringes of forests and fully depend on minor forest produce and bamboo in the old Adilabad district. They are more superstitious when compared to other tribal groups.

## Fuel price hike sparks outcry

There will be adverse impact on households, essential commodities prices: Cong.

DC CORRESPONDENT  
WARANGAL, JUNE 11

Warangal Urban and Rural District Congress Committee president Naini Rajender Reddy today staged a protest at the Indian Oil petrol pump in front of the Hanmakonda Nakkalagutta.

Demanding immediate reduction of the hiked petrol and diesel prices, the Congress leaders staged a protest with holid placards and black flags chanting "Modi Murdabad." at Nakkalagutta in Hanamkonda on Friday. They also roganised cook and eat programme using firewood in protest of the hike in gas prices.

Speaking on the occasion, Naini Rajender Reddy said petrol and diesel prices in the country were rising day by day despite people being in serious trouble with the Covid-19 pandemic.

Rajender Reddy said that the price of a litre of petrol had crossed the ₹100 mark in most parts of the country, adding that the increase would have an impact on the rise in prices of all household and essential commodities.

"In the last 13 months, petrol prices have increased by ₹25.72 per litre and diesel by ₹23.93 per litre.

He said petrol and diesel prices had gone up 43 times in the last five months, which was an example of public exploitation by the Central government," Reddy pointed. He noted that the rise in petrol and diesel prices was leading to an economic slowdown, extreme unemployment, wage cuts, job losses and high price issues.

"Is the 'Ache Din' promised by Prime Minister Narendra Modi just for his Gujarat friends Ambani and Adani or the general public? Why are the Central and state governments not reducing petrol and diesel rates even though crude oil prices have come down?" he sought to know.

● **NAINI RAJENDER Reddy** noted that the rise in petrol and diesel prices was leading to an economic slowdown, extreme unemployment, wage cuts, job losses and high price issues.



Warangal Urban and Rural District Congress Committee president Naini Rajender Reddy along with other Congress leaders stage protest at Nakkalagutta in Hanamkonda on Friday.

—BY ARRANGEMENT

## BJP govt looting public money brazenly: TPCC

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KARIMNAGAR, JUNE 11

In response to a nationwide call by All-India Congress Committee

(AICC) to protest against Bharatiya Janata Party-led government at the centre increasing fuel prices 43 times in last 13 months, Congress workers staged a dharna opposite the HP petrol pump near One Town police station in Karimnagar city on Friday.

Addressing a gathering on the occasion, Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) working president Ponnamp Prabhakar pointed out that after coming to power in 2014, the Narendra Modi

regime has collected Rs. 28 lakh crore from people in the last seven years by increasing prices of petrol, diesel, gas and other fuels.

"Instead of working in the best interest of people, BJP is ruling the country as though it is a business house," Prabhakar charged.

He maintained that when Congress government was in power, it increased the price of petrol by just 25 paise. But there is no limit for increase in prices of fuel by the BJP government.

The TPCC working president such price hikes are inhuman when people are facing considerable financial problems with the outbreak

of Coronavirus pandemic. "The Narendra Modi regime has increased the price of petrol by Rs. 25 and diesel by Rs. 23 within a matter of months, he pointed out.

Prabhakar said on directives of AICC president Sonia Gandhi and former president and Wayanad MP Rahul Gandhi, Congress workers are protesting in front of petrol pumps throughout the country on Friday against increase in prices of fuel.

The TPCC working president demanded that the central government rethink and take immediate steps for bringing down prices within the reach of common people.

## CONG. DECRIES STEEP HIKE IN FUEL PRICES

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KHAMMAM, JUNE 11

Congress leaders staged dharna in front of petrol bunks in Khammam and all mandal headquarters in the district in protest against the hike in petrol and diesel prices.

Congress activists led by CLP leader Bhatti Vikramarka staged a dharna before a petrol bunk on Wyra Road in Khammam on Friday. CLP leader said that the Congress party organised such programme in the entire country on the call given by AICC president Sonia Gandhi. Bhatti said that the price of petrol in Telangana crossed century mark. "The Central government is trying to fill up its coffers only with taxes on oil. The common man is reeling under pressure with the sky-rocketing prices of essential commodities", he said.

The party workers organised the stir in all mandals like Madhira, Nelakondapalli, Wyra, Bonakal, Errupalem and Tallada in Khammam district.

## OP services begin at new hosp.

**Warangal:** The outpatient (OP) services have been initiated at the newly constructed Super Specialty Hospital in the premises of Kakatiya medical college in Warangal on Friday.

The hospital was set up in affiliation to the Kakatiya Medical College under the Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY) at a cost of ₹150 crore.

The officials said all arrangements have been completed at the Super Specialty Hospital set up with state-of-the-art facilities. With this hospital now fully functional, the MGM

Hospital will now be utilized for the treatment of Covid victims. The medical authorities took steps to provide non-covid medical services and made OP services available in nine departments.

KMC principal Dr Sandhyarani said the process of selection of doctors, paramedical and technical staff, security staff, sanitation workers and supervisors to work in the super specialty hospital is still in progress. "As part of this, the selection of three civil surgeons, RMOs, 16 super specialty doctors,

seven broad speciality specialists and 134 staff nurses have been completed," she said.

Outpatient services in Cardiology, Cardiothoracic Surgery, Nephrology, Urology, Gastroenterology, Pediatric Surgery, Neurology, Neurosurgery and Radiology are available. Dr Sandhyarani informed. Panchayat Raj Minister Errabelli Dayakar Rao said that highest quality medical services would be made available free of cost to the people of the joint Warangal district as well as the adjoining districts.

## POLICE FACILITATES COVID-19 RAPID TESTS IN GODAVARIKHANI

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KARIMNAGAR, JUNE 11

As a spate of Corona cases came to light in Santosh Nagar and Lambada thanda of RG-2 area under Godvarikhani Two Town police station limits, its Circle Inspector Srinivas Rao, in coordination with the health department and Singareni officials, facilitated Covid rapid tests on Friday.

The officials conducted tests on as many as 52 persons in both the areas, of whom 12 tested positive for Covid-19. The officials handed over medical kits to them and advised home isolation until the disease subsides. Those who do not have facility to remain in home isolation are asked to stay at the isolation centre established in Saphthagiri Colony.

Inaugurating the Corona rapid testing camp, Commissioner of Police V. Satyanarayana said that the virus does not differentiate between rich and poor. It can infect any person who is alive. The only way to protect from its infection is follow precautionary steps strictly.

Due to the second wave of Coronavirus, many families lost their bread-winners and other family members in front of their eyes. People should follow the lockdown orders and must not come out, behaving irresponsibly, the CP advised.

The Commissioner commended the police staff and asked them to ensure continuation of rapid test camps in order to keep check on the spread of the virus. He also asked the police officials to file cases against those venturing out without any valid reason and seize their vehicles.

Peddapalli DCP Ravinder, Godavarikhani ACP Umendar, CI Ravinder, DMHO Pramod, RG-2 general manager Venkateshwarlu, SI Santosh and corporator Shankar Naik and others were present.

● **TINAUGURATING** The Corona rapid testing camp, Commissioner of Police V. Satyanarayana said that the virus does not differentiate between rich and poor. It can infect any person who is alive. The only way to protect from its infection is follow precautionary steps strictly.

## Monsoon exposes laxity of GWMC

DC CORRESPONDENT  
WARANGAL, JUNE 11

The Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation (GWMC) has not taken any preventive measures before the arrival of the monsoon season this year. As a result, the heavy rains on half a day of Wednesday caused flooding several colonies.

Instead of clearing the silt from the drains and preventing colonies from getting inundated, the GWMC prepared DRF teams with boats to rescue people from inundated areas. Citizens are criticising the officials and public representatives who made plans to rescue people from floods but not prevent the floods itself.

During July and August last year, the city experienced heavy rainfall and at least 120 colonies remained inundated for several days. Several roads were washed away cutting off transport. Municipal administration minister K.T. Rama Rao visited the city to take stock of the damage and directed officials to take large scale measures to prevent such a situation again. However, no steps in that direction were taken.

With the arrival of rains this week, the municipal officials woke up from their slumber and started works which are likely to be expedited hastily.

The demolition of encroachments on the main nalas in the city has been left midway. Several owners of the structures brought stay orders from the courts and halted the works. In all, 288 structures were removed.

The decision to construct a retaining wall on either side of the nala intended to prevent further encroachment has been taken five years ago.

The matter came back on cards after the arrival of KTR last year. Except for the retaining wall between the Waddepalli lake and Amaravati Nagar, it was not constructed anywhere else.

A social activist, Santhosh Manduva of the Srinagar colony, said the elected representatives must work towards a permanent solution and not just temporary rescue missions and relief efforts during floods.



Silt being removed from the nala near the Bhadrakali temple in Warangal.

—BY ARRANGEMENT

## People worry over mosquito menace

DC CORRESPONDENT  
WARANGAL, JUNE 11

The negligence of the GWMC officials has resulted in the residents of Nandhi hills in Hunter Road to deal with mosquito menace and live in unhygienic conditions.

Due to an improper drainage system, the flood water is flowing through the colony roads and it remains stagnant at many places. Due to the overflowing of drainages, all the dirt gets accumulated on the road causing unhygienic conditions and aids mosquito breeding.

A colony resident N. Mohan Rao said the GWMC constructed a new drain in place of the existing one after the floods last year. However, it is in no way an improvement from the previous one. "We had to rebuild our ramps which cost us ₹30,000 but the purpose of the new drains is not served. Instead of water flowing from our streets to the big drain, the opposite is taking place.

Because of the poor planning of the officials, the drainage is

● **DUE TO** an improper drainage system, the flood water is flowing through the colony roads and it remains stagnant at many places. Due to the overflowing of drainages, all the dirt gets accumulated on the road causing unhygienic conditions and aids mosquito breeding.

● **REPEATED COMPLAINTS** to the GWMC officials have not resulted in any action being taken regarding the issue.

There is no place for the stagnant water to go even after the rain subsides. As a result, it remains like that indefinitely," he said adding that repeated complaints to the GWMC officials have not resulted in any action being taken regarding the issue.

The residents request the authorities to give a permanent solution to the problem at the earliest given as more rains are expected in the coming days.

## SEVERAL SICK AFTER EATING 'RASSHOLI'

DC CORRESPONDENT  
ADILABAD, JUNE 11

As many as 41 persons fell sick after eating 'Rassholi' (Sweet Chapathi) at a function in Thadihathnoor village they were shifted to Narnoor mandal primary health care centre.

Agency DMHO Kudimetha Manohar visited the Narnoor PHC and supervised the situation. They were later shifted to RIMS, Adilabad on Friday.

It is learnt that the health condition of all the people who fell sick was stable at RIMS.

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SHORT TAKES

MAOIST GUNNED DOWN IN ODISHA

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, JUNE 11

A Maoist was on Friday gunned down during a joint combing operation by Special Operation Group (SOG) jawans and Odisha police at Padampur in Odisha's Bargarh district.

The security personnel also seized a cache of arms and ammunition, including an AK-47 rifle, from Jhanj Reserve Forest near Bhanjagunda area, informed state Director General of Police Shri Abhay. However, the identity of the slain rebel was yet to be ascertained, the DGP said.

According to reports, a group of Left Wing Extremism cadres opened fire on the security personnel when the latter were carrying out a combing operation in Jhanj Reserve Forest. The security personnel retaliated with full force and in the process a cadre in uniform was killed. However, the remaining Maoists managed to escape.

According to police, an AK-47 rifle, three AK-47 magazines, sophisticated ammunition and other explosives were recovered from the spot. The combing operation was in progress till the report last came in.

"Normally, senior Maoist cadres are given AK-47 rifles to operate. We assume that the encountered rebel could be a senior cadre. Effort is on to establish his identity," said the DGP.

"I once again urge all the Maoists to shun violence and return to the mainstream. I appeal to them to join various rehabilitation schemes of the state government," he added.

SC ORDER ON ITALIAN MARINES LIKELY ON MON.

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JUNE 11

The Supreme Court on Friday agreed to order the dropping of criminal proceedings against two Italian marines accused of killing two Indian fishermen off Kerala coast in 2012, after court was informed that ₹10 crore compensation for the families of victims have been deposited with the court registry.

The Italian marines Chief Master Sergeant Massimiliano Latorre and Sergeant Major Salvatore Grigore, on board Italian-flagged oil tanker M V Enrica Lexie, had killed two Kerala fishermen who were on a fishing vessel in India's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), allegedly suspecting them to be sea pirates.

Telling Solicitor General Tushar Mehta "We will accept that you are saying", a bench comprising Justice Indira Banerjee and Justice M.R. Shah said that they will pass the order on June 15.

On the question of disbursement of money to the families of victims, the court indicated that it may ask Kerala High Court to deal with it as it can monitor the aspect of disbursement of the compensation to the families of the victims.

It said that the money deposited with its registry can be transferred to Kerala High Court. In the course of the hearing on Friday, Solicitor General Mehta told the court that the money can be deposited in interest-bearing bank accounts for gradual withdrawal and accrual of adequate interest.

Covid chaos



People throng a market that opened after two months as restrictions of Covid-19 lockdown eased in Bhopal on Friday.

— PTI

BJP leaders call Mukul Roy 'Mir Jafar, opportunist'

WB BJP chief says anyone can go anywhere, it is their personal choice

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, JUNE 11

The Bharatiya Janata Party, shattered by its national vice president Mukul Roy's exit and his return to the Trinamul Congress, has become a divided house in West Bengal with a blame game between two camps amid a fierce internal revolt since its poll debacle in the state.

While one section slammed the party leadership for inducting Mir Jafars like Roy without any judgment ahead of elections, senior leaders alleged their rivals of having "no contribution" while downplaying the newly elected Krishnanagar North MLA's defection as a "personal choice."

Bishnupur BJP MP Saumitra Khan alleged, "We saw Mir Jafar in Bengal before independence. But now we are seeing them in politics. This type of people are never accepted. Had he been Chankaya in politics, he could have succeeded in ensuring the victory for his son Shubhrangshu from Bijpur Assembly seat this time. But he failed. Mir Jafar can not do anything good. They



BJP leader Mukul Roy hugs TMC general secretary Abhishek Banerjee during his re-joining of the party, as West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee looks in Kolkata on Friday.

— PTI

only can harm." Another party MP Arjun Singh claimed that Roy was an "opportunist" who belongs to no organisation.

His party colleague Anupam Hazra posted on Facebook, "A pathetic outcome of extra jubilation over one or two leaders during election and sidelining and insulting the efficient through lobbying!! Now the Royal Passengers of Chartered flights are also missing!! Still time is there, the

Bengal BJP should stop lobbying and engage the efficient leaders who are sidelined!!!"

State BJP president Dilip Ghosh, however, said, "Those who have no contribution in the rise of our party here are feeling sad. If someone fails to sing in the party's tune, it is his personal problem, not of the party. Anyone can go anywhere. It is his personal wish. I do not know if there was hardly any gain for us

when he was there. Our party remains intact."

Darjeeling BJP MP Raju Bista said, "Mukul Roy is a senior and a seasoned politician, and his joining TMC is a reflection of his personal choice. The beauty of democracy is that people are free to choose. But sadly, today this freedom to choose does not exist in West Bengal. BJP is making space for democracy to foster again in Bengal and as the 2021

elections showed, BJP has grown stronger in the grassroots level in West Bengal and this momentum will continue unabated."

Former MLA Shilbhadra Dutta, who defected to the BJP before the polls, said, "This is a personal choice. He did whatever he thought was best. I have nothing to say. But people develop a hatred towards politics when they see repeated switches by someone."

SC raps Param Bir for having no faith in cops

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JUNE 11

The Supreme Court on Friday described as "shocking" the former Mumbai police commissioner Param Bir Singh saying that he had no confidence in the Maharashtra police with which he has been associated for over three decades as IPS officer, as it declined to entertain his plea for the transfer of all the criminal cases

registered against him in Maharashtra to CBI or an independent agency.

Apparently intrigued over Param Bir Singh showing lack of faith in Maharashtra police in which he grew up to become the top cop of Mumbai police, the court observed that those living in glass houses should not throw stones on others.

Describing as "shocking" Param Bir Singh's plea that he was seeking



the transfer of all the criminal cases to CBI or an independent agency because of his lack of trust in the Maharashtra police, a bench comprising Justice Hemant Gupta and Justice V. Ramasubramanian said,

"It is very surprising. You were part of Maharashtra IPS cadre for 30 years and served it. Now you are saying you do not have faith in that system. It is a shocking ... shocking allegation."

Reminding Param Bir Singh that he was alleging lack of trust in a police force of which he was part for 30 years, the court observed, "It is said persons living in glass houses shouldn't throw stones at other."

"Your Lordships are assuming I am living in glass houses," senior counsel Mahesh Jethmalani appearing for Param Bir Singh said responding to the observation from the bench.

At the outset of the hearing, the court told Singh that it can't pass a blanket order in respect of all the FIRs registered against him and asked him to approach Bombay High Court or any other appropriate forum.

Prashant Kishor's meeting with Pawar sets off speculations

SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC MUMBAI, JUNE 11

Well-known political strategist Prashant Kishor on Friday met Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) chief Sharad Pawar at the latter's residence Silver Oak in South Mumbai. Though the NCP maintained that the meeting was a thanksgiving trip related to the Bengal and Tamil Nadu election, there are speculations that non-Congress opposition parties are trying to put up a joint fight against the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and credible leader against Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The Shiv Sena has been openly proposing Pawar as the opposition leader.

Kishor held talks with the NCP chief and party leaders for three and half hours. The meeting between Pawar and Kishor assumes 'political significance' as it is believed the NCP chief wants a united forum of Opposition parties to take on the ruling BJP in the next Lok Sabha election, which is scheduled in 2024.

A senior NCP leader, requesting anonymity, said that Kishor had apprised the NCP chief about the current political situation with the facts and figures.

He also gave a suggestion on how to unite the opposition parties in the country. Apart from the NCP chief, the meeting was also attended by Baramati MP Supriya Sule, Maharashtra NCP president Jayant Patil and MLA Rohit Pawar.

Speaking with this newspaper on Friday, Maharashtra Cabinet minister and NCP national spokesperson Nawab Malik said that the current political situation in the country was discussed in the meet-

● **KISHOR HELD** talks with the NCP chief and party leaders for three and half hours.

● **THE MEETING** between Pawar and Kishor assumes 'political significance' as it is believed the NCP chief wants a united forum of Opposition parties to take on the ruling BJP in the next Lok Sabha election, which is scheduled in 2024.

● **THE SHIV** Sena has been openly proposing Pawar as the opposition leader.

ing. "A discussion was held over the political situation in the country and how to unite the opposition parties against the BJP in the country," Malik added.

Senior NCP leader and Cabinet minister Chhagan Bhujbal said that Prashant Kishor, who is a successful election strategist, has helped various parties win the elections at the centre and states with his suggestion and strategies.

"But I don't know the exact reason behind the meeting but if he comes with a suggestion, Pawar will certainly consider it," he added.

Shiv Sena spokesperson Arvind Sawant welcomed the meeting and said, "At present, polarisation is needed in the country. If democracy needs to be preserved, a strong opposition is needed."

In March 2021, the Sena had said that there is a need to restructure the UPA, and the new alliance should be led by a senior leader like Sharad Pawar as many regional parties are not ready to work under the leadership of the Congress. According to the Sena, if UPA is restructured, more parties will join the alliance.

Will provide security — to Poonawalla if he asks: Maha to HC

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC MUMBAI, JUNE 11

The Maharashtra government on Friday told the Bombay High Court that it would provide security to Adar Poonawalla if he asks.

Following the statement by the state that it would provide more security to Poonawalla if he asks so, a division bench of Justice S.S. Shinde and Justice N.J. Jamadar disposed of the petition filed by city based lawyer Datta Mane seeking Z+ security for Poonawalla. The petitioner had also sought registration of FIR against those who had threatened him in relation to supply of vaccine used in fight against Covid-19. The petitioner had termed the 'Y' category security provided to Poonawalla by the Centre as an eye wash.

On Friday, Chief Public Prosecutor Deepak Thakare made a statement before the court that whenever Poonawalla returns from London, and if he seeks protection, then adequate or additional protection will be

● **THE PETITIONER** had also sought registration of FIR against those who had threatened him in relation to supply of vaccine used in fight against Covid-19. The petitioner had termed the 'Y' category security provided to Poonawalla by the Centre as an eye wash.

given to him immediately. Advocate Pradeep Havnur, appearing for the petitioner, requested the Court to keep the petition pending to consider the prayer for registration of FIR.

The bench, however, said that the petitioner is seeking protection for someone else, but what if he says he doesn't want it? "How can we incorporate all of this into your petition?" asked the bench. The bench said that the court will not entertain the petition beyond a point now.

When Havnur submitted he did not have instructions to withdraw, the court proceeded to dispose of the petition after recording advocate Thakare's statement.

COVID | BLUES Relaxations mandate all shops, offices to follow all guidelines

TN too extends lockdown till June 21

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR & D. SEKAR | DC CHENNAI, JUNE 11

Extending the lockdown till June 21, Chief Minister M.K. Stalin announced a slew of additional relaxations all over the state, more of them in the 27 districts where Covid-19 infections have shown a decline.

In the other 11 districts — Coimbatore, The Nilgiris, Tiruppur, Erode, Salem, Karur, Namakkal, Thanjavur, Thiruvavur, Nagapattinam and Mylathur — too a few relaxations like allowing security services and housekeeping staff in apartments and other buildings have been announced.

However, in the rest of the state, liquor shops will be open from 10 am to 5 pm and beauty parlors, spas,



A health worker administers a dose of the Covid-19 vaccine to a person at a drive-in vaccination centre in Chennai on Friday.

— PTI

salons can function from 6 to 5 pm without switching on the air conditioner and not accommodating customers more than per cent of the capacity.

The relaxations, announced after reviewing the spread of Coronavirus district wise and with a view

to saving the precious lives of people, however mandate all shops and business establishments to provide hand sanitizer with dispenser at the entrance, thermal screening of body temperature and ensuring that all workers wore face masks and so on.

No shop can have the air conditioner on and should restrict the entry of customers with a view to maintaining social distancing, which should also be maintained as they waited outside to enter the premises by marking spots.

Among other activities allowed in the 27 districts with low infection rates are Parks and playgrounds to open for morning walking between 6 am and 9 am, shops repairing agricultural accessories and pump sets (not those doing sales) from 9 am to 5 pm, opticians, both selling and repairing spectacles, from 9 am to 2 pm and potters and handicraft makers and sellers between 6 am to 5 pm.

Shops repairing and selling household accessories like mixies, grinders and television sets, those selling cell phones and outlets

dispensing construction material can all be kept open from 9 am to 2 pm.

Educational institutions can function for doing administrative work relating to admissions and the export companies and those supplying raw materials to them can function with 50 per cent workers, following the Covid-19 protocols.

Other companies can engage 33 per cent of their workers, who would not be allowed to travel by their two-wheelers with e-registration. But IT related firms will have to restrict their employees in the premises to 20 per cent or 10 persons at a time.

Housing Finance Companies, Non-Banking Finance Companies and all insurance companies can function with 33 per cent employees in the 27 districts with more relaxations.

Will continue as CM for next two years: Yediyurappa

Hassan (K'taka), June 11: BJP national general secretary Arun Singh's statement ruling out his replacement has given him "more strength", Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa said on Friday and asserted that he will work for the development of the state during the remaining two years of the term.

The 78-year-old Lingayat strongman also said his responsibility has increased because of the trust shown in him by the BJP high command. "Arun Singh who is Karnataka in-charge has said that there is no question (of leadership change).. it doesn't arise and that Yediyurappa will remain (CM) for the next two years and complete the term where does that question arise," Yediyurappa said in response to a question.

Speaking to reporters after a review meeting with officials and public representatives from the district, he said, "it has been clarified that Yediyurappa will continue for the remaining two years and with the cooperation of everyone I will focus on development and tour across the state, and will make honest efforts to do a good job."

Amid speculation about leadership change in Karnataka, Singh, who is BJP's national general secretary in-charge of the state, on Thursday had ruled out replacing the Chief Minister and asserted that Yediyurappa will continue in the top post.

Yediyurappa in response to a question said that Singh's statement has given him "more strength". "Hundred per cent, when

our Karnataka in-charge has said there is no change for the remaining two years and good work is happening under my leadership, my responsibility has increased. I will put more effort and honestly work for the next two years, and try to live up to the trust shown in me by PM Narendra Modi and Amit Shah (Union home minister)," he added.

Speculation has been rife for some time now that efforts were on, by a section of the ruling BJP to exert pressure for unseating Yediyurappa. Some BJP legislators are said to be pushing for convening a legislature party meeting, citing some decisions taken by the government, its functioning, handling of the Covid crisis and alleged instances of corruption, among others.

— PTI



## SHORT TAKES

## 18 KILLED IN BUS CRASH IN PAKISTAN

**Karachi:** At least 18 persons were killed and 30 others injured on Friday when an over-speeding passenger bus overturned in Pakistan's Balochistan province, a media report said.

The bus was travelling from Wadh to Dadu when it met with an accident at Khorl in Khuzdar district of the province, Geo News reported. Fifteen people were killed on the spot. As soon as the accident was reported, rescue personnel rushed to the spot and started rescue operations, the report said.

The injured and deceased were shifted to Teaching Hospital Khuzdar, where three more people died and the death toll rose to 18, it said. The condition of some of the injured is said to be critical. Sources told the channel that the passenger coach lost control and overturned as it was over-speeding.

## THREE DEAD AT FLORIDA SUPERMARKET

**Royal Palm Beach, Fla.:** A man fatally shot a grandmother and her 1-year-old grandson inside a Florida supermarket before killing himself, authorities said, causing dozens to flee the store in panic.

The shooting happened shortly after 11:30 am on Thursday at a Publix located in a strip mall that also houses small shops and restaurants.

Authorities initially said the shooter and the victims may have known each other. A later update from the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office said there was no known motive or relationship between the suspect and the victims, but detectives were still investigating.

The sheriff's office identified the suspect as Timothy J. Wall, 55, of Royal Palm Beach.

The names of the grandmother and her grandson won't be released. Their family invoked Marsy's Law, the sheriff's office said, which allows victims of crimes to block information that could be used to locate or harass them or their families from being made public.

## INDONESIA DENGUE STUDY OFFERS HOPE

**Jakarta:** Dengue fever infections dropped dramatically in an Indonesian study where a bacteria was introduced into disease-carrying mosquitoes, offering hope in the battle against an illness that sickens millions annually around the world.

Results of the three-year study, published in the New England Journal of Medicine this week, found that infecting dengue-carrying mosquitoes with a harmless bacteria called Wolbachia led to a 77 percent drop in human cases.

Infections requiring hospitalisation also fell by 86 percent in Wolbachia-treated areas of Yogyakarta, a city on Java island where the experiment was conducted, researchers said. The study was conducted by the World Mosquito Program at Monash University in Australia and Indonesia's Gadjah Mada university.

"The 77 percent figure is honestly quite fantastic for a transmittable disease and we're very grateful with the result," said Adi Utarini, a public-health researcher.

## INDIA-KUWAIT SIGN MOU ON RECRUITMENT

**Kuwait City:** India and Kuwait have signed an MoU that brings Indian domestic workers in the Gulf nation within the ambit of a legal framework that streamlines their recruitment and provides them with the protection of the law.

The MoU was signed on Thursday by Indian Ambassador Sibi George and Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kuwait Majdi Ahmad Al-Dhafiri in the presence of visiting External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and his Kuwaiti counterpart Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah.

Jaishankar arrived here on his first bilateral visit to the oil-rich Gulf nation early on Thursday, according to a press release issued by the Indian Embassy here. The MoU brings the Indian domestic workers in Kuwait within the ambit of a legal framework that streamlines their recruitment and provides them with the protection of the law.

## G7 to donate 1 billion jabs

Leading economies feel joint approach is best to recover from Covid-19

**Carbis Bay, June 11:** G7 leaders gathered on Friday for their first in-person talks in nearly two years, with an expected pledge to donate one billion Covid vaccine doses to poor countries on the agenda in a show of Western democratic cohesion.

The club of leading economies — Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and United States — say a joint approach is the world's best chance for recovering from the global health crisis, and tackling climate change.

President Joe Biden has set the tone, ditching Donald Trump's isolationist stance to ram home a message of resolve by the G7 and NATO against both Beijing and Moscow, as he heads into his first sit-down with Russian President Vladimir Putin next week in Geneva.

"The driving animating purpose of this G7 summit is to show that democracy can deliver against the biggest challenges we're facing in the world," a senior US administration official said.

Campaigners say the G7's vaccine donations pledge for this year and next — including 500 million US doses — is far too little, too late to end a pandemic that has claimed over 3.7 million lives worldwide.

"If the best G7 leaders can manage is to donate one billion vaccine doses then this summit will have been a failure," Oxfam said, insisting the world needs 11 billion doses. But the G7 has recognised it needs to rise to competing "vaccine diplomacy" efforts launched by China and Russia, with the Biden administration stressing it expects nothing in return for its donated jabs.

G7 leaders meeting at the seaside resort of Carbis Bay in Cornwall, southwest England, are also expected to outline more help for developing nations to build up infrastructure, as a counterpoint to the debt-fuelled spending by China in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

The initiative "will embrace a high standards, transparent, climate friendly, non-corrupt mechanism" for infrastructure investment in the developing world, the US official said. "It will be an alternative to that which other countries, including China, are offering." Underpinning the US-led

## PAKISTAN TO GIVE RIGHT OF APPEAL TO KULBHUSHAN

**Islamabad, June 11:** The Pakistan government has rushed through the National Assembly a bill to provide the right of appeal to Indian death-row prisoner Kulbhushan Jadhav amidst ruckus and boycott by the Opposition.

The lower house of Parliament passed the ICJ (Review and Re-consideration) Bill, 2020 on Thursday. The bill is aimed at allowing Jadhav to have consular access in line with the International Court of Justice (ICJ) verdict.

Jadhav, the 51-year-old retired Indian Navy officer, was sentenced to death by a Pakistani military court on charges of espionage and terrorism in April 2017.

India approached the ICJ against Pakistan for denial of consular access to Jadhav and challenging the death sentence. The Hague-based ICJ ruled in July 2019 that Pakistan must undertake an "effective review and reconsideration" of the conviction and sentence of Jadhav and also to grant consular access to India without further delay.

The ICJ, in its 2019 verdict, had asked Pakistan to provide a proper forum for appeal against the sentence given to Jadhav. — PTI



(Left to Right) President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, France's President Emmanuel Macron, President of the European Council Charles Michel, Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel and Italy's Prime minister Mario Draghi, take part in an EU coordination meeting in advance of the start of the G7 summit in Carbis Bay, Cornwall on Friday. — AFP

## CDC LOOKS INTO HEARTBURN AFTER PFIZER VAX

**Washington, June 11:** US health officials are investigating what appear to be higher than expected reports of heart inflammation in male teens and young adults after they get a second dose of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines.

It's not clear if the heart inflammation is caused by the shots and the reports still are rare, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It urges everyone 12 and older to get vaccinated.

As of May 31, the agency had 275 preliminary reports of such inflammation in 16- to 24-year-olds, CDC's Dr Tom Shimabukuro told a government vaccine meeting on Thursday. — AP

diplomatic revival, Biden and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Thursday adopted a new "Atlantic Charter", modelled on the pact signed by their World War II predecessors to help build a new world order. — AFP

## H1-B visa: USCIS undoes Trump plan

**Washington, June 11:** The US' immigration agency has said that it would rescind a 2018 trump-era policy that allowed immigration officers to reject visa applications, including the H-1B, instead of first issuing a notice of intent to deny to the applicants, a decision which will reduce barriers to "legal immigration".

The H-1B visa, popular among Indian IT companies and professionals, is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise.

Technology companies depend on it to hire tens

## UK says Delta variant 60% more transmissible

**London, June 11:** The British government said Friday that the new Delta coronavirus variant is 60 percent more transmissible in households than the variant that forced the country to lock down in January.

The Delta variant, which first emerged in India, has caused a rise in cases in the UK, prompting questions about whether social distancing restrictions will be lifted as planned from June 21.

New research from Public Health England "suggests that the Delta variant is associated with an approximately 60 percent increased risk of household transmission" compared to the Alpha variant identified in Kent, southeast England.

The Kent variant caused a surge of Covid cases in January leading to a three-month lockdown as hospitals were stretched to near-capacity.

The government ramped up its public vaccination drive in response, and has now given two doses of vaccine to nearly 29 mil-



People dine out in Melbourne's Lygon Street cafe and restaurant strip on Friday as the city eases restrictions after a two-week lockdown. — AFP

lion adults and one dose to nearly 41 million.

Daily cases rose to 7,393 on Thursday, a level not seen since February. More than 90 percent of new cases were of the Delta variant, ministers said.

However the number of patients in hospital remains low, at just over 1,000 on Thursday, and Health Secretary Matt Hancock has said most inpatients have not had any vaccine.

The government said this suggested the vaccination programme is mitigating the impact of the

Delta variant, urging the public to get both jabs.

Jenny Harries, chief executive of the UK Health Security Agency, said that "two doses provide significantly more protection" against the Delta variant than one.

The UK has reported 127,867 deaths from the virus, the worst toll in Europe.

Under the government roadmap, England plans to drop rules on numbers at social gatherings and allow large weddings and reopening of nightclubs from June 21. — AFP

## UK digs in over North Ireland in Brexit trade row

**Enniskillen, United Kingdom, June 11:** Britain on Friday hit back at French President Emmanuel Macron's uncompromising stance on Brexit, in a simmering row over new trading arrangements for Northern Ireland.

Macron on Thursday warned London that it was "not serious" to review agreements signed last December, just weeks before the UK left the European single market and customs union.

"Nothing is renegotiable," he said before heading to the G7 leaders summit in Cornwall, southwest England.

But Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab insisted that Brussels should be more flexible in its approach to Northern Ireland, which shares the UK's only land border with the EU.

Under the so-called Northern Ireland protocol, checks are required on some goods heading to the British province from mainland Britain — England, Scotland and Wales. But that has angered unionist communities who say it has driven a wedge between them and the rest of the UK, and blamed it for a resurgence of violence.

Controls have been suspended, and London has extended a grace period for checks on deliveries of chilled meat products to the province. "The change must come from the European Commission side," said Raab. "We are not negotiating or haggling the integrity of the United Kingdom," he told *Sky News*.

Talks to try to resolve the issue broke up in London without agreement on Wednesday, with Brussels threatening punitive action if London fails to implement the agreement.

The arrangement — to prevent unchecked goods heading into the EU through member state Ireland — effectively means Northern Ireland is still part of the European single market.

The row threatened to overshadow the G7 summit, with reports that US President Joe Biden was angered at the potential harm to the 1998 peace deal that brought an end to three decades of violence over British rule in Northern Ireland.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson played down reports of a rift on Thursday, after the pair met for 90 minutes of talks on the eve of the G7 leaders meeting. — AFP

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## US: China can spark 'crisis' in Indo-Pacific

**Washington, June 11:** Describing China as a "pacing challenge" to the US, Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin has told American lawmakers that Beijing's "aggressive behaviour" in the Indo-Pacific could spark a "crisis" in the strategically vital region.

Responding to questions from members of the Senate Armed Services Committee during a Congressional hearing on the annual budget of the Pentagon, he stressed on having a direct line of communication between the militaries and also between government officials as well, the defence secretary said.

Austin described the US' relationship with China currently as one of competition. "They desire to be the pre-eminent country on the planet. Their mid to long-term goal is to do that. They look to compete with us, not only militarily but across a spectrum of activity," he said. — PTI

rich diversity of New Jersey and the promise of America as a place where anything is possible. He was born in New York and grew up in Fanwood, New Jersey with his parents, both immigrants from Pakistan who came to this country to build a better life," Menendez said.

Before his appointment, he was Chair of Riker Danzig's White Collar Criminal Defence and Investigations Group and his firm's first Chief Diversity Officer.

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## US nod to 1st Muslim federal judge



Zahid Quraishi

**Washington, June 11:** The US Senate has approved the historic nomination of Pakistani-American Zahid Quraishi to the District Court in New Jersey, making him the first Muslim federal judge in the country's history.

The Senate voted 81-16 on Thursday to confirm Quraishi, 46. As many as 34 Republicans joined the Democrats in confirming the first-ever Muslim-American as a federal judge.

Currently, a magistrate judge for the District of New Jersey, Quraishi would now make history when he will be sworn in as the Judge of the US District Court of New Jersey. "Judge Quraishi has devoted his career to serving our country, and his story embodies both the rich diversity of New Jersey and the promise of

America as a place where anything is possible," said Senator Robert Menendez during a speech on the Senate floor before the confirmation vote.

Menendez is Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. "Zahid Quraishi is a man of integrity, a consummate public servant, and a trailblazer for Asian-Americans and Muslim-Americans across this country who dream of one day presiding over a court of their own,"

he said. "We should all draw inspiration from his story because it is a story that could only take place in the United States of America," Menendez said. The US District Court of New Jersey is one of the busiest in the country, with 46,000 cases pending before it and with judges facing individual case-loads more than triple the national average.

Quraishi was appointed as a US Magistrate Judge for the District of New Jersey in the Trenton Vicinage on June 3, 2019. Quraishi, who is of Pakistani ancestry, is the first Asian-American to serve on the federal bench in New Jersey.

"Judge Quraishi has devoted his career to serving our country, and his story embodies both the

rich diversity of New Jersey and the promise of America as a place where anything is possible. He was born in New York and grew up in Fanwood, New Jersey with his parents, both immigrants from Pakistan who came to this country to build a better life," Menendez said.

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## DECCAN Chronicle

12 JUNE 2021

### To stay relevant, Congress must hold inner-party polls

After repeated electoral setbacks the party has endured in recent years, is there any relevance left for the Congress? Many may think the question redundant, considering how little the party's impact has been on the ground in most parts of the country. And yet, there is another question: "Does India need a viable Opposition?"

This question has not become pressing on account of the government's conspicuous failures to deal with the corona crisis last year and this year, which is pretty much an open and shut case, no matter how much the BJP may try to put a spin on it. Even before the virus struck, the economy stood shaken on account of questionable policies, and the unemployment rate was the highest in 45 years. Shortly thereafter, the Chinese Army marched into territories on India's side of the Line of Actual Control and remains there by and large. The humiliation is stark.

If none of this has quite registered with the public, there has to be a question about the effectiveness of the Opposition. For want of a viable choice, the voter may find themselves stuck in a rut. This hypothesis may be too structured. After

**The present-day Congress inspires too little confidence. There is a leadership vacuum. Party units do not function on the ground in most states. And where they do, they are riven in factions, and cannot hold a coherent line.**

all, the electorate is capable of springing a dramatic surprise, as in the election after the Emergency. But for that to happen, there have to be on the scene political actors with antecedents, and some reliability.

On that count the present-day Congress inspires too little confidence. There is a leadership vacuum. Party units do not function on the ground in most states. And where they do, they are riven in factions, and cannot hold a coherent line. In any case, the party is lacking a message. Defections are frequent, Jitin Prasada being the most recent. As for even the most swashbuckling of regional parties, these are not of a mould that can fit the pattern

nationwide. As if to attest to this, the ruling BJP's highest political priority appears to be to decimate a Congress whose trace is slowly disappearing. If this is an irony of sorts, it also tells us something about the meaning of brand value.

There has been some G-23 messaging after Mr Prasada quit last Wednesday, but most in the G-23 are not even paper tigers. What the Congress needs is a stiff dose of the sanjeevani of even a haphazard CWC election based on old AICC roles, which in turn would lead on to an immediate election for the party president.

The Gandhi family has meant well and has hewed to the line of Gandhiji and Jawaharlal Nehru. The tallest of them is too unwell to carry on even in an interim capacity. The most vital of them, and the most honorable, will not return as party chief. He resigned taking responsibility for a major poll defeat and announced none in his family would fill the slot after him. Which means he has paved the way for a fresh election for party president.

If this can happen well before the upcoming election in UP, Uttarakhand, Punjab and Goa in early 2022, the Congress can be in the hunt for the laurels, and the political scene can be electrified. Let the Congress disregard the corona restrictions (as it would need to anyway when elections are announced), and go for inner-party polls.

### No room for complacency

The second wave of the pandemic Covid-19 has started showing signs of a decline, given that every indicator, from daily case load to number of deaths to test positivity rate, shows a definite pattern. This, however, offers little reason to be complacent what with experts predicting the arrival of a third wave which could be more dangerous and lethal. It is important that the government pull up the socks to take on it, and a truthful and scientific assessment of the first and second waves is key to the successful resistance to the pandemic.

It is in this context that the reports of an upward revision of the death toll in Bihar must be viewed. As per the latest government figures, Bihar has lost

**It is important that the government pull up the socks to take on Covid, and a truthful and scientific assessment of the earlier waves is key to a successful resistance to pandemic.**

9,375 people to the pandemic against the earlier figure of 5,424. This indicates that the government's figures have gone up by more than 72 per cent after the correction. The government's justification is that it has taken time to collect data from private hospitals, other facilities, in home isolation and of those who died of post-Covid complications. In a way, the government was admitting that it was formulating its policies and strategies on a wrong database.

The Bihar episode should be an eye-opener for all state governments and the Union government. The Union health ministry must ensure that every state follows uniform guidelines, formed by the Indian Council of Medical Research in the collecting data on infection and deaths. It must also ensure that the data from the rural and remote areas are also collected, collated and analysed scientifically so that it gives valuable inputs while preparing for the next wave. The right inputs based on reliable data should help the government plan the ways to augment healthcare infrastructure at places that would seem the next target of the virus.

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Subhani



## ‘Bombshell Barbara’ vs the ‘Robed Yogi’ of UP



**Shobhaa's Take**

I love it that we're a chilled-out country so accepting of dramatic contrasts. I mean that! For centuries, we have absorbed absurdities and carried on like it's no big deal. Last week's headline grabbers couldn't have been more startlingly different! One, a mysterious femme fatale in Antigua, the other a saffron-robed chief minister of our country's most populous state. In both cases, their newsworthiness was hinged around perfect timing! "Bombshell Barbara" is getting her cues so on point (wonder who's tutoring this one!). So is Yogi Adityanath (err... we can guess who his tutor is!). Both protagonists are armed with enough lethal ammo to blow up a few very important reputations. There is a third high-profile player. Harish Salve, who'll attract almost as much attention in the weeks to come as these two.

Let's start with "Bombshell Barbara", who's living up to the old chestnut... "*Cherchez la femme*" ... in the ongoing extradition saga featuring a disreputable and disgraced diamantaire from India — the infamous Mehul Choksi, maternal uncle of an equally "wanted" diamantaire Nirav Modi. The brilliant Harish Salve has his work cut out for him, in a way. He has announced he'll succeed in getting back the fugitive diamond merchant either hiding out or being held hostage in Dominica, who ran off with ₹3,500 crores of public money in the PNB scam. Please note, Shri Salve is saying this feat will be achieved in weeks, not months! That's Salve for you — brilliant, mercurial, well-connected, super-confident and successful.

While we hold our

breaths for the "Return of the Jewel Thief", the adventurous lady playing a starring role in the high seas action drama in the Caribbean is attracting a great deal of attention — not just from Choksi's wife Preeti, but the media at large. The official "*Jab we met*" versions keep changing, but when the kidnapping story broke, Barbara was *khullam khulla* described as Mehul's girlfriend. Till loyal wife Preeti protested and staunchly denied a romantic liaison, choosing to describe Barbara as a family friend who had tricked her sweet husband into accepting a "dinner appointment" (Preeti's description). That too, at 5.30 pm (why not call it "high tea" with *nashta paani*?).

Between the wanted man and the bombshell, we expected a tad more action. What was this innocuous, chaste "appointment" Preeti was talking about? Please, madam, do describe it as a hot and daring dinner date a deux, then we are talking! Oh, wait a minute, when did the Bewakoof Barbara discover that she'd been had by Mehul Choksi in more ways than one? When did she find out she was just one more greedy woman conned by Mehul, who she alleges wooed her with "priceless" diamond trinkets, which turned out to be fake! During their "long walks" and "relaxed evenings"? As they say, beware the wrath of a woman diamond scorned... After the scandal broke, Barbara has been singing like a canary with a sore throat. Alas, there go her dreams of becoming a real estate tycoon in Antigua — another false promise made by Mehul to keep his lady love interested, while he figured out his next move — some say to

Cuba. Maybe what he didn't figure was the classic honey trap — "The End" — to his *pyaar mohabbat*! Diamonds are forever, as the tagline goes. But Mehul was peddling cheap glass. God knows how many high net-worth customers in India have been similarly tricked by Mehul and his understudy Nirav. Funny part is, the cheated ladies can't file charges — those supposedly priceless and rare stones were probably sold minus receipts, to greedy and gullible clients eager to park unaccounted money in easy to store *heera motis*. I can visualise these ladies staring glumly at their obscene rocks and wondering what to do with the useless baubles. Meanwhile, "Bombshell Barbara" may be busy selling the rights to her story to Netflix. This is "Pirates of the Caribbean", without Johnny Depp! But with a roly poly Mehul Choksi playing Humpty Dumpty.

On the other side of the news cycle is a diminutive "ascetic" who is making some badass moves in Uttar Pradesh. Clearly prepping for the Assembly elections in 2022. Yogi wants it to be his solo show, not a group exhibition. Clearly, he is being backed by his RSS bosses, and encouraged to assert his individuality more emphatically, in order to defuse any argument as to who calls the shots in UP — Modi or Yogi? Political watchers believe a new axis is forming, which pitches the Modi-Shah combo against the Gadkari-Yogi jodi. If true, this could also pave the way for new power structures across India and dent the invincibility of those currently holding the reins at the Centre.

**On the other side of the news cycle is a diminutive 'ascetic' who is making some badass moves in Uttar Pradesh. Clearly prepping for the Assembly elections in 2022.**

Nobody is demanding their heads on a platter. They are also insisting Yogi is their guy. The main man. Which means the highest of the high commands is okay with the new narrative and is in fact encouraging such public talk. Frankly, this is a positive development — absolute power corrupts absolutely, as we all know. Throwing in a serious challenger to NaMo at this critical stage (the run-up to Elections 2022) is a smart, shrewd move. It means all players will have to work that much harder to win this round. It also signals Yogi's elevation to a more visible, pan-India position, from where he can leverage and consolidate his image before the *asli* biggie — the national elections of 2024. The person who should be watching these developments closely is Mamata Didi, given her prime ministerial ambitions. These two make worthy rivals — both come with their single-and-not-ready-to-mingle status: the guy is a Yogi and the lady is a Yogini. Their followers worship them and believe that they can do no wrong. The race to the hot seat has suddenly got hotter!

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Instagram handle: @ShobhaaDe; Twitter: @DeShobhaa

#### LETTERS

#### RELAXING LOCKDOWN

People are violating guidelines when in the lockdown relaxation hours (*Thin attendance at government offices, DC, June 11*). Making the police run after them to follow rules is affecting the health of the personnel. Zone-wise and phase-wise imposition of lockdowns will allow them to focus on safety and reduce their stress.

**G. Murali Mohan Rao**  
Secunderabad

As the lockdown is mainly to prevent new infections and break the Covid-19 chain, rigorous awareness campaigns are required now in risky areas like markets, wine shops, cinema theatres, bus stands and railway stations were people congregate in large numbers. The unlock process and prevention campaigns should go hand-in-hand to break the Covid-19 chain.

**T. Kailash Ditya**  
Hyderabad

#### HELMET FOR PILLION

The Hyderabad police raised a challan for ₹130 on June 4 as the pillion rider was not wearing helmet. This happened when I was going for vaccination of my son (pillion rider) at HiTec centre. I agree it is the rule but it is not being enforced fully. The police should keep this rule on hold for some time in this pandemic.

**Y.V. Sarma**  
Hyderabad

#### 50 YEARS AGO IN

### DECCAN Chronicle

#### Astronauts perform medical tests

MOSCOW JUNE 11.

Lieutenant Colonel Georgi Bobrovolsky, Commander of Russia's Salyut orbital station, today reported that he and his crew of two were well as they began their fifth working day abroad the giant craft.

A major part of their scientific programme is medical and biological research to determine man's ability to work for prolonged periods in space. Cosmonaut-Doctor Boris Yegorov told Tass News Agency that yesterday each of the crew took his own blood sample for test. They also put on medical bets for the thorough clinical analysis of the cardio-vascular system in a state of weightlessness, which was to be conducted periodically.

Farrukh Dhondy  
Cabbages & Kings



"Oh Bachchoo what can you write  
When your inspiration is gone  
And the day of joy passed into night  
And like a lone cloud forlorn  
You drift across an empty sky  
Propelled by a destined wind  
And like sinners wondering why  
And in what depth they have sinned?"

— From **Songs of the Randy Rundis** by Bachchoo

Ann Boleyn, one of the wives Henry VIII condemned to be beheaded, was as white as an unburdened cloud or a ceramic sink or... You see, gentle reader, I am trying to get away from the cliché of "driven snow" because I have never understood what drives it. And yet in the now-running Channel 5 television drama, Ann is played by a black actress.

Idiosyncratic casting is not new — black actors have been cast as Julius Caesar, women as Titus Andronicus and black actors, female so far, as the three Chekhovian sisters.

In the case of Ann, however, no commentator has openly objected but a lot has still been said. The writer-director of the series and Channel 5

put out a press release saying that their version intended to correct the prevalent view of Ann Boleyn as a manipulative schemer who deserved what she got. Though they didn't say it, what the writer-director who cast the black actress and her black brother in their respective roles probably intended was to win sympathy for Ann as a victim and someone who resists this victimisation, all in tune with the zeitgeist of the Black Lives Matter explosion.

Another seemingly well-informed reviewer pointed out that most historians and three previous depictions of Ann Boleyn in drama and film, characterised her not a manipulative sorceress, but as precisely the victim of capricious power. The Channel 5 drama was pushing against an open door.

The story ends horribly and tragically for Ann and her brother and this cross-racial casting sets out to prove that the privileged white establishment is guilty of racism — gosh! What a revelation — why didn't I think of it — thank you, Channel 5!

My own viewing of the series, perhaps in total eccentricity, reminded me at several points of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle and had me

wondering whether Oprah Winfrey was about to appear in the role of marriage counsellor.

Integrated or gender-and-colour-blind casting has several purposes. It may be that it was introduced in Britain and America under pressure from black actors who complained of not having opportunities and work as there weren't many roles for them to play. As a member in the 1980s of two theatre companies, the Black Theatre Coop (BTC) and the Asian Co-operative Theatre (ACT, geddit?), we were very much in the thick of the clamour for parts for non-white actors.

Our solution was not to cast blacks in traditional white roles, but to find and encourage the writing and production of plays about the black and Asian experience, contemporary, international, historical, epic, mythical and even sci-fi and fantastical. That vein of theatre has prospered in part and flourished in part but seems to have established itself firmly in the theatrical space of Britain, moving from the venues and audiences we played in and for, into the terrain of the nation's dramatic establishment. We were the proud and defiant fringe. Now black and Asian drama covers

the whole scalp, sometimes scantily as "racial" concession, but also occasionally in rich, dramatic, Rastafarian ringlets.

There was a parallel impulse which prompted racially integrated casting, which was the contention that all the stage is a world, a self-contained world removed from, though portraying the realities of racial and nationalistic tensions.

It was this impulse or determination that caused the maestro Peter Brook to cast any and every nationality and race in his masterful nine-hour production of the *Mahabharata*. Japanese and Caribbean actors played Indian heroes, heroines and gods.

Brook's criterion was not race or nationality but something like "the best actor from all the world for the role". Akin to the players of Manchester United not representing the city of Manchester but drawn from anywhere and everywhere.

The Brook impulse was certainly not shared by sections of the Indian population. Inspired by Brook's liberality or, as some would say, liberties with the *Mahabharata*, I wrote a novel called *Bombay Duck* in which this

same impulse — of universally integrated casting — results in tragedy. The book progresses to other instances and narratives to question all our notions of authenticity.

Perhaps Peter Brook would, with these colour-blind casting eyes, direct *Othello* with a white female actor playing the principal part? I am almost certain that Channel 5 would not but am a bit doubtful about Britain's National Theatre or indeed the Royal Shakespeare Company, which might very well in the interests of "diversity" overcome the idea that the play depends to a large extent on perceptions of race and gender. When Laurence Olivier, palpably white, played Othello, he blackened his face to dramatise this dimension of the play. Through the last few decades, no choric group of white singers in the West would blacken their faces to represent black and white minstrels. If a white actor blacked up to play Othello there would be mass riots in the streets. But what if one of the established theatres cast a white female actor as Othello without a change into male clothes, skin colour or plummy accent? Interesting. Watch this space.



quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	52474.76	0.33
Nifty 50	15799.40	0.39
S&P 500*	4,240.87	0.04
Dollar (₹)	73.06	0.00
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.38	-0.36
Euro (₹)	88.81	0.07
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,530.441	0.90
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	72.91	0.54
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.006	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.464	0.005

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

Govt holds back release of full April IIP data

The government has held back the release of complete data of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) for April, as was done for the same month last year due to the lockdown. By the partial data released by the NSO, industrial production expanded by a whopping 134 per cent year-on-year in April, while it was 22.4 per cent in March. But compared with April 2019 data, industrial growth stood at 0.07 per cent.

Singh's daughters appointed as DLF directors



DLF boss Rajiv Singh's two daughters, Savitri Devi Singh (36) and Anushka Singh (34), have been appointed on the company's board. In a filing, DLF said the board has "co-opted" them as additional directors with immediate effect. Both will be non-executive and non-independent directors. Both hold BSc in Economics degree from the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, DLF said.

US consumer sentiment rebounds in June

US consumer sentiment rebounded in early June as inflation fears subsided and households grew more optimistic about future economic growth and employment. The University of Michigan said its preliminary consumer sentiment index increased to 86.4 in the first half of this month from a final reading of 82.9 in May. The survey's gauge of current economic conditions edged up to a reading of 90.6 from 89.4 in May.

BHEL Q4 loss narrows to ₹1,036 crore

BHEL's consolidated net loss narrowed to Rs 1,036.32 crore in the March 2021 quarter, mainly on the back of higher revenues, compared with a consolidated net loss of Rs 1,532.18 crore in the year-ago quarter. Total income rose to Rs 7,245.16 crore from Rs 5,166.64 crore. In the full financial year 2020-21, the PSU's consolidated net loss widened to Rs 2,699.70 crore compared with 1,468.35 crore in 2019-20.



Pilot run is part of 'Medicines from the Sky' project Flipkart to test drone delivery of vaccine, meds in Telangana

FC BUREAU

NEW DELHI, JUNE 11

Homegrown e-commerce major Flipkart on Friday said it has partnered with the Telangana government to lead a consortium tasked with the development and execution of the drone deliveries of medical supplies to remote areas under the 'Medicines from the Sky' project.

As part of the consortium, Bengaluru-based Flipkart will deploy drones and enable deliveries of vaccines and medical supplies.

These efforts will be complemented with technologies such as geo mapping,



routing of shipments and track and trace of location etc, developed by Flipkart over the years in serving millions of customers across the country, a Flipkart statement said.

A combination of these technologies will then be used to conduct 'Beyond Visual Line of Sight'

(BVLOS) deliveries in remote areas of the state.

The pilot, to be conducted for over six days, will be tested out for delivering thousands of vaccines.

"The Covid-19 crisis has pushed the envelope in the rapid development of scalable and robust technologies and the Medicines

from the Sky project is a testament to that. It is a decisive step in making use of cutting-edge technologies for the safety and well-being of the masses," said Rajneesh Kumar, senior VP and chief corporate affairs officer, Flipkart.

The Telangana government has adopted this framework to implement drones for last-mile delivery and will integrate them into the state's healthcare supply chain.

Jayesh Ranjan, principal secretary (IT and I&C), Government of Telangana said the state has been a pioneer in using technology for improving the lives of the citizens.

FOREX RESERVES CROSS \$600 BN

Mumbai, June 11: The country's foreign exchange reserves crossed the \$600-billion mark for the first time after increasing by \$6.842 billion in the week ended June 4, RBI data showed on Friday.

The reserves surged to a record \$605.008 billion, helped by a rise in foreign currency assets (FCA), a major component of the overall reserves.

In the previous week ended May 28, the reserves had swelled by \$5.271 billion to \$598.165 billion.

In the reporting week, FCA jumped by \$7.362 billion to \$560.890 billion.

Gold reserves declined by \$502 million to \$37,604 billion. —PTI

HC okays CCI probe of e-com biggies

SANGEETHA G

CHENNAI, JUNE 11

The Karnataka High Court on Friday dismissed pleas by e-commerce biggies Amazon and Flipkart challenging the probe ordered by the Competition Commission of India (CCI).

The CCI had ordered a probe in January 2020 against both Amazon and Walmart-owned Flipkart in a complaint filed by the Delhi Vyapar Mahasangh (DVM), representing small businesses. The petitioner had alleged that the e-commerce companies were violating the competition laws while selling smart phones on their platform. The Delhi Vyapar

Mahasangh had levelled allegations of predatory pricing, deep discounting, preferential seller listing, and exclusive partnerships, among others, against Amazon and Flipkart. The Confederation of All-India Traders (Cait) too had implored as a party to the case.

In February, the e-commerce players got stay on the probe from the Karnataka High Court, which found that the ongoing investigation by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) should be first completed before the CCI could initiate a probe. The ED in 2019 had initiated an investigation against Amazon and Flipkart for alleged

violation of Foreign Direct Investment laws.

Following this, the petitioners again approached the court asking it to vacate the stay order.

However, on Friday CCI argued that an investigation by the ED under the Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999 (Fema) does not bar another investigation by the CCI for violations of competition law. It said e-commerce players were twisting the pendency of an ED investigation to ward off CCI's probe.

Responding to the court order, an Amazon spokesperson said: "We will review the judgement carefully and decide on the next steps."

ASSET QUALITY OF MICRO LOAN PORTFOLIOS DIP

SANGEETHA G

CHENNAI, JUNE 11

With lockdowns hitting collections, the asset quality of micro loan portfolios is estimated to have deteriorated this month, exceeding the post-demonetisation levels.

A drop in the collection efficiency of NBFC-MFIs owing to Covid-19 curbs will increase asset-quality pressures in the sector and loans in arrears for over 30 days could rise to 14-16 per cent of portfolio in June from a recent low of 6-7 per cent in March, says a Crisil report. This is higher than 11.7 per cent touched in March 2017 in the aftermath of demonetisation.

"Pressure on asset quality would be higher (than last year) as borrowers do not have a blanket moratorium this time, while their cash flows have been impacted by the second wave," said Krishnan Sitaraman, senior director and deputy chief ratings officer, Crisil Ratings.

Earlier, Sa-Dhan had reported that overall collections, which had bounced back to pre-Covid levels in March, dropped by 10 to 20 per cent in April-May 2021 as the lockdown was imposed in some of the key states.

Passenger vehicle sales dip 66% in May amid Covid disruptions: Siam

MICHAEL GONSALVES

PUNE, JUNE 11

Passenger vehicle wholesales—dispatches from factory gates to the dealerships—declined month-on-month by 66 per cent to 88,045 units in May as compared to April as lockdowns across various states impacted dispatches to dealers, auto industry trade lobby the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers, or Siam, said on Friday.

Passenger vehicle wholesales in April stood at 2,61,633 units.

Since both May 2020 and May 2021 were abnormal months because of the Covid-19 situation and lockdowns, comparison of these two months holds no meaning. But a comparison of May 2021 sales with April this year, presents a realistic picture.

Siam said two-wheeler dispatches to dealers dropped by 65 per cent to 3,52,717 units compared with 9,95,097 units in April.

Motorcycle sales declined 56 per cent last month to 2,95,257 units as against 6,67,841 units in April.

Similarly, scooter sales were down 83 per cent to

KIMS Hospitals ₹2,144-cr IPO priced at ₹815-₹825

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD

MUMBAI, JUNE 11

Hyderabad-based Krishna Institute of Medical Sciences (KIMS Hospitals), one of the largest hospital chains in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, announced a Rs 2,144-crore initial public offering (IPO) in the price band of Rs 815 to Rs 825 per equity share of Rs 10 face value.

The public issue opens on June 16 and closes on June 18.

The KIMS Hospitals Group operates nine multi-specialty hospitals under the "KIMS Hospitals" brand across AP and Telangana.

The hospital chain started with the first hospital, KIMS Nellore, set up in 2000 by cardiologist Bhaskara Rao Bollineni with the vision to create a hospital system for his home state of Andhra Pradesh.

The current network of KIMS hospitals, with total 3,064 beds, are located at Secunderabad, Hyderabad, Vizag, Nellore, Rajahmundry, Srikakulam, Ongole, Anantapur and Kurnool, catering to the healthcare needs of neighbouring states of Karnataka, Odisha, Tamil Nadu and parts of central India.

The IPO comprises a fresh issue worth Rs 200 crore and an offer for sale of over 23.56 million equity shares by private equity investor General Atlantic Singapore and promoter selling shareholders-Bhaskara Rao Bollineni, Rajyasri Bollineni and Bollineni



DODLA DAIRY PUBLIC ISSUE PRICED AT ₹421-₹428 PER SHARE

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD

MUMBAI, JUNE 11

Hyderabad-based Dodla Dairy announced a Rs 520.18-crore initial public offering (IPO) in the price band of Rs 421 to Rs 428 per equity share of Rs 10 face value.

The public offer opens on June 16 and closes on June 18.

The firm's procurements are spread across five states of Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Maharashtra and its products are available in 11 states.

Dodla Dairy's product portfolio includes milk, buttermilk, ghee, curd, paneer, flavoured milk, doodh peda, ice cream and milk-based sweets. The IPO consists of a

fresh issue aggregating up to Rs 50 crore and an offer for sale (OFS) of over 10.98 million equity shares by private equity investor TPG Dodla Dairy Holdings and promoter and promoter group selling shareholder Dodla Sunil Reddy, Dodla Family Trust and Dodla Deepa Reddy.

The OFS consists of 92 lakh shares by TPG Dodla Dairy Holdings and 4,16,604 shares by Dodla Sunil Reddy, 10,41,509 equity shares by Dodla Family Trust, and 3,27,331 shares by Dodla Deepa Reddy.

The public offer has 50 per cent shares reserved for institutional investors, 35 per cent for retail investors and 15 per cent for non-institutional investors.

Ramanaiah Memorial Hospital.

US-based General Atlantic holds 40.91 per cent stake in KIMS Hospitals and will be selling over 16 million shares worth Rs 1,320.29 crore at the upper

price band of Rs 825.

The public offer has reserved 75 per cent shares for institutional investors, 15 per cent for non-institutional investors and 10 per cent for retail investors.



BoM tops PSU banks in loan, deposit growth

New Delhi, June 11: Bank of Maharashtra (BoM) has emerged as the top performer among public sector lenders in terms of loan and deposit growth during 2020-21. The lender recorded 13.45 per cent increase in gross advances at Rs 1.07 lakh crore in FY21, as per the published data of BoM.

It was followed by Punjab & Sind Bank, which posted 8.39 per cent growth in advances with aggregate loans at Rs 67,811 crore at the end of March 2021.

In deposit mobilisation, BoM, with nearly 16 per cent growth, was ahead of even the country's largest lender, State Bank of India, which recorded 13.56 per cent rise.

However, in absolute terms SBI's deposit base was 21 times higher at Rs 36.81 lakh crore against Rs 1.74 lakh crore of BoM.

Current account savings account (CASA) for BoM saw 24.47 per cent rise, the highest among the public sector lenders, during the year.

As a result, CASA was 54 per cent or Rs 93,945 crore of the total liabilities of the bank.

According to the announced quarterly numbers, Central Bank of India achieved the second spot by recording 11.46 per cent growth in CASA at Rs 1.61 lakh crore.

Total business of BoM increased 14.98 per cent to Rs 2.81 lakh crore.

For the full year 2020-21, BoM's standalone net profit jumped nearly 42 per cent to Rs 550.25 crore. In the previous year, the profit was Rs 388.58 crore.

—PTI

HASTY | NOD

Biogen drug was authorised based on evidence that it can reduce brain plaques

US FDA faces criticism over Alzheimer's drug approval

JULIE STEENHUYSEN & DEENA BEASLEY

JUNE 11

In approving the first new Alzheimer's drug in nearly 20 years, the US Food and Drug Administration is taking its biggest risk yet with a strategy that allows new therapies onto the market without strong evidence that they work, regulatory and scientific experts say.

The Biogen Inc drug, Aduhelm, was authorised based on evidence that it can reduce brain plaques, a likely contributor to Alzheimer's, rather than proof that it slows progression of the lethal

mind-wasting disease.

The FDA has granted so-called "accelerated approval" in more than 250 instances since 1992, mainly for rare diseases or small patient populations that have had no effective treatments available to them. In these cases, the agency requires that drugmakers conduct additional clinical trials to prove their therapy works, or face withdrawal from the market.

Aduhelm, however, is in a different league in terms of the number of potential patients and cost to the healthcare system.

In addition, the FDA

approval ignored the recommendation of its outside advisors, who said Biogen did not provide enough evidence of clinical benefit. Three of the advisory panel's members have resigned in protest since the FDA decision was announced on Monday.

"This decision has shaken the foundations of the scientific process and methods," said Dr Jason Karlawish, co-director of the Penn Memory Center in Philadelphia. Karlawish ran one of the trial sites for the Biogen drug.

He said the FDA made its decision "by fiat," and



had not asked its advisors to consider whether the drug's ability to remove a type of brain plaques known as beta amyloid would improve outcomes for patients.

"It's a disturbing set of events, scientifically, clinically, politically," Karlawish said.

Biogen has said that some 1.5 million Americans with early-stage Alzheimer's will be eligible for the drug, priced at an average of \$56,000 per year, with the federal Medicare insurance programme for seniors likely on the hook for most of the cost.

The FDA approval allows Biogen to sell its product over several years - with forecasts for potential annual sales reaching as high \$10 billion to \$50 billion - until the company completes a required follow-up study.

"No amount of unmet need can take the place of sufficient evidence," said

Johns Hopkins public health professor Dr. Caleb Alexander, a member of the FDA advisory panel.

The number of Americans living with Alzheimer's is expected to more than double to around 13 million by 2050, according to the Alzheimer's Association.

Biogen research chief Alfred Sandrock said the FDA had painstakingly analysed its clinical trial data over two years before reaching a conclusion.

"I believe they came to the right decision on behalf of the American public," Sandrock said in an interview.

—Reuters



## SHORT TAKES

## Vinesh emerges on top in Poland

**Warsaw:** Star Indian wrestler Vinesh Phogat proved that her preparations for the Tokyo Games were on track by winning the 53kg gold at the Poland Open here on Friday, giving herself some crucial 'mat-time' ahead of the Olympics. It is third title of the season for the 26-year-old Vinesh, who claimed gold medals at the Matteo Pellicone event (March) and Asian Championship (April) earlier. The victory would potentially make Vinesh the top seed at the Tokyo Olympics. Except for her opening bout against 2019 World bronze (50kg) winner Ekaterina Poleshchuk, Vinesh wasn't troubled by any of her other rivals as she conceded only two points en route the top place on the podium. She did not concede a single point to Ukraine's Khrystyna Bereza in the final, winning 8-0. Vinesh took most of her points through double-leg attacks while the 2019 European silver medalist Bereza was on the defensive throughout.

— PTI

## No ministerial delegation for Oly

**New Delhi:** The Sports Ministry on Friday said it has decided against sending its delegation to Tokyo Olympics to accommodate "maximum" support staff, including coaches and physios, for the athletes competing in the Summer Games. A total of 100 Indian athletes have so far qualified and another 25 to 35 might make the cut. "The Ministry has decided to depute maximum additional support staff such as coaches, doctors, physiotherapists, to optimize the performance of the athletes," the Ministry said in a statement. — PTI

## Tokyo undecided on spectators

**Tokyo:** The question of allowing any fans into Tokyo Olympic venues is still being debated with a decision unlikely to be announced before the end of the month. This would be just a few weeks before the Olympics are to open on July 23. Fans from abroad have already been banned in what is shaping up as a largely made-for-television Olympics. Tokyo and several prefectures are under a state of emergency until June 20. Infections have slowed recently, but the spread of variants is still a concern that could put pressure on already stressed medical facilities. — AP

## Warner, Stoinis opt out of The Hundred

**Melbourne:** Star Australian opener David Warner and all-rounder Marcus Stoinis have pulled out of the inaugural edition of 'The Hundred' as the England and Wales Cricket Board gears up for more withdrawals in wake of the challenges posed by Covid-19 pandemic. Warner and Stoinis, who returned home from Covid-ravaged India after the suspension of the IPL, were named in Australia's squads for the limited over tours to the West Indies and Bangladesh. — PTI

## Ngidi takes five as Windies crumble

**Saint Lucia:** Lungi Ngidi mowed through the lower half of the West Indies batting order on the way to a five-wicket haul as South Africa routed the home side for 97 on the opening day of the first Test of the two-match series at the Daren Sammy Cricket Ground in St Lucia on Thursday. The Proteas reached the close of play at 128 for four, a lead of 31 runs. — AFP

**Brief scores (Day 1):** West Indies 97 (Holder 20; Ngidi 5/19, Nortje 4/35) vs South Africa 128/4 in 43 overs (van der Dussen 34 (batting); Seales 3/34).

## Live on TV

## EURO

**Group Stage:** Wales vs Switzerland from 6.30 pm; Denmark vs Finland from 9.30 pm; Belgium vs Russia from 12.30 am (Sunday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

## TENNIS

**French Open:** Women's singles final from 6.30 pm; Men's doubles final from 8 pm on Star Sports, Select 1, HD

## UFC

**Fight Night:** Israel Adesanya vs Marvin Vettori from 7.30 am (Sunday) on Sony Ten 2, 3



Belgium players pose after a training session. The Red Devils will face Russia in St Petersburg on Saturday.

— Twitter

## Red alert for Russia

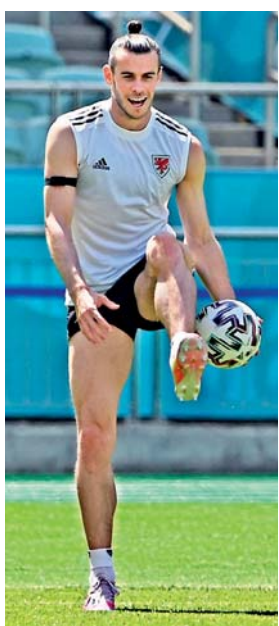
## Top-ranked Belgium take on Russia in quest for Euro glory

**St Petersburg, June 11:** What's being billed by some as the last hurrah for Belgium's "golden generation" begins with two of the team's long-time stalwarts likely to miss their opening match of the European Championship.

Injury and fitness concerns mean neither Kevin De Bruyne nor Eden Hazard are set to start against Russia on Saturday at Saint Petersburg Stadium, where the Belgians' World Cup hopes in 2018 died in a loss to France.

They return to the same venue three years later as the world's top-ranked team — they have been in that position since October 2018 — but with doubts about the availability of their two star attacking midfielders, and maybe a bit more.

De Bruyne is probably the least of coach Roberto Martinez's concerns, despite linking up with the squad a week late after fracturing his nose and eye socket during Manchester City's loss to Chelsea in the Champions League final. The playmaker required a minor operation and is likely to



Gareth Bale of Wales during a training session in Baku on Thursday. — AFP

be ready to start in Belgium's second game, against Denmark in Copenhagen on June 17, when he might be wearing a face mask.

Hazard's health is slightly less clear-cut, with the winger in far-from-perfect shape after an injury-dis-

## HEAD-TO-HEAD

**WALES-SWITZERLAND**  
● Matches: 7. Switzerland: 5. Wales: 2.

## ● EURO MEETINGS

**1999:** Switzerland bt Wales 2-0 in Zurich.

**1999:** Switzerland bt Wales 2-0 in Wrexham.

**2010:** Switzerland bt Wales 4-1 in Basel.

**2011:** Wales bt Switzerland 2-0 in Swansea.

## DENMARK-FINLAND

● Matches: 59. Denmark: 38. Finland: 11. Draw: 10

## ● EURO MEETINGS

**1986:** Denmark bt Finland 1-0 in Copenhagen.

**1987:** Denmark bt Finland 1-0 in Helsinki.

## RUSSIA-BELGIUM

● Matches: 7. Belgium: 5. Draw: 2.

## ● EURO MEETINGS

**2019:** Belgium bt Russia 3-1 in Brussels.

**2019:** Belgium bt Russia 4-1 in St Petersburg.

— S. PERVEZ KAISER

rupted season with Real Madrid and only being a substitute in Euro 2020 warm-up games. Martinez said Hazard still needed to get "match intensity" so is likely to be on the bench again for the game against Russia, whose chances of an upset

win suddenly have improved. Playing in front of a potential 30,000 fans, among the biggest group-stage attendances at the tournament, can only spur on Russia in their fifth straight appearance at the European Championship.

## BALE 'NOT WORRIED' ABOUT DROUGHT

Wales captain Gareth Bale said on Friday he was unconcerned about his international goal drought on the eve of his side's Euro 2020 opener against Switzerland.

Bale, 31, last scored for Wales against Croatia in October 2019 but has created four goals in his previous seven appearances. "It doesn't matter. I've made assists. I'm still contributing. I'm not worried," he said.

"If the chances arise to score, hopefully I can take them," he added.

Bale's side start their campaign in Azerbaijan on Saturday in the competition that has been delayed by a year due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The Real Madrid forward, who spent last season on loan at Tottenham,

has scored 33 goals in 92 international appearances since making his debut in 2006 but his goalless run stretches back 11 matches.

Wales coach Robert Page, who will take charge of the side during the tournament as Ryan Giggs is facing trial in England, backed his star player.

## FINLAND READY FOR DANISH TEST

Finland goalkeeper Lukas Hradecky didn't sugar coat things when summing up the difference between his team and Denmark at the European Championship.

"They have better players than us in every position," Hradecky said bluntly ahead of Finland's major tournament debut at Euro 2020.

Then the Bayer Leverkusen goalkeeper touched upon the one thing that could speak in his team's favor going into Saturday's Group B game in Copenhagen.

"But we have shown before that the sum of all the parts in our puzzle is greater than what people think," he said.

— Agencies

## Quick passes

## Spain vaccinate entire squad

Worried that a coronavirus outbreak could derail their chances at the European Championship, Spain sent in the army on Friday to vaccinate the national team three days before their opening match at the tournament. Medics from Spain's Armed Forces administered the shots at the team's training facility near Madrid. "We have had the privilege and the good fortune that the government decided to vaccinate us," said Spain midfielder Thiago, who was infected with Covid-19 last year. "While this is great news for us, I hope that we don't have any adverse effects before the match."

## Scotland players to take a knee

Scotland's players will take a knee at the European Championship before the game against England in London but will stand ahead of matches in Glasgow against the Czech Republic and Croatia. The England team have been doing the anti-racism gesture since last year. Scotland captain Andy Robertson says "we have collectively decided to again take the knee as a team for the fixture against England at Wembley Stadium." The match will be played on June 18. The gesture has been booed by a section of England fans but the team will continue to take a knee at Euro 2020. England's first game of the tournament will be on Sunday against Croatia.

## De Bruyne to miss opener

Kevin De Bruyne has not travelled to St. Petersburg with the Belgium squad for Saturday's European Championship game against Russia. The Manchester City playmaker only linked up with the team on Monday after having a minor operation on the fractured nose and eye socket he sustained during the Champions League final against Chelsea on May 29. Belgium coach Roberto Martinez says De Bruyne hasn't yet trained with the group and was still following an individual programme to "get him back to really being able to move freely."

Martinez says he expects De Bruyne to join full training with the squad when Belgium's players return to the training camp in Tubize after the group game against Russia.

## COPA | AMERICA

## Messi, Di Maria boost Argie side

**Buenos Aires, June 11:** Lionel Messi, Sergio Aguero and Angel Di Maria are headlining the Argentina squad that will head to Brazil for the Copa America, seeking their national team's first major title since 1993.

The list was published on Thursday by South American governing body, CONMEBOL.

Defender Juan Foyth and striker Lucas Ocampos are the most notable absentees from the 28-player squad, despite featuring regularly since Lionel Scaloni became head coach in 2018.

Foyth was involved late when Argentina conceded a last-minute equaliser to Colombia in a World Cup qualifying match earlier this week.

The Villareal defender, a winner of the latest Europa League, lost possession at the edge of the penalty box. Colombia subsequently crossed and then found the back of the net with a header by Miguel Borja.

Sevilla's Ocampos had a lacklustre performance in the 1-1 draw against Chile last week, also in a World Cup qualifier. — AP

## A Stef closer to Slam dream

**Paris, June 11:** Stefanos Tsitsipas went from way ahead to suddenly stuck in a five-set struggle against Alexander Zverev at the French Open on Friday before emerging to earn his first berth in a Grand Slam final.

The fifth-seeded Tsitsipas entered with an 0-3 record in major semifinals and it seemed as if he might let this one slip away, too, until a late surge carried him to the 6-3, 6-3, 4-6, 4-6, 6-3 victory after more than 3 and a half hours at Court Philippe Chatrier.

On Sunday, Tsitsipas will face 13-time Roland Garros champion Nadal or top-seeded Novak Djokovic for the championship on the red clay.

Tsitsipas regained control of his semifinal on a cloudy afternoon in the late going thanks to a combination of more solid returning by him and a succession of ground-stroke unforced errors from the sixth-seeded Zverev, a 24-year-old from Germany.

The fifth set began with a key service hold after Tsitsipas double-faulted to fall behind love-40. From there, he won five consecutive points, including one with a cross-court forehand passing winner that he celebrated by shaking his racket at the crowd chanted, "Tsi-tsi-pas! Tsi-tsi-pas! Tsi-tsi-pas!"

Then Tsitsipas broke to go up 3-1 with plenty of help from Zverev, who double-faulted, then missed a backhand, followed by a forehand and another backhand.

Zverev winced and Tsitsipas raised his right fist.

Fifteen minutes later, Tsitsipas earned his first match point, and while he needed five of them to



Stefanos Tsitsipas of Greece celebrates a point against Germany's Alexander Zverev during their French Open semifinal at the Roland Garros on Friday. — AP

close the proceedings, he eventually did convert one with an ace.

Tsitsipas will be the first player from Greece in a Grand Slam singles final and youngest man to appear in the title match at the French Open since Nadal won the 2008 championship five days after his 22nd birthday.

And this is not some out-of-nowhere ascension. Tsitsipas has been build-

ing toward this over the past couple of seasons, reaching three major semifinals in a row and leading the ATP in total match wins (39 now) and clay-court wins (22) in 2021. Three of his seven career tour-level titles came on clay, including a pair this year — at the Monte Carlo Masters and Lyon.

Zverev's loss makes him 0-10 against members of

the Top 10 at Grand Slam tournaments, an especially confounding statistic when viewed in contrast to his 31-30 mark against such opponents in any other setting.

He hadn't faced a seeded player en route to the semifinals, including two matches against qualifiers and a quarterfinal victory over 46th-ranked Alejandro Davidovich Fokina. — AP

## ANASTASIA AND BARBORA SEEK GRAND SUCCESS

**Paris, June 11:** Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova and Barbora Krejickova, two of the most unlikely Grand Slam finalists of the modern era, meet in Saturday's French Open title match at the conclusion of a shock-heavy tournament. World number 32 Pavlyuchenkova has reached this stage for the first time at the 52nd attempt, 10 years after making a first Slam quarter-final in Paris.

Krejickova has long been labelled a doubles specialist and this is just her fifth appearance in a main draw singles at the Slams, having never previously got beyond the last 16. However, both women have capitalised on a draw where the top seeds fell and just kept falling.

Ashleigh Barty hobbled out in the second round.

Serena Williams was knocked out in the fourth round, world number two Naomi Osaka withdrew after one match while 2018 champion Simona Halep never even made it to Paris. Pavlyuchenkova is bidding to become the fourth Russian champion at Roland Garros. — AFP

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