

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
VIJAYAWADA | WEDNESDAY | 30 JUNE 2021

WEATHER

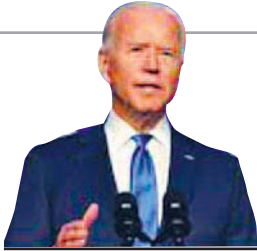


Max: 34.0°C
Min: 26.0°C
RH: 81%
Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: Cloudy/Rain.
Max/Min temp.
34/26 °C

WORLD | 5

US to spend \$250b
to counter China



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SPORTS | 8

Swiss knock world
champs France out



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ASTROGUIDE

Plava: Uttarayana
Tithi: Jyeshtha Bahula Shashthi
till 1.23 pm
Star: Purvabhadrā till
2.05 am (Thursday)
Varjyam: 7.44 am to 9.24 am
Durmuhurtam: 11.53 am to
12.45 pm
Rahukalam: 12 noon to 1.30 pm
HJRI CALENDAR
Zeeqad 18,1442 AH
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.10 am
Zohar: 1.30 pm
Asar: 5.15 pm
Maghrib: 6.47 pm
Isha: 8.30 pm
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.32 AM
SUNSET TODAY 6.40 PM
MOONRISE TODAY 11.28 PM
MOONSET TOMORROW 11.36 AM

COUNTER POINT



Farmers' income will
be doubled? Where
is the income?

SHORT TAKES

RBI IMPOSES
₹1.1CR FINE ON
MAHESH BANK

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JUNE 29

The Reserve Bank of India has imposed a monetary penalty of ₹1.12 crore on Hyderabad-based Andhra Pradesh Mahesh Co-operative Urban Bank for non-compliance with its directions on deposit rates and 'Know Your Customer' (KYC) norms.

The RBI said that found Mahesh Bank had not complied with some of its directions issued when it had conducted a statutory inspection. It said the charges were proved after considering the bank's reply to its showcause notice, oral submissions made in the personal hearing.

The RBI said the action was based on deficiencies in compliance and was not intended to pronounce upon the validity of any transaction or agreement entered into by the bank.

Another report on Page 7

Twitter booked
for pornography

New Delhi: The Delhi Police has registered a First Information Report (FIR) against Twitter for allegedly allowing access to child pornography on the microblogging platform on a complaint by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), officials said on Tuesday.

■ Another report on Page 4

NEW | PROJECT

Steel maker to invest ₹7,500cr to set up plant

Jindal gets land for steel plant

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 29

Several key proposals have been approved at the state Investment Promotion Board (SIPB) meeting chaired by Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy here on Tuesday. Among other decisions, the board decided to allot 860 acres of land to Jindal Steels to set up a steel plant in Nellore district.

At the meeting, the chief minister directed the authorities to ensure companies provided 75 per cent employment to locals. He

also emphasized on environment protection.

The board approved the allotment of land to Jindal Steel Andhra Ltd at Thammaminapatnam for the setting up of an integrated steel plant. It would have an annual production capacity of 2.25 million metric tonnes. This would be done at a total investment of ₹7,500 crore. The company would provide employment for 2,500 people in four years.

Also, the board approved extension of the deadline to June 2022 for the setting up

of St Gobain Industry in Visakhapatnam district. The company had sought an extension due to the prevailing covid conditions and promised to invest ₹2,001 crore in the state in three phases.

The board has given its approval to Pitti Rail Engineering Components Ltd at Kopparthi near Kadapa for manufacture of electrical, locomotive and industrial infrastructure-related material at an investment of ₹401 crore. This could create direct employment to 2,000 people, it was stated

at the meet.

Similarly, the board gave its nod for Neelkamal Ltd at Kopparthi which is planning to invest ₹486 crore for manufacture of furniture and other household items, by employing around 2,000 people. Also, the board approved the expansion of Greentech Industries in Naidupet area of Nellore district, which supplies steel and iron products to companies such as Ford, Hyundai, Volkswagen etc.

■ Page 2: Board also nods for mega retail park

CM asks women to download Disha app

Orders door-to-door awareness campaign

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 29

Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has instructed officials that they go door to door for creating awareness about Disha Mobile Application and ensure that every woman downloads this app.

Participating in the Disha awareness programme at Gollapudi on outskirts of Vijayawada on Tuesday, the Chief Minister underlined that women safety is the top most priority of the state government. Towards that, Disha App is like a protective shield for women in danger.

He informed that the unfortunate incident at Prakasam Barrage had enraged him. This made him decided to create awareness about Disha App, which can protect girls and women in danger by alerting police.

Jagan Mohan Reddy

pointed out that over 17 lakh people have already downloaded the Disha App, which has received four national awards. He wanted the figure of downloads to reach one crore soon.

Explaining the features of Disha App, he reminded that 18 Disha police stations have already been set up in the state after Disha Act had been brought in.

The CM said state government has deployed 900 mobile patrolling teams, particularly in sensitive areas, where crimes are likely to occur. A woman police officer has been appointed in each village and ward secretariat. Reiterating that the government gives top priority to women, he pointed out that in the state cabinet, key posts of Deputy Chief Minister and home minister are held by women.

During the event, volunteers demonstrated the

use of Disha App in presence of the Chief Minister.

In one instance, soon after pressing SoS, Bhavanipuram police responded and reached the location in minutes.

Deputy Chief Minister (Tribal Welfare) Pamula Pushpasrivani, home minister Mekatoti Sucharitha, panchayati raj minister Peddireddy Ramachandrarreddy, endowment minister Velampally Srinivas, civil supplies minister Kodali Venkateswara Rao (Nani), Transport minister Perni Venkatramaiah, women and child welfare minister Taneti Vanitha, Chief Minister's programme coordinator Thalasila Raghuram, AP Women's Commission chairperson Vasireddy Padma, DGP Gautam Sawang, public representatives and other officials had been present at the campaign launch.

NIA will probe drone attack on Jammu AFS

Investigating agency to probe 30 incidents of drone infiltration

DC CORRESPONDENTS
NEW DELHI/SRINAGAR,
JUNE 29

The Union home ministry on Tuesday handed over the investigation into the drone attack on the Jammu Air Force Station (AFS) to the National Investigation Agency (NIA). The incident took place on Sunday and considering the sensitive nature of the case involving "pan-India ramifications", it was decided that the NIA, which is the premier probe agency for terror-related cases, should investigate the case, MMA sources added.

Top intelligence sources, meanwhile, confirmed to this newspaper that initial investigations point towards the involvement of the terror outfit Lashkar-e-Tayyaba and that it was planned by its operatives from across the border in Pakistan. The Air Force Station in Jammu is barely 14 km from the intentional border with Pakistan.

The sources claim it also appears the same module which carried out the drone attack on the Air Force base was also behind a similar incident reported near an Army facility close to Jammu on Monday. The

High-level meet plans drone rules

PAWAN BALI | DC
NEW DELHI, JUNE 29

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday held a meeting with defence minister Rajnath Singh, home minister Amit Shah, civil aviation minister Hardeep Singh Puri and National Security Advisor Ajit Doval on the drone attack on the IAF's Jammu airbase.

They also discussed making the drone policy in the country tighter to avoid its misuse. A new policy on drone use by civilians in the country is expected to be released soon. It could

include a ban on the use of drones by civilians in many sensitive areas.

"There were discussions on futuristic challenges in the defence sector and equipping the forces with modern equipment and aspects relating to the involvement of more youth, startups and strategic community were also discussed," said sources.

Earlier during the day, Rajnath Singh is reported to have attended a presentation by top IAF officials about the drone attack and ways to strengthen security.

and Kathua districts of J&K.

The officials of the J&K police, Army and Border Security Force had on Monday said that six sorties with weapon payloads were found in the Samba sector, three to four in Hiranagar and two each in Nowshera-Rajouri and

Arnia sectors.

Intelligence sources claimed that the J&K police has identified a suspect in connection with the drone attacks. The man, identified as Nadeem Ul Haq, was caught with some explosive material from the Narwal area of Jammu on Sunday morning. He is said to be from the Banihal region with possible links with Lashkar.

"The suspect has given us vital clues but he will also be interrogated by the NIA to take the investigation forward. There is no doubt that Pakistan-based terror groups, most probably Lashkar, are behind these drone attacks, which are the first of its kind in the country," a senior intelligence official said.

The intelligence officials claimed there was a major threat to all defence installations close to the India-Pakistan border both in J&K and Punjab region and that they were now on maximum security alert.

Special Quick Reaction Teams have been deployed at all defence facilities in the border region with strict instructions that any suspected drones flying nearby should be shot down.

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SHORT TAKES

HC DIRECTS AP NOT TO RELEASE ₹49L FOR VAHANA MITRA

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 29

Andhra Pradesh High Court has directed the state government not to release ₹49 lakhs proposed for 'YSR Vahana Mitra' until July 5, in an interim order and posted next hearing to next Monday.

A division bench led by Chief Justice A.K. Goswami and justice N. Jayasurya heard a petition on Tuesday filed by the BJP leader G. Bhanu Prakash Reddy with a plea to declare GO 334 issued by the revenue (endowments) department on June 15, diverting ₹49 lakh from endowments department to YSR Vahana Mitra scheme.

Petitioner's counsel K. Gopala Krishna argued that it was illegal to use endowments funds for implementation of government schemes.

However, government pleader C. Suman submitted to the court that no funds from temples or from Hundi collections were used for Vahana Mitra scheme and further submitted that there was no truth in petitioner's contention that endowments funds were diverted for implementation of the government scheme. He informed the court that a government order was issued to utilise funds allotted in the budget for AP Brahmana Corporation for implementation of Vahana Mitra scheme and sought some time to submit more details on the issue to the court. The court accepted the government's pleader's appeal for some time and posted the next hearing for July 5.

NCST ISSUE NOTICES TO CS, OTHERS OVER POLAVARAM

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, JUNE 29

National Commission for Schedule Tribes (NCST) has issued notices to Chief Secretary of Andhra Pradesh, secretary to central Water Resources and River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation Department, Polavaram Project Authority chief executive officer and East Godavari district collector on resettlement of people displaced by Polavaram Project.

The commission has directed them to submit their replies within 30 days.

These notices have been issued after T. Venkata Reddy of Talluri village in Devipatnam mandal filed a petition before NCST about non-implementation of the commission's recommendations on Polavaram Project. He alleged that the state government and district administration have flouted norms and recommendations of NCST in the report on Polavaram Project-Affected Tribal People.

Venkata Reddy pointed out that High Court had underlined rehabilitation and resettlement of each and every displaced person being a condition before water is filled in the dam.

BOARD ALSO NODS FOR MEGA RETAIL PARK

From Page 1

GreenTech, which has invested ₹750 crore will invest another ₹627 crore for its expansion and provide an additional 2,200 direct jobs. The board also gave its approval for Ammayapper Textiles Pvt. Ltd in Chittoor district. It would invest ₹30 crore and provide 90 per cent jobs to women.

Besides these, the board approved construction of a mega retail park for textiles and garments on five acres at Tadepalli, Guntur district by investing ₹194.16 crore.

The retail parks will be housing around 900 units and provide direct employment to nearly 5,000 people. This will be a hub for national and international business. It is estimated that about 70 per cent of the sales made in the state comes from here. Each store is expected to generate around ₹11 crore in business annually. Deputy chief minister (revenue) D.K. Das, finance minister Rajendranath, Panchayat Raj minister P.R. Reddy, energy minister Srinivas Reddy, agriculture minister Kannababu, industries minister Goutham Reddy, municipal administration minister Botsa Satyanarayana, labour minister Gummanuru Jayaram, chief secretary Adityanath Das, industries special chief secretary Karikala Valaven and agriculture special chief secretary Poonam Malakondaiah were among the officials present.

Disha app awareness drive



A woman shows her cell phone to Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy at the Disha app awareness programme at Gollapudi in Vijayawada on Tuesday.

— C. NARAYANA RAO

Despite warning, private hospitals fleece patients

Instances of hospitals charging extra surface; IMA takes notice

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN |
DC
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 29

Several private hospitals continue to fleece Covid-19 infected patients to provide healthcare in parts of Andhra Pradesh.

The patients and their family members alleged that some hospitals are generating bills for Covid care as per government prescribed rates, but charging them extra and collecting cash from them and refusing to accept any online payment to avoid detection. On an average, they are charging a minimum of ₹2.5 lakh from each patient to provide Covid care in the hospital for five to six days with a course of five shots of remdesivir injections along with other injections and medicines and some tests in the lab. If the patient requires oxygen or ventilator support and is having multiple health complications, the hospitals charge more and the bill goes up to ₹12 lakh to even ₹20 lakh per head.

They also alleged violation of ICMR recommended Covid protocol in providing admission to the patients by some hospitals after manipulating the vitals as they wanted more numbers of patients to be admitted for

● **THE CORONAVIRUS** infected patients and their family members alleged that some hospitals are generating bills for Covid care as per government prescribed rates, but charging them extra and collecting cash from them and refusing to accept any online payment to avoid detection.

treatment.

Some of these private hospitals have set up temporary Covid care wards and hired doctors and health personnel to treat the patients. They offer financial incentives to the quacks to bring patients especially from rural areas for admission. Some quacks even set up hospitals with no registration with the health and medical authorities, by hiring doctors as consultants and started providing treatment even to the Covid-19 infected patients and in case the patients turn critical, they send them to other hospitals for treatment.

The patients also complain about poor quality of food being served at some hospitals and they want the state government to ensure quality food to be served to them as majority of them are being covered under government health schemes.

Though each hospital has a nodal officer, a cluster nodal officer and a district level flying squad to monitor it closely, some

hospitals are continuing their illegal practices from the level of admission to provision of treatment to overcharging the patients undetected and their violations are having no limit at all. In a case in Kakinada in East Godavari, a private hospital was found claiming bills for treating a Covid infected patient even after his discharge from the hospital. In another case, a private hospital at Gollapudi of Vijayawada in Krishna district, treated a Covid infected patient for two days and when the patient died, it mentioned in its death summary that the patient died of cardiac arrest and when his family members questioned about it, the hospital management informed them that they were not supposed to treat a Covid patient and so they were not supposed to mention about it. For the folly of the hospital management, the deceased family members failed to get any financial benefit from the government.

A patient said, "We

appeal to the state government to further streamline functioning of private hospitals to ensure quality healthcare and food to be supplied to them as the state government is paying for their treatment under various health schemes."

The state vigilance authorities have booked over 75 private hospitals for a series of violations during the second wave of the pandemic and district authorities imposed fines worth several lakhs of rupees on these hospitals so far in the state.

Indian Medical Association AP president Dr N. Subramanyam said, "We do not encourage corrupt practices by the private hospitals in the state and we are against promotion of quackery. But we appeal to the state authorities to revise rates for Covid treatment as they are unviable and not to penalise the errant hospitals heavily and take up proper inquiry to punish them as per norms."

Meanwhile, a private doctor admits, "We are being approached by officials from various departments for money on one pretext or the other and we appeal to the government to control such illegal practice to avoid financial burden on them."

Alla Nani rubbishes Naidu's charges on Covid-19 care

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 29

Deputy Chief Minister and minister for health and family welfare Alla Kali Krishna Srinivas alias Nani refuted allegations of former chief minister and Telugu Desam president N. Chandrababu Naidu on containment of Covid-19 against the government and stated that people of Andhra Pradesh would not trust the 'fake' Deeksha of the latter. He came down heavily on Chandrababu Naidu for his political drama under the name of Sadhana Deeksha and said it had shocked people of

the state.

Speaking to the media at the party central office here on Tuesday, the minister said people knew the history of protests being organised by Naidu including how he cheated people in the name of Nava Nirmana Deeksha.

He flayed Naidu for claiming that the Chief Minister had ignored the suggestions given by him after interacting with intellectuals and said Naidu had done nothing during the pandemic except attending Zoom conferences. Nani said 150 testing labs were set up in the state and revolutionary changes were being

made in the health sector with ₹13,000 crore and asserted that there was no scarcity of oxygen and beds were available.

The minister said the state government under the leadership of Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy had effectively contained Covid and Naidu had suddenly popped up in the state and further misleading the people in the name of Sadhana Deeksha.

He said Andhra Pradesh stood as an example to other states in containing Covid effectively and questioned Naidu what he had achieved through this Sadhana Deeksha.

POWER | PLAY

Neighbour feels threatened over stoppage of generation

TS deploys cops at Nagarjunasagar

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JUNE 29

Tension prevailed at the Nagarjunasagar dam on Tuesday after Telangana state government deployed a large police force to thwart any attempts by the Andhra Pradesh government to stop the generation of hydroelectric power by TS power utilities.

The Nagarjunasagar dam is the mega joint project of Telangana and AP on the River Krishna.

The Telangana state Cabinet had recently

decided to take up hydel generation at the projects up to 100 per cent of installed capacity. Both major hydel power stations of Telangana state are located on the Krishna river, namely Srisaillam and Nagarjunasagar, which are joint projects of TS and AP.

The AP government has already lodged a complaint with the Union Jal Shakti ministry against the Telangana state government utilising Srisaillam water for hydel power generation despite lower water level in the

dam. The Centre had directed the TS government on Sunday to stop hydel power generation but the state government on Monday directed its power utilities to generate hydel power ignoring the Centre's orders.

Against this backdrop, the TS government has decided to generate hydel power even at Nagarjunasagar. Suspecting that the AP government would resist this, the TS government on Tuesday deployed heavy police force on the dam for the security of

Many MSMEs set to shut shop by year-end: Survey

AVINASH P.
SUBRAMANYAM | DC
TIRUPATI, JUNE 29

The Medium, Small and Micro Enterprises (MSME) sector has been going through a tough phase in view of the Covid-19 pandemic's repeated assaults on them.

According to a local survey, more than half of the existing start-ups/small companies may be shut down or sold off by the year-end due to the harsh ground situations. The situation is grim across Andhra Pradesh and more so in Chittoor district, where nearly half of the registered and unregistered start-ups and MSMEs are in a mood to scale down production, shut down their units or sell them away.

The MSME sector here was already facing problems of outdated technology, poor marketing and lack of coordination among the entrepreneurs and nodal agencies.

All start-ups and MSMEs have landed in uncertainty due to the closure of units amid the lockdowns since March last year. Now, the Covid's second wave and the lockdown and curfew have all had an added adverse impact on the region's economy.

FOUNDATION STONE FOR KARAKATTA WORKS BY CM

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 29

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy will lay foundation stone for the work of widening and strengthening of Krishna River Flood Bank (bund) road at Kondaveeti Vagu lift irrigation scheme site, near Prakasam barrage in Sitanagaram on Wednesday. The Chief Minister will lay foundation stone at 10:25 am for widening works in a stretch of 15.525 km from Kondaveeti Vagu lift irrigation scheme to Rayapudi with a cost of ₹150 crore. Water resources department will undertake the works with the funds of Amaravati Smart and Sustainable City Corporation Limited. Ten meter two way road will be constructed along with two lanes for walking. Renovation of Kondaveeti Vagu bridge, construction of Venkatasayapalem Rayapudi outfall sluice and flood monitoring centers will be done along this road.

The N1 and N3 roads of Amaravati will be linked with Undavalli-Rayapudi. Amaravati Seed access road and Gollapudi-Chinakakani Vijayawada bypass road so that the transportation facilities to Amaravati, Secretariat, High Court, other government offices, educational institutions, Undavalli, Penumaka, Venkatasayapalem, Mandadam, Uddandaryunipalem, Rayapudi, Borupalem, Abburajupalem, and Harishchandrapuram will be improved.

● **CM WILL** lay foundation stone for widening works in a stretch of 15.525 km from Kondaveeti Vagu lift irrigation scheme to Rayapudi.

● **ACCORDING** to a local survey, more than half of the existing start-ups/small companies may be shut down or sold off by the year-end due to the harsh ground situations.

"The majority of the workforce has gone back to their home states. Several MSMEs and even big units have faced a severe manpower crunch after the unlocking last year. Many skilled workers are yet to return from their native places. So, we are struggling to scale up the operations. This is hindering production, transportation and distribution of the stocks," said Sai Kiran Reddy, managing partner of TAGS Pvt. limited. Chittoor district has more than 150 large-scale industrial units and close to 3,600 registered MSMEs with a turnover of over ₹6,000 crore, in addition to hundreds of unregistered units. They, altogether, employ more than 1.5 lakh persons.

Around 7,500 odd small scale units had a workforce of more than 75,000. Now, only 30 to 35 per cent of the workforce (local/semi-skilled/unskilled) is turning up for work while the remaining (skilled from north India) are away at their homes.

"Many locally-available skilled workers and even persons at the managerial roles had succumbed to the first and second waves of Covid-19. Guest workers who had left for their native states have not returned. We lost many experienced workers and their loss has demoralised the units' working capacities and production," an entrepreneur lamented.

A local survey revealed that nearly 48 per cent of small and medium enterprises in the district were facing labour problems.

"Other problems include marketing for 56 per cent of the units, raw materials for 37 per cent, financial problems for 43 per cent. Infrastructural issues for 40 per cent."

Now, the talk of a Covid third wave is sending chills down the spines of industry managers. Failing to scale up the operations due to manpower shortage and various other problems, several units in Chittoor district are now running out of funds.

Most of them are also witnessing their working capital being hit as sales have crashed.

They are barely able to pay the power bills and laid off daily wage workers and are struggling to pay salaries to the retained workers.

Jagan asks PM for vax not lifted by pvt hospitals

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 29

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy wrote a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday, thanking him profusely for extending support during the state's fight against Covid-19 pandemic.

The Chief Minister said, in his letter, that Andhra Pradesh had demonstrated its capacity for large-scale vaccination by inoculating 13,72,481 people on a single day on June 20, another 6,32,780 people on April 14 and 5,79,161 people on May 27. He said that AP could easily replicate this performance frequently if more vaccines were made available to the state. He said, "Andhra Pradesh is in a unique position to vaccinate lakhs of people daily due to the set-up of 15,004 village & ward secretariats all over the state aided by 2.66 lakh volunteers responsible for 50 households each, more than 40,000 ASHA workers, 19,000 ANMs and vast number of PHCS, CHCS etc. Under the Liberalised Pricing and Accelerated National Covid-19 Vaccination Strategy implemented with effect from 1st May, 25% vaccine production was permitted to be procured by the private hospitals and the industrial establishments (through their hospitals).

This 25% allocation of available vaccines to the private hospitals has been continued in the "Revised Guidelines for Implementation of National Covid Vaccination Programme" which are being implemented with effect

● **THE CHIEF** Minister said, in his letter, that Andhra Pradesh had demonstrated its capacity for large-scale vaccination by inoculating 13,72,481 people on a single day on June 20, another 6,32,780 people on April 14 and 5,79,161 people on May 27.

from 21st June."

"So far only 2,67,075 people have been vaccinated at private hospitals within the state of Andhra Pradesh. It may also be noted that 17,71,580 doses have been earmarked for private hospitals for the month of July. The past experience and the demand for vaccines at private hospitals in Andhra Pradesh clearly indicate that such huge quantities of vaccine cannot be utilised by private hospitals. Similar sentiments were expressed by some other states," he said. The Chief Minister requested the Prime Minister to procure and supply the vaccine stocks not lifted by the private hospitals for implementation of vaccination drive through the government channels. He stated that such an approach would go a long way in speeding up the vaccination drive and enabling effective utilisation of the available resources to achieve complete vaccine coverage at the earliest.

Hoping for a positive reciprocation from Modi, Jagan Mohan Reddy concluded the letter by saying that such a decision would be immensely popular amongst the public and enhance the image of the Central government.

AP BJP CALLS FOR ARRESTS IN ASSAULT, KIDNAP OF ITS LEADER

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 29

AP BJP has appealed to Director General of Police to book a case and arrest those involved in the kidnap and murder attempt on its party Yuva Morcha leader Hasan of Allagadda in Kurnool district.

A delegation of state BJP leaders led by party state general secretary S. Vishnu Vardhan Reddy arrived at the DGP's office on Tuesday and submitted a representation to additional DG Ravi Sankar Ayyanar. The BJP leaders sought arrest of Allagadda MLA Gangula Brijendra Reddy's followers on charges of abduction and attempt to

murder Hasan. They further wanted suspension of local circle inspector Krishnaiah for supporting the accused in their unlawful activities.

Later, Vishnu Vardhan Reddy told media persons that when their party leader Hasan questioned the corrupt practices of Allagadda MLA, the legislator, along with his supporters, assaulted Hasan and even tried to kill him. The BJP state general secretary alleged their party leaders and supporters are facing similar threats all over the state whenever they confront illegal acts of YSRC leaders. He pointed out that many of their party leaders have been booked under false cases.

SHORT TAKES

₹13.35CR FOR KONDAVEEDU FORT FACELIFT

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 29

Ancient historical hilltop Kondaveedu fort turned into a historical tourism centre with ₹13.35 crore of funds. Kondaveedu Fort Development Committee (KFDC) sought speeding up of development works in view of decrease in Corona crisis. KFDC convener Kalli Siva Reddy met Guntur range forest conservation officer Y. Srinivas Reddy in Guntur on Tuesday and explained about the Kondaveedu fort project work.

Mr Srinivas Reddy said that the government sanctioned ₹13.35 crore funds for the development of Kondaveedu fort which would be spent in the next five years. He said that already greenery development under Nagara Vanam project has been started in Kondaveedu and explained that main entrance welcome arch, children park, open air theatre for children, concrete water pool for children, solar lamps at 19 places, seating facility for tourists at 26 places and tree plantations works in the Kondaveedu fort has been recently completed.

POSTPONE MARKET VALUE REVISION, SAYS CREDAI

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 29:

The Confederation of Real Estate Developers' Association of India (CREDAI), Vijayawada chapter, has appealed to the state government to postpone the revision of the market value of land in view of the prevailing Covid-19 crisis for the past 14 months. A delegation led by CREDAI Vijayawada chapter general secretary K. Ramesh Ankineedu and joint secretary T. Vamsikrishna submitted a memorandum to DIG stamps and registration M. Ravindranath on Tuesday seeking postponement of revision.

The two CREDAI leaders said the market price of land is normally revised in August every year but with the Covid-19 crisis, people cannot bear the extra financial burden. They stated that revision would impose an additional burden not only on builders but also on the buyers. They appealed to the State government to continue with the existing market values till the situation normalised.

● A delegation led by CREDAI Vijayawada chapter general secretary K. Ramesh Ankineedu and joint secretary T. Vamsikrishna submitted a memorandum to DIG stamps and registration Ravindranath on Tuesday seeking postponement of revision. They appealed to the State government to continue with the existing market values till the situation normalised.

PROTESTS AGAINST PROPERTY TAX HIKE

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 29

Members of the Visakhapatnam Welfare Association (VARWA) and Greater Visakh Residential Colony Association (NIVAS) on Tuesday staged a protest at GVMC administrative office near RTC Complex against the hike in the property tax, underground drainage charges and water tax.

General secretary of the Forum for Development of North Andhra, Aja Sarma, said the state government made a drastic change in the levying the property tax. Tax assessment rules laid down by the central government had stated that any property tax enhancement proposal must be placed in the democratically elected council before it is notified for public opinion. This was not done at the GVMC Council.

“Notification issued by ignoring the council is against law,” Sarma said.

Change in the methodology of property tax is opposed by colony and apartment residents, employees and workers of every department including those in IT, the pensioners, the small and medium entrepreneurs and people of every section. “How can the government not have thrust on the people? Is it democracy?” asked BB Ganesh, general secretary VARWA.

He said since the people are in distress due to the Covid pandemic, state governments like Telangana have given concessions on property tax. “But it is inhuman on the part of the AP government to propose a huge increases in property tax.”

The June 3 notification called for objections from people on the proposed enhancement of property taxes before July 4.

Fun time



With the extension of relaxation in curfew timings, people came out in large numbers across the state. A family is seen having a ball at the famous Rushikonda Beach in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday. — K. MURALIKRISHNA

Farmer's son gets Diana award for societal work

Highest honour is given to young leaders across the globe

NAGABHUSHANAM
HOSKOTE | DC
ANANTAPUR, JUNE 29

Bisathi Bharath, a youth from a farmer family in remote Kandikapula village in Puttur mandal in this district has been selected for the Diana Award 2021, the highest honour given to young leaders across the globe for their special efforts to uplift society.

Diana Award is the most prestigious accolade a young person aged 9-25 can receive for their social action or humanitarian work. It is noted here. A postgraduate in Political Science and Economics, Bisathi Bharath hails from Kandikapula although the village lacks basic amenities and do not even have public transportation.

He took the challenge as an opportunity and started a youth organisation by name Pragathi Padham. At present, it has a network of 150 young leaders.

With an aim that no student in the village should



A file photo of Bisathi Bharath (second from right).

be left out in terms of job opportunities, he adopted three villages — Yerraguntlapalli, Ammaladinne and Puttur — and organised free career guidance sessions, soft skills development training, digital education, personality development sessions etc. This, eventually, helped about 25,000 youths across the country in the past seven years. In recognition of his role as a volunteer and of his leadership skills, he had been selected as a UNV India Young leader to go to Indonesia for an

International Youth Exchange 2017 programme. Only four youths from India had represented the nation there.

Narrating his experiences, Bharat said his original inspiration was from the National Service Scheme (NSS) at the Govt Arts College, Anantapur. He took an active role in organising special camps in villages for promoting the messages of Swachh Bharat, sanitation, environment conservation, women empowerment, and adult education. He also took part in health

care camps and other social activities.

The Nehru Yuva Kendra appointed him as a trainer for NYVs of Rayalaseema region.

Bharath was involved in 67 rural youth development projects and is connected to 20,000 youths across the country. He feels no one should suffer due to lack of a proper knowledge about opportunities. “I had suffered due to the geographical disadvantage and lack of proper exposure. Young people have the capacity to change the world. Everyone is talented in a unique way,” he said.

Bharat has received eight national awards, 35 state awards and 50 district awards from various departments and ministries for his remarkable services towards social uplift for the past 10 years. He took the Swachh Purashkar 2019 and the National Service Scheme Award 2017 from President Ram Nath Kovind at Rashtrapati Bhawan.

VMC to set up garbage stations

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 29

The Vijayawada Municipal Corporation (VMC) has decided to set up garbage transfer stations within the city limits for easy transfer of household garbage. They are Housing Board Colony, Jakkampudi STP premises, Auto Nagar garbage transfer station, Ramalingeswara Nagar and one will be set up either at AS Nagar or Vambay Colony.

VMC Commissioner V. Prasanna Venkatesh explained that each transfer station was a closed structure and would have a capsule.

The garbage collected from the household through a portable compactor vehicle would be dumped in the capsule and the garbage would be compressed with the hopper and hook loader would remove the compressed garbage blocks.

Venkatesh said that ₹15.4 crore was sanctioned and tendering process was underway. He explained that the project would complete in one year to transform Vijayawada

into a garbage bin-free city under which 220 vehicles would ply on the roads to collect garbage from households and to take it to the garbage transfer station. He said distribution of three dustbins one each for dry, wet and hazardous waste had started and soon the bins would be distributed to all the 3.2 lakh households across the city.

Venkatesh said depending on the quantity of waste generated in that particular location, compactors and hook loaders were planned at the transfer stations.

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Ayurvedic plant in agency faces threat, experts worried

VADREVU SRINIVAS | DC
KAKINADA, JUNE 29

Tippa Teega or Tiniaspora Cardifolia-Gulancha Tinospora, a commonly available plant in the agency area, is now fast getting extinct along with 15 to 20 other prominent herbal plants.

Ayurvedic experts and herbal plant growers are worried about the plant's extinction in Nagulakonda Hillock and Agency areas in East Godavari district.

Several factors are going against this plant. But it has shot into prominence of late with Ayurveda practitioner Anandaiah producing a medicine for Covid-19. However, its large-scale use for this is acting as one of the factors for its extinction.

Tippa Teega, known as Amruthavalli in Sanskrit language — Ayurvedic doctors call it Kalapavalli — is commonly growing on trees like a creeper and appears in the backyards of houses in rural and urban areas. This is an important plant in agency areas and there are plenty of trees on which it grows in the area.

Due to axing of trees and other factors, the plant has become an endangered species.

“After Anandiah's medicine gained prominence, many people in the agency area are cutting the Tippa Teega plant in large quantities for medicinal purpose,” said traditional Ayurvedic doctor G. Bulliah. He grows a herbal nursery at Addateegala in Rampachodavaram agency area.

Bullaiah said nearly 1,500 to 1,600 variety of herbal plants, most useful as ingredients in Ayurvedic and other traditional herbal medicine systems, are available in Maredumilli, Addateegala, Y Ramavaram, Sileru, Papikondalu, Nagulakonda and other hillocks and forest areas.

Sadly, some 15 to 20 herbal plants are becoming extinct or are in the list of endangered species.

“The most important herbal plant, Nara Mamidi (common tallow laurel) is

● Ayurvedic experts and herbal plant growers are worried about the plant's extinction in Nagulakonda Hillock and Agency areas in East Godavari district.

vanishing and not seen anymore in the agency area. Naramamidi is used for treatment of bone fractures.

Eight years back, the GCC wanted to give value addition to the tribal people and started to purchase this at ₹6 to ₹50 per kilo. Now the herbal plant has vanished,” said Bulliah.

Other plants like Gum Karaya (Kovela plant, from which gum is extracted) are vanishing.

Amla, Sarpagandhi (Serpentine Root) too are getting extinct. Now, Sarpagandhi's market value is ₹800 per kilo as it is an important ingredient in ayurvedic medicines.

So with Adavi Naabhi (Malabar Glory Lily-the plains area people pick up the plants with roots), Yerra Chitramulam (Rosy-flowered Leadwort used for Siddha Makaradwaja medicine with sulphur, mercury etc), Repu to treat indigestion problem, Madiphalam (Citrom), Kshira Vidhari, Mayurasikha, Jhothismathi (climbing staff plant), Induga Chilla (cleaning trees), Somitha (Indian redwood), Shatavari, Samudrapala (elephant creeper), and Arepuvvu (fire flame bush).

Bulliah who is growing a herbal nursery in Addateegala stressed the need for setting up of a herbal research institute and a herbal lab to grow the herbal plants and protect them from extinction.

He said nearly 400 Ayurvedic doctors are making use of the herbal plants in the agency area for preparing Ayurvedic medicines.

D. Achutam of Kakinada said many people felt Tippa Teega, growing in the backyards of houses in Kakinada, was dismissed as any other bush. Now, they are taking and eating it as an immunity booster.

AP REGISTERS A NEW LOW OF 3,620 COVID CASES, 41 DEATHS IN 24 HOURS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 29

Andhra Pradesh has registered 3,620 fresh Coronavirus infections and 41 deaths in the last 24 hours.

Though the state had been

daily registering over 4,000 fresh cases of Covid-19 in the last few days, the case-load dipped to 2,224 on June 27; but again witnessed an increase to 3,620 on Tuesday. State health authorities reported on Tuesday that 91,231 samples tested.

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CHANGE OF NAME

I, SOUPATI JOHN WESLEY S/o No. 1167419 Late Gnr Soupati Chinaveera Swamy resident of Kolakalur Village, Tenali Thasil, Guntur-Dist. A.P. , have changed my name from JOHN WESLEY to SOUPATI JOHN WESLEY vide Affidavit dated 24-06-2021 before Public Notary

TD demands ₹10L for Covid affected families

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, JUNE 29

TD leaders blamed Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy for a large number of deaths because of the spread of deadly Covid-19 virus. They said that the CM failed in rescuing the infected patients while demanding ₹10 lakh compensation for the families which lost their bread-winners.

TD Nellore Lok Sabha segment in-charge S.K. Abdul Aziz, former NUDA chairman Kotamreddy Srinivasulu Reddy, State Executive Committee Secretary Pellakuru Srinivasulu Reddy, Doctors Cell state president Dr Z. Siva Prasas and State Secretary

Ramanaiah took part in a protest named “Sadhana Deeksha” at the party office in Nellore.

Speaking on the occasion, S.K. Abdul Aziz expressed surprise over the Chief Minister's attention on several other issues when Covid was playing havoc with the lives of the people in the state.

Kotamreddy Srinivasulu Reddy said they will keep exposing the failures of the Jagan Mohan Reddy until his rule comes to an end. Reminding that Jagan is not spending money from his pocket, he questioned the rationale behind not paying sizable compensation to the families who lost their dear ones to Covid-19.

| Government of India Department of Atomic Energy Atomic Minerals Directorate for Exploration & Research No.1-10-153-156, AMD Complex, Begumpet, Hyd-500016 | | | | | | | |
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| 1. | NIT No. AMD/CD/SR/CORE/2021-22/T-(204), Date: 21.06.2021 TENDER NO. AMD/CD/MTPL/RKP/CORE/2021-22/T-204 10,000 m core drilling in Motnupalapalle area, Kadapa District, Andhra Pradesh with borehole depth varying from 600 to 850 m. | 347.10 | NIL * | 14-07-2021 at 15:00 hrs. | 19-07-2021 at 17:00 hrs. | 20-07-2021 at 15:00 hrs. | 12 (TWELVE) |
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SHORT TAKES

CORBETT TO HAVE ROUND-THE-YEAR TOURISM

Rishikesh, June 29: The Corbett Tiger Reserve was opened on Tuesday for round-the-year tourism. Five ranges of the reserve including Garjia, Bijrani, Dhara-Jhirna, Dhela and Pakhron were opened on Tuesday afternoon for day visits for the whole year, Corbett’s Director Rahul said.

Corbett’s opening generated great enthusiasm among wildlife lovers with around 50 bookings made for the day safaris on the inaugural day, he said. Opening the reserve for round-the-year tourism will help people whose livelihoods are connected with it, Rahul said.

Corbett’s revenues have been hit hard by the Covid pandemic and a measure like this will help offset the impact, he said. Uttarakhand’s forest and environment minister Harak Singh Rawat had recently announced that Corbett and Rajaji tiger reserves will be opened for tourists for the whole year. Wildlife experts have been opposed to the move saying it will not be good for animals inhabiting the reserves.

MP MINISTER LISTS BENEFITS OF CYCLING

Indore, June 29: As the prices of petrol and diesel touch record highs, Madhya Pradesh energy minister Pradyuman Singh Tomar has highlighted the advantages of cycling and said the government was spending tax revenue earned from petroleum fuels for the benefit of the poor.

The minister was responding to a query by reporters on the skyrocketing prices of petroleum fuels. “I have been criticised for this earlier also. But, I am saying it again today, do we ever go to the vegetable market on bicycle? Cycling will keep us physically fit and also free from pollution,” he said.

The minister was on a personal visit to Indore. “What is important for us — petrol and diesel or are the country’s health services?” the BJP leader asked.

Tomar said the habit of cycling applies equally to him as well as common citizens. “If you look at my diary for the last 30 days, you will come to know how much I travel in car, how much I cycle and how much I walk,” he said.

Asked about the impact of diesel price hike on the transport industry, Tomar said, “Is the money (tax revenue) generated from petrol-diesel going to the house of any particular person or leader? This money is being used for the poor people who are in need of treatment, education and ration.”

TN: WORK ON 2 MORE NUCLEAR REACTORS BEGINS

M. ARULOLI | DC KUDANKULAM, JUNE 29

The nation’s largest nuclear power park in the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Project (KKNPP), which stands as a symbol of Indo-Russian partnership in the field of civil nuclear energy, entered its third phase on Tuesday with the commencement of the construction of two more reactors (units 5 and 6) at an estimated cost of ₹49,631 crore. These are to come up in addition to two reactors of the first phase which are operational and another two of the second phase which are still under construction.

Chairman of Indian Atomic energy commission and DAE secretary, Kamlesh Nilkanth Vyas, ceremoniously unveiled the e-plaque through video conferencing along with the Director General of Rosatom, Dr. Alexy Likhachev and flagged off the first pour of the concrete for units 5 and 6 of KKNPP. He said this is a milestone event in the Indian nuclear power programme for providing clean and environmentally benign power.

The atomic energy commission chairman said that when units 5 and 6 are operational as expected in 2026, KKNPP would be producing 6,000 MW from its six reactors to significantly provide for the growth of Tamil Nadu, the home state of the power park and to the nation as a whole by supplying stable, clean and green power.

The commencement of the construction work of units 5 and 6 of KKNPP, according to Vyas, was another step towards realising the dream of Dr. Homi Baba, the father of atomic energy in India and Vikram Sarabhai, who placed India among the front running nuclear energy producing countries of the world.

SC REFUSES TO POSTPONE CA EXAMS, SEEKS OPT-OUT SCHEME

PARMOD KUMAR | DC NEW DELHI, JUNE 29

The Supreme Court on Tuesday refused to pass any direction to postpone the Chartered Accountant (CA) exams slated in July but favoured the “opting out” scheme asking the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI), to spell out the scheme by Wednesday.

The court also sought the details of the Covid protocols to be followed in the examination halls.

A bench of Justice A.M. Khanwilkar, Justice Dinesh Maheshwari and Justice Aniruddha Bose said, “We are not stopping the exam. We are going to consider how opting out can be granted. In the midst of exams, out of five papers, if a student appears for three papers, he should be appearing in two papers only next time.”

It posted for June 30 (Wednesday) the hearing on the candidates who want to opt out before and during the exam.

The ICAI offered the “opting out” scheme for the candidates unable to appear in the exam on account of the Covid restrictions. Senior advocate Ramji Srinivasan told the Court, “We have given in this cycle an opt out scheme. We have suggestions which we will put to the institute. The opt out facility will be available to people who are affected by Covid in one form or the other.”

In a note filed on Monday, ICAI submitted that it is in best interest of students that exams are held as scheduled in July instead of postponing them as they were originally scheduled in May, but they were postponed to July due to increase in the Covid cases.

ICAI also submitted that since the Covid third wave is expected to peak in September-October, it has this narrow window of July 2021 to conduct the CA examinations. Pending before the court are three petitions. One is to give extra chance/extension and allow opt out to those appearing for intermediate and final exams of CA under the old syllabus.

It also sought more exam centres to ensure one in every district of the country and not more than 50 students allotted to one centre.

DC CORRESPONDENT GUWAHATI, JUNE 29

BJP president J.P. Nadda here on Tuesday said that Opposition parties in Assam were in quarantine with some in the ICU during the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Addressing the state BJP executive after the appointment of new Assam BJP president Bhabesh Kalita virtually, Nadda said that the Opposition parties emerge only during elections as political tourists but after that, they are nowhere to be seen. He said, “All the Opposition parties were in quarantine with some having reached the ICU. It was the BJP members who reached out to those in distress.”

Asking the newly-appointed state unit president and Chief Minister

‘Power’ful approach



Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal with Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Punjab president Bhagwant Mann addresses a press conference in Chandigarh on Tuesday. Kejriwal promised 300 units of free electricity per month for each household in that state if AAP wins the polls. The AAP leader also promised round-the-clock power supply in Punjab and waiver of pending electricity bills. — PTI

Twitter faces more heat over depicting distorted India map

Delhi cops register case for alleged access to child pornography on its platform

New Delhi/Lucknow, June 29: In more trouble for Twitter, an FIR was lodged in Uttar Pradesh against two senior officials of its India office over the social media platform putting up a distorted map of the country, while the Madhya Pradesh government on Tuesday said it will also initiate legal action against the microblogging giant over the issue.

The Delhi Police said it has registered a case against Twitter on a complaint by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) for allegedly allowing access to child sexual abuse material on the social media platform. It is the latest in the run-ins between Twitter and Indian authorities.

While the social media giant is mired in a row with the central government over not following the new IT rules, Twitter India MD Manish Maheshwari was recently summoned by Ghaziabad police in UP in a probe into an objectionable video posted in connection with an assault on an elderly Muslim man.

The Uttar Pradesh police

Parl. panel seeks Twitter’s reply

New Delhi, June 29: A parliamentary panel on Tuesday asked Twitter to seek reply from Twitter on the blocking of access to accounts of Prasad and others on its platform, the sources said.

Last week, Twitter had blocked Union information and technology minister Prasad from accessing his account which ratcheted up tensions with the government as it came under renewed attack for not following local laws. — PTI

has now moved the Supreme Court against an order of the Karnataka High Court restraining it from taking coercive action against Maheshwari. The FIR in the wrong map issue was lodged at the Khurja Nagar police station in Bulandshahr district of Uttar Pradesh on Monday evening against Maheshwari and News

Partnerships Head Amrita Tripathi under Indian Penal Code section 505 (2) (public mischief) based on a complaint by an office-bearer of right-wing outfit Bajrang Dal.

Twitter had on Monday removed the wrong map that showed the Union Territories of Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir outside India, following an uproar. “The world map

does not show Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir as parts of India. This is not a coincidence. This act has hurt the sentiments of Indians, including me,” Bajrang Dal’s western UP convenor Praveen Bhati said in the complaint. Charges under Information Technology Act section 74 (publication for fraudulent purpose) have also been invoked in the case, according to the FIR.

Madhya Pradesh home minister Narottam Mishra said he has directed the state director general of police Vivek Johri to investigate the matter related to the distorted map and take legal action in this direction. “These issues cannot be taken lightly. The governments at the Centre and the state have taken it seriously,” he said in a statement posted on Twitter. Mishra said such incidents of speaking against or doing something against the country are on the rise. Earlier, Twitter had shown Leh as part of China.

In Delhi, the police have registered an FIR against Twitter under relevant provisions of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), the Protection of Children

from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and the IT Act for allegedly allowing access to child pornography on the microblogging platform on a complaint by the NCPCR.

This comes days after the NCPCR, the country’s apex child rights body, asked

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Cyber Cell) Anyesh Roy to explain why no action had been taken. In its letter, the NCPCR had asked the Delhi Police to book Twitter in the wake of the findings of its recent inquiry in which it had found that child sexual abuse material (CSAM) was easily available on the platform.

“Acting on a complaint received from the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights regarding the availability of child sexual abuse and child pornographic material on Twitter in the form of various accounts and links, an FIR under relevant sections of IPC, IT Act and POCSO Act has been registered by the Cyber Crime Unit, and investigation has been taken up,” Delhi Police Public Relations Officer Chinmoy Biswal said. — PTI

MAHA ASKS PEOPLE TO KEEP GANESH FESTIVAL LOW-KEY AFFAIR

SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC MUMBAI, JUNE 29

The Maharashtra government on Tuesday asked the devotees to keep Ganeshotsav celebration low-key affair. The height of the Ganesh idols in public celebrations across the state is restricted to four feet. Idols in homes will be limited to only two feet this year in view of the Covid pandemic. The home department issued a circular in this connection on Tuesday. This is the second consecutive year, when the celebration of Ganeshotsav would be low key.

The 10-day festival will start from September 10. The circular was issued following the demands by the idol makers in Maharashtra as two months are left for the festival.

According to the circular, Ganesh Mandals would need to get proper permission from the local administration. The public organisers have been requested to make all the arrangements possible to provide online Ganesh Darshan via cable network, website, Facebook among others.

A senior official said that the state government has asked the devotees to make idols of metal, which is available at house, and marble instead of the traditional Ganesh idol. An appeal has been made to devotees to go for eco-friendly idols. And immersion should be done at home. If immersion is not possible at home, it should be done in an artificial pond. For public Ganeshotsav, Ganesh Mandals will have to take prior permission as per the policies of BrihanMumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) and local administration.

UTTARAKHAND EXTENDS CURFEW TILL JULY 6

Dehradun, June 29: Covid curfew in Uttarakhand has been extended by another week till July 6 with more relaxations. The extended curfew, which came into effect on Tuesday, will remain in force till 6 am on July 6, an order issued by Chief Secretary Om Prakash said.

Giving more relaxations, shops and business establishments have been allowed to open six days a week instead of five. They will remain open even on Sundays in the two popular tourist spots of Mussoorie and Nainital, the order said. Markets in these towns will remain closed on Tuesday.

Gyms and coaching centres for job aspirants have also been allowed to open with 50 per cent occupancy.

However, educational institutions, training institutes, malls and cinema halls will remain closed till further orders. Permission for online classes and distance learning remains in place.

Registering on the smart city portal at the start of their journey and bringing a negative RT-PCR or Rapid Antigen test report not older than 72 hours will be compulsory. — PTI

Assam Oppn in quarantine during pandemic: Nadda



BJP national president J.P. Nadda during Assam BJP state executive meeting via video conferencing from party headquarters in New Delhi on Tuesday. — PTI

Think of these as BJP’s programmes,” said the BJP chief. Nadda advised the Assam BJP president to personally visit hospitals and ensure oxygen plants in every district hospital before the third

Covid wave hits the country. He also hailed both present Chief Minister and former chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal for taking developmental works forward.

He also asked the Chief

Minister to ensure proactive implementation of all the central schemes. “I request the Chief Minister to engage the party and government with MSME groups more and more. Out of the ₹3 lakh crore

package announced by the government, ₹1 lakh crore has already been spent giving a boost to the sector,” he added.

He also asked the Chief Minister to take forward establishing farmers producer organisations (FPOs). “FPOs should be promoted and help genuine farmers. Meet street vendors and implement the scheme meant for them,” said the BJP chief.

Nadda also thanked the people of Assam for defeating the forces of communalism and corruption and putting their faith in Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s development agenda.

It is significant Kalita, who is a sitting MLA in the Assam assembly, replaced Ranjeet Kumar Dass, who became a minister in the newly-formed government in the state.

CHILD | SAFETY

State to set up paediatric ICU in all medical colleges, major hospitals to face possible third wave

Assam: Over 34K kids infected by Covid during 2nd wave

MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, JUNE 29

Assam health department has started a special drive to set up paediatric ICU in all the medical colleges and major hospitals in the wake of possible third wave of pandemic as 34,606 children below the age of 18 tested positive for Coronavirus during the second wave of the pandemic in Assam.

This accounts for 12 per

cent of the total cases reported since April 1 this year.

Assam health minister Keshab Mahanta told reporters that in the first wave only 8 per cent of children were affected. Referring to the data of the state health department, he said that in the second wave a total of 5,755 cases belonged to below 5-year age category while 28,851 to 6-18 years age group.

● **THE ASCPCR has also taken note of pandemic affecting children and sent letters to all district deputy commissioners and joint directors of health, asking them to strengthen paediatric ICUs, child-friendly wards.**

Asserting that the government has taken note of the development, he said, “We are taking a number of steps including activat-

ing paediatric ICUs in all medical colleges in the state, as well as district hospitals.”

The authorities in the National Health Mission said that out of the 34,606 positive cases, 34 have succumbed to the infection - 0.1 per cent of the total cases.

“It is mostly because of comorbidities such as congenital diseases affecting the heart, kidney, etc,” he added.

The district with the highest number of cases among the under-18 age group is Kamrup (Metro), with 5,346 children infected.

“To stop the spread of infections among kids, we prefer that parents should opt for institutional quarantine,” he said, adding since there was no vaccine for children yet, the need to follow Covid-appropriate behaviour was crucial.

Assam currently has 25,790 active cases, with a positivity rate of 2.01 per cent.

Informing that phase-3 of Assam Community Surveillance Programme was going on, he said that it has revealed that many children staying with Covid positive parents and guardians who opted for home isolation, were subsequently tested positive for the virus.

The Assam State

Commission for Protection of Child Rights (ASCPCR) has also taken note of pandemic affecting children and sent letters to all district deputy commissioners and joint directors of health, asking them to strengthen paediatric ICUs, child-friendly wards for Covid-positive kids, along with arrangements for mothers and caretakers as well separate delivery rooms in hospitals.

SHORT TAKES

XI HANDS OUT MEDALS AMID CELEBRATIONS

Beijing, June 29: Amid celebrations over the centenary of the ruling Communist Party, Chinese President Xi Jinping has awarded loyal party members with medals and called for adherence to Marxism. Xi's speech at a ceremony Tuesday follows a lavish celebration at Beijing's Olympic stadium on Monday night emphasising China's rise to economic and political prominence following reforms enacted more than 40 years ago. While unleashing private industry, the ruling party has maintained an iron grip on political power, along with preferential policies toward state-run companies.

RUSSIA TARGETS INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISTS

Moscow, June 29: Russian authorities on Tuesday morning raided the apartments of several investigative journalists and their family members, a move that comes amid mounting pressure on Russia's independent media outlets. Police searched the apartments of Roman Badanin, chief editor of the *Proekt* investigative online outlet, and Maria Zholobova, one of its journalists. Officers also raided the home of the parents of Badanin's deputy, Mikhail Rubin. Rubin was detained near Zholobova's residential building and brought to his parents' apartment. *Proekt* said in its account in the Telegram messaging app that the raids occurred after the outlet promised to release an investigation into Russia's interior minister, Vladimir Kolokol'tsev, and his alleged wealth.

BUSAN FORMER MAYOR JAILED FOR SEX ABUSE

Seoul, June 29: The former mayor of South Korea's second-largest city was jailed Tuesday on a three-year sentence for sexually abusing two city employees during his tenure. The lawyers of Oh Keo-don didn't immediately return calls and text messages asking whether they plan to appeal. Busan's district court also ordered Oh to receive counselling and banned him from jobs at child welfare organisations and disability facilities for five years following the end of his jail term. Oh, who was seen as a key ally of Busan-raised President Moon Jae-in, stepped down as the city's mayor in April 2020 after admitting he had "unnecessary physical contact" with a female public servant who accused him of groping her in his office.

SUU KYI BID TO DISQUALIFY TESTIMONY DENIED

Bangkok, June 29: Myanmar's ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi suffered a legal setback Tuesday when a judge denied her lawyers' motion to disqualify prosecution testimony against her on a sedition charge, her defense team said. The court, however, said it would allow the issue to be referred to the High Court and would suspend testimony until a ruling is issued. Ousted President Win Myint and the former mayor of Naypyitaw, Myo Aung, her close political allies, are co-defendants in the charge. The court will continue to hear prosecution testimony on other charges Suu Kyi faces: That she illegally imported walkie-talkies for her bodyguards' use and used those radios without a licence, and violated Covid-19 curbs twice during the 2020 election campaign.

JAIL TO ZUMA FOR CONTEMPT OF COURT

Johannesburg, June 29: The apex court in South Africa on Tuesday sentenced the country's former president Jacob Zuma to 15 months' imprisonment for contempt of court after he walked out of hearings of the Commission of Enquiry into State Capture in November last year and refused to return to it. The court also said that the sentence could not be suspended. The Commission, which is investigation allegations of corruption and bribery at state and parastatal institutions, had asked that Zuma be sent to prison for two years. Zuma has repeatedly said that he would rather go to jail than cooperate with the Commission. Justice Sisi Khampepe of the Constitutional Court described Zuma's statements as "outlandish" and "intolerable".

US to spend big to counter China

\$250 bn to boost American competitiveness

Washington, June 29: The US plans a large spending plan to counter China. According to the senate, China is America's biggest geopolitical and geo-economic problem and handed the United States Innovation and Competition Act 2021 to spend greater than \$250 billion to be certain that the US stays on prime in phrases of technological analysis and manufacturing.

The invoice is a uncommon level of settlement between the Republicans and the Democrats. In a vote, 68 of the 100-member senate supported the measure, with 32 in opposition to. The senate is evenly divided between Republicans and Democrats and consultants say that the vote exhibits how the two political events are united on the necessity to counter Beijing's financial and army ambitions.

Supporters say the bundle is one of the biggest industrial payments in US historical past and the largest funding in scientific analysis that the nation has seen in many years.

The invoice geared toward bolstering American competitiveness with China with a spread of measures.

- According to the senate, China is America's biggest geopolitical and geo-economic problem.
- It handed the United States Innovation and Competition Act 2021 to spend greater than \$250 billion to be certain that the US stays on prime in phrases of technological analysis and manufacturing.

The key thought is that this, from part 3005, which reads: "The United States must ensure that all federal departments and agencies are organised to reflect the fact that strategic competition with the PRC is the United States' greatest geopolitical and geo-economic challenge."

To meet that problem, the senate licenced within the finances \$190 billion geared toward massively growing R&D at universities.

ties and different establishments and boosting improvements in synthetic intelligence, drones and different rising applied sciences. To create an American model of China's 'Special Economic Zones', \$10 billion are to be invested in "regional technology hubs". For the growth of home semiconductor manufacturing, \$52 billion has been provisioned. More than \$23 billion for area exploration and the event of area industries has been earmarked as effectively.

The invoice contains a number of China-specific provisions, together with the prohibition of the social media app "Tik Tok" from being downloaded on authorities units. The buy of drones manufactured and offered by Chinese state enterprises would even be blocked beneath the laws. Chinese organisations engaged in US cyber-attacks or theft of US mental property from US corporations would face sanctions too.

The invoice additionally requires sanctions over human rights abuses in Xinjiang province and abuses in opposition to Uighurs.

Urge Pak to act against ultras, India tells UN



Yasir Lapid

ISRAELI FM OFF TO UAE FOR 1ST STATE VISIT

Jerusalem, June 29: Israel's new foreign minister took off on Tuesday for a state visit to the United Arab Emirates, the first high-level trip by an Israeli official since the two countries signed an agreement to normalise relations last year. According to the Israeli foreign ministry, Yair Lapid will be inaugurating Israel's Embassy in Abu Dhabi, meeting with senior Emirati officials, including foreign minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan and attending a trade expo where Israeli companies are exhibiting technology.

— AP

United Nations, June 29: India has told the UN General Assembly that it is high time the international community called on Pakistan to take "effective and irreversible" actions against terror outfits operating on its soil, asserting that Islamabad should not take the "high road of morality" which is only laden with mines of falsehood. Hitting out at Pakistan for its "vitriolic diatribe" against India, Special Secretary (Internal Security), Ministry of Home Affairs in the Government of India V.S.K. Kaumudi said: "As expected, the delegation of Pakistan has again resorted to peddling false narratives and making baseless allegations against India."

He was speaking at the 2nd High Level Conference of the Head of Counter Terrorism Agencies of the Member States in the

General Assembly on Monday. "For a nation that engages in sectarian violence against its own minorities and harbours a deep sense of insecurity and orchestrated hatred for India, there is nothing new that we could have expected from this delegation," he said at the session. "Global scourge of terrorism: Assessment of current threats and emerging trends for the next decade". He noted that the 7th review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (GCTS) is over and Pakistan's false narrative was summarily negated by the UN membership.

"Its high time that the international community called upon Pakistan to take effective, verifiable and irreversible actions against terror outfits operating on the territory under its control and not take the high road of morality."

Two Americans apologise for role in Ghosn escape

Tokyo, June 29: Two Americans charged in Japan with helping Nissan's former chairman, Carlos Ghosn, jump bail and escape Japan for Lebanon apologised Tuesday in a Tokyo court.

"I deeply regret my actions and sincerely apologise for causing difficulties for the judicial process and for the Japanese people. I'm sorry," Michael Taylor, a former Green Beret said, bowing and holding back sobs.

Taylor, on trial in Tokyo District Court with his

son Peter, said in response to questioning by his lawyer and by prosecutors that he had been misinformed by Ghosn and his wife, Carole Ghosn.

Carole Ghosn told Taylor or her husband was tortured and grilled in solitary confinement, he said.

Ghosn also said he was being mistreated, Taylor said. Taylor said he has been well treated in Japan. "I didn't know much about Japan. All I know is that the Japanese are the friendliest people I've ever bumped into," he said.

At the outset of their trial earlier this month, the Taylors indicated they weren't fighting the allegations, in Japan's equivalent of pleading guilty. They were arrested in Massachusetts last year and extradited to Japan in March. Peter Taylor, who allegedly met with Ghosn to plan the escape, also apologised to the court for the trouble he had caused.

"I must apologise to the people of Japan," Peter Taylor said, bowing to a panel of three judges.

— AP



Medical personnel tend to Covid-19 patients in a tent set up outside a hospital in Bogor on Tuesday, as infections soar in Indonesia.

— AFP

Red Cross warns Indonesia faces Covid-19 catastrophe

Jakarta, June 29: Indonesia needs to urgently increase medical care, testing and vaccinations as the number of new infections in the country has rapidly increased and left it on the edge of a Covid-19 catastrophe, the Red Cross said Tuesday.

The group said its Coronavirus hospital in Bogor, outside of Jakarta, was overflowing and emergency tents had been set up to be able to house more patients. It was a similar scene at other hospitals near the capital, including in at the Bekasi city hospital that had 90% of its beds filled.

"We are seeing record number of infections, but every statistic is a person who is suffering, grieving or struggling to support the people they love," Sudirman Said, secretary general of Indonesian Red Cross, said in a statement. "Our medical teams are providing lifesaving care, with hospitals full to the brim and oxygen supplies critically low."

The surge in Indonesia, the world's fourth most populous nation, is being blamed in part on the Delta variant of the virus, which was first spotted in India and is thought to be more contagious. Indonesia reported more than 20,600 new cases on Monday and more than 400 deaths.

Indonesia has seen more than 2.1 million cases since the pandemic began and more than 57,500 deaths, both the most in Southeast Asia. Less than 5% of adults in the nation of 270 million people have been fully vaccinated. The Red Cross called for global action so countries like Indonesia can get the vaccines they need.

Health authorities in Thailand on Monday announced 5,406 new Covid-19 cases, as the country struggles with how to cope with new Coronavirus variants and contain its rapid spread around the capital Bangkok and in southern provinces.

Nine of the new cases were in prisoners, while the others among the general public marked a record high for that category of patients.

Thailand has had 249,853 confirmed Covid cases since the pandemic began last year, more than 88% occurring in the third wave of the coronavirus that started this April.

— AP

AZ to Oz adults for rapid rollout

Canberra, June 29: Australia is offering AstraZeneca to all adults in a bid to rapidly ramp up sluggish vaccination rates as more of the country on Tuesday locked down against the spread of Covid-19. The government late Monday agreed to indemnify doctors who administer the AstraZeneca vaccine that has been blamed for at least two fatalities from a rare blood clot complication in Australia since April.

That exceeds the single death from Covid-19 in Australia this year, and vaccine hesitancy has increased with only 5% of the population fully inoculated. Pfizer has been the recommended vaccine for people younger than 60 since a 52-year-old woman died in May of blood clots in the brain blamed on AstraZeneca.

But supply of Pfizer, the only alternative to Australian-manufactured Astra-

Zeneca, cannot keep up with demand.

There's a preference for Pfizer until the age of 60. That's a preference, Chief Medical Officer Paul Kelly said on Tuesday.

It's a discussion for doctors to have with their own patients and work through their own risk and benefit in relation to that, Kelly added.

The Queensland state capital Brisbane and surrounding cities will be in lockdown for three days from late Tuesday after the government reported two new Covid-19 infections. Sydney reported 19 new infections in that east coast city, Perth reported two new cases on the west coast and Darwin reported two new cases on the north coast. Those three cities and their surrounds are already in lockdown.

Australia has been relatively successful in containing clusters throughout the pandemic.

— AP

VIRUS OUTBREAK IN FIJI TESTS HEALTH SYSTEM

Suva, June 29: A growing Coronavirus outbreak in Fiji is stretching the health system and devastating the economy. It has even prompted the government to offer jobless people tools and cash to become farmers.

The Pacific nation got through the first year of the pandemic without any significant outbreaks and just two virus deaths.

But an outbreak of the highly contagious Delta variant two months ago has grown to the point where Fiji is adding about 250 new cases each day.

The government has so far resisted calls for a lockdown, in part to try and protect an economy which had already shrunk by 19% last year after international tourism evaporated. Nearly half of all jobs were connected to tourism in the island nation that's known for its white-sand beaches, clear water and welcoming people.

— AP

Russia daily toll hits 652

Moscow, June 29: Russian authorities have reported 652 new Coronavirus deaths on Tuesday, the highest daily tally in the pandemic. The new record comes as Russia struggles to cope with a surge in infections and deaths and low vaccine uptake.

Russia's state coronavirus task force has been registering over 20,000 new Coronavirus cases every day since last Thursday. On Tuesday, 20,616 new contagions were recorded.

Russian officials have blamed the surge, which started in early June, on Russians' lax attitude toward taking necessary precautions, growing prevalence of more infectious variants and laggard

vaccination rates. Although Russia was among the first countries to announce and deploy a Coronavirus vaccine, only about 14% of the population has received at least one shot.

Russia's Coronavirus task force has reported nearly 5.5 million confirmed Coronavirus cases in the pandemic and 134,545 deaths.

— AP

CHINESE VAX EFFECTIVE IN CHILDREN, SAYS STUDY

Beijing, June 29: Two doses of the China-made Covid-19 vaccine, CoronaVac, are safe and produce a strong antibody response among children and adolescents aged 3-17 years, according to a study published in *The Lancet Infectious Diseases* journal.

The phase 1/2 trial on 550 young people found that over 96 per cent of children and adolescents who received two doses of the vaccine, manufactured by Sinovac, developed antibodies against SARS-CoV-2. Most adverse reactions were mild or moderate, with pain at the injection site the most commonly reported symptom.

— PTI

EU ASYLUM APPLICATIONS DROP DUE TO COVID-19

Brussels, June 29: The European Union's asylum agency said Tuesday that the number of people seeking international protection in Europe hit its lowest level last year since 2013, but that the drop was due to Covid travel curbs.

EASO said in a new report that 485,000 asylum applications were made in the 27 EU countries plus Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland in 2020. That's a 32% decrease over the previous year. It said that "reduced applications were primarily due to restricted mobility and travel, rather than a decrease in the number of people in need of international protection."

— AP

Fans mark Diana's 60th birthday

London, June 29: Most people wouldn't volunteer to walk through a minefield. Princess Diana did it twice. On January 15, 1997, Diana walked gingerly down a narrow path cleared through an Angolan minefield, wearing a protective visor and flak jacket emblazoned with the name of The HALO Trust, a group devoted to removing mines from former war zones. When she realised some of the photographers accompanying her didn't get the shot, she turned around and

did it again. Later, she met with a group of landmine victims. The images of that day appeared in newspapers and on TV sets around the globe.

Today, a treaty banning landmines has 164 signatories. Those touched by the life of the preschool teacher turned princess remembered her ahead of what would have been her 60th birthday on Thursday, recalling the complicated royal rebel who left an enduring imprint on the House of Windsor.

— AP

IT'S IMMINENT

The Soviet Union had built the airfield back in the 1950s

After nearly 20 yrs US to leave Bagram

Bagram, June 29: For nearly 20 years, Bagram Airfield was the heart of American military power in Afghanistan, a sprawling mini-city behind fences and blast walls just an hour's drive north of Kabul. Initially, it was a symbol of the US drive to avenge the 9/11 attacks, then of its struggle for a way through the ensuing war with the Taliban.

In just a matter of days, the last US soldiers will depart Bagram. They are leaving what probably everyone connected to the

base, whether American or Afghan, considers a mixed legacy. "Bagram grew into such a massive military installation that, as with few other bases in Afghanistan and even Iraq, it came to symbolise and epitomise the phrase mission creep," said Andrew Watkins, Afghanistan senior analyst for the Brussels-based International Crisis Group.

US Central Command said last week that it's well past 50% done packing up Bagram, and the rest is going fast. American officials

have said the entire pullout of US troops will most likely be completely finished by July 4.

The Afghan military will then take over Bagram as part of its continuing fight against the Taliban — and against what many in the country fear will be a new eruption of chaos. The departure is rife with symbolism. Not least, it's the second time that an invader of Afghanistan has come and gone through Bagram.

The Soviet Union built the airfield in the 1950s. When it invaded Afghanistan

in 1979 to back a communist government, it turned it into its main base from which it would defend its occupation of the country. For 10 years, the Soviets fought the US-backed mujahedeen, dubbed freedom fighters by President Ronald Reagan, who saw them as a front-line force in one of the last Cold War battles.

The Soviet Union negotiated its withdrawal in 1989. Three years later, the pro-Moscow government collapsed, and the mujahedeen took power, only to

turn their weapons on each other and kill thousands of civilians. That turmoil brought to power the Taliban who overran Kabul in 1996.

When the US and Nato inherited Bagram in 2001, they found it in ruins, a collection of crumbling buildings, gouged by rockets and shells, most of its perimeter fence wrecked. It had been abandoned after being battered in the battles between the Taliban and rival mujahedeen warlords fleeing to their northern enclaves.

— AP

DECCAN Chronicle

30 JUNE 2021

FM's stimulus timely, but poor need immediate aid

Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman has announced eight measures to support certain sectors, including small businesses and micro-lenders, which were affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. The stimulus is estimated to be worth ₹6.3 lakh crore, but most of it will be provided through credit guarantees to stressed sectors.

As manufacturing companies have more or less come out of the deadly second wave successfully, the current stimulus package focuses on supporting contact-intensive sectors, especially tourism. Tourism is one of badly affected sectors as people have drastically curtailed their travel plans.

Though there have been demands — including from captains of the Indian industry — for direct cash transfers to the poor and the middle classes to sustain demand, the government does not appear to be keen on this idea. In his speech to delegates in Hyderabad, chief economic advisor Krishnamurthy V. Subramaniam gave out the government's line of thought. Referring to some studies, he claimed that a rupee spent on capital expenditure would add ₹4.50 to the economy, while the same amount spent on freebies would add just 97 paise.

Though the government's preference of capital expenditure cannot be faulted, the finance minister should not forget that the worst-affected are the poor...

Though the second wave of Covid has been devastating for people's health, Mr Subra-maniam argued that its impact on the economy has been milder than the first wave of infections last year. This interpretation appears to have led to the government's belief that the economy does not need a massive stimulus through direct cash transfers, and the demand would return in the due course.

While the government's assessment of the macroeconomic situation is accurate, it should not rely too much on GST collection numbers.

Sometimes, higher consumption by the rich could offset the low demand from the poor and may result in robust GST collections. The government should, therefore, not lose sight of the Covid pandemic's impact at the micro level. The infection has forced lakhs of Covid-infected people from the unorganised sector to lose out on their income. Similarly, lakhs of people from the lower middle class, who were hospitalised for the treatment, had accumulated debt, which they can't repay for the next few years. Months-long lockdowns since last March have pushed many families into poverty.

The government, therefore, cannot behave as if everything is normal just because macroeconomic indicators appear healthy. Though the government's preference of capital expenditure cannot be faulted, the finance minister should not forget that the worst-affected, as the chief economic advisor had admitted, are the poor and she cannot expect them to wait for the fruits of economic reforms trickle down.

Though the spending on the infrastructure projects and the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme have been immensely helpful in providing jobs to unskilled labour, the government needs to further increase capital expenditure and ensure the benefits of these initiatives reach the targeted people as fast as possible. Otherwise, it would be too late for many people.

Doctors, too, need protection

The advisory of the Union home ministry to state governments to invoke stringent sections of the Epidemic Diseases (Amendment) Act, 2020, against those who indulge in assault on doctors and healthcare professional is welcome. As per the Act, a person proved to have assaulted doctors or healthcare professionals can be jailed for up to seven years and fined up to ₹5 lakh. The advisory becomes all the more relevant in the backdrop of the series of attacks on healthcare professionals during the pandemic; the latest being reported from Assam.

The Centre advisory becomes all the more relevant in the backdrop of the series of attacks on healthcare professionals during the pandemic; the latest being reported from Assam.

It must, however, be remembered that there is no lack of deterrent penal provisions against attacks on hospitals and people employed there; as many as 19 states have enacted special laws for their protection. But the real issue is the lack of enthusiasm on the part of the law enforcers to use the legal tools. The latest is the police inaction against a constable who assaulted a surgeon in a government hospital in Alappuzha district in Kerala alleging that medical negligence led to his mother's death though a police investigation report said the patient had died before reaching the hospital. The police advanced one reason or

the other not to arrest the assaulter until he was granted anticipatory bail by the high court. The danger of the state apathy towards the medical fraternity is that it could turn to defensive practice, which would impact the poorest sections of society. The government must design a two-pronged strategy to address the issue as a whole. First, it must ensure that healthcare professionals are given adequate security and violators of the law must be brought to book without fail. Two, it must put in place a fair, transparent, fast and credible mechanism to process complaints of medical negligence. The issue demands urgent government attention and action, not just advisories.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

KAUSHIK MITTER
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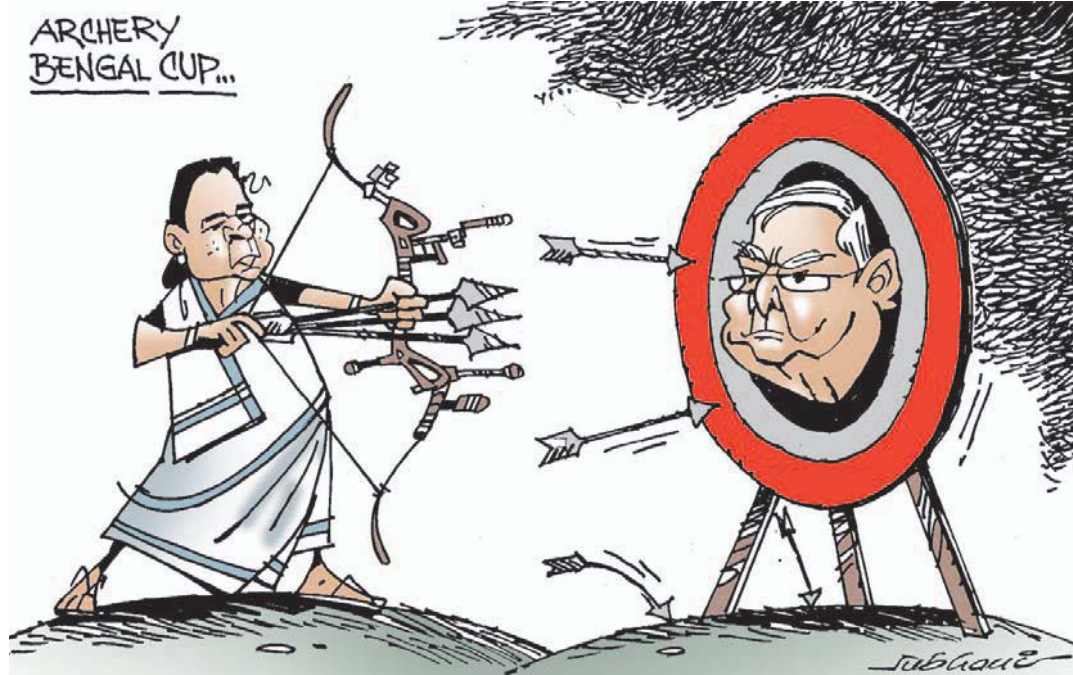
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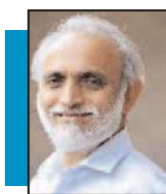
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Subhani



In Covid crisis, SC forces Centre to share vital info



Parsa Venkateshwar Rao Jr

Along with the Central and state governments, the Supreme Court has been playing an important role in monitoring the management of the situation arising out of the six-week-long Covid-19 second wave between the middle of April and the end of May. Through its order of April 30, the Supreme Court bench of Justices Dhananjay Y. Chandrachud, L. Nageswara Rao and S. Ravindra Bhat had been actively directing the Central and state governments on the supply of liquid medical oxygen in the last week of April and the first week of May, and the availability of beds for critically ill patients in hospitals, as well as the availability of vaccines and their proper distribution across the country.

Though Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his government has claimed credit for its decision on procuring vaccines directly and then allocating them to the states, announced by the PM in a televised address on June 7, the suggestion actually came from the highest court after scrutinising the Centre's policy of acquiring 50 per cent of the vaccines at a set price and leaving the remaining 50 per cent to be negotiated by the state governments and private hospitals with the manufacturers.

The Supreme Court in its April 30 order had said: "Prima facie, there are several aspects of the vaccine pricing policy adopted by the Central government which require that policy to be revisited." The court went on to add: "Prima facie, the rational method of proceeding in a manner consistent with the right to life (which

includes the right to health) under Article 21 would be for the Central government to procure all vaccines and to negotiate the price with the vaccine manufacturers." It concluded with a judicious note of warning: "While we are not passing a conclusive determination on the constitutionality of the current policy, the manner in which the current policy has been framed would prima facie result in a detriment to right to public health, which is an integral element of Article 21 of the Constitution."

The court also noted that individuals and communities had turned to the social media for help and that through the online networks people had tried to help those in distress either by finding the medicines or hospital beds needed. And here comes the acerbic observation: "However, it is with deep distress that we note that individuals seeking help on such platforms have been targeted by alleging that the information posted by them is false and has only been posted on the social media to create panic, defame the administration or damage the nation's image". It went on to say: "We do not hesitate in saying that such targeting shall not be condoned, and the Central government and state governments should ensure that they immediately cease any direct or indirect threats of prosecution and arrest to citizens who air grievances or those who are attempting to help fellow citizens to receive medical aid."

It is indeed a matter of shame that during a time of extreme distress, the Central and state governments had taken adversarial positions against the people, and the

Supreme Court was forced to tick off the authorities and warn them against intimidating people. This is a judgment that should become an integral part of any account of Covid-19 in India, and political leaders in positions of power should hang their heads in shame.

It was after this chastening tone by the Supreme Court that the Central government, through the solicitor-general and its other law officers, has been filing affidavits informing the court about the availability of vaccines, a crucial part of the fight against the pandemic. Most of the vital information on the availability of the vaccines has not been shared by the government with the people. The daily press conference that the health ministry officials hold are used as a propaganda forum to trumpet the number of vaccinations that had been administered that day, and the total figure of those vaccinated. The other key figures like the number of new infections, the total number of those who have been infected since January 2020, and the Covid-19 death toll are relegated to the background. There is a vague promise that there will be enough vaccines available and that by December 2021 the entire adult population of the country, which amounts to 93-94 crore people, would be vaccinated. On May 16, the Union health ministry told the court that 216 crore Covid-19 vaccines would be available, but in its affidavit filed on June 27, the government revised the figure to 135 crores, and details were given of the

share of each of the vaccines available or to be made available in the market.

The information about the availability of vaccines keeps changing simply because the government is still negotiating with foreign vaccine makers like Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson and Johnson, and there is no clarity as yet on the outcome. It is understandable that the foreign manufacturers are bargaining hard, which is a shameful thing, and the government is in a helpless situation. That is why it wants to do make do with the vaccines available in the country, which have been developed and manufactured in India like Covaxin, or those which have been developed outside the country like Covishield and Sputnik V and are manufactured in India. But transparency has not been a virtue of the Modi government. There has been a continuous attempt to paint a picture of normality in abnormally stressful and distressful times.

The Prime Minister might be under the illusion that he is keeping panic under control, but he is only adding to uncertainty and anxiety among the people. He should have used his monthly radio talk "Mann ki Baat" to share information about the Covid-19 situation in the country and the difficulties that the government and people are facing. Unfortunately, even democratically elected leaders in India have the bad habit of hiding the truth from the people. It is in this kind of dubious situation that the Supreme Court is performing the yeoman service of compelling the government to share facts, to share information, something that the government should be doing on its own. The Supreme Court is thus ensuring the flow of crucial information to the people in this time of crisis.

The writer is a Delhi-based commentator and analyst

The info about the availability of vaccines keeps changing simply because the government is still negotiating with foreign makers like Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson and Johnson...

LETTERS

SCIENCE PARK

Kudos to the Nellore Municipal Corporation which has conceptualised to establish Science Park, a novel and innovative initiative to popularise science and develop scientific temper among public especially students community (*Nellore civic body plans science park, DC, June 28*). Though students are getting everything at the touch of the mouse, facilities for practical education are very much limited to students.

Venkataramudu K. Nellore

POSITIVITY RATE

The report 'Curfew eased in 8 districts' (*DC, June 29*), says, "He said that positivity rate in Krishna, etc., is more than five per cent and hence the relaxation". This is incorrect. Relaxation is given in district/areas with positivity less than 5 per cent.

J.R. Sreenivas Visakhapatnam

NIRMALA'S STIMULUS

Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman's new package to stimulate all business sectors especially small borrowers and stressed borrowers should give one year relaxation on EMIs. (*FM announces new stimulus, DC, June 29*). This way they can grow financially. Later they clear their debts as per RBI rules. The Centre and the RBI must rethink and increase the relaxation period up to one year on repayments for all small borrowers in this crisis.

D. Ravikumar Visakhapatnam

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

No hasty step on Bangla Desh : P.M.

NEW DELHI, June 29. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi said here today that "the Government will not embark upon any adventurist policies in regard to Bangla Desh".

Addressing meeting of the Congress (R) Parliamentary Party. Mrs Gandhi said no Government could afford to take any precipitate steps on such a delicate problem.

Reacting sharply to the tone of some of the speeches made earlier. Mrs. Gandhi regretted that too gloomy a picture was being drawn about India's diplomatic effort on Bangla Desh.

A.G. Noorani



Modi's Kashmir plan: Present Pak with fait accompli post-delimitation

The conference of Kashmiri parties convened by the Indian government in New Delhi on June 24, 2021, proves once again that Kashmiris cannot be crushed into obedience. Jawaharlal Nehru imprisoned Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah for 11 years only to invite him to New Delhi as his guest for talks. In between, he had sent his Dr P. Subbarayan to the Jammu Central Jail to sound out Sheikh *sahib*. He discovered that the prisoner had not changed his convictions.

In 1965-66, Jayaprakash Narayan sent his emissaries to Kodaikanal to sound out Sheikh *sahib* who was in internment there with Mirza Muhammad Afzal Beg. Nothing came out of it. Released in 1968, it took Prime Minister Indira Gandhi seven years to conclude an accord with her former friend Sheikh Abdullah whose imprisonment in 1953 she had opposed vehemently.

Those who criticise Sheikh *sahib* for the 1975 accord with Indira Gandhi should remember that the ground had been cut under his feet by the Shimla Pact of 1972. It con-

gealed the status quo but also provided for talks on Kashmir to which she never agreed.

Insurgency erupted in 1989. At its peak, Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao said that the sky was the limit if violence was eschewed. On the India-Pakistan plane, two major developments took place. The Agra summit was aborted by L.K. Advani for spurious reasons. An agreed draft was ready but was rejected by India at the very last minute.

At the domestic level, the All Parties Hurriyat Conference was wrecked by its foremost leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani. His was an impossible formula — all or nothing. Coupled with this was the personal angle. He wanted to be the leader and was foolish enough to declare this ambition twice. On each occasion sharp reactions by his colleagues compelled him publicly to withdraw his demand. In truth, he wrecked the Hurriyat. Sadly, he is now a broken man in poor health and has all but withdrawn from politics. Two Presidents of Pakistan discovered

his limits. Farooq Laghari was taken aback at the residence of Pakistan's high commissioner to India in New Delhi by how Geelani reportedly offered him sharp criticism of the apparel of Pakistan TV's anchors. President Pervez Musharraf reprimanded Geelani when he took up Balochistan and North Waziristan.

On the wreckage of the Hurriyat, a diminutive Joint Resistance League was formed comprising Geelani, Yaseen Malik and Mirwaiz Umer Farooq, the most sensible of the lot. He is under house arrest still and was not invited to New Delhi.

Why has New Delhi taken the initiative now and what has it to offer to the Kashmiris after it wronged them in 2019?

Restoration of statehood had been offered by India since 2019. Restoration of Article 370 of the constitution, which was supposed to guarantee Kashmiris special autonomous status, is a different issue. Its abrogation had been demanded by the BJP. The government received public support in 2019 when it abrogated Article 370

though its action was shamelessly unconstitutional and the reasons for it were patently dishonest.

The Congress chief Sonia Gandhi has her ears transfixed to the ground and her eyes fixed on Hindu voters. She is desperate about retaining her diminishing flock. It is difficult to see how any Kashmiri with self-respect can possibly support the abrogation of Article 370.

But apart from Article 370, New Delhi's real concern is with fresh determinations of Assembly constituencies so that Jammu acquires a majority in the assembly. This is Narendra Modi's game — settle the Kashmir dispute once and for all "on the ground", as they use the expression. Next confront Pakistan with a fait accompli — "see it is all over. We have nothing to talk about now".

There is a fatal flaw in this cynical reasoning. There is a powerful pro-Pakistan constituency in Kashmir. Mufti Mohammed Sayeed could not resist paying tribute to Pakistan the day he took the oath of office as chief minister in December 2014 in the presence of Prime Minister

Narendra Modi. He was riled because Mufti Sayeed thanked Pakistan for allowing elections to be held in Kashmir. This revealed a lot more than he intended.

The question is: what result can an open conference of 14 parties possibly yield? The Centre has consistently kept its stooges in Kashmir well supplied with funds. Among the invitees to the New Delhi conference were at least two who are notorious as New Delhi's paid agents.

It may be recalled that the cruel blow which New Delhi inflicted on Kashmir had three dimensions — abrogation of Article 370, wipe out of Kashmir's identity and delimitation of Assembly constituencies.

It is the last which lies at the core of New Delhi's foul deed. On June 22, Mehbooba Mufti, president of the People's Democratic Party, said: "Delimitation is part of the same process used to break the state. This wasn't reorganisation, it was disorganisation. That way it is illegal and done with a certain purpose."

By arrangement with Dawn

quick BITES

| INDICATORS | | % |
|------------------------|-----------|-------|
| Sensex | 52549.66 | -0.35 |
| Nifty 50 | 15748.50 | -0.42 |
| S&P 500* | 4,295.83 | 0.12 |
| Dollar (₹) | 74.22 | -0.02 |
| Pound Sterling (₹) | 102.82 | 0.40 |
| Euro (₹) | 88.39 | 0.19 |
| Gold (10gm)* (₹) | 46,167*89 | 0.19 |
| Brent crude (\$/bbl)* | 75.11 | 0.58 |
| IN 10-Yr bond yield | 6.036 | 0.00 |
| US 10-Yr T-bill yield* | 1.507 | 0.029 |

* As of 8:30 PM IST

RIL signs pact to join Abu Dhabi petchem hub

Reliance Industries has signed a pact to invest an undisclosed amount in a giant petrochemical hub being built in the UAE. The conglomerate will join the recently formed Ta'ziz joint venture of Abu Dhabi state energy giant Adnoc and state holding company ADQ for developing the Ruwais Derivatives Park in western Abu Dhabi. Unconfirmed reports put the investment at about \$1.5 billion.

New Range Rover Sport SVR comes at ₹2.19 crore



Tata Motors-owned Jaguar Land Rover introduced the most powerful Range Rover yet, the Range Rover Sport SVR, at a starting price of Rs 2.19 crore. The imported Sport SVR is powered by 5.0-litre supercharged V8 petrol engine. It can accelerate from 0-100 kph in 4.5 seconds. The Land Rover range in India includes the Range Rover Evoque starting at Rs 59.04 lakh and Range Rover at Rs 2.10 crore.

Electricity Bill may be tabled in monsoon session

The Electricity (Amendment) Bill 2021, which enables power consumer to choose from multiple service providers as in the case of telecom services, is likely to be introduced and pushed for passage in the monsoon session of Parliament beginning in July. At a Bloomberg virtual event, power and renewable energy minister R. K. Singh said the bill seeks to delineate distribution of electricity.

Standard Life sells ₹6,783-crore HDFC Life stake

HDFC Life Insurance Company's promoter Standard Life (Mauritius Holdings) offloaded shares worth over Rs 6,783 crore in the firm, through open market transactions. Standard Life (Mauritius Holdings) 2006 Ltd held 8.88 per cent stake in the firm. As per BSE data, the promoter sold 10 crore shares. The total deal value stood at Rs 6,783.59 crore. HDFC Life stock ended 1.39 per cent lower on the BSE, at Rs 686.35.



₹10,000 for Reits and ₹15,000 for InvITs. Lot starts at 1 Minimum investment in Reits, InvITs relaxed

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, JUNE 29

In an attempt to deepen the market for new instruments Reits and InvITs, markets regulator Sebi on Tuesday decided to reduce the minimum subscription amount and trading lot size for such publicly listed investment trusts.

The minimum application value for Real Estate Investment Trusts (Reits) and Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InvITs) will be in the range of Rs 10,000-Rs 15,000 and the trading lot will be of one unit, the Sebi said. Currently the threshold investment is Rs 50,000-Rs 100,000 range.

For unlisted InvITs, the regulator has introduced the concept of minimum unit-holders requirement. "The minimum number of unit holders, other than sponsor, its related parties and its associates shall be five, together holding not less than 25 per cent of the total unit capital of the InvIT," the Sebi said in a release after its board meeting.

Real estate players hailed the Sebi's decision to reduce the minimum subscription amount and trading lot size for Reits, saying it will encourage retail investors to participate in the publicly traded instrument.

The Sebi board has approved amendments to Reits and InvITs Regulations on Tuesday.

"The revised minimum application value shall be within the range of INR 10,000-15,000 and the

'ACCREDITED INVESTORS' TO GET MORE INVESTMENT FREEDOM

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, JUNE 29

Capital market regulators Sebi on Tuesday approved the proposal to introduce a framework for 'accredited investors' in the securities market.

Accredited investors are a class of investors who may be considered to be well-informed or well advised about investment products.

Accredited investors may eventually be offered benefits such as flexibility in minimum investment amount, flexibility and relaxation in regulatory requirements and access to products/ services offered exclusively to accredited investors.

According to the regulator, accredited investors may be individuals, Hindu undivided family (HUFs), family trusts, sole proprietorships, partnership firms, trusts and body corporates based on financial parameters.

"Eligible subsidiaries of depositories and specified stock exchanges, and any other specified institutions will be recognised as

accreditation agencies for these accredited investors," the Sebi said.

These agencies will grant accreditation status and issue accreditation certificate to the investors.

"Accredited Investors shall have flexibility to participate in investment products with an investment amount lesser than the minimum amount mandated in the Alternative Investment Funds (AIF) Regulations and Portfolio Managers Regulations," the Sebi said.

"Accredited investors who are clients of investment advisers will have the flexibility to determine the limits and modes of fees payable to the investment adviser through bilaterally negotiated contractual terms."

Investors welcomed the move. "The flexibility in investment decisions would allow AMCs & AIFs to work closely with the well-informed investors like family offices to create bespoke proposals," said Prateek Pant, chief business officer, White Oak Capital Management.

revised trading lot shall be of one unit," the release said.

Under the current rules, while making an initial public offering and follow-on offer, the minimum sub-

scription should not be less than Rs 50,000 for Reits and Rs 1 lakh for InvITs.

Allotment to any investor is required to be made in the multiples of a lot. At present, for initial listing, a

TIGHTER NORMS ON INDEPENDENT DIRECTORS

New Delhi, June 29: In efforts to bolster corporate governance, the Sebi on Tuesday approved various amendments to rules governing the appointment, re-appointment and removal of independent directors, including the requirement to disclose resignation letters of such individuals.

There will be a one-year cooling period for an independent director transitioning to a whole-time director in the same company/ associate company belonging to the promoter group.

Appointment, re-appointment and removal of independent directors should be done only through a special resolution passed by shareholders. Further, the process to be followed by the Nomination and Remuneration Committee while selecting candidates for appointment as independent directors has been made more transparent.

—PTI

trading lot should be of 100 units and during follow-on offer, each lot should consist of such number of units in its trading lot as it had at the time of initial offer.

States asked to monitor pulses stocks as prices go up

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JUNE 29

The Centre has directed states and union territories to ask millers, traders and importers to declare their stocks of pulses. They will also have to monitor pulses prices on a weekly basis.

The Ministry of Consumer Affairs says it has noticed a sudden spurt in prices of pulses, which may be due to hoarding by stockholders. Hoarding could lead to a situation of artificial scarcity and price rise. According to the trade, pulses have become dearer by about 10 per cent on an annual basis.

As per the Essential Commodities Act, 1955, the government can issue orders for collecting information and statistics to persons engaged in the production, supply or distribution or trade of any essential commodity, the letter issued by the ministry said.

Though the Essential Commodities Act, 2020, notified in September last year, stipulates that the supply of certain food articles, including cereals, pulses and oils, can only be regulated in extraordinary circumstances such as war, famine and natural calamity, the Act has not come into force yet due to a stay order by the Supreme Court.

"Stockholders like millers, traders and importers may be directed by the states/ UTs to declare the stocks of pulses and that may be verified by states/UTs. States/UTs are also



requested to monitor the prices of pulses on a weekly basis," the ministry said. The ministry has also created an online portal and provided the list of millers as per the Nafed data.

However, the trade argues that there is no hoarding happening and there is no major price rise at the wholesale level and that many pulses are trading at the minimum support price (MSP) level or below it. "No hoarding is happening in pulses. At the wholesale level, moong and chana are trading below MSP, tur and urad around MSP and masoor above MSP. The MSP has gone up by 5 per cent after the recent revision and last year the pulses were trading below MSP. The price rise is at retail level as the retailers are taking a margin of Rs 50/60 a kg. The government should address the issue at the retail level," said Bimal Kothari, vice chairman, Indian Pulses and Grains

Association.

Earlier, the government had fixed an annual quota to import 4 lakh tonnes of tur and urad dal from Myanmar and Malawi for the next five years. It has also extended a quota to import 2 lakh tonnes of the pulses with Mozambique for five years. This annual quota will be imported through private trade. If there is any shortfall in the annual quota, that quantity will be imported from other countries. The quota system allows imports of the specified quantity even if the commodity falls into the restricted category.

After a gap of three years, India, the largest pulses producer and consumer, had moved import of tur, moong and urad from restricted to open category in May this year till November-end.

"This is an assurance given to the farmers of these countries by India as very few countries produce pulses like tur and India is the largest consumer."

Though India's production has been rising, the consumption is increasing faster. Apart from Myanmar and Malawi, we have also extended a similar agreement with Mozambique for next five years," said Kothari.

For decades, India has been producing 14-18 million tonnes of pulses. However, from 2016-17, the production crossed 23.13 million tonnes, 25.42 million tonnes in 2017-18 and 23.22 million tonnes in 2018-19. The total consumption of pulses is estimated at around 25 million tonnes.

Fresh Covid threat hits Asia-Pac markets

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, JUNE 29

Fresh coronavirus outbreaks in the Asian region dampened market sentiment across Asia and led to some profit taking in Indian market too. Barring healthcare and FMCG, all other sectoral indices on the BSE closed in the red.

Australia, Russia and China have seen new Delta variants along with a surge in Covid cases in other smaller Asian countries like Malaysia.

The Sensex closed 185.93 points or 0.35 per cent down at 52,549.66 while the Nifty-50 closed 0.42 per cent or 66.25 points lower at 15,748.45.

The broader market's BSE Mid-cap index also closed 0.42 per cent down while BSE Small-cap index was down 0.07 per cent.

Major Asian markets indices closed in the red, led by Japan's Nikkei (-0.81 per cent), Hong Kong's Hang Seng (-0.94 per cent), China's



Shanghai Composite (-0.92 per cent) and South Korea's Kospi (-0.46 per cent).

"The rise in cases of a new Covid variant has started weighing on the sentiment globally and it may cascade to our markets too," Ajit Mishra, VP-research, Religare Broking said.

"Weakness in the Asian markets, consistent selling pressure from FIIs since the last three sessions, and steadiness in the prices of Brent crude at \$75 per barrel could be the few reasons to keep the market within the trading range," said Shrikant Chouhan, executive VP, equity technical research, Kotak Securities.

PERSONAL LOANS GROW 13.5% IN MARCH QUARTER

Mumbai, June 29: Personal loans continued to grow at a robust pace and recorded a 13.5 per cent year-on-year rise in March 2021, while industrial loan growth remained negative during all quarters of the last fiscal, the Reserve Bank of India said on Tuesday.

As per the Quarterly Basic Statistical Returns (BSR)-1: Outstanding Credit of Scheduled Commercial Banks (SCBs), March 2021' released by the RBI, private sector banks registered a higher loan growth compared to the other bank group.

Their share in total credit increased to 36.5 per cent in March 2021 from 35.4 per cent a year ago and 24.8 per cent five years ago, it said.

Credit to the household sector rose by 10.9 per cent (YoY) and its share in total credit increased to 52.6 per cent in March 2021 from 49.8 per cent the year-ago period. Growth in credit to the private corporate sector, however, declined for the sixth successive quarter and its share in total credit stood at 28.3 per cent.

—PTI

FC BANKING BUREAU MUMBAI, JUNE 29

The Reserve Bank on Tuesday said it has imposed penalties on four co-operative banks, including a Rs 112.50 lakh fine on Hyderabad-based Andhra Pradesh Mahesh Co-operative Urban Bank, for contravention of certain regulatory directions.

A penalty of Rs 62.50 lakh has been imposed on The Ahmedabad Mercantile

Co-operative Bank, Ahmedabad; Rs 37.50 lakh on SVC Co-operative Bank, Mumbai; and Rs 25 lakh on Saraswat Cooperative Bank, Mumbai.

The penalty on Andhra Pradesh Mahesh Co-operative Urban Bank was for non-compliance with directions issued by the RBI contained in Master Directions on 'Interest Rate on Deposits' and 'Know Your Customer'.

The Ahmedabad Mercantile Co-operative Bank has been penalised for violation of norms contained in Master Directions on 'Interest Rate on Deposits'.

According to the RBI, it imposed penalty on SVC Co-operative Bank for non-compliance with directions on 'Interest Rate on Deposits' and 'Frauds Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism'. Saraswat Cooperative

Bank was penalised for non-compliance with directions on 'Interest Rate on Deposits' and 'Maintenance of Deposit Accounts'.

The penalties, the RBI said, have been imposed for based on deficiencies in regulatory compliance and are not intended to pronounce upon the validity of any transaction or agreement entered into by the banks with their customers.

Govt for new rating system for MSMEs

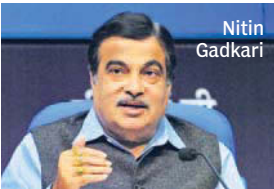
SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JUNE 29

The government has suggested creation of a new ratings system for micro small and medium enterprises and a dashboard for effective monitoring of MSME schemes.

A simple and transparent methodology should be evolved to give ratings to MSMEs having good turnover and GST records to enable them to get finances from the banks and institutions, Minister for MSME Nitin Gadkari said. According to him, the

whole world now wants to invest in Indian industry and with an effective rating system MSMEs can get good investment from abroad.

The RBI already has a BLR rating for MSMEs with a loan exposure of Rs 5 crore and above. However, the MSMEs have not been happy with the rating as it applies the same model applicable to large companies. The MSMEs have been complaining about this rating system. "If the minister has now announced a rating system, I presume that



the ministry is talking about a new rating system that will take care of the concerns of the industry. If it does that, the rating will be useful for the MSMEs," said Anil Bharadwaj, secretary general of Fisme.

Gadkari also proposed setting up a dashboard for monitoring schemes to pre-

vent delays in decision making. The ministry already has such a dashboard, so it is not clear if the minister is looking for a real-time dashboard.

Gadkari asked Sidhi to take decisions within three months and provide support. It is time to make the system transparent, time-bound, result oriented and performance oriented and help appropriate entrepreneurs with a good track record, he said. Industry presumes the new dashboard might have details of newer schemes like the ECLGS.

Shrinkflation is a monster worth watching

STEPHEN MIHM JUNE 29

How will we know if inflation is making a comeback? Most economists are focused on the price of commodities, wages, and other basic goods and services. But history suggests they might want to keep an eye on a related phenomenon that often escapes notice: so-called "shrinkflation."

This practice became increasingly common in the 1960s and 1970s, when manufacturers confronting runaway inflation tweaked packaging rather than hike prices. At first, the practice attracted relatively little notice: It's difficult to discern changes in unit prices when they're camouflaged in different-looking boxes and bags.

In fact, it was the humourist Art Buchwald who was among the first to sound the alarm. In a column entitled "Packaged Inflation" published in 1969, he lampooned the growing tendency to conceal price increases. Tongue in cheek, he praised American industry for "devising new methods to make the product smaller while making the package larger."

This wasn't far from the truth. As inflationary pressures rose over the course of the 1970s, manufacturers pursued a number of methods to pass along price increases. The most basic of these was so-called "downsizing" - same package, same price, fewer goods.

In late summer of 1974, for example, Woolworth's offered a packet of pencils



at its back-to-school sale for 99 cents—same price as the previous year. But as a sharp-eyed reporter at The New York Times observed, the packages only contained 24 pencils, six fewer than the previous year. The same strategy affected packets of construction paper (24 sheets, not 30).

The grocery store offered numerous opportunities for downsizers. At the

beginning of the decade, that staple of postwar cuisine, Rice-A-Roni, sold boxes containing 8 ounces of the product. Soon, though, it shrank to 6.9 ounces, but the packaging and price remained the same.

This kind of sleight-of-hand became ubiquitous. Everything from cans of tuna fish to jars of spaghetti sauce contained less and less. Advocacy groups like the Consumers' Union (now Consumer Reports) ineighed against downsizing, but the practice remained widespread.

Gumball makers may have pulled of the most brazen act of shrinkflation. As the price of sugar climbed in the 1970s, they

couldn't easily raise prices—gumball machines were set up to accept a specific coin. And they couldn't make the gumballs smaller—the dispensers couldn't reliably handle any other size. So they created a hollow in the formerly solid gumball. Instead of sugar, kids got some air.

Many of these unit-pricing systems survive in 2021. But so, too, does shrinkflation. In the past year, there have been increasing reports of crafty manufacturers whittling away everything from sheets of toilet paper to servings of cat food. These have intensified in recent weeks.

If the trend continues, beware: This may signal that inflation, long dormant, may finally be resurgent.

—Bloomberg

Column



SHORT TAKES

Dutee nominated for Khel Ratna

Bhubaneswar: Odisha government on Tuesday nominated ace sprinter Dutee Chand for the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna Award, the country's highest sporting honour. Apart from Dutee, the Odisha government also sent five other recommendations to the sports ministry, said an official here. "I'm thankful to Odisha chief minister Naveen Patnaik for nominating my name for the Khel Ratna Award. May your blessing always be upon me," Dutee said on Twitter.

The Indian sprint ace broke her own 100m national record, clocking 11.7 seconds at the Indian Grand Prix 4 in Patiala last week to miss the automatic Olympic qualification time by 0.02 seconds. She is, however, set to make it to the Tokyo Olympics on the basis of world rankings. — *PTI*

Jehan in race for Arjuna award

New Delhi: Indian motorsports' governing body FMSCI has nominated its own president Akbar Ebrahim for the Dronacharya Award besides sending Jehan Daruvala's name to the government for Arjuna Award after inexplicably ignoring him last year. Racer turned coach Ebrahim's name was also recommended for Dronacharya last year but none of FMSCI's nominations for the national sports awards was short-listed by the government appointed selection panel. India's biggest racing star at the moment, Jehan stands the best chance of getting the award. The 22-year-old is into his second year in F2 and has multiple podium finishes to his name. He won the sprint race in Bahrain last year and has scored two podiums. — *PTI*

Southee auctions jersey for a cause

Auckland: New Zealand pace spearhead Tim Southee is auctioning a shirt he wore during the inaugural World Test Championship final to raise funds for the treatment of an eight-year-old diagnosed with a rare form of cancer. The shirt is signed by the entire Black Caps squad. Southee, who played a crucial role in New Zealand's eight-victory over India in the marquee clash last week, has placed the memorabilia to raise funds for eight-year-old Hollie Beattie, who was diagnosed with a rare, aggressive form of cancer called neuroblastoma back in 2018. The 32-year-old said he learnt about Beattie's condition a couple of years ago and has been trying to help her ever since. — *PTI*

Mithali back in top five of ODI ranking

Dubai: India captain Mithali Raj has returned to the top five of the latest ICC Women's ODI Rankings for batswomen after top-scoring for India with 72 in the series opener against England in Bristol. The 38-year-old, who has completed 22 years in international cricket, rescued her side from a precarious 27 for two but India's total of 201 for eight was not challenging enough for England, who will be defending their World Cup title in New Zealand next year. Mithali has gained three slots to reach fifth position after the Bristol knock. — *PTI*

India aim to level series vs England

Taunton: India will have to shed their outdated batting approach and play more freely to bounce back against formidable hosts England in the second women's ODI here on Wednesday. India consumed as many as 181 dot balls on way to posting a below par 201 which England chased down rather comfortably to take a 1-0 lead in the three-match series on Sunday.

Ahead of the World Cup in New Zealand early next year, India have got work to do in all departments as pointed out by skipper Mithali Raj herself. The game could see India making multiple changes in the playing eleven as the batters' inability to rotate strike is proving to be a big issue for the team. — *PTI*

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IT'S SWISS TIME!

Spirited Switzerland pack off world champs France

| | |
|--|----------|
| Switzerland | 3 |
| (Haris Seferovic 15, 81, Mario Gavranovic 90) | |
| France | 3 |
| (Karim Benzema 57, 59, Paul Pogba 75) | |
| Switzerland win 5-4 in penalty shootout | |

Paris, June 29: Kylian Mbappe missed the crucial penalty on Monday as world champions France were sent packing from Euro 2020 in a shoot-out against Switzerland, who go through to a quarter-final tie against Spain after an unforgettable day of drama which featured a total of 14 goals in two games.

Switzerland had never won a knockout tie at the European Championship and had never won a shoot-out, but they triumphed 5-4 on penalties against the World Cup holders after a remarkable 3-3 draw in Bucharest.

France, who came into the tournament as favourites to add the continental crown to the World Cup they won in Russia three years ago, had earlier come from 1-0 down to lead 3-1 and looked to be cruising through, only to concede two late goals. The game in the Romanian capital followed a 5-3 extra-time win for Spain over Croatia in Copenhagen, and the 2008 and 2012 European champions will face the Swiss in the last eight in Saint Petersburg on Friday.

Switzerland went ahead early on when Haris Seferovic headed in a cross, but they looked set to rue the moment early in the second half when Ricardo Rodriguez's penalty was saved by Hugo Lloris.

By the hour mark the game — watched by a crowd of around 25,000 after coronavirus restric-



Switzerland's goalkeeper Yann Sommer (in the foreground) is jubilant after saving the decisive kick by France forward Kylian Mbappe in the penalty shootout of their Euro Round of 16 match in Bucharest on Monday night. — *AFP*

SIMILAR SCRIPT!

| | |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| Spain vs Croatia | France vs Switzerland |
| 20th min: ESP 0-1 CRO | 15th min: FRA 0-1 SUI |
| 38th min: ESP 1-1 CRO | 57th min: FRA 1-1 SUI |
| 57th min: ESP 2-1 CRO | 59th min: FRA 2-1 SUI |
| 77th min: ESP 3-1 CRO | 75th min: FRA 3-1 SUI |
| 85th min: ESP 3-2 CRO | 81st min: FRA 3-2 SUI |
| 92nd min: ESP 3-3 CRO | 90th min: FRA 3-3 SUI |

tions in Bucharest were eased — had been turned on its head by Karim Benzema, who controlled Mbappe's pass to fire in the equaliser and then nodded in Antoine Griezmann's centre.

Paul Pogba's stunning curling strike into the top corner seemed to have put Les Bleus out of sight at 3-1 with quarter of an hour left, but Seferovic pulled one back and substitute Mario Gavranovic netted a last-minute equaliser to force extra time.

With no further goals, the tie went to penalties and all nine kicks were converted before Mbappe saw his effort saved by Yann Sommer.

"It is painful," said France captain Lloris.

Switzerland, who only qualified for the last 16 as one of the best third-placed sides, had not won

a knockout tie at a major tournament since the 1938 World Cup.

"It was an incredible evening. I am so proud of the team," said goalkeeper Sommer.

SPAIN EDGE CROATIA IN 8-GOAL THRILLER

Somehow the drama in Bucharest topped that in Copenhagen earlier, when Alvaro Morata netted an all-important goal as Spain prevailed in extra

time against the 2018 World Cup runners-up, but only after they also let slip a 3-1 lead.

Luka Modric's Croatia came back to force the extra half-hour but that was when Morata, the Atletico Madrid striker who has been panned for his performances by critics and subjected to abuse from fans, controlled a cross and volleyed home in the 100th minute.

Mikel Oyarzabal then

secured Spain's victory in what was the highest-scoring game at a European Championship since the opening match of the very first tournament in 1960, when Yugoslavia defeated hosts France 5-4.

Croatia had been gifted a first-half lead when Spain goalkeeper Unai Simon allowed Pedri's back-pass to slip under his foot and in. But Luis Enrique's side had been the better team prior to that and they levelled through Pablo Sarabia before appearing to run away with the tie in the second half.

Manchester City winger Ferran Torres crossed for Cesar Azpilicueta to head in his first goal for his country and Torres then made it 3-1.

However, Croatia substitute Mislav Orsic pulled one back. — *AFP*

T20 CUP FROM OCT. 17, FINAL ON NOV. 14

Dubai, June 29: This year's T20 World Cup, which has been moved to the UAE and Oman from India due to the Covid-19 pandemic, will be played from October 17 to November 14, the International Cricket Council (ICC) announced on Tuesday.

"The BCCI will remain the hosts of the event, which will now be held in Dubai International Stadium, the Sheikh Zayed Stadium in Abu Dhabi, the Sharjah Stadium, and the Oman Cricket Academy Ground, from 17 October to 14 November 2021," the ICC stated.

The first round of the tournament, comprising the eight qualifying teams, will now be split between Oman and UAE.

Four of these teams will then progress to the Super 12s round where they'll join the eight automatic qualifiers.

The upcoming edition will be the first men's T20 World Cup played since 2016. The eight teams competing in the preliminary stage are Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Ireland, Netherlands, Scotland, Namibia, Oman and Papua New Guinea, before the play-off stage and the Final on November 14. — *PTI*

English exorcise German ghosts

London, June 29: Raheem Sterling and Harry Kane fired England into the Euro 2020 quarter-finals as they sealed a 2-0 win against Germany that ended decades of hurt at the hands of their bitter rivals on Tuesday.

Sterling struck with 15 minutes left in a tense last 16 tie at Wembley before Kane clinched England's first knockout stage victory over Germany since 1966. In the 55 years since England beat the Germans in the World Cup final, the Three Lions had endured a painful litany of defeats against Die Mannschaft when the stakes were high.

England were eliminated from the 1970, 1990 and 2010 World Cups by Germany, who also beat them in the Euro 96 semi-finals at Wembley. But Gareth Southgate's side have finally exorcised the ghosts of Paul Gascoigne's tears and their own manager's penalty miss 25 years ago.

| | |
|-------------------------------------|----------|
| England | 2 |
| (Raheem Sterling 75, Harry Kane 86) | |
| Germany | 0 |

England produced a gritty display capped by clinical finishes from Sterling, who now has three goals in the tournament, and Kane — who finally bagged his first of the competition.

England, yet to concede a goal in the tournament, head to Rome on Saturday for a quarter-final against the winners of Tuesday's other last 16 tie between Sweden and Ukraine.

Chasing a first major international trophy since 1966, England's side of the draw looks wide open, with a potential semi-final against Denmark or the Czech Republic unlikely to strike fear into their hearts. It was only England's second knockout stage win in Euro history. — *AFP*

| COPA QF LINE-UP | | |
|-----------------|--|--------------------|
| July 3 | Peru vs Paraguay at Goiania Brazil vs Chile at Rio de Janeiro | 2.30 am 5.30 am |
| July 4 | Uruguay vs Colombia at Goiania Argentina vs Ecuador at Brasilia | 3.30 am 6.30 am |

Messi sets record in Argentina win

Cuiaba (Brazil), June 29: Lionel Messi celebrated his record 148th international cap with two goals as Argentina trounced Bolivia 4-1 to clinch top spot in Copa America Group A on Monday.

Messi — who had equalled Javier Mascherano's Argentinian caps record of 147 last week — marked his 148th appearance in style, setting up the opening goal before bagging a brace of his own.

The victory at Cuiaba's Arena Pantanal stadium sees Argentina advance to a quarter-final on Saturday against Ecuador, the fourth placed finishers from Group B.

Bolivia, who had already been eliminated after three defeats in their opening three games, were out-classed from the outset by a rampant Argentina.

The Argentines almost took the lead after three minutes, only for Bolivia goalkeeper Carlos Lampe to pull off a remarkable double save from Sergio Aguero and Angel Correa in quick succession.

But Argentina did not have to wait long for the breakthrough, when Messi's delightful chipped

| | |
|---|----------|
| Argentina | 4 |
| (Alejandro Gomez 6, Lionel Messi 33-pen, 42, Lautaro Martinez 65) | |
| Bolivia | 1 |
| (Erwin Saavedra 60) | |

| | |
|-------------------------|----------|
| Uruguay | 1 |
| (Edinson Cavani 21-pen) | |
| Paraguay | 0 |

pass released Papu Gomez who volleyed past Lampe to make it 1-0 after six minutes.

Argentina doubled their lead on 33 minutes when Gomez was brought down in the area by Bolivia's Diego Bejarano.

Messi duly stepped up to convert the penalty to put Argentina firmly in control. Bolivia got their first shot on goal shortly afterwards, Jeyson Chura's ferocious long-range effort forcing Argentina goalkeeper Franco Armani into a diving save at full stretch. But Argentina reasserted their dominance and it was Messi who made it 3-0. — *AFP*

Olympic briefs

Manu logs off social media

Teen shooting sensation Manu Bhaker on Tuesday decided to switch off from social media till the end of Tokyo Olympics to focus on her preparation and performance in the Games, starting July 23. The 19-year-old Bhaker is currently training in Croatia along with other members of the Olympic-bound Indian team, which is taking part in the ISSF World Cup here. The shooters will directly fly to Tokyo before the Games.

Mary heads to Italy for training

Six-time world champion MC Mary Kom has decided to join the rest of India's Olympic-bound boxing team in Italy for training to avoid the added restrictions on those travelling to Tokyo from here amid the pandemic. Mary Kom will take off for Assisi in a day or two to join the eight other Olympic-bound boxers, who are set to leave for Tokyo from there itself. The London Olympics bronze-medallist was training at Pune's Army Sports Institute so far.

Wawrinka joins exit list

Former Olympic Games gold medallist Stan Wawrinka on Tuesday joined the growing list of players withdrawing from the Olympics. Wawrinka, who won an Olympic title in men's doubles alongside Roger Federer at Beijing in 2008, has undergone surgery on his left foot. The 36-year-old hasn't played on the tour since Doha in March. "He is very disappointed not to be able to play in the Games," said a statement by his management team.

Relay to be pulled off roads

Some stages of the Tokyo Olympic torch relay will be pulled off the roads of the Japanese capital because of fears about spreading the coronavirus, Japan's Kyodo news agency reported on Tuesday. Citing the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, Kyodo said the relay would not appear on public streets from July 9-16. Kyodo said organisers would decide on the format for the relay from July 17 until the opening ceremony on July 23.

Federer survives scare

London, June 29: Roger Federer survived a huge scare to reach the Wimbledon second round on Tuesday when French opponent Adrian Mannarino was forced to retire injured at the start of the fifth set.

Eight-time champion Federer was level at 6-4, 6-7 (3/7), 3-6, 6-2 when Mannarino called it quits after just one point in the decider.

The Frenchman, celebrating his 33rd birthday, suffered a bad fall in the seventh game of the fourth set.

Despite taking treatment from the trainer, he was hardly able to move and grimacing in pain had to retire.

Just five weeks shy of his 40th birthday, Federer faces either Richard Gasquet or Yuichi Sugita for a place in the last 32.

Germany's Alexander Zverev eased into the second round of Wimbledon on Tuesday beating Dutch qualifier Tallon Griekspoor 6-3, 6-4, 6-1 in just 89 minutes.

The 24-year-old French Open semi-finalist had lost to qualifiers at Wimbledon on two occasions — Ernests Gulbis in the third round in 2018 and to Jiri Vesely in the first round in 2019 — but he made no mistake this time round.

Not even a 15 minute break so the Court One



Venus Williams of USA in action during her first round match against Mihaela Buzarnescu of Romania in Wimbledon. — *AFP*

roof could be closed due to rain upset the fourth seed's rhythm.

VENUS' RECORD APPEARANCE

Venus Williams marked her record 90th Grand Slam appearance with a three-set victory over

Mihaela Buzarnescu of Romania at Wimbledon on Tuesday and revealed the secret to her longevity: "I'm good at what I do".

The 41-year-old American, who is a five-time champion at the All England Club, triumphed

THE RESULTS

Men's first round: Roger Federer (SUI, x6) bt Adrian Mannarino (FRA) 6-4, 6-7 (3/7), 3-6, 6-2 retired; Alexander Zverev (GER, x4) bt Tallon Griekspoor (NED) 6-3, 6-4, 6-1; Sebastian Korda (USA) bt Alex De Minaur (AUS, x15) 6-3, 6-4, 6-7 (5/7), 7-6 (7/5); Diego Schwartzman (ARG, x9) bt Benoit Paire (FRA) 6-3, 6-4, 6-0; Fabio Fognini (ITA, x26) bt Albert Ramos Vinolas (ESP) 7-6 (7/4), 6-2, 6-4; Dan Evans (GBR, x22) bt Feliciano Lopez (ESP) 7-6 (7/4), 6-2, 7-5.

Women's first round: Ashleigh Barty (AUS, x1) bt Carla Suarez Navarro (ESP) 6-1, 6-7 (1/7), 6-1; Venus Williams (USA) bt Mihaela Buzarnescu (ROM) 7-5, 4-6, 6-3; Liudmila Samsonova (RUS) bt Kaia Kanepi (EST) 6-4, 6-2; Madison Brengle (USA) bt Christina McHale (USA) 3-6, 7-5, 10-8; Karolina Pliskova (CZE, x8) bt Tamara Zidansek (SLO) 7-5, 6-4; Tereza Martincova (CZE) bt Alison Riske (USA, x28) 6-2, 4-6, 6-1; Lin Zhu (CHN) bt Mona Barthel (GER) 6-7 (2/7), 6-3, 6-3.

7-5, 4-6, 6-3. Former world number one Williams first played Wimbledon in 1997 and is making her 23rd appearance at the tournament. Now at 111 in the world, she fired 10 aces and 33 winners to defeat her 160th-ranked opponent. — *AFP*

Aditi qualifies for 2nd successive Games

New Delhi, June 29: India's top ranked woman golfer Aditi Ashok will take part in her second successive Olympic Games in Tokyo next month after finishing 45th on the qualifying list released on Tuesday.

Aditi thus joined Anirban Lahiri and Udayan Mane to make it a team of three to Tokyo. Lahiri also like Aditi, will be participating in his second straight Games after

Rio, 2016. Aditi and Lahiri, figured in the first list of 60 players, of whom some are likely to skip the Games.

"I still think of Rio 2016 like it was only yesterday. To have the honour of playing for India is beyond exciting. I am privileged to have the opportunity to represent my country and my sport at the Games again," the golfer tweeted.

Even as Aditi came

through in the first list, Diksha Dagar also figures in the second list as the fifth reserve in case of some specific pull-outs. Diksha, who trailed Tvesa Malik till last week overtook the latter with a tied-fourth finish at an event in the Czech Republic.

Mane made the cut following the withdrawal of Emiliano Grillo of Argentina. His entry will be confirmed on July 6 by the IGF and by then it will

also be known who all are withdrawing from the women's section.

DISCUSS THROWER PUNIA MAKES CUT

Veteran discus thrower Seema Punia qualified for Tokyo Olympics with a best effort of 63.70m while winning gold on the final day of the National Inter-State Athletics Championships in Patiala. The 37-year-old Punia, who had won a sil-

ver in the 2018 Commonwealth Games and a bronze in the 2018 Asian Games, breached the Olympic qualifying mark of 63.50m.

She will be taking part in her fourth Olympics after the 2004, 2012 and 2016 editions of the Games. Punia will be the second Indian woman to take part in the event in Tokyo after national record holder Kamalpreet Kaur. — *PTI*