


WEATHER



Max: 32.0°C  
Min: 23.3°C  
RH: 60%  
Rain: Nil

Forecast: Cloudy sky.  
Moderate rain likely.  
Max/Min temp. 33/23°C

ASTROGUIDE

Plava: Uttaraayana  
Tithi: Jyeshtha Shuddha Saptami  
till 9.55 pm  
Star: Purvaphalguni till 10.08 pm  
Varjyam: 6.10 am to 7.45 : 5.10  
am to 6.43 am (Friday)  
Durmuhurtam: 10.06 am to  
10.58 am; 3.19 pm to 4.11 pm  
Rahukalam: 1.30 pm to 3 pm  
HJRI CALENDAR  
Zeeqad 5,1442 AH  
PRAYERS  
Fajar: 4.32 am  
Zohar: 12.27 pm  
Asar: 4.54 pm  
Maghrib: 6.58 pm  
Isha: 8.15 pm  
SUNSET TODAY 6.52 PM  
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.42 AM  
MOONRISE TODAY 11.32 AM  
MOONSET NA

COUNTER POINT



I want to wind up  
this business too... I  
can't afford oil!

SHORT TAKES

FM seeks letters  
on new I-T portal

New Delhi: Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman invited written representations regarding the issues/glitches on the new Income-Tax portal on the email address fmo@nic.in latest by 7 pm on June 18 prior to the meeting between senior finance ministry officials and Infosys on June 22. Senior FM officials will hold an interactive meeting with Infosys on issues in the new IT e-Filing portal.

Covid drugs not  
for kids: Centre


New Delhi: Drugs such as ivermectin, hydroxychloroquine, favipiravir and antibiotics like doxycycline and azithromycin prescribed for adult Covid-19 patients have not been recommended for treating children, according to a government guideline issued on Wednesday. The government has come out with guidelines for operationalising Covid-care services for children.

India to explore  
deep oceans

New Delhi: The Centre approved a proposal to roll out a "deep ocean mission" for resources and develop deep-sea technologies for sustainable use of ocean resources. "The Union Cabinet decision will support the blue economy and take India into a new era," Union minister Prakash Javadekar said.

WORLD | 5

PIO nominated  
Connecticut federal judge



deccanchronicle.com, facebook.com/deccannews, twitter.com/deccanchronicle

Calm after the storm



Russian President Vladimir Putin shakes hands with US President Joe Biden prior to the US-Russia summit at the Villa La Grange, in Geneva on Wednesday. Putin said he and Biden agreed in a constructive summit to return ambassadors to their posts, lowering tensions and beginning consultations to replace the last remaining treaty between the two countries limiting nuclear weapons. The meeting which was expected to last for five hours ended in three. — AP

Modi asks global investors  
to utilise Indian tech talent

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 16

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday "invited the world to invest in India" based on its "five pillars of talent, market, capital, ecosystem, and culture of openness". He also heaped praises for the tech and start-up sectors of the country. "India offers what innovators and investors need," he said. Hailing France and Europe as India's key partners and speaking in the context of the pandemic, he also said "disruption does not have to mean despair" and that "instead, we must keep the focus on the twin foundation of repair and prepare". He made the remarks during his keynote address via video conference at the fifth edition of Viva-Tech 2021, one of the largest digital and startup events in Europe, held in Paris every year since 2016. "India offers what innovators and investors need. I invite the world to invest in India, based on the five pillars of talent, market, capital, ecosystem, and culture of openness. Indian tech talent pool is famous across the world. Indian youth have given tech solutions to some of the world's most pressing problems," the Prime Minister said. "Today, India has 1.18 billion mobile phones and 775 million Internet users. This is more than the population of several nations. Data consumption in India is among the highest and cheapest in the world. Indians are the largest users of social media. There is a diverse and extensive market that awaits you," Modi explained. The Prime Minister also called technology and digital as the two emerging areas of close cooperation with France among the many other wide range of topics.

Huzurabad poll  
hits Cabinet rejig

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 16

The unexpected political developments in the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) in May leading to bypoll for Huzurabad Assembly seat seem to have dashed hopes of TRS leaders of securing Cabinet berths and nominated posts in the party and the government. TRS leaders believe that the party president and Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao will not undertake any exercise either to reshuffle his Cabinet or to fill nominated posts in the party as well as in the government until the Huzurabad bypoll is over. These leaders have been desperately waiting for years to grab plum posts but the appointment process is getting delayed every time under one pretext or the other. They had pinned heavy hopes on the Chief Minister undertaking Cabinet reshuffle and filling up hundreds of nominated posts in the party and the government soon after the completion of Nagarjunasagar Assembly bypoll and municipal corporation elections for Khammam and Warangal besides five municipalities in May first week. The fact that the municipal polls in May marked the completion of all elections in Telangana and no polls were scheduled until 2023 December Assembly polls rekindled the hopes of these leaders.

■ Page 2: KCR wants party to stay focussed on bypoll

Court threatens to try home official for contempt  
HC notice to home secretary


DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 16

Annoyed over the delay in filling up 174 Additional Public Prosecutors' (APPs) posts by the state government despite the court orders, the Telangana High Court on Wednesday issued showcase notices to Ravi Gupta, principal secretary of the state home department, as to why contempt proceedings should not be initiated against him. A division bench comprising Chief Justice Hima Kohli and Justice B. Vijayen Reddy was unhappy with the government apathy in implementing the court directions. The court observed that it seemed as if the government was of opinion that it was doing a favour to the court by implementing its orders. Litigants are suffering a lot as criminal cases have been pending for several years. Most of the criminal courts in the state do not have full-time APPs. As it came to the notice of the court that 50 per cent of posts of APPs have been vacant in the state, the High Court had directed to fill the posts. On April 1, 2021, the court, on request of the government counsel, had given last chance and directed him to submit an affidavit regarding the appointments. On Wednesday, the counsel for home, requested some more time to implement the court orders. Justice Kohli disapproved the request and observed that the state government was in deep slumber and it seemed it wanted all criminal courts to also to be in deep slumber. "Should we put a gun on your heads to make you do administrative work and implement court orders?"

■ Page 2: State's inaction hampers justice, says CJ

SPORTS | 8

Ronaldo smashes  
record in Portugal win



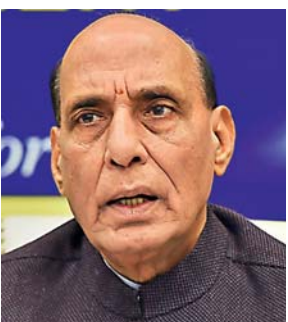
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Rajnath for freedom  
of navigation in SCS

Def min makes demand in China's presence at Asean meet

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 16

With China listening, defence minister Rajnath Singh on Wednesday called for freedom of navigation, overflights and unimpeded commerce in the South China Sea where the Chinese Navy is flexing its muscles. He called for an open and inclusive order in the Indo-Pacific based upon respect for sovereignty and the territorial integrity of nations while addressing the eighth Asean Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM) Plus. The ADMM Plus is an annual meeting of the defence ministers of 10 Asean countries and eight dialogue partner countries — Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, Russia and the United States. Brunei is the ADMM Plus forum's chair this year. Mr Singh also stressed on "peaceful resolution of disputes through dialogue". "India calls for a free, open and inclusive order in the Indo-Pacific, based upon respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of nations, peaceful resolution of disputes through dialogue and adherence to international rules and laws" — RAJANATH SINGH  
Defence minister



India calls for a free, open and inclusive order in the Indo-Pacific, based upon respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of nations, peaceful resolution of disputes through dialogue and adherence to international rules and laws" — RAJANATH SINGH  
Defence minister

ing with international law, including the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, and do not prejudice the legitimate rights and interests of nations that are not party to these discussions. Mr Singh said India has strengthened its cooperative engagements in the Indo-Pacific based on converging visions and values for the promotion of peace, stability, and prosperity in the region. "Premised on the centrality of Asean, India supports the utilisation of Asean-led mechanisms as important platforms for implementation of our shared vision for the Indo-Pacific," said Mr Singh. He added that India's engagement with the Southeast Asian region, of which Asean is a primary component, is based on its "Act East Policy" announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in November 2014. "Key elements of this policy are to promote economic cooperation, cultural ties and develop strategic relationships with countries in the Indo-Pacific region through continuous engagement at the bilateral, regional and multilateral levels," the defence minister added. Referring to the threat from terror networks, Singh called for strong action against those encouraging, supporting and financing terrorism and provide shelter to terrorists, in remarks seen as directed at Pakistan. "Terrorism and radicalisation are the gravest threats to peace and security that the world is facing today," he said. "India shares global concerns about terrorism and believes that, in an era when networking amongst terrorists is reaching alarming proportions, only through collective cooperation can the terror organizations and their networks be fully disrupted," he said.

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## SHORT TAKES

## 3 SISTERS BOOKED FOR BID TO END LIFE BY SUICIDE

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 16

The police booked a case against three women, all sisters, in connection with an alleged suicide attempt in front of the Medchal Collectorate. The three were hopeful of getting accommodation under the 2BHK housing scheme of Telangana, but could not.

They were Kuthadi Laxmi (35), Kuthadi Sulochana (29) and Kuthadi Sujatha (28).

According to the police, the three came to the collectorate on Wednesday afternoon and quarrelled with the staff after demanding that they be provided with a double bedroom house. Sulochana doused herself with kerosene in a suicide attempt.

"A woman police constable foiled her attempt. Another of the sisters, Kuthadi Sujatha, had earlier come to the collectorate and done the same," said Keesara police.

According to the police, Sujatha and Laxmi abetted Sulochana in pouring kerosene on herself. The Keesara police booked a case under sections 309 IPC (attempt to suicide) and 109 IPC (punishment for abetment). The three sisters were shifted to the Sakhi Centre for counseling.

## NO CALF SERUM IN COVAXIN: BHARAT BIOTECH

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 16

Amid a social media buzz that new-born calf's serum is used in the manufacture of Covaxin, the producer firm Bharat Biotech on Wednesday clarified that the serum is "used for the growth of cells," but this is neither used in the growth of SARS-CoV2 virus nor in the final formulation.

The Union Ministry of Health too said there was no truth in the social media posts that Covaxin contains new-born calf's serum. "Facts have been twisted and misrepresented in these posts."

Newborn Calf Serum, it said, is used only for preparation/growth of vero cells, or cells cultured for final use in vaccine manufacture. Different kinds of bovine and other animal serum are standard enrichment ingredient used globally for vero-cell growth.

Vero cells are used to establish cell lines which help in production of vaccines. This technique has been used for decades in Polio, Rabies, and Influenza vaccines.

These vero cells, after growth, are washed with water and chemicals, many times, to make them free from the new-born calf serum. Thereafter, these vero cells are infected with Coronavirus for viral growth. In the process, the cells are completely destroyed, the ministry explained.

At this stage, the virus grown in these vero cells is also killed (inactivated) and purified. This killed virus is then used to make the final vaccine. In the final vaccine formulation, no calf serum is used, it said.

## Covid: Study finds 95% vaccinated hosp. staff safe

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 16

A study on the effect of Covid-19 vaccination by Apollo Hospitals during the second wave of the disease has found that more than 95 per cent of the healthcare workers who received the jabs did not have post-vaccination infection.

The finding, from one of the largest cohorts of vaccinated healthcare workers (HCWs) analysed in the country so far, emphasized that Covid-19 vaccines are effective," according to Dr Hariprasad of the hospitals group.

"It is important to continue with Covid-safe behaviour even when one is fully vaccinated, like in matters of wearing a mask, sanitizing the hands, maintaining appropriate social distance and avoiding crowds," Dr Hariprasad said.

The study looked at 31,621 staff from 43 units of the Apollo Hospitals group in 24 cities. These included doctors, nurses, paramedical as well as support and administrative staff.

According to Dr Anupam Sibal, group medical director, "The results showed

Covid vaccines protected more than 95 per cent of the recipients and that post-vaccination infection occurred in only 4.28 per cent (1,355 out of 31,621) of the vaccinated healthcare workers."

The findings also showed only 90 cases of all vaccinated workers required hospitalization, with only three of the cases requiring ICU admission.

The most important finding, he said, was that there was no death in case of Covid infection after vaccination. Of the fully vaccinated workers, 1,061 reported post-vaccination infections, while 294 of the partly vaccinated workers tested positive, Dr Sibal said.

Dr Prathap C. Reddy, founder chairman of the Apollo Group, said: "This study reiterates that our mainstay against Covid19 is mass vaccination. Vaccines are not only safe, but also help prevent severe manifestations of Covid19 and save lives."

He said, "We should aim to vaccinate five million Indians per day. The main conclusions from the study are that post-vaccination infections are usually minor and vaccination helps prevent severe infection, ICU admissions, and death."

## Spike proteins in variants worrisome

KANIZA GARARI | DC  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 16

Errors in replication of mRNA viruses are a cause of concern as they attach to human cells and create spike proteins, which if stronger and smarter than the previous ones, can cause concern, according to scientists. With the delta variant B.1.617.2 being highly infectious but less lethal, it led to a large number of cases in the country during the second wave, they said.

This variant has infected one in three people according to the seroprevalence report of Ahmedabad. Keeping this as a basis, scientists state that maximum people have developed antibodies against this variant. But this does not mean that the virus has gone away. Covid appropriate behaviour of masks, social distancing and hand washing must be followed.

Maximum people have to be vaccinated by December in the country to protect it from the

development of other variants to protect the population, they opine.

A senior scientist at CCMB, on condition of anonymity, explains, "Origin of variants is when the virus is in the host body for 100 days. This virus in an immunocompromised body and after many 100's of replications is able to develop a variant which strikes. This mutant of the virus will always not be dangerous but if it is lethal, it becomes a major cause of worry."

Scientists state that genome sequencing must be carried out regularly as different sets of viruses have to be studied for better preparedness.

The delta variant had 16 spike protein mutations and it has been found with alpha (B.1.1.7), delta with beta (B.1.351) and delta with gamma (P.1) strain. These combinations of deltas have already been recorded in India.

These different mutations of the virus during replication means that it is constantly evolving.

## TS eyes 33% green cover

## Haritha Haram to implement Yadadri model plantation in GHMC limits

MADDY DEEKSHITH | DC  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 16

The next phase of Haritha Haram, the Telangana government's flagship programme to increase green cover in the state from 24 per cent to 33 per cent, will have Yadadri model plantation in the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) limits.

The urban biodiversity wing of the corporation has procured one crore saplings for the upcoming Haritha Haram, which would be commenced soon based on the rainfall and Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao's instructions.

The civic body, apart from taking up conventional plantation along lake bunds, buffer zones of water bodies

including nalas and the Musi, will also take up multi-layered avenue plantation at designated locations in the city. According to GHMC officials, Yadadri pattern follows the Japanese Miyawaki technique (invented by botanist Akira Miyawaki) of growing urban forests in a short time and with less space. This unique method of afforestation is gaining popularity especially in urban areas which have less green space.

"The techniques may be the same, but we have not followed the system blindly. Since our soil and species are different, we have modified the Miyawaki model to suit our conditions," officials said.

The government gave a call to name it as Yadadri

model and implement it all over the state. Recently, chief secretary Somesh Kumar visited Kandlakoya oxygen urban forest taken up under the Japanese model and asked the officials to implement the same all over the state. Once developed, the forest also becomes a shelter for different birds and animals improving the biodiversity of the area. The corporation has already implemented the model on pilot basis during last year's Haritha Haram programme at five locations.

This year Yadadri forest model will be implemented at about 40 locations including Venkateshwara Colony, Attapur, BHEL, open space in Nallagandla, Government Veterinary Hospital at Rajendra Nagar, Yaprail

and Malkajgiri to name a few. As many as 14,70,000 saplings will be planted under the Yadadri model.

A senior GHMC official said Somesh Kumar had instructed them to take up multi-layered avenue plantations at newly developed link roads and major central medians in the city. He said under multi-layered avenue plantation, more than two species of plants would be planted at the bottom of the central median as well as in the centre. "A whopping 40,30,000 lakh saplings would be planted as a part of single layered and multi-layered avenue plantations. As many as 5,50,000 saplings will be planted at government institutions, double bedroom housing projects and graveyards. About 4,70,000

saplings would be planted near lake bunds, open spaces, and buffer zones of water bodies," he said. The official said the plantation programme on pilot basis had already been taken up near Shamshabad, immediately after the PVNR Expressway (left side of the road).

The corporation, under the mega plantation programme, would plant 4,90,000 saplings along the Musi and nalas, 13,40,000 would be planted in colonies apart from tree parks, newly proposed parks and theme parks. About 13,50,000 shrubs and hedge plantations will be taken at flyovers and 3,00,000 saplings will be planted in forest parks designated locations in all six zones in the GHMC limits.

## Watch out!



An open manhole on the Padmaonagar main road poses threat to motorists during monsoon season in Hyderabad. — S. SURENDER REDDY

## UK moots new graduate route for foreign students

HARLEEN MINOCHA | DC  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 16

The UK government announced that it will start accepting applications for a new graduate route for international students from July 1. This will allow the students to work or look for work after their studies at UK bachelor's degree-level or above, for a maximum period of two years, or three years for Doctoral students.

International students must comply with all set regulations and hold an eligible course at a UK

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS must comply with all set regulations and hold an eligible course at a UK higher education provider, said the British High Commission in Hyderabad's twitter handle on Wednesday.

higher education provider, said the British High Commission in Hyderabad's twitter handle on Wednesday.

This route, the government further added, will

be unsponsored, meaning applicants will not need a job offer to apply for the route. Graduates on the route will be able to work flexibly, switch jobs and develop their career as required.

The Graduate route will include England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland where the individuals would want to stay after their studies. Earlier, the government had announced the launch of a new immigration route that could help start-ups and fast-growing firms get talented employees.

## TS' INACTION HAMPERS JUSTICE: CJ

From Page 1

"Do you (the government) think that you are doing a favour to the judiciary or courts by filling the posts? It is the duty of the state. Your inaction is hampering the criminal justice system in the entire state," the CJ said.

Giving one last chance, the court said if the process for appointment would not be taken up in 15 days, it would issue a contempt case against the principal secretary of home. "Later, you cannot fault the court for the contempt case, she made it clear and adjourned the case to July 7.

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 16

The Air Force Academy (AFRA) here will host a Combined Graduation Parade in Dundigal on Saturday, to mark the successful completion of pre-commissioning training of Flight Cadets of various branches of Indian

## 2 monuments to remain closed

ATHER MOIN | DC  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 16

Two historical monuments of Hyderabad, Golconda and Charminar remained closed on Wednesday. Likewise, no decision has been taken to reopen Salarjung Museum. These monuments have remained closed from April 16 because of lockdown restrictions.

This is in spite of the decision of Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) to open all monuments coming under it from Wednesday. The reason cited was that they did not have the consent of the district officials.

Officials of Hyderabad Circle of ASI clarified that lockdown is still imposed in Telangana and they have to get clearance from the state government. Director of monuments, ASI Delhi, N. K. Pathak had made it clear that the decision was subject to executive orders of the State or district disaster management authority.

The city monuments were shut down for five months last year when coronavirus started spreading across the state. It has to be seen if ASI reopens Charminar and Golconda fort on June 19 in case the lockdown is lifted.

## AFA Graduation Parade on Saturday

Air Force.

Chief of Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhaduria, will confer the 'President's Commission' to the graduating trainees. The flight cadets, completing flying and navigation training respectively, will be presented with Wings and Brevets. Wings will also be awarded to officers

of Indian Navy and Indian Coast Guard on successful completion of their flying training at AFA.

The flight cadet from the flying branch standing first in the order of merit will be awarded the Chief of the Air Staff Sword of Honour for excelling in overall training. The

awardee will also have the privilege of commanding the parade besides receiving the President's Plaque for being the best trainee. The reviewing officer will present the President's Plaque to those who stand first in the overall merit in flying and ground duty branches.

The other features of the

event will be an aerobic display by the renowned Surya Kiran aerobatic team, Sarang helicopter display team, Pilatus PC-7 trainer and para-jumping by the Akash Ganga team. The ceremony will also have fly-past formations by Hawk, Kiran, Pilatus aircraft and Chetak helicopters.

## CM to party: Stay focussed on bypoll

FROM PAGE 1

They strongly believed that this was the 'ideal time' for the party chief to reward leaders with nominated posts who worked for the TRS victory in all the polls since December 2018.

But then, the Chief Minister sacking health minister Etala Rajender from his Cabinet on the day when polling ended for municipal polls in May first week came as a shocker for these aspiring leaders. It eventually led to Etala quitting the TRS as well as MLA post in June first week forcing yet another bypoll in Huzurabad.

According to party sources, the Chief Minister now is completely focussed on winning Huzurabad bypoll, come what may, and he wants the entire party leaders and cadre to remain

focussed on Huzurabad.

The Chief Minister is said to be in no mood to take up any Cabinet reshuffle or fill nominated posts at this juncture as it may divert the attention of party leaders and cadre from Huzurabad bypoll and also give scope for dissidence surfacing in the party from the leaders who could not be accommodated either in Cabinet or in nominated posts due to political and caste equations in some districts.

Leaders desperately waiting for posts are a worried lot as exactly only half of the five-year term is left for the TRS government before facing Assembly polls in December 2023. They are hoping that the party chief will take this factor into account and expedite the filling of nominated posts after the Huzurabad bypoll.

## Kishan opens community hall

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD JUNE 16

Union Minister Kishan Reddy on Wednesday inaugurated the newly constructed community committee hall in Kachiguda at the Thakkaizail Dhobi Ghat. The hall was constructed with ₹14.50 lakh from the MP fund.

The minister said that he has allotted altogether ₹54 lakh from the MP fund for different works. Another Dhobi Ghat was built with the MP local area development fund in Amberpet Mohini colony. In Secunderabad constituency, a Dhobi Ghat was built in Veeranna Gutta. He praised the Rajaka Sangam leader Narsimha who was

involved in the Dhobi Ghat constructions.

He said the work on some other project like a railway over-bridge would start soon. Though the Amberpet flyover work has been delayed due to problems in land acquisition, it would start soon. Many development works have been delayed due to the Covid-19 crisis. Yet, with the support of the people, all these would be completed in a time-bound manner, he said.

The minister participated in several programmes including Covid relief initiatives at Pan Bazar in Secunderabad and Ramnagar. He visited Raj Bhavan and called on chief justice of India NV Ramana.

## OU LIKELY TO HOLD PG EXAMS IN JULY

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 16

Osmania University is likely to hold examinations for the PG final semester from the first week of July. Exams for final semester regular, backlog and improvement candidates, and improvement and backlog exams for first, second and third semesters have been scheduled tentatively for next month.

While a detailed timetable will be released later, students will have to pay the examination fee online by June 22 without late fee; or by June 28 with a late fee of ₹300.

The university said in a circular that this will be the last chance for backlog examinations for students admitted during the 2015-16 academic year.

Meanwhile, even though a tentative schedule for undergraduate students has not been finalised yet, the university is enrolling undergraduate first semester students for examinations.

It has released a schedule for exam fee payment. Students have been advised to submit their examination application forms and fees without late fee by June 25, or with a late fee of ₹200 by July 2.





## SHORT TAKES

## 40KG GANJA SEIZED; FOUR ARRESTED

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KOTHAGUDEM, JUNE 16

The police recovered 40 kg ganja in Bhadrachalam on Wednesday. The police team led by sub-inspector T. Swamy suspected the bags of four persons and searched it. The police found ganja packets worth ₹6 lakh from them. The four persons that were arrested include Mohammad Intiaz, 27, Khammam, Korra Dara Babu, 20, Chintapalli, Visakhapatnam district, Muthineni Kishan Kumar, 26, Khammam and Mohammad Mujamil, Khammam. The four formed a gang and transported ganja from one place to another place. Darababu is a key person in the gang and he supplied 859 kg ganja worth ₹1.28 crore in 2020-21. There are eight ganja cases against Darababu in Bhadrachalam police station.

Kishan Kumar used to shift the ganja to other places and four cases were filed against him.

## COVID SPURT IN TRIBAL THANDA STUNS OFFICIALS

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KHAMMAM, JUNE 16

Karepalli, a tribal mandal in Wyr Assembly segment, was in the news till a week ago for recording the highest number Covid-19 positive cases. It registered 1,322 positive cases in May against 419 in April. About 907 Covid-19 positive cases were reported from June 1 to June 16. Relief came from June 9 when 52 positive cases were reported from 525 tests that were conducted on that day. The positive cases were reported 57 against 576 tests on June 10, 41 cases against 406 tests on June 11 and 39 from 814 tests on June 13. On June 16, It showed 11 positive cases from 454 tests.

Hanumantha Rao, medical officer of Karepalli mandal said, "There is a reason to feel happy on the day because there are occasions when the mandal witnessed 60 per cent positive cases from tests that were conducted."

How has Covid-19 witnessed such extremes in Karepalli mandal where the 104 habitations stay at considerable distances? It is not a border mandal. But, its Covid developments have baffled both medical and health department staff and also higher officials from the government.

There are two major reasons for the spread. The police are unable to check the movement of people between the habitations. The people did not stop their routine programmes at any stage with it.

Secondly, about 55 marriages took place in the mandal from May 11 to June 5. Nobody maintained the guidelines and the attendance at marriages was 150 and 200.

"TRS leaders encouraged people to organise functions in their own way when the elders approached them on conducting marriages," said an official.

The government took the virus' spread as serious and conducted 7,229 tests in June, 2,714 tests in May and 1570 tests in April. Medical kits were distributed to 1,600 persons after finding Covid-19 symptoms.

## MP Bapurao gifts bullock to farmer

DC CORRESPONDENT  
ADILABAD, JUNE 16

Adilabad BJP MP and Thudum Debba state president Soyam Bapurao has responded to the incident of a distressed Adivasi farmer family using family member in place of the second bullock to balance the plough in Dongargam village in Indravelli mandal and donated a bullock to the farmers' family on Wednesday.

Following a report in *Deccan Chronicle*, Bapurao who was in Delhi asked his team to immediately visit the village and donate a bullock to Kova Abhiman's family so that they could continue their agriculture operations without any hurdles. Abhiman is using his son Avinash in place of the second bullock following the death of a bullock.

A team of leaders led by Bapurao's son Venkatesh visited Dongargam village

● Following a report in *Deccan Chronicle*, Bapurao who was in Delhi asked his team to immediately visit the village and donate a bullock to Kova Abhiman's family so that they could continue their agriculture operations without any hurdles. Abhiman is using his son Avinash in place of the second bullock following the death of a bullock.

and interacted with the family and donated the bullock that was purchased for ₹40,000. BJP leaders and the farmer's family performed puja to the bullocks before commencing tilling in the leftover land.

Indravelli MPP Pote Shobha, senior Adivasi leader Sidam Bheemrao and Thodasam Nagorao, Thudum Debba leaders Kodapa Nagesh, Godam Ganesh and Purka Bapurao and others were present.

## Etala exit brings to fore Huzurabad district issue

TRS is looking to keep its vote bank intact following exit of Etala

DC CORRESPONDENT  
WARANGAL, JUNE 16

The formation of Warangal and Hanamkonda districts is once again brought to the fore with the state government mulling the creation of 'P.V. Narasimha Rao' Huzurabad district. Panchayat raj minister Errabelli Dayakar Rao and State planning commission vice-chairman Boinalpalli Vinod Kumar mentioned the reorganisation of districts recently, leading to a discussion over the issue in political circles and the general public.

As part of the division

of districts in 2016, the erstwhile Warangal district was carved into six districts (Warangal Urban, Warangal Rural, Jayashankar Bhupalpally, Mulugu, Mahabubabad and Jangaon). There were differences of opinion regarding the formation of Warangal Urban and Warangal Rural districts.

Due to ambiguity over the continuation of these two districts, the headquarters for Warangal Rural was also not finalised till now. Hanamkonda continues to remain the headquarters for the operations of both districts.

● Due to ambiguity over the continuation of these two districts, the headquarters for Warangal Rural was also not finalised till now. Hanamkonda continues to remain the headquarters for the operations of both districts.

Although it was decided to undertake the construction of the Rural District Headquarters on the premises of Ajamiah mills, it was not implemented due to various reasons. Attempts were made to carry out land

acquisition in various parts of the Parkal constituency but they were not successful.

The issue of Warangal Rural and Warangal Urban districts continues to come to the fore every time new districts are mentioned in the state.

Following the recent developments in the Huzurabad constituency, where former TRS MLA and minister Etala Rajendar joined BJP, the ruling party is looking to keep its vote bank intact by creating P.V. Huzurabad district.

It is being speculated that the new district would be carved out by

including several mandals from Warangal Urban, Karimnagar, Siddipet and Jayashankar Bhupalpally districts.

This move could also fulfil the long-standing demands to upgrade Vangara and Challuru villages to mandals. This implies that the formation of a new district would change the current state of the surrounding districts.

Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao, who is coming to Warangal on the 21st of this month, seems likely to clarify the issue regarding the reorganisation of districts.

## ROAD MISHAP SPARKS STIR BY VILLAGERS

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NIZAMABAD, JUNE 16

Gannaram villagers in Indalwai mandal staged a rasta roko with the dead body of a road accident victim on Wednesday at the Indalwai toll plaza on National Highway 44. Kummari Saloo, of Gannaram village died on the spot when a speeding car coming from Hyderabad hit his moped on NH-44.

Noticing the incident, angered villagers staged a protest demanding compensation to the victim's family members.

As a result, vehicular traffic was halted on the Hyderabad-Nagpur highway for some time. Dichpally CI Raghunath, Indalwai police rushed to the spot and convinced the agitators.

Finally, they shifted the body for postmortem at GGH in Nizamabad. Gannaram villagers said lack of service road facility, the villagers frequently affected in road accidents. They urged the National Highway Authority of India officials to provide service road facility immediately.

● Vehicular traffic was halted on the Hyderabad-Nagpur highway

## One groom, two brides

DC CORRESPONDENT  
ADILABAD, JUNE 16

Everything is fair in love and war, says an adage, and proving it right, a man tied nuptial knots to two of his lady-loves at the same time, following all traditions, right in front of his kith and kin.

This off the wall wedding ceremony took place in Ghanpur village in Uttoor mandal in Adilabad district on Tuesday, much to the shock of diehard advocates of monogamy.

It is said that three of them are majors and are about to complete their graduation.

Marriage between two women and one man, that too at a time on the same occasion is rare and this is a first-of-its-kind marriage in the recent history of Adivasis in Telangana.

The low-key ceremony was at Ghanpur village, which is the native place of the groom and one of the brides. The second bride's native village is near to Ghanpur.

The groom and two



Marriage being solemnised for a bridegroom and his two brides in Ghanpur village in Uttoor mandal.

brides are close relatives. He is cousin to both the brides. All three are going to live together at one home in Ghanpur.

Both the girls fell in love with the same boy and wanted to get married to him and vice versa.

The relatives present at the wedding seemed to be enjoying watching the rare 'marriage proceedings' and the visible chemistry between the

two brides and a groom.

The bridegroom, Veladi Arjun, is doing a degree and completed his TTC and while brides Kanaka Usharani and Ada Surekha are also educated and are doing their degrees.

Arjun said he wanted to do justice to both the girls and tied the knots since both girls were in love with him and he too loved both the girls deeply.

## Vax drive picks up as norms eased

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NIZAMABAD/KAMAREDDY, JUNE 16

People thronged the Covid-19 vaccination centres in Nizamabad and Kamareddy districts due to a well-orchestrated campaign to induce the public to go for jabs and also remove any vaccine hesitancy in them.

People of age groups could be seen going in droves to the vaccination centres.

Frontline workers and high-risk groups have already been adminis-

tered Covid-19 vaccines in both the districts. A majority of centres are offering only Covishield vaccines. Rush is avoided at many places and people are being handed time slot slips the day before. Raju, a carpenter who got the vaccine at Rajiv Gandhi Auditorium in Nizamabad, said there were no side-effects and he was carrying on his job well.

As the inoculated people relate the advantages, there is a growing interest in the public to get

vaccine doses to boost their immunity against the dreaded infection.

Urban health centre officials in Nizamabad said that the strict rules for Covid-19 vaccination slowed the process for the last one month. However, following relaxation in the norms, people are increasingly turning up for the doses on their own. No eligible person would be left out this time, they said.

On-the-spot registration would increase the number of beneficiaries, is observed. The medical

and health department says it is almost reaching the daily target for vaccination in both districts. For instance, in Kamareddy district, vaccines were administered to 2,091 people (72 per cent) as against the daily target of 2,900 on Wednesday.

However, a corporate hospital in Nizamabad is also providing Covid-19 vaccines.

It is charging ₹1,450 per vaccine. It is learnt around 300 people are getting vaccines at the hospital.

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## Cops lay roads to 2 interior villages

DC CORRESPONDENT  
ADILABAD, JUNE 16

Ramagundam Police Commissioner V. Satyanarayana on Wednesday inaugurated the gravel road that was laid by the police with the help of local people and two tractors owners

from the two interior villages of Lendiguda and Punaguda in the Maoist-affected Chorpalli gram panchayat in Lingapur mandal in Komaram Bheem Asifabad district. The Commissioner inaugurated the two roads at Chorpalli.

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## SHORT TAKES

## PM LAUDS MOTHER FOR ISOLATING FROM CHILD

New Delhi, June 16: Prime Minister Narendra Modi has hailed a mother of a six-year-old boy for her courage and positive thinking as she isolated herself from her son after contracting Covid-19.

Pooja Verma, who lives in Sector-6 of Ghaziabad, tested positive for the Coronavirus along with her husband, Gagan Kaushik. Verma, her husband and their six-year-old son live in a three-bedroom apartment and after contracting Covid-19 in April, the couple made a tough decision and decided that all three would be isolated in separate rooms.

This was not easy for the six-year-old who longed for his parent's love while unable to understand what the Coronavirus was or what Covid-related norms meant and what was the need for this isolation, Verma said.

He kept on wondering what wrong had he done that he had to stay in a room separate from his parents, she said. In a letter to the Prime Minister, she narrated her ordeal as a mother who had to stay away from her child, through a poem she had penned.

The Prime Minister wrote back to her and while asking about the wellbeing of her family, said, "I am happy that even in difficult circumstances, you and your family have fought this disease by adopting Covid-compliant behaviour with courage." Lauding the woman's poem, the PM said it expressed the worry and anxiety of a mother when she is away from her child.

## ODISHA GOES FOR 'PARTIAL UNLOCK' FROM TODAY

DC CORRESPONDENT  
BHUBANESWAR, JUNE 16

With the state reporting a steady dip in Covid-19 cases, the Odisha government on Wednesday announced partial unlock plans to relax the restrictions imposed on May 1 this year. The partial lockdown will come into effect from June 17 morning and will continue till July 1 morning.

Addressing a press conference, chief secretary Suresh Mohapatra said the Covid-19 infection rate has drastically declined and the test positivity rate (TPR) dropped to six per cent this week. He attributed the drop in the infection rate to people's adherence to lockdown restrictions.

"The peak period in the state is already over and I hope if people continue to coordinate with the state government, the situation can be completely brought under control in a few days," Mohapatra added.

Under the new unlocking measures, the lockdown restrictions will be eased in 17 districts (Category A) out of the 30 in the state from tomorrow. Shops will remain open between 6 am and 5 pm in these 17 districts. The Category-A districts are in the southern and western parts of the state where test positivity rate is five per cent or less. However, in the remaining 13 districts (Category B), shops will remain open between 6 am and 1 pm.

## MAOISTS INJURED IN ODISHA ENCOUNTER

AKSHAYA KUMAR  
SAHOO | DC  
BHUBANESWAR, JUNE 16

A fierce gunbattle took place between a group of Maoists rebels and security forces in a forest near Kulabedha in Odisha's Malkangiri district on Wednesday morning. Some of the rebels reportedly sustained injuries in the encounter.

According to Malkangiri superintendent of police Hrushikesh Khilari, the exchange of fire occurred during a search operation carried out by the joint team of Special Operation Group and District Voluntary Force in the forest.

"The SOG and DVF of Odisha police had launched a search operation during which the Maoists cadres opened fire indiscriminately at the security forces. The jawan also retaliated in which some rebels sustained injuries," the SP said.

However, the injured ultras managed to flee into the dense forest, he added.

During subsequent search, the security forces recovered an INSAS rifle along with 34 rounds of bullets and magazines. A kit bag, digital camera, live magazines and other Maoist articles were also found during the search, the SP added.

## FURTHER PROGRESS OF MONSOON STOPS

New Delhi, June 16: Atmospheric conditions are still not favourable for further advance of monsoon into Rajasthan, remaining parts of Gujarat, Punjab, Haryana and Delhi, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Wednesday.

It said a cyclonic circulation lies over east Uttar Pradesh and neighbourhood and there is also a western disturbance.

These conditions are not favourable for the advance of monsoon, IMD director general M. Mohapatra said.

"Large-scale atmospheric conditions are not favourable for further advance of monsoon into Rajasthan, remaining parts of Gujarat, Punjab, Haryana and Delhi," the IMD said.

However, there could be a slow progress of monsoon into some more parts of UP during the next five days in association with the existing cyclonic circulation over east Uttar Pradesh, the IMD added.

— PTI



A man takes a selfie with his family at Taj Mahal that reopened after authorities eased some restrictions in the ongoing Covid-19 lockdown, in Agra on Wednesday. — PTI

## Gap between jabs stirs row again

Centre says decision to increase gap was 'transparent and backed by scientific data'

VINEETA PANDEY | DC  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 16

India on Wednesday reported 62,224 new cases of Covid-19 and 2,542 deaths. Country's active caseload for the first time in 70 days came down below 9 lakh. The Recovery Rate has increased to 95.80 per cent while daily positivity rate stands at 3.22%. The positivity rate has been less than 5% for nine consecutive days. With the pace of vaccination picking up, the Centre hopes to check the daily cases and blunt the possible third wave.

However, a controversy has re-erupted over the gap between two doses of Covishield vaccine. The Centre had increased the gap between the two doses for Covishield from 8-12 weeks to 12-14 weeks in

May raising questions if that was done based on scientific evidence or due to shortage of the vaccines. The doses of the vaccines remain unchanged now even after the United Kingdom, which was quoted by Central government officials as an example, has decided to reduce the gap.

Union health minister Dr Harsh Vardhan on Wednesday clarified that the decision to increase the gap between the two doses was 'transparent and backed by scientific data'. The clarification came after some members of the National Technical

Advisory Group on Immunisation (NTAGI) said they had recommended only 8-12 weeks but the government on its own came out with a 12 to 16 weeks gap. It was initially

● **THE CLARIFICATION** came after some members of the NTAGI said they had recommended only 8-12 weeks but the government on its own came out with 12 to 16 weeks gap.

● **ON ANY** fresh proposal to reduce Covishield dosage gap, Dr Arora said decision will be taken scientifically, giving paramount importance to the health.

4-6 weeks.

Chairman of NTAGI Dr N.K. Arora explained that the decision to increase the gap between two Covishield doses from 4-6 weeks to 12-16 weeks lay in the fundamental scientific reason regarding behaviour of adenovector vaccines.

"In the last week of April 2021 the data released by Public Health England, United Kingdom's executive agency of the Department of Health, showed that vaccine efficacy varied between 65%

and 88% when interval is 12 weeks. This was the basis on which they overcame their epidemic outbreak due to the Alpha variant. The UK was able to come out of it because the interval they kept was 12 weeks. We also thought that this is a good idea, since there are fundamental scientific reasons to show that when interval is increased, adenovector vaccines give better response. Hence, the decision was taken on May 13, to increase the interval to 12-16 weeks. This also

gives flexibility to the community, since everyone cannot come at precisely 12 weeks or so," said Dr Arora.

Dr Arora said that the earlier decision of four weeks was based upon the bridging trial data available then. He referred to studies by PGI Chandigarh and CMC Vellore which compared effectiveness of partial versus full immunisation. "A PGI Chandigarh study very clearly shows that vaccine effectiveness was 75% for both partially immunised and fully immunised. So at least in the short run, effectiveness was similar whether you are partially or fully vaccinated. This was in relation to the Alpha variant which had swept Punjab, Northern India

and came to Delhi. This also meant that even if you received only one dose, still you are protected." Results from the CMC Vellore study were similar.

On any fresh proposal to reduce Covishield dosage gap, Dr Arora said the decision will be taken scientifically, giving paramount importance to the health and protection of the community. "Covid-19 and the vaccination are very dynamic. Tomorrow, if the vaccine platform tells us that a narrower interval is better for our people, even if the benefit is 5% - 10%, the Committee will take the decision on the basis of merit and its wisdom. On the other hand, if it turns out that the current decision is fine, we will continue with it," he added.

## MP IAS officer gets show cause notice

RABINDRA NATH  
CHOUDHURY | DC  
BHOPAL, JUNE 16

A young IAS officer of Madhya Pradesh has been served show cause notice by the state government following his posts in a private social media group of bureaucrats levelling corruption charges against some babus.

The posts later got leaked. In the leaked posts, the 2014 batch IAS officer of MP cadre, Lokesh Jangid, said he was frequently transferred because of his "intolerance to corruption in the administration".

The babu said he was transferred seven times in his four and half years of service.

In one of his posts, the IAS officer said, "In Bihar they do not make any one DM who mints money. In MP, the less said the

better".

"Stability of tenure in Madhya Pradesh and the joke of an institution called Civil Service Board," said another post by him.

"Interestingly, while those who mint money from all kinds of mafia get transferred from field to field and those with impeccable integrity get thrown to the Secretariat on transfer", read another post in the group by him.

He also indicated to write a memoir after his retirement to bring the facts before everyone since he was bound by service rules currently.

The IAS officer, in one of his posts, alleged corruption by Barwani district collector Shivraj Singh Verma and accused the latter of influencing the Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan to get him transferred.

## 2 die after consuming spirit stolen from Covid Care Centre in Kerala

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JUNE 16

Two persons died in Kerala's Kollam district after consuming surgical spirit kept at a Covid First Line Treatment Centre (CFLTC). The deceased were identified as Prasad of Pattazhy and his friend Muruganandan. Two others — Rajeev and Gopi — who had also consumed the spirit are in a critical condition.

The surgical spirit was stolen from a private hospital in Pathanapuram which was functioning as a CFLTC.

In the statement recorded by police, Gopi said that Muruganandan who worked as a security guard at the private hospital had brought the spirit. The police said that Muruganandan is



A bartender arranges liquor bottles on the shelves at a bar ahead of its reopening after authorities eased restrictions of lockdown in Kolkata on Wednesday. — PTI

believed to have taken the spirit from hospital and diluted it before consuming it along with others.

According to hospital authorities some quantity of surgical spirit which

was used for sanitising hospital equipment, was found missing.

The four consumed the spirit as liquor was not available in the state due to lockdown. It may be noted that the

government had decided to reopen bars and liquor outlets in the state from Thursday.

Meanwhile, the police and excise officials conducted a search at the hospital.

Kerala reports 13,270 new cases of Covid 19 on Wednesday.

The active cases have come down to 1,09,794. During the last 24 hours, 1,21,521 samples were tested and the Test Positivity Rate was 11.79 per cent.

The state reported 147 deaths taking the death toll to 11,655.

At present 4.92 lakh people are under observation including 4.63 lakh under home or institutional quarantine.

The state government had announced lifting of lockdown restrictions in a graded manner from Thursday.

## ASSAM EDU. DEPT TO TAKE CALL ON HOLDING EXAMS

MANOJ ANAND | DC  
GUWAHATI, JUNE 16

The Assam cabinet on Wednesday observed that the Covid situation in the state has not improved to conduct class 10 and 12 board examinations but the final decision will be taken by the education department in consultation with the stakeholders.

Informing that in zero-18 years group about 25,000 children were infected by Covid in the state, Assam health minister Keshab Mahanta told reporters that state health department gave a detailed presentation before the state cabinet about the prevailing rate of positivity besides the possible congregation of people in case of holding the board examinations.

After seeing the presentation, the cabinet concluded that it would not be wise to hold the board examinations, he said adding that the decision on whether the exam will be conducted or not will be taken on June 18 by the education department.

Pointing out that Covid situation has not yet improved in districts like Golaghat, Morigaon, Kamrup (M) etc, the minister said that the cabinet was of the view that all necessary steps should be taken to ensure that the spread of pandemic is brought under control. "We have decided not to allow home isolation to persons who don't have separate isolation facilities at home," he said adding that home isolation was responsible for the spread of the virus in many cases.

## MAHA TOLD TO PROBE CONG. MLA, SONU SOOD

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC  
MUMBAI, JUNE 16

The Bombay High Court on Wednesday asked the Maharashtra government to "seriously examine" the role of MLA Zeeshan Siddiqui and actor Sonu Sood regarding the alleged illegal distribution of crucial anti-viral drug Remdesivir, through social media, noting that it seemed like a case of a parallel unauthorised agency.

The bench comprising Justices S.P. Deshmukh and G.S. Kulkarni issued this direction while hearing a public interest litigation filed by Nilesh Navalakha through advocate Rajesh Inamdar on management of distribution of Remdesivir to all states by Centre.

On the last date of hearing, advocate Inamdar had pointed out to the court how Remdesivir was supplied to people following requests made on social media to Siddiqui and Sood within hours, while the state complained of a shortage and several people were dying.

On Wednesday, the court observed that the two seemed to have played a crucial role in facilitating the distribution of Remdesivir.

## NEW LAWS

New IT rules are aimed at regulating content on social media, making it more accountable

## Prasad slams Twitter for not complying with new IT rules

New Delhi, June 16: IT minister Ravi Shankar Prasad on Wednesday slammed Twitter for deliberate defiance and failure to comply with the country's new IT rules, which has led to the US giant losing its intermediary status in India and becoming liable for users posting any unlawful content.

Twitter has allegedly not fully complied with the new rules, called Intermediary Guidelines that call for setting up grievance redressal mechanism and appointing officers to coordinate with law enforcement.

The rules became effective from May 26 and Twitter even after the expiry of the additional

time has not appointed the requisite officers, leading to it losing the 'safe harbour' immunity, sources in the government said.

Prasad said Twitter has "deliberately chosen the path of non-compliance." The minister also mentioned that if any foreign entity believes that it can portray itself as flag bearer of free speech in India to excuse itself from complying with the law of the land, "such attempts are misplaced".

"There are numerous queries arising as to whether Twitter is entitled to safe harbour provision. However, the simple fact of the matter is that Twitter has failed to comply with the Intermediary

Guidelines that came into effect from the 26th of May," he said in social media posts.

He posted a series of messages on Koo — Twitter's homegrown replica — and then on Twitter itself, saying the US social media giant "was given multiple opportunities to comply with the same, however, it has deliberately chosen the path of non-compliance."

Loss of intermediary status in India implies that in the event of any charge against the microblogging site for alleged unlawful content, it would be treated as a publisher and would be liable for punishment under penal laws.

The new IT rules, originally announced in February, are aimed at regulating content on social media firms and making likes of Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter more accountable to legal requests for swift removal of posts and sharing details on the originators of messages.

Prasad's ministry on June 5 had written to Twitter warning it of "unintended consequences" if it did not comply with the rules. Twitter did not immediately comment on Prasad's tweets but it on Tuesday stated that it was keeping IT ministry apprised of progress of every step of the process.

"An interim Chief Compliance Officer has been retained and details will be shared with the Ministry directly soon," it had said.

"Twitter continues to make every effort to comply with the new guidelines."

The government's relationship with social media platforms has been tense for the past few months and with Twitter, it got enunciated when posts by BJP leaders on an alleged strategy document of the opposition Congress party to target the Modi government's handling of the second wave of Covid infections, was tagged as 'manipulated media'. — PTI



## SHORT TAKES

## EXTEND BREXIT SAUSAGE WAR DEADLINE: UK

**London, June 16:** Britain has asked the EU to extend a grace period for some post-Brexit trade rules in Northern Ireland, Brexit minister David Frost said Wednesday as a sausage-centred dispute between London and Brussels sizzles on. Frost confirmed the UK has asked the bloc to delay an end-of-month deadline to implement a new trading regime around chilled meats in the British province, which could see Northern Irish imports of products like sausages banned.

“We have asked and suggested to the EU that the right way forward would be to agree to extend the grace period, at least for a bit,” Frost told a British parliamentary scrutiny panel.

## RECORD-BUSTING HEAT SPREADS ACROSS S-W U.S.

**Phoenix (US), June 16:** Dangerous, record-busting heat spread across the US Southwest on Tuesday and into parts of Utah, Montana and Wyoming as a dome of high pressure hovered over a large swath of the region, pushing temperatures into the triple digits this week and intensifying the risk for wildfires amid a long-running drought.

Some of the highest temperatures were seen in bone-dry Arizona, where the National Weather Service forecast a record high of 117 degrees (47 degrees Celsius) in Phoenix. The previous high for the date was 115 degrees (46 Celsius), set in 1974. “It is kind of early to see temperatures this high, that’s for sure,” said Marvin Percha, senior forecaster at the weather service’s Phoenix office.

## THINNER KIM LEADS TO HEALTH SPECULATION

**Seoul, June 16:** The health of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has long been a source of morbid fascination in rival South Korea, which sits in the shadow of Kim’s 1.2-million-strong army and his growing arsenal of nuclear-armed missiles.

Has he gained even more weight? Is he struggling for breath after relatively short walks? What about that cane? Why did he miss that important state anniversary? Now, the 37-year-old faces fresh speculation in the South about his health again. But this time, it’s because he’s noticeably slimmer. Kim’s health matters in Seoul, Washington, Tokyo and other world capitals because he hasn’t publicly anointed a successor who would control an advancing nuclear programme targeting the United States and its allies.

## 2 CANDIDATES PULL OUT OF IRAN PREZ RACE

**Tehran, June 16:** Two days before Iran’s presidential election, which is expected to be won by an ultraconservative cleric, two of the seven men vying for the post pulled out of the race on Wednesday.

Conservative lawmaker Alireza Zakani withdrew hours after reformist Mohsen Mehralizadeh had also thrown in the towel ahead of Friday’s vote, Iranian media reported.

That leaves five hopefuls in the race, in which ultraconservative judiciary chief Ebrahim Raisi, 60, is seen as the clear favourite after other prominent politicians were barred from running. Zakani, 55, was quoted as saying of Raisi to a state television reporter: “I believe him to be qualified and will vote for him, and I hope that fundamental reforms take place in the country.”

## PIO NOMINATED CONNECTICUT FEDERAL JUDGE

**Washington, June 16:** US President Joe Biden has nominated Indian-American civil rights attorney Sarala Vidya Nagala as a federal judge in the State of Connecticut.

If confirmed by the Senate, federal prosecutor Nagala would become the first judge of South Asian descent to serve on the District Court for the District of Connecticut.

Nagala is currently serving as the Deputy Chief of the Major Crimes Unit in the US Attorney’s Office in the District of Connecticut, a role she has held since 2017.

She joined the US Attorney’s Office in 2012 and has served in a number of leadership roles, including as Hate Crimes Coordinator.

Previously, Nagala was an associate at Munger, Tolles, & Olson in San Francisco, California from 2009 to 2012.

## AUSTRALIA COURT REJECTS FOREIGN INTERFERENCE LAW CHALLENGE

**Canberra, June 16:** Australia’s highest court on Wednesday rejected a challenge to foreign interference laws in a case that involved a US conservative political organisation and free speech arguments.

China has condemned the laws introduced in 2018 that are widely seen as a means of preventing covert Chinese interference in Australian politics, universities and other institutions.

People working on behalf of a foreign powers have to be publicly registered with the Attorney-General’s Department in the interests of transparency. But LibertyWorks Inc, an Australian libertarian think tank, objected to having to register while working on communications for the American Conservative Union ahead of conferences held in Australia. LibertyWorks promotes the American group’s annual political conferences.

LibertyWorks argued the so-called Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme Act was not valid because it burdened the implied right to free speech in Australia.

LibertyWorks said the registration process was onerous and therefore deterred political communication. But six of the seven High Court judges found the law was valid and any burden was justified.

Even when the purpose of the foreign interference is not to damage or destabilise Australia, if left undisclosed it can impede the ability of decision-makers in Australia, Justices Susan Kiefel, Patrick Keane and Jacqueline Gleeson wrote. Attorney-General Michaelia Cash welcomed the ruling.

Foreign influence activities, when conducted in an open and transparent manner, can contribute positively to public debate and are welcome in Australia, her office said in a statement.

The scheme is not there to prohibit people or entities from undertaking these activities. Rather, it acknowledges that it is in the public interest that these arrangements are transparent, the statement added. LibertyWorks president Andrew Cooper could not be immediately contacted for comment. — AP

## FATF TO GIVE PAK REPORT NEXT WEEK

**Islamabad, June 16:** The global watchdog for money laundering and terror financing has prepared a preliminary report on Pakistan’s progress on the implementation of the 27-point action plan and will present it at FATF’s next plenary meeting from June 21, according to a media report.

The report has been prepared by the Paris-based Financial Action Task Force’s (FATF) International Cooperation Review Group (ICRG), which includes the US, the UK, France, China and India.

Currently placed on the FATF’s ‘grey list’, Pakistan has been scrambling in recent months to avoid being added to a list of countries deemed non-compliant with anti-money laundering and terrorist financing regulations by the global watchdog. — PTI

## Putin says summit ‘constructive’

Despite worst US-Russia tensions in recent years, both Presidents struck positive notes

## At summit, reporters seen shoving

**Geneva, June 16:** President Joe Biden’s summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin began with minutes of unusually fierce shoving and shouting among United States and Russian journalists and security forces.

Organisers at Wednesday’s summit in Geneva opened the meeting room to great powers’ capable of agreeing to disagree. He stressed his desire to take US-Russian relations off their increasingly unstable trajectory, in which Washington accuses the Kremlin of everything from meddling in elections to cyberwarfare.

“It’s always better to meet face to face,” he told Putin as they met in the villa’s library, with a globe placed between them.

“We are trying to determine where we have a mutual interest, where we can cooperate; and where we don’t, establish a predictable and rational way in which we disagree — two great powers,” Biden said.

Putin noted at the start of the meeting that “a lot of issues” need addressing “at the highest level” and that he hoped the meeting would be “productive”. — AP

journalists for what’s normally a few minutes of news media filming and shouting questions before talks start.

On Wednesday, however, Russian and United States security forces and officials initially blocked journalists as they tried to enter the site for the scheduled press meeting.

The scene then devolved into minutes of chaos inside the meeting room.

American journalists described Russian security and news media grabbing them by the arms and clothes to try to hold them back.

United States journalists tried to shoulder their way in, and a US reporter

was knocked to the ground.

Before the scene calmed, some in the crowd shouted they were being crushed in the melee.

Biden and Putin initially sat awkwardly in front of the press, but then watched and at times laughed at the tumult.

— AP

## Masks requirements vary in Geneva, say authorities

**Geneva, June 16:** The acting chief of protocol for the Geneva region says staff members at the villa where United States President Joe Biden and Russian President

Vladimir Putin are meeting will keep masks on during the summit even if the two leaders don’t. Geneva authorities require the wearing of masks in public, though there are exceptions. The requirement holds particularly in places with a lot of pedestrian traffic, such as shopping areas.

Marion Bordier Bueschi, who is managing the grand lakeside mansion that will serve as the summit site, told *The Associated Press* that staffers inside Villa La Grange were already wearing masks.

She said Putin and Biden would likely not wear masks during their talks on Wednesday. She noted that both leaders have been vaccinated against the coronavirus. Confirmed cases and deaths from Covid-19 have dropped across Switzerland, and authorities are planning steps to ease the mask requirement later this month.

Biden and his aides have made clear that he will not follow in the footsteps of his recent predecessors by aiming to radically alter the United States’ ties to Russia. Instead, the White House is looking to move toward a more predictable relationship and attempt to rein in Russia’s disruptive behaviour.

Biden will push Putin on Wednesday to stop meddling in democratic elections, to ease tensions with Ukraine and to stop giving safe harbour to hackers carrying out cyber and ransomware attacks.

— AP

## RUSSIA, U.S. TO HOLD TALKS ON CYBERSECURITY

**Geneva, June 16:** Russian President Vladimir Putin says that he and US President Joe Biden have agreed that their two nations will start consultations on cybersecurity.

After a meeting with Biden in Geneva, Putin said: “We believe that cybersecurity is important for the world in general, for the US in particular, and for Russia as well.” The Russian president said that the two countries “just need to abandon various insinuations, sit down at the expert level and start working in the interests of the US and Russia.”

Putin charged that “most of the cyberattacks in the world are carried out from the cyber realm of the United States,” with Canada and Britain coming second and third.

However, the most damaging cyberattacks on record have been attributed by the United States and the European Union to Russia’s GRU military intelligence agency, including the NotPetya virus.

— AP

## Israeli airstrikes target Gaza sites

**Jerusalem, June 16:** Israeli aircraft carried out a series of airstrikes at militant sites in the Gaza Strip early Wednesday, the first such raids since a shaky cease-fire ended the war with Hamas last month.

The airstrikes targeted facilities used by Hamas militants for meetings to plan attacks, the Israeli military said, blaming the group for any act of violence emanating from Gaza.

There were no immediate reports of casualties. On Tuesday, hundreds of Israeli ultranationalists, some chanting “Death to Arabs,” paraded in east Jerusalem in a show of force that threatened to spark renewed violence.

Palestinians in Gaza responded by launching incendiary balloons that caused at least 10 fires in southern Israel.

The march posed a test for Israel’s fragile new government as well as the tenuous truce that ended last month’s 11-day war between Israel and Hamas. Palestinians consider the march, meant to celebrate Israel’s capture of east Jerusalem in 1967, to be a provocation.

Hamas called on Palestinians to “resist” the parade, a version of which helped ignite last month’s 11-day Gaza war. With music blaring, hundreds of Jewish nationalists gathered and moved in front of Damascus Gate. — AP

## Sun, sea and sand



People enjoy the sunshine on Brighton beach, south east England, on Wednesday.

— AP

## Moscow orders mandatory vaccinations over case rise

**Moscow, June 16:** The mayor of Moscow on Wednesday ordered mandatory vaccinations for residents of the Russian capital working in the service industry, citing a “dramatic” rise in Coronavirus infections.

The announcement by Sergei Sobyanin — one of the first compulsory vaccination orders for a major world city — was a stark admission from a senior Russian official that authorities are struggling to bring the pandemic under control.

Russia lifted most restrictions last year, and the country has pressed ahead with large in-person events, like a recent economic forum in Saint Petersburg and Euro 2020 hosting duties.

President Vladimir Putin has repeatedly signalled Russia was moving beyond the Coronavirus

## Two vax for kids show promise

**New York, June 16:** The Moderna Covid-19 vaccine and an experimental protein-based preventive proved to be safe and showed good antibody response against SARS-CoV-2 in a trial on baby rhesus macaques, scientists say.

The research, published on Tuesday in the journal *Science Immunology*, suggests that vaccines for young children are likely important, safe tools to

curtail the pandemic.

“Safe and effective vaccines for young children will help limit the spread of Covid-19 because we know children can transmit the virus to others, whether they get sick from SARS-CoV-2 infection or remain asymptomatic,” said Sallie Permar from New York-Presbyterian Komansky Children’s Hospital, US. — PTI

“Moreover, many children have become sick

and claimed his country — which has the sixth-highest caseload globally

— handled the global outbreak better than most others. — AFP

## REGENERON THERAPY SAVES LIVES: STUDY

**London, June 16:** A new, experimental antiviral treatment used for some worst-affected Covid-19 patients has been found to save lives, according to the results of a UK trial on Wednesday.

In the ongoing Randomised Evaluation of Covid-19 Therapy (RECOVERY) trial, Regeneron Pharmaceuticals’ combination of drugs was found to benefit patients with severe symptoms of the virus. It not only cut down the numbers requiring a ventilator but also reduced the duration of their hospital stay. — PTI

## Jadhav’s case put off till October 5

**Islamabad, June 16:** A Pakistani court has adjourned till October 5 the hearing of a government’s plea to appoint a counsel for Indian death-row prisoner Kulbhusan Jadhav on request of the country’s top law officer. Jadhav, the 50-year-old retired Indian Navy officer, was sentenced to death by a Pakistani military court on charges of espionage and terrorism in April 2017.

India approached the International Court of Justice against Pakistan for

denial of consular access to Jadhav and challenging the death sentence.

The Hague-based ICJ ruled in July 2019 that Pakistan must undertake an “effective review and reconsideration” of the conviction and sentence of Jadhav and also to grant consular access to India without further delay. On Tuesday, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) adjourned the hearing of the government’s plea to appoint counsel for Jadhav till October 5. — PTI

## CORRIGENDUM

**Muthoot Finance**

**Muthoot Finance Ltd. Gold Auction Notice**

Registered Office: 2nd Floor, Muthoot Chambers, Banerji Road, Kochi - 682 018, Kerala, India. CIN: L65910KL1997PLC011300. Ph: +91484 2396478, 2394712, Fax: +91 4842396506, mails@muthootgroup.com, www.muthootfinance.com

Gold Auction dates of the following auction centers of Muthoot Finance Ltd. has been Postponed due to some technical reasons. New date of the auction with concerned auction centers are shown below:-

2nd Auction Date : 17.06.2021, 12:00PM  
New Auction : 17.07.2021, 12:00PM  
Auction Centre : Muthoot Finance Ltd., H.No.5-11-24, 1st Floor, Shop No.5, DattaSai Complex, Nr. Mohan Electronics, Old Bus Stand, Nirmal (Nirmal District)

2nd Auction Date : 17.06.2021, 11:00AM  
New Auction : 17.07.2021, 11:00AM  
Auction Centre : Muthoot Finance Ltd., # 1-12-123/5/1, Sri Nagar Colony, Opp: Prashanthi Homes, Vinayakanagar, Nizamabad (Nizamabad District)

2nd Auction Date : 17.06.2021, 05:00PM  
New Auction : 17.07.2021, 05:00PM  
Auction Centre : Muthoot Finance Ltd., #2-5-259, First Floor, Rambazar Road, Jagtial (Jagtial District)

2nd Auction Date : 17.06.2021, 04:00PM  
New Auction : 17.07.2021, 04:00PM  
Auction Centre : Muthoot Finance Ltd., Bldg. No.6-6-11/3/14/1, 1st Floor, B.Ramulu Complex, Ambedkar Chowk, M.G. Road, Adilabad (Adilabad District)

For Muthoot Finance Ltd  
M/s. SSR & Co., Law Associates,  
1-19-72/12, Rukminipuri Colony,  
Behind Spencers, ECIL Post, Hyderabad - 62

Place : Nizambad  
Date : 17.06.2021



# DECCAN Chronicle

17 JUNE 2021

## HC upholds right to protest, dissent; offers a ray of hope

The order of the Delhi high court granting bail to three research students incarcerated for their alleged role in the Delhi riots of 2020 comes as a ray of hope for those who have been anguished by the government's propensity to use legal means against political opponents and the judiciary's proclivity to shut its eyes to executive excesses. The students, two from Jawaharlal Nehru University and one from Jamia Milia Islamia University, were charged under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, (UAPA), 1967.

The court has made significant observations on two important points that needed judicial clarification. One, the line that demarcates legitimate protests and terrorist activities and two, the police's unmindful application of laws such as UAPA on people and the lower judiciary's failure to apply their judicial mind to it. On the first, the court was categorical in assailing the state for blurring the line between the constitutionally guaranteed right to protest and terrorist activity in an attempt to suppress dissent. Such a mindset gaining traction would harm democracy, the court

**It defies the basic principles of the rule of law if the executive thinks that the process of law can be the punishment a citizen would face for defiance. There are far too many such people, including the 84-year-old priest Fr Stan Swamy, now languishing in jail under the very same law.**

has observed. On the second, the court reminds the police that it was not the legislative intent of the UAPA that offences of the usual and ordinary kind, however grave, egregious or heinous in their nature and extent, to be covered by that law.

Referring to the constitutional scheme of things and the separation of powers under the Union, State and Concurrent Lists, the court pointed out that such laws are enacted for the defence of India, trashing the police act of booking students for shouting slogans. It has also found that the chargesheet reveals nothing to prove that the students were engaged in "terrorist activities" the definition of which was, according to the court, "vague". The court enjoined upon the courts to apply its mind when such laws are invoked on unsuspecting people instead of giving its assent to what the executive prescribes.

Governments may be uncomfortable with citizens asking questions, but that's the way democracy functions. It defies the basic principles of the rule of law if the executive thinks that the process of law can be the punishment a citizen would face for defiance. There are far too many such people, including the 84-year-old priest Fr Stan Swamy, now languishing in jail under the very same law.

Entries in the statute book cannot be allowed to be tools in the hands of a repressive government that has no compunction towards invoking the most stringent of laws against political opponents at the drop of a hat and muzzle dissent. The executive should be stopped from going beyond the legislative intent of the laws, and any transgression must be viewed from the point of view of the victim. It's the job of the judiciary to raise the protective covering of the Constitution when a vindictive government takes aims at a peacefully rebellious citizen. The Delhi high court has just done that. Every court must do it, should democracy survive and succeed; it should not be left to the individual judges to show the gumption.

## BJP behind drama in LJP?

When the late Ram Vilas Paswan, once among the leading young Lohia socialist leaders of Bihar and the country along with Lalu Yadav and Nitish Kumar, figured that his best bet lay in emerging as a dalit leader, he created the Lok Janshakti Party (LJP). But he had a handicap. His base lay exclusively among the Dusadh community of dalits of Bihar. On that basis alone, it was not easy to be a long-distance runner.

But Mr Paswan survived with clever footwork, joining alliances which he changed with frequency to retain a position in the Union cabinet in a range of governments. He had a personal standing and was a well-liked politician. After the demise of the nine-term parliamentarian last October, the LJP has clearly lost its way.

The party had mostly become a family affair, with his son Chirag named its president, a brother and a nephew being bought to Parliament, and another nephew heading the party's Bihar unit. This lot is now busy fighting. The Lok Sabha Speaker promptly gave recognition to the breakaway group, which has five of the six party MPs, while only Chirag is out. So, the BJP's blessing to the move is a likely assumption.

Such parties usually do not last long. The split may have been brought about in the hope that one among the group may be made a Union minister in a Cabinet expansion. In the last Bihar Assembly election, Chirag had earned the enmity of chief minister Nitish Kumar by setting up candidates at the Centre. It was the strangest of situations. Now, many think JD(U) may have exacted revenge by engineering the process of LJP's split or eventual vapourising. In any case, it is the BJP in Bihar to which the Dusadh community may gravitate. For socioeconomic reasons, this direction was manifesting itself in the late Ram Vilas Pawan's lifetime.

### DECCAN CHRONICLE

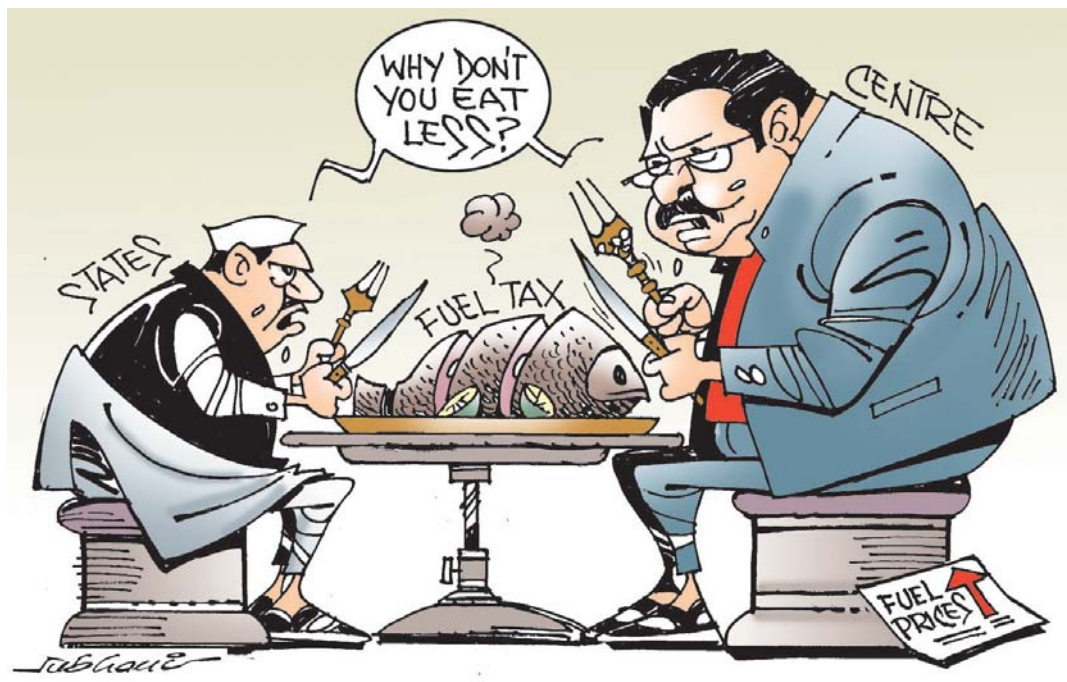
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Subhani



## Covid-19 accountability: Making the dead count



Patralekha Chatterjee

Dev 360

In hyper-polarised India, it needs dollops of bravery for governments to admit that they got their Covid-19 death data wrong, that the magnitude of the problem they face in the time of the pandemic is more serious than they previously stated. Because political rivals are likely to pounce on such bursts of honesty as evidence of rank incompetence.

Nevertheless, some states are taking baby steps towards greater transparency of Covid-19 data. That is good news.

Bihar is in the spotlight. Covid-19 death figures in the state shot up from 5,478 on June 8 to 9,429 on June 9 in the wake of data revision. The dramatic jump in the number of coronavirus casualties did not happen because the Bihar government suddenly woke up to the need for good data. It was because the judiciary stepped in. The Patna high court demanded an audit of the figures after widespread allegations that the state government was underplaying the scale of infections and deaths.

Arguably, Bihar is not the only state which has faced such accusations. Ground reports by the media from crematoriums in many places, along with images of dozens of bodies dumped in rivers or buried in shallow graves have only bolstered the widespread belief that the official Covid-19 death count in the country doesn't tell the real story. Many states like Maharashtra and Telangana are revising their official death toll in the Covid-19 pandemic.

Interestingly, Jharkhand, one of India's poorest states, is setting an inspiring example by initiating an Intensive Public Health Survey. This is the first such door-to-door counting of deaths by any state during the second wave of the pandemic. It has revealed that

25,490 people died in the state in April-May 2021 — that is 43 per cent higher than the 17,819 total deaths officially registered across all 24 districts in the state in April-May 2019.

What should one make of this sudden rush for data integrity in many states even as the pandemic rages on? Will other states follow suit? Will the Narendra Modi government stop denying that India's official Covid-19 death toll is a massive undercount?

It is too early to tell. The pandemic is indeed making many countries finally acknowledge that they have been undercounting Covid-19 deaths. Peru did it. Mexico did it. But truth-telling may not be as contagious as the mutating coronavirus. Here in India, even as state governments start to revise their Covid-19 data, the Centre insists all is well. It recently lashed out at an international news-magazine for pegging the country's excess deaths due to the pandemic at 5-7 times the official figure.

But better late than ever. Whatever be their motives, the states which are embracing greater data transparency deserve to be cheered even if by doing so, they push up India's official Covid-19 death count.

As health economist Rijo M. John puts it: "Those brave states that are indeed doing this must be appreciated and I hope it motivates the rest to do so too."

Dr John cites the example of Maharashtra, which he says "has been relatively honest with the data right from the beginning, compared to many others".

Now, more states are joining in.

In India, even in normal times, many deaths are not officially recorded. Globally two-thirds (38 million) of 56 million annual deaths are still not registered, according to the World Health

Organisation.

But the coronavirus pandemic may have set in motion a laudable trend; many governments are beginning to acknowledge that there has been a massive undercount of deaths. The science of death-counting is making headlines and the critical need for strong and developed death registries is a talking point.

Dr Hemant Shewade, a medical doctor specialising in community medicine and operational research, points to the uneven quality of even routine surveillance of deaths in the country. "The coverage of routine death surveillance (proportion of deaths registered along with medical certification of cause of death) is as high as 100 per cent in Goa and as low as 2.5 per cent in Jharkhand. One did not really expect 100 per cent accuracy in Covid-19 death reporting. We cannot improve routine death surveillance overnight. But in the time of the pandemic, the problem rose because the undercounting of deaths was way too high," he told me.

What is really unacceptable, says Dr Shevade, "is singling out certain states for contributing higher proportion of reported Covid-19 deaths. This creates an environment that encourages poor Covid-19 death reporting."

Why is accurate Covid 19 data so important?

Because poor data makes for poor planning. "The administration, as well as the public, become lax as the true picture is not presented. Then it takes a wave as large as the second wave to wake us up. By then any action is too little too late," says Dr Shevade.

What should be done? Public health experts

who have been tracking the Covid 19 numbers stress the importance of making an honest attempt to not "show less numbers" by reporting all Covid-19 deaths, captured by routine death surveillance. "Accepting that under-reporting is an inescapable reality in India, we need regular local estimates of under-reporting to guide us regarding the true estimate of mortality," says Dr Shevade, "This can be done through post-mortem surveillance of all Covid-19 deaths in sentinel sites. Every district should have one sentinel site (local data for local action). This should be explored. This is important because in a country like India it takes time for data on excess deaths to come out."

Alongside inaccurate data, there is the problem of inadequate data. Together, they create a fertile ground for the spread of misinformation which severely hampers the battle against Covid-19. Many public health experts say the Centre must proactively and regularly publish reliable all-cause mortality data in regular intervals at the national level so that studies using incomplete and unreliable data to measure the true extent of deaths become redundant.

Telling the truth may seem politically risky, but it's the only way out. Bad data causes reputational damage. India has already suffered heavily with its official Covid-19 data being widely questioned and public trust being dented. It's true that the Indian Council of Medical Research has issued a "Guidance for appropriate recording of Covid-19 related deaths in India", as the Centre likes to stress.

However, there are gaps. As Dr Rijo John tweeted last week: "Do you have data to show which states adhere to these guidelines & which do not? What actions have you taken against those who didn't?"

*The writer focuses on development issues in India and emerging economies. She can be reached at patralekha.chatterjee@gmail.com*

### LETTERS

#### PETROL AT ₹100/LITRE

Is hiking petrol prices 47 times in 2021 the idea of 'achche din' by Modi government? (Hyderabadis for first time pay 3-digit price for petrol, DC, June 15).

The Centre never showed concern about the soaring prices. This never happened in India before. The BJP, which criticised the Congress before 2014 elections, is now silently hiking fuel prices even though oil prices are down globally.

Kshirasagara Balaji Rao  
Hyderabad

#### RAM TEMPLE FRAUD

If allegations of AAP and SP leaders over the sale of land to Ram Jannabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust are true, how should a devotee of Lord Ram view this? (Sanjay Singh claims house 'attacked' by BJP supporters, DC, June 16). Should it be seen as a miracle or when money is at stake, even God is not spared? The onus is now on the Trust to be transparent and honour devotees by sharing details of the land sale.

D. Nagarjuna  
Hyderabad

#### ILLEGAL DETENTION

JNU students Natasha Narwal, Devangana Kalita and Jamia's Iqbal Tanha got bail from Delhi High Court after spending over 1 year in jail (Delhi HC says state blurred line between protest, terror, DC, June 16). The Delhi police who booked them under UAPA must be held accountable. Unless courts take stringent measures on those who misuse their authority, citizens will continue to face such illegal detentions.

P.J. David  
Hyderabad

### 50 YEARS AGO IN

## DECCAN Chronicle

#### World must pressurise Pak

BRISBANE, June 16.

The expulsion of Bengalis from East Bengal was a "calculated move to throw India into chaos" the Indian High Commissioner to Australia, Mr. A. M. Thomas, said here today.

Mr. Thomas, who arrived in Queensland on a farewell visit after four years in Australia, said Pakistan was "driving out the Bengalis at the point of the bayonet".

He said the world was still not taking the requisite action over Bengal and described the situation there was chaotic and desperate.— Reuter

Mahir Ali



## Bye bye Bibi: Netanyahu's exit may not spell change

Among the various heads of state and government who have seemed like permanent fixtures on the international political landscape in the past decade or so, no one's perch has looked as precarious as that of Benjamin Netanyahu. There's a degree of irony in the fact that Israel's longest-serving prime minister apparently ran out of steam midway through the presidential term of the most fervent White House admirer he could conceivably have attracted.

It's all relative, of course. Ever since its inception, Israel has never not had an ally in the White House, and occasional tensions have scarcely dampened US enthusiasm for — let alone hindered its munificence towards — what was identified early on as an invaluable satellite in a region once deemed broadly hostile to US interests.

The Obama administration, for instance, set a record in generosity, notwithstanding the toxic personal chemistry between Bibi and Barack. By then, it hardly looked like a case of

the tail wagging the dog. The transformation may not have been sudden, but Netanyahu had few qualms about treating America as the tail.

He was happy to do most of the barking until another top dog chimed in, determined, as the leader of the pack, to be louder than anyone else. And loyally tagging along behind Donald was Jared Kushner. Even Trump and Kushner apparently balked, however, when Netanyahu talked about fulfilling his dream of annexing much of the occupied West Bank. Had the US flashed the green light, enabling him to pursue this project, Netanyahu would probably still be Prime Minister, and Israel would almost certainly be embroiled in a military campaign far more vicious than its most recent assault on the Gaza Strip.

The latter did not suffice to keep him in power — not least because a substantial proportion of Israelis are under the impression that he chickened out. Unable to pull together a coalition after Israel's fourth election in two years, Netanyahu predictably

ranted against the alternative regime that was taking shape.

In the past couple of weeks he has ludicrously labelled his opponents as dangerous and far left. The new Prime Minister, Naftali Bennett, is an extremist all right, but on the other end of the ideological spectrum. He has served Netanyahu as chief of staff and in various ministerial capacities, and throughout his political career has been described as even more right wing than his former master.

In the past he has not only enthusiastically hailed the idea of West Bank annexation but also proudly boasted about seeing "no problem" having "killed lots of Arabs in my life". Now, as a Prime Minister at the head of a disparate — and desperate — eight-party coalition, whose Yamina party boasts only six seats in the 120-member Knesset, he has indicated that there will be no movement on the Palestinian front. The idea that the status quo can indefinitely be maintained while the state-sponsored settlers (whom Bennett has been proud to represent)

keep gnawing away at what's left of the diminishing Palestinian territories is one of Netanyahu's proudest achievements. There's no need to bother with a deal, not even with an eagerly compliant Palestinian "authority" in place under Mahmoud Abbas, who put off his elections to ward off the likelihood of another triumph for Hamas.

That likelihood has only increased in recent months, but yet another Israeli election before the end of the year cannot be written off. After all, the Bennett-led coalition has the bare minimum parliamentary support necessary, and Netanyahu as Opposition leader will no doubt continue trying to topple his rivals. The 'Bye bye Bibi' placards displayed by jubilant demonstrators after his comeuppance may prove to have been premature. Does any of this matter very much? Not for the Palestinianians. Sure, there is an Arab Islamist party on the fringes of the Bennett coalition, playing pretty much the sort of collaborationist role that the odd relatively unrepresentative black organisation did under South African

apartheid. It also includes the Meretz and Labour parties, which remain wedded, at least formally, to the fantasy of a two-state solution.

What's far more important is that the political centre has shifted sharply to the right — Netanyahu deserves some of the credit for that, but the narrowing of the political spectrum from the centre right to the far right is by no means an exclusively Israeli phenomenon. Hardly anywhere, though, is the political system more fractured: what once were factions have evolved into a plethora of parties, and one-party majorities are now a thing of the past.

Netanyahu has hitherto thrived on this dysfunction, but whether he can exploit it much longer remains to be seen. The criminal justice system may catch up with him. One thing that won't change, however, is what Joe Biden reiterated last week: "Israel has no better friend than the United States." Which in effect means nothing will really change.

By arrangement with Dawn



quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	52,501.98	-0.51
Nifty 50	15,767.50	-0.64
S&P 500*	4,234.42	-0.29
Dollar (₹)	73.30	0.02
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.48	-0.28
Euro (₹)	88.90	0.02
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	47,814.48	0.10
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	74.32	0.45
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.045	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.485	-0.014

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

MF SIP asset base touches ₹4.67L cr in May

Assets under the systematic investment plan (SIP) touched an all-time high of Rs 4.67 lakh crore in May. Over the past five years, assets under management (AUM) of SIPs has grown 30 per cent annually, twice as fast as the growth in the overall mutual fund industry's AUM. According to Amfi data, SIP AUMs have seen a close to four-fold jump to Rs 4,67,366 crore as of May this year from Rs 1,25,394 crore as of August 2016.

Subsidies hiked for DAP, other fertilisers



The Union Cabinet raised the subsidies for DAP and some other non-urea fertilisers by Rs 14,775 crore to keep the prices low for farmers. After urea, diammonium phosphate is the most widely used fertiliser. Minister of state for chemicals and fertilisers Mansukh Mandaviya "Farmers will continue to get DAP at the old rate of Rs 1,200 per bag." He said the subsidy for DAP has been raised to Rs 1,200 per bag from Rs 500.

Cost Inflation Index for LTCG notified

The income tax department has notified the Cost Inflation Index (CII) for the current fiscal beginning April 2021 for calculating long-term capital gains arising from sale of immovable property, securities and jewellery. The CII is used by taxpayer to compute gains arising out of sale of capital assets after adjusting for inflation. "The Cost Inflation Index for FY 2021-22 relevant to AY 2022-23 & subsequent years is 317," the CBDT said.

Video recordings must for stages of NH projects

The NHAI said it has made mandatory the use of drones for monthly video recording of national highway projects during all stages of development, construction, operation and maintenance. It said contractors and concessionaires shall carry out the drone video recording in the presence of team leader of the supervision consultant and upload comparative project videos on NHAI's portal 'Data Lake.'



■ Three firms hit daily limit for the third day

Adani stocks tumble more

NUPUR ACHARYA  
JUNE 16

The slump in shares of companies controlled by Indian billionaire Gautam Adani deepened on Wednesday with three of them tumbling by the daily limit for a third straight day. Adani Total Gas Ltd, Adani Power Ltd and Adani Transmission Ltd hit the lower circuit after dropping 5 per cent each even as the group denied a local report on Monday that said accounts of three Mauritius-based funds that own the group's stocks were frozen.

Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone tumbled 7.17 per cent and flagship Adani Enterprises tanked 5.77 per cent on the BSE. Adani Green Energy declined 3.10 per cent. The dramatic rout marks a halt to the dizzying rally in shares of some of the Adani Group of Companies that had added almost \$40 billion to the billionaire's wealth this year through Friday that made him the second-richest person in Asia. His net worth, based on Tuesday's closing share prices, is \$71.5 billion.

The conglomerate refuted the reports that said National Securities Depository Ltd froze the accounts of Albula Investment Fund, Cresta Fund and APMS Investment Fund. It called the report "blatantly erroneous" and followed up with another statement on

INVESTORS FRET OVER LITTLE-KNOWN FUNDS

NUPUR ACHARYA & P. R. SANJAI  
JUNE 16

Confusion over three Mauritius-based funds that whipsawed shares of Adani Group companies this week has underscored a deeper risk for investors in such stocks owned by opaque entities. "It is important for investors and the regulator to be aware of the ownership in listed companies, especially when they originate from tax havens like Mauritius," said Hemindra Hazari, an independent research analyst in Mumbai. "The names of the funds are not very well known in the capital market and they have high concentration into a select number of stocks, which in itself is unusual."

Even as a massive share rally in the companies of the conglomerate has this year more than doubled the net worth of Adani to

\$73 billion, this week's events have pointed to a deeper pain point: opacity around the group and its key non-founder shareholders. There's also scant analyst coverage for Adani companies, highlighting the information lacunae could be a chronic issue.

"It is extremely crucial for the Adani Group to disclose relevant details regarding ultimate beneficial ownership of foreign portfolio investors," said Zulfikar Memon, managing partner of Mumbai-based law firm MZM Legal LLP.

Some of the group's listed stocks have soared more than six-fold in value since the start of 2020 on bets Adani's push into infrastructure will pay off as the economy revives. Adding to the tailwind was MSCI Inc including three more Adani stocks to its India benchmark index, taking the total to five.— Bloomberg

Tuesday citing communication from the national depository that the three funds' demat accounts are "suspended for debit."

The funds, registered at the same address in Port Louis, own more than Rs 43,500 crore (\$6 billion) in four Adani group firms, the report had said.

Dollar bonds issued by Adani group firms have pared some of the losses from earlier this week. Adani Ports & Special Economic Zone's dollar bond due 2031 fell by a record 3.3 cents on the dollar on Monday to 94.1 cents and is now trading at 95.4 cents.— Bloomberg

Most new loans are unsecured credit

SANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, JUNE 16

Unsecured credit has grown faster than secured products between 2017 and 2020. This could be a cause of worry for lenders in the aftermath of moratoriums.

Increasing consumerism and entry of large number of non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) in the segment have increased the share of unsecured credit among newly sanctioned loans to 85 per cent in 2020-21 till end February. Overall, the share of unsecured credit in the loan book increased from 15 per cent in March 2017 to 24 per cent as of February 2021. During the first wave of the pandemic, the share went up from 22 per cent to 24 per cent, as per a report by Experian India and Invest India.

In terms of number of loans, the unsecured category has increased its share to 71 per cent by February 2021 from 62 per cent in March 2017, indicating that consumers are looking to fund small purchases, including con-

sumer durables and holidays through credit, and the lending institutions have increased confidence in their borrowers' ability to repay and are thus willing to take more risk.

Unsecured products have seen an increase in loan book at a CAGR of 38 per cent compared to secured products that grew at a CAGR of 17 per cent over 2017-2020. An unsecured loan is supported only by the borrower's creditworthiness, rather than by any collateral, such as property or other assets.

Rising share of unsecured loans is a cause of worry, especially during the pandemic-induced financial crisis.

According to Icra, the delinquencies for the retail loan pools that had seen a gradual reduction in Q4 FY2021 are now again expected to reach elevated levels.

Emkay Global Financial Services says, "Given the two rounds of moratoriums, we believe that the visibility of the asset quality pain in NBFCs had largely remain suppressed until Q2FY21."

NEW RANGE ROVER VELAR SUV COMES AT ₹79.87L

MICHAEL GONSALVES  
PUNE, JUNE 16

Tata Motors-owned British luxury car maker Jaguar Land Rover on Wednesday drove in the new Range Rover Velar SUV in the country with prices starting at Rs 79.87 lakh. The Range Rover Velar comes in the R-Dynamic S trim on the Ingenium 2.0 l petrol and diesel powertrains. The new SUV will rival luxury SUVs like the Jaguar F-Pace, Mercedes GLE Coupe and the BMW X6.



Entire board can now meet via video, audio

SANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, JUNE 16

Providing relief to companies, the government has omitted the rule pertaining to the conduct of meetings with physical presence of the board of directors for approval of several important matters.

The Ministry of Corporate Affairs has omitted Rule 4 of the Companies (Meetings of Board and its Powers) Rules, 2014. Rule 4 pertained to matters which should not be dealt with in a meeting through video conferencing or other audiovisual means. As per this rule, directors can attend the board meeting through video conferencing if a quorum or a minimum number of members

are physically present for the meeting. Usually, this number of minimum members should be one-third of the number of directors of the company.

The meetings which hitherto needed physical presence of minimum number of board directors, included those held for approval of annual accounts and financial statements, board reports, prospectus, audit committee meeting for consideration of accounts and approval of amalgamation, mergers, acquisitions and takeovers, said Jidesh Kumar, managing partner, King Stubb and Kasiva, Advocates and Attorneys. The notification will come into force after its publication in the official gazette, the ministry said.

SHYAM METALICS IPO SUBSCRIBED 121 TIMES, SONA 2.33 TIMES

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD  
MUMBAI, JUNE 16

Integrated metals manufacturer Shyam Metalics and Energy's Rs 909 crore initial public offering received huge subscription demand as it got subscribed 121.40 times shares offered in the public issue. But another issue that closed on Wednesday, that of Sona Comstar, got subscribed by a modest 2.33 times.

In the Shyam Metalics public offer, priced in the band of Rs 303 to Rs 306 per share, the portion reserved for retail investors was subscribed 11.64 times. The qualified institutional buyer category was subscribed 155.71 times, the non-institutional investor category was subscribed 339.98 times.

Shyam Metalics received over 21.13 lakh applications across investor categories as per last update made available by sources close to the merchant bankers.

Automotive technology company Sona BLW Precision Forgings (Sona Comstar) Rs 5,250 crore IPO was subscribed 2.33 as per last update from the stock exchanges.

The portion reserved for retail investors was subscribed 1.61 times.

The qualified institutional buyer category was subscribed 3.54 times, the non-institutional investor category was subscribed 0.40 times as per the last update made available by sources close to the merchant bankers.

Sona Comstar received over 4.46 lakh applications as per the last update.

Cooking oil prices start softening

SANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, JUNE 16

After more than doubling in the past one year, edible oil prices have started softening in the last one month. "Edible oil prices in India are showing a declining trend across a wide array of oils. As per data from the Department of Consumer Affairs, over the past month, the prices of edible oils are now coming down," an official statement said on Wednesday.

Palm oil prices have dropped 19 per cent from Rs 142 per kg on May 7 to Rs 115 per kg, sunflower oil prices dropped 16 per cent to 157 per kg, price of soya oil has come down from Rs 162 per kg to Rs 138 per kg in the past few weeks. Mustard oil was down 10 per cent, groundnut oil 8 per cent and vanaspati 8 per cent at Rs



157, Rs 174 and Rs 141 per kg, respectively.

"Expectations of a production recovery in Malaysia and Indonesia amid slowing demand have pulled down the prices. Due to the second wave, exports of edible oils were affected in these countries. In the case of soya oil, the surge in the interest for renewable energy too had supported prices. However, the market now finds that the

blending requirements in the US would be reduced due to the intervention of the environmental protection agency. This has cooled down prices," said Ajay Kedia, MD, Kedia Commodities.

The international price trends are directly affecting the domestic edible oil market as India imports a significant quantity of the commodity to meet its demand. As per reports, India meets 56 per cent of its domestic demand through imports. The effective rate of import duties, including agriculture infrastructure and development cess and social welfare cess, ranges from 35 per cent to 59 per cent for edible oils. This too has led to higher edible oil prices in India.

Despite the rising prices, the industry has been asking the government not to cut the import duties.

Govt plans ₹50,000-cr loan guarantee for health infra

SIDDHARTH SINGH  
JUNE 16

The government is considering offering as much as Rs 50,000 crore (\$6.8 billion) of credit incentives to boost health care infrastructure in the nation hit by the coronavirus pandemic, according to people familiar with the matter.

The programme will allow companies to access funds for ramping up hospital capacity or medical

supplies with the government acting as a guarantor, said the people, who asked not to be identified citing rules.

A finance ministry spokesperson could not be immediately reached for comment.

The government's loan guarantees will complement the central bank's efforts last month to boost credit for health care services and provide fresh lending to vaccine-makers.

The Reserve Bank of India had then announced an on-tap liquidity window for banks worth Rs 50,000 crore to extend credit to health services and vaccine manufacturers until March 2022.

The government also last month separately included airlines and hospitals in a \$41-billion emergency credit programme to cushion them from the impact of the pandemic.

— Bloomberg

RBI: 2nd wave hits domestic demand

FALAKNAAZ SYED  
MUMBAI, JUNE 16

The second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic has hit domestic demand. Going forward, the speed and scale of vaccination will shape the path of recovery, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said in its monthly bulletin for June 2021 released on Friday. It observed that while vaccines will not end the pandemic by themselves, "the country will have to learn to live with the virus, complementing vaccines with ramping up investment in healthcare, logistics and research".

"The pandemic is a real shock with real consequences. Hence, there is a need to ensure that the recovery is built on a solid foundation of business investment and productivity growth. Life- and work-style transformation such as increased remote work and online shopping may likely endure. When patterns of demand shift, some firms may face closure. Some industries may become permanently smaller. At the same time, existing



firms in industries experiencing increased demand may expand and new ones will emerge. What matters is that resources are put to their best use and that reallocation occurs smoothly and with as few costs as possible," said the central bank.

An influential view identifies three sectors with the greatest growth potential in the post-recovery decade—digital technologies; biomedical science (along with its applications in health care); and technologies that address the various challenges to sustainability, especially those pertaining to climate change, said the RBI.

Commenting on the

state of the economy, the central bank has said that while the second wave has hit domestic demand, on the brighter side, several aspects of aggregate supply conditions—agriculture and contactless services—are holding up, while industrial production and exports have surged compared to last year amidst pandemic protocols.

"Going forward, the speed and scale of vaccination will shape the path of recovery. The economy has the resilience and the fundamentals to bounce back from the pandemic and unshackle itself from pre-existing cyclical and structural hindrances. Signs of the ebbing of the second wave of the pan-

demic are cautiously becoming evident. In fact, the data suggest that the second wave is rolling back almost as fast as it rolled in."

On June 14, 2021 India's daily cases fell to a seventh of their peak of 4,14,188 a month ago (May 6). The seven-day average, which smooths out daily fluctuations, also declined by a fifth from its peak of close to 4 lakh. This is also reflected in the doubling rate, which increased to 247 days from its trough of 34 days at the end of April.

The daily positivity rate, which had peaked at 22.7 per cent in early May, plummeted to 3.8 per cent, remaining below 10 per cent for the 14th consecutive day, and dipping even lower than the first wave's peak of 11.7 per cent at end-August 2020. Recoveries outnumbered fresh cases for the 36th day, taking the total number of recoveries in India past 2.8 crore.

On the fiscal framework and quality of expenditure in India, the RBI noted that the pandemic necessitated an overwhelming fiscal response.

NPPA ASKS DRUG FIRMS TO REDUCE PRICES IN WAKE OF GST RATE CUT



New Delhi, June 16: Drug pricing regulator NPPA has asked pharmaceutical companies and medical device makers to reduce prices on products on which the GST has been lowered in order to pass on the benefit to the consumers.

In a notification, the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) noted that a change in tax rates has an impact on the fixation of maximum retail prices (MRP) of various drugs and formulations.

As per DPCO 2013, MRP of drugs and formulations are inclusive of taxes. Therefore, any downward change in tax or GST rates should be reflected in the MRP and benefit of the reduction should be passed on to the consumers, it noted. — PTI

ON THE BACK BURNER SSRC receives lukewarm staff response

RBI quietly buries specialised cadre plan

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 16

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is learnt to have quietly shelved the plan for raising a specialised supervisory and regulatory cadre (SSRC) to strengthen its supervisory wing to check bank frauds and other regulatory violations in the system.

About a year ago, the apex bank had assured the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance about the cadre, but the plan hasn't made any headway since.

After Punjab National Bank (PNB) scam, questions were raised over the RBI's supervision of scheduled commercial

banks. In response, RBI had come up with a grandiose plan of creating an SSRC. Its Central Board had, in May 2019, approved the creation of such a cadre and the RBI had announced the creation of SSRC on November 1, 2019.

The RBI has silently buried the plan and even its latest annual report has no mention of the SSRC.

The RBI spokesperson is yet to respond to a mail sent in this regard.

Explaining the reasons for shelving the SSRC, the source, however, said the scheme drew a lukewarm response for several reasons. "Merely 5 per cent of its staff opted for the SSRC. The poor response

was mainly due to apprehension among the staff regarding the HR issues like lack of mobility, promotional avenues, etc. Besides, there was no proper communication or stakeholder consultation by top management. The unions also opposed the move," the source said.

Another reason is that "traditionally, the supervisory vertical is headed by a deputy governor, who comes from a commercial bank. This leads to obvious conflict of interest. He heads the department, which is supposed to examine his own performance as managing director of the commercial bank."

"There have been several instances in the past

where serious concerns, regulatory violation and even vigilance cases had to be dropped from the (assessment) report. Further, in many cases it has led to vindictive action even to the extent of blocking the promotion of the entire supervisory team examining the particular bank," the source said.

"Incidentally, RBI is one of the very few public institutions in India, which does not have a whistleblower policy or effective grievance redressal system. Also, the RBI as a regulator, must display highest standards of corporate governance for financial institutions to emulate," the source said.



## SHORT TAKES

## Milkha is stable &amp; out of Covid ICU

**Chandigarh:** Legendary Indian sprinter Milkha Singh is "stable" and he has been shifted out of Covid ICU to another section of the PGIMER hospital, a statement from his family said on Wednesday. The 91-year-old had contracted the dreaded virus last month. "Milkha is stable and is out of the Covid ICU, but is in the Medical ICU," a spokesperson of the Milkha family said. "Thank you for your continued prayers and good wishes," it added. PGIMER sources said that Milkha was "fine, stable and recovering". "He has tested Covid negative after which he was shifted out of the Covid ICU," the sources said. The sources further said that a medical team comprising senior doctors of the institute were closely monitoring his daily health progress. — PTI

## Japan to set 10k spectator-cap

**Tokyo:** Japan is planning to set a cap of 10,000 fans at sports events ahead of the Olympics, a cabinet minister said on Wednesday, as organisers weigh how many domestic spectators can attend the Games. The proposed measure would come into force after a Covid-19 state of emergency in Tokyo and other parts of the country ends on June 20, and would last until the end of August, said Yasutoshi Nishimura, the minister in charge of virus measures. It would limit spectators to 50 percent of a venue's capacity or 10,000 people, whichever is smaller, he said. The plan is expected to become official later this week. — AFP

## Federer suffers defeat in Halle

**Berlin:** Roger Federer suffered a setback in his preparations for Wimbledon after crashing out of the second round of the ATP grass court tournament in Halle on Wednesday. Federer, who will bid to win a ninth title at Wimbledon which starts June 28, suffered a shock 4-6, 6-3, 6-2 defeat to 20-year-old Canadian Felix Auger Aliassime, who is almost half Federer's age. "It's amazing, for sure I didn't expect this," Auger Aliassime said after beating one of his heroes at the first attempt on the ATP tour. "I wanted to win, but Roger Federer is my idol and it was a huge honour to play him." Federer is exactly 19 years older than Auger Aliassime as the pair share the birthday on August 8. — AFP

## IPL Aussie stars pull out of tours

**Melbourne:** Seven top Australian cricketers who recently played in the IPL have pulled out of the country's white-ball tour of West Indies and Bangladesh. The two tours are part of team's preparations for the T20 World Cup later this year. David Warner, Pat Cummins, Glenn Maxwell, Jhye Richardson, Kane Richardson, Marcus Stoinis and Daniel Sams have requested not to be considered for the tours for various reasons while Steve Smith has been rested to fully recover from an elbow complaint which flared during the IPL. Cricket Australia said in a statement. — AFP

## Virat climbs to 4th spot in rankings

**Dubai:** India skipper Virat Kohli climbed to the fourth spot while Australia batsman Steve Smith reclaimed the top position in the ICC Test rankings released on Wednesday. Kohli has 814 points. Keeping Kohli company in the top 10 is wicket-keeper batsman Rishabh Pant (747 points) and star opener Rohit Sharma (747 points), who have retained their joint sixth position. — PTI

## Live on TV

## EURO

**Group Stage:** Ukraine vs North Macedonia from 6.30 pm; Denmark vs Belgium from 9.30 pm; Netherlands vs Austria from 12.30 am (Friday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

## COPA AMERICA

**Group Stage:** Colombia vs Venezuela from 2.30 am (Friday); Brazil vs Peru from 5.30 am (Friday) on Sony Ten 1

## Shot in the foot

## Germany go down as Hummels kicks into own net

**Munich, June 16:** World champions France beat Germany in a blockbuster Euro 2020 clash on Tuesday.

In Munich, a 20th-minute Mats Hummels own goal proved enough for 2018 World Cup winners France to beat 2014 World Cup winners Germany in Group F.

France deserved the win, with both Kylian Mbappe and Karim Benzema having second-half goals disallowed for tight offsides calls while Adrien Rabiot also hit the post for Les Bleus.

"I knew my players would be ready and they were up for the fight," France coach Didier Deschamps said.

"It's our first match, but this is a game that could have been a semi-final or a final and to take these three points in a group like this was important."

The win was savoured by a small band of French fans among the crowd in the Allianz Arena, which was limited to just 20 percent of capacity because of Covid-19 restrictions.

It was also enjoyed by fans back home in France who packed into bars to see their team kick off their bid to add the European crown

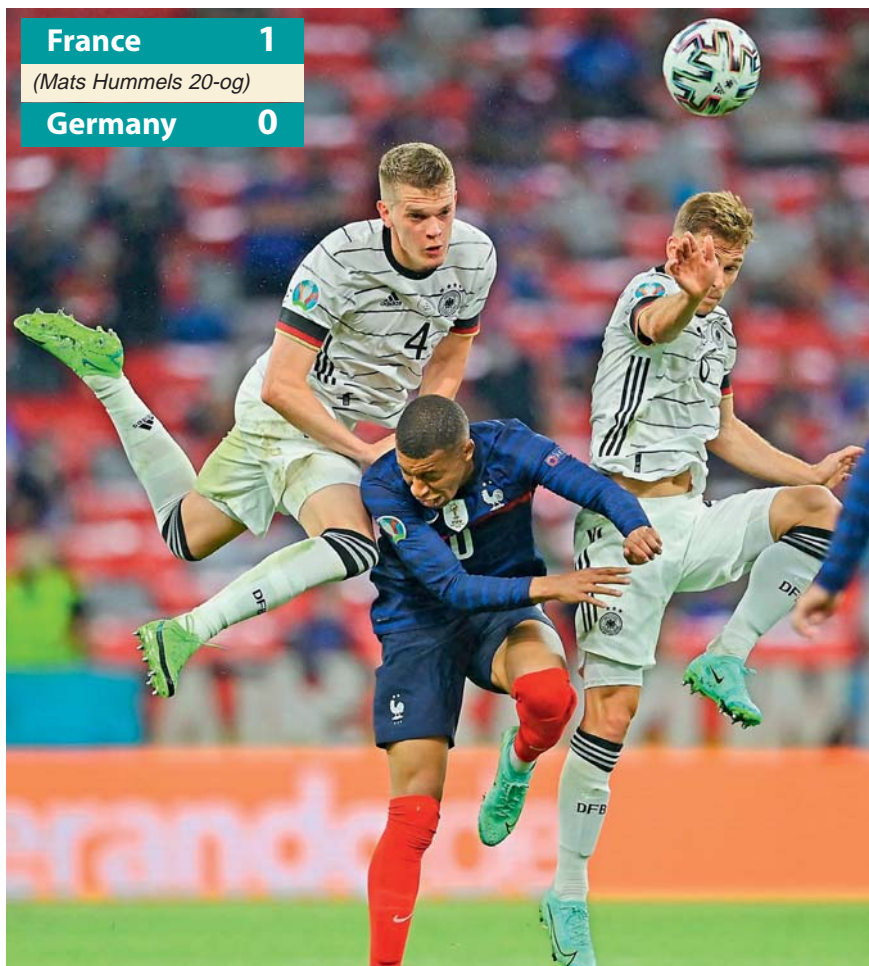
## POGBA PLAYS DOWN RUEDIGER 'BITE'

France midfielder Paul Pogba has played down Antonio Ruediger's apparent attempted bite on his back during their win over Germany.

Immediately after the incident, Pogba cried out and complained to Spanish referee Carlos del Cerro Grande, who did not punish the German, and the Manchester United star played it down after the game.

"I think he nibbled at me a little bit, but we've known each other for a long time. It was nothing big. We hugged after the game," Pogba said.

— AFP



Germany's Matthias Ginter (left) vies for the ball with France's forward Kylian Mbappe (centre) during their Euro group match at the Allianz Arena in Munich. — AFP

## Injury mars Russia win

**St. Petersburg, June 16:** A special goal by Aleksei Miranchuk allowed Russia to kickstart their Euro 2020 campaign with a 1-0 win over Finland in Saint Petersburg on Wednesday, but the game was marred by an injury to Mario Fernandes.

Miranchuk, of Serie A side Atalanta, produced a glorious finish in first-half stoppage time for the only goal of the game between the neighbours in Group B. It blows open the section after Russia,

Russia	1
(Aleksei Miranchuk 45+2)	
Finland	0

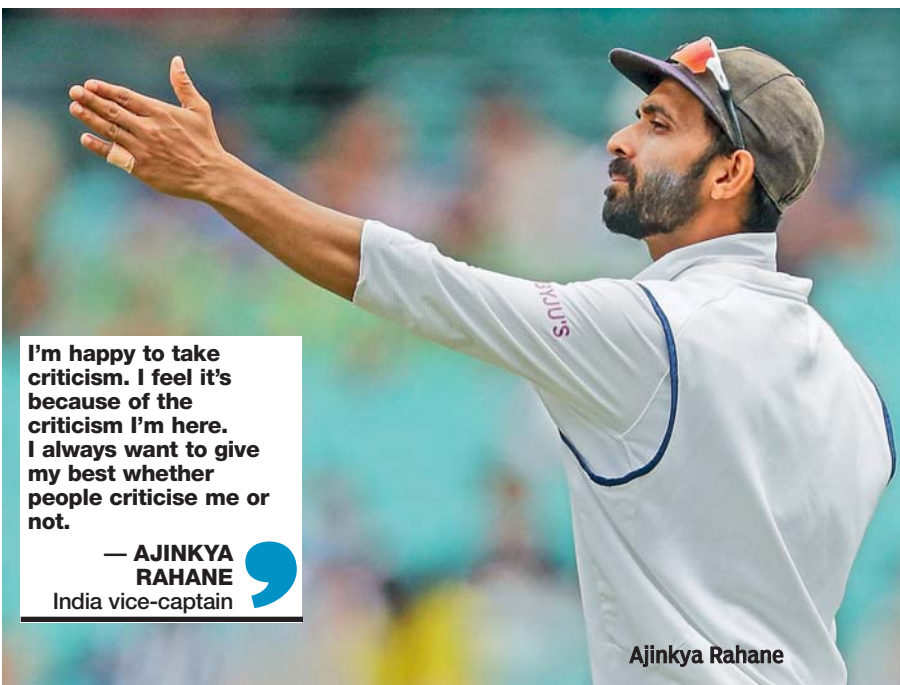
one of nine participating nations at the Euro playing matches at home, had lost 3-0 to Belgium in their opening game at the weekend.

Finland had beaten Denmark 1-0 on Saturday, a game completely overshadowed by Christian Eriksen's cardiac arrest.

Here it was Russia's Fernandes, the Brazilian-born CSKA Moscow right-back, who provided an injury scare.

The 30-year-old went up for a high ball in the first half and came down awkwardly, the back of his neck taking the full force of the landing. He needed to be stabilised and was stretchered off before being taken to hospital.

The Russian team's Twitter feed said he was undergoing tests. — AFP



I'm happy to take criticism. I feel it's because of the criticism I'm here. I always want to give my best whether people criticise me or not.

— AJINKYA RAHANE  
India vice-captain

## EMOTIONAL DENMARK TO FACE BELGIUM

**Copenhagen, June 16:** Denmark can take heart that Christian Eriksen is recovering and will be cheering them on along with the rest of the country as they try to salvage their Euro 2020 campaign against fancied Belgium in Copenhagen on Thursday.

Kasper Hjulmand's talented side know that their qualification from Group B will be in jeopardy if they get the same treatment that leaders Belgium dished out to Russia on Saturday, and they need to bounce back from their traumatic 1-0 defeat by Finland.

## UKRAINE, MACEDONIA DESPERATE FOR WIN

Both Ukraine and North Macedonia conceded late goals in their opening matches at the Euro, and both lost because of them.

The teams will next play each other at Euro on Thursday, knowing another loss just might end their chances of advancement. "We have two more games to go and we will still play with the same energy," said Ukraine captain Andriy Yarmolenko.

## DUTCH &amp; AUSTRIA EYE MOMENTUM

Netherlands will meet Austria in the team's second Group C match at the Johan Cruyff Arena.

Both the Dutch and the Austrians won their opening matches at Euro 2020, so both can advance with another victory.

The top two teams in each of the six groups advance to the knockout stage, along with the four best third-place teams.

— Agencies

## Ronaldo breaks scoring record

**Budapest, June 16:** Cristiano Ronaldo netted a double to become the European Championship's all-time leading scorer as Portugal struck three times late on to beat a stubborn Hungary 3-0 in their Euro 2020 opener at a packed Puskas Arena on Tuesday.

The holders, who appear to have a much stronger squad than when they won their first major title five years ago, laboured for long periods in Budapest.

But Raphael Guerreiro made the vital breakthrough in the 84th minute and Ronaldo slammed in a penalty shortly afterwards before tapping home in injury time.

"We didn't deserve a 3-0 defeat, with a bit of luck it could have been a point each, but it was an experience of a lifetime," said Hungary goalkeeper Peter Gulacsi.

## SURPASSES LEGEND PLATINI

Ronaldo netted his 10th and 11th goals at Euro, surpassing the previous record of nine held by France legend Michel Platini. The 36-year-old has

Portugal	3
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(Raphael Guerreiro 84, Cristiano Ronaldo 87, 92)

Hungary	0
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## Milestone man

■ All-time Euro top scorer with 11 goals and counting.

■ All-time top scorer for Portugal with 106 goals.

■ First player to appear in 5 Euro final tournaments.

■ First player to score at 5 consecutive Euro final tournaments.

now scored at five different European Championship finals tournaments and has 106 goals for his country in total, leaving him just three away from matching Iranian Ali Daei's all-time international scoring record of 109.

"I am really grateful to the team for helping me to score twice and be named man of the match," Ronaldo said.

— AFP



Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo celebrates after scoring a goal against Hungary in Euro 2020 on Wednesday. — AFP

## CR7 snub takes fizz out of Cola

**Budapest, June 16:** Portuguese superstar Cristiano Ronaldo removed Coca-Cola bottles placed in front of him at a European Championships press conference here, which reportedly cost the global beverage giant a staggering \$4 billion.

A well-known fitness enthusiast, Ronaldo set aside two Coca-Cola glass bottles which lay in front of him during a press conference ahead of Portugal's opening Euro match against Hungary here on Monday.

In a video that has since gone viral, the 36-year-old Juventus striker picked up a bottle of water instead saying "Agua!" in Portuguese, seemingly urging people to choose water over aerated drinks.

According to media reports, the share price of Coca-Cola, one of the official sponsors of Euro 2020, slipped from \$56.10 to \$55.22 almost immediately after Ronaldo's gesture.

The market valuation of

Coca-Cola went from USD 242 billion to USD 238 billion, a fall of USD 4 billion.

Reacting to the incident, Coca-Cola in a statement said "everyone is entitled to their drink preferences" with different "tastes and needs".

Ronaldo has spoken about his uneasiness with carbonated drinks earlier as well. In December last year, he had tweeted, "My son has potential. We'll see if he will become a great footballer."

"Sometimes he drinks Coke and eats crisps and it irritates me."

## POGBA REMOVES BEER BOTTLE

On Tuesday, France midfielder Paul Pogba removed a bottle of Heineken beer that had been placed in front of him at a press conference.

Pogba, a practising Muslim, removed the bottle when he sat down to speak to the media after his side's 1-0 win over Germany. — PTI

## ENVY OF WORLD

## Gavaskar says India's batting depth is highly admirable

**New Delhi, June 16:** Former captain Sunil Gavaskar says India's batting depth helps them bounce back from tough situations, as they face an upbeat New Zealand in the World Test Championship final this week.

India have a host of batting stars in their line-up including skipper Virat Kohli, his deputy Ajinkya Rahane and dashing opener Rohit Sharma.

R. Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja, both spinners who have six Test centuries between them while batting in the middle and lower-middle order, are also expected to take to the field in the title clash in Southampton starting Friday.

"With Ashwin and Jadeja playing so well, India's batting depth is the envy of the cricketing world," Gavaskar, who is

## TAYLOR SAYS KOHLI &amp; CO. HAVE SET BAR REALLY HIGH

**Southampton, June 16:** Senior New Zealand batsman Ross Taylor has said India have set the bar really high and considering their bench strength, it will be an extremely tough battle for his team during the World Test Championship final beginning June 18. "You go through the Indian line-up, all world-class players all through and whatever side they do decide to go with, they will leave out some world-class players as well. We know whatever XI we face will be very tough," Taylor said.

"India have been a world no.1 side and they have kept the bar really high for a long period of time, everyone in the world had to catch up to and I don't see any difference, yes we had a couple of Tests here but playing India in home, away or neutral venue will be a tough opposition," he said. — PTI

in England as a television pundit for the final said.

"Yes, there could be the odd bad-innings like Adelaide, Australia, but this team is like a wonderful rubber ball, always bouncing back and keep

on bouncing."

New Zealand, led by the world's top Test batsman Kane Williamson, head into the final with a recent 1-0 win over hosts England in a two-match series.

Gavaskar said once perennial underdogs New Zealand now have quality players in their team that have settled well in English conditions.

"New Zealand have invariably flown under the radar and thus underestimated by the opposition," said Gavaskar.

"They have one of the greatest batsmen in the world in their team as well as a pace bowler who will be among the greatest left arm pacers too. They will be high on confidence after the win over England," he added.

India last played in March and are coming out of a stint in quarantine but Gavaskar believes the team would be hungry to perform.

"In terms of match practise, yes, the Indians may feel a bit undercooked but they will be hungry to get into action," he said. — PTI

## SOUTHEE BATS FOR CHANGE OF FORMAT

**Southampton, June 16:** New Zealand pacer Tim Southee on Wednesday said changes can be made to the format of the World Test Championship final going ahead, instead of it being a one-off match.

"At the start of the two-year cycle, we knew that it was going to be a one-off final. Maybe it's something they can look at going forward and then potentially make changes," Southee said.

"It was made clear two years ago at the start of the cycle, what was required to win the championship.

"It's been great to put context around the Test game, to have the two-year cycle. There have already been adjustments going forward to the next cycle. So, it'll be an evolving thing," he added.

"It's been long time since we won the Champions Trophy in 2000. We've come very close in the last last couple," added the premier fast bowler of New Zealand. — PTI