



SCHOOLGIRL'S RAPE AND MURDER

Woodcutter sentenced to life-long jail term in Shimla



SHIMLA

A 28-year-old man was on Friday sentenced to life imprisonment till death in the infamous Gudiya case involving the rape and murder of a schoolgirl four years ago. A Shimla court also imposed a penalty of Rs 10,000 on convict Anil Kumar alias Nillu, a woodcutter. Special Judge Rajeev Bhardwaj pronounced the order in the presence of the convict. The court had convicted Anil earlier on April 28 in the case of the rape and murder of a 16-year-

old schoolgirl. The heinous crime had triggered an outrage all over Himachal Pradesh. The victim was raped and killed in a forested area in Shimla's Kotkhai while she was on her way home from school on July 4, 2017. The case saw dramatic twists, including the custodial death of a man earlier suspected of having committed the crime and the arrest of a senior police officer in this connection. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) then took charge of the case and arrested Anil Kumar three years ago.

Special Judge Bhardwaj on April 28 held Anil Kumar guilty under the Indian Penal Code sections related to rape and murder, as well as the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. The judge said 12 of the 14 crucial points of evidence presented by the CBI went against the convict. The most important of them was the matching of his DNA with samples found at the crime spot, he said. During hearing over video conference on April 28, the judge ruled that the crime was commit-

ted on the spur of the moment when Anil Kumar came across the girl as she walked home through the forested area. Anil Kumar, who then attended the hearing from a prison in Shimla, pleaded innocence. The girl's body was found in the forest two days after she went missing. A post-mortem report then indicated rape and murder. Days later, the state police set up a special investigation team headed by Inspector General Z Zahur Zaidi. Police arrested six men on July 13. One of them, Suraj, died in po-

lice custody on July 19. Amid public outrage, the Himachal Pradesh High Court handed over the case to the CBI, which arrested nine policemen including the IGP for the custodial death. The proceedings against the five men arrested along with Suraj were dropped for lack of evidence. The custodial death case against the police officers was later transferred to Chandigarh, where it is currently being heard. Anil Kumar was arrested on the basis of DNA evidence in April, 2018

Youth arrested for raping minor girl in UP
BALLIA

A youth was arrested for allegedly raping a 10-year-old girl in a village in Ballia district, police said on Friday. Bablu Rajbhar (22) raped his neighbour on Wednesday in Maniyar police station area, Station House Officer Shailesh Singh said. On the basis of the complaint filed by the victim's mother, a case was registered against the accused and he was arrested, Singh said. The girl has been sent to the district hospital for medical examination, he added.

VIRAL VIDEO OF ASSAULT ON AN ELDERLY MAN

UP police send notice to Twitter

LUCKNOW

THERE'S more trouble for Twitter. The Uttar Pradesh Police has sent a legal notice to the Managing Director of Twitter India Manish Maheshwari regarding the viral video of the assault on an elderly man in Loni. The MD has been asked to record his statement after the microblogging site "let the anti-social messages go viral". According to the legal notice, the managing director has been asked to come to the Police Station Loni Border and record the statement over the matter within seven days. "Some people used their Twitter handle as a tool to spread ha-



tred in the society and Twitter Communication India and Twitter Inc did not take any action against it. They let the anti-social messages go viral," the notice

sent to the managing director read. This comes after when Twitter has lost its status as an intermediary platform in India as it does

not comply with new IT rules. According to the sources, Twitter is the only social media platform among the mainstream that has not adhered to the new laws. The implication of this development is that if there is any charge against Twitter for alleged unlawful content it would be treated as a publisher - not an intermediary - and be liable for punishment under any law, including IT Act, as also the penal laws of the country, sources stated. Earlier, a senior-level team of Delhi Police's Special Cell questioned the Twitter India managing director Manish Maheshwari at Bengaluru over the 'Congress toolkit case' matter on May 31.



Villagers being moved to safety after Kali river swells

PITHORAGARH

OFFICIALS were asked on Friday to move the residents of the villages near the banks of the Kali river to safe locations after its waters almost touched the danger mark in this Uttarakhand district. The river is flowing at 889.6 metres while the danger mark is at 890 metres, Pithoragarh District Magistrate (DM) Anand Swaroop said. An alert has been sounded from Dharchula to Jhoolaghat and officials have been asked to move the residents of the nearby villages to

safety, preferably to shelters run by the district administration, he added. The sub-divisional magistrates (SDMs) of Dharchula, Didihat and Pithoragarh have been put on the job, the DM said. "Besides instructing the sub-divisional administration, we have also informed all the security agencies concerned, including the BRO and the PWD, to remain alert in case of an emergency," he added. Transportation through the bridges on the river has temporarily been suspended for safety reasons, the DM said.

U'khand cop who fined MLA for violating lockdown transferred

DEHRADUN

A police sub-inspector posted in Uttarakhand's Mussoorie was transferred days after he fined an MLA for allegedly violating COVID-19 guidelines, fuelling allegations that he was pe-

nalised for acting against a sitting legislator. Last Sunday, a video clip surfaced on social media in which Roorkee MLA Pradeep Batra was seen throwing money at a police sub-inspector who had fined him and walking away.

The MLA was stopped for not wearing a mask properly and roaming around with his family despite the lockdown enforced in Mussoorie. The sub-inspector, Neerak Kathait, was on Thursday transferred to Kalsi, around 40 km from Dehradun,

Mussoorie Circle Officer Narendra Pant said. The sub-inspector can be heard in the video reprimanding the MLA, whom he apparently did not recognise, for violating COVID-19 guidelines. He is also heard saying that Batra will have to pay a fine

of Rs 500. Angered by this, the MLA is next seen hurling the money at the officer. As the news of the officer's transfer spread, local people rallied behind him in support, saying he was being penalised for doing his duty.

'Asaram's plea for shifting to ayurvedic centre infructuous'



NEW DELHI

THE Rajasthan government on Friday told the Supreme Court that self-styled godman Asaram Bapu, serving a life term in two rape cases, has been hospitalised and is in intensive care unit. A bench of Justices Indira Banerjee and M R Shah was informed by senior advocate Manish Singhvi, appearing for Rajasthan, that Asaram's plea for transferring him to an ayurvedic centre near Haridwar in Uttarakhand has become infructuous as now he cannot be shifted due to his hospitalisation. Senior advocate Siddharth Luthra, appearing for Asaram, said his client has been admitted to the hospital and the court should call for the medical

records. "We don't know what his ailments are. This court should order for the calling of his medical records from the state as the hospital authorities will not give the details to them," Luthra said. The bench said however that it was adjourning the matter till reopening of the court after the summer vacation. On June 8, the state government had told the top court that Asaram is fit and stable but trying to change the venue of his custody on the pretext of medical treatment. The state government had made this submission to the apex court in its reply to Asaram's fresh plea, seeking suspension of his sentence and interim bail to undergo treatment for various ailments at an ayurvedic centre near Haridwar in Uttarakhand. Asaram is serving varying jail terms including life sentences in two sexual assault cases. "The accused/petitioner with ulterior motives has been attempting to change the venue of his custody, under the guise of medical treatment. Such change, with due respect, is an abuse of the process of law," the state government had said in its affidavit. "The accused is also deliberately delaying the pending trial at Gandhi Nagar as well as Jodhpur, raising such pleas with mala fides whereas he is stable and fit," it had said.

U'khand CM says fake Covid testing scam not from his term

DEHRADUN

UTTARAKHAND Chief Minister Tirath Singh Rawat has said the fake Covid testing scam during the Kumbh Mela in Haridwar dates back to before his term, while his predecessor Trivendra Singh Rawat demanded a judicial probe into it. Both remarks came on Thursday. The decision to rope in private firms to conduct Covid tests during the Kumbh Mela was taken before he took over as Chief Minister, Tirath Singh Rawat said. "The scam is old. I took over in March. However, a probe has already been ordered into it and stern action will be taken against those involved," he told reporters here on the sidelines of a programme on Thursday. Tirath Singh Rawat became Chief Minister of the state on March 10 while the Kumbh Mela was held from April 1 to April 30. However, he expressed the state government's resolve to bring out the truth and punish the guilty. Meanwhile, his predecessor Trivendra Singh Rawat has demanded an im-



partial probe into the scam by a high court judge, terming the scam serious in nature. The Uttarakhand government on Thursday had lodged a case against a company and two private labs for fudging coronavirus test re-

ports during the Kumbh Mela in April. The firm, Max Corporate Service, Nalwa Laboratories Private Limited of Hisar and Delhi-based Dr Lalchandani Lab have been accused of issuing fake negative test reports.

9 stranded UP labourers reach home after help from Ladakh MP

BAHRAICH

NINE labourers from Uttar Pradesh's Bahraich district, stranded in Ladakh during the second wave of Covid, have reached their homes thanks to the help extended by social worker Jang Hindustani and Ladakh MP Jamyang Tsering Namgyal. They were stranded after Covid was detected among the labourers who were involved in the ongoing work at the new terminal of Kushok Bakula Rimpochee Airport in Leh. "We were working as carpenters and had gone there through a contractor," one of the labourers, Upendra, who returned home on Thursday told mediapersons. Work was going on in full swing but in May, a Covid test was conducted at the site during which 57 of the 300 labourers working there tested positive, he informed and added that three of



the nine labourers who returned had also tested Covid positive. The area was declared a containment zone and we lived in accommodation provided by the company in which social distancing could not be maintained, he said. Things started improving when all the labourers tested Covid negative on June 5, so

we asked the contractor to send us home, Upendra said. He alleged that the contractor had not made a full payment to them and refused to give more. "Whatever little we had saved, soon dried up and our relatives back home arranged money for air tickets for June 9," he said. But, we were not allowed to move out on the pre-

text of another Covid test so we lost the amount spent on the tickets, Upendra said. Then we contacted a social worker from Bahraich, Jang Hindustani, who helped us, he said. Hindustani told PTI that after getting in touch with the labourers, he posted their plight on social media and locals started sending money in their accounts. "I too contributed from my side," he said. We also contacted Ladakh MP Jamyang Tsering Namgyal and he immediately helped us, Hindustani said, adding that the MP directed the officials to make arrangements to send back those workers who wanted to go. Air tickets were arranged with the money left with the labourers and from what was contributed by the people. The MP helped in meeting the shortfall in the funds and nine labourers were sent to Delhi from where they reached home by bus.

4 held by ACB for 'taking money in lieu of recruitment'

JAIPUR

FOUR persons have been arrested by Rajasthan's Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) for allegedly taking lakhs of rupees from candidates in lieu of recruitment in the Centre-run ESIC Medical College and Hospital in Alwar. Three of the arrested accused are from a Gujarat-based company that had the contract for the recruitment of nursing staff and others in the hospital. An amount of over Rs 20 lakh was also seized from the possession of the accused, who were held late on Thursday night from Alwar, Ajmer and Jodhpur, Director General (DG), ACB B L Soni said on Friday. The company, MJ Solanki, based in Gujarat's Rajkot, has the contract for the recruitment of nursing and other staff in the medical college and hospital. Instead of an open recruitment, the company officials were taking



money from the candidates in lieu of appointments to the posts of nursing staff, the ACB alleged. Following a tip-off, the ACB started collecting information about the matter and arrested the four persons, including the partner of the firm, Manjal Patel. Patel was caught with cash amounting to Rs 15.5 lakh in Ajmer, while the company super-

visor, Kanaram Chaudhary, and field in-charge Bharat Poonia were held in Alwar with Rs 5 lakh. An employee of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Jodhpur, Mahipal, was also arrested, the DG said. He said the role of others involved in the recruitment process is also being examined.

Protecting the ‘rights’ of Nature

THE discovery of the largest onshore deposit in sub-Saharan has transformed Uganda into one of the most sought after and contentious oil frontiers. However, the Ugandan government adopted groundbreaking environmental law formally recognising the rights of nature in the same ways that human rights are recognised. In 2019, as the scale of the oil development project took shape, the government made a paradoxical move: It adopted an environmental law that could protect the fragile habitat in which the oil project is centred. Both Uganda and Tanzania which have entered into an agreement with oil giants are now fighting to impose the rights of nature on their agreements.

The agreements may not be fully scrapped, but those exploring the oil now have to follow the law of the land to a great extent now and help preserve

nature. The law formally recognises the rights of nature in the same ways that human rights are recognised and allows nature to be named as an injured party in litigation over “any infringement” of those rights. By treating forests, lakes, and other ecosystems as living beings and enshrining nature’s right “to exist, persist, maintain, and regenerate,” Uganda joined a growing global movement to recognize the value of the natural world as an equal party rather than a resource to be exploited - and became the first African nation to do so.

At least 14 countries have passed measures protecting rights of nature since 2008, when Ecuador added rights-based protections to its constitution. The natural places have “rights” to sue; guardianship bodies are appointed in these nations to serve as the ecosystem’s human face during consultations and court hearings. This is a dra-

matic new framework that gives nature a voice. It is a new DNA for the legal system.

Some countries have granted personhood to unique and venerated places, including Colombia’s Atrato River and New Zealand’s Whanganui River, worshipped by the Indigenous Maori people. In Australia this spring, the local council in Blue Mountains, a town close to Sydney, became that country’s first to embed the rights-of-nature concept into its operations. And in May, a rights-of-nature lawsuit was filed in Orange County, Florida, on behalf of several waterways under the county’s “rights of nature” law that voters approved last November.

The suit argues that multiple streams and wetlands are at risk for destruction by a proposed 1,900-acre housing development. The oil fields are being developed on the ancestral lands

of the Bagungu people, a farming and fishing community in western Uganda’s rural Bulisa district on the shores of Lake Albert. Multiple sacred natural sites are scattered across the region and the community has watched the building of the oil project with growing unease.

The oil extracted from the UNESCO wetlands will then be pumped 900 miles through the world’s longest heated pipeline to the Indian Ocean port city of Tanga, in Tanzania. The pipeline crosses critical wildlife habitats; the port is surrounded by mangroves and coral reefs. International observers estimate the project will displace thousands of farmers. The first oil export is planned for 2025. While rights of nature laws appear cutting edge, they are rooted in ancient, indigenous thought. Let us hope the African example shows the way out for the world. At least a beginning has been made in course correction despite the law being ‘nunc pro tunc’ - now for then move.



Has examination system failed the education system?

SACHIN GUPTA

DO not mistake the subject statement as a mere exaggeration to just call for attention. Over the years, the purpose of Education is being lost to the process of Examination. Let us discuss the two separately. Education is the process of facilitating learning, or the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, morals, beliefs, and habits. If the above were to be true, then we all should be very well aware as to what are the skills, values, morals, beliefs, habits and knowledge that a student is likely to possess after a specific number of years of education. What are the deliverables that the present education system is promising to our children? What are the short term and long term education objectives that have been determined? What can we expect from the educated after a specific number of years?

With loads of information and data, children today have been made to feel as if they are totally in the unknown and that they need to learn from the text books which are the gospels of truth and knowledge. Without going into how the syllabus has been structured to meet the larger objective, children burn the midnight oil to master the information. Some score 100 percent and some 40 percent. Without going into how the 40 percent was accepted as the passing mark, both the students with 40 percent and 100 percent pass out the system and are declared successful. The student who scores 100 percent develops the attitude that he/she knows it all and that the one with 40 percent feels that if he/she were to master the books, it would give him/her the taste of eternal knowledge.

The point in question here is what should be the goal of education? Whether the present day education system is achieving that goal? What is the set of specific and broad goals that our children should acquire after a long 14-15 years of school education? Are we even talking about them or is it just the passing certificate we are all interested in? Has the end become more important than the process?

Without going into the ‘correlation’ of the education goals with the subjects and syllabus being covered in schools; even for a moment if we say all is well; why does the system needs to send hundreds of changes / additional circulars to schools on newer practices / commemoration of days / activities / etc. almost on regular basis? Even it being so, we may like to conclude that the system is ever evolving, ever expanding, ever developing. So isn’t the process standardised to not achieve the goal which is supposedly earmarked in the first place, that we need to keep adding newer activities every week / fortnight as additional curriculum / activity.

Also, why doesn’t the system also delete some activities / material / workload which may become redundant and due to which there is a need felt to add more activities over the old. It is anybody’s guess that no School would be able to complete the set of stipulated exercises / activities / work as enshrined in the system’s requirement. So is this a calculated way of putting the schools on back foot to always feel left behind and always wanting soft handling?

Where are the parents in the process? They are the most important stake-holders who need to be taken alongside. Do the parents even know about the teaching objectives or what they can expect their children to be after they pass out class 12? Or is it too mechanical that everything that goes in the system comes out and further goes in and then again comes out and on and on. What is the accountability of the system? The state of affairs in today’s society speaks volumes of where the system is heading. With School toppers languishing in jails, being unemployed, most disillusioned, with no morals, values, beliefs, habits etc.; It is high time we have a re-look at the education system of today.

Now coming to the examination aspect of today’s education system; it can be anything except being perfect. The focus of all school children, teachers, and parents is on examination. Examinations are not adjusted on completion of education but education is adjusted seeing the examination timelines. Examination process is being taken care of by people who seldom teach in classrooms. The examination system has become a kind of test in itself. It has become a speed test, power test, alongwith appropriate language usage and ability to understand the question in the intended direction in which the question paper setter is seeking the answer.

Who knows how the two to three hour question paper on a particular date / place is able to test the knowledge, skills, abilities etc of a child? The examination’s validity, reliability and standardisation needs a revisit for determining the achievement of the goals of education. But the larger question is that even if all these statistical properties were present; how can the system for its own suitability and in times like the present pandemic alter the duration of the examination and still deem it to be standardised / valid / reliable?

Have examinations become a toy in the hands of the system to use it the way it likes, just because no one questions it? Are we losing crucial time for education for examinations? Is education being lost to examination? Examination reforms have always been advocated in this country, but nothing seems to be happening on the ground. We were not able to implement the last NPE in 34 years. Now the country has another NPE 2021. Hopefully, the new music beats are melodious to the ears, but the question is how and when?

The quest that mankind is behind, the pandemic that we are in today; is all a result of the faulty education system. We need to start again. Start without boundaries, without syllabus, without rigidity, without text books, without top down approach, without - with. Start this time with not ‘A’ for Apple but ‘A’ for Anything, May be.

(The writer is Chancellor of Sanskriti University)

TS shying away from water war with AP?



V RAMU SARMA

THE agitation for separate Telangana was based on three aspects, Neellu (Water) Nidhulu (allocation of budget) and Niyamakalu (Jobs). The agitation fought on these three issues virtually forced then Congress government at Centre to create the 29th state. It is now over seven years since the new State has been formed but there appears to be no logical conclusion to the water war between the two sibling states Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. The Rajoli Banda Diversion Scheme which was one of the main issues during the agitation for separate Telangana State continues to be a bone of contention between the two Telugu States. Like many other issues, the Centre did not bother to address this issue in the AP State Reorganisation Act and as a result, the farmers under RDS canal are being denied their rightful share of water to reach Gadwal district. It is a different matter that it had failed to implement many of the issues that were listed in the Reorganisation Act.

Due to this, farmers under the RDS canal in Gadwal district are still awaiting for their rightful share of water to reach their fields even more than seven years after Telangana State was formed. Though the political executive keeps claiming that it will fight for its just share, Andhra Pradesh government has been going ahead with canal works. Barring occasional noise and that too when farmers raised the issue, the State government could not restrict its friendly neighbouring State from going ahead with the works till Krishna River Management Board resolved the issue.

All that we hear are statements like Brijesh Kumar Tribunal order has not yet been operationalised.” “AP cannot go ahead with its works. The canal works were neither approved by the Central Water Commission (CWC) nor Krishna River Management Board (KRMB). And

all those who make such noises add that Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao will take appropriate measures to protect the interests of the State and the farmers etc.

The dispute has a history of decades. The RDS is crucial for Telangana, as it was meant to irrigate about 87,000 acres in the State and 4,000 acres in AP. Telangana was allocated 15.9 TMC from the RDS but for decades it was getting only five TMC of water on an average. Officials say the reduced inflow is on account of leakages. Located on river Tungabhadra, it caters to water requirements of three states, Telangana, Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh and Raichur district of Karnataka. Now with AP going ahead with construction of a parallel canal, farmers say that TS would not get even this five TMC of water and this would adversely affect the interests of farmers of Gadwal district in particular. Andhra Pradesh proposes to utilise 5 TMC of water once the 160 km long canal works were over.

The right canal is being constructed across Tungabhadra on the upstream of Rajolibanda project. The project would help in diverting Krishna water for irrigation in Kurnool district and Tungabhadra water would be diverted to new reservoirs under RDS right main canal. The AP government has taken up the project to provide irrigation facility to five lakh acres.

The TS government and its ministers say that the sibling state has been going ahead with the works though there is no agreement between Telangana, Andhra and Karnataka. They also claim that they will fight for justice and right share of Tungabhadra waters. But this has not stopped Andhra Pradesh from putting the works on fast track while TS continues to make noise and watch silently.

The TS Government of course had filed a Special Leave Petition in Supreme Court. The apex court stayed the Brijesh Kumar Tribunal order to utilise 4 TMC of water by AP for the purpose.

The Telangana government pointed out that the right canal would deprive the farmers of Alampur assembly segment in the old Mahbubnagar. Once the project is completed, nearly 85,000 acres of farm land would



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be deprived of irrigation water in Jogulamba Gadwal district.

If we take a look at the history of RDS, in 1944, the then Madras and Hyderabad state governments came up with RDS scheme (15 TMC) for Telangana and KC Canal for Andhra to utilise Tungabhadra waters. There was no RDS left and right canals in the proposals. After the formation of Andhra Pradesh the united AP government had come up with the concept of RDS right canal for AP and left canal for Telangana.

The original RDS had only one canal which emanates from left side of anicut in Karnataka on river Tungabhadra. The anicut is located at the border of Kurnool in Andhra Pradesh and Raichur in Karnataka. The left canal passes through Karnataka for 43 kms and flows into Telangana for about 100 kms. This canal is supposed to meet the requirements of farmers in 87,500 acres with 15.9 TMC water in Telangana and 5,900 acres in Karnataka using 1.2 TMC of water. While all this is on paper, the reality is that Telangana for decades had not been getting more than 5 TMC of water.

But Andhra Pradesh government claims that Krishna Water Dispute Tribunal -2 (Brijesh) had allocated 4 TMC in 2013 and accordingly the AP government was constructing the right main canal under which four reservoirs and gravity canal.

After the formation of the new state, Telangana Government complained to Central Water Commission against the AP’s RDS right canal. The TS government said that the Tum-milla, Garlapadu, Budamarsu and Madduru lift schemes constructed on Tungabhadra will get dried up once the RDS right main canal becomes operational.

The 160 km long canal would finally be aligned with Gajuladinne Project. The Andhra Pradesh government has earmarked about Rs 2000 crore for the project and claims that it is well withing its right to construct the canal to meet the water requirements of farmers of Rayalaseema region.

While this is the ground situation, the Telangana government has not taken any concrete steps to see that the Andhra Pradesh government does not go ahead with the proj-

ect till the Tribunal gives its award and the case which is pending in Supreme Court was cleared. All that it thunders now and then is that “AP cannot go ahead with its works, as the Brijesh Kumar Tribunal order has not yet been operationalised.”

The latest decision of the Telangana government after a meeting the Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao had with officials was that they should once again lodge a complaint with the Krishna River Management Board (KRMB), the Central Water Commission (CWC) and the Apex Council of the Union ministry of Jal Shakti against the AP government and ensure that Andhra Pradesh suspends these works.

But what is baffling the people is why both states had suspended the dialogue on this issue. Unlike in the past, after the last general elections, both Chief Ministers had met many times and a friendly atmosphere was created and both assured to see that the interests of Telugus in both the states would be well protected. But then all this too seems to have ended with statements. The TS government did not stop the AP government from going ahead with the canal works. The big question now is once the 160 km long canal works are over, is there anything one can do?

Karnataka Government had constructed several project upstream of river Krishna and despite raising objections, the Al-matti Dam also became a reality. May be the same will happen once again.

with the delta variant. Secondly, it promotes the development of further mutations and new variants.

Experts are of the view that with the UK reducing Covishield dose gap to eight weeks is the best for India to follow suit as it gives maximum immunity protection from severe Covid infection. Otherwise that would defeat the purpose of vaccination for individuals and for society. Therefore the government should consider the shorter interval of 4 to 8 weeks between two doses of Covishield vaccine to ensure a high immune response in the recipients.

K S Rao, Thané

Discuss disarmament

THE Geneva summit between Russian President Putin and USA President Biden should have discussed disarmament too. Recent G-7 meet too did not discuss this issue. Disarmament and destruction of weapons must be made compulsory topic in the agenda of any major meet / summit. Also let there be regular E-meetings amongst various leaders on disarmament, reduction of production of weapons and war paraphernalia. This sounds meaningful in this modern era.

P N Sreelekha, Secunderabad

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Hastening vaccination spread

INDIAN Government is giving vaccine freely for all above 18 years. It is an appreciable decision. But for that vaccines should be produced faster. There are many changes for third wave. If it will become faster there is availability to give the vaccines for below 18 years. So that we can stop most of the deaths. As sooner vaccination process completes the sooner we can stop corona virus. Due to reduction of cases governments are relaxing the lockdown. Because of this again the virus will spread. Over 26 crore people are administered Covid - 19 vaccine in India. In that 4.84 crore people vaccinated fully. It means 3.5% of people vaccinated in India. The states must work in coordination with the Centre to make the vaccination success.

T V S Suchitra, Khammam

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A lot of debate has been held surrounding the time gap between two doses of Covishield vaccine after the government increased it from 6-8 weeks to 12-16 weeks after examining the real life evidence from the UK. The current gap of 12 to 16 weeks has two problems. First it leaves people with one dose exposed for that much time to the risk of several Covid

Opaque disengagement process?

THE Congress president has rightly echoed the sentiments of the common man that the disengagement process with the China appears to have worked to our disadvantage. Several rounds of talks between the Army Commanders of both the nations throughout the past one year, have unfortunately yielded nothing optimistic. What is still more concerning is the dragon country’s recent deployment of additional armed forces and artillery near the area of conflict. The entire country is watching restlessly for a positive outcome, given the assurance by our prime minister Narendra Modi that our brave Jawans’ sacrifice in June 2020 must not go in vain. The nation can ill-afford another encore of October 1962 debacle

Seshagiri Row Karry, Hyderabad

Control inflation urgently

THE fight against the pandemic has somewhat obscured the rising inflation, both retail and wholesale. You name it, vegetables, fish, pulses, edible oils; the price of each item that we consume for our subsistence has gone up. Core inflation is also upward in the inflation trajectory. A cartoonist has captured it

excellently with a person entering a shop with a shopping trolley, but coming out with a basket. Those living below the subsistence level don’t use trolleys even in the best of times, though.

The prices of all essentials have gone up so much that low income households find it extremely hard to make both ends meet. Job losses and reduced salaries since the Covid-19 outbreak have left poor families without the means to cope with the inflation. People’s purchasing power is now at an all-time low. Daily wage earners who have no means of subsistence other than their labour are the worst hit as they don’t find work or find less than usual work in this pandemic time. Less or ‘lacklustre’ production, high production cost and disruption in supplies, coupled with rupee depreciation are contributing factors to the high inflation.

The increase in fuel prices (petrol and diesel cost somewhere around Rs.100 per litre) has exacerbated the problem of runaway inflation by its cascading effect in terms of transportation costs on food items consumed and other products used in daily life. The RBI can opt for ‘a wait-and-watch policy’ or adopt ‘accommodative policy’, but the poor with their empty or near empty stomachs cannot. The government should act to rein in inflation and ease the inflation burden.

G David Milton, Maruthancode, Tamil Nadu

KCR to adopt Vasalamarri to spur growth

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

IT'S official. Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao will adopt Vasalamarri village in Yadadri Bhongir district on Tuesday. KCR already spoke to the village sarpanch Anjaiah over the phone and briefed him about his visit to the village.

The village is in Turkapally mandal of Yadadri Bhongir district. Vasalamarri is just 15 km away from the CM's farmhouse at Erravelli village in Siddipet district. It has a 2,600 population.

The Chief Minister will announce some sops pertaining to livelihood schemes for the jobless youth and others and a financial package for the village. This will be followed by a community



lunch. He directed the sarpanch to make necessary arrangements for the community lunch and a meeting with all locals. He told Anjaiah to erect rain-proof tents to hold the meeting in the wake of reports that Telangana is likely to receive heavy rains during next week.

Officials said that KCR would review the village development with village and district officials and announce special schemes for the village. Farmers welfare, Aasra pension distribution, education, and medical facilities would be given priority during the meeting. The officials of all related departments have been asked to attend the meeting. He will also hold "Gram Sabha" in the village. Later, he is likely to visit Yadadri temple to review the progress of the renovation works. The officials already briefed the CM about the progress of the works which are nearing completion. After visiting the temple, KCR is likely to announce the schedule for the inauguration of the renovated temple.

Adoption of this village, sources say, will help in making the administration to take up developmental activities at a faster pace at the grassroots level.

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It is difficult to contain coronavirus: Kishan Reddy

- Centre making all efforts to contain spread of virus
- Govt prepared plans to produce 200 crore vaccines

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

UNION Minister of State for Home Affairs G Kishan Reddy on Friday said that it was difficult to contain Coronavirus in the country, when compared with Europe and the UK.

Reddy stated that it was, however, possible to contain the virus with the help of public and private partnership. He made the remarks while addressing a gathering here in Durgabai Deshmukh Hospital. He claimed that the Centre was making all efforts to contain



spread of the virus. "The Modi Government has ensured availability of oxygen plants and medicines. It had overcome shortage of oxygen in just 15 days". The minister revealed that the government had set up oxygen plants in several hospitals across the coun-

try. "It has given 1,400 ventilators to 46 hospitals in Telangana. Of the 80 lakh vaccines given to the State, 15 lakh have been distributed to private hospitals".

He said the government had prepared plans to produce 200 crore vaccines.

TCS employee falls prey to cybercrime

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

A TCS employee fell prey to cyber fraudsters as she lost Rs. 10 lakh by clicking on a link. The identity of the employee has not been revealed due to confidential reasons.

According to a CCS official, they received a complaint from the victim that she has been employed with TCS for two years. A few days back she received a link through message on her mobile phone. As soon as she clicked the link she was directed to the Telegram app. Within seconds she received a call from a person who informed her that he is from a trading department of Wipro. He persuaded her to click on the link on the Telegram app.

As the victim clicked, she was directed to a Wipro page (a fake one). Even before she could realise, the cyber fraudster sweet talked and made her enter the key details of bank account. The entire Rs. 10 lakh was siphoned off.

Later the victim realised that it was a cyber-crime. She filed a police complaint, based on which a case has been registered. The matter is being investigated, said the official.

Cutting-edge tech makes Rajendranagar litter-free

- Officials turn the garbage into source of revenue by selling half of the re-usable trash to recycle units before shifting the remaining dead waste to Jawaharnagar dumping yard

ESA BIN ABDUL REHMAN
HYDERABAD

A comprehensive and technical approach to garbage management system at Rajendranagar has made it easier for the officials to address the issue of day to day trash collection and disposal of waste without much stress and also made the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation Sanitation Wing amply satisfied with the new development.

The officials reached to this point in just two years where they can make much of the mechanical approach to address the stinking and painstaking issue of garbage disposal.

Spreading in a sprawling area of 3.5 acres at Katedhan, the dumping yard has been set up two years ago to dump the garbage being collected from different areas under Rajendranagar. However, soon the officials mooted an idea to begin the process of segregation of garbage under the shade using several cutting edge machines.

The idea has proved to be a big success as the officials now manages to turn the garbage being collected from different areas into source of revenue by selling half of the re-usable trash to recycle units before shifting the remaining dead waste to Jawaharnagar dumping yard.



To put the full-fledged segregating unit into operational mode, the officials employed several labourers to segregate at least 17 types of waste material. This has also created a promising employment for almost 190 people who are involved in end-to-end garbage treatment process under Rajendranagar.

"The dumping yard is helping us in two ways at a time by providing us space both for dump the garbage and segregating the reusable material using men and machines under one roof. We have a fleet of 100 open tippers for door to door garbage collection while remaining 70 supervise the entire process," informed Anjaneulu, In-charge Dumping Yard and a Liaisoning Officer GHMC Circle No.11, Rajendranagar.

After shifting the garbage to dumping yard, he said, the process of segregation of waste material

begins using machines like Degrading unit into operational mode, the officials employed several labourers to segregate at least 17 types of waste material. This has also created a promising employment for almost 190 people who are involved in end-to-end garbage treatment process under Rajendranagar. Besides, out of a total strength of 190 members, at least 120 labourers carry out door to door garbage collection while remaining 70 supervise the entire process," informed Anjaneulu, In-charge Dumping Yard and a Liaisoning Officer GHMC Circle No.11, Rajendranagar.

The changing trend in garbage management system even attracted the team of officials from Administrative Staff College of India (ASCI) who visited the dumping yard and fascinated with the throughput involved in the process of garbage treatment and disposal.

RTC gets ₹46 cr through cargo, parcel: Minister Ajay

- Services to be expanded to towns to provide home delivery
- Getting positive results; support from people, officers & business

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

TRANSPORT Minister Puvvada Ajay Kumar on Friday said that cargo and parcel services begun one year ago by the TSRTC have given good results. He appreciated officials and staff for their coordinated efforts in getting better revenue through new services.

Kumar informed that the



TSRTC earned Rs 46 crore through the services due to good patronage by people. The minister said several government departments were using the services. "The revenues are good, as

prices to get services are less compared to others".

He stated that the TSRTC celebrates one year of cargo and parcel services is and getting positive results. "The government will expand the services in future and get more revenue. This is a good sign that during the pandemic period the State got good support from people and offices and business people alike".

The minister disclosed that with 177 bus station counters and 810 agents, the services will be extended to towns to provide home delivery. "Safety and timely services are being offered by the TSRTC for people", he said.

CM Jagan releases schedule to fill 10,143 vacant posts



Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy, along with Ministers and officials, releases Job Calendar for 2021-22 at his camp office in Tadepalli on Friday

HANS NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI

CHIEF Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy on Friday released the job calendar for the year 2021-22 to fill 10,143 vacant posts.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister said that this is first-of-its-kind in the history of Andhra Pradesh, where the unemployed would know the exact month of the job notification release and the number of posts that are vacant. He said that the entire process will be done in a transparent way without corruption or discrimination or the involvement of middlemen.

The recruitment will be based on the marks obtained in the written test conducted by the government without any interview process. Affirming that youngsters are looking for jobs, the Chief Minister stated that

the government had brought the job calendar to boost the confidence among the youth.

Recalling the his two-year governance, Jagan Mohan Reddy said that almost over one lakh jobs were created within the four months of forming the government and a total 6,03,756 vacancies were filled, which includes 1.22 lakh permanent jobs in the village and ward secretariats. He said that the volunteer system was brought in to increase the sense of service among the unemployed youth, and thus 2.50 lakh youngsters were recruited as volunteers.

Of the total 6.03 lakh jobs created, 1,84,264 were created on a regular basis, 3,99,791 are outsourced and 19,701 are on contract basis. The government had hiked the salaries for 7,02,656 jobs who were paid a meagre amount in the previous govern-

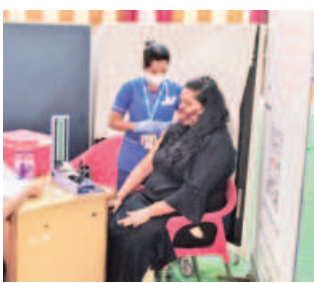
ment. The Chief Minister said in spite of having a Rs 3,500 crore burden, APSRTC has been merged with the state government, where the livelihoods of 51,387 RTC employees have been secured. He said that the job market will be expanded with the decentralisation and more jobs will be created at the village level itself.

On this occasion, the Chief Minister slammed the previous government for not keeping the election promise of providing a job to each household and leaving the unemployed youth in lurch by not paying the promised unemployment allowance. He said that former chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu promised to fill 1.4 lakh vacant posts and listed it in the election manifesto, but in reality the manifesto itself was dumped in trash bin.

RWA conducts vax drive across city

MEGHNA NATH
HYDERABAD

FOR the safety of the residents United Federation of Resident Welfare Association (UFERWAS) the apex body of resident welfare associations has come up with a massive vaccination camps at various localities across the city. On Friday around 200 people of Sai Krishna Enclave residential welfare association, Yapral got vaccinated. Till date around 6000 people got vaccinated in around 28 camps organized across the city. "As Covid cases spiked in the



month of May and people were rushing for vaccine, many were finding difficulty to avail the vaccine. With the aim to vaccinate at least 40,000 people by mid-week July, we began a massive vaccination

camp from the first week of June. For which we developed an app i-Vaccinate which links RWAs with the hospitals. In collaboration with private hospitals that includes Apollo, Rush, KIMS and Yashoda Hospital," said BT Srinivasan, general secretary, UFERWAS.

Through this vaccination app, first the particular residential association should register the name of the members of their society for the vaccination. Once registration number reaches above 100 the private hospital gives a particular date for the

camp in that particular locality.

"Observing the rush at vaccination centres and also how people are sent back due to the shortage of vaccine we have organising these camps. With this, in-house vaccination drives have reduced the load of hospitals. Through this app on Friday in collaboration with Rush hospital around 200 people from Sai Krishna Enclave residential welfare association, Yapral got vaccination from the camp organized by RWA at Tulsi Garden, Yapral," said Raghavendra, general secretary, Sai Krishna Enclave, Yapral.

Vijayasai spits fire at Ashok Gajapathi

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VISAKHAPATNAM

YSRCP Rajya Sabha member V Vijayasai Reddy alleged that Simhachalam temple Trust Board chairman P Ashok Gajapathi Raju looted hundreds of acres of land when he was the chairman of the Devasthanam.

After launching the distribution programme of Anandaiah's Ayurvedic medicine for Covid-19 to 200 frontline workers along with tourism minister M Srinivasa Rao here on Friday, the MP said a forgery case was registered against Ashok Gajapathi Raju in the past. It is certain that he would go to jail one day or the other, the MP reiterated.

Further, Vijayasai Reddy stated that they will appeal against the High Court's single-judge decision on the reappointment of MANSAS Trust and Simhachalam Trust Board chairman post. The MP said it will be challenged before the di-



Rajya Sabha MP V Vijayasai Reddy speaking at a conference in Visakhapatnam on Friday

- ▶ Alleges that the former Union Minister has 'looted' hundreds of acres of Simhachalam temple lands
- ▶ Says HC single-judge bench verdict restoring Ashok as MANSAS Trust and Simhachalam Devasthanam posts will be challenged before division bench
- ▶ Distributes Anandaiah medicine and drugs to 200 frontline warriors

vision bench. The MP added that the alleged irregularities during Ashok's tenure are being investigated. He observed that the provision of the MANSAS Trust that only men should essay the role of the chairman is discriminatory policy against women and contrary to the judgements of the Supreme Court.

Further, the MP said MANSAS

Trust was set up a day before the Land Ceiling Act came into force. Late P V G Raju (father of Ashok Gajapathi Raju) kept some of the lands in the name of the trust, some in the name of his family members. These apart, Vijayasai Reddy alleged, more lands are being sold in the name of binamis. He also distributed drugs to about 200 frontline warriors.

AMARAVATI

WITH the completion of term of eight MLCs on Friday, the YSRCP got majority in Legislative Council with increase of its strength to 21 and coming down of TDP's strength to 15.

The council members who completed their term on Friday are Ummareddy Venkateswarlu (YSRCP), Reddy Subrahmanyam, Y V B Rajendra Prasad, Buddha Venkanna, Pappula Chalapati Rao, Gali Saraswati, D Jagadeeswara Rao and Budhha Nageswara Rao of TDP.

With the retirement of MLCs, the number of vacancies of MLCs under Local Bodies quota increased to 11. As the High Court quashed the parishad elections, the filling of MLCs under Local Bodies quota will be delayed under



Moshen Raju, one of the four newly-nominated members of Legislative Council, makes courtesy call on Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy at Tadepalli on Friday

present Covid pandemic situation.

It may be noted that the government nominated four MLCs, Lella Appireddy, Thota Thrimurtulu, Moshen Raju and Ramesh Yadav, and the list got Governor's approval recently. The vacancies arose after the retirement of Beeda Ravichandra, TD Janardhan, G Sreeniva-

sulu and P Samanthakamani of TDP.

Meanwhile, Governor Biswa Bushan Harichandan issued orders appointing senior member V Balasubrahmanyam as pro-tem Chairman of AP Legislative Council as the term of both chairman Md Ahmed Shariff and Deputy Chairman Reddy Subrahmanyam was completed. He

will continue in the post until the election of new chairman and Deputy Chairman.

Balasubrahmanyam was elected as MLC representing Nellore, Chittoor and Prakasam district teachers' constituency thrice. Meanwhile, the pro-tem Chairman is going to administer oath of office to four newly-nominated MLCs under Governor's quota on Monday.

Agri Min Tomar rules out repeal of three farm laws

‘If any farmers’ union wants to talk on provisions of the Act even at midnight, they are welcome’

NEW DELHI

Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar on Friday ruled out repealing the three new farm laws but said the government is ready to resume talks with protesting farmer unions on provisions of the legislations.

The government and unions have held 11 rounds of talks, the last being on January 22, to break the deadlock and end the farmers' protest. Talks have not resumed following widespread violence during a tractor rally by protesting farmers on January 26. Thousands of farmers, mainly from Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh, have been camping at Delhi's borders

for more than six months in protest against the three laws that they say will end state procurement of crops at MSP. The Supreme Court has put on hold the implementation of the three laws till further orders and set up a committee to find solutions. "Government of India is ready for talks with farmers.

Except for repeal, if any farmers' union wants to talk on provisions of the Act even at midnight, Narendra Singh Tomar will welcome it," the agriculture minister said in a video posted on his Twitter account. Three union ministers, including Tomar and Food Minister Piyush Goyal, have held 11 rounds of talks with the protesting farmer unions. In the last meeting on January 22, the government's negotiations with 41 farmer



groups hit a roadblock as the unions squarely rejected the Centre's proposal of putting the laws on suspension.

During the 10th round of talks held on January 20, the Centre had offered to suspend the laws for 1-1.5 years and form a joint committee to find solutions, in return for protesting farmers going back to their respective homes from Delhi's borders.

The three laws -- The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020, The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020, and The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act 2020 -- were passed by the Parliament in September last year.

Farmer groups have alleged that these laws will end the mandi and MSP procurement systems and leave the farmers at the mercy of big corporates, even as the government has rejected these apprehensions as misplaced.

On January 11, the Supreme Court had stayed the implementation of the three laws till further orders and appointed a four-member panel to resolve the impasse. Bhartiya Kisan Union President Bhupinder Singh Mann had recused himself from the committee. Shetkari Sanghatana (Maharashtra) President Anil Ghanwat and agriculture economists Pramod Kumar Joshi and Ashok Gulati are the other members on the panel. They have completed the consultation process with stakeholders.

WINDOWS

Assam Cong MLA Kurmi quits party

GUWAHATI: The Congress in Assam suffered a blow on Friday as its prominent MLA Rupiyoti Kurmi quit the party and announced to join the ruling BJP coming Monday.

The Congress in turn immediately expelled the four-time MLA from the party for his "anti-party activities".

Criticising the party, Kurmi, a tea community leader, alleged that the Congress has stopped listening to the younger leaders, and envisaged further downfall of the party if Rahul Gandhi continues to call the shots. "Rahul ji can't bring about change as he is responsible for the downfall of the Congress.

The results of the recent state elections are a clear sign that the Congress will keep suffering if it gives importance to Rahul Gandhi. The party will keep losing its relevance," he told the media.

One in 100 deaths by suicide: WHO

GENEVA: One in a hundred deaths globally can directly be attributed to suicide, the World Health Organization (WHO) said, arguing that the Covid-19 pandemic has increased factors for suicide worldwide. In 2019, more than 700,000 people died of suicide, one in 100 deaths, which was more than HIV, malaria, wars or homicide, the world body said in a statement issued on Thursday. The same year, prior to the global pandemic, the global suicide rate was decreasing everywhere, the WHO declared, with exception of the Americas region that saw increases of 17 per cent.

Among young people aged 15-29, suicide was the fourth leading cause of death after road injury, tuberculosis and interpersonal violence.

According to the WHO, more than twice as many males die due to suicide as females (12.6 per 100,000 males compared with 5.4 per 100,000 females). Suicide rates among men are generally higher in high-income countries (16.5 per 100,000).

For females, the highest suicide rates are found in lower-middle-income countries (7.1 per 100,000).

Docs' children take part in clinical trial

17 children dead, over 5,000 test positive for Covid in Meghalaya: State Health Minister

SHILLONG/NEW DELHI

DOCTORS at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Patna are coming forward with their children to take part in the ongoing clinical trial of Bharat Biotech's Covaxin on minors at the premier institute, blunting doubts on vaccine hesitancy, according to NDTV report.

The trials have been flagged off in anticipation of a mutated variant of Covid, that could leave children vulnerable.

In the trial for 6-12 age group, which began on Monday, seven children were given first dose, said AIIMS Patna Superintendent Dr CM Singh. Doctor couple Veena Singh and Santosh's elder son Satyam, 13, who was given the first dose was joined by his younger brother Samyak, 7.

Over 5,000 children in the age group of 0-14 years have tested positive for Covid-19 in Meghalaya, 17 of which succumbed to the infection, Health Minister A L Hek said on Friday. He also stated that none of the newborns delivered by Covid-positive mothers were found to have got infected.

"So far, 5,101 children in the age group of 0-14 years were diagnosed with the disease. Seventeen children died of the infection since last year," the minister said.

Vaccines by Pfizer and Moderna do not harm male fertility, suggests a study which found the levels of sperm in participants remained at healthy levels after they got two doses of the mRNA preventive.

The study, published in the journal JAMA, recruited 45 healthy male volunteers aged 18 to 50 years scheduled for mRNA COVID-19 vaccination by Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna. The participants were pre-screened to ensure they had no underlying fertility issues. Those with Covid symptoms or a positive test result within 90 days were excluded.

The men provided a semen sample after two to seven days of abstinence, prior to receiving the first vaccine dose and approximately 70 days after the second shot. Semen analyses were performed by trained andrologists as per World Health Organization guidelines and included semen volume, sperm concentration, sperm motility, and total motile sperm count (TMSC).

With 62,480 new coronavirus infections being reported in a day, India's total tally of cases rose to 2,97,62,793, while the death toll climbed to 3,83,490 with 1,587 fresh fatalities, the lowest in 61 days, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Friday.



Slum dwellers who live beside railway tracks, play cricket during lockdown in Kolkata on Friday

‘Pfizer, Moderna Covid vax don’t lower sperm count’

India logs 62,480 new cases, 1,587 fresh fatalities

114 sick, 1 dead in US embassy

KABUL: The US embassy in Kabul has been forced into immediate lockdown due to a sudden spike in Covid-19 cases in Afghanistan. The rising infection has also prompted US officials to build temporary, on-site wards to care for oxygen-dependent patients, USA Today reported citing an internal memo. "COVID-19 is surging in the Mission. 114 of our colleagues now have Covid and are in isolation; one has died, and several have been medevaced," reads the notice from Shane Pierce, an employee in the embassy's health unit. According to this internal memo, the intensive care units at a US military hospital are swarmed and temporary on-site units have been set up for staff who need oxygen.

Active black fungus cases at 27,142

NEW DELHI: India has 27,142 active cases of Mucormycosis, also known as black fungus, and if the number rises, the country is prepared to increase the availability of Amphotericin B and other drugs used in the treatment of the disease, Union Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said on Friday. "On June 16, 2021, active cases of Mucormycosis were 27,142. Even in the future, if cases of Black fungus increases, India is prepared to have more than sufficient availability of Amphotericin B and other drugs which are required to treat patients of Mucormycosis," Mandaviya said in a tweet. The Minister of State for Chemicals and Fertilisers noted that domestic production of Amphotericin B has already gone up five folds so far.

Milkha Singh's O2 level drops

DELHI: Legendary Indian sprinter Milkha Singh has developed a fever and his oxygen saturation level has also dropped as he battles to regain his health, after a bout with COVID-19, in the Intensive Care Unit of the PGIMER hospital here on Friday. The 91-year-old, who tested negative for COVID-19 on Wednesday and was shifted to the general ICU, is being closely monitored by a team of doctors. "He suddenly developed a fever Thursday night and his oxygen saturation levels dipped. A team of doctors is monitoring him," PGIMER sources said on Friday. Milkha had been "stable before this. "It's been a slightly rough day for Milkha ji. But he is battling away," read a statement from his family.

‘Activist IAS officer’ seeks police cover

BHOPAL: A Madhya Pradesh IAS officer who has been issued a show-cause notice for uploading an audio clip of his conversation with a senior colleague sought police protection on Friday, claiming that an unidentified caller threatened him.

Lokesh Kumar Jangid, a 2014 batch officer, in an email to the state Director General of Police said someone called him before Thursday midnight and told him that he had put his life in danger by taking on very powerful people.

The caller also said that unbeknownst to the IAS officer,

some 'Pakistanis' were using him, and he should go on leave for six months and stop talking to the media if he valued his and his son's life, said the email which was leaked to the media.

Jangid was issued a show-cause notice two days ago for allegedly uploading an audio clip of his conversation with a senior colleague about his transfer on May 31 from the post of additional collector of Bharwani to the Bhopal-based Rajya Shiksha Kendra as its director.

According to Jangid, it was his ninth transfer in 54 months.

'BJP judge' hears Nandigram case

KOLKATA: TMC's Mahua Moitra and Derek O'Brien flag the selection of the judge hearing West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's petition challenging the election of Leader Of Opposition Suwendu Adhikari from Nandigram. Derek O'Brien had tweeted this picture of the Justice Kaushik Chandra (second from left) saying, "Matters where Justice Kaushik Chandra has appeared for the BJP before the Calcutta High Court. And now he has been assigned to hear the Nandigram election case. One big coincidence?"

TMC MP Mahua Moitra tweeted the same picture adding, "MiLord- get a conscience or at least a better veil! Mamata's Nandigram petition listed before Justice Kaushik Chandra, member of BJP's legal cell & BJP lawyer in numerous appearances Save our judiciary!"

Meanwhile, Adhikari on Friday submitted a petition to Speaker Biman Banerjee seeking disqualification of Mukul Roy's membership in the House under the anti-defection law as he has recently crossed over from the BJP



to the TMC, a senior leader in the saffron party said. The TMC, in response, insisted that the opposition leader should request his father and parliamentarian Sisir Adhikari to lead by example, as he, too, switched over to the BJP from the Mamata Banerjee camp ahead of the assembly polls. The speaker, when contacted, however, said he won't be able to say anything about the petition for now as he was yet to visit the Assembly.

Study finds Covid traces in Sabarmati, 2 lakes

AHMEDABAD: A recent study by researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Gandhinagar has established the presence of coronavirus in water samples from the Sabarmati river and two lakes in Ahmedabad city of Gujarat.

While the study, funded by the UNICEF, did not reveal if the genes of coronavirus found in the water samples were dead or alive, Professor Manish Kumar, who led the research, has emphasised the need for further probe on the subject to avert any future tragedy. Following the revelation, the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) has decided to send samples from these water bodies to

the Gujarat Biotechnology Research Centre (GBRC). "The GBRC is the authorised agency of the AMC for water analysis. We have been sending samples to them since the last one year and they submit their report to the state government. We have no idea about the IITs research.

"However, we will now send samples of these water bodies to the GBRC for a similar analysis," said Harpal Singh Zala, the AMC's city engineer for Water Resources.

The study was conducted between September and December 2020 and water samples were collected from the Sabarmati river, Chandola and Kankaria lakes of the city.

‘Rule of land supreme, not your policy’, Parl panel tells Twitter

NEW DELHI

Amid a tussle between the Union government and Twitter over the new IT rules, members of a parliamentary panel on Friday strongly objected to Twitter India officials' observations that they abide by their policy and categorically told them that the rule of land is supreme. According to sources, members of the Parliamentary Panel on Information Technology also asked Twitter why it should not be fined as it has been found "violating" rules of the country. Earlier this month, the Centre issued a notice to Twitter giving it one last chance to "immediately" comply with the new IT rules and warned that failure to adhere to the norms will lead to the platform los-



ing exemption from liability under the IT Act. The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Information and Technology, chaired by Congress leader Shashi Tharoor, had last week summoned Twitter over issues related to misuse of the platform and protection of citizens' rights. Twitter India's public policy manager Shagufta Kamran and legal counsel Ayushi Kapoor deposed before the panel on Friday.

Members of the panel asked some tough and searching questions to Twitter India officials but their answers lacked clarity and were ambiguous, sources said. They strongly objected to the observation of Twitter India officials that its policy is on par with the rule of land and categorically told them "rule of land is supreme, not your policy", sources said.

Twitter and the Centre have been at loggerheads over several issues for the last few months.

The microblogging site had faced backlash when it briefly removed the 'blue tick' verification badge from the personal account of Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu and of several senior RSS functionaries, including its chief Mohan Bhagwat.

Earlier, Delhi Police had sent a notice to Twitter, seeking an explanation of how it described an alleged "Congress toolkit" against the Central government as manipulated media. The police reportedly had also questioned Twitter India MD Manish Maheshwari on May 31 and visited the Twitter India offices in Delhi and Gurgaon on May 24 over the toolkit issue.

TODAY'S QUOTE

Centre asks banks to disburse pensions faster

“Banks have been instructed to disburse pensions expeditiously in view of the current Covid pandemic. The government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi is committed to seek ‘Ease of Living’ for all, including the pensioners and, therefore, such inconvenience to the elderly citizens has to be avoided.

— Dr Jitendra Singh, Union Minister



TELECOM

Jio adds 79L customers in March

India's largest telecom operator Reliance Jio gained over 79 lakh, mobile users, in March, surpassing the combined net adds by rivals Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea during the month, according to data released by TRAI. While Bharti Airtel added 40.5 lakh and Vodafone Idea gained 10.8 lakh customers during March.

FOREX (buy rates in ₹)			
US Dollar	74.74	South	
Euro	89.08	African Rand	6.04
UAE Dirham	20.75	Hong Kong Dollar	10.96
Thai Baht	2.59	Japanese Yen	0.77
British Pound	103.77	New Zealand Dollar	52.26
Australian Dollar	56.38	Saudi Riyal	21.7
Canadian Dollar	60.44	Swedish Krona	9.95
Swiss Franc	81.47	Singapore Dollar	56.3

DELHI SATURDAY 19 JUNE 2021

BIZ BRIEFS

ZEE5 launches new offer

Video streaming platform ZEE5 on Friday announced its new brand campaign ‘Dekhtey Reh Jaogey’ under which it is offering its annual premium subscription at Rs 499. This subscription was available at Rs 999 earlier. For a long, Indian consumers have evolved to the international concept of binge-watching and with this campaign, ZEE5 aims to enable them further to continue watching and unearthing content from over 150 originals and over 2,800 movies resting on the platform, it said. The platform also on-boarded actress Sara Ali Khan and OTT's favorite boy Amol Parashar as brand ambassadors for the campaign. Manish Kalra, Chief Business Officer, ZEE5 India, said, “We keep pushing the boundaries of what’s possible in a bid to keep delivering an unmatched experience to our users. With the ‘Dekhtey Reh Jaogey’ campaign, we want to make quality entertainment accessible to consumers”.

Forevermark's new collection

Forevermark, the diamond brand from DeBeers Group, has launched a jewellery range, Forevermark Icon Collection, for Father's Day, which will serve as a memorable gifting option. These special occasion cufflinks are crafted with Forevermark diamonds. Just as every Forevermark diamond undergoes a journey of rigorous selection, these limited-edition white gold cufflinks are a gift that will be treasured for years to come. Sealed with the promise of the beautiful, rare and responsibly sourced Forevermark diamonds, this range of cufflinks will be a reminder of one's affection and admiration. “This collection has a contemporary set of cufflinks set in 18K white gold and enamel crafted with natural diamonds. It takes cues from the brand's distinctive ‘icon’ motif - two everlasting symbols of forever - which has been intrinsic to its DNA since its inception,” the brand said.

Policy support key for the GDP recovery: RBI

Covid 2.0 has altered the near-term outlook for economy: RBI Guv Das

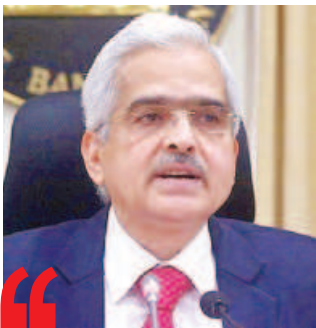
MUMBAI

RESERVE Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das has pitched for policy support from all sides - fiscal, monetary and sectoral - to nurture recovery of the economy hit by the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic.

The dent on economic activity due to the second wave of the pandemic during April-May necessitated continuation of monetary measures to support the process of economic recovery to make it durable, Das had said while participating in the meeting of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) earlier in the month.

“Overall, the second wave of Covid-19 has altered the near-term outlook, and policy support from all sides - fiscal, monetary and sectoral - is required to nurture recovery and expedite return to normalcy,” Das said, as per the minutes of the meeting released on Friday.

Going forward, the Governor said the pace of vaccination and the speed with which the second wave can be brought under control will have considerable bearing on the evolving growth as well the inflation trajectory. The Reserve Bank remains committed to un-



Reserve Bank remains committed to undertake pro-active conventional and unconventional measures and to effectively channelling the systemic liquidity to alleviate stress of critical sectors which have borne the brunt of the second wave

— RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das in recent MPC meeting

dertake pro-active conventional and unconventional measures and to effectively channelling the systemic liquidity to alleviate stress of critical sectors which have borne the brunt of the second wave, he said.

Das, and the other five members of the MPC - Shashanka Bhide, Ashima Goyal, Jayanth R Varma, Mridul K Saggarg and Michael Debabrata Patra - had voted for keeping the policy repo rate unchanged at 4.0 per cent. RBI Deputy Governor Patra observed that unlike in the first wave, supply conditions have remained relatively resilient in the second wave, but aggregate demand barring net exports has been dented and needs counter-pandemic policy support.

Even the turnaround in net exports is fragile and heavily dependent on the strength of the vaccination propelled revival in external demand, which may be partially offset by the terms of trade loss on account of the rise in international commodity prices, particularly crude oil, he noted.

Patra further said the MPC has created the necessary conditions for supporting growth by maintaining the policy rate at its lowest level ever. “The onus is on the Reserve Bank to operationalize the MPC's guidance on an ongoing basis by ensuring congenial financial conditions across the system as well as for specific sectors, instruments and institutions,” he said.

NSAI warns of illegal cotton seed cultivation

HYDERABAD: The Federation of Seed Industry of India (FSII) and National Seed Association of India (NSAI), both seed industry bodies, on Friday warned about the sudden surge in cultivation of illegal herbicide tolerance BT cotton (HTBT) cotton this year.

“It is being grown in major cotton growing states since several years at a lower intensity, but the sale has suddenly shot up this year posing a serious threat to the environment, farmers, legitimate seed companies and government revenue,” the industry bodies said.

Prabhakar Rao, president, NSAI, maintained that such an illegal cultivation of HTBT cotton would not only decimate small cotton seed companies but would also threaten the entire legal cotton seed market in India.

“To make matters worse, the illegal seeds are sold using the brand name of prominent companies. With this, farmers are at risk with such illegal cotton seed sale as there is no accountability of the quality of seed. It pollutes the environment, the industry is losing legitimate seed sale and the government also loses revenue in terms of tax collection,” he pointed out. Regulators are only limiting their checking to licensed dealers and seed companies while this illegal activity of HT seed sales is carried mostly by unorganized and fly by night operators. Focus must be shifted to catching them and taking exemplary and strong punitive action, he said.

RIL, HDFC save the day for mkts

Sensex makes smart recovery, ends in green after a 722-points plunge

MUMBAI

THE BSE Sensex staged a smart recovery to end in the positive terrain after diving over 722 points during the session on Friday, as heavyweights Reliance and HDFC duo saved the day for the benchmark. After swinging over 985 points during the day, the BSE gauge ended 21.12 points or 0.04 per cent higher at 52,344.45.

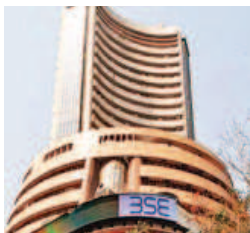
On the other hand, the broader NSE Nifty slipped 8.05 points or 0.05 per cent to close at 15,683.35. Intraday, the index touched a high of 15,761.50 and a low of 15,450.90. In the Sensex pack, 18 shares suffered losses and 12 ended with gains. ONGC was the top loser in the Sensex pack, shedding around 4 per cent, followed by NTPC, PowerGrid, M&M, Nestle India, SBI and HCL Tech.

On the other hand, HUL, Bajaj Auto, Bharti Airtel, Bajaj Finserv and IndusInd Bank were major gainers. Index heavyweights Reliance Industries as well as HDFC Bank and HDFC too logged gains - helping the Sensex end in the green. Sectorally,

power, utilities, metal, oil and gas, basic materials and realty indices fell up to 2.77 per cent. While, BSE telecom, FMCG and consumer durables indices ended with gains. Broader mid-cap and smallcap indices dropped up to 0.89 per cent. During the week, the Sensex declined 130.31 points or 0.24 per cent, while the Nifty fell 116 points or 0.73 per cent.

“The market continued to be in the consolidation phase witnessing broad-based selling, taking cues from the Fed policy and mixed global markets. US bond yields have cooled off from its high as global markets seem to have digested the latest Fed comments,” said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services. China's plan to sell metal reserves to check recent price hikes has pulled down the sector's sentiments, he added.

Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Hong Kong and Seoul ended on a positive note, while Shanghai and Tokyo closed lower. Stock exchanges in Europe were largely trading with losses in mid-session deals.



Freedom Oil unveils new product

HANS BUSINESS HYDERABAD

FREEDOM Oils, a flagship brand of city-based Gemini Edibles and Fats, has launched two litre jar of ‘Freedom Refined Sunflower oil’. The new jar was launched by P Chandra Shekhara Reddy, Vice President - Sales & Marketing, Freedom Healthy Cooking Oils, along with the other senior management. The new two-litre jar has been designed according to socio-demographic profile of In-

dian consumers. The two-litre PET transparent jar has been introduced to offer convenience to the nuclear families to suit their consumption requirement

“We are happy to introduce the new two litre PET bottle of ‘Freedom Refined Sunflower oil’, to provide an elegant and convenient SKU for the present-day customer. We hope it is liked by our patrons. We offer a value for money brand to our consumers providing them the ‘Freedom to eat, Freedom to enjoy,’” said Chandra Shekhara Reddy.

LIC Cards launches prepaid gift card

HANS BUSINESS HYDERABAD

LIC Cards Services Ltd (LIC CSL) in collaboration with IDBI Bank, has launched a contactless prepaid gift card, Shagun, on the RuPay platform. The purpose of this card is to expand the gift card market with an intent to promote cashless ways of gifting and present a wide range of end-use



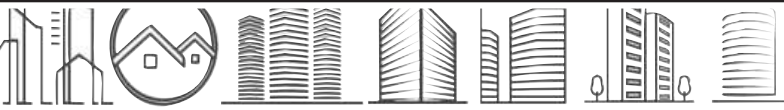
choices. In future, it will foray into the market of e-gift cards, LIC CSL said in a statement.

The Shagun gift card offers customisation in the

form of flexible loading of any amount ranging from Rs 500 to Rs 10,000. With this card, the customer can perform multiple transactions within the validity of 3 years. With the wide acceptability of RuPay, the Shagun gift card can be used at millions of merchant outlets and e-commerce websites in India to diversify spending options on the card.

RenewBuy raises \$45 mn

HYDERABAD: RenewBuy, an insurtech company, has raised \$45 million in a Series C funding round an investment from Apis Growth Fund II, a private equity fund managed by Apis Partners LLP. RenewBuy group, through its subsidiary D2C insurance broking, enables retail customers to buy motor, health and life insurance products with a unique end-to-end digital experience. More than 60 per cent of RenewBuy's business is from semi-urban and rural areas in India, with a focus on addressing an under-insured population. This aligns with Apis Partners' core impact driven mandate to measure the sustainability and societal effect of an investment in a company or business. “Insurance penetration in India continues to be low at about 3.76 per cent. Demand for insurance is strong in India, supply has always been a gap. We have solved this by creating a cutting-edge technology solution that more than 5,00,000 POSP advisors use - in over 650 cities,” said Balachander Sekhar, CEO, RenewBuy.



REAL CORNER



COMMERCIAL REALTY UNDER PRESSURE AS COVID BITES

With the second wave peaking in the first quarter of FY22, the sector is expected to confront similar challenges as in the previous financial year, Icra Ratings said in a report

The commercial real estate sector will continue to face pressure in the near term due to the Covid-19 pandemic related disruptions in the office and retail leasing segments, according to a report.

With the second wave peaking in the first quarter of FY22, the sector is expected to confront similar challenges as in the previous financial year, Icra Ratings said in the report.

While the retail leasing segment prospects are closely linked to the recovery in retail sales and discretionary consumption spending by the urban population, demand recovery in the office leasing segment is influenced by multiple factors as corporates evaluate the challenges and opportunities created by the pandemic on their real estate resource planning, it added.

“Though cash flows remained materially unimpacted in FY21, we are seeing increasing vacancy levels in the rated portfolio as the pandemic has resulted in deferment of new leasing transactions by tenants, while the available inventory builds up in line with scheduled completions,” Icra Group Head and Senior Vice President, Corporate Ratings, Shubham Jain told reporters at a virtual



press conference. The delay in the conclusion of new leasing is on account of multiple factors, including restrictions on international travel and deferment of decision making until there is clarity on employees returning to offices at earlier numbers, he added.

To some extent, corporates could also be evaluating the potential for them to reduce their real estate footprint through the implementation of hybrid work models, including work-from-home, flexible-seating, among others, he noted.

“While the factors that have supported the high level of absorption of office space in the country in the past - including abundant and cost-competitive talent pool - remain intact, the evolving work practices in response to the pandemic may create, at best, a temporary deferment of leasing decisions or, in the

worst case, a permanent reduction in the demand for real estate space,” Jain said.

As per the report, until the implications of the pandemic on the demand trends become clear over the medium term, portfolios with moderate leverage and a low share of under-construction assets will be better placed to weather the short-term challenges such as a drop in occupancy or lower than anticipated growth in rent rates. Nonetheless, a sustained gap in the demand-supply position, which can spill over into reduction of rent rates or occupancies in the broader market, will be a key monitorable, it added.

Icra said the cash flow pressures on the retail leasing segment are more evident in the near term as state-level lockdowns and restrictions on mall operations impact the tenants' revenues and

will translate into rent concessions being granted by mall operators. As retail operations eventually recover from the impact of the pandemic, the rental collections are also expected to revert to the earlier levels, the report noted.

Nonetheless, the timelines for such recovery will depend on the pace of vaccinations in the target consumer segment for retail malls, as well as the revival in consumer sentiments following the adverse impact that the second wave had on disposable incomes.

“The first wave resulted in a reduction in net operating income of malls by up to 50 per cent in FY21. However, the recovery in operating metrics witnessed in the second half of last fiscal would have been heartening for the industry.

“The prospects for such a steep recovery in FY22 could be dampened by the income shock created by the second wave due to the associated healthcare costs that many families incurred,” Jain noted. In addition, he said, the possibility of subsequent waves will weigh on the decision-making by authorities regarding relaxation of restrictions as well as the propensity for visitors to return for non-essential shopping and leisure.

Upfex launches co-working booking platform

US-based co-working booking platform Upfex has tied up with real estate consultant Anarock to enter the Indian market.

Mumbai-based Anarock said in a statement that “it will make Upfex, a hybrid booking platform with the largest global network of flexible workspace, available to companies in India”.

Anarock has signed a formal agreement to deploy Upfex's services across tier 1, 2, and 3 cities in India.

The agreement combines Upfex's technology, processes, and corporate mandates with Anarock's national distribution platform to offer a highly customisable workspace programme. “The unique workspace solution that Upfex offers is highly relevant today, when the country is still coming to grips with the pandemic,” Anarock Chairman Anuj Puri said. The Upfex solutions portfolio is designed to replace traditional leasing models with a low-touch, single-vendor alternative, streamlining real estate, reducing overheads, conserving resources, and improving the employee experience, said Rohin Shah, Director, Anarock.

Via the intuitive Upfex mobile app, employees can search thousands of workspaces across 1,600 cities and 75 countries, and book conveniently located desks, offices, and meeting rooms on demand.

States must cut stamp duty to rev up realty

State governments should reduce stamp duty on registration of properties by at least 50 per cent to boost housing sales and revive the real estate sector, according to experts.

Addressing a webinar on Thursday, realtors' body Naredco's Chairman Rajeev Talwar said, “we need to cut down the stamp duty by half”.

Maharashtra government's decision to reduce the stamp duty during September to March of the last fiscal year helped a lot in reviving sales in the state, he noted.

Talwar, who recently retired as CEO of India's largest realty firm DLF, said many developers from Maharashtra made payment of the reduced stamp duty on behalf of their customers.

The webinar “Ins & Outs- Impact 2020 on Real Estate Investments & Road ahead” was organised by industry body PHDCCI.

About the outlook for the real estate industry, Ashwinder R Singh, CEO - Residential, Bhartiya Urban, said sales are likely to bounce back in the second half of this year as it happened in 2020 after the first Covid wave.

He said interest rates are favourable and will aid in revival. Mudassar Zaidi, Executive Director- North, Knight Frank India, said office leasing activities will remain muted during

Maharashtra government's decision to reduce the stamp duty during September to March of the last fiscal year helped a lot in sales in that State: Experts



this fiscal. According to him, the revival of office market will depend on the pace of the vaccination programme. Zaidi hoped that office leasing activities are expected to improve from the next fiscal onwards with return of workforce to their workplaces.

While noting that the impact of the pandemic has been varied on various segments of real estate, he said retail and hospitality have been most affected. According to property consultants, housing sales and office leasing fell around 40-50 per cent during 2020 compared to the previous year because of the adverse impact of Covid.

