

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
NELLORE | FRIDAY | 4 JUNE 2021

WEATHER



Max: 40.5°C
Min: 30.2°C
RH: 56%
Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: clear.
Max/Min
temp. 40/30 °C

ASTROGUIDE

Plava: Uttarayana
Tithi: Vaishakha Bahula Dasami
till 4.08 am (Saturday)
Star: Uttarabhadra till 8.49 pm
Variyam: Sessa Variyam up to
6.51 am
Durmuhurtam: 8.20 am to
9.12 am; 12.40 pm to 1.32 pm
Rahukalam: 10.30 am to 12 noon
HIJRI CALENDAR
Shawwal 22, 1442 AH
PRAYERS
(SHAHI MASJID)
Fajar: 4.20 am
Zohar: 12.08 pm
Asar: 4.42 pm
Maghrib: 6.36 pm
Isha: 7.55 pm
SUNSET TODAY 6.36 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.40 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 00.59 AM
MOONSET TOMORROW 1.50 PM

COUNTER POINT



These economists are anti-nationals, they are showing negativity!

SHORT TAKES

SC seeks Class 12 assessment plan

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Thursday said it was happy to note that the government has cancelled the Class 12 board exams, and directed the CBSE and ICSE to place on record well-defined objective criteria for assessment of students in two weeks. A bench of Justices A.M. Khanwilkar and Dinesh Maheshwari asked Attorney General K.K. Venugopal and advocate J.K. Das, to place the parameters in 2 weeks.

CVC opposes pvt jobs by ex-babus

New Delhi: Noting instances of retired officials taking up jobs in private sector after their retirement, the CVC on Thursday said acceptance of such an employment offer without the completion of mandatory cooling-off period "constitutes a serious misconduct". In an order, it also said that all government organisations should mandatorily take vigilance clearance before offering postretirement jobs to babus.

5 more die in new UP hooch tragedy

Allgarh (UP): Five people died and 22 more were hospitalised after consuming spurious liquor in a village here, days after another hooch tragedy resulted in the death of at least 35 in the district, police said on Thursday. On Wednesday night, some brick kiln labourers fell sick after consuming country-made liquor dumped in a canal near Rohera village in the Jawan area, the police personnel said.

SW monsoon enters Kerala

New Delhi: After a delay of two days, the Southwest Monsoon made an onset over Kerala on Thursday, marking the commencement of the rainfall season in the country, the India Meteorological Department said. The Monsoon has made an onset over southern parts of Kerala, said IMD Director General Mrutunjay Mohapatra. The normal onset date for Southwest Monsoon over Kerala is June 1.

WORLD | 5

Bill to remove cap on Green Card in US

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Ever ready



Army Chief General M.M. Naravane reviews the security situation along the Line of Control in Kashmir on Thursday. He said the longevity of the ceasefire along the Line of Control with Pakistan depends on the actions of the neighbouring country but asserted that there would be "no slackening" of preparedness as terror infrastructure across the border was intact.

Centre to buy 30cr Bio-E vax

Talks on with Pfizer, Moderna, J&J to procure Covid vaccine

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MAY 3

The Centre has signed a deal for 30 crore vaccines with the city-based Biological-E that is making India's second indigenous vaccine after Covaxin.

"The vaccine by Biological-E is currently undergoing Phase 3 clinical trials after showing promising results in Phase 1 and 2 clinical trials. The vaccine being developed by Biological-E is a RBD protein sub-unit vaccine and is likely to be available in the next few

months. These 30 crore doses will be manufactured and stockpiled by Biological-E from August to December 2021. For this, the Union Ministry of Health would be making an advance payment of ₹1,500 crore to Biological-E," Union health ministry said on Thursday.

Health ministry officials said the arrangement with Biological-E is part of the wider endeavour of Centre to encourage indigenous vaccine manufacturers by providing support in Research and Development (R&D) and also

financial support. The Biological-E Covid vaccine candidate has been supported by Centre from pre-clinical stage to Phase-3 studies during which the department of biotechnology has provided grant-in-aid of over ₹100 crore and also partnered with Biological-E to conduct all animal challenge and assay studies through its Research Institute Translational Health Science Technology Institute, Faridabad.

Officials said the government is supporting development of 5-6 Covid-19 vaccine candidates. Some of

these are now closer to licensure and introduction in health systems.

"We are also part of discussions with major vaccine manufacturers like Pfizer, Johnson and Johnson, and Moderna about sourcing and possible local manufacturing of their vaccines in India. We have helped to expedite the introduction of the Sputnik-V. Vaccines have complex supply chains," said MEA spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said.

■ Page 3: Centre wants local units for foreign vax

JAGAN: LET'S ALL ASK CENTRE TO TAKE VAX CHARGE

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 3

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has sought to impress upon his counterparts in all states to rally for procurement of vaccines.

In a letter to them, he stressed the need for them to speak in one voice to put pressure on the Central government to take sole responsibility for the vaccination drive including procurement of vaccines.

His letter detailed how states could not allot funds to take up such tasks as calling for global tenders, which sadly saw no bids from anybody.

Hence, it should be the Centre alone which should take charge of the vaccination drive.

■ Page 2: CMs should speak in one voice: Jagan

SPORTS | 8

BCCI biggie Srinivasan's daughter guilty of conflict

TABLOID

Hustle culture & burnout generation



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3 capitals set to come into force

Botsa says Vizag would soon turn exec capital

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 3

The Chief Minister can work from any place and Visakhapatnam will soon start to function as AP's executive capital.

Municipal administration minister Botsa Satyanarayana on Thursday affirmed that 'three capitals' would come into force in Andhra Pradesh anytime to ensure distributed development of the three regions of the state.

He claimed there is no restriction on the Chief Minister and he can work from any place.

Satyanarayana said that Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy had announced three capitals as a policy decision for the uniform development of all areas of the state and, hence, the decision to turn Visakhapatnam as executive capital, Kurnool as judicial capital and Amaravati as legislative capital.

He said some evil forces unable to digest the distributed development of Andhra Pradesh went to the court against the implementation of the three capitals decision. The minister asserted

CM kick-starts 15.6L houses' construction

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 3

The mega construction of 15.62 lakh houses began in Andhra Pradesh, creating a new record on Thursday. Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy virtually launched works at YSR Jagananna Colonies across the state.

As many as 28,30,227 houses will be constructed in two phases at a cost of Rs 50,944 crore. In the phase-1, 15.6 lakh houses will be constructed at a cost of Rs 28,084 crore by June 2022, and 12.70 lakh

houses in phase-2 would be ready by 2023.

Addressing the beneficiaries, an elated Jagan Mohan Reddy said a housing programme for the poor on such a large-scale was never launched anywhere in the country. He said this programme gave him more satisfaction than any other welfare initiative. For its fast completion, the project was associated with the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY).

■ Page 2: Joint Collector to monitor work

that the government would not go back on its decision.

He added that the government was working towards resolving legal hurdles and affirmed that court cases cannot stop the Chief Minister from working at any place for administrative purposes.

Botsa Satyanarayana said some evil forces unable to digest the distributed development of Andhra Pradesh went to the court against the implementation of the three capitals decision.

WhatsApp forces consent: Centre

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 3

The Centre has told the Delhi High Court that social messaging platform WhatsApp was trying to "force" its users to consent to the new privacy policy before the Personal Data Protection Bill becomes a law by bombarding them with notifications daily to obtain their consent.

Terming WhatsApp's bombardment of notifications on its customers as an "anti-user practice" for obtaining "trick consent," the Central government has urged the court to direct the messaging platform to desist from pushing notifications onto its existing users with regard to the new privacy policy.

The Centre's claim has been made in an additional affidavit filed in response to several pleas challenging the new privacy policy of WhatsApp.

One of the pleas, which was the first one to be filed, was moved by Chaitanya Rohilla, a lawyer, in January this year.

Mr Rohilla, represented by advocate Manohar Lal, has contended that the updated privacy policy violates users' right to privacy under the Constitution and they can

THE GAME PLAN is very clear, i.e., to transfer the entire existing user base committed to the updated 2021 privacy policy before the Personal Data Protection (PDP) Bill becomes the law

—UNION GOVERNMENT in Delhi High Court

either accept it or exit the app, but they cannot opt not to share their data with other Facebook-owned or third party apps.

The government has said that WhatsApp "has unleashed its digital prowess to the unsuspecting existing users and would like to force them to accept the updated 2021 privacy policy by flashing such notifications at regular intervals."

"The game plan is very clear, i.e., to transfer the entire existing user base committed to the updated 2021 privacy policy before the PDP Bill becomes the law," the government has said in its affidavit.

The plea has claimed that the new privacy policy of WhatsApp allows full access into a user's online activity without supervision.



SEDITION CHARGE AGAINST VINOD DUA QUASHED

PARMOD KUMAR | DC
NEW DELHI, JUNE 3

In a relief to senior journalist Vinod Dua, the Supreme Court on Thursday quashed an FIR registered by Himachal Pradesh police alleging sedition against him for making comments critical of the Centre's handling of the first phase of the 21-day long nationwide lockdown. The said video was uploaded by Mr Dua on YouTube for his "The Vinod Due Show" on March 30, 2020.

Quashing the FIR, Justice Uday Umesh Lalit, said, "Given the drift of the entire talk show and all the statements put together, it cannot be said to have crossed the limits set out in the 1962 constitution bench judgment and certainly not made with the intent to incite people..."

GAMBHIR FOUND STOCKING VAX, PILLS ILLEGALLY

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI JUNE 03

BJP MP Gautam Gambhir's foundation was found guilty of unauthorised stocking, procurement, and distribution of Fabiflu medicine to Covid-19 patients, Delhi's drug controller body informed the Delhi High Court on Thursday. The drug controller informed the HC that action will be taken against the foundation, drug dealers, and other such cases which were brought to its notice. The DCGI was submitting a fresh report to the HC after the body was reprimanded for previously giving a clean chit to Gambhir's foundation.

COVID | OFFENCES

Police, vigilance personnel book cases and act independently without drug officials

Multiple agencies pursue drug black marketeers

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 3

Despite a Supreme Court direction to allow only drugs control authorities to deal with cognisable offences like diversion of certain drugs for Covid and black fungus cure, as per the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940, the vigilance and enforcement and the police along with drugs control administration (DCA) are on a spree of booking cases even as their action may fail to stand legal scrutiny. The apex court recently

ruled that the police does not have power to make arrests under the Chapter IV of Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940, which deals with manufacture, sale and distribution of drugs and cosmetics. The court directed drugs inspectors to carry out the arrest as provided in Section 58 of CrPC and report to their superior officers.

The Act also specifies the powers of drugs inspectors in Chapter IV Section 22 (D), allowing them to exercise such other powers as may be necessary for carrying out the purpose of

ON A WEAK FOOTING

● Cognisable offences like diversion of drugs should be dealt with as per the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940, not by invoking CrPC, IPC, DMA, etc

● Booking cases thus may not stand legal scrutiny. Also, drug inspectors are being forced to file cases beyond their territorial jurisdictions

this chapter or any rules made under.

However, in the wake of rampant diversion of vials like remdesivir which was sold even at nearly ₹80,000 per vial against the government-fixed price of ₹3,940,

tocilizumab at about ₹5-6 lakh a vial against the fixed price at ₹46,000 and amphotericin B at ₹ 60,000-₹70,000 a vial against the fixed price of ₹6,248 a vial, meant for cure for Covid and black fungus respec-

tively, teams of officials from vigilance and enforcement, DCA and health formed flying squads in districts and carried out raids and booked cases.

Sources in the DCA say that cases are being registered under Sections like 18 (a), (b), (c) of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940, and also under relevant sections including 188 of IPC, Disaster Management Act, 2005, under Sections 51 (b), 53, Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897 and others, during raids on hospitals and black marketeers.

They say that booking of

cases under sections of various laws will not serve the purpose as they may fail to stand legal scrutiny in a majority number of cases.

The sources claim that the drugs inspectors are even being forced to lodge complaints with the police even under IPC sections and also beyond their territorial jurisdiction. For instance, as a drugs inspector is allotted for district-level flying squad, he is being asked to file cases with police all over the district.

■ Page 3: 70 hospitals booked for Covid offences

SHORT TAKES

INDIA'S SDG IMPROVED MARGINALLY

From Page 1

Launched in December 2018, the index has been stated to be the primary tool for monitoring progress on the SDGs in the country and has simultaneously fostered competition among the states and union territories by ranking them on the global goals.

The index, developed in collaboration with the United Nations in India, measures the progress at the national and sub-national level in the country's journey towards meeting the global goals and targets and has been successful as an advocacy tool to propagate the messages of sustainability, resilience, and partnerships, as well.

From covering 13 goals, 39 targets, and 62 indicators in the first edition in 2018-19 to 17 goals, 54 targets and 100 indicators in the second, the third edition covers 17 goals, 70 targets, and 115 indicators.

The SDGs, constituted through a consultative process, have 17 goals and 169 related targets to be achieved by 2030.

India's overall score across sustainable development goals improved marginally by six points, from 60 in 2019 to 66 in 2021, Niti Aayog said while releasing the index.

This rise in the score was due to the country-wide improvement across clean water and sanitation (Goal 6) and affordable and clean energy (Goal 7), it added.

HC GRILLS CENTRE ON BLACK FUNGUS DRUGS

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 3

The Andhra Pradesh High Court has expressed concern over short supply of injections meant to treat black fungus and directed the Centre to submit details of its supply to the state government by Friday.

A division bench comprising Justices K. Vijaya Lakshmi and D. Ramesh heard a batch of petitions on Thursday and expressed displeasure over the supply of a very few injections for black fungus treatment to AP at a time when 1,400 such cases were reported in the state.

The court asked the assistant solicitor general, N. Harinath, as to how many injections were going to be allotted by the Centre to AP. In response, he submitted to the court that the Centre was allotting injections to states based on the number of black fungus cases being reported and in the wake of less production of such injections and more demand, there was shortage.

He submitted that the state government could purchase such injections on its own and sought a week's time to submit details. However, the court directed him to submit details by Friday.

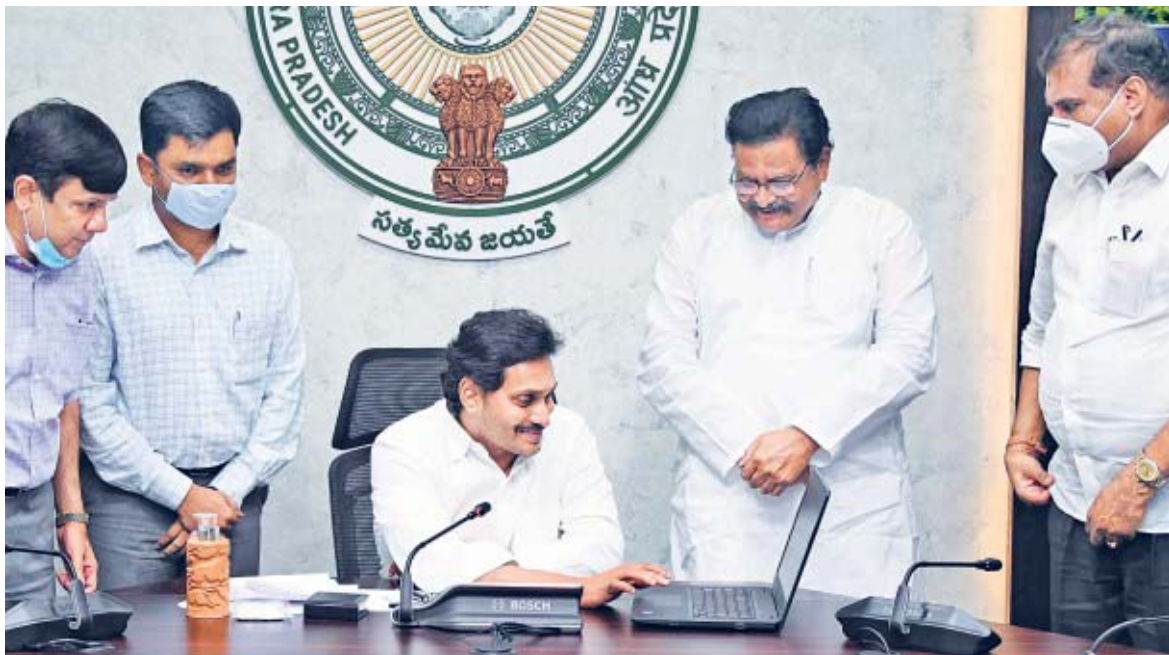
RAJU SEEKS REPEAL OF SEDITION LAW

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 3

The rebel YSRC MP, K. Raghu Ramakrishna Raju, has written a letter to his fellow members seeking their support for amendment or repeal of Section 124 A of IPC dealing with sedition. He also alleged custodial torture by AP-CID in the letter.

The MP in his letter stated that he was subjected to custodial torture after invoking the draconian and colonial Section 124 A of IPC dealing with sedition. He said that his critical evaluation of various schemes and other initiatives launched by the current dispensation in the state was seen from a prejudiced prism and regrettably some developed a personal grudge against his fair, unbiased and impartial analysis. He further said that his stand against the misuse of AP government was vindicated by over 150 judgements issued by AP High Court and also Supreme Court and added that it would bear testimony in unequivocal terms to the very fact that the state government was not discharging its responsibility in compliance with constitutional norms.

The MP pointed out that the state administration at the orders of Chief Minister foisted several false cases on him while some of them were stayed by the AP High Court and stated that several threats were issued to him publicly by the trumpeters of CM.



Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy virtually launching the construction of houses in YSR Jagananna Colonies at his camp office in Tadepalli on Thursday. Ministers Botsa Satyanarayana (right), Ch. Sriranganatha Raju (second from right), Special Chief Secretary (Housing) Ajay Jain (left) and AP State Housing Corporation MD Narayana Bharat Guptha (second from left) are also seen.

— BY ARRANGEMENT

Another chance to apply for house sites by AP govt

Houses will be sanctioned within 90 days after the verification process

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 3

The state government will give another chance to people to apply for house sites under Pedalandiriki Illu scheme.

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy said "All those eligible persons who missed out can apply and houses will be sanctioned within 90 days after the verification process is completed."

The Chief Minister said it was unfortunate that 3.74 lakh beneficiaries are being left out due to pending cases in courts.

He said that the government shall treat it as a priority project and ensure that justice is served, eventually.

Reddy said that the economic situation, which has been hit by Covid-19, will improve with the housing project will create livelihood to masons, welders, carpenters, electricians, brick makers and cement traders.

He stated that while prices of building materials are skyrocketing, the government has taken the initiative to provide material at affordable prices, by procuring 69.70 lakh metric tonnes of cement, 7.44 lakh metric tonnes of steel, 310 lakh metric tonnes of sand, and other materials for the initial phase of construction.

He affirmed that the government will also provide 20 metric tonnes of sand free of cost from nearby sand rigs.

The Chief Minister stated that the government has given three options to beneficiaries.

According to the first option, the government will supply quality construction material and pay for labour charges, while the beneficiaries can build a house on their own.

In the second option, the beneficiaries can bring materials required and build a house as per their interests. The government will make payments to the beneficiaries' bank accounts in a phased manner depending on the progress of construction.

In the third option, the government will build the house taking the entire responsibility of the materials.



Rajahmundry MP M. Bharat lays foundation stone for a housing colony for the poor at Vemagiri in Rajahmundry Rural on Thursday.

— DC

CM GETS INVITE AS HOUSE WORKS START

DC CORRESPONDENT KAKINADA, JUNE 3

A woman, Gandham Aparanjani, running a small hotel in Marteru village in West Godavari district, has invited Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy to participate in "Gruha Pravesh" function at her new house for which works began at the Jagananna Housing Colony in the village.

She interacted with the Chief Minister during the laying of foundation stones for the construction of housing colonies in East and West Godavari districts on Thursday.

Aparanjani showered praise on the CM that he had made housing dreams of the poor come true as they were facing hardships in paying rents. She recalled she had applied for housing during the previous government but it was sanctioned. She said Jagan Mohan Reddy was implementing many a welfare scheme, realising the dreams of the poor.

Meanwhile, West Godavari District Collector Karthikeya Misra participated in the stone-laying ceremony at Marteru village in Penumantra mandal where 362 houses were taken up in 164 plots in an extent of 9.05 acres at a cost of ₹6.52 crore. He said that 1,70,699 houses were sanctioned to the district and 1,138 layouts were made. He informed 1,23,125 houses would be constructed and 47,574 persons had their own sites. Among them, 6,612 beneficiaries started house construction.

He said all infrastructure facilities like drinking water, electricity, underground drainage and others were being provided in the Jagananna Colonies.

Participating in the foundation laying ceremony in Chindadagaruvu village in Amalapuram rural mandal, Social Welfare Minister Pinepe Viswaroop recalled that Jagan Mohan Reddy launched distribution of house sites to 30 lakh people at Kakinada on December 25, 2020.

Joint collector to monitor work

From Page 1

After distributing 30.76 lakh house sites to the homeless poor, the government embarked on another historic programme of making their dream houses a reality.

Referring to the 2011 census, he said that of the total population of 4.95 crore, almost 1.24 lakh people would be having their own houses.

New villages and towns would emerge with all modern amenities in these layouts.

A Joint Collector has been designated in each district to monitor the work, apart from the existing three Joint Collectors.

The CM stated that for the next one week, the foundation-laying ceremonies would be taking place amid a festival atmosphere by adhering to Covid safety protocols.

Explaining the design of

houses, the CM said, "Unlike in the past, the present government is building each house in a 340 square feet area with a bedroom, hall, kitchen, bathroom and porch. Also each house is provided with two fans, two tube lights, four bulbs, and a Syntex tank."

This would become an asset worth ₹5-15 lakhs for each beneficiary."

Almost ₹4,128 crore is being spent on providing drinking water, ₹22,587 crore on roads and drainage, ₹4,986 crore on power supply, ₹627 crore on internet and ₹567 crore on other facilities for these colonies with a total cost of ₹32,909 crore on physical infrastructure alone.

Ministers Ch. Sriranganatha Raju, Botsa Satyanarayana, Chief Secretary Adityanath Das and other officials were present.

A SIGNIFICANT MILESTONE IN COUNTRY: DY CM

DC CORRESPONDENT KADAPA, JUNE 3

Deputy chief minister S.B. Amjad Basha said the state government's ambitious 'Home for the Poor' initiative as part of the Navratnas was a significant milestone in the country's history.

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Thursday inaugurated the construction of 15.60 lakh houses through a virtual approach from the Thadepalli camp office as part of the state-wide 'YSR Jagananna Colonies

Houses Opening Ceremony' as part of the 'Navaratna' — Homes for the Poor' scheme.

Amjad Basha, Kamalapuram MLA P. Ravindranath Reddy, mayor Suresh Babu and district collector Chevuru Harikiran performed Bhumi Puja in Mamillapalle Jagananna Colony layout set up on 119.88 acres within Kadapa city.

JC (Welfare) Dharmachandra Reddy and Kadapa sub-collector Pridhvitej were present on the occasion.

Economic stress, school closures, customs, illiteracy key factors for the practice

COVID-19 | DISTRESS

D. SIVA RAMI REDDI | DC KURNOOL, JUNE 3

The financial distress wreaked by the Covid pandemic on poor families is increasingly making the girl child seem an additional burden for the hapless parents. School closures are only adding to the higher risk of child marriage.

In Kurnool district, as many 25 child marriages

were prevented by May-end by Disha police, according to DSP Venkata Ramaiah.

The police filed 97 child marriages in 2019 and 35 child marriages last year 2020. But the number of child marriages that took place could be much higher, say observers.

According to the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), Andhra

Pradesh, Karnataka, West Bengal see high prevalence of the social evil.

Child marriage is more prevalent in certain communities in Kurnool district, particularly in Adoni division which shares a long border with Karnataka state.

The tribal communities in the Nallamala forest like Chenchus also have the custom of child

marriages.

Social customs, tradition, illiteracy, poverty, low status of women in society, lack of awareness about consequences are seen as main reasons behind the institution of child marriage.

Dr Mallikarjuna, a gynecologist at Kurnool Government General Hospital, said marriage at a young age for girls increases their fertil-

CMs should speak in one voice, says Jagan

From Page 1

The letter to Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan was released on Thursday. Jagan Mohan Reddy stated: "India is showing initial signs of retreating from a deadly second wave of Coronavirus infections but, we cannot let our guard down and I am sure you are preparing for the journey ahead by ensuring even stronger healthcare systems in your respective states. Our sharpest weapon against Coronavirus is the vaccine. India's vaccination drive has to be even faster, a fact pointed by several experts."

Explaining the reason for writing the letter, CM Jagan said, "As to why I am inking this letter also stems from this reality. We had gone for a global tender in order to procure the vaccines directly in line with our commitment to vaccinate everybody free of cost. The date of submission of bids was 3rd June until 5 pm, but to my dismay no one quoted and the reasons being the situation now being transformed into States Vs. Union and

● CHIEF MINISTER Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy stated, "A centralised and coordinated vaccination, supported by the states would lead to wonderful results for the people of India."

also the approving Authority being Govt. of India and so on and so forth, the situation is no longer in our control as far as the procurement of vaccines are concerned. Apart from this, the vaccination drive is plagued by multiple coordination issues. Some states feel they are not getting enough and global tenders floated by states are not getting the desired responses. Any delay in vaccinating the people would come at a heavy price."

CM Jagan stated, "It is my request that as Chief Ministers, we speak in a single voice and urge the Government of India to take charge and responsibility of the vaccination drive, the way it was happening in the early part of the year. The timely vaccination of medical staff yielded great results. The

vaccination was completed on time and this decision ensured that our front-line workers and medical professionals could be fighting the virus when at the peak of the second wave. While there remain so many supply constraints in vaccine production, the decision of giving the states a larger say in the vaccination procurement was something that was unwarranted, the fact remains that the last month and a half has made us realise the challenges of this drive. It has also led to significant deviation of resources from augmenting healthcare capacities in our respective states."

The Chief Minister asserted, "The need of the hour is to increase our vaccine availability. A centralised and coordinated vaccination, supported by the states would lead to wonderful results for the people of India. Therefore, I would again urge you to lend your support and we as Chief Ministers speak in one voice and ensure that India overcomes this pandemic."

Covid situation on the mend, CM told

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 3

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has asked officials to strictly ensure no inconvenience or hardship is caused to those undergoing treatment for Covid-19 or black fungus. They should ensure timely care as well as sufficient stock of medicines. He also drew their attention to the need to keep an eye on the problems and treatment of patients under Aarogyasri at private hospitals.

He was conducting a review at his camp office in Tadepalli on Thursday. Expressing concern over the state of children orphaned by the Covid, he said they should get financial assistance every month and ₹10 lakh each should be deposited in the name of all children. The officials informed that cases were declining on the whole and that even those in critical issues were recovering well. They said the positivity rate dropped further to 13.02 per cent against 25.56 per cent on May 16. Active cases were 2.11 lakh on May 17 and they declined to 1.43 lakh this week. The number of people recovering from Covid was also increasing and their number surpassed that of new cases. The recovery rate was now at 90.98 per cent.

The officials said the number of cases with critical issues was also declining. The ICU bed availability had increased to 1,582 by June 2 and it was 380 on May 15. They said only 433 oxygen beds were available on May 17. In contrast, they are 7,270 beds available now. Only 9,378 general beds were available on May 19 and the number rose to 11,708 at present.

Analysing the last seven week data, they said that the cases were decreasing in all the districts. They said the number of patients in Covid care centers was also on the decrease. There are only 14,057 patients in these care centres.

While 19,175 calls were made to '104' call centre on May 4, they dropped to 3,645 at present. The officials said there are 45,324 beds at 557 Covid hospitals, of which 25,220 were occupied. Around 20,070 patients were being treated under Aarogyasri and 1,04,518 people were in home isolation. While there were 16 Covid care centers across the state in September 2020, they rose steeply to 135 at present and the bed availability also increased to 53,631. As many as 14,057 patients are being treated in Covid care centers at present.

The officials said the first dose of vaccine is administered to 51,03,821 people and two doses are given to 25,47,784 people across the state. They said the central government has allotted 36,94,210 doses of vaccine for this month and distributed 5,08,710 till now and added that they have decided to procure 20,74,730 doses of vaccine from the government side. They said 1187 Black Fungus cases were registered till now.

They said 89 cases were registered in 66 hospitals by the Vigilance department for violating norms and imposed a fine of ₹9.9 crore and added that 23 non-hospital cases were registered.

They said they identified 93 orphans who lost their parents to Covid and ₹10 lakh each was deposited in the names of 46 children.

Deputy Chief Minister Alla Krishna Srinivas, Chief Secretary Adityanath Das, DGP Gautam Sawang, Covid Command Control Chairman K.S. Jawahar Reddy, Covid Taskforce Committee Chairman M.T. Krishna Babu, Health Secretary (Covid Management & Vaccination) M. Ravi Chandra, '104' call centre in-charge A. Babu, Health Commissioner Ramulu and other officials were present.

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Deputy Chief Minister Alla Krishna Srinivas, Chief Secretary Adityanath Das, DGP Gautam Sawang, Covid Command Control Chairman K.S. Jawahar Reddy, Covid Taskforce Committee Chairman M.T. Krishna Babu, Health Secretary (Covid Management & Vaccination) M. Ravi Chandra, '104' call centre in-charge A. Babu, Health Commissioner Ramulu and other officials were present.

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VAHANA MITRA AID ROLLOUT ON JUNE 15

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 3

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy will launch the distribution of aid under the YSR Vahana Mitra scheme on June 15 for auto rickshaw, taxi cab, maxi cab owners and drivers.

Minister for transport Perni Venkataramaiah alias Nani said here on Thursday that the YSRC government was offering ₹10,000 aid under the scheme. Last year the scheme was disbursed four months before the schedule in June 2020 due to the Corona crisis.

He said that this year also the scheme would be offered on June 15 and this is the consecutive third year of scheme implementation.

Nani said that as many as 2,36,344 persons benefited from the Vahana Mitra scheme in 2019-20 and 2,76,985 in 2020-21. He said this year the number of beneficiaries slid to 2,23,238 due to various reasons.

He explained that selling of auto rickshaws, paying of income tax, exceeding electricity usage and getting other government professional schemes were among main reasons for the drop in the number.

The minister said that 17,465 new applications were received for Vahana Mitra and soon they would be finalised. The minister said that the list of eligible beneficiaries would be put on display at all village/ward secretariats.

Those who want to apply for Vahana Mitra can submit their applications by June 5 at the respective secretariats. They will be verified on June 10.

The exercise for approval of eligible applications would be on June 11 and 12. The CM would distribute the aid on June 15. He hoped that Vahana Mitra would be of great help to the beneficiaries during the pandemic crisis.

on May 19 to set up Anti-Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs) in all the 13 districts.

One inspector, two SIs, two head constables, and two police constables would form part of one AHTU unit.

The Kurnool unit would function from Disha station. It will have the entire district under its jurisdiction and the SP will act as a nodal officer.

SHORT TAKES

MUMBAI MAYOR IN SOUP OVER ONLINE REPLY

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC
MUMBAI, JUNE 3

Mumbai mayor Kishori Pednekar on Thursday landed herself in controversy over a tweet, in which she allegedly used objectionable language. She later deleted the tweet claiming that her party worker had posted the message from her account.

Responding to a Twitter user's question "Contract Konala Dila?" (To whom contract has been given?), tweet about the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation's (BMC) global tender for Covid-19 vaccine supply, Pednekar replied "Tujhya Bapala!" (To Your Father).

The mayor later deleted the tweet by claiming that her party worker had posted the message from her account while she was busy with a work commitment.

Pednekar, who belongs to Shiv Sena, said, "A Shiv Sainik sent out that particular tweet from my phone. He may have done it out of anger. I usually check my phone when it comes back in my hands, and I noticed the said tweet. I realised that it was a big mistake and that this should not have been done. However badly others might behave with us, we should not behave the same way with them."

"I have learned a lesson from this that your mobile phone should not be handed over to a person even if they are close to you," she further said.

17 PILOTS DIED OF CORONAVIRUS IN MAY

New Delhi, June 3: A total of 17 pilots of Air India, IndiGo and Vistara died due to Covid-19 in May when the country witnessed the peak of the Coronavirus pandemic's second wave, sources said on Thursday.

IndiGo lost 10 pilots and Vistara two, aviation industry sources stated.

Air India officials said five senior pilots — captains Harsh Tiwary, G.P.S. Gill, Prasad Karmakar, Sandeep Rana and Amitesh Prasad — of the national carrier died of Covid.

No pilot has died due to Covid-19 at AirAsia India till date, the industry sources mentioned.

"We are committed to covering our entire workforce by mid-June," said Raj Raghavan, Senior VP & Head of Human Resources, IndiGo, in a statement.

Indigo has a "robust" welfare scheme and a "benevolent policy" so that each family of the deceased pilot would be getting ₹5 crore, the sources mentioned. They added that while there were barely a few pilots of IndiGo who tested positive during the first wave, almost 450 pilots of the carrier tested positive for Covid-19 during the second wave.

HC ISSUES SUMMONS TO RAMDEV

New Delhi, June 3: The Delhi High Court on Thursday issued summons to yoga guru Ramdev on a plea accusing him of making statements against allopathic medicines and claiming Patanjali's Coronil kit is a cure for Covid-19 but refused to restrain him at this stage saying the allopathic profession was not so fragile.

The high court however orally asked Ramdev's counsel to tell him not to make any provocative statements.

"Rajiv Nayar is a very respectable senior (advocate). I am sure his client will listen to him," Justice C. Hari Shankar said.

The high court issued summons to Ramdev on the suit filed by Delhi Medical Association (DMA) and asked him to file response in three weeks and listed the matter for hearing on July 13.

Considerable time has passed since passing of allegedly injurious statements. The counsel says defendant no. 1 (Ramdev) continues to make statement. No injunctive order can be given without giving an opportunity to the plaintiff, especially in view of the objections. Issue summons on the suit, Justice Shankar said.

The court also issued summons to social media platforms Twitter and Facebook and Astha channel, who are made parties to the petition.

DMA, on behalf of its doctor members, submitted before the court that Ramdev's statement affects as Coronil medicine does not cure Covid and it is misleading.



Beneficiaries wait to receive the second dose of the Covid-19 vaccine at a vaccination centre in New Delhi on Thursday. — PTI



People flout social distancing guidelines in a market area after relaxation in lockdown norms in Jabalpur on Thursday. — PTI

MVA speaks in different voices on curbs

Maha all set to unlock in phases but CMO and Congress minister differ on withdrawal of restrictions

SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC
MUMBAI, JUNE 3

The conflict among Maharashtra's ruling parties (Maharashtra Vikas Agadhi) was again out in the open after the Chief Minister's office disapproved the announcement made by a Congress minister regarding withdrawal of lockdown.

Senior Congress leader and Maharashtra relief and rehabilitation minister Vijay Wadettiwar on Thursday held a press conference and declared the withdrawal of lockdown in 18 out of 36 districts from Friday.

Within an hour after Wadettiwar's announcement, Maharashtra Chief Minister's Office (CMO) issued a statement stating that curbs have not been withdrawn. "A proposal in this connection with unlock is under consideration. The decision is yet to be taken," the statement said.

Chief minister Uddhav Thackeray on Thursday held a meeting of the State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA) through video conferencing.

Subsequently, Wadettiwar said that the state government has decided to 'unlock' 18 districts of the state, where the positivity rate of Covid is less than five per cent. The state has planned to lift the restrictions in five phases.

However, in a statement, the CMO said, "We have not prevented the spread of Coronavirus infection completely as yet. The infection is increasing in some rural parts of the state. Considering the deadly coronavirus and mutations in it, it is necessary to decide whether the curbs should be relaxed or not. The restrictions imposed in the state are yet to be lifted."

The decision on relaxing restrictions is under consideration and no decision has been taken, the CM's Office said. After the Chief

K'taka announces ₹500 cr relief, extends lockdown

Bengaluru, June 3: The lockdown slated to end on June 7 was extended till June 14 in Karnataka as Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa on Thursday announced a ₹500 crore second relief package.

The relief was meant for sections, which were left out in the previous package of ₹1,250 crore.

"We had earlier announced stringent restrictions from May 24 to June 7 to contain the spread of Coronavirus. Though the infections have reduced, the spread of the disease is still on," Yediyurappa said.

The decision to extend the restrictions by a week was taken following the recommendation of experts, he said.

The lockdown-like restrictions have been in effect since April 27.

From May 10, the Chief Minister announced a lockdown till May 24 morning. However, it was further extended till June 7.

The second Covid relief package of ₹500 crore would encompass teachers, 'ASHA' and Anganwadi workers, fishermen, workers in film industry, temple priests, Muezzins in mosques and powerloom workers.

The relief package

● **THE SECOND** Covid relief package of ₹500 cr would encompass teachers, 'ASHA', Anganwadi workers, fishermen, workers in film industry, temple priests, Muezzins in mosques and powerloom workers.

would benefit over 62.50 lakh people, the Chief Minister said.

According to Yediyurappa, ₹100 crore has been earmarked for purchasing milk to sustain those who are in the dairy business and have been hit by decrease in the demand.

The milk would be processed into milk powder and half kilogram of it would be supplied to each school child along with their regular foodkit in June and July.

Teachers working in unaided private schools would get ₹5,000 each, which would cost the state exchequer ₹100 crore.

A sum of ₹35 crore has been reserved for 59,000 powerloom workers who would get ₹3,000 each, the Chief Minister said.

He added that each of the 22,000 unorganised workers in film industry and television medium would get ₹3,000 for whom ₹6.6 crore has been ear-

marked.

Temple priests serving in the 'C' category of temples under the Muzrai department, Imams and Muezzins in mosques and ASHA workers would also get ₹3,000 each, Yediyurappa said.

He said ₹24.7 crore has been earmarked for Anganwadi workers who would get ₹2,000 each.

The government also exempted the medium, small and micro enterprises from the fixed electricity charge which would cost ₹114.7 crore to the government.

BJP Karnataka unit chief and Dakshina Kannada MP Nalin Kumar Kateel welcomed the second package announced by the Chief Minister.

To a query, the Chief Minister said already the disbursement of relief packages to various sections, as announced earlier, is on.

Almost 70 per cent of people have started receiving the benefits of the previous package. Within two days, we will start disbursing the second relief package to the beneficiaries. We will make a sincere effort to give the benefits to people within a week," Yediyurappa

— PTI

MP: MINORS' PARENTS TO GET VAX PRIORITY

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, JUNE 3

As part of measures to effectively deal with a possible third wave of Coronavirus, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Thursday announced that priority would be given to parents of minors aged below 12 years in the current vaccination drive.

In a video statement released here, Chouhan said the decision to give priority to the parents of minors aged below 12 years in the ongoing third phase of vaccination in the state was taken following warnings by experts that children may be affected the most in the third wave of pandemic, feared to hit the country by December this year.

"We have started establishing children wards in many hospitals in the state as part of our preparation to deal with a possible third wave of pandemic. We have decided to give priority to parents of minors aged below 12 years in the vaccination drive so that they can stay with their sick children safely in the hospitals", he said.

The Chief Minister said the second pandemic wave was under 'control' in the state now and added that the state government was trying to stop the third wave by intensifying the vaccination drive in coming days.

Chouhan further said students visiting abroad for higher studies would also be given priority in vaccination to ensure that their travel plans were not disrupted due to restrictions on travels by Indians imposed by some countries.

Maha, UP cancel state board exams

Mumbai, June 3: The state board examinations for classes 10 and 12 in Maharashtra have been cancelled this year in view of the prevailing Coronavirus pandemic, minister Vijay Wadettiwar announced on Thursday.

Speaking to reporters here, relief and rehabilitation minister Wadettiwar said the state board exams of classes 12 and 10 are cancelled. "Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray had already indicated about it in his earlier address to the state. A (formal) decision was taken today."

The Maharashtra government's decision came two days after the Centre cancelled the CBSE class 12 board exams citing the prevailing Covid-19 pandemic. The class 10 (SSC) board exams in the state were cancelled earlier due to a surge in Covid-19 cases, but a formal announcement was made on Thursday.

The Uttar Pradesh Board also cancelled the class 12 examination. The decision was taken at a meeting chaired by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath in which deputy chief minister Dinesh Sharma, who holds charge of secondary education department, was also present.

Additional chief secretary, information, Navneet Sehgal said that, "examination for the UP board class 12 has been cancelled."

Nearly 26 lakh candidates are registered for the class 12 board exams in the state.

The state had last month cancelled class 10 UP Board exam following which nearly 30 lakh candidates, who had registered for it, were promot-

ed to class 11.

Many state boards have cancelled the class 12 exam after the Union government on Tuesday decided to cancel the CBSE Class 12 board exams amid the Covid-19 pandemic with Prime Minister Narendra Modi asserting that the decision has been taken in the interest of students and that the anxiety among students, parents and teachers must be put to an end.

However, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday said a decision on holding the class 12 exams in the state will be taken after the CBSE announces modalities for marking the students.

Addressing a press conference on his first visit to the national capital as chief minister, he also said that all willing residents of Assam will be vaccinated by the end of December as more Covid-19 vaccines will be arriving in the state from this month onwards.

Asked whether the class 12 exams conducted by the Assam Higher Secondary Education Council will be cancelled, Sarma said a decision in this regard will be taken after consultation with all stakeholders as it is a question of a students' future.

The Union government on Tuesday decided to cancel the CBSE Class 12 board exams amid the Covid-19 pandemic with Prime Minister Narendra Modi asserting that the decision has been taken in the interest of students and that the anxiety among students, parents and teachers must be put to an end.

— PTI

RIGHTS | MATTER

Supreme Court chides CBSE for falling back on its examination bylaws

SC allows name change on CBSE Cl-12 certificates

PARMOD KUMAR | DC
NEW DELHI, JUNE 3

The Supreme Court on Thursday upheld the students' right to change or correct their names in the Class XII certificate of the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) on the principle that the right to control one's identity must remain with the individual for all times.

A bench comprising Justice A.M. Khanwilkar, Justice B.R. Gavai and Justice Krishna Murari chided the CBSE for falling back on its examination bylaws to deny issuance of fresh certificate with alteration or change in the name of the students.

The CBSE had cited

● **REASONABLENESS** WOULD demand, SC said, a proper balance between a 'student's right to be identified in the official (public) records in manner of her choice and the Board's argument of administrative efficiency."

● **THE JUDGMENT** came in an appeal by one I. Jigya Yadav through her father in 2011 after Delhi HC rejected her plea in 2010.

administrative efficiency to resist the change or altering of names in the certificates issued by the board.

Speaking for the bench, Justice Khanwilkar said, "Administrative efficiency, despite being a crucial concern, has not been and cannot be elevated to a standard that it is used to justify non-performance of essential functions by an instrumentality of the state."

"To use administrative

efficiency to make it practically impossible for a student to alter her identity in the Board certificates, no matter how urgent and important it is. Would be highly disproportionate and can in no manner be termed as a reasonable restriction," Justice Khanwilkar said.

Reasonableness would demand, the court said, a proper balance between a "student's right to be identified in the official (pub-

lic) records in manner of her choice and the Board's argument of administrative efficiency."

To sustain this balance, the court said that it would be open to the Board to limit the number of times such alterations could be permitted including subject to availability of the old records preserved by it as per the extant regulations.

However, to say that after the publication of examination results and issuance of certificates, there can be no way to alter the record would be a case of "total prohibition and not a reasonable restraint."

The top court judgment came in an appeal by one I. Jigya Yadav through her father in 2011 after Delhi

High Court rejected her plea in 2010. The petitioner has challenged by-law 69.1 primarily on the ground that it does not permit any correction in name, either of the candidate or his/her parents in the school certificate unless such correction/alterations are necessary for bringing the documents in conformity with the school record.

The court further stated that CBSE, which deals with maintenance of educational standards, cannot arrogate to itself the power to impact the identity of students who enroll with it.

The court said that the provision in CBSE by-laws restricting change of name "post publication of examination results" is

excessively restrictive and violative of Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution.

However, the court clarified that the provision for change of name in the by-laws is clearly severable from those for corrections in name/date of birth and, therefore, the court's determination shall not affect them except as regards the condition of limitation period.

The Supreme Court directed the CBSE to process the applications for correction or change, as the case may be, in the certificate issued by it in the respective cases under consideration.

It also ordered that the bye-laws of the board are amended to reflect the guidelines laid down by the court.

DHARAVI REPORTS ONE FRESH CASE

Mumbai, June 3: For the first time in four months, Mumbai's Dharavi area reported just one new Coronavirus case on Thursday, a senior official of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) said.

The slum-dominated area had not detected a single case on Wednesday, he said.

The tally of infections in Dharavi stands at 6,829, of which 6,451 patients have recovered from the disease and 19 are undergoing treatment, the official said.

Dharavi became a hotspot of coronavirus infection at the start of April, with 99 cases reported on April 8 alone.

— PTI

SHORT TAKES

6.1-MAGNITUDE
QUAKE STRIKES
INDONESIA

Jakarta, June 3: A 6.1-magnitude earthquake struck off the coast of Indonesia's remote Maluku islands Thursday, the United States Geological Survey said, but no tsunami warning was issued.

The strong quake hit at a relatively shallow depth of 31 kilometres, about 127 kilometres southwest of the city of Ternate. Shallower quakes tend to cause more damage, but there were no immediate reports of casualties. "It was a decent shake, but people weren't panicking," said Ternate resident Nasarudin Amin. "There are warnings about potential aftershocks." Indonesia experiences frequent quakes due to its position on the Pacific "Ring of Fire".

4 KILLED AS BOMB
HITS MINIVAN
IN KABUL

Kabul, June 3: A bomb ripped through a minivan in the western part of the Afghan capital Kabul on Thursday, killing at least four people.

No one took responsibility for the attack in the neighbourhood, which is largely populated by the minority Hazara ethnic group who are mostly Shiite Muslims. The Islamic State has carried out similar bombings in the area, including an attack on two minivans on Tuesday that killed at least 10 people. Shiites are a minority in mostly Sunni Afghanistan, and the Islamic State affiliate has declared war against them. In a statement, IS said they had also bombed an electrical grid station on Tuesday, leaving much of Kabul in darkness.

TRUMP SHUTS
DOWN HIS SOCIAL
MEDIA SITE

Washington, June 3: Donald Trump has permanently closed his blog, a webpage where the former US president shared his fiery speeches and statements after being banned by social media giants, including Facebook and Twitter.

The page titled From the Desk of Donald J. Trump has been removed from Trump's website after going live less than a month earlier, his spokesperson Jason Miller told *CNBC* news on Wednesday.

It was just auxiliary to the broader efforts we have and are working on, Miller said, adding that the webpage will not be returning.

"Hoping to have more information on the broader efforts soon, but I do not have a precise awareness of timing," Miller said.

FRANCE'S DAVID
DIOP WINS INT'L
BOOKER PRIZE

London, June 3: French novelist David Diop on Wednesday won the prestigious International Booker Prize for books translated into English with his World War I-set novel, "At Night All Blood is Black".

The Paris-born writer became the first French winner of the prize, awarded for a book translated into English and published in the UK or Ireland, a ceremony broadcast online.

Lucy Hughes-Hallett, chair of the judges, said "this story of warfare and love and madness has a terrifying power".

"We judges agreed that its incantatory prose and dark, brilliant vision had jangled our emotions and blown our minds," she said, adding "it had cast a spell on us".

BLOOD MONEY
SAVES INDIAN
FROM DEATH ROW

Abu Dhabi, June 3: A 45-year-old Indian, who was on death row in the United Arab Emirates for killing a young Sudanese boy in a road accident in 2012, can't believe that he will be a free man and can return to the country to be with his family. Becks Krishnan was saved by prominent NRI businessman and philanthropist M.A. Yusufali who helped to pay his "blood money" amounting nearly ₹one crore.

Krishnan, who hails from Kerala, was sentenced to death by UAE Supreme Court after he was found guilty of killing a young Sudanese boy when he recklessly drove and rammed his car into a group of children in September 2012. Ever since, his family and friends have been trying hard for Krishnan's release without any success, especially as the victim's family had already gone back and settled in Sudan, putting an end to any discussion or pardon. The Krishnan family then approached Yusufali,

Tiananmen protest anniv eve



Visitors tour in front of Tiananmen Gate on the eve of Friday's anniversary in Beijing, on Thursday. Communist Party leaders have imprisoned or driven activists into exile and largely succeeded in ensuring young people know little about the June 4, 1989, deadly crackdown on the pro-democracy movement.

— AP

Bill to remove per nation cap
on Green Card in US Congress

Washington, June 3: A bipartisan legislation has been introduced in the US House of Representatives to eliminate the per country cap on employment-based Green Card. The legislation was introduced by Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren and Congressman John Curtis and it is likely to benefit Indian IT professionals anguishing over decades of Green Card wait. The Equal Access to Green cards for Legal Employment (EAGLE) Act, 2021 needs to be passed by the Senate before it can be sent to the White House for the president to sign it into a law.

The bill phases out the seven per cent per-country limit on employment-based immigrant visas. The bill also raises the seven per cent per-country limit on family-sponsored visas

● **THE BILL** phases out the seven per cent per-country limit on employment-based immigrant visas. The bill also raises the seven per cent per-country limit on family-sponsored visas to 15 per cent.

Its predecessor, the Fairness for High Skilled Immigrants Act, was passed in the House in the 116th Congress with a resounding bipartisan vote of 365 to 65.

"We all know that our immigration system is severely broken and it has been broken for decades," said Lofgren, Chair of the House Subcommittee on Immigration and Citizenship. The basic framework for allocating im-

migrant visas dates back to the middle of the 20th century and was last seriously updated in 1990, when the Congress established the worldwide numerical limits on visas and the seven per cent per-country cap that still exists today, she said.

Over time, these limitations have led to backlogs that were unimaginable in 1990. The effect has been that countries with relatively small populations are allocated the same number of visas as a relatively large population country. "The result? A person from a large-population country with extraordinary qualifications who could contribute greatly to our economy and create jobs waits behind a person with lesser qualifications from a smaller country," she added.

"It makes no sense. Because of this, we are now seeing recruiters from outside America luring those with the highest skills away from the US. That hurts our economy.

The bipartisan EAGLE Act moves our country toward a system that emphasises birthplace and better serves America. Simply put, it will allow US companies to focus on what they do best — hiring smart people to create products and services, which creates jobs in our districts," Lofgren said. Congressman Curtis said the 2020 census showed that Utah has the fastest-growing state in the nation due to major growth and innovation in the technology sector, bringing thousands of new jobs to the state.

— PTI

S'PORE BEGINS
PROBE INTO
FIRE ON SHIP

Singapore, June 3: Singapore on Thursday started its own investigation into the massive fire on a chemical-laden cargo vessel, sailing under the country's flag, that sank in Sri Lankan waters and posed a grave threat to the environment and marine life.

The Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA) in a press statement said it also understands that the Sri Lankan authorities are investigating the incident.

"As the flag State, MPA has also commenced its own investigation on the incident," it said. The container ship MV X-Press Pearl, carrying a consignment of chemicals and raw materials for cosmetics from Hazira in Gujarat to Colombo Port, sank.

— PTI

Cyberattack: Biden says
looking at Russia reprisal

Washington, June 3: US President Joe Biden said Wednesday he is "looking" at possible retaliation after the White House linked Russia to a cyberattack against global meat processing giant JBS.

Asked by a reporter if he would take action against President Vladimir Putin, whom he will meet for a summit in Geneva later this month, Biden said: "We're looking closely at that issue." The ransomware attack on a US subsidiary of Brazilian-owned JBS has again prompted accusations that Russia is at least harbouring cybercriminals.

Similar suspicions were raised after ransomware hackers forced the temporary shutdown of the huge Colonial fuel pipeline in the eastern United

● **SIMILAR SUSPICIONS** were raised after ransomware hackers forced the temporary shutdown of the huge Colonial fuel pipeline in the eastern United States last month.

States last month. Asked if Putin is testing him ahead of their summit, Biden said "no." The Federal Bureau of Investigation on Wednesday attributed the attack to "REvil and Sodinokibi," which experts have said are two names for the same hacking group with ties to Russia, and said it was "working diligently to bring the threat actors to justice."

"We continue to focus our efforts on imposing risk and consequences

and holding the responsible cyber actors accountable," the FBI said in a statement.

The White House says Biden will bring up US concerns during the summit on June 16, as well as at earlier summits with allies in the G7 group, the European Union and Nato. "We expect this to be an issue of discussion throughout the President's trip," Press Secretary Jen Psaki told reporters.

"Harbouring criminal entities that are intending to do harm, that are doing harm to the critical infrastructure in the United States, is not acceptable," she said.

"We're not going to stand by that. We will raise that and we're not going to take options off the table,"

— AFP

Bibi rivals reach
deal to oust him

Lapid: 8-party coalition has been formed

Jerusalem, June 3: Israel's Opposition parties on Thursday set the wheels in motion for a potential national unity government after clinching a last-minute agreement to oust Benjamin Netanyahu, the longest-serving prime minister in the Jewish nation's history.

Yair Lapid, leader of the centrist Yesh Atid party, announced an eight-party coalition had been formed after tough political negotiations. Under a rotation arrangement, the head of the right-wing Yamina party, Naftali Bennett, 49, would serve as the prime minister first before handing over to Lapid.

Lapid, 57, officially informed President Reuven Rivlin and Knesset (Parliament) Speaker Yair Levin about the deal late Wednesday night, barely half an hour before the Wednesday midnight deadline.

The announcement came after a series of back-to-back meetings with the leaders of the anti-Netanyahu camp in the 120-member Knesset. "In accordance with Clause 13(b) of the Basic Law: The Government I am honoured to inform you

● **UNDER A rotation arrangement, the head of the right-wing Yamina party, Naftali Bennett, 49, would serve as the prime minister first before handing over to Lapid.**

that I have succeeded in forming a government... MK (Member of Knesset) Naftali Bennett will serve as a prime minister first, Lapid told Rivlin.

"I commit to you Mr President that this government will work to serve all the citizens of Israel including those who aren't members of it, will respect those who oppose it and do everything in its power to unite all parts of Israeli society," the Yesh Atid party leader said.

Lapid will serve as foreign minister until the two men swap roles halfway through the term.

There still needs to be a parliamentary vote before the government is sworn in.

The Israeli president thanked Lapid saying, "We expect the Knesset will convene as soon as possible to ratify the government, as required."

The development, seen by some as historic as it

includes an Arab party in the coalition, will break an ongoing political impasse that has seen Israel go through four polls yielding inconclusive results in less than two years.

Lapid's coalition is composed of Yesh Atid, Yamina, Kahol Lavan, New Hope, Labor, Yisrael Beiteinu, Meretz and United Arab List.

Netanyahu, 71, in his first reaction on Twitter said "all legislators elected by votes from the right must oppose this dangerous left-wing government."

The Opposition on Thursday moved quickly to push for a vote for the Knesset Speaker to be replaced as soon as possible.

The move to replace Likud's Yairiv Levin is designed to deny the Speaker the chance to drag his feet on scheduling a confidence vote on the new government.

In the letter to the Knesset's secretary-general, the Opposition bloc asked that a vote to replace Levin with Yesh Atid MK Mickey Levy as Speaker be placed on the agenda at the next plenum session, which is set to take place on Monday.

— PTI

UK SEEKS TO FLIP
GOVT'S FOREIGN
AID BUDGET CUT

London, June 3: Lawmakers from Britain's governing Conservative Party said Thursday they hope to force a vote in Parliament next week that could make the government reverse a contentious cut to the United Kingdom's foreign aid budget.

The British government dropped a long-standing commitment to spend 0.7% of the UK's gross domestic product on international aid, citing the coronavirus pandemic's blow to the economy. It says the cut to 0.5 per cent is temporary.

United Nations agencies and other international organisations say the reduction will hurt programmes that help some of the world's poorest people.

Former International Development Secretary Andrew Mitchell says he has enough support to win a vote on Monday, just days before Prime Minister Boris Johnson hosts leaders of the Group of Seven wealthy nations for a June 11-13 summit in Cornwall, England.

The vote will only happen if the speaker of the House of Commons allows it, which is not guaranteed.

But the growing list of Conservative lawmakers supporting Mitchell nevertheless could pressure the government to change course.

— AP

G7 health heads
talk vax sharing

Oxford, June 3: Health ministers from the G7 group of wealthy nations met Thursday in Britain to discuss sharing vaccines with poorer countries, as calls continue to ensure fairer global distribution of doses.

The meeting in Oxford in southern England comes ahead of next week's G7 summit, hosted by the United Kingdom, which is set to be dominated by discussion of the coronavirus pandemic and recovery plans.

"We'll be working together with G7 partners to try to meet the objective that a vaccine is made available right across the world," UK Health Secretary Matt Hancock told reporters.

"After all, this is a global pandemic and nobody is safe from it until everybody is safe," he added.

The G7 gathering was also set to focus on improving identification of animal-borne infections, given three-fifths of all infections jump from animals to humans.

The ministers from Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States vowed to "combat future health threats by working together to identify early warning signs from animals and the environ-

CHINA SEEKING
POLITICAL GAINS
OVER VAX: TAIWAN

Taipei, June 3: Taiwan's foreign minister on Thursday said China is seeking political gains abroad in return for providing vaccines and other pandemic assistance, partly to increase pressure on Taiwan, which it claims as its own territory.

Beijing's Communist Party leaders further exploited the pandemic to impose their political agenda on many others," Joseph Wu said in a video conference with the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan. China's vaccine diplomacy is creating divisions among countries in Central and South America.

— AP

ment", "There will be more diseases that cross that boundary from animals to humans," Hancock added.

— AFP

Vax refusal: Sindh
to stop staff pay

Islamabad, June 3: The chief minister of Pakistan's Sindh province on Thursday directed the authorities to stop the salaries of government officials from July if they fail to get vaccinated for Covid-19.

The order was passed during a meeting of the provincial task force on Covid-19 chaired by Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah. "Government employees who do not get themselves vaccinated will have their salaries stopped from July," Shah said.

A directive on this has been issued to the finance ministry, officials said.

The Sindh government has already fixed June 5 as the deadline for all teachers in the province to get vaccinated. The step is because all educational institutions are to open from June 7.

According to the the Sindh Health Department, 1,550,553 people have been vaccinated in the province so far, while 1,121,000 people have received the first dose and 429,000 people have been fully vaccinated against

MORE CASES IN
VIRUS CLUSTER
IN SOUTH CHINA

Beijing, June 3: Fifteen more Covid-19 cases have been reported in the southern Chinese province of Guangzhou, with a report saying the Coronavirus variant in the latest outbreak is more transmissible than in previous clusters in the country.

The city of Guangdong has locked down neighbourhoods and requires anyone wishing to leave the province to show a negative virus test taken within the past 72 hours.

— AP

the virus. Meanwhile, Pakistan's Coronavirus tally reached 926,695 on Thursday with the detection of 2,028 cases in the last 24 hours, while 92 more fatalities pushed the death toll to 21,022, the health ministry said.

— PTI

OVERLOOKED | NEIGHBOUR

Aim to understand how planet became an inferno

Nasa announces 2 new Venus missions

Cape Canaveral, June 3: Nasa is returning to zizzling Venus, our closest yet perhaps most overlooked neighbour, after decades of exploring other worlds.

The space agency's new administrator, Bill Nelson, announced two new robotic missions to the solar system's hottest planet, during his first major address to employees Wednesday.

"These two sister missions both aim to understand how Venus became an inferno-like world capable of melting lead at the surface," Nelson said.

One mission named DaVinci Plus will analyse the thick, cloudy Venusian atmosphere in an attempt to determine whether the inferno planet ever had an ocean and was possibly habitable. A small craft will plunge through the atmosphere to measure the gases.

It will be the first US-led mission to the Venusian atmosphere since 1978.

The other mission, called

EARLIER VOYAGES	
1970: Nasa's Mariner 2 performed the first successful flyby in 1962, and the Soviets' Venera 7 made the first successful landing.	1978: The year when a US-led mission had last gone to the Venusian atmosphere.
1989: Nasa used a space shuttle to send its Magellan spacecraft into orbit around Venus.	2006: The European Space Agency put a spacecraft around Venus.

Veritas, will seek a geological history by mapping the rocky planet's surface.

"It is astounding how little we know about Venus," but the new missions will give fresh views of the planet's atmosphere, made up mostly of carbon dioxide, down to the core, Nasa scientist Tom Wagner said in a statement. "It will be as if we have rediscovered the planet."

Nasa's top science official, Thomas Zurbuchen, calls it "a new decade of Venus". Each mission — launching sometime around 2028 to 2030 — will receive \$500 million for development under Nasa's Discovery programme. The missions beat out two other proposed projects, to Jupiter's moon Io and Neptune's icy moon Triton. The US and the former



In this photo provided by Nasa, Administrator Bill Nelson speaks during his first major address to employees, at the agency's headquarters in Washington on Wednesday.

— NASA/Bill Ingalls

Soviet Union sent multiple spacecraft to Venus in the early days of space exploration.

Nasa's Mariner 2 performed the first successful flyby in 1962, and the Soviets' Venera 7 made the first successful landing in

1970. In 1989, Nasa used a space shuttle to send its Magellan spacecraft into orbit around Venus.

The European Space Agency put a spacecraft around Venus in 2006.

— AP

DECCAN
Chronicle

4 JUNE 2021

Vaccines for all: SC has put Centre squarely on the mat

The demand for a review of the Union government's liberalised vaccine policy that handed over the responsibility of vaccinating people aged between 18 and 44 years to the state governments and private hospitals is gaining strength what with the Supreme Court questioning its very logic. In its interim order in a suo motu case on Tuesday, the apex court wondered why the Centre cannot procure the vaccines for the states as well if it gets the doses cheap because of the size of its order. The court pointed out that the Union Budget for 2021-22 has earmarked ₹35,000 crores to vaccinate people unlike the cash-strapped states, and asked the latter whether they have plans to vaccinate their people for free. After digging out data which said there are about 13,000 villages with no common service centres, the court flagged the issue of digital divide and reminded the government that accessibility barrier could have serious implications on the fundamental rights to equality and health of the marginalised sections of society as registering themselves on the CoWin app is mandatory to get the jab.

The government should take the court's intervention as an opportunity to make a course correction and take charge. It should go in for a thorough review of the botched policy.

Some could find the court's directive to produce the data of the purchases the Centre has made till now and the documents and file notings reflecting its thinking on the policy a bit of judicial overreach but the court, as the defender of fundamental rights including the right to life, has little option but to put its foot down and hold a delinquent government accountable. The same sense of duty could have driven it into asking the government to produce an outline for how and when it seeks to vaccinate the remaining population by the end of 2021.

The court's views apart, the vaccine policy has come under criticism from several state govern-

ments, experts and epidemiologists as it refuses to address the challenges the pandemic poses to the nation. The latest to join the chorus is Odisha chief minister Navin Patnaik who wants the Centre to procure vaccines for all the states.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is on record saying vaccination is an important tool in the fight against the virus but the government he heads does not seem to understand its import, lest it should not have forced state government and private companies to fight with one another for a life-saving product in a market where the supply is limited. The Centre should have long ended the charade of the state governments floating global tenders for vaccines only to get poor response when it, as it stated the other day, had known that there is a global shortage of the doses and that manufacturers are unlikely to deal with state governments. It should have taken an early decision on making the Integrated Vaccine Complex at Chengalpet in Tamil Nadu functional instead of sitting on the repeated reminders by chief minister M.K. Stalin.

The government should take the court's intervention as an opportunity to make a course correction and take charge. It should go in for a thorough review of the botched policy and come out with a comprehensive one which will inoculate every citizen whether a third wave hits the nation or not. Better late than never.

Osaka's prerogative

Sport mirrors the society it is played in but in the modern age that society has got unimaginably more complex. Take for instance the walkout from the French Open by one of the most talented players in women's tennis — Naomi Osaka, four time Grand Slam winner. Facing mental health issues as in dealing with a psychosis over media conferences, which she thinks only induce doubts in players' minds, she decided to abandon the Grand Slam rather than face up to her demons. But what did sport do but throw the book at her in pedantic action and which proved so unpopular, with public opinion swinging hugely in sympathy with her condition, that the sports administrators were running for cover.

Professional sport can no longer be run like a circus ring into which athletes are corralled to perform while taking home fat pay and endorsement cheques. The finest athletes are subjected to extreme anxieties, which their skills help tame sometimes. But they all suffer the same human frailties as John Doe and that calls for empathy rather than stentorian diktats from the keepers of the codes of behaviour. Ironically, the men running the most from the press and media were the admin men of the Grand Slams just when they were required to come clean and act in the interest of inclusivity in sport by explaining themselves.

The mental well-being of sportspeople is also important for the entertainment they offer through their artistic skills that please the aesthete and the aficionado as well as the common man. The complexities of individual behaviour under competitive pressures in young people may seem administratively difficult to handle. But sport must endure all that besides taking a stand against so much else that is wrong with the world, such as racism, sexism and jingoism. They made the debutant England Test cricketer Ollie Robinson apologise cringingly and in public for tweets of 2012 and 2013 that were racist and sexist. It is in addressing sympathetically the issue of his career that sport can show it has the equanimity and the empathy when it comes to dealing with sportspeople.

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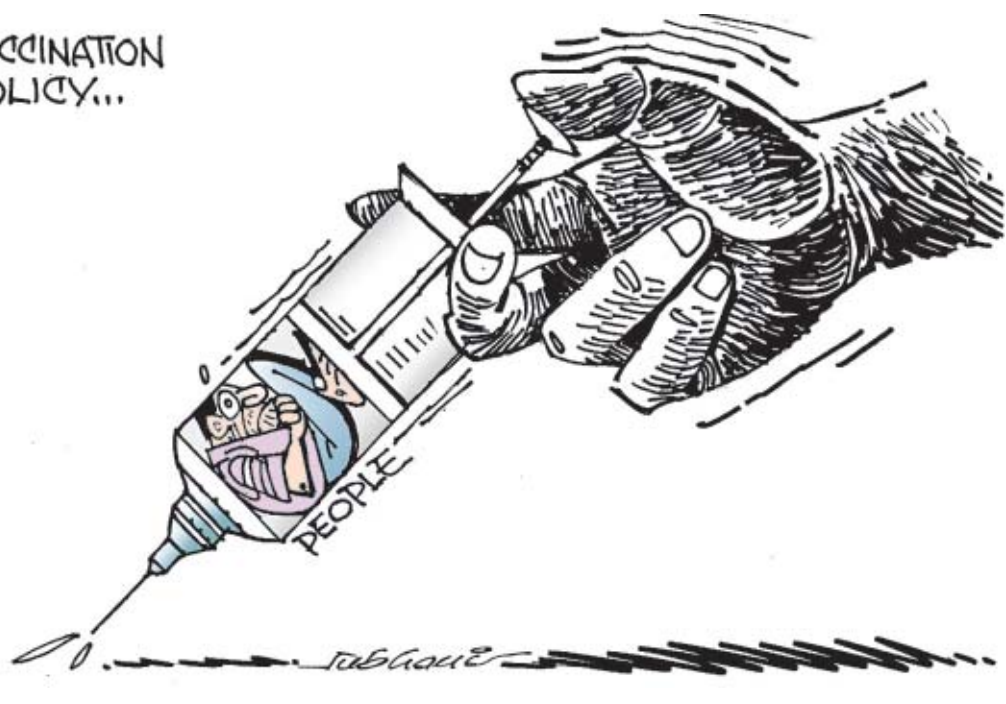
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Subhani

VACCINATION
POLICY...

Why China needs to pay reparations to the world

Abhijit
Bhattacharyya

In an article in August last year, I had argued that the "world needs to seek reparations from China" for the all-round harm it had caused. "Covid-19 has done more damage to the global economy in six months than the two world wars did in 10 years. The Chinese origin virus has already claimed over six lakh lives, while more than 1.6 crore cases have been recorded. There is debt worth billions, perhaps trillions, of dollars and over 200 countries are on the road to ruin", I had written.

Today, in June 2021, the casualty figures have not only multiplied several hundred times in just 10 months, but skyrocketed to astronomical levels, battering all 223 countries, minus China. Therefore, I reiterate that the world, including India, must compel the Communist Party of China's government in Beijing to pay suitable reparations or damages to all nations that have been left devastated by the China-conceived Third World War, which is still raging. No one has been left untouched. The effects are starkly visible all over: with India's economics, society, industry, public health, trade, commerce, security, territorial integrity and 1.3 billion people's lives turned upside down.

No one is quite sure what lies in store for the world's second most populous country six months from now, except to helplessly stare at the stark reality of New Delhi being in cusp of an unprecedented period of economic turbulence, caused wholly by the Chinese chemical and biological warfare germ, known to the world as Covid-19, which originated from Wuhan in 2019. The WHO and international bodies have now, belatedly, started an investigation into the origins of the virus, but its credibility has already hit

rock bottom in the eyes of most people in the affected nations, which certainly includes Indians.

Thus, New Delhi continues to pay dearly for the blind trust it reposed in the congenitally deceptive "goodwill" and false "promises" of the CPC's deceitful and duplicitous leaders and has rarely learnt any lessons.

Just consider some of the facts and figures compiled by Prof. Kaushik Basu, a world-renowned economist, currently a professor at Cornell University and a former chief economic adviser to the Government of India and former World Bank chief economist. Of 14 Asian nations (Bangladesh, Myanmar, China, Vietnam, Indonesia, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, India), the minus eight per cent annual GDP growth of 2020 positions India last but one (above Philippines' minus 8.3 per cent). In contrast, Bangladesh, with 3.8 per cent annual GDP growth in 2020 tops the list of 14 Asians, with China's 1.9 per cent growth putting it in third spot, below second-placed Myanmar's two per cent GDP growth.

In Covid-19 deaths per million population too (as of May 21, 2021), India hit nadir in descending order of 14 Asian states. Bhutan's one, to India's 212, and China's three deaths per million, that clearly shows the scale of beating India has taken at the hands of the CPC-ruled dragon.

The story doesn't end here. The quantity and quality of universal damage, maliciously inflicted by the CPC since 2019, indisputably qualifies China as the principal destroyer which must be compelled to pay reparations to the world at large, and India in particular.

Just as vanquished Germany was compelled, by 40-odd nations by the Treaty

of Versailles (June 28, 1919) to pay reparations, especially to France, for starting the First World War and ravaging its neighbours. In comparison to the universally destructive 2021, 1919 appears minuscule, as China has set the whole world on fire with its lab created CBW airborne germs; killing, maiming, numbing, crippling soldiers to factory workers; farmers to college students; doctors and nurses on duty to a host of service industry personnel.

Beijing's single-point agenda is to monopolise the world economy. In India-China bilateral trade alone, Beijing has so far profited by over \$483 billion in 20 years, starting 1999-2000. In other areas too, like Chinese banks operating in India, and sub-standard Chinese automaker MG, is on a profiteering spree through high prices and poor service. India's roads, railways, telecoms, tech are all being targeted, and the aim is to bolster China and destroy India.

Let's translate \$483 billion to India's annual defence expenditure. Military Balance 2021, published by the International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, shows India's 2020 defence budget of \$64.1 billion standing third behind America's \$738 billion and China's \$193.3 billion. The outcome of a one-way \$483 billion Chinese profit implies loss of the same amount to India — which is equivalent to seven and a half years of India's defence budget! That's just one segment, not to speak of several other sectoral losses worth millions/billions. One, therefore, fails to comprehend, why a battered India shouldn't demand reparations from the CPC. After all, the world has already entered

The twenty-first century is, so far, a 'war without gunshots' (except in Ladakh), but its airborne destruction far outweighs the twentieth century firepower of the two world wars

the third year of the Third World War, which has put the lives of 1.3 billion Indians under grave threat.

Paradoxically, the Wuhan-origin "Third World War CBW virus", despite looking surreal and bizarre, has turned the much-touted cliché "world is one" and "world is a global village" into reality. The world is indeed "really one", as all sides, except China, are "sinking as one". In unison, Beijing's bragging now stands out. The CPC is claiming that China has killed industrial production, exports to the US, EU and India, and this comes amid an assault on freedom of navigation through international waters and the "wolf warrior diplomacy" targeting everyone and anyone — from Canberra to London, Pacific islands to the Balkans, along with landlocked Tibet, Xinjiang and Taiwan. Plus of course the never-ending standoff in Ladakh and tensions across the Himalayas.

Today, therefore, is a time of reckoning. The world must collectively demand reparations, as done after the First World War by the Versailles Treaty. Two articles — 231 and 232 — made Germany capitulate and agree to pay for the wilful death, damage and destruction it caused to Europe.

The prefix "re" thus becomes the economic password of battered countries: "Reconstruction, recovery, rebuild, reparations, retrenchment, repayment of war debts," revaluation of currency and restoration of the gold standard. The twenty-first century is, so far, a "war without gunshots" (except in Ladakh), but its airborne destruction far outweighs the twentieth century firepower of the two world wars. The CPC must be forced to pay reparations, if the world is not to capitulate to the dictates of Emperor Xi Jinping. Incidentally, Xi will turn 68 on June 15, the day he killed 22 Indian soldiers in 2020 to mark his 67 years!

The writer is a Supreme Court advocate. The views expressed here are personal.

LETTERS

TESTING TIMES

Can students avoid being tested? (*Testing time for students, DC, June 3*). A big 'no' under the present circumstances. We can't jeopardise the lives of students and their parents who will accompany their wards. These are extraordinary circumstances and extraordinary decisions must be taken. And that's what the governments did in the best interests of people.

K. Nehru Patnaik
Visakhapatnam

B. MATHAM ROW

Veera Brahmendra Swamy's reputation is being tarnished by a controversy over Brahmamgari Matham. (*Dispute continues over B. Matham head, DC, June 3*). Seers, peetha dharmas, bylaws, cannot resolve dispute between two claimant groups. The AP endowments must take possession of B. Matham, appoint an executive officer and transfer the issue to court.

D. Ravikumar
Visakhapatnam

FIGHT OVER CS

The recalling of Chief Secretary, West Bengal is the upshot of acrimonious BJP-TMC fracas which sends an unsettling message for the vulnerable bureaucracy while dealing with political headwinds in the system.

Dr C. Ghanshyam
Visakhapatnam

50 YEARS AGO IN
DECCAN
Chronicle

Hari Prasad remanded to custody

HYDERABAD, June 3. Thakur V. Hari Prasad, Honorary Secretary of A.P. Welfare Fund, who was arrested by the State Crime Branch CID yesterday, was today remanded to judicial custody for 15 days.

He was charged with cheating, misappropriation, falsification of accounts and embezzlement of amounts of the A.P. Welfare Fund. The State Crime Branch CID in the meantime have also arrested Mr. Diwakara Shetty, Joint Secretary of the Kannada Natya Ranga, this evening on charges of cheating and misappropriation. He has been accused of producing a false resolution purported to have been passed by the Kannada Natya Ranga.

Pranay Sinha,
Amita Sudhir,
Tania A. Thomas and
Scott K. Heysell

Why is medical care making Covid-hit sicker, poorer in India?

Jugaad" is a Hindi word which refers to using resources frugally yet creatively. From low-cost space flights to cost-efficient cardiac surgery, India has pioneered ways to maximise its limited resources. And yet, as front-line emergency physicians and infectious diseases physicians, we have seen a wasteful misuse of healthcare resources in India during the Covid-19 pandemic, which threatens the health and wealth of millions.

Emboldened by falling Covid-19 cases, the Indian government loosened restrictions by October 2020. By March 2021, there were signs that the virus was resurgent. According to the Johns Hopkins database, India has seen more than 2.8 crore cases of Covid-19 and more than 3.2 lakh deaths by May 31, 2021. More than 50 per cent of deaths have occurred during the second wave and models suggest that these numbers may be underestimates. Heroic Indian healthcare workers, many of them still unvaccinated, are persevering despite the unprecedented shortages of hospital beds, oxygen, and even fever-reducing acetaminophen. Unfortunately, clinicians are using government guidelines based on tenuous or even counterfactual medical evidence, that are resulting in systematic errors.

Anti-bacterial drugs like

azithromycin and doxycycline are commonly prescribed despite a lot of evidence that they have no plausible benefits for the viral infection of Covid-19. In addition to monetary costs, patients also face health risks from unnecessary antibiotics. For instance, azithromycin may promote dangerous and even fatal changes in the heartbeat pattern.

Antibiotic overuse also propagates anti-microbial resistance, already a major concern in India.

The latest Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) recommendations from May 18 still include repeatedly debunked drugs like ivermectin and hydroxychloroquine. These inclusions are entirely inconsistent with the current scientific consensus and should be removed promptly to avoid all confusion. We are heartened that nationally well-known medical leaders like Dr Randeep Guleria, the head of New Delhi's All India Institute of Medical Sciences, have publicly opposed the use of these discredited Covid therapies. The ICMR guidelines should also be purged of these ineffective drugs to avoid confusion.

The ICMR guidelines also suggest use of remdesivir for in-patients. This drug has not been found to have any mortality benefit, and its benefit in shortening

hospitalisation is studied only in the background of adequate supportive care, which is currently available to most Indians. And yet, many Indians are paying \$65 (Rs 5,000) for a five-day course and even higher costs on the black market. Similarly, we are concerned about the recent premature emergency use authorisation given to 2-deoxy-D-glucose (2-DG.). Although the government cites success for this drug in clinical trials, these data have not been made available to the public.

Steroids, a cornerstone of Covid-19 therapy, are also being used improperly. The evidence on steroids is clear — they should be given to patients who need oxygen, at a specific dose, and for up to 10 days. In India, steroids are being given early in the disease — before oxygen needs are apparent, at higher doses, and for much longer periods. They can weaken the immune system, worsen diabetes, a disease one in eleven Indians have, and may be implicated in an alarming number of Indians developing a range of fungal infections, including deadly mucormycosis (which is being called black fungus). Fungal infections are not inevitable with steroid use — we did not observe such high rates of invasive fungal infections in the United States when using steroids as recommended

by clinical trials.

Indians with Covid-19 are advised to take a large assortment of minerals and vitamins that again have not been shown to be effective. As physicians who cared for patients in the early days of the pandemic in the US, we understand the impulse to "do something" in the midst of so much death, devastation, and desperation. However, having also seen our relatives confused by interminable lists of drugs, we know that seemingly harmless nutritional supplements have opportunity costs — they draw attention away from what is essential. Additionally, given that more than a billion Indians subsist on less than \$5.50 (₹440) daily per capita, each addition to their medication list must be evidence-based and serve a clear purpose.

We have the utmost empathy for the Indian healthcare workers who are stretched beyond belief and lack the time to research their recommendations and follow the rapidly growing Covid-19 literature. We exhort the Indian public health leadership to promptly take three specific steps to support Indian clinicians.

First, increase public awareness of what to do to care for loved ones at different stages of the disease and keep patients out of hospitals when possible.

NGOs like Swasth and volunteer groups like India COVIDSOS have already developed accessible protocols that can empower Indians to care for sick family members at home, and community organisations to care for patients in Covid-19 care centres, an essential option when hospitals are overwhelmed. Second, the ICMR guidelines must be purged of any therapies that do not stand up to hard-nosed scientific scrutiny. Lastly, the Indian leadership should ensure regular clinical updates to support beleaguered Indian healthcare workers. These updates should come as digestible recommendations straight to the healthcare providers' phones. Clinicians should be made aware of the cost and the effectiveness of the drugs they prescribe so they can personalise care and share decision-making with patients struggling with the financial burden of Covid-19.

Adversity is the mother of frugal creativity, and it is hard to imagine a time more adverse. Though despondent, we nourish the hope that India can mitigate further misery with jugaad, delivered with clear communication, and backed by scientific rigour.

The writers are doctors working in different hospitals in the United States

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	52,232.43	0.74
Nifty 50	15,690.40	0.73
S&P 500*	4,199.05	-0.22
Dollar (₹)	72.90	0.25
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.44	-0.08
Euro (₹)	88.88	0.14
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,530	339
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	70.99	-0.50
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.997	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.615	0.024

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Services sector moves into contraction zone

Services sector activities slumped into contraction territory for the first time in eight months, amid renewed decline in new work intakes due to the escalation of the pandemic and the reintroduction of restrictions. The seasonally adjusted India Services Business Activity Index fell to 46.4 in May, down from 54.0 in April. In PMI parlance, a print above 50 means expansion while a score below 50 denotes contraction.

Guidelines for ₹12K-cr telecom PLI issued



The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) issued operational guidelines for the Rs 12,195-crore PLI scheme for the telecom sector. The registration process for the scheme will begin on Friday and remain open for 30 days till July 3, the DoT said. The scheme, which will be effective from April 1, 2021, will provide incentives to companies on their investments and incremental sale till 2025-26.

MFs' overseas exposure limit raised to \$1 bn

The Sebi enhanced the overseas investment limit for a mutual fund house to \$1 billion from the existing \$600 million. The overall mutual fund industry limit is capped at \$7 billion. The higher limit would allow MFs to allocate a higher share of their corpus for foreign securities. "Mutual funds can make overseas investments subject to a maximum of \$1 billion per mutual fund, within the overall industry limit of \$7 billion," the Sebi said.

VW drives in Polo automatic at ₹8.51 lakh

Volkswagen introduced the Comfortline variant of the Polo 1.0 TSI with an automatic transmission at a starting price of Rs 8.51 lakh at Delhi showroom. The new model is powered by a BS 6-compliant 1.0-litre turbocharged stratified injection (TSI) engine from the Volkswagen Group. The new Polo variant comes with an auto-climatronic air-conditioning feature, besides a 17.7 cm Blaupunkt music system, exclusive to this trim only.



■ Capa expects traffic to pick up in H2

Airlines stare at \$4.1 bn loss

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JUNE 3

Hit by the second wave, India's airline companies are likely to register a consolidated loss of about \$4.1 billion in FY22, similar to the losses clocked in FY21, provided there is no third wave of the pandemic this year. The companies will require \$5 billion of recapitalisation this financial year to survive.

"We expect that Indian airlines will lose a consolidated \$4.1-billion in FY22, similar to that in FY2021. This will take total losses over two years to around \$8 billion as a result of the two Covid-19 waves," aviation consultancy firm Capa India said in a report. The report finds that the full-service carriers are expected to contribute as much as \$2.1 billion in the total losses this year, while the budget carriers would account for the remaining \$2 billion.

Full-service carrier Air India and no-frills player IndiGo together will account for around \$4.5 billion of the combined \$8 billion of losses in two years.

The projected losses could rise further if necessary recapitalisation comes in the form of debt, as the borrowing costs will have to be included.

Capa estimates that the airline companies will require close to \$5 billion of recapitalisation in FY22 just to survive. Out of this, around \$1.1 billion is in the pipeline in the form of Initial Public Offering,



Qualified Institutional Placement and other financial instruments. If these plans materialise, the incremental requirement could be reduced to \$3.5 billion.

The government had recently expanded Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) to include civil aviation in the scheme. The scheme has already sanctioned Rs 2.54 lakh crore of loans and will be valid up to September end or till the unutilised amount in the Rs 3 lakh crore under the scheme is exhausted.

Capa also expects domestic airline traffic to pick up to 80-95 million during FY22, far higher than 52.5 million traffic recorded in FY21, but well below the 140 million registered during FY20. Capa estimates a moderate recovery in June after the second wave subsides. However, its projections did not take a possible third wave into consideration. "After a massive slump

in April and May, we expect to see a moderate recovery in June as activity returns, with an acceleration in traffic from the second quarter.

"As was the case in the second half of FY2021, we expect to see rising confidence and continued traffic recovery in the second half of this financial year," Capa said.

According to rating and research firm Icra, domestic air traffic nosedived to 19.20 lakh passengers in May from around 57.3 lakh in April, registering a sharp 65-67 per cent month-on-month contraction. Average daily departures were around 900 against 2,000 in April 2021 and average number of passengers per flight in May was 72, against 93 passengers in April 2021.

International passenger traffic stood at around 1.4 lakh in May, a sequential decline of around 96 per cent. The international traffic is projected to be in the range of 16-21 million passengers for the year.

Nifty hits record high as curbs ease

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, JUNE 3

The market gained more than half a per cent on Thursday, buoyed by the sharp decline in fresh Covid cases and several states partially lifting lockdown curbs.

The Nifty-50 closed at new all-time high of 15,690.35, gaining 114.15 points, or 0.73 per cent.

The Sensex gained 382.95 points, or 0.74 per cent, closing at a new high this year at 52,232.43, surpassing the earlier closing high of 52,154.13 on February 15, 2021. The index is now near its all-time high of 52,516.76.

The broader market outperformed with BSE Mid-cap and Small-cap indices gaining 1.04 per cent each.

The market capitalisation of all BSE-listed companies close stood at a new all-time high of Rs 226.51 lakh crore.

Foreign portfolio investors were net buyers of equities worth Rs 1,079.20 while domestic institutions booked profit worth Rs 278.97 crore.

As several states have started lifting restrictions with the second wave receding, consumer focused sectors gained on Thursday.

BSE Consumer Durable index topped sectoral gainers list with a 4.44 per cent gain. The other sectors that gained included BSE Realty (3.95 per cent), Capital Goods (1.46 per cent), Oil Gas (1.25 per cent) and Bankex (0.90 per cent).

Saudi raises oil prices for Asia customers as market tightens

JAVIER BLAS, SALMA EL WARDANY & ANTHONY DI PAOLA JUNE 3

Saudi Arabia increased oil prices for customers in its main market of Asia by more than expected after crude surged above \$70 a barrel and the Opec forecast that global demand would heavily outstrip supply over the rest of the year.

State energy firm Saudi Aramco hiked its key Arab Light grade for July shipments to Asia by 20 cents to \$1.90 a barrel above a benchmark. Analysts surveyed by Bloomberg were expecting a raise of just 10 cents.

The kingdom sends more than 60 per cent of its exports to Asia, with China, India, South Korea and Japan, being the biggest buyers. Last month, it shipped 6.1 million barrels a day, according to preliminary data compiled by Bloomberg.



Prices for four of Aramco's five Asian grades were increased, with the only drop coming for heavy crude. All grades for Europe were raised, while those for the US were kept the same as for June.

The move is a reverse of Aramco's cut for Asian customers in June, a decision made in early May as new coronavirus cases hammered fuel demand in India.

The Asian country and others such as Japan and

Malaysia are still struggling to slow the pandemic. Still, the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries this week predicted that oil stockpiles will decline rapidly from August as lockdowns ease across major economies and travel picks up.

The Opec and its partners—a 23-nation grouping led by Saudi Arabia and Russia—stuck to a plan to increase production this month and in July. But they refused to say what their plans were beyond those dates.

Brent crude has climbed 38 per cent in 2021 to a two-year high of about \$71.20 a barrel. It extended gains this week on Opec's new outlook and because nuclear talks between Iran and world powers stalled. Should the sides reach a deal, the US will probably ease sanctions on Tehran's oil exports.

—Bloomberg

Rural net users to beat urban by '25

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JUNE 3

Active internet users in India will touch 900 million in five years, finds a study. By 2025, rural India will have more internet users than urban India.

There are around 622 million active internet users as of 2020 and in five years the number of active users will grow by 45 per cent, as per IAMA Kantar -ICUBE 2020 Report. The report finds that there is a lot of

headroom for growth in rural India and this would help in bridging the urban-rural digital divide.

"By 2025, there would be a greater number of internet users in rural India than in urban India. Given this, the digital ecosystem will need to evolve to address the specific needs of this emerging demography. Vernacular, voice and video will emerge as the gamechangers for the digital ecosystem over the next few years," said

Biswapriya Bhattacharjee, executive vice president, insights division, Kantar.

Though internet penetration in urban areas is higher than rural now, usership in rural areas has been growing at a faster rate on a year-on-year basis. Internet users grew by 4 per cent in urban India reaching 323 million users or 67 per cent of urban population in 2020.

Small towns account for almost two out of five active internet users.

Orchid's 7700% stock surge to face reality check

ASHUTOSH JOSHI JUNE 3

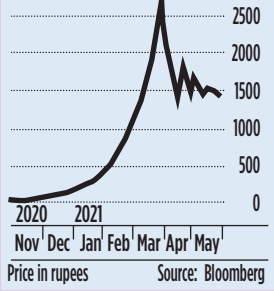
A shortage of shares has helped drive a surge of almost 7,700 per cent in Orchid Pharma Ltd over the past seven months. Now it looks poised to end. New owners have to divest part of their stake of about 98 per cent in the firm, which re-listed in early November after emerging from bankruptcy. That's to comply with a regulation that requires the new owners— in this case Dhanuka Laboratories Ltd—to boost the minimum public float to 10 per cent over the next few months.

Orchid is among a handful of companies to post meteoric gains after exiting bankruptcy proceedings. Such rallies could pose considerable risks for investors, as those firms typically don't have good fundamentals, according to some market watchers.

In a bid to limit such occurrences in future, the

Exponential gains

Orchid Pharma shares are up over 7600% since re-listing despite recent decline



securities regulator in December decided to reduce to 12 months the period such firms have to meet the minimum free-float requirement, down from 18 months earlier.

"It's not really investment, I call it fun and excitement," said Ajay Srivastava, MD of New Delhi-based consultancy Dimensions Consulting Pvt Ltd. While trading such stocks is an "adrenaline rush," the share sale by founders will force the

valuation to likely become more realistic, he said.

Dhanuka won the Orchid stake after a three-year legal tussle. Creditors got 1 per cent in the restructuring, with another 1 per cent going to existing shareholders. Apart from working to boost the public holding, Orchid's board is also evaluating a proposal to merge the unlisted Dhanuka Laboratories with the company, according to an earnings statement released on May 22.

With about 99 per cent locked in with founders and lenders, barely about 2,000 Orchid shares have been traded on an average per day. But those precious few had, until recently, always found willing investors— with the stock rising to the daily limit about 100 times since November.

Orchid's shares ended at Rs 1,411.70 on Thursday. They had surged to as high as Rs 2,680 in early April from Rs 18 on Nov. 3.

—Bloomberg

PRICEY | GROCERY

Very little room for any production shock: FAO economist

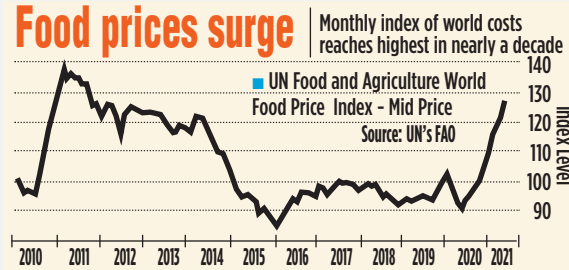
Global food prices surge to near decade high

MEGAN DURISIN JUNE 3

Global food prices extended their rally to the highest in almost a decade, heightening concerns over bulging grocery bills as economies struggle to exit the Covid-19 crisis.

A United Nations gauge of world food costs climbed for a 12th straight month in May, its longest stretch in a decade. The continued advance risks accelerating broader inflation, complicating central banks efforts to provide more stimulus.

Drought in key Brazilian growing regions is crippling crops from corn to coffee, and vegetable oil production growth has slowed in Southeast Asia. That's boosting costs for livestock producers and



risks further straining global grain stockpiles that have been depleted by soaring Chinese demand. The surge has stirred memories of 2008 and 2011, when price spikes led to food riots in more than 30 nations.

"We have very little room for any production shock. We have very little room for any unexpected surge in demand in any country," Abdolreza Abbassian,

senior economist at the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization, said by phone. "Any of those things could push prices up further than they are now, and then we could start getting worried."

The prolonged gains across the staple commodities are trickling through to store shelves, with countries from Kenya to Mexico reporting higher food costs. The pain

could be particularly pronounced in some of the poorest import-dependent nations, which have limited purchasing power and social safety nets.

The UN's index is trending at its highest since September 2011, with last month's gain of 4.8 per cent being the biggest in more than 10 years. All five components of the index rose during the month, with the advance

Across the board	All food categories tracked by FAO climbed in past 12 months
Overall food index (%)	40
Cereals	37
Vegetable oil	124
Dairy	28
Meat	10
Sugar	57

led by pricier vegetable oils, grain and sugar.

The world's hunger problem has already reached its worst in years as the pandemic exacerbates food inequalities, compounding extreme weather and political conflicts.

There were other elements that exacerbated skyrocketing food costs a decade ago. For example, oil prices neared \$150 a barrel—double current levels—and there was a wave of trade restrictions by major grain shippers. Costs for rice, one of the world's food staples, have remained relatively subdued during the current agricultural price surge.

Gains in the past year have been fuelled by China's "unpredictably huge" purchases of foreign grain.

STATES TOLD TO ISSUE RATION CARDS TO POOR

New Delhi, June 3: The Centre has issued an advisory to all states and UTs to identify and issue ration cards to the most vulnerable and economically weaker sections to ensure their coverage under the National Food Security Act (NFSA).

Addressing a virtual press conference, food secretary Sudhanshu Pandey said states and Union territories have scope to add coverage of 1.97 crore under the NFSA. Fourteen states have completed 100 per cent coverage quota.

On Wednesday, the food ministry has issued an advisory to all states and UTs to launch a special drive to reach out to vulnerable and weakest sections of the society, such as street dwellers, rag pickers, hawkers and rickshaw pullers.

—PTI

SHORT TAKES

Hockey team all set for Olympics

Jaipur: Seasoned striker Yuvraj Walmiki has a “gut feeling” that the Indian men’s hockey team will win a medal if the Tokyo Olympics goes ahead as per schedule. Among other things, the 31-year-old Walmiki, spoke about the national team’s prospects in Tokyo, his life’s struggles and how they helped him become a better human being on the latest episode of ‘SportTiger Talks’.

“One thing I will definitely say is that Indian hockey right now is doing wonderfully well under (leadership of) (PR) Sreejesh and Manpreet (Singh),” Walmiki said.

“I still have this gut feeling... In case, Tokyo Olympics takes place, the Indian hockey team will bag a medal this time. I have this strong belief in my heart,” he added. — *PTI*

India hoopster in US varsity side

New Delhi: NBA Academy India graduate Lalnehpuia Chhakchhuak has enrolled at North Park University in Chicago, Illinois, becoming the sixth male student-athlete from the academy to commit to a high school or college basketball programme in the US. Chhakchhuak first participated in the 2017-18 Reliance Foundation Jr. NBA program before joining NBA Academy India in 2018 as a part of the academy’s second class of student-athletes identified through the ACG-NBA Jump program. The 6-1 guard represented NBA Academy India at the 2018 and 2019 NBA Academy Games in Australia and the US, respectively, as well as the Poma Nazarene Team Camp in San Diego in 2019. — *PTI*

Vidit qualifies for chess World Cup

Chennai: India No.3 Vidit Gujrathi has qualified for the FIDE chess World Cup 2021, to be held in Sochi, Russia from July 10 on the basis of his rating. With this, Grandmaster Gujrathi becomes the fourth Indian man to qualify for the upcoming World Cup, a press release said on Thursday. The Nashik-based player joins Grandmasters P. Harikrishna, Aravindh Chidambaram and P. N. Anand as the Indian men to have qualified for the World Cup. Meanwhile, Koneru Humpy, D. Harika, Bhakti Kulkarni, R. Vaishali and Padmini Rout have qualified for the women’s event at the World Cup. This will be Gujrathi’s third World Cup appearance, having previously featured in 2017 and 2019. — *PTI*

Indian teams arrive in England

London: The Indian men’s cricket team arrived here on Thursday for the upcoming World Test Championship final against New Zealand and the subsequent Test series versus hosts England. The men’s team was accompanied by the women’s side which is touring England for three ODIs and as many T20s besides the one-off Test, starting in Bristol on June 16. “Touchdown,” top-order batsman K. L. Rahul tweeted with a picture of the chartered flight in the background, confirming their safe arrival in London. Both the teams will now travel to Southampton, where they will complete their mandatory quarantine. — *PTI*

76ers, Hawks in NBA playoffs

Los Angeles: The Philadelphia 76ers and Atlanta Hawks advanced to an Eastern Conference semifinal showdown on Wednesday, wrapping up emphatic series victories over the Washington Wizards and New York Knicks. Seth Curry’s 30-point display helped the Sixers shrug off the injury absence of Joel Embiid as the top seeds completed a 4-1 playoff series win with a 129-112 defeat of the Wizards in Philadelphia. In New York, the fifth-seeded Hawks brought the Knicks’ season to an end with a 103-89 victory at Madison Square Garden to clinch the best-of-seven series 4-1 after a bruising contest. — *AFP*

Live on TV

CRICKET
England vs New Zealand: First Test, Day 3 from 3.30 pm on Sony Six

FOOTBALL
Euro Pre-Tournament Friendlies: Italy vs Czech Republic from 12.15 am (Saturday) on Sony Ten 2

SERENA ON SONG

Federer blows hot, Djokovic cool as stars advance in France

Paris, June 3: Serena Williams survived a French Open scare to extend her latest bid for an elusive 24th Grand Slam singles title with a three-set victory over Mihaela Buzarnescu on Wednesday, while men’s fifth seed Stefanos Tsitsipas and World No.2 Daniil Medvedev also reached the third round.

The 39-year-old Williams, who has been one short of Margaret Court’s all-time record of most major trophies since 2017, brushed off a second-set blip to win 6-3, 5-7, 6-1.

Meanwhile, Roger Federer became entangled in a rare running dispute with a chair umpire on Thursday before safely securing his place in the Last 32.

Federer saw off Marin Cilic for the 10th time in 11 meetings, winning 6-2, 2-6, 7-6 (7/4), 6-2 but only after a second set bust-up with umpire Emmanuel Joseph.

The 20-time Grand Slam title winner was handed a time violation at 1-3 down in the for taking too long between points. “I don’t even dare to go my towel anymore,” he said to Joseph.

Federer, the oldest man in the draw at 39, lost his cool and the set before recovering to defeat former world number three Cilic.

World number one Novak Djokovic continued his bid for a 19th Grand Slam title with a straight-sets win over Uruguay’s Pablo Cuevas to reach the third round. The 34-year-old, who is looking to become the first man in more than 50 years to win all four Slams multiple times, won 6-3, 6-2, 6-4 on Court Suzanne Lenglen.

Tsitsipas put in a strong display to dispose of Spaniard Pedro Martinez



Serena Williams of the United States serves to Romania’s Mihaela Buzarnescu during their second round match of the French Open tennis tournament at Roland Garros in Paris, France, on Wednesday.

6-3, 6-4, 6-3. The Greek next faces American John Isner.

Medvedev bounced back from losing the first set to American Tommy Paul in style by romping to a 3-6, 6-1, 6-4, 6-3 victory.

INJURED BARTY IS OUT

Top seed Ashleigh Barty retired injured midway through the second set of her French Open second-round match against Poland’s Magda Linette on Thursday. She left the court for medical treat-

ment after losing the first set 6-1. She had struggled with a hip problem during her first-round win and called it quits at 2-2 in the second set on Court Philippe Chatrier.

MEN’S PAIR COVID +VE

French Open organisers say that both members of a men’s doubles team have tested positive for Covid-19 and have been dropped from the tournament.

The players were placed in quarantine. The tournament did not identify

them. The French tennis federation said these were the first two positives from the 2,446 Coronavirus tests that have been administered on players and their entourages since the start of qualifying rounds on May 24. — *Agencies*

OTHER RESULTS

Men’s second round: Jannik Sinner (ITA x18) bt Gianluca Mager (ITA) 6-1, 7-5, 3-6, 6-3; Mikael Ymer (SWE) bt Gael Monfils (FRA x14) 6-0, 2-6, 6-4, 6-3; Diego Schwartzman (ARG x10) bt Aljaz Bedene (SLO) 6-4, 6-2, 6-4; Philipp Kohlschreiber

(GER) bt Aslan Karatsev (RUS x24) 6-3, 7-6 (7/4), 4-6, 6-1.

Women’s second round: Magda Linette (Poland) bt Ashleigh Barty (Australia x1) 6-1, 2-2 — retired; Ons Jabeur (Tunisia x25) bt Astra Sharma (Australia) 6-2, 6-4; Sloane Stephens (USA) bt Karolina Pliskova (CZE x9) 7-5, 6-1; Karolina Muchova (CZE x18) bt Varvara Lepchenko (USA) 6-3, 6-4; Elina Svitolina (UKR x5) bt Ann Li (USA) 6-0, 6-4; Sofia Kenin (USA x4) bt Hailey Baptiste (USA) 7-5, 6-3; Jessica Pegula (USA x28) bt Tereza Martincova (CZE) 6-3, 6-3; Maria Sakkari (GRE x17) bt Jasmine Paolini (ITA) 6-2, 6-3.

Srini’s daughter in conflict of interest

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 3

Tamil Nadu Cricket Association president Rupa Gurunath has been found guilty of conflict of interest. The BCCI’s Ethics Officer Justice D. K. Jain, in his order on Tuesday, upheld a complaint made by Sanjeev Gupta. Rupa is the daughter of former BCCI chief N. Srinivasan.

Gupta, a former life member of the Madhya Pradesh Cricket Association, had alleged that Rupa was occupying more than one position,

contrary to the Board rules. Rupa is the president of TNCA and also a whole-time director of India Cements Limited, the company which owns Chennai Super Kings Cricket Ltd (CSKCL).

According to Gupta, all seven directors of CSKCL sit as directors on the subsidiary companies of India Cements, thus “giving rise to an instance of conflict” against Rupa.

Justice Jain, in his order, said Rupa “has an indirect interest (if not direct) in CSKCL which has entered into a contract with BCCI.”



Rupa Gurunath

“All these facts go on to show that a circuitous web of entities, including CSKCL has been created under the umbrella of

ICL. The management and governance of all such entities directly or indirectly lies in the hands of the board of ICL, notwithstanding the defence pleaded that ICL has no stake in CSKCL.

“In the given factual scenario, it can be safely inferred that the respondent (Rupa), in her capacity as the whole time director and promoter of ICL, has close associations with the trustees of IC Shareholders Trust and the Directors of CSKCL, which has a franchise agreement with the BCCI. This is one of the recog-

nised forms of conflict of interest,” the order said.

“ICL, CSKCL, IC Shareholders Trust, subsidiary companies of ICL, IC Capital, all share the same official address and ICL has been one of the sponsors of CSKCL, franchisee, Chennai Super Kings,” the order added.

The Ethics Officer also said the BCCI shall requisite steps in accordance with law to ensure due compliance. Thus, Rupa has to relinquish one of the posts. TNCA sources, however, said Rupa is likely to appeal against the order in a court of law.

Conway cracks double on debut
Devon seventh in Test history to score 200 in first knock

London, June 3: New Zealand opener Devon Conway made exactly 200 on Test debut before England slumped to 25-2 on the second day of the series opener at Lord’s on Thursday.

Conway was last man out in a first-innings total of 378 on the second day of this two-match series.

The South Africa-born left-hander was in sight of becoming the very first batsman in the 144-year history of Test cricket to carry their bat — bat throughout the entire innings — in their first knock in the format when he was run out to end a stay of more than nine-and-a-half hours.

Nevertheless, it needed a review of a close call before it was confirmed that England captain Joe Root had taken the bails off in time.

Even so, Conway was only the seventh batsman to make a double hundred on Test debut.

Conway has also broken former India captain Sourav Ganguly’s 25-year-old record of registering the highest Test score on debut at Lord’s when he went past the stylish southpaw’s 131.

He faced 347 balls, with 22 fouls and went to 200 in style when he hooked fast bowler Mark Wood for the only six of his innings.

New Zealand No. 11 Neil



New Zealand’s Devon Conway celebrates after reaching his double century during the second day of the first Test against England at Lords Cricket Ground in London on Thursday.

— *AFP*

Wagner, also born in South Africa, made 25 not out off 21 balls that included a superb straight six off Stuart Broad during an entertaining last-wicket stand

of 40. Sussex paceman Ollie Robinson, like Conway making his Test debut, led England’s attack with four wickets for 75 runs in 28 overs.

But New Zealand then

DOUBLE CENTURIANS
ON TEST DEBUT

287 — Tip Foster (England) vs Australia in Sydney, 1903-04

222* — Jacques Rudolph (South Africa) vs Bangladesh at Chattogram, 2002-03

214 — Lawrence Rowe (West Indies) vs New Zealand at Kingston, 1971-72

214 — Mathew Sinclair (New Zealand) vs West Indies at Wellington, 1999-00

210* — Kyle Mayers (West Indies) vs Bangladesh at Chattogram, 2020-21

201* — Brendon Kuruppu (Sri Lanka) vs New Zealand in Colombo, 1986-87

200 — Devon Conway (New Zealand) vs England at Lord’s, London, 2021

— *S. PERVEZ KAISER*

struck twice with the ball themselves.

Kyle Jamieson had Dom Sibley lbw for a duck with a ball that straightened to hit the opener on the back pad, the decision upheld on ‘umpire’s call’ after a review. But there was no room for doubt when Zak Crawley was caught behind off Tim Southee for two.

BRIEF SCORES

Day 2, at Tea: New Zealand 378 in 122.4 overs (Devon Conway 200; Ollie Robinson 4/75) vs England 25/2 in 10 overs.

10,000 Olympic volunteers quit

Tokyo, June 3: The Tokyo Olympics chief said the Games would only be cancelled in extreme circumstances on Thursday as organisers revealed 10,000 volunteers had quit over Coronavirus fears, a sexism row and scheduling problems.

Exactly 50 days before the opening ceremony, Tokyo 2020 president Seiko Hashimoto said the show would go on unless the pandemic stops a majority of teams from travelling.

“If various countries around the world experience very serious situations, and delegations from most countries can’t come, then we wouldn’t be able to hold it,” she told the *Nikkan Sports* daily.

“But conversely, unless such a situation emerges, the Games will not be cancelled,” she added.

The 2020 Games remain beset by doubts and low public support as Japan battles a fourth Coronavirus wave with much of the country, including Tokyo, under a state of emergency.

Late on Wednesday, Tokyo 2020 CEO Toshio Muto said around 10,000 of the 80,000 volunteers — vital to the smooth running of the Games — had quit, largely over coronavirus concerns.

Others dropped out after the Games were postponed, or in protest at sexist remarks made by Hashimoto’s predecessor

If various countries around the world experience very serious situations, and delegations from most countries can’t come, then we wouldn’t be able to hold it. But conversely, unless such a situation emerges, the Games will not be cancelled.

— **SEIKO HASHIMOTO**
Tokyo 2020 president

who was forced to resign, Muto told Japanese media. However, Muto said the reduction in volunteers would not affect the Games because the event has been scaled back, so fewer people are needed.

Overseas fans have already been barred, and a decision on whether to allow domestic spectators is expected after the state of emergency in Tokyo ends on June 20.

The number of overseas officials and participants has been cut by about half, to around 78,000, with calls for further reductions.

Organisers will unveil details of the medal ceremonies later on Thursday — the latest attempt to generate positive momentum.

Polls show 80 per cent of Japanese oppose hosting the Games this year. But surveys among the population of Tokyo have found a more even split between those in favour and against. — *AFP*



Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju (centre) poses with athletes after unveiling India’s kit for the Tokyo Olympics, in New Delhi on Thursday.

— *D. KAMRAJ*

INDIA’S OLYMPIC SQUAD
LIKELY TO BE 190-STRONG

New Delhi, June 3: The Indian contingent for the upcoming Tokyo Olympics is expected to be around 190, including over 100 athletes, IOA president Narinder Batra said on Thursday as Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju unveiled the official kits for the country’s participants.

So far, 100 athletes have qualified for the Tokyo Games, including 56 men and 44 women. The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) expects another 25 to 35 to make the cut for the Games, which open on July 23.

Indian athletes from 12 sports — badminton, boxing, hockey, wrestling, sailing, athletics, archery, equestrian, fencing, rowing, shooting and table tennis — have so far qualified for the Tokyo Olympics.

“We are estimating to touch 125 to 135 (qualified athletes) by the next two to three weeks when the qualification process is over,” Batra said.

“This means the Indian contingent, including officials and support staff, is likely to be around 190,” he added. The number of officials cannot be more than one-third of the athlete group as per the Sports Ministry rules. The ministry can, however, allow additional officials at no cost to the government. — *PTI*

Mbappe stars as France win big

Nice (France), June 3: Karim Benzema said he was happy with his performance despite a missed penalty as he made his first France appearance in almost six years in Wednesday’s 3-0 Euro 2020 friendly win over Wales in Nice.

Benzema had been left out of Didier Deschamps’ squad since October 2015 due to his alleged role in a blackmail plot.

Kylian Mbappe, Antoine Griezmann and Ousmane Dembele were on the score-sheet for the World Cup winners against the Euro 2016 semifinalists, who had Neco Williams sent off for handling the ball in his area. Meanwhile, Trent

Alexander-Arnold gave Gareth Southgate a Euro 2020 injury scare as Bukayo Saka scored his first goal for England in Wednesday’s 1-0 friendly win against Austria.

In another match, Memphis Depay scored twice to salvage a 2-2 draw for the Netherlands in a pre-Euro 2020 friendly on Wednesday against a Scotland side missing seven players following midfielder John Fleck’s positive Covid-19 test.

Elsewhere, Mats Hummels and Thomas Mueller made their return to international football after a two-year exile as Germany were held to a 1-1 draw. — *AFP*