

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

VIJAYAWADA | FRIDAY | 11 JUNE 2021



WEATHER



Max: 34.0°C
Min: 28.0°C
RH: 81%
Rainfall: 1.6 mm

Forecast: clear.
Max/Min temp.
34/28 °C

ASTROGUIDE

Plava: Uttarayana
Tithi: Jyeshtha Shuddha Padyami till 6.28 pm
Star: Mrigasira till 2.28 pm
Variyam: 11.43 pm to 1.29 am (Saturday)
Durmuhurtam: 8.21 am to 9.13 am; 12.42 pm to 1.34 pm
Rahukalam: 10.30 am to 12 noon
HIJRI CALENDAR
Shawwal 29, 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 5.34 AM
SUNSET TODAY 6.40 PM
MOONRISE TODAY 6.02 PM
MOONSET TOMORROW 08.25 AM

COUNTER POINT



Only 2 seasons in metro cities... Covid season and flood season!

SHORT TAKES

UPSC to start Civils interviews

New Delhi: The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) has decided to commence interviews for civil services examination 2020, which were deferred due to a surge in Covid-19 cases, from August 2, according to an official statement. The civil services examination is conducted annually by the UPSC in three stages — preliminary, main and personality test (interview) — to select officers of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Indian Foreign Service (IFS) and the Indian Police Service (IPS), among others.

Centre to auction big oil, gas fields

New Delhi: The government will auction unmonetised large oil and gas fields of state-owned ONGC and OIL to boost the country's hydrocarbon production, Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said on Thursday. Speaking on the launch of the third round of auction of small discovered fields, he said companies cannot indefinitely sit on resources they may have discovered.

GST council to meet tomorrow

New Delhi: The all-powerful GST Council, chaired by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, will meet on June 12 to decide on GST rate cut for Covid essentials and black fungus medicine, according to officials. In the previous meeting on May 28, a Group of Ministers (GoM) was set up to recommend tax relief on Covid essentials. The GoM submitted its report on June 7.

FSSAI number made compulsory

New Delhi: Food safety regulator FSSAI has mandated food business operators to mention FSSAI licence or registration number on cash receipts or purchase invoice with effect from October 1 this year. The FSSAI has issued a latest order in this regard. Since complaints remain unresolved due to lack of specific information, this move will help consumers lodge complaint against food business using the FSSAI number, it said.

WORLD | 5

Junta hits Suu Kyi with graft charges

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Polavaram project: AP seeks pending dues

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 10

The Andhra Pradesh government has urged the Centre to clear Polavaram project pending bills worth ₹1,600 crore to enable them to take up all works including land acquisition, relief and rehabilitation (R&R) and others in an expeditious manner.

Union secretary (water resources) Pankaj Kumar reviewed the progress of Polavaram works with the AP officials from water resources department and also with Polavaram Project Authority chairman J. Chandrasekhar Iyer, virtually from New Delhi on Thursday.

The officials said that the Union secretary directed them to expedite

● **THE UNION** official told the AP officials that to get approval for the second revised cost estimates of the project worth ₹47,725 crore, the Union Cabinet has to give its approval.

the R&R works the displaced people at 42.5 metres contour level by the end of July, when the officials informed him about the closure of upper cofferdam to enable diversion of water from the main course of Godavari river through spillway.

Nearly 17,600 project-affected people at 41.5 metres contour level and about 9,800 project-affected people need to be rehabilitated in July and August as the river wit-

nesses floods. The state officials informed Pankaj Kumar about the pending bills worth ₹1,600 crore.

Informing him that bills pertaining to works worth ₹570 crore were set aside, they urged the Central official to clear the bills in toto, and not component-wise, in order to enable them to expedite the works.

However, they were told that to get approval for the second revised cost estimates of the project worth ₹47,725 crore, the Union Cabinet has to give its approval.

AP water resources secretary J. Syamala Rao, engineer-in-chief C. Narayana Reddy and Polavaram project chief engineer B. Sudhakar Babu attended the review meet.

TS WITHDRAWS KRISHNA WATER SHARING CASE FROM APEX COURT

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JUNE 10:

In a significant step to facilitate a central push for resolving the long-pending Krishna water sharing dispute between Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, the TS government has withdrawn its case from the Supreme Court in this respect.

Official sources said the government has filed a plea in the Supreme Court on Thursday, seeking withdrawal of the case.

TS had filed a petition in the Supreme Court in 2015 after the Centre did not respond to its demand for constituting a new tribunal for Krishna water sharing under the Interstate River Waters Disputes Act of 1956.

At the apex council meeting held by the Centre in December last with the two states, the Centre agreed to look into the water reallocation plea on condition that the Telangana State withdrew its case from the SC. In the meeting, chief minister Chandrashekar Rao had agreed to do this but did not issue the order so far.

This week, the CM directed the officials to withdraw the case immediately.

He reportedly told officials that it's for the Centre now to fulfill its assurance to both the states.

■ **Page 2: TS to tell Centre about case withdrawal**

Yogi in Delhi as winds of change speculated in UP

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 10

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Thursday met Union home minister Amit Shah and is expected to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP president J.P. Nadda on Friday.

The CM's visit to Delhi has come after the BJP faced a major setback in the recent panchayat polls, and with crucial Assembly polls in the state are lined up for early next year there is a lot of speculation about a possible Cabinet reshuffle. The BJP state unit is also abuzz with rumours about the growing rift between the CM and a section of party leaders on his way of functioning and growing disenchantment among Brahmin voters with the BJP under Yogi Adityanath's rule.

● **THE CM'S** visit to Delhi has come after the BJP faced a major setback in the recent panchayat polls, and there is a lot of speculation about a Cabinet reshuffle.

ond wave, will be part of the discussion in the CM's meetings with the PM, Mr Shah and Mr Nadda. While the UP CM met Mr Shah for more than an hour on Thursday, the latter also held a meeting with Apna Dal chief Anurpriya Patel after his meeting with Adityanath. The BJP and its ally Apna Dal had fielded separate candidates in the panchayat polls, and the latter's performance, in and around Varanasi, was better than that of the BJP.

Amid reports of dissension, BJP general secretary (organisation) B.L. Santhosh had visited UP recently and had met ministers, MLAs, MPs and the CM, apparently to gauge the situation in the government and also the organisation. He had also reviewed the party's preparedness for the coming Assembly elections.

Thereafter, the attendant should obtain signatures of District Coordinator of Health Services, District Medical and Health Officer, Superintendent of the Hospital concerned, Drug Control Wing officer and finally the Joint Collector. The attendant has to run to all these offices and the less said the better about his plight if he happens to be uneducated.

Finally, he should produce the indent at the Central Drug Store and submit a demand draft. A senior official said that he had seen people struggling to reach out to officers to obtain signatures and secure Tocilizumab to save their kin in critical condition. He stressed the need to relax the conditions to save the ordeal for the kin of patients and also to speed up the treatment.

He said the situation is no different to secure Tocilizumab from Central Drug Stores.

SPORTS | 8

Indian boxing legend Dingko Singh dead

TABLOID

Shutting out depression

Jagan pushes 3 capitals plan with Shah in Delhi

Urges HM to start process to relocate High Court at Kurnool

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 10

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy met Union home minister Amit Shah at the latter's residence on Thursday night and held discussions for over one-and-a-half hours.

The Chief Minister impressed upon Shah that Andhra Pradesh was committed to the concept of balanced regional development and decentralisation of governance and hence was planning to decentralise capital functions at three locations with Executive Capital at Visakhapatnam, Legislative Capital at Amaravati and Judicial Capital at Kurnool. In this regard, the government enacted the AP Decentralization and Inclusive Development of All Region Act, 2020 in August 2020.

Jagan Mohan Reddy urged the Union home minister to direct the authorities concerned to initiate the process of re-notification of locating the High Court of Andhra Pradesh at Kurnool and also took it to his notice that the proposal was also part of the BJP's official manifesto for 2019 state elections. He Andhra Pradesh was faced with many challenges due to the poor financial situation and in order to make the state systemically stronger and "Atmanirbhar" (self-reliant), it was imperative that the state was accorded Special Category Status. He added that the approval of Special Status would entitle AP to more Central grants, resulting in pro-



Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy meets Union home minister Amit Shah at his residence in New Delhi on Thursday.

— D. KAMRAJ

portional reduction of financial burden on the bifurcated state, creation of jobs on the back of new industries, and attainment of fiscal self-reliance due to the enhanced tax base.

The Chief Minister asked for sanction of 13 medical colleges and financial assistance to them. He said an amount of Rs 3,299 crore related to the subsidy for PDS rice was to be released by the ministry of food & civil supplies. He sought release of pending dues worth Rs 4,652.70 crore and enhancement of annual person days for work per family from 100 to 150 days by the ministry of rural development. He urged the central government to release pending dues of ₹529.95 crore

towards Rural Local Body Grants related to 14th Finance Commission and to release pending dues of Rs 497 crore for financial year 2020-21 related to 15th Finance Commission.

The CM also stressed the need to extend support to rejuvenate and make AP power sector more robust in ways such as surrendering of costly thermal power allocation of Kudgi & Valluru (NTECL) plants, supporting Telangana Discoms under Atmanirbhar programme by extending conditional loans, and restructuring an outstanding high-cost debt of about Rs 50,000 crore in the books of AP Power utilities. In view of the severe financial distress of AP power utilities,

it is requested that this debt may be restructured appropriately. Financial assistance was also sought for the reverse pumped storage project in Upper Sileru. Jagan Mohan Reddy also requested the central government to give assent to the Andhra Pradesh DISHA Bills, Criminal Law (Andhra Pradesh Amendment) Bill, 2019, Andhra Pradesh DISHA (Special Courts for Specified Offences against Women and Children) Bill, 2020, and Andhra Pradesh Land Titling Authority Bill, 2020. He also sought establishment of a central tribal university in the tribal sub-plan area.

■ **Page 2: Jagan pushes hard for Polavaram project**

11 KILLED AS BUILDING FALLS IN MUMBAI

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC
MUMBAI, JUNE 10

Eleven people, including eight children, were killed when a three-storey apartment collapsed on another structure at a slum in Malad on Wednesday night.

According to the BMC disaster management cell, the incident was reported around 11.10 pm from the New Collector compound slum on Abdul Hamid road. A case of culpable homicide not amounting to murder was registered against the owner of the building.

ACCESS | CONTROL Many signatures needed to get medicines

Tight rules for fungus drugs

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, JUNE 10

The procedure insisted upon by the medical and health department to obtain Amphotericin B injection to treat the dreaded black fungus (MucorMycosis) has made it grueling for the desperate attendants of patients, forcing them to run from pillar to post for signatures of medical officers and senior officials in health and revenue departments.

Initially, the procedure was framed for the life-saving injection-Tocilizumab and now is being followed other drugs too. Each patient requires 42 vials of the injection and

each vial costs about ₹3,500 at the Central Drug Store functioning under the medical and health department infrastructure wing.

According to a medical officer, there are seven odd parameters to secure the injection. Some of the conditions are that patient should be in the intensive care unit for at least 48 hours; he should not be a TB patient, and there should not be any bacterial infections. In addition to this, he should not have responded to steroids.

The first step is that the doctor treating the patient should raise an indent and it should be signed by the duty doctor.

Thereafter, the attendant should obtain signatures of District Coordinator of Health Services, District Medical and Health Officer, Superintendent of the Hospital concerned, Drug Control Wing officer and finally the Joint Collector. The attendant has to run to all these offices and the less said the better about his plight if he happens to be uneducated.

Finally, he should produce the indent at the Central Drug Store and submit a demand draft. A senior official said that he had seen people struggling to reach out to officers to obtain signatures and secure Tocilizumab to save their kin in critical condition. He stressed the need to relax the conditions to save the ordeal for the kin of patients and also to speed up the treatment.



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SHORT TAKES

CM condoles death of Ghantasala's son

Vijayawada: Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy expressed grief over the demise of Ghantasala Ratna Kumar, son of legendary music composer and singer Ghantasala. Ratna Kumar was a renowned dubbing artiste and dialogue writer, the Chief Minister said and conveyed his condolences to the bereaved family members. He recalled the services of Ratna Kumar and praised his services.

BC COMMISSION ISSUES NOTICES TO KURNOOL SP

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL JUNE 10

National Commission for BackWard Classes issued notices to Kurnool district Superintendent of Police, K. Fakeerappa to inquiry into allegations leveled against the Kurnool one town circle inspector Kalavenkata Ramana for his role in abusing leaders of backward communities during the recent municipal elections.

The National Commission for BackWard Classes (NCBC) directed the SP to complete the investigation within 15 days and report the matter. Otherwise, the commission warned SP to appear before it in person at New Delhi. The BJP leader K. Harish Babu who complained against the one town Circle inspector to the national BC commission said that the Circle inspector must be punished for his rash behavior with political leaders. He alleged that the Circle inspector worked in favour of the state government and suppressed the voice of the opposition leaders.

TD DEMANDS WHITE PAPER ON GROUP-1 EXAM EVALUATION

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 10

Telugu Desam MLC Nara Lokesh has expressed concern over state government not conceding the demand for inquiry into alleged irregularities in valuation of Group-I mains exam.

After participating in a virtual meeting with candidates who had taken this exam, he said there have been many complaints that the evaluation has been faulty. Lokesh said to come clean on this, the government should release details of marks and answer sheets of candidates who have been selected.

The TD MLC pointed out that the notification for Group-I mains had been issued in 2018, written exam held in December 2019, and results announced on April 28, 2021. Of the 9,678 candidates who took the written exam 340 got selected for interviews.

Following final selections, numerous complaints have been received with allegations that AP Public Service Commission (APSPC) has turned into YSR Congress Public Service Commission (YCPSC).

Lokesh demanded that YSRC government explain why so many complaints have been received about overall conduct of Group-I exam. He sought a white paper on how candidates who have appeared for the Group-I exam have been evaluated and final selections made. He said TD will agitate till justice is done in the matter.

TS TO TELL CENTRE ABOUT CASE WITHDRAWAL

From page 1

The state government will write to the Centre informing it of the withdrawal of its case from the Supreme Court. The sharing of Krishna waters between the Telugu states is to be done by the Krishna water disputes tribunal, which also is responsible for allotment of water to Maharashtra and Karnataka through which the river flows.

Soon after the formation of Telangana State in 2014, the CM sought the formation of a new tribunal. TS later filed the petition in the SC in 2015 as the Centre did not take any steps.

Union water resources minister Gajendrasingh Shekhawat had stated that once Telangana withdrew its case, the Centre will seek legal opinion and decide whether or not to constitute a new tribunal; or give new terms of reference to the existing tribunal, the Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal-II.

Door-to-door survey



Municipal corporation health staff conducting door-to-door inspection during the 12th phase of fevers survey in Vijayawada on Thursday. — C. NARAYANA RAO

Will supply water from Polavaram by '22: Anil

CM Jagan to take up funding of Polavaram during Delhi visit

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 10

Minister for water resources P. Anil Kumar Yadav on Thursday affirmed that the government would provide water from Polavaram project by the 2022 Kharif season. He said that Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy was discussing about the pending funds and grants to Polavaram during his visit to Delhi and refuted allegations by the opposition parties that the visit was only aimed at lobbying for cases.

Yadav said that the entire world was stalled due to Covid-19, but the state government was continuing the works, with an aim to provide water by 2022 Kharif. He said the

● **MINISTER ANIL** Kumar Yadav said that that over 3,000 people were working on the project to complete it on time, even risking their lives. Already, five officials at the project site died due to Covid-19.

● **HE SAID** the opposition had no right to speak on the Polavaram project, and they were only trying to blame the government by washing their hands off their faults.

opposition leaders were unnecessarily making false allegations against the government, fearing that they would completely vanish after the completion of Polavaram project.

The minister said that over 3,000 people were working on the project to complete it on time, even risking their lives. Already, five officials at the project site died due to Covid-19.

He said everyone should appreciate the officials and workers for continu-

ing the project works despite Covid-19 crisis.

Yadav criticised that both Chandrababu Naidu and his son Lokesh were not venturing out fearing Covid-19 and conducting Zoom meetings by sitting at home. He stated that MP K. Raghu Ramakrishna Raju had become an agent for Telugu Desam and conspired to destabilise the government by joining hands with Naidu and Lokesh. He said Lokesh failed miserably and he could not win as an MLA

despite working as a minister for three departments, and the existing MLC tenure would come to an end in a year. The minister said that it was ridiculous for Naidu to talk about Polavaram R&R, as he could not give a single house to the displaced during his rule. He assured that all measures were being taken for rehabilitation of the 17,000 displaced families in a phased manner. He said the opposition had no right to speak on the Polavaram project, and they were only trying to blame the government by washing their hands off their mistakes. He said that the Chief Minister shall discuss the funding of Polavaram project during his Delhi visit.



The Chief Justice of India, Justice N.V. Ramana, offers prayers at Dwajasthambham at Srivari temple in Tirumala on Thursday.

Chief Justice visits Tirumala, takes part in Ekanta Seva

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, JUNE 10

The Chief Justice of India (CJI), Justice N.V. Ramana, along with his family members, arrived in Tirumala on Thursday evening on a two-day pilgrimage. This is his maiden visit to the pilgrim centre after his elevation to the topmost judicial post in the country.

The CJI had a darshan of

Lord Venkateswara Swamy along with his family and took part in Ekanta Seva. Earlier, on his arrival at Sri Padmavathi Rest House, he was welcomed by TTD Trust Board Chairman Y.V. Subba Reddy, EO Dr K.S. Jawahar Reddy and TTD Additional EO A.V. Dharma Reddy.

Among other prominent personalities who received the dignitary

included AP HC Judge Justice Lalita Kumari and Tirupati Legislator and TTD Board member B. Karunakar Reddy.

The CJI is visiting the temple town for the second time this year. In his capacity as the CJI-designate, he had visited the hill shrine on April 11. The CJI is scheduled to have a darshan of Lord Venkateswara again on Friday.

RYTHU | BHAROSA

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 10

The state government has started purchasing paddy directly from farmers and urged them to make good use of the Rythu Bharosa Kendras (RBKs) to sell their grains.

AP State Civil Supplies Commissioner Kona

Sasidhar said the government aims to procure 45 lakh metric tonnes of paddy in the Rabi season. So far, 25,25,927 tonnes of paddy has been purchased till date and procurement would continue till July-end.

Sasidhar said the government is ensuring timely payments to farmers

through issue of registration and purchase coupons to them at the RBKs. He asserted that the entire produce of farmers would be procured at the minimum support price (MSP). Brokers or other intermediaries and millers are not allowed at RBKs in order to protect the interests of farmers.

Low tax makes Bethamcherla attract Tandur slab traders

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL, JUNE 10

Bethamcherla is a major hub for stone polishing industries as it holds the tax advantage. Units here pay lower GST on limestone slabs at the rate of 5 per cent instead of 18 per cent as mandated by the GST Council.

The misinterpretation of the classification of goods into a lower GST slab has brought a windfall of profits as industries use loopholes in the tax system.

The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) in its notification number 19/2018 brought under 5 per cent GST slab articles which fall under HSN Chapter 25 15. It covers only the material of 'Ecaussine and other calcareous monumental or building stone alabaster (other than marble and travertine), other than mirror polished stone which is ready to use.'

At Bethamcherla, there are more than 1,000 stone polishing units that extract limestone slabs from the quarry and the goods are then subjected to the processes of polishing, tumbling, and calibration. These goods fall within the scope and meaning of the term "worked monumental or building stone" as per the description in Heading 6802, and as such, they are rightly classifiable under Heading 6802 of the First Schedule to the Customs Tariff Act, 1975.

When contacted, Raj Gopal Sarda, a Tandur entrepreneur, who moved the Authority for Advance ruling against the Telangana State GST authorities, found no relief to classify the limestone slabs which underwent value addition to make it a ready-to-use product to be brought under the 5 per cent GST slab. The authority ruled that they should be taxed at the rate of 18 per cent

DC IMPACT

Bethamcherla units need to be protected with low GST: Min.

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL, JUNE 10

Finance minister Buggana Rajendranath Reddy, reacting to a news report in the *Deccan Chronicle*, give headline please in quotes on Thursday, said stone polishing units in the Bethamcherla area are eligible for five per cent GST.

Citing that the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) in its Notification No. 19/2018 had brought under 5 per cent GST slab articles which fall under HSN Chapter 25 15, only the material of 'Ecaussine and other calcareous monumental or building stone alabaster (other than marble and travertine), other than mirror polished stone which is ready to use', the minister said he has represented before the GST council meeting to make this happen.

Reddy said the Rayalaseema region, an underdeveloped area, would be hit if the GST rates are collected at the rate of 18 per cent on polished stones and slabs. The industrial

GST. He said Bethamcherla units which carry on a lot of processing rough blocks extracted from the quarry cannot termed their products as raw material even though the physical properties of morphology remain the same.

A businessman in Bethamcherla confirmed that they polish the stone several times to get the

development in the backward Rayalaseema region particularly in the Bethamcherla, Kollimigundla, Banaganapalle, Tadipatri, Ankireddy palke villages would come to a halt.

The minister contended that the stone polishing industries generate employment to the tune of 20,000 people and also provides an opportunity for self-employment. But none of the Rayalaseema people prefer to work in quarries and stone polishing units. All the labour is brought from Bihar and Chattisgarh states.

It is to be noted that there is no dispute with regard to GST on raw material. The units in Bethamcherla process the stone and make it ready to use product thereby becoming liable to higher tax slabs of 18 per cent.

When questioned what is the problem in collecting 18 per cent GST from stone polishing units as in any case the industry would pass on the tax incident to the ultimate consumer, he said the industry needs to be protected.

fine and smooth texture and edges are roughed up to smoothness. Then they will cut it, stack it, pack it in wooden boxes and keep thermacole or other material between slabs of stone to prevent abrasion. All these processes on the naturally quarried stone quality as mirror polished and, therefore, need to be charged at 18 per cent of GST.

CM pushes hard for Polavaram project

From page 1

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy began his hectic Delhi tour on Thursday by first meeting the Union minister for forests, Prakash Javadekar. Later, he called on the Union minister for Jal Shakti (water resources), Gajendra Singh Shekawat.

The CM explained the progress of Polavaram project in detail to Shekawat and took up the issue of pending funds and grants for the project. He impressed upon the minister for timely release of funds to complete the project on time.

The CM pressed for GOI approval for investment clearance for Polavaram project as recommended by the PPA and the Central Water Commission and accepted by Technical Advisory Committee of the Ministry of Jal Shakti for ₹55,656.87 crore at 2017-18 price list at the earliest, so that project works including land acquisition and R&R (relief and rehabilitation) can be completed as per schedule by June 2022.

The CM requested the Jal Shakti Minister to consider the water supply component as an integral part of the irrigation component and this would be in consonance with the guidelines followed by the Ministry of Jal Shakti towards national projects. He urged the minister to reimburse the expendi-

ture without restricting it to component-wise eligibility. He also sought reimbursements for land acquisition and R&R compensation for project affected families of the project as per the Right to Fair Compensation & Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013.

The CM also sought shifting of the headquarters of PPA from Hyderabad to Rajamahendravaram at an early date as it is difficult for the officials to come all the way from Hyderabad for project monitoring and inspection. Earlier, the Chief Minister requested Prakash Javadekar to solve some problems in environmental clearances regarding the stocking works of Polavaram project.

Later, the CM met Niti Aayog vice-chairman Dr Rajiv Kumar. He explained the programmes undertaken under the Housing for All scheme in AP. He informed that 30.76 lakh house site pattas were already given to the beneficiaries by distributing 68,381 acres of land which was procured by the government.

He said that 17,005 new colonies would come up with all amenities across the state.

CM Jagan said that "We are constructing over 15 lakh new houses this year and a total of 28.30 lakh houses are being constructed in the next three years."

get coupons accordingly. The government has set aside ₹8,600 crore for procuring 45 lakh metric tonnes of grains for the Rabi season. It already procured 25,25,927 tonnes from 3,78,206 farmers at a cost of ₹4,729 crore.

Sasidhar informed that an amount of ₹3,299 crore is yet to be reimbursed by

TD POLITICISING CM'S DELHI TOUR: BOTSA

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 10

The Minister for Municipal Administration, Botsa Satyanarayana, slammed Telugu Desam for politicising Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy's visit to Delhi, and clarified that the tour was only to protect the interests of the state and seek funds.

Addressing a press conference here on Thursday, he said it was ridiculous on the part of the TD leaders to claim that the CM had gone to Delhi to get the cases against him quashed. "Neither Chandrababu Naidu nor his party leaders have the habit of giving suggestions other than levelling false allegations," he criticised.

Instead of demanding more vaccines to the state from the centre, the Telugu Desam leaders were asking the government to distribute Anandaiah's herbal concoction.

Countering the opposition allegations of burdening the public with the new tax system, Satyanarayana clarified that the property value-based tax decision dates back to the pre-election period and has been implemented in the most transparent manner.

He stated that the revised method of property tax fixation is to make urban local bodies financially self-sufficient and not burden the public.

towards paddy procurement. The CM wrote letters to the PM and the Union Minister for Civil Supplies, seeking the release of the funds. The official urged the farmers not to cultivate locally unused rice varieties in the kharif season.

3,936 paddy grain purchase centres have been connected to 7,706 RBKs in villages

Govt to procure 45L tonnes paddy at MSP

SHORT TAKES

37-YEAR-OLD
VENDOR KILLED IN
DRUNKEN BRAWLDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 10

A 37-year-old street vendor was allegedly murdered by another person reportedly over a drunken brawl that took place at Spring Road under the II Town police station limits in Visakhapatnam on Wednesday late night. The deceased was identified as B. Subbireddy (37), a resident of Kallupakala veechi.

Inspector of II Town Police Station, B. Venkat Rao said that Subbireddy, along with one of his family member, were chit-chatting near Spring Road, when one P. Yugandhar alias Raghava approached them in inebriated state in between 9.30 to 10 pm on Wednesday. Yugandhar allegedly entered into a heated argument with the duo, and thereafter he allegedly stabbed Subbireddy with a sharp knife.

Subbireddy collapsed on the spot and he was immediately shifted to a hospital. He died while undergoing treatment during the wee hours of Thursday, police said.

The accused Yugandhar has been taken into police custody, the police added.

400 EV CHARGING
STATIONS SOON
AT 73 LOCATIONSDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 10

Minister for Energy Balineni Srinivasa Reddy on Thursday launched a 'Go Electric' campaign through online mode to spread awareness on the benefits of e-mobility and electric vehicles charging infrastructure in Andhra Pradesh.

The minister said that AP was making a big push for electric vehicles and decided to set up 400 charging stations across the state in the first phase.

He explained that electric mobility is a major alternative to IC (Internal Combustion) engines and has lower operational cost compared to IC engines. It also helps to reduce emissions and cut import dependency on fossil fuels, which would help the economy.

He further said that on one hand India has high dependence on crude oil imports and on the other hand, it is struggling to combat air pollution for a cleaner and greener future.

He stated that this campaign would address these two challenges by creating awareness among the general public regarding adoption of electric mobility and sustainable transportation ecosystem.

Srinivas Reddy stated that the transport sector accounts for 18% of total energy consumption.

Conventional fuel vehicles are one of the major contributors of air pollution and an alternative solution is electric vehicles with zero emissions. He opined that the main constraint for the electrical vehicle promotion in a big way is lack of charging infrastructure.

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Vaccination in full swing



People from various age groups stand in a line to get their dose of Covid vaccine during a vaccination drive at Swarnabharathi Urban Primary Health Centre at Resapuvanipalem in Visakhapatnam on Thursday.

— K. MURALI KRISHNA

Govt gears up to foil
misuse of jab drive

Anti-Covid-19 jab to 40 lakh mothers having kids below 5 years

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 10

As the state government gets ready to administer anti-Covid-19 jab to nearly 40 lakh mothers having children below five years, there is a chance of misuse of jab unless the identity of the child is taken up for registration in CoWIN app as others may claim the child to be theirs and get the jab.

As the third wave of the Coronavirus pandemic is expected to affect the children, the state government has taken a decision to inoculate the mothers in the first instance, so that when they attend to their infected child during

● **THE DIRECTOR** of health issued a circular instructing all medical officers to prepare a list of mothers with kids below five years to administer the jab to them and entrusted the task to ANMs and ASHA workers to mobilise the mothers to Covid Vaccination Centres for the jab.

hospitalisation they will remain safe from the infection.

Accordingly, the director of health issued a circular instructing all medical officers to prepare a list of mothers with kids below five years to administer the jab to them and entrusted the task to ANMs and ASHA workers to mobilise the mothers to Covid Vaccination Centres for the jab.

However, with people

app. This is hoped to avert any misuse of the facility by others not falling in the eligible category. Though in rural areas, the health staff may be able to identify true beneficiaries, heavy rush may not make it possible for them to keep close tabs and avert misuse.

Director of Health Dr T. Geeta Prasadini said, "As the list of all eligible mothers with kids below five years is getting ready for the jab, we will strictly go by it at CVCs and avoid any chance of misuse of jab by any means and take corrective measures in case of any issues as vaccination programme goes on."

AWARENESS ON
COVID THROUGH
SOCIAL MEDIADC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 10

Andhra Pradesh government is taking up a Covid-19 awareness programme for the benefit of people on social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, WhasApp and Instagram in the state.

The AP Covid Command Control authorities say that AP's official Facebook page '@ArogyaAndhra' has 1,63,704 followers, while Gujarat 25,564, Tamil Nadu 7,953, Telanagana 13,613, Karnataka 1,03,077, Kerala 1,17,544 and Odisha with 89,068.

They authorities have said that the Facebook enabled 'Covid Alert Option' allowing the state health authorities to send Covid-19 alerts to all Facebook users in AP with over two million reach and further added that AP has got such an option at the first instance along with Karnataka in the country.

They also added that Facebook is providing technical help for advertising also besides content development.

● **THEY AUTHORITIES** have said that the Facebook enabled 'Covid Alert Option' allowing the state health authorities to send Covid-19 alerts to all Facebook users in AP with over two million reach.

Vizag de-notifies 46 pvt
hosps listed for Covid-19DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 10

The district administration has de-notified government ENT hospital and 46 private and corporate hospitals which have been listed as Covid-19 hospitals following a drop in the number of positive cases being reported every day.

On Thursday, the district reported 502 cases and seven deaths. The number of active cases stood at 6,910 while it was 9,750 five days ago.

"All the major and import hospitals have reported that the occupancy fell by 50 percent and it would continue to fall as the situation is improving," said officer on special duty for Covid-19 and principal of Andhra Medical College Dr P.V. Sudhakar.

He said out the 500 beds in CSR block of King George Hospital, only 250 beds have been occupied as on date. Other hospitals which include VIMS hospital having a strength of 400, has 188 patients, Government Hospital for Chest and Communicable Diseases has 120 patients with a strength of 200 beds.

Similarly, the two major Covid Care Centres in Visakhapatnam have reported no new admissions. Around 900 patients were admitted in Mudasarova Covid Care Centre during the

CITU BURNS EFFIGY OF PM MODI

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 10

Members of the Visakhapatnam city committee of CITU burnt the effigy of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in protest against his anti-people and anti-farmers' policies near Gandhi statue in Visakhapatnam City on Thursday.

Addressing the party workers, State president of CITU Ch. Narsinga Rao said Prime Minister Narendra Modi's policies during Covid-19 pandemic was highly condemnable.

He said while the deaths were increasing and people were suffering from the virus, Modi announced a hike in the prices of petrol and diesel adding more burden to the common people.

The increase led to a hike in the prices of essential commodities and mismanaged the Covid-19 pandemic lead-

ing to loss of previous lives.

"He did not come forward to ease the supply of vaccine till pressure was mounted from the courts and public," Narsinga Rao said. He demanded 10 kg of rice and 18 types of essential commodities for the poor, and create employment to those who lost their jobs, fill doctors and nurses posts and keep the public sector undertakings under the government control.

Health experts feared that due to the easing of the lockdown and curfew, there could be a fresh surge in new cases. They said ensuing monsoons could do away with the social distancing when large groups of people take shelter in the rain.

medical officer Dr Malladi Srinivas Sharma. Health experts feared that due to the easing of the lockdown and curfew, there could be a fresh surge in new cases. They said ensuing monsoons could do away with the social distancing when large groups of people take shelter in the rain.

HC directs govt to administer
Covid-19 jab at old age homesDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 10

The Andhra Pradesh High Court has directed the state government to administer Covid-19 jab to people staying in old age homes and prisons and to migrant labourers without insisting on identity cards like Aadhaar.

A division bench comprising justices K. Vijaya Lakshmi and D. Ramesh held a hearing on Thursday. The court directed the government to provide the Covid-19 vaccination to the people living in old age homes as they are facing trouble in getting the

● **THE COURT** directed the government to provide the Covid-19 vaccination to the people living in old age homes as they are facing trouble in getting the jab for want of seven ID cards such as Aadhaar permitted by the Centre for giving the jab.

The state government submitted to the court that they had completed giving jab to the people living in old age homes located in

Krishna and Chittoor districts so far, while nearly 50 per cent of people were covered in other districts. However, the court directed it to complete giving jab to the people in old age homes all over the state in two days.

The state government also detailed the measures being taken up to face the impending third wave of Coronavirus pandemic in the state as also the ongoing Covid-19 vaccination programme. It also submitted details on the number of black fungus cases and the medical treatment being provided to the affected people.

American physicians donate
200 oxygen concentratorsDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 10

AP High Court Judge Justice B. Krishnamohan praised the services of Indian Red Cross Association and American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPIO) towards providing oxygen concentrators to save lives of Covid-19 patients.

Justice Krishnamohan on Thursday distributed 200 oxygen concentrators donated by AAPIO to IRCS district committees through IRCS AP chairman Dr A. Sridhar Reddy.

Justice Krishnamohan, praising the efforts of AAPIO appealed to NGOs and philanthropists to come forward to serve people in this Corona

crisis. He sought people to follow Corona protocol without fail and must wear masks to contain the pandemic Covid-19.

Dr Sridhar Reddy said that AP Red Cross Society started 18 oxygen banks in 13 districts of the state and has provided 500 oxygen concentrators to the needy Covid-19 patients.

He said that philanthropists and donors from foreign countries came forward to donate oxygen concentrators, medicines and other required medical equipment and soon another 1,000 oxygen concentrators would reach AP. He added that needy people can call the 18004251234 number to get oxygen for free of cost.

Magunta, Balineni provide
Anandaiah potion in OngoleDC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, JUNE 10

Even as people in Nellore city and other parts of the district, except Sarvepalli segment, are waiting for Anandaiah's herbal medicine, the concoction is being distributed in Ongole town in the neighbouring Prakasam district.

Thanks to the initiative of Ongole MP Magunta Srinivasulu Reddy and Forests and Energy Minister Balineni Srinivasa Reddy, the duo made the medicine available to the residents of Ongole.

In fact, Magunta Srinivasulu Reddy developed special interest in the medicine after he himself took the mixture and he is strongly recommending this to everyone. Incidentally both Magunta and Balineni have provided ingredients to Anandaiah to produce the medicine.

Sources in YSR Congress said that Magunta and Balineni

● **THE FOREST** minister said that he would provide herbals available in the forest areas of Nellore and Prakasam to enable Anandaiah to prepare the medicine without any hassle.

collected 6,000 sachets each from Anandaiah. Each sachet contains preventive medicine for Covid-19 for five members of a family, Magunta Srinivasulu Reddy said. He launched the distribution at PVR Municipal High School premises while the followers of minister Balineni Srinivasa Reddy carried out the distribution at his residence.

Barricades have been arranged to follow Covid-19 guidelines in both places.

The forest minister said that he would provide herbals available in the forest areas of Nellore and Prakasam to enable Anandaiah to prepare the medicine without any hassle.

TTD TO OPEN MORE ACCOMMODATION
REGISTRATION COUNTERS AT TIRUMALADC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, JUNE 10

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) is all set to open new accommodation registration counters at six locations, instead of the existing registration counter only at Central Reception Office (CRO) alone, in Tirumala from Saturday onwards for easy allocation of accommodations to devotees.

The room allocation counters will become operational from that day at six locations in Tirumala including one at GNC tollgate near luggage centre, two counters each at Balaji bus station, one each at Kausthubham

● **TTD HAS** appealed to devotees to note the new facilities developed for their convenience and comforts.

rest house, Rambhagicha rest house, Mangalam Bhaavi Cottages (MBC), besides the existing one at CRO.

TTD officials said, all arrangements are completed at all six locations for registration of names for rooms and wait for SMS confirmation and proceed towards Sub enquiry offices for payment of tariff and collection of room keys. TTD has appealed to devotees to note the new facilities developed for their convenience and comforts.

AP REGISTERS
8,110 COVID-19
CASES, 67 DEATHSDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 10

Andhra Pradesh has registered 8,110 fresh Coronavirus infections and 67 deaths. The state health authorities reported here on Thursday that out of 97,863 samples tested, 8,110 persons were found infected with confirmed Coronavirus infection.

Out of a total number of 2,01,37,627 samples tested so far in the state, 17,87,883 persons were found infected with the virus and of them, 16,77,063 were recovered while 99,057 are still active with the virus.

Among daily cases of Coronavirus infections, only two districts reported over 1,000 with East Godavari reporting the highest at 1,416, followed by 1,042 in Chittoor, 906 in Anantapur, 792 in West Godavari, 600 in Prakasam, 576 in Krishna, 512 in Guntur, 508 in Kadapa, 502 in Visakhapatnam, 461 in Srikakulam, 280 each in Nellore and Vizianagaram and 235 in Kurnool.

East Godavari continued to record the highest number of active cases at 22,418, followed by 13,466 in Chittoor, 9,650 in Prakasam, 8,411 in Krishna, 8,186 in Nellore, 7,495 in West Godavari, 6,910 in Visakhapatnam, 6,140 in Guntur, 4,895 in Srikakulam, 3,494 in Kadapa, 2,686 in Kurnool and 2,476 in Vizianagaram.

Chittoor reported 11 deaths of Coronavirus infected patients, followed by nine in West Godavari, seven in Visakhapatnam, six each in East Godavari, Srikakulam and Vizianagaram.

WALT AIR DIVISION
OBSERVES LEVEL
CROSSING DAYDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 10

Waltair division of East Coast Railway observed the International Level Crossing Awareness Day (ILCAD) 2021 on Thursday. To mark this occasion the employees organised week long special awareness programmes over the Division.

The International Level Crossing Awareness Day is a worldwide initiative to improve awareness of level crossing safety.

The theme of ILCAD 2021 is distraction with the motto, "Distraction kills!".

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Late Sri Kailash Chand Gupta
Though you are not with us, But your thoughts, Values and Ideas will inspire and Guide us forever"

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SHORT TAKES

COVID CASES FALL BELOW 500-MARK, BHOPAL UNLOCKED

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, JUNE 10

For the first time in the last three months, fresh Coronavirus positive cases in Madhya Pradesh dipped below 500 mark on Thursday.

Madhya Pradesh reported 453 fresh cases on Thursday taking the tally of cases to 7,86,755.

The state has recorded 36 deaths in the last 24 hours taking the death toll to 8,441.

"This was the first time during the second wave that hit the state in March that the positivity rate in Madhya Pradesh has dropped to 0.5 per cent", state home minister Narottam Mishra said.

He said the active cases in the state have also come down to 7,071.

While ten out of 52 districts in the state reported zero fresh cases on Thursday, 35 districts reported less than ten cases.

Only two districts in the state, Bhopal and Indore, reported more than 100 fresh cases on Thursday. While Bhopal reported 104 fresh cases, Indore reported 144 cases.

Meanwhile, Bhopal was unlocked on Thursday following a dip in the positivity rate in the city. The positivity rate in Bhopal has now dropped to 1.2 percent. However, night curfew in the city will remain in force, the district crisis management committee has decided. Barring cinema halls, gyms, and swimming pools and sports complexes, all other business establishments have been allowed to resume operation on Thursday.

HC 'EXTENDS' STAN SWAMY'S STAY AT PRIVATE HOSPITAL

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC MUMBAI, JUNE 10

The Bombay High Court on Thursday allowed a request made by the lawyer and extended Jesuit priest and activist Stan Swamy's stay in a private hospital in Mumbai till June 18, as he has been tested Covid positive.

Swamy, 84, who has been arrested in the Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case, was on May 28 shifted from the Taloja prison in neighbouring Navi Mumbai to the Holy Family Hospital here after he filed a petition, seeking interim bail on medical grounds. After being shifted to the private hospital, he tested positive for Covid-19 infection.

On Thursday, his counsel Mihir Desai told a the division bench of Justices S.S. Shinde and N.J. Jamadar that Swamy had tested positive for Covid and hence, his stay at private hospital should be extended.

Upon Desai's request the bench said Swamy shall remain admitted at the private hospital till June 18, and posted the petition for hearing on June 17. The court also directed the hospital to submit in a sealed envelope medical reports of Swamy by the next date of hearing.

SEPT. 15 LAST DAY FOR PADMA AWARD ENTRIES

New Delhi, June 10: The Centre on Thursday said it was committed to transform the Padma awards into "People's Padma" and urged all citizens to make nominations and recommendations, including self-nomination, for the prestigious civilian honours.

The Union home ministry said online nominations or recommendations for the awards, to be announced on the eve of Republic Day, 2022, are open, with the last date being September 15, 2021.

The ministry said in a statement that such nominations and recommendations will be received online only on <https://padmaawards.gov.in>.

The Padma awards, namely, Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri, are amongst the highest civilian awards of the country.

The government is committed to transform the Padma awards into "People's Padma" and all citizens are therefore requested to make nominations, recommendations including self-nomination, the statement said. The nominations and recommendations should contain all relevant details specified in the format available on the portal, including a citation in narrative form (maximum 800 words), clearly bringing out the distinguished and exceptional achievements, and the services the person rendered in her or his respective field or discipline, it said.



A vendor attempts to sell shoes to a customer after markets reopened in Bhopal on Thursday.

— PTI

Bihar revises Covid-19 toll by 72% after HC flags flaws

State health dept also revised recovery rate which came down to 97.65 per cent

NAYEAR AZAD | DC PATNA, JUNE 10

The total number of Covid-19 death toll has jumped to 9,429 after the figures were revised by the Bihar health department.

The actual figure provided by the state health department till Monday was 5,424 but after the health department recounted the deaths in all 38 districts the toll jumped by more than 72 per cent.

Among the districts, Patna recorded 2,293 deaths, followed by Muzaffarpur with 609,

● **AMONG THE DISTRICTS**, Patna recorded 2,293 deaths, followed by Muzaffarpur with 609, Nalanda 463, Begusarai 454, East Champaran 425.

Nalanda 463, Begusarai 454, East Champaran 425, Darbhanga 342 and Madhubani 317.

After recounting death figures, the state health department has also revised the recovery rate which came down from 98.70 to 97.65 per cent.

The move came after the Patna High Court flagged irregularities in the data

and directed the state government to conduct an audit.

According to officials from the state health department here, the audit was carried out in all 38 districts by a team of experts. The revised figures also include those who died due to post-Covid complications and who died on their way to the hospital. "Most of the deaths occurred during the second wave of the pandemic. The increase in the figure was due to deaths which occurred during home isolation, post-Covid complications

or at the private hospitals". Additional Secretary (Health) Pratyaya Amrit told reporters in Patna.

When asked whether the state health department was planning to initiate action against officials who failed to register figures related to Covid deaths, he said that "the government would take stern action against those who showed laxity in registering these figures".

After the revised figures stoked a political controversy, state health minister Mangal Pandey said that the state government

had been working on revising the figures for the past few weeks and released it on Tuesday.

The revised death figures have triggered a political row in Bihar. Blaming Chief Minister Nitish Kumar for irregularities in Covid-19 death figures, leader of the opposition Tejashwi Yadav in a tweet said that "The death toll suddenly jumped to 4,000 in a day. The government is still hiding the actual statistics. There have been 20 times more deaths than being claimed by the Nitish Kumar government".

Ambedkar opposes name for airport

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC MUMBAI, JUNE 10

The controversy has erupted over the naming of the upcoming Navi Mumbai International Airport in Maharashtra with the locals and political leaders opposing the proposal of giving the name of Shiv Sena supreme late Bal Thackeray to the project.

On Thursday, prominent Dalit leader Prakash Ambedkar, objected to naming the airport after Mr Thackeray and said that the locals' demand for it to be named after former parliamentarian late D.B. Patil should be honoured.

Announcing his support, Mr Ambedkar, the grandson of Dr BR Ambedkar, said that locals' demand to name the airport after Mr Patil is fair and appropriate. He said, "Patil's contribution to Navi Mumbai's development has been immense. He fought for the rights of sons of the soil who offered their

land for the city's growth. The local residents of Ulwe, Kopar and Panvel had given their ancestral land for the airport project and hence their feelings should be respected by the rulers."

Patil has also played a major role in shaping the social life of Maharashtra as he contributed to the movement for the rights of OBC's. He represented Raigad district in the Lok Sabha for four times and also held the post of opposition leader in the state assembly, said Mr Ambedkar.

The naming controversy has flared up after the City and Industrial Development Corporation (CIDCO), which is the nodal government agency for the project, recently passed a resolution to name the airport after Bal Thackeray. The locals, under the banner of Vimaltal Prakashprast Sanghatana (Organisation of Airport Project-affected People) has opposed the move insisting on the name of Mr Patil.

Concern over low vax coverage among FLWs

DC CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs NEW DELHI, JUNE 10

With Bihar revising its figures and putting the total number of fatalities caused by Covid-19 at 9,429, India reported its highest single-day spike of 6,148 deaths, pushing the toll to 3,59,676.

This is even as daily infections have been steadily showing a downward trend — with 94,052 fresh Covid infections reported in a day — less than one lakh for the third straight day.

India, earlier, registered the highest fatalities due to Covid-19 on May 21 with 4,529 deaths, which crossed both the US and Brazil's record deaths in 24 hours. It surpassed the US' 4,468 deaths reported on January 12, 2021 and 4,211 in Brazil on April 6, 2021.

The total number of Covid cases in India till now stand at 2,91,83,121 out of which 2,76,55,493 people have recuperated

till date, according to the Union health ministry's data updated on Thursday.

Active cases have reduced to 11,67,952 comprising 4 per cent of the total infections, while the national Covid-19 recovery rate has improved to 94.77 per cent, it said.

A net decline of 63,463 cases has been recorded in the total number of Covid-19 cases in a span of 24 hours, the data updated at 8 am showed.

The Central government on Thursday expressed concern over low Covid vaccination coverage among healthcare and frontline workers and asked all states and Union Territories to focus on second dose coverage among this most vulnerable and crucial section. The Centre advised them to sharpen their focus and prepare effective plans, keeping them as the priority.

In the meeting, chaired by Union health secretary

Rajesh Bhushan and called to review the progress of vaccination, it was highlighted that while the national average for the first dose administration among healthcare workers (HCWs) is 82 per cent, for the second dose it is only 56 per cent.

Further, the coverage in 18 states and Union territories, including Punjab, Maharashtra, Haryana, Tamil Nadu, Delhi and Assam is below the national average in this aspect.

For frontline workers (FLWs), the national average of first-dose coverage is 85 per cent but for the second dose it is only 47 per cent.

Nineteen states and Union territories, including Bihar, Haryana, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Puducherry, Telangana, Karnataka and Punjab have reported a second-dose coverage of frontline workers below the national average.

Kerala man hides his 'lover' in a room for 10 years

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JUNE 10

In a story that can beat any blockbuster, a Kerala youth hid his lover in his house for ten long years.

The parents and siblings of the man who were staying in the same house, are yet to come to terms with what had happened. The story sounded totally unbelievable to the local residents.

The incident happened in Ayilur, about 30 km from Palakkad town.

With Covid-19 pandemic and frequent lockdown making means of livelihood extremely difficult, Rahman the hero of the story, decided to end his lover Sajitha's decade long "room isolation".

Rahman was 24 and Sajitha 18 when they decided to elope. Since the couple belonged to different religions, their families were totally opposed to the relationship.

Recollects Rahman, "We were into two years courtship when Sajitha suddenly left her home. Though I got some money, it was taken by family delivering a blow to my plans to take a house on rent. I still can't believe how we spent ten years."

Rahman who is an electrician, even connected the door handle with electric wire and fixed an automatic lock. He passed minor electric current through the handle to prevent anyone from opening the door.

● **RAHMAN WAS 24** and Sajitha 18 when they decided to elope. Since the couple belonged to different religions, their families were totally opposed to the relationship.

He claims that Sajitha didn't fall ill even once in last 10 years. For mild fever and headache he used to give paracetamol tablets.

Rahman never used to take up work after sunset in order to be with his wife. Sajitha said she can't believe that her ten years were spent in a room.

"My husband took full care. He shared food mainly breakfast and dinner, stocked bread and biscuits. I never felt any difficulty. I used to watch TV using headphones and that's how I spent time in his absence," she said.

Since there was no attached bathroom, the washroom was used mainly during night and early morning.

Rahman was forced to end his wife's room confinement after his family started suspecting his strange behaviour.

"I was actually upset by Covid pandemic. But my parents thought some evil spirit had entered my body. They even took me to sorcerers," he said.

Since there was a missing case, both were produced in a local court and let off after they conveyed their willingness to stay together.

J'khand tops in vaccine wastage

New Delhi, June 10: Kerala and West Bengal recorded negative wastage of Covid-19 vaccines in May, saving 1.10 lakh and 1.61 lakh doses respectively, while Jharkhand reported maximum wastage of 33.95 per cent, according to government data.

While Kerala reported -6.37 per cent vaccine wastage, West Bengal recorded -5.48 per cent.

Chhattisgarh reported 15.79 per cent vaccine wastage while Madhya Pradesh reported 7.35 per cent.

States like Punjab, Delhi, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra reported 7.08 per cent, 3.95 per cent, 3.91 per cent, 3.78 and 3.63 per cent and 3.59 per cent respectively.

The data showed that a total of 790.6 lakh vaccines were supplied to

states and UTs in May out of which total vaccinations were 610.6 lakh while 658.6 lakh shots were utilised and the closing balance was 212.7 lakh.

The vaccination in May was less as compared to April in which a total of 898.7 lakh vaccinations were done, 902.2 lakh vaccines were utilised and the closing balance was 80.8 lakh.

India's first dose coverage of the 45-plus population till June 7 was pegged at 38 per cent with Tripura's coverage being 92 per cent, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh 65 per cent each, Gujarat 53 per cent, Kerala 51 per cent and Delhi 49 per cent.

Tamil Nadu's first dose coverage of the 45-plus population is at a low of 19 per cent, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh at 24 per cent each and Bihar at 25 per cent.

— PTI



Beneficiaries stand in a queue as they wait to receive a dose of Covid-19 vaccine at a hospital in Jaipur on Thursday.

— PTI

ANNUAL FEST

In 2020, the Rath Yatra was held sans devotees for first time in its centuries-long history

Odisha bans Rath Yatra of Lord Jagannath

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, JUNE 10

The Odisha government on Thursday announced a ban on the Lord Jagannath's much-awaited annual nine-day Rath Yatra festival at all places in the state except Puri.

Puri is the prime abode of Lord Jagannath. It is here Lord Jagannath and His two siblings — Lord Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra — are worshipped in a gigantic temple called Srimandir.

During the Rath Yatra, the deities of Srimandir visit Srigundicha Temple, located at a distance of 2

kilometres. Lakhs of devotees from across the country and abroad gather at Puri during this time to see the wonderful spectacle of the deities riding the colourful chariots.

The decision to ban Rath Yatra was taken as the state is struggling hard to contain the Coronavirus pandemic. Odisha Development Commissioner Pradeep Kumar Jena made the major announcement saying that the festival which begins from July 12 will be held in Puri with strict adherence to guidelines laid out by the Supreme Court.

In 2020, the Rath Yatra

festival which is also known as Car Festival, was held sans devotees for the first time in its centuries-long history because of the Covid-19 situation.

"Odisha government has always given supreme importance to the safety and well-being of the public. With the second wave of Covid pandemic continuing and threat of a possible third surge looming, public gathering during the grand festival which attracts lakhs of devotees from all around the world needs to be curbed. This apart, since it is a mass festival celebrated with much fanfare across

Odisha and outside, restrictions on public participation in the celebration are necessary," Jena said during a press briefing.

He added that servitors testing (RT-PCR) Covid negative or those fully vaccinated will be allowed to participate in the rituals.

As per the Supreme Court's guidelines, only 500 servitors will be allowed to pull each chariot during the festival.

Curfew will be clamped in Puri for the festival and only essential and emergency services will be allowed.

Vehicular movement to

and from Puri will be restricted during Rath Yatra.

Direct live telecast of the festival will be facilitated to interested media outlets and broadcasters by the I&PR department of Odisha government.

At all other Lord Jagannath shrines across Odisha, only rituals will be conducted within the premises of the temples and the public will not be allowed to participate, the DC informed.

Meanwhile, the Odisha police on Thursday launched a special cell in Bhubaneswar to deal with cases related to missing and kidnapping of minor

children.

Currently, the cell headed by an Assistant Commissioner of police (ACP) rank officer is functioning on trial basis and will actively operate once the pandemic situation is over, said Bhubaneswar Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Umashankar Dash.

Sources said around 800 cases related to missing of minor children are pending at police stations under the Bhubaneswar-Cuttack Commissionerate police.

"At a review meeting, 800 minor girl missing cases were found registered at different police stations.

In view of this, we have launched a special cell headed by an ACP with an inspector and two sub-inspectors as members to deal with these cases. The cell has already rescued 30 minor girls from different areas in the state," he added.

The opposition parties in Odisha and civil society organisations have been demanding since long for the constitution of a special cell to trace out the missing children.

They contended that the special cell was a better mechanism than the special drives launched from time to time for rescue of the missing children.

SHORT TAKES

POPE REJECTS
CARDINAL'S
RESIGNATION

Rome, June 10: Pope Francis refused Thursday to accept the resignation offered by German Cardinal Reinhard Marx over the sex abuse scandal in the church, but said a process of reform was necessary and that every bishop must take responsibility for the “catastrophe” of the crisis. Francis wrote a letter to Marx in response to the German’s bombshell announcement last week that he had offered to resign as archbishop of Munich and Freising over the church’s mishandling of abuse cases.

PAK TO HOLD PoK
ASSEMBLY POLLS
ON JULY 25

Islamabad, Jun 10: Pakistan-occupied Kashmir’s top election official announced on Thursday to hold the general election for the legislative assembly on July 25, despite appeals to postpone the polls for two months due to the threat of resurgence of the Coronavirus. Last year, Pakistan conducted the legislative assembly election in Gilgit-Baltistan.

India had slammed Pakistan for its decision to hold elections in Gilgit-Baltistan and said any action to alter the status of the militarily-occupied region has no legal basis.

PAK CLERIC HELD
FOR MALALA
KILL THREAT

Islamabad, June 10: A Muslim cleric in northwest Pakistan has been arrested under the tough anti-terrorism act for threatening to kill Malala Yousafzai in a suicide attack and instigating people against the Nobel Laureate for her recent comments on marriage, police said. Mufti Sardar Ali Haqqani, a cleric, was arrested in Lakki Marwat district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province on Wednesday. In an interview to *Vogue* magazine, 23-year-old Malala revealed that she is not sure if she will ever marry.

MYANMAR
MILITARY PLANE
CRASH KILLS 12

Bangkok, June 10: A well-known senior Buddhist monk was among at least 12 people who died when a plane belonging to Myanmar’s military crashed Thursday in the country’s central Mandalay region, state media reported.

Army-run *Myawaddy* TV said a boy was one of two survivors on the flight from the capital, Naypyitaw, to Pyin Oo Lwin, also known as Maymyo. The other person taken to a hospital was reported to be a member of the military, but several other unconfirmed reports said he later died.

JUNTA HITS
SUU KYI WITH
GRAFT CHARGES

Yangon, June 10: The Myanmar junta has hit deposed civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi with corruption charges over claims she accepted illegal payments of gold and more than half a million dollars in cash, state media reported Thursday.

The country has been in turmoil since the generals ousted Suu Kyi on February 1, with more than 850 civilians killed in a brutal crackdown by security forces on near-daily protests against the coup.

The 75-year-old Nobel laureate, who has been in custody since the putsch, is facing a raft of wide-ranging criminal charges, including sedition and breaching a colonial-era secrecy law. The latest charges relate to allegations by the former Yangon region chief minister that Suu Kyi illegally accepted \$600,000 in cash from him along with around 11 kilograms of gold.

The Anti-Corruption Commission found evidence that Suu Kyi had committed “corruption using her rank”, according to the *Global New Light of Myanmar*, a state-run newspaper. “So she was charged under Anti-Corruption Law section 55.” She is also accused of abusing her authority when renting two areas of land for her charitable foundation.

After weeks of legal wrangling, two of Suu Kyi’s trials are due to start in earnest next week, hearing evidence from witnesses. In Naypyidaw, the remote capital purpose-built by the previous military regime, her trial on charges of violating restrictions during last year’s election campaign and possessing unlicensed walkie-talkies will start on Monday.

A separate case is scheduled to start on June 15.

Ring of fire



In this image taken from Arlington, Virginia, and released by Nasa, a partial solar eclipse rises behind the US Capitol on Thursday. Northeast states in the US saw a rare eclipsed sunrise, while in other parts of the Northern Hemisphere, this annular eclipse will be seen as a visible thin outer ring of the sun’s disk that is not completely covered by the smaller dark disk of the moon, a so-called “ring of fire”.

— AFP PHOTO/NASA/BILL INGALLS

US to buy 500mn
Pfizer vaccines

Washington, June 10: The US will buy 500 million more doses of the Pfizer Covid-19 vaccine to share through the global COVAX alliance for donation to 92 lower income countries and the African Union over the next year, a person familiar with the matter said Wednesday.

President Joe Biden was set to make the announcement Thursday in a speech before the start of the Group of Seven summit. Two hundred million doses — enough to fully protect 100 million people — would be shared this year, with the balance to be donated in the first half of 2022, the person said. National security adviser Jake Sullivan told reporters Wednesday that Biden was committed to sharing vaccines because it was in the public health and strategic interests of the US. As Biden embarks on his first foreign trip, he is aiming to show “that democracies are the countries that can best deliver solutions for people everywhere.” “As he said in his joint session (address), we were the arsenal of democracy in World War

INDIA TO GET A
SHARE OF 80 MN
US VACCINES

Washington, June 10: India will be receiving a share of the 80 million (8 crores) unused Covid-19 vaccines through the UN-backed COVAX global vaccine sharing programme that President Joe Biden has announced, according to a senior State Department official.

On June 2, President Biden announced that the US will allocate 75 per cent — nearly 1.9 crores of the first tranche of 2.5 crore doses — of unused Covid-19 vaccines from its stockpile through the UN-backed COVAX global vaccine sharing programme to countries in South and Southeast Asia as well as Africa.

— PTI

II,” Sullivan said. “We’re going to be the arsenal of vaccines over this next period to help end the pandemic.”

— AP

Wastewater virus:
Sensor developed

London, June 10: UK and Indian scientists have jointly developed a low-cost sensor that can detect fragments of the virus responsible for Covid-19 within wastewater, paving the way for health officials to get a better understanding of how prevalent the disease is in a larger area.

The technique, developed by researchers from the University of Strathclyde and the Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay, could be used to enable widespread monitoring of

Covid-19 prevalence in low- and middle-income nations which struggle to conduct mass testing.

The sensor can be used with portable equipment that uses the standard Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test to detect the SARS-CoV-2 virus, without the need for the expensive chemicals and lab infrastructure needed for real-time quantitative PCR tests, according to the research published in the journal *Sensors and Actuators B: Chemical*.

— PTI

NAVALNY TEAM
TO FIGHT AFTER
EXTREMISM TAG

Moscow, June 10: Jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny’s anti-corruption group vowed Thursday to fight on after a court branded it an “extremist” organisation and ordered its closure.

Western countries and the European Union were quick to condemn Wednesday’s late-night ruling, but senior Russian officials doubled down, describing Navalny as an agent collaborating with Washington.

The court decision was the latest move against critics of President Vladimir Putin. Some of his loudest opponents have fled the country and several prominent activist groups and independent media have closed.

The ruling bans Navalny’s Anti-Corruption Foundation (FBK) and a network of regional offices from operating and, under a recently passed law, prevents those previously associated with the groups from running in parliamentary elections.

The FBK was defiant, saying in a Thursday morning Twitter post: “We woke up, smiled with destructive intent and knowing that we are a ‘danger to society’ will continue to fight corruption!”

What exactly it will be able to do is unclear in the wake of the ruling, which followed a hearing behind closed doors.

Navalny’s key allies still in Russia are under close law enforcement supervision, some under house arrest, and other prominent aides have gone into exile.

Navalny was jailed for more than two-and-a-half years in February after he returned from Germany where he had been convalescing following a poisoning attack in Siberia that he blamed on the Kremlin.

— AFP

Allies to look beyond
Covid at G-7 summit

Before pandemic, Boris wanted it to be climate-dominated meet

London, June 10: There will be roundtable meetings, one-on-one chats and a group photo against a picturesque backdrop. When leaders of some of the world’s richest nations meet Friday at the English seaside for a three-day Group of Seven summit, much of the choreography will be familiar.

But the world has changed dramatically. Since the G-7 last met two years ago, the Coronavirus pandemic has killed more than 3.7 million people and decimated economies with lockdowns and layoffs. So when British Prime Minister Boris Johnson welcomes US President Joe Biden and the leaders of France, Germany, Italy, Japan and Canada to the cliff-ringed Carbis Bay beach resort in southwest England, pandemic recovery — “building back better,” in a phrase both Biden and Johnson like — will top the agenda.

Johnson said the meeting would help move on from “a miserable period of competition and squabbling” that marked the early response to the pandemic. “This is the moment for the world’s greatest and most technologically advanced democracies to shoulder their responsibilities and to vaccinate the world, because no one can be properly protected until everyone has been protected,” he said in an article published Thursday, a day before the summit’s official start.

Before the pandemic,

Johnson slammed for taking
plane, not train, to Cornwall

Plymouth, June 10: UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson is being criticised for flying to the Group of Seven summit meeting in Cornwall, rather than taking the train, as he presses world leaders to do more to fight global warming.

Environmental activists bombarded Johnson’s Twitter feed with suggestions that the prime minister should practice what he preaches after he posted a photo of himself climbing off the plane accompanied by a call to make the world “better, fairer and greener.” “This is how serious Boris Johnson is about combating the climate em-

● **ACCORDING TO** figures posted on the UK government website, domestic flights generate about six times more greenhouse gases than rail travel.

● **A TRAIN** journey to Cornwall takes about five hours, compared with less than 90 minutes for a flight.

ergency: He flew to Cornwall,” Zarah Sultana, a lawmaker from the opposition Labour Party, tweeted

Johnson planned this to be a climate-dominated summit. He had wanted to make it a major staging post to November’s international COP26 meeting on climate change in Glasgow, eliciting ambitious targets for slashing carbon emissions and expanding green industries.

That’s still on the agenda, but the meeting will be dominated by Covid-19, with discussions focusing on physical and economic recovery and building resilience against future pandemics. Let anyone forget that the virus is still raging, there will be daily

Coronavirus tests for attending politicians, diplomats, staff and journalists. Biden made a vaccine pledge before the meeting got underway, announcing that the US will buy 500 million more doses of the Pfizer vaccine to share with poorer countries over the next year.

That upped the pressure on Johnson, who has not yet sent any of Britain’s vaccine doses abroad. Almost four-fifths of adults in the UK have had the first of two shots. Johnson said Thursday that Britain would donate “millions” of doses from surplus

in response. According to figures posted on the UK government website, domestic flights generate about six times more greenhouse gases than rail travel. A train journey to Cornwall takes about five hours, compared with less than 90 minutes for a flight. Johnson is hosting leaders from the world’s seven richest democracies during this weekend’s summit at the Carbis Bay resort in Cornwall.

The agenda includes talks on climate change, the global response to Covid-19 and the taxation of multinational corporations.

— AP

JBS settles Muslim bias
lawsuit for \$5.5 million

Denver (US), June 10: The second-largest producer of beef, pork and chicken in the US will pay up to \$5.5 million to settle a lawsuit that claimed the company discriminated against Muslim employees at a meat processing plant in northern Colorado.

The US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission filed the lawsuit in federal court in Denver in 2010, saying JBS Swift & Company discriminated against employees at its beef processing plant in Greeley by denying them bathroom breaks and disciplining them more harshly than other workers because they were Muslim, immigrants from Somalia, and PoC.

JBS USA LLC, doing business as JBS Swift & Company, must pay the \$5.5 million to about 300 employees who were included in the settlement, which was announced by the commission on Wednesday.

Nikki Richardson, a spokeswoman for JBS USA, said the company does not admit any liability in the settlement, prohibits all discrimination

Cyberattack: JBS
paid \$11mn ransom

Denver (US), June 10: The world’s largest meat processing company says it paid the equivalent of \$11 million to hackers who broke into its computer system late last month. Brazil-based JBS SA said on May 31 that it was the victim of a ransomware attack, but Wednesday was the first time the company’s US division confirmed that it had paid the ransom. “This was a very difficult decision to make for our company and for me personally,” said Andre Nogueira, the CEO of JBS USA.

“However, we felt this decision had to be made to prevent any potential risk for our customers.” JBS

said the vast majority of its facilities were operational at the time it made the payment, but it decided to pay in order to avoid any unforeseen issues and ensure no data was exfiltrated. The FBI has attributed the attack to REvil, a Russian-speaking gang that has made some of the largest ransomware demands on record in recent months.

The FBI said it will work to bring the group to justice and it urged anyone who is the victim of a cyberattack to contact the bureau immediately. It targeted servers supporting JBS’s operations in North America and Australia.

— AP

and harassment at its facilities and “is committed to diversity and inclusion in the workplace.”

According to the lawsuit, JBS prevented Mus-

lim employees from praying and harassed them when they tried to pray during scheduled breaks and bathroom breaks.

— AP

WIFE OF ‘EL CHAPO’ PLEADS GUILTY TO U.S. CHARGES

Washington, June 10: The wife of Mexican drug kingpin Joaquin “El Chapo” Guzman pleaded guilty Thursday to charges in the US and admitted that she helped her husband run his criminal empire. Emma Coronel Aispuro, wearing a green jail uniform, appeared in federal

court in Washington and pleaded guilty to three federal offences as part of a plea deal with federal prosecutors. The charges include knowingly and willfully conspiring to distribute heroin, cocaine, marijuana and methamphetamine for several years.

— AP



Emma Coronel Aispuro

FINAL FRONTIER

Beijing avoids ISS due to US concerns over its programme’s secrecy

China ready to send first crew to space station

Beijing, June 10: The rocket that will send the first crew members to live on China’s new orbiting space station has been moved onto the launch pad ahead of its planned blast-off next week. The three astronauts plan to spend three months on the space station, far exceeding the length of any previous Chinese mission. They will perform spacewalks, construction and maintenance work and carry out science experiments.

The main section of the

Tianhe, or Heavenly Harmony, station was launched into orbit on April 29. Cargo spacecraft sent up last month carried fuel, food and equipment to the station in preparation for the crewed mission.

The Long March-2F Y12 rocket carrying the Shenzhou-12 spaceship was transferred to the launch pad at the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwest China on Wednesday, the China Manned Space Engineering Office said in a brief statement. Its tentative launch date is next Wednesday.

The space agency plans a total of 11 launches through the end of next year to deliver two laboratory modules to expand the 70-ton station, along with supplies and crew members.

Next week’s launch will be the third of those, and the first of the four crewed missions planned.

Another cargo mission is planned for September, shortly after which a replacement crew will be sent up, according to reports.

The station’s other two modules are expected to be launched next year.

China said in March the astronauts training for the upcoming crewed missions were a mix of space travel veterans and newcomers and included some women. China has sent 11 astronauts into space to date, all of them pilots from the ruling Communist Party’s military wing, the People’s Liberation Army. The first Tianhe crew will be all male, though women will be part of future crews on

the station, according to Yang Liwei, who orbited Earth in China’s first crewed mission in 2003 and is now an official at the space agency.

The Tianhe builds on experience China gained from operating two experimental space stations earlier in its increasingly ambitious space programme. Chinese astronauts spent 33 days living on the second of the previous stations, carried out a spacewalk and taught science classes that were beamed

down to students.

China landed a probe, the Tianwen-1, on Mars last month that carried a rover, the Zhurong. It also has brought back lunar samples, the first by any country’s space programme since the 1970s, and landed a probe and rover on the moon’s less explored far side. Beijing doesn’t participate in the International Space Station, largely due to US concerns over the Chinese programme’s secrecy and its military connections.

— AP

LANKA PROBES
OIL SLICK FROM
SINKING SHIP

Colombo, June 10: Sri Lanka announced an investigation Thursday into a possible oil slick reported off its west coast where a container ship is submerged after burning for 13 days.

Coast Conservation Minister Nalaka Godahewa said local experts were asked to examine an oil patch of about 0.35 square kilometres where MV X-Press Pearl ran aground. “I visited the area by boat yesterday and what we noticed was a thin film of oil which looked like diesel,” Godahewa said in Colombo. “It did not look like bunker oil, but we have asked our experts to examine.” It reported an onboard acid leak and caught fire just as it was due to enter the Colombo harbour on May 20.

— AFP

DECCAN Chronicle

11 JUNE 2021

FinMin signals need for urgency in vaccine drive

The Union finance ministry's suggestion that the government plan an accelerated vaccination drive against pandemic Covid-19 in August and September reflects the sense of urgency that appears to have gripped the corridors of power. That it has come close on the heels of two important announcements adds to its import: in the first, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in a reversal of earlier policy, announced that the government would procure and distribute doses for free to the state governments to inoculate people aged above 18; the second is the government's decision to purchase 44 crore doses of the Covishield and Covaxin. This contract, coupled with the last week's deal with Hyderabad-based Biological E for the procurement of 30 crore doses, will significantly augment vaccine availability in the country. The number could look inadequate, especially since warding off a third wave would call for inoculating the children, too. However, the government seems to have finally woken up to the challenge. That's good news.

The procurement of the required number of doses solves only part of the problem; administering them to ensure herd immunity is the real task. It is to this end that the Union finance ministry has come up with a series of suggestions. In its monthly economic report, the department of economic affairs of the ministry calls for vaccinating at least 70 crore people in August and September this year by launching an accelerated vaccination programme in mission mode.

Going by the specifics, the report is perhaps the first such comprehensive reports a Union ministry has produced on Covid containment. It has identified the real problem on hand and suggested an actionable programme considering the multiple factors that could play out while hitting the ground. The report says 92 lakh people must be vaccinated every day if we were to achieve the target. This is a formidable challenge given that the peak daily vaccination as of now is 42.65 lakh. However, this figure was attained by deploying people in shifts that spanned 8-9 hours a day; a 24 by 7 programme will take us to the target in time, the report argues.

The ministry estimates that 216 crore doses will be made available in the country between August and December. It advocates use of technology to circumvent logistical issues that could crop up. In a bold deviation from the vaccination policy till now, the report advocates for the government reaching out to the population by organising mass vaccination centres, integrating shopping areas and drive-ins with schools and primary health care centres.

While the ministry has said such steps are required to boost investor confidence, the primary beneficiary will be the people themselves who can resume their daily lives and return to their jobs once the pandemic is under control. The report also contains a grim warning about the speed with which the second wave has spread in the rural areas, suggesting how important it is to prevent a third wave. It is up to the government now to design an exhaustive plan with achievable milestones.

Just good optics for BJP

Former Union minister Jitin Prasada has defected from the Congress to the BJP. This should make little difference to either party. Mr Prasada did not bring value to the Congress when he was there and is unlikely to be a harbinger of benefits to his new party, especially when preparations will soon be afoot for the Assembly election in UP early next year.

The lineage principle operates conspicuously in Congress (and now increasingly in other parties) and this appears to be the reason why Mr Prasada came into the Lok Sabha twice on the Congress ticket and was even made minister. Seeing that his party was in a state of disrepair in UP, his home state, he had tried to switch to BJP before the 2019 Lok Sabha poll but evidently negotiations did not work out. He pulled so little weight.

This factor has not gone away. If anything, even in the Congress Mr Prasada had slipped from being lightweight to featherweight. And yet, the BJP has taken him in. This is because the party is embattled chiefly on account of very poor Covid management.

In addition, the Adityanath regime has sundered the caste coalition that gave the party a huge victory in 2017. The Brahmins, who form just a little less than 15 per cent of the vote, are reportedly badly alienated. Mr Prasada, being from that caste, has in recent times tried to project himself on a caste basis. While that by no means makes him a tall politician emerging from that caste, the BJP will accept any symbolic boost.

So, the defection makes for some good optics for the BJP and bad optics for the Congress, but that is about as far as it goes. Mr Prasada has badly lost parliament and Assembly polls in the recent past. He would hope BJP would field him in the upcoming state polls and that he will win on their ticket. That is the best his ambition can take him for now.

Subhani



Sedition: Time for SC to enforce its own rulings



Karan Thapar

As I See It

It is time to define the limits of sedition", said Justice D.Y. Chandrachud of the Supreme Court on June 1, and his comment was received with considerable applause. I'm afraid it left me puzzled. The Supreme Court did that nearly 60 years ago in the 1962 Kedar Nath Singh case. What we need is meticulous and unflinching enforcement of what the court had laid down as the law of sedition, and not a fresh definition. Perhaps that's what Justice Chandrachud meant, but it's not what he said.

Let me explain. In the Kedar Nath Singh judgment, the Supreme Court read down Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code, which is the law of sedition. It first said the section would be limited to "such activities as would be intended, or have a tendency, to create disorder or disturbance to public peace by resort to violence". It then pointedly added: "We have no hesitation... to limit the application (of this section) to acts involving intention or tendency to create disorder, or disturbance of law and order or incitement to violence". Frankly, it couldn't have been clearer than that.

However, at least on four separate occasions thereafter, the Supreme Court reconfirmed this reading down of Section 124A. That first happened in 1995, in the Balwant Singh case, when the court ruled that the "Khalistan Zindabad" slogan is not seditious. Remember, this ruling referred to slogans raised in an open marketplace on the day Indira Gandhi was killed. Despite that the court's position was clear and forthright: "Raising some slogan only a couple of times ... which neither evoked

any response nor any reaction from anyone in the public cannot attract the provision of Section 124A". And then the court significantly added: "The police officers exhibited lack of maturity and, more, of sensitivity in arresting the appellants for raising the slogans... (the slogans) did not constitute any threat to the government as by law established nor could the same give rise to feelings of enmity or hatred among different communities or religions or other groups".

Thereafter, in the Bilal Ahmed Kaloo case and the Common Cause case, the Supreme Court restated the 1962 ruling. That happened again in 2016 when the court explicitly said: "We are of the considered opinion that the authorities while dealing with offences under Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code shall be guided by the principles laid down by the Constitution Bench in Kedar Nath Singh versus State of Bihar." Doesn't this mean there is no doubt or confusion about the Supreme Court's position?

Yet for those who still have doubts, the Supreme Court delivered a fifth reaffirmation, this time, ironically, three days after Justice Chandrachud's perplexing comment. A bench presided over by Justice U.U. Lalit in the Vinod Dua case said Section 124A is limited "only to such activities ... involving incitement to violence or intention or tendency to create public disorder or cause disturbance of public peace". This means, both before and after Justice Chandrachud's comment, the Supreme Court's position has been made crystal clear, and there's no need for further definitions of the

limits of sedition.

What is needed is enforcement of the law laid down by the court as far back as 1962. This is necessary because the court's ruling is continuously and deliberately flouted. We need the court to recognise this as contempt and act.

Let me give you a few facts. The website Article 14 claims 65 per cent of the sedition charges against 10,938 individuals since 2010 were brought after 2014. In that category, 96 per cent of sedition cases "for criticising politicians and governments over the last decade" were registered after 2014. According to Article 14, this amounts to "a 28 per cent increase in the number of sedition cases filed each year between 2014 and 2020 ... compared to the yearly average between 2010 and 2014". Finally, the National Crimes Records Bureau seems to confirm these figures with its own, which show a 165 per cent increase in cases of sedition between 2016 and 2019.

This means not only is the law of sedition repeatedly abused but the amount of abuse is steadily increasing. It also means that for 60 years the Supreme Court's ruling has been deliberately disregarded by all governments (both Central and state) and their police forces. This is nothing short of contempt. There is no other term for it.

Yet the court has watched in silence. It's swallowed this disrespect of its rulings. It's tolerated this defiance of the law. Not once has it objected. Or even commented.

What is needed is enforcement of the law laid down by the court as far back as 1962. The court's ruling is continuously and deliberately flouted. We need the court to recognise this as contempt and act.

It's not that the Supreme Court has been equally tolerant and forgiving of other instances of contempt. It took suo moto cognisance of the Prashant Bhushan case even though the attorney general advised against it. So, when elected governments and the police are in contempt — which has to be worse — why has it been unwilling to act or even speak out? That may sound like a rhetorical question but, actually, it's a finger pointing at the court.

So I say today to Justice Chandrachud, it's not definitions of sedition we need but the enforcement of a law that your predecessors had laid down several generations ago. And, if I'm honest, we need something else as well — an explanation from the court why it did not speak out and act earlier. Remember, by failing to do so, it allowed abuse of the law to continue and proliferate. It also accepted disrespect and disregard of its rulings. Simply put, that's defiance of the law.

But does the Supreme Court also owe us an apology? Since I'm being bold, let me also be precise — an apology for not defending the law laid down by its own judgments and also an apology for not standing up for its own authority.

The Supreme Court let the country down in 1975 with its ADM Jabalpur ruling. Justice Chandrachud had the moral strength to accept this even though his father was a Supreme Court judge at the time. Isn't the failure to enforce its definition of sedition for almost 60 years almost as bad? Think of the innocent people — cartoonists, students, journalists, historians, authors, actors, directors and, by some accounts, little children — who suffered because the Supreme Court kept silent while the law was blatantly defied. Yes, I think an apology is due.

The writer is a television commentator and anchor

LETTERS

SPEEDY JUSTICE

Kudos to our CJI N.V. Ramana for increasing the strength of judges in Telangana (*TS HC gets big boost with 18 new judges, DC, June 10*). The proverb 'Justice delayed is justice denied' was felt across the nation due to court cases pending for years and decades leading to public losing faith in the system and going for private settlements even if they lose.

M. Bhaskara Rao
Visakhapatnam

URANIUM WASTE

It is highly distressing and disquieting to read that effluents being released by the uranium industry are causing colossal damage to standing crops and polluting groundwater in Kadapa villages (*Uranium waste affecting people, DC, June 10*). The gravity of the situation cannot be underestimated. Authorities must step in immediately and take action. Requisite Steps must be taken to prevent the loss lives.

Dr C. Ghanshyam
Visakhapatnam

CENTRE MUST HELP

It would be good for the Centre to heed to those in trouble (*In distress, MSMEs and middle class cry for help, DC, June 10*). They are doing so much to ameliorate the lot of BPLs in so many ways. Why can't they do for the middle class and the MSMEs the minimum asked for: loan moratorium for a specific period till the country's economy is back on rails? Needless to mention that it will give a great relief to all.

K. Nehru Patnaik
Visakhapatnam

50 YEARS AGO IN

DECCAN Chronicle

A flying hotel

MOSCOW, June 10. Three Soviet cosmonauts settled in today for a long stay among the homely comforts of their 'Flying Hotel' a Salyut space station fitted out for hot food, cold drinks and leisure reading.

TASS described the 25-ton station as a spacious and comfortable temporary home for cosmonauts Georgi Dobrovolsky, Vladislav Volkov and Viktor Patsayev.

"The standard of comfort is high here" Tass said. "There are vacuum cleaners, water heaters, devices for warming food refrigerators — in other words it is a modern flying hotel where even a library of the cosmonauts' favourite books is maintained".

Brexit trade deal later this month. The deal with Australia is part of the UK push to join the CPTPP, an 11-nation free trade agreement centred on the Pacific. If the UK joins this agreement, it will not only deepen this country's links with an area of growing economic and strategic importance but it will also ensure that the UK is part of a group that will become crucial to the global trading system if tensions between the West and China were to make it impossible for the World Trade Organisation to function.

The UK needs to stabilise its relationship with the EU. It will be that much harder for the free world to stand up to Russia and China if the UK is at loggerheads with its neighbours. It will require compromise and humility on both sides to fix the issues around the Northern Ireland protocol. It would be bad for the Western alliance if Britain and the EU became the European equivalent of Japan and South Korea, two key US allies who fall out at the slightest provocation.

By arrangement with the Spectator

DECCAN CHRONICLE

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James Forsyth



Why G-7 summit in Cornwall this weekend matters more than most

It's risky planning a trip to the British seaside at any time of year. But if the weather forecast is to be believed, Boris Johnson will get away with this gamble at the weekend's meeting of the G-7 at Carbis Bay in Cornwall.

Brexit's critics were always going to seize on any evidence that Britain was being sidelined by the rest of the world after leaving the European Union. It's fortunate for the government the UK is hosting this year's summit. This G-7 is unusually consequential. It's the first time these leaders will meet in person for well over a year. This will give the meeting momentum; it's hard to think of a worse format for diplomacy than group video calls. It's also the first summit of the new US administration. Every G-7 summit when Donald Trump was in the White House was a damage-limitation exercise. But President Joe Biden is an old-school believer in the Western alliance, and he'll be keen to make these events work. Just look at the G-7 deal on a global minimum level of corporation tax. This was achieved, in large part, because of

America's willingness to let other major economies tax its giant technology firms. Finally, this week's summit has an immediate practical problem to solve: how can the developing world get enough vaccine doses? (In a sign of how Covid-19 is still derailing diplomacy, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi will only attend virtually because of the severity of the pandemic there.)

Britain's top foreign policy priority is the US relationship. As Mr Biden was preparing to take office earlier this year, many speculated Britain would be hampered in its bid to have a good relationship with his team because of its previous close ties to the Trump administration. This has turned out to be wrong. The US and UK are more closely aligned now than they were under Mr Trump.

The US and the UK both believe the world is entering into a new era of competition between the democratic and autocratic worlds. This is a view that's not yet shared by all of the G-7. The UK has invited Australia, India, South Korea and South Africa to this year's summit to launch a "Democratic 11" of

free countries. Mr Biden wants this to pave the way to an international "Summit for Democracy". The South Africans are a late addition after there were objections that the initial "D10" plan lacked African representation. But the Asian tilt of this group is no accident. The UK sees this as crucial to any effort to contain China.

One potential irritant to the US-UK relationship is the Northern Ireland protocol. As the UK-EU standoff over the issue intensifies, Mr Biden, who makes much of his Irish ancestry, is expected to raise the issue with Mr Johnson in their bilateral discussions, though even the EU expects the intervention to be relatively mild.

The second priority is collective security. If the UK had one great diplomatic success during the Trump years, it was in keeping Nato together. Given Mr Trump's ambiguity about the whole principle that an attack on one was an attack on all, it is an achievement in itself that the alliance has survived.

After the G-7 is over, Mr Biden will travel to Brussels for the Nato summit next week. The White House has con-

firmed Russian authoritarianism will be discussed, demonstrating the alliance's traditional utility. But Russia is, ultimately, a declining threat. As America's focus shifts to the Pacific, Nato will need to become more relevant to the struggle to contain China. This will have to involve partnerships with groups like the Quad — the emerging alliance of the US, Japan, India and Australia, which is working to counter China in the South China Sea.

The UK, with its connections to India and Australia and its role as the biggest European contributor to Nato, is well placed to argue for this shift. It won't be easy to move the alliance in this direction given, for instance, Germany's publicly stated desire not to divide the world into opposing blocs. But attitudes to Beijing are changing fast. The EU signed an investment treaty with China at the end of last year — yet just three months later it joined a coordinated Western effort to impose sanctions on Chinese officials over abuses in Xinjiang.

The final priority is free trade. The UK hopes to sign its first full post-

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	52,300.47	0.69
Nifty 50	15,737.80	0.65
S&P 500*	4,243.03	0.56
Dollar (₹)	73.05	-0.09
Pound Sterling (₹)	102.96	0.46
Euro (₹)	88.86	0.10
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,127•259	0.53
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	72.40	0.25
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.019	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.487	-0.002

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Creditors to vote on Suraksha, NBCC final offers

Jaypee Infratech's financial creditors decided to put the bids of NBCC and Suraksha Group to vote after both parties submitted final offers for the debt-laden company. The winning bidder will acquire Jaypee Infratech Ltd as well as complete more than 20,000 pending flats in the NCR region. The voting process is likely to start from Monday next week and continue till June 23.

Justice Sikri to head IMAI grievance board



The IMAI said former Supreme Court judge Justice Arjan Kumar Sikri will chair the Grievance Redressal Board of the recently formed Digital Publisher Content Grievances Council. The DPCGC has 14 publishers of online curated content as members, including Amazon Prime Video, Alt Balaji, Apple, BookMyShow Stream, Eros Now, Firework TV, Hoichoi, Hungama, Lionsgate Play, MX Player, Netflix, Reeldrama, Shemaroo and Ullu.

Tata Group spent ₹2,500 cr in Covid relief: Chandra

Tata Sons chairman N. Chandrasekaran said group companies have collectively extended a help of Rs 2,500 crore towards Covid-19 relief across both the waves of the pandemic that started in March 2020. Speaking at the TCS AGM, Chandrasekaran said more than the financial commitments, the work done on the ground by the group firms, like helping build hospitals and expanding O2 capacity, has been the focus area.

Skoda drives in all-new Octavia at ₹26 lakh

Skoda, the Czech car-maker, launched the fourth generation new Skoda Octavia sedan with a starting price of Rs 25.99 lakh for the Style variant and the Laurin and at Rs 28.99 lakh for the Klement variant. At present it rivals only the Hyundai Elantra as Honda Civic and Toyota Corolla have been discontinued in the Indian market. The new Skoda Octavia is powered by a 2.0-litre, four-cylinder TSI turbo-petrol engine.



ONGC, OIL set to lose large oil, gas blocks
Next auction is for major fields: Govt

FC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, JUNE 10

In a bid to maximise the country's hydrocarbon production, the government will auction non-monetised large oil and gas fields of state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) and Oil India Ltd (OIL), petroleum minister Dharmendra Pradhan said on Thursday. The statement comes weeks after his ministry asked India's largest oil and gas producer ONGC to sell a stake in producing oil fields such as Ratna R-Series in western offshore to private firms and get foreign partners in KG basin gas fields.

Speaking on the launch of the third round of auction of small, discovered fields, he said companies cannot indefinitely sit on resources they may have discovered. "These resources actually belong to the nation and they will be monetised by bidding them out to interested entities," he added. As many as 32 oil and gas blocks with 75 discoveries have been offered in the Discovered Small Field (DSF) round-III. These small and marginal fields were discovered by both ONGC and OIL, but they were not economically viable to be developed due to the fiscal regime and their small size. Under the DSF, liberal terms, including pricing and marketing freedom, are offered, to make them viable. "There will be no



DSF next time. Rather, for the next time, it will be a 'major' round (auction of large fields)," Pradhan said. He said the Directorate General of Hydrocarbons (DGH), the oil ministry's technical arm, has the "full mandate" to identify unmonetised major fields that could be offered for bidding. "Resources don't belong to a company. They belong to the nation and the government. They cannot lie with a company indefinitely. If somebody cannot monetise them, we will have to bring a new regime," he added. For a nation that imports 85 per cent of its oil needs, resources lying idle for a long time cannot be permitted, he said. "Our objective to maximise production. So, we have to look at all options available. We cannot have a situation where fields are lying with some for a long time and are not being developed," he said. This would be the third attempt by the ministry to

get ONGC to privatise its oil and gas fields. In October 2017, the DGH had identified 15 producing fields with a collective reserve of 791.2 million tonnes of crude oil and 333.46 billion cubic metres of gas, for handing over to private companies in the hope that they would improve upon the baseline estimate and its extraction. A year later, 149 small and marginal fields of ONGC were identified for private and foreign companies on the grounds that the state-owned enterprises should focus only on the bid ones. According to reports, the first plan could not go through because of strong opposition from ONGC. The second plan went up to the Cabinet, which on February 19, 2019, decided to bid out 64 marginal fields of ONGC. But that tender got a tepid response. ONGC was then allowed to retain 49 fields on condition that their performance will be strictly monitored for three years.

Nigeria courts India's Koo to take on Twitter

New Delhi, June 10: Koo on Thursday said the Government of Nigeria has set up an official account on the Indian microblogging platform, which is looking at making deeper inroads into the African nation.

The development comes in the backdrop of a standoff between the Nigerian government and Twitter. Last week, the Nigerian government had announced an indefinite suspension of the US social media platform in that country. Koo co-founder and CEO Aprameya Radhakrishna in a post on Koo said, The official handle of the government of Nigeria is now on Koo! Interestingly, he also shared the information on Twitter saying: A very warm welcome to the official handle of the Government of Nigeria on @kooindia! Spreading wings beyond India now. Last week, the Nigerian government had said it was suspending Twitter indefinitely after the company removed a contentious tweet that President Muhammadu Buhari made about a secessionist movement. Following this, Koo had said the platform is available in Nigeria and that it is keen on adding new local languages for users in that country. Now that there is an opportunity for microblogging platforms in Nigeria... Koo is looking at introducing local Nigerian languages in the app. Radhakrishna had said. —PTI

Tata Digital acquires majority stake in 1MG

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, JUNE 10

After acquiring online grocery store BigBasket and investing in fitness-focused startup Curefit, Tata Digital, a 100 per cent subsidiary of Tata Sons, the holding company of salt-to-software Tata empire, is expanding its digital presence in the fast-growing e-pharma space by buying out a majority stake in 1MG Technologies.

Incorporated in 2015, 1MG provides access to a wide range of products like medicines, health and wellness products, diagnostics services and tele-consultation to customers. It has three diagnostics labs and a supply chain covering over 20,000 pin codes. It is also engaged in B2B distribution of medicines and other healthcare products. According to consultants RedSeer, 1MG is a leading player in the e-health space, which touched a gross merchandise value of \$1.2 billion in FY20 and is estimated to have clocked \$2 billion in FY21. E-health has been one of the biggest beneficiaries of the Covid-19-driven lockdown, seeing a 3x jump in user households. This space has seen several major deals happening in recent times. Reliance had acquired a majority stake in Netmeds, and Medlife was bought over by its rival PharmEasy. The presence of large conglomerates like Reliance and Tata in the space will fuel faster



BHARATPE TO TAKE OVER PAYBACK INDIA

New Delhi, June 10: Merchant payment and lending service provider BharatPe on Thursday said it has acquired Payback India from American Express and ICICI Investments Strategic Fund. The firm did not disclose the financial details of the deal. This is the first acquisition by BharatPe and will make Payback India a wholly owned subsidiary of BharatPe. Payback India, launched in 2010, is a multi-brand loyalty programme with over 100 million members. It has a network of over 100 offline and online partners and allows its customers to earn and redeem points on transactions. —PTI

nostics space through a technology led platform," said Pratik Pal, CEO of Tata Digital. Though the company did not divulge the financial details of the transaction, it had invested Rs 100 crore in 1MG through debt a few months back. It was later reported that Tata Digital was eyeing a 65 per cent stake in 1MG, valuing the outfit at about Rs 1,200 crore, but no word on this has come from either companies. Tata Group has been fast expanding its digital business both organically and inorganically. While it already has a presence in the horizontal space with Tata Cliq, Tata Digital has been acquiring key players in some of the fast-growing verticals. It had recently acquired a controlling stake in BigBasket. Reliance too is betting big in this segment with its JioMart. The segment already has biggies like Walmart and Amazon expanding their footprint. The online grocery market has grown 30 times in the last eight years to reach \$3 billion. It is now expected to grow at a 59 per cent compound annual growth rate to \$18 billion by 2024, RedSeer estimates. A few days back, Tata Digital announced its investment of \$75 million in Curefit. In fact, group patriarch Ratan Tata had realised the potential of digital business in its initial years and has been investing in digital start-ups. Curefit was one among them. He has even exited Lenskart with handsome returns.

Govt promotes exports of unique farm products

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, JUNE 10

The government is in the process of expanding its export basket of agricultural products by promoting products unique to India. Organically certified moringa leaves powder and seven unique value added products of moringa have been exported in small quantities. Vacuum freeze dried ethnic village rice from Kumbakonam in Tamil Nadu has been shipped to multiple destinations of Australia, Vietnam and Ghana. The first consignment of 40 tonnes of iron-rich red rice from the Brahmaputra valley has been shipped to the US, according to the Ministry of Commerce. Flavoured jaggery powder was exported to the US and the first consignment of millets grown in the Himalayas went to Denmark and Dahanu Gholvad sapota from Maharashtra to the UK. Fresh jackfruit from

Tripura was exported to London and value-added products of organically certified gluten-free jackfruit powder and retort packed jackfruit cubes were shipped to Germany. According to the ministry, such shipments will improve the export of agricultural and allied products, which increased 17.34 per cent in FY21. The export of agriculture and allied products, including marine and plantation products, in FY21 jumped to \$41.25 billion from \$35.16 billion in FY20. In rupee terms, the rise was 22.62 per cent to Rs 3.05 lakh crore. With imports of \$20.67 billion, India improved its trade surplus by 42.16 per cent to \$20.58 bn in FY21 from \$14.51 bn in FY20. Export of cereals too saw growth with non-basmati rice growing by 136 per cent, wheat 774 per cent and other cereals 238 per cent. Oil meals grew 90 per cent, sugar 41.88 per cent, raw cotton 79.43 per cent and vegetable oils 254 per cent.

SONA COMSTAR'S ₹5,550-CR IPO OPENS ON 14TH

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, JUNE 10

Auto components manufacturer Sona BLW Precision Forgings (Sona Comstar) Rs 5,550-crore IPO opens on June 14 in the price band of Rs 285 to Rs 291 per share of Rs 10 face value. Sona Comstar designs and manufactures automotive systems and components for electrified and non-electrified powertrain segments and supplies across the US, Europe, India and China. The public issue is an offer for sale of shares worth Rs 5,250 crore by US-based private equity firm Blackstone, which holds 66.28 per cent stake in the company through the entity Singapore VII Topco III Pte. Ltd. Also there is a fresh issue of shares worth Rs 300 crore by the company. Sona Autocomp Holding owns the remaining 33.72 per cent stake. The firm aims to use the proceeds from the fresh issue to repay over Rs 240 crore of its borrowings. The issue has 10 per cent shares reserved for retail individual investors and 75 per cent for institutional investors.

RBI hikes ATM interchange fee

FALAKNAAZ SYED
MUMBAI, JUNE 10

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Thursday increased interchange fee for ATM transactions from Rs 15 to Rs 17 per financial transactions and from Rs 5 to Rs 6 for non-financial transactions, effective August 1, 2021. The charges were last revised in August 2012. To compensate the banks for the higher interchange fee, the RBI has increased the ATM charges per transaction for customers from Rs 20 to Rs 21 from January 1, 2022, over and above the free transactions permitted. The interchange fee is a

Banks to increase the ATM transaction charges from ₹20 to ₹21 from January 1, 2022

fee paid by the card issuing bank to the operator/bank of the ATM when a customer makes a transaction at an ATM that does not belong to the card issuing bank. While the card-issuing bank is called the issuer, the latter is called an acquirer. This charge is divided between the acquirer and the company maintaining the ATM, a reason why banks discourage customers from using other banks' ATMs. Industry players wel-

comed the move. Rustom Irani, MD & CEO, Hitachi Payment Services, which provides ATM services, said, "We are grateful to the RBI and the government for this progressive step of increasing the interchange rate. This will help us...deploy additional ATMs which are particularly needed in semi urban and rural locations to provide financial access and enable financial inclusion." Pranay Jhaveri, country manager-India & South Asia, Euronet Worldwide said, "This move will definitely give a fresh impetus to deployment of ATMs across India and help improve the penetration."

Credit to textiles drops to 3-year low

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, JUNE 10

In line with the slower manufacturing activity and exports, credit availed of by the textiles and apparel sector declined 20 per cent in the December quarter, the lowest in three years. As of December 2020, the quarterly credit availed of by the sector stood at Rs 1.62 lakh crore, which was 19.8 per cent lower than Rs

2.02 lakh crore received in the same quarter in 2019. This was the lowest quarterly credit in three years—lower than Rs 1.82 lakh crore in December 2017, as per Sidbi-CRIF High Mark data. On a sequential basis, December quarter credit declined 12.37 per cent. The number of active loans in the sector stood at 4.26 lakh as of December 2020 and 95 per cent of the overall credit by volume

went to MSME borrowers. Of this, 76.7 per cent of the credit volume was accounted for by the micro enterprises. Apparel Export Promotion Council chairman A. Sakthivel said a Rs 16,000-crore special liquidity facility being provided by the RBI to the Sidbi at repo rate will support MSMEs for easier access to credit. NPAs at 16.92 per cent was lower than 24.61 per cent in December 2019.

LPC framework can strengthen banks balance sheets: Experts



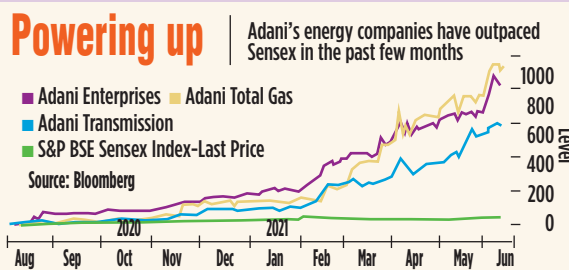
MADHUSUDAN SAHOO
NEW DELHI, JUNE 10

Financial experts have called for use of an LPC framework' to help banks and non-banking financial institutions (NBFCs) strengthen their balance sheet. Lenders would be better prepared to tackle the problem of increased non-performing assets (NPA) by adopting the LPC framework. In the framework, 'L' stands for maintaining higher liquidity on the balance sheet, 'P' for having a higher provisioning cover and 'C' stands for higher capitalisation and lower leverage. "Use of the LPC framework will help banks and NBFCs to fortify their balance sheet and enhance their resilience to the impact of the pandemic. It is expected that the ongoing pandemic may cause an increase of the NPA in banks," Krishnan Sitaraman, senior director & deputy chief ratings officer, Crisil Ratings said, while addressing a webinar. Bankers also feel that the financial sector—especially banks and other lending institutions—is currently facing headwinds with the spread, intensity and duration of the pandemic and the accompanying lockdown measures taken by the government. "The LPC framework is a good concept to be followed by the banks, NBFCs and other lending institutions," said Dr M. Narendra, former CMD of Indian Overseas Bank and Adviser to Enque Collaboration. Narendra also noted that, "During the last year and the current year, banks have maintained sufficient liquidity."

CONCENTRATED POSITIONS Asymmetric risk-reward as large investors avoid Adani \$43-bn jump in Adani fortune fraught with risks

ANTO ANTONY
JUNE 10

A rally in the stocks of companies controlled by Indian billionaire Gautam Adani has added almost \$43 billion to his wealth this year, catapulting him to the spot of the second-richest person in Asia. Some analysts say the gains are fraught with risk. Adani's net worth of \$76.7 billion got a boost from a 330 per cent jump in Adani Total Gas Ltd, a 235 per cent rise in his conglomerate's flagship Adani Enterprises Ltd and a 263 per cent increase in Adani Transmission Ltd this



year. Adani Group stocks, especially these three, "look extended," Bloomberg Intelligence analysts Gaurav Patankar and Nitin Chanduka wrote in a June 10 note after analysing technical indicators. "Among the biggest for-

eign investors are a few Mauritius-based funds holding over 95 per cent of assets in these companies," the analysts wrote. "Such concentrated positions, along with negligible onshore ownership, create asymmetric risk-reward as large investors conspicuously avoid

Adani." The analysis underscores the vulnerability of the rapid wealth surge Adani has seen in 2021, beating the gains for Warren Buffett and his compatriot Mukesh Ambani. A representative for Adani Group declined to comment immediately. The overseas funds hold a large chunk of shares, effectively reducing the public float and leaving the stocks prone to volatility, the analysts wrote. Elara India Opportunities Fund, Apms Investment Fund, Cresta Fund, Albulba Investment Fund, Lts Investment and Asia Investment Corp have put more than 95 per cent of

their assets in Adani Group firms, according to data compiled by Bloomberg Intelligence. The ports-to-power conglomerate also got a boost after MSCI Inc included three more Adani firms to its India benchmark index last month, taking the group's total footprint to five. This leads to mandated buying by investors that track this index. "Adani stocks trade 150-200 per cent above 200-day moving averages, and statistically look extended," Bloomberg Intelligence analysts wrote. "Tesla was 126 per cent above the 200-day when it peaked this year." —Bloomberg

SHORT TAKES

Team India begin training in group

Southampton: India carried out their first group practice session at a ground adjacent to Ageas Bowl here on Thursday, five days after being allowed staggered training in the run-up to the World Test Championship final against New Zealand. The WTC final is scheduled to be held from Jun 18 to 22. It was the first time the players mixed with their teammates on the ground after being allowed to run in the gymnasium and the main playing field at different time slots on completion of the third day of their hard quarantine in the UK. "We have had our first group training session and the intensity was high. Fire. #TeamIndia's preparations are on in full swing for the #WTC21 Final," the BCCI wrote in a twitter post along with a short video of the session. — PTI

Harman to play for Manchester

London: India's T20I skipper Harmanpreet Kaur and teen batting sensation Shafali Verma will be representing the Manchester Originals and Birmingham Phoenix respectively in the inaugural edition of The Hundred in the UK starting on July 21. The duo will be joined by opener Smriti Mandhana, all-rounder Deepti Sharma and batswoman Jemimah Rodrigues in the 100-ball tournament involving eight men's and women's teams. While Verma, who is the No. 1 ranked T20 batter, joins Birmingham Phoenix as a replacement for New Zealand's Sophie Devine, Sharma will turn out for the London Spirit. Mandhana, the vice captain, is set to form a devastating opening partnership with England's Danni Wyatt at Southern Brave and Rodrigues will feature for Northern Superchargers. — PTI

Enable spinners to bowl doosra: Ash

Southampton: Saqlain Mushtaq was the only spinner who bowled a "legal doosra" during his playing career, feels India's star spinner Ravichandran Ashwin, who wants game's governing body ICC to do away with the current elbow flexion of 15 degree to a permissible level. While Saqlain started the doosra revolution, the others who bowled the wrong 'un included Muttiah Muralitharan, Harbhajan Singh and Saeed Ajmal. "According to me, let's not do away with it (doosra) but enable spinners to bowl the doosra responsibly with an appropriate bend," Ashwin said in his YouTube show. — PTI

Neymar to lead Brazil in Copa

Sao Paulo: The Copa America has been rocked by one surprise after another, but there were none Wednesday as Brazil coach Tite named his squad for the troubled tournament, led by superstar Neymar. The defending South American champions will keep a roster nearly identical to the one that beat both Ecuador and Paraguay 2-0 this month to extend the Selecao's win streak in World Cup qualifying to six matches. Paris Saint-Germain striker Neymar will lead a squad with just one change: returning from injury, 36-year-old Chelsea defender Thiago Silva will replace Rodrigo Caio of Flamengo. — AFP

Axed Robinson to take short break

London: Pace bowler Ollie Robinson has decided to take a short break from cricket. He missed England's second Test against New Zealand after being suspended from all international cricket pending the outcome of a disciplinary investigation into historical racist and sexist tweets. Robinson issued an apology for the posts he sent in 2012 and 2013, when he was in his late teens, which were unearthed and shared online on the day he made his Test debut against the Black Caps. A statement from the player's county, Sussex, announced: "After a difficult week, Ollie has decided to take a short break from the game to spend time with his young family." — PTI

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Continental gala

Heavyweights gear up for top kick as Euro football begins

London, June 10: Euro 2020 finally kicks off on Friday as Cristiano Ronaldo's Portugal prepare to defend their title and world champions France seek a rare double a year after the tournament was delayed by the coronavirus pandemic. France's fearsome forward line makes them favourites to win a third European crown at the pan-continental event, while top-ranked Belgium and a youthful England side will be a major threat. For the first time the tournament is taking place in 11 cities across Europe instead of one or two countries despite the lingering shadow cast by the Covid-19 crisis.

Dublin and Bilbao were dropped from the list of host cities after being unable to give guarantees they could meet UEFA's requirement of accommodating limited numbers of spectators, but Seville stepped in for Bilbao while Dublin's games went to London and Saint-Petersburg.

The action gets under way at Rome's Olympic Stadium on Friday, where Italy take on Turkey in front of 16,000 fans. Favourites France are not in action until Tuesday in the headline act of the first round of group matches when the world champions take on Germany in Munich.

"All the other countries envy us," said a recent front page of French sports daily *L'Equipe* underneath pictures of Kylian Mbappe, Karim Benzema and Antoine Griezmann.

All eyes will be on 33-year-old forward Benzema, who was recalled after an international exile of five-and-a-half years following a prolific season for Real Madrid. Holders Portugal and Hungary complete Group F. Ronaldo is now 36 but is still going strong and is supported by a better squad, which also boasts the outstanding talents of Joao Felix, Bruno Fernandes, Bernardo Silva and Ruben Dias.



Euro 2020 mascot 'Skillzy' poses with the winners' trophy.

— Twitter

HEAD-TO-HEAD

- **Matches:** 11. Italy won 8. Turkey won 0. Draw: 3
- **EURO MEETINGS**

1962: Italy beat Turkey 6-0 in Bologna.

1963: Italy beat Turkey 1-0 in Mithat Pasa

2000: Italy beat Turkey 2-1 in Arnheim.

— S. PERVEZ QAISER

CAN ENGLAND TRIUMPH AT HOME?

England have the carrot of knowing both semi-finals and the final will be played at Wembley, while Italy and the Netherlands are eager to impress after failing to qualify for recent tournaments.

Captain Harry Kane believes England will start their bid to win Euro 2020 in a "better place" than they were before reaching the 2018 World Cup semi-finals.

"I feel like now we've had a bit more experience, players in the biggest games for their club and obviously players who have played in that World Cup have had that experience as well," he said. — AFP

Azzurri set sights on Turkey dinner

Rome, June 10: Top Italy striker Ciro Immobile will be looking to shake off the demons of World Cup failure as the 'Azzurri' return to the big stage in Friday's European Championship opener against Turkey in Rome.

Roberto Mancini's resurgent four-time world champions are being touted as possible dark horses after failing to qualify for the 2018 World Cup.

But Italy lack the high-profile strike partnerships of rivals such as Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo and Joao Felix, France's Kylian Mbappe and Karim Benzema and England's Harry Kane and Marcus Rashford.

And despite a club-record 150 goals in five seasons for Lazio, Immobile has been unable to shake off the tag of being unable to score when it matters.

The 31-year-old bore the brunt of criticism for fail-

ing to find the net in the World Cup play-off defeat to Sweden in November 2017.

"I didn't want to play anymore, it was too much sadness to manage and negative thoughts," recalled Immobile.

Mancini has rebuilt Italy since, with the team on a 27-match unbeaten run.

Immobile won the European Golden Shoe in the 2019-2000 season for his 36 league goals, and scored 20 last campaign as Lazio finished sixth.

For the former Borussia Dortmund and Sevilla reject this could be his last chance to shine on the bigger stage.

"I have a strong personality," he insists.

"I'm not very gifted technically, but where I don't get there with the technique I get there with strength, tenacity and cunning." — AFP

Pellegrini joins Italy's injury list

Lorenzo Pellegrini on Thursday joined Italy's injury list on the eve of their Euro 2020 opener against Turkey, the Italian Football Federation (FIGC) confirmed. Italy have submitted a request to UEFA to bring in Fiorentina's Gaetano Castrovilli in their 26-man squad after Pellegrini pulled up with a muscular problem in training mid-week.

Ukraine told to remove slogans

Ukraine must modify their team shirt for the Euro after UEFA upheld part of a Russian complaint about slogans and a map that included Crimea. The yellow-and-blue shirt design unveiled on Sunday angered Russian officials by including an outline of Ukraine's land territory with the Crimea region which Russia annexed in 2014. The fresh ruling allows the map to stay on the shirt.

Pope blesses UEFA officials

Pope Francis met with UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin and other soccer officials on Thursday to offer his blessings before the Euro Championship kicks off in Rome. The Argentine-born Francis is an avid soccer fan and a noted supporter of Buenos Aires team San Lorenzo. Italian soccer federation president Gabriele Gravina also took part in the meeting inside the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican.

DHAWAN TO LEAD INDIA ON SL TOUR

New Delhi, June 10: Shikhar Dhawan has been confirmed as captain, while pacer Bhuvneshwar Kumar will be his deputy as the BCCI named a 20-member squad to tour Sri Lanka in July. All matches will be played at the R Premadasa International Stadium in Colombo.

Among the youngsters to get a look in are Devdutt Padikkal, Ruturaj Gaikwad and Chetan Sakariya, all of who impressed in the domestic circuit and Indian Premier League recently. The experienced Karnataka allrounder Krishnappa Gowtham also gets a call up, alongside experienced white-ball spinners Yuzvendra Chahal and Kuldeep Yadav. Tamil Nadu and Kolkata Knight Riders spinner Varun Chakravarthy gets another chance with the national squad after he missed out on the Australia tour due to injury after being originally named in the T20I squad. — Agencies

SQUAD

Shikhar Dhawan (Captain), **Prithvi Shaw**, **Devidutt Padikkal**, **Ruturaj Gaikwad**, **Suryakumar Yadav**, **Manish Pandey**, **Hardik Pandya**, **Nitish Rana**, **Ishan Kishan** (Wicket-keeper), **Sanju Samson** (Wicket-keeper), **Yuzvendra Chahal**, **Rahul Chahar**, **K Gowtham**, **Krunal Pandya**, **Kuldeep Yadav**, **Varun C. Bhuvneshwar Kumar** (Vice-captain), **Deepak Chahar**, **Navdeep Saini**, **Chetan Sakariya**. **Net Bowlers:** **Ishan Porel**, **Sandeep Warrier**, **Arshdeep Singh**, **Sai Kishore**, **Simarjeet Singh**

EURO FIXTURES

GROUP A	GROUP B	GROUP C
Turkey Italy Wales Switzerland	Denmark Finland Belgium Russia	Netherlands Ukraine Austria North Macedonia
GROUP D	GROUP E	GROUP F
England Croatia Scotland Czech Republic	Spain Sweden Poland Slovakia	Hungary Portugal France Germany

GROUP STAGE

June 12	Turkey vs Italy Wales vs Switzerland Denmark vs Finland	Group A Group A Group B	12.30 am 6.30 pm 9.30 pm
June 13	Belgium vs Russia England vs Croatia Austria vs N. Macedonia	Group B Group D Group C	12.30 am 6.30 pm 9.30 pm
June 14	Netherlands vs Ukraine Scotland vs Czech Republic Poland vs Slovakia	Group C Group D Group E	12.30 am 6.30 pm 9.30 pm
June 15	Spain vs Sweden Hungary vs Portugal	Group E Group F	12.30 am 9.30 pm
June 16	France vs Germany Finland vs Russia Turkey vs Wales	Group F Group B Group A	12.30 am 6.30 pm 9.30 pm
June 17	Italy vs Switzerland Ukraine vs N. Macedonia Denmark vs Belgium	Group A Group C Group B	12.30 am 6.30 pm 9.30 pm
June 18	Netherlands vs Austria Sweden vs Slovakia Croatia vs Czech Republic	Group C Group D Group D	12.30 am 6.30 pm 9.30 pm
June 19	England vs Scotland Hungary vs France Portugal vs Germany	Group D Group F Group F	12.30 am 6.30 pm 9.30 pm
June 20	Spain vs Poland Italy vs Wales Switzerland vs Turkey	Group E Group A Group A	12.30 am 9.30 pm 9.30 pm
June 21	Ukraine vs Austria N. Macedonia vs Netherlands	Group C Group C	9.30 pm 9.30 pm
June 22	Finland vs Belgium Russia vs Denmark	Group B Group B	12.30 am 12.30 am
June 23	Czech Republic vs England Croatia vs Scotland Sweden vs Poland Slovakia vs Spain	Group D Group D Group E Group E	12.30 am 12.30 am 9.30 pm 9.30 pm
June 24	Germany vs Hungary Portugal vs France	Group F Group F	12.30 am 12.30 am

ROUND OF 16

June 26	2A vs 2B	Match 37	9.30 pm
June 27	1A vs 2C 1C vs 3D/E/F	Match 38 Match 39	12.30 am 9.30 pm
June 28	1B vs 3A/D/E/F 2D vs 2E	Match 40 Match 41	12.30 am 9.30 pm
June 29	1F vs 3A/B/C 1D vs 2F	Match 42 Match 43	12.30 am 9.30 pm
June 30	1E vs 3A/B/C/D	Match 44	12.30 am

QUARTERFINALS

July 2	Winners of Matches 41 and 42	Quarterfinal 1	9.30 pm
July 3	Winners of Matches 38 and 40	Quarterfinal 2	12.30 am
	Winners of Matches 37 and 39	Quarterfinal 3	9.30 pm
July 4	Winners of Matches 43 and 44	Quarterfinal 4	12.30 am

SEMIFINALS

July 7	Winners of Quarterfinal 1 and 2	12.30 am
July 8	Winners of Quarterfinal 3 and 4	12.30 am

THE FINAL

July 12	Winners of Semifinals	12.30 am
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MATCHES LIVE ON SONY TEN 2, HD, SONY TEN 3, HD (HINDI), SONY SIX, HD (MALAYALAM & BENGALI), SONY TEN 4, HD (TAMIL & TELUGU)

Anastasia in dream final

Paris, June 10: Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova beat Tamara Zidansek in straight sets to reach a first Grand Slam final at the French Open on Thursday at a record 52nd attempt.

The 29-year-old Russian defeated world number 85 Zidansek 7-5, 6-3 and will face Greek 17th seed Maria Sakkari or Barbora Krejickova of the Czech Republic for the title on Saturday, 14 years after her Grand Slam debut.

Pavlyuchenkova, a quarter-finalist in Paris a decade ago, became the first woman to play more than 50 majors before making her first final, breaking the previous mark of 44 set by 2015 US Open runner-up Roberta Vinci.

"I am so tired and so happy, it is very emotional," said Pavlyuchenkova.

"It was difficult, I tried to fight very hard and to work on the tactical side. It is important to stay focused and in the right zone for the final on Saturday."

The 31st seed dropped serve in the opening game on a sun-drenched Court Philippe Chatrier.

SALISBURY-KRAWCZYK WIN MIXED DOUBLES

Joe Salisbury became the first Briton to win the French Open mixed doubles in 39 years on Thursday as he and American partner Desirae Krawczyk beat Aslan Karatsev and Elena Vesnina 2-6, 6-4, 10-5 in the final. It is a second Grand Slam title for Salisbury, 29, who won the 2020 Australian Open men's doubles with Rajeev Ram.

The 27-year-old Krawczyk finished runner-up in last year's women's doubles at Roland Garros with Alexa Guarachi. — AFP



Russia's Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova serves to Slovenia's Tamara Zidansek during their semifinal in the French Open at the Roland Garros on Thursday.

— AP

DJOKOVIC TO TAKE ON NADAL IN SEMIS

Paris, June 10: Novak Djokovic said facing Rafael Nadal for the 58th time on Friday, with a place in the French Open final on the line, will be "a great battle" against his "biggest ever rival".

Djokovic secured the eagerly-awaited clash when he reached his 40th Grand Slam semifinal with a 6-3, 6-2, 6-7 (5/7), 7-5 win over Italy's Matteo Berrettini.

It will be his 11th appearance in the last-four in Paris where he was champion in 2016.

Nadal, the 13-time winner, beat Argentina's Diego Schwartzman 6-3, 4-6, 6-4, 6-0 to make the semi-finals for the 14th time. He will be playing in his 35th Slam semi.

"I'll probably pick Rafa as the biggest rival I've ever had in my career," said world number one

Djokovic. "The anticipation for the match against him, any match, any surface, any occasion, is always different from any other. Let's have a great battle."

Although Djokovic has the edge at 29-28 in their overall rivalry stretching back 15 years, Nadal enjoys a 7-1 record in their French Open meetings and is 19-7 overall on clay. — AFP

Dingko dies after battle with cancer

New Delhi, June 10: Asian Games gold medal-winning former boxer Dingko Singh, who inspired a generation of Indian pugilists with his swashbuckling ring craft and flamboyant personality, died on Thursday after a long battle with liver cancer.

He was 42 and had been fighting the disease since 2017. He is survived by his wife Babai Ngangom, a son and a daughter.

During his battle with cancer, the former bantamweight (54kg) boxer's health woes were compounded by a bout of jaundice and Covid-19 last year.

"We lost a legend," Olympic-bound boxer Vikas Krishan said summing up what he meant to Indian boxing.

Dingko's gold in the



Dingko Singh

Bangkok Asiad was the first in 16 years for Indian boxing after Kaur Singh's top finish at the regional showpiece's 1982 edition.

Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju offered condolences on his demise along with the national federation and a host of Indian boxers, some of whom have only heard tales of his dazzling persona. — PTI

RORY BURNS BRIGHT, BUT HOSTS COLLAPSE ON DAY 1

Birmingham, June 10: Matt Henry struck twice on his return to international cricket as a much-changed New Zealand reduced England to 152-4 at tea on the first day of the second Test at Edgbaston on Thursday.

England, who had been 72-0, lost three wickets for 13 runs shortly after lunch as they slumped to 85-3, with captain Joe Root out for just four. But opener Rory Burns, fresh from his hundred in the drawn first Test at Lord's last week, was still there on 73 not out.

Henry, one of six changes to New Zealand's side, deserved his interval figures of 2-36 in 13 overs.

The paceman, in for the veteran Tim Southee — one of three New Zealand players rested ahead of next week's inaugural World Test Championship final against India at Southampton — started the slump.

Dom Sibley tried to leave a Henry away-slinger but was caught behind for 35. England's 72-1 became 73-2 when Zak Crawley's miserable run continued with a duck, the batsman caught in the slips after a loose shot off left-arm paceman Neil Wagner — the only surviving member of New Zealand's attack from Lord's. — AFP

Brief scores (Day 1, at Tea): England 152/4 in 56 overs (Rory Burns 73 (batting), Dom Sibley 35, Matt Henry 2/36) vs New Zealand