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HYDERABAD | FRIDAY | 11 JUNE 2021

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**WEATHER**  
 Max: 32.6°C  
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 RH: 67%  
 Rain: 10.4 mm  
**Forecast:** Cloudy sky.  
 Rain likely. Max/Min temp. 32/24°C

**ASTROGUIDE**  
**Plava:** Uttaryana  
**Tithi:** Jyeshta Shuddha Padyami till 6.28 pm  
**Star:** Mrigasira till 2.28 pm  
**Varijya:** 11.43 pm to 1.29 am (Saturday)  
**Durmuhuram:** 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**  
 Fajr: 4.31 am  
 Zohar: 12.25 pm  
 Asar: 4.51 pm  
 Magrib: 6.55 pm  
 Isha: 8.12 pm  
**SUNSET TODAY** 6.50 PM  
**SUNRISE TOMORROW** 6.10 AM  
**MOONRISE TOMORROW** 6.10 AM  
**MOONSET TODAY** 7.44 AM

**INSIDE**  
**SPORTS.. PG12**  
 Indian boxing legend Dingko Singh dead

## Builder Shanta Sriram disregards SC's order

N. VAMSI SRINIVAS | DC HYDERABAD, JUNE 10

The Supreme Court vacation bench comprising Justices B.R. Gavai and Krishna Murari directed the parties to maintain the status quo in a Special Leave Petition filed by the state government on June 1.

ing Justices B.R. Gavai and Krishna Murari directed the parties to maintain the status quo in a Special Leave Petition filed by the state government on June 1.

While the legal heirs of Badami Rangaswamy were claiming ownership of two acres, situated near Bhagyanagar Studios on Road No 14, Banjara Hills, the revenue department contended that it is a government land as a nala also passed through the land. The private claimants have entered into a development agreement with Shanta Sriram Constructors.

When this correspondent visited the site on

Thursday, ground levelling works were being carried out at a brisk pace with truckloads of debris being dumped at the site. The builder had also erected blue sheets on one side of the land damaging the property of the neighbours as well as removing the approach road against which the affected parties approached the Telangana High Court on Wednesday and got status quo orders.

According to a senior Hyderabad district revenue official, the government's ownership was confirmed by a City Civil Court in 1998. However, Justice G. Sridevi of the Telangana High Court passed an order on April 1 this year declaring the private claimants as the owners of the land. She observed that the government failed to prove its ownership, while the private persons established the same in their favour beyond doubt.

Page 2: HC rejected state's claim to land

## SC lets police probe key officials of Mahesh Bank

Sets aside HC stay on probe into forgery and illegal bank loans

VUJJINI VAMSHIDHARA | DC HYDERABAD, JUNE 10

The Supreme Court has allowed the Banjara Hills police to continue its investigation in the cases filed against AP Mahesh Cooperative Bank chairman Ramesh Kumar Bung, managing director Umesh Chand and vice-chairman Purushottam Das.

Through its order, the Supreme Court stayed the operation of an interim direction issued by the Telangana High Court on April 27 to suspend the probe against the key offi-

cials of Mahesh Bank.

Allegations against Ramesh Bung, Umesh Chand and Purushottam Das relate to the forging of documents; illegal disbursement of loans worth more than ₹300 crores and siphoning of ₹18.3 crore.

In spite of several complaints lodged against the key officials of Mahesh Bank and a direction from the state government, police did not register an FIR against the trio.

Later, the AP Mahesh Bank Shareholders Association filed a complaint under Section 200 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) before a magistrate court, seeking its direction to the police.

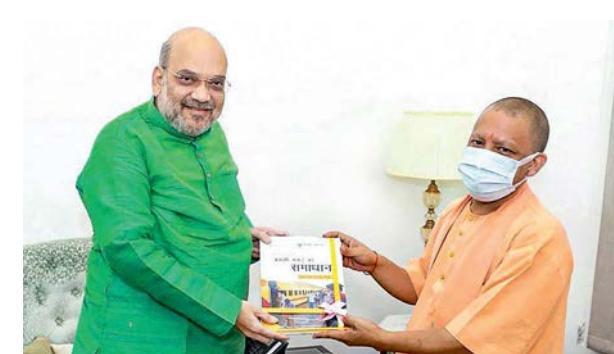
The magistrate court referred the petition to the police under Section 156(3) of the CrPC, forcing the Banjara Hills police to register an FIR. However, the

accused had got a stay from the Telangana High Court.

Though the AP Mahesh Bank Shareholders Association had on February 7 sought a High Court's direction to the Reserve Bank of India for conducting a forensic audit into the bank's transactions and to suspend the incumbent Board of Directors, the court refused to intervene.

The tussle between the incumbent management of the bank and the AP Mahesh Bank Shareholders Association came to the fore during the elections conducted to elect the bank management.

## Yogi in Delhi ahead of reshuffle

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 10

Uttar Pradesh CM Yogi Adityanath meets home minister Amit Shah in New Delhi on Thursday.

the BJP's attempt to placate the Brahmin votebank in the state.

Sources said the UP CM sought an appointment with the PM last month to discuss some state-related issues, including Covid-19 relief measures. The UP government had faced severe criticism over its handling of the second wave of the global pandemic, and the BJP leadership was said to be unhappy about it. The CM is likely to present a report card to the PM on his government's initiatives to battle against the pandemic.

Sources said the impact of the farmers' agitation will be part of the discussion in the CM's meetings.

## 8 KIDS AMONG 11 DEAD IN MUMBAI BUILDING CRASH

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC MUMBAI, JUNE 10

Eleven people, including eight children, were killed when a three-storey apartment building collapsed on another structure at a slum in Mumbai's Malad area late Wednesday night. A case of culpable homicide not amounting to murder has been registered against the owner of the building.

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 in Malad. The slum pocket has come up on Collector's land and the height of the ill-fated structure was extended illegally. There are few more dilapidated structures that are waiting for disaster to happen.

BMC deputy municipal commissioner Prabhat Rahangdale said, "Three persons are still suspected to be trapped and the search operation is on to find them."

Locals started removing debris and rescuing people promptly after the incident. The police and fire brigade officials reached the spot and started rescue operations.

The Malwani police has registered an FIR against Rafique Siddiqui, the owner of the structure. Rafique's brother Shafiq was staying on the third floor of this structure with his family. Shafiq, his wife and wife of owner Rafique along with six children of this family lost their lives in the incident.

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## SHORT TAKES

**TOBACCO WORTH ₹15 LAKH SEIZED, EIGHT ARRESTED**DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 10

Hyderabad Commissioner's Task Force teams on Thursday apprehended eight persons in two separate cases for selling noxious tobacco gutka and foreign cigarettes. In all, ₹15 lakh worth of these goods have been seized.

In the first incident, the South Zone team took into custody Abu Bakar Bin Ilyas Zumbali, 32, Omer Bin Ali Timimi, 35, Abubakar, 24, P. Gangadhar, 56, and Khader Khan, 50, with Rs. 9 lakh worth products. They had been illegally procuring and selling the prohibited tobacco gutka and foreign cigarettes.

Khader Khan runs a pan shop at Hafeez Baba Nagar. To make money illegally, he contacted agents and procured gutka and foreign cigarettes. He then supplied them to other stores and shops. The men, along with seized material, have been handed over to Chandra Nayagutta, Madanapet and Kanchanbagh police for taking necessary action, police said.

In the second case, the West Zone team raided a kirana shop and seized Rs. 5.5 lakh worth tobacco gutka from them. The accused Ram Kishore Kumawat, Satish Bajaj and A. Sai Baba, have been handed over to Mangalhat police and Jubilee Hills police for taking necessary action.



People shop leisurely at Sultan Bazaar after the lockdown relaxation window was extended till 5 pm in Telangana on Thursday.

— S. SURENDER REDDY

## Thin attendance at government offices

### Extended relaxation sees staff turn up at colleges

SANJAY SAMUEL  
PAUL | DC  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 10

Attendance in government offices was sluggish on the first day after lifting of the lockdown during the day.

Commercial establishments and business entities raised their shutters and hoped for a steady pick-up in transactions.

Lockdown restrictions continued to be in place from 6 in the evening and there were fewer people in the streets even in popular areas like those around Hussainsagar lake.

Attendance was thin in the government offices including the

**WHILE THE** popular NTR Marg and Necklace Road (now PV Narasimha Rao Marg) saw a few couples and families, there were some who came out for a stroll.

state Secretariat. "There seems to be some confusion over whether the 50 per cent attendance rule is still in place," explained a section officer at the secretariat.

The mood was upbeat at commercial centres with traders and businessmen expressing happiness over the decision to increase the relaxation hours.

Prabhaker, who runs an electric appliance shop

at Troop Bazar, said, "We are thankful to the government, we are getting customers. Remaining open only for few hours a day does not help at all."

Elsewhere, colleges under Osmania University saw teaching and non-teaching staff turning up for work.

Prabhu, who works in an aided college said, "Most of the staff have started working as advised by the university. Lecturers were asked to take online classes from the college itself."

Restaurants are considering the reopening of their dine-in section. According to Satish Kumar, manager at a fine-dine restaurant,

"Our takeaway services are on with app-based gregarious. Restaurants will soon decide on reopening of dine-in sections."

While the popular NTR Marg and Necklace Road (now PV Narasimha Rao Marg) saw a few couples and families, there were those who have come out for a stroll.

TSRTC increased its services in the city from Thursday with V. Venkateshwari, RTC's Greater Hyderabad Zone's Executive Director saying "From Thursday onwards, the number of services have been increased from 900 to 1,500 in GHMC region, based on the footfalls."

Restaurants are considering the reopening of their dine-in section. According to Satish Kumar, manager at a fine-dine restaurant,

## COUNTER POINT



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

## Covid wave reducing but caution advised

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 10

The second wave of Covid-19 is seeing a steady decline and yet the risk of people getting infected exists in the public sphere. Districts like Yadadri Bhongir have recorded 46 new cases (290 in a week), Warangal urban 61 new cases (445 in a week), Suryapet 84 new cases (537 in a week) and Mahabubabad 68 new cases (461 in a week).

Chances of infection are more in areas of agriculture, fishing and other economic activities as crowds gather.

In Bhadrak Kotahudem, several cases of infection were reported during the past week due to the fishing activity. There were 86 new cases on Thursday while the week has seen 95 cases on June 7 and 110 on June 4.

While the unlocking is on, caution is advised to those who are planning house warming ceremonies or small social gatherings at home. Restaurants must avoid drawing people in.

Dr Lay Kumar, president of IMA Telangana says: "Covid-appropriate behaviour has to be followed during the unlocking. There are some who are vaccinated and others who are yet to do this.

**DOCTORS SAY** there must be more awareness drives so that people continue to refrain from unnecessary travel and social activity. Till the cases are down, any activity will only lead to small events of super spreaders.

Those who are vaccinated cannot give up safety measures as the virus is still active. People have to refrain even from small gatherings."

Doctors say there must be more awareness drives so that people continue to refrain from unnecessary travel and social activity. Till the cases are down, any activity will only lead to small events of super-spreader.

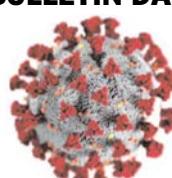
At present, 90 per cent of government isolation and oxygen beds are empty while 50 per cent of the oxygen beds is vacant in private hospitals.

With people in districts, neighbouring states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu recording higher numbers of cases, patients are coming in from border areas to private hospitals. Sporadic cases have been reported in Nanded and these are coming to Hyderabad for treatment. Experts say alertness and caution must be maintained.

Daily COVID BULLETIN DATA

Update: Cases | Deaths

Fresh Cases	1,798
Deaths	14
Tests Done	1,30,430
Active Cases	23,561
Total Cases	5,98,611
Total Deaths	3,440



## Highest New Cases

Adilabad	6	
Komaram Bheem Asifabad and Kamareddy	7	
Narayanpet	10	
Medak and Nirmal	11	
Jangaon	15	

## Lowest New Cases

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## SHORT TAKES

**BANDI ACCUSES CM OF RULING LIKE DICTATOR**DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 10

BJP state president Bandi Sanjay Kumar on Thursday charged that Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao's rule is like a dictatorship wherein there is no freedom to raise people's issues. Anyone who raises voice on behalf of the people is suppressed, he stated. Addressing a meeting of party general secretaries along with BJP Telangana affairs in-charge Tarun Chugh, Sanjay said Etala Rajendar has been targeted by Chandrasekhar Rao as the former minister did not sing praises of the CM.

He accused the Chief Minister of targeting people who opposed his decisions. BJP state president was critical of police for "kidnapping" journalist Raghu for the latter's critical reports.

Sanjay expressed worry that the free vaccination announced Prime Minister Narendra Modi may not be carried out effectively in the state as hospitals lacked the requisite facilities. He asked the state government to recruit as many staff as needed in a timely manner for carrying out the vaccination.

The BJP state president regretted that the government has failed to purchase grains from farmers even though the monsoon season has started.

**PROTEST AGAINST FUEL HIKE: TPCC**DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 10

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) president N. Uttam Kumar Reddy on Thursday called upon the party rank and file to participate in protests across petrol pumps on Friday opposing the spiraling petrol and diesel prices in the country and demanding immediate slashing of prices.

In a statement, he lamented the frequent increase in fuel prices even as people are facing indescribable hardships due to Covid-19.

He said that the All India Congress Committee has called upon the party leaders and workers to stage protests opposing the manner the prices were increasing. He said that the protests would start at 11 am.

Reddy said that DCCD presidents should participate in the protests at their respective district headquarters and constituency in-charges at the headquarters of the Assembly constituencies, town and mandal in-charges in their respective towns and mandal headquarters.

He said that an off-shoot of the fuel price hike has been the steady increase in prices of essential commodities. He said that in the past 13 months the prices of petrol have risen by Rs25.72 per litre and diesel by Rs 23.93 per litre. He said that the prices have been raised 43 times and this is an example of the loot engineered by the Centre.

**● IN A statement, he lamented the frequent increase in fuel prices even as people are facing indescribable hardships due to Covid-19.**

**MOVE TO DEMOLISH 135-YEAR-OLD WARANGAL PRISON DRAWS FLAK**DC CORRESPONDENT  
WARANGAL, JUNE 10:

Even as the Telangana state government initiated the shifting of the 956 inmates of the Warangal central prison to build a multi-speciality hospital in its place, experts are

questioning the feasibility and the loss of a heritage site.

Public policy expert Donthi Narasimha Reddy opined that with the Telangana economy in tatters caused by public policies, economic downturn, the Covid-19 pan-

demic and lockdown, the rationale for undertaking an expensive demolition and construction activity which could cost ₹1,000 crore, albeit with public health objective, is not clear.

The Warangal central jail was set up during the

period of the sixth Nizam of Hyderabad, Mir Mahboob Ali Khan, in 1886.

Even though it is not listed as a heritage construction, its edifice has heritage characteristics. It currently occupies 54 acres.

With the two states, the Centre agreed to look into the water reallocation plea on condition that the TS withdrew its case from the SC.

In the meeting, chief minister Chandrashekhar 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. 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

**WATER DISPUTE****Centre agreed to resolve row if state withdrew case from SC****TS' Krishna dispute case withdrawn**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 LATER filed the petition in the SC in 2015 as the Centre did not take any steps.**

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 TS withdrew its case from the SC.

In the meeting, chief minister Chandrashekhar 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

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.

**Ex-TRS leader Rajendar, aides to join BJP on June 14**NARENDER PULLOR | DC  
NIZAMABAD, JUNE 10

Former minister Etala Rajender, former MLA Enugu Ravinder Reddy, Karimnagar former zilla parishad chairperson and TRS undivided Nizamabad district in-charge Tula Uma will join BJP on June 14.

BJP national general secretary and Telangana state in-charge Tarun Chugh will reach Hyderabad and meet the TRS dissident leaders to invite them into the party fold.

Meanwhile, Ravinder Reddy has been busy with a series of meetings with his supporters

in Yellareddy Assembly constituency for the last few days.

Many second-rung leaders and activists supported his decision to join BJP.

Ravinder Reddy explained to the cadre how he was humiliated in TRS after his defeat in the 2018 Assembly elections.

The party cadre split into two groups with one group supporting Ravinder Reddy and the other rallying behind sitting MLA Jajala Surender, who had switched over from Congress. To protect the cadre, the ruling party is taking utmost care in Yellareddy Assembly constituency, but in vain.

Meanwhile, TRS Nizamabad district in-charge Tula Uma is also finding it difficult to adjust in TRS and has decided to join BJP. During her stint as district in-charge Tula Uma actively participated in party programmes. TRS leaders in the district were shocked to hear Uma's decision.

Speaking to *Deccan Chronicle*, a TRS key leader said on condition of anonymity that both Ravinder Reddy, Tula Uma are leaving the party. Since the 2018 Assembly elections, the gap between the party and these leaders has widened, he said.

**Back to shopping**

The surroundings of Charminar were abuzz with commercial activity as lockdown norms were relaxed.

— P. SURENDRA

**BJP prepares cadre for Huzurabad bypoll****Rajendar likely to get on board, say BJP sources**DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 10

post on June 12. On Thursday, party leaders including state in-charge Tarun Chugh and party president Bandi Sanjay, as well as seniors like D.K. Aruna and Muralidhar Rao met at the state party office in Nampally. They had an overview of the evolving electoral strategy of the ruling TRS in Huzurabad. Party in-charge Tarun Chugh suggested that BJP leaders visit the constituency one after another and encourage the cadre to fight the election in a coordinated manner as had hap-

pened in the Dubbakkapoll.

The party high command has reportedly reviewed the state's political situation in the context of the Eatala exit from the state ministry and felt this is time for the BJP to actively start preparing the party for the 2023 assembly elections. The party state in-charge Tarun Chugh, national vice president D.K. Aruna and OBC National Morcha president Dr. K. Laxman would call on Etala Rajendar at his residence as a courtesy call. They would dis-

cuss with him about the future strategies for the BJP in state polls. The party is likely to a p o o i n t in-charges for each mandal with involvement of former ministers and former MLAs and they would visit the respective constituencies regularly and interact with the local cadre.

After the Nagarjunasagar bypoll, the party conducted a review and identified the loopholes in its campaign strategies. New strategies will be shaped in consultation with Etala.

**GHMC REMOVES OUTLETS SELLING USED FURNITURE**ATHER MOIN | DC  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 10

permit sale of lands on the ground of avoiding possible encroachments of these vacant land parcels".

The government order stated that, "In order to avoid possible encroachments, the land parcels of various sizes and shapes and some of the land parcels that are not required for any immediate public purpose are permitted to be disposed of via open auction.

It said these lands are in prime locations scattered across the state and hence are prone to encroachments and un-authorizedized possessions.

The government has, after a careful examination of the matter and to avoid possible encroachments, permitted disposal of such government land parcels as are not required for any public purpose and cannot be kept idle for possible encroachment n's throughout the state, by open public auction.

An approval committee has been constituted to ensure development of lands and preparation of layouts with proper boundaries prior to conduct of e-auction comprising commissioners of GHMC, HMDA, CMD of TSSPDCL, MD of HMWSSB, DG of Fire Services and member secretary, TSPCB.

An auction committee was formed with the commissioner of HMDA, MD of Housing Board and MD of TSIIC.

The nodal department appointed by the government for the disposal of government lands has to fix the upset price for the e-auction.

They complained that they were not allowed to take away their wares and furniture worth lakhs of rupees was destroyed. They claimed that this place was designated for the sale of used furniture for 70 years. "We display our articles on the road for sale only on Sunday. On normal days we keep a few items in a narrow place that is not used as a road," said a trader.

A 70-year-old trader Mulla ji said he has been doing business here for more than a half-century.

"More than 150 families are dependent on this business. GHMC and police authorities without intimating us have started destroying the furniture. We were already confronting a financial crisis due to the lockdown. This is terrible and tragic."

**SAMVATSAREEKAM AS PER THITHI**B.P. ANANTH RAJ  
D.O.B: 11-03-1961 D.O.D: 02-05-2021  
Inserted by:  
Family Members  
(S/2122/D00300)In Loving memory of Mr. KAKANUR RAJGOPAL NAIDU  
(on his 1st Death Anniversary). You left us on this day 22.06.2020. Leaving a deep void. You will always be in our hearts and your memories deeply cherished.Remembered by:  
Smt. Vasanthi (Wife)  
Kiran - Nita- Nag (Children)  
Grand Children and Family Members.

(S/2122/D00302)

With a heavy heart, we inform you that my father JAHANGIR ALI

Left for his heavenly abode on May 14th 2021. He will always be remembered for the warm-hearted person that he was; please do pray for his soul...

Durdana Ali & Family  
Ph: 9945275575  
(B/2122/D00304)3rd ANNIVERSARY  
"I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Psalms 23:6Mr. BODI SUDHAKAR, M.A.Ed.  
Rtd. Govt. Head Master  
DOB: 25-09-1951 D.O.D: 11-06-2018  
Forever remembered,  
Forever missed...  
We love you...
Inserted by:  
Wife, Children and Family Members.

(S/2122/D00292)

20th ANNIVERSARY  
In loving memory of Dr. RAMBOOPAL  
(MD DM)  
DOB: 06-10-1944 D.O.D: 11-06-2001  
Inserted by:-  
FAMILY MEMBERS

(S/2122/D00304)

40th Day Remembrance  
Thy grace.....O Lord: John 1:16B.K. CHANDULAL BOON  
(RETD. D.S.P.I.P.T.)June 28, 1956 - May 3rd 2021  
Please join us in Honouring & Celebrating the Life of Jubilant, Joyful and loving Boon6 pm, 11th June 2021  
Zoom ID: 925 600 3311, Passcode: 237515

YouTube: Olive Boon

Inserted by: Mrs. Olive Kumari Boon (Wife)

Daughters &amp; Sons-in-law, Grand Children

Tel: 9895237515 / 9966553678 / 9704074377

In Loving memory  
A.J. Sunder Dass  
17th March 1943 to 11th June 2020

We Miss You

Late Sri Kailash Chand Gupta

Though you are not with us, but your thoughts, Values and Ideas will Inspire and Guide us forever!

Inserted by:  
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Dr. RAMBOOPAL M.D.M.D.

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Himayath Nagar, Hyderabad

11th DAY CEREMONY

Late. KAPPA UDAYA KUMARI  
W/o KAPPA CHAKRADHARA

DOB: 28.08.1958 D.O.D: 01-06-2021

You Have Given us Everything in life,

we miss you dearly

Son-in-law  
Daughter  
Son  
Daughter-in-law  
SHALINI KAPPA

Grandchildren Family and friends

11th day ceremony will be held today 11th June 2021

at Cypress Palms villa No 89 Kondapur Hyderabad

In great...

Son-in-law  
MURTHYUNJAY GOWRI

Honey Smita

SANDEEP KAPPA

SHALINI KAPPA

Grandchildren Family and friends

<div data-bbox="17

## SHORT TAKES

## Forest staff bid to retain podu lands

**Adilabad:** Forest officials are raising a false alarm and spreading tiger scare among locals in a bid to retain podu lands that are being used by Adivasis and non-tribals in the interiors of old Adilabad district. The state government failed to ensure a joint survey of the disputed forest lands by revenue and forest officials. Adivasi farmers are hesitant to go to their fields in the forests with the tiger movements and the death of two persons in Kagaznagar.

## SCR OBSERVES INT'L LEVEL CROSSING DAY

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 10

The South Central Railway (SCR) on Thursday observed the International Level Crossing Awareness Day educating road users about remaining alert while driving through railway crossings, so that lives can be saved.

In a statement, SCR underlined that safety of road users at level crossings is being enhanced rapidly. In 2020-21 itself, 81 manned level crossings have been replaced with construction of limited height subways, road under bridges and road over bridges. During the current financial year 2021-22, seven level crossing gates have been replaced with help extended by state governments in the SCR region.

International Level Crossing Awareness Day is observed to spread awareness among road users globally about ensuring their safety at level crossings.

The campaign includes caution signage boards with statutory warning indicating road users about the mandatory precautions to be taken at railway level crossings.

SCR general manager Gajanan Mallya has advised road users about being alert while driving through railway level crossings, so that precious lives are not endangered.

## Reconnecting to old ways



The Jagdish Market lane at Abids, popular in twin cities for mobile phones and repairs, is flooded with vehicles blocking the streets on the first day of extended lockdown relaxation on Thursday. — P. SURENDRA

## NGT calls out GHMC over waste disposal

Panel has asked civic bdy to quantify city's sewage

T.S.S. SIDDHARTH | DC  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 10

● THE IRRIGATION  
Department will have to ensure that information about Full Tank Level (FTL) is given to departments concerned.

Calling out the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) for failing to attend any of the meetings of joint committee appointed by National Green Tribunal (NGT), the committee tasked the civic body with the task of identifying the amount of sewage generated within the civic body's limits. The GHMC also has to ensure that no solid waste or garbage makes its way into any water body within the twin cities.

In its report submitted to NGT on Wednesday, the joint committee said despite being invited, no one attended its meetings

It described the GHMC's tasks as:

To ensure full-fledged operation of Solid Waste Management (SWM) including door-to-door collection with segregation of wet and dry waste.

To ensure no solid waste finds its way into water bodies by dumping.

The joint committee has now asked the civic body to quantify the sewage generated in the entire city and submit a time-bound action plan for treatment of entire sewage generated within the city limits.

authority has also been tasked with the responsibility of ensuring that the STPs function properly and the treated water is reused.

This is in addition to the responsibility of submitting a time-bound action plan for construction and operation of 17 proposed STPs in the Kukatpally catchment area.

The Irrigation Department will have to ensure that information about Full Tank Level (FTL) is given to departments concerned. The department also needs to take up repairs at the surplus weir near Viceroy Hotel. It will have to upload regularly the status of work carried out by them.

Meanwhile, HMDA has called for global tenders for bio-remediation. The

## Male tiger injured in AP, seeks refuge in TS Amrabad Reserve

BALU PULIPAKA | DC  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 10

A male tiger just about past its prime, and likely driven out of its territory in the Nagarjunasagar Tiger Reserve (NSTR) in Andhra Pradesh by a younger and fitter male, has sought refuge in Telangana's Amrabad Tiger Reserve (ATR). And for the past few days, teams of wildlife officials from the two states have been keeping a close watch on the tiger as part of their attempts to trap it to examine a wound under its eye, treat it, and then release the tiger back in the forest.

The male tiger was first noticed by people from Vatvarampally village in the heart of the ATR, it was noticed that its movements were sluggish. It was first spotted near Rasamola Bavi, a Nizam era step well right next to the road that runs between Mannanur village and Sriramam dam through ATR.

Closer observations by the forest officials revealed that the tiger, a male aged around 11 or 12 years, had a blackened wound under its right eye, and officials believe that the wound has debilitated the tiger. "This was a dominant male in the Naglooty range of NSTR and possible was driven out by a younger fitter male and suffered the wound in the fight for the territory," an official told Deccan Chronicle.

The male tiger which first lived in Amrabad tiger reserve, is believed to have crossed over to NSTR on the Andhra Pradesh side where it lived for the past five years before returning to the forest area after losing the territorial battle - it was possibly familiar with on the Telangana side of River Krishna, which forms a boundary between the two tiger reserves.

The establishment of undisturbed corridors on Krishna by the two tiger reserves this year by officials of the two tiger reserves on either side of the river in the two states, is believed to have helped in the injured tiger making its way back into Telangana.

## Injured leopard rescued

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 10

A young male leopard, with possible grievous injuries after an encounter with cattle it reportedly attacked, was rescued on Thursday by a team of veterinarians from the Nehru Zoological Park, and forest department officials. The leopard was brought to the zoo in the evening where it was being examined by the veterinarians for the extent of its injuries.

It was around 8.30 in the morning that Mahbubnagar district forest officials were informed of a leopard that was not able to move at Burugupally village in Kolkonda mandal. According to forest department officials, the leopard, around two or three years old, was found lying on the ground and was unable to get up.

After preliminary examination at the site, officials determined that the leopard possibly suffered from

internal injuries, and possibly on its spine which prevented it from getting up. Officials said that it was quite possible that the leopard suffered its injuries as it attacked some cattle in the area and must have received the wounds, some on its front paws, when the buffalo it attacked fought

back. One of the cattle had bleeding wounds on its mouth indicating that it may have been picked by the leopard for feeding on.

Since the animal was unable to move, the forest officials, with the help of local police, set up a temporary fence around the injured big cat using green netting.



A young male leopard, with possible spinal column injuries, drinks water from a plastic bowl, as forest and police department officials look on at Burugupally village in Mahbubnagar district on Thursday.

back. One of the cattle had bleeding wounds on its mouth indicating that it may have been picked by the leopard for feeding on.

Since the animal was unable to move, the forest officials, with the help of local police, set up a temporary fence around the injured big cat using green netting.

## New consortium to track variants

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 10

A consortium of four city clusters — Bengaluru, Hyderabad, New Delhi and Pune — has been established to upscale SARS-CoV-2 Coronavirus genomic surveillance, complementing national efforts led by the Indian SARS-CoV2 Genomic Consortium (INSACOG).

The consortium is led by CSIR-Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CSIR-CCMB), Hyderabad, and it currently includes different partners in three other cities: NCBS-TIFR, InStem-DBT and NIMHANS in Bengaluru; CSIR-IGIB in New Delhi; Pune Knowledge Cluster, IISER-Pune; and CSIR-NCL in Pune. It will work

closely with local governments, hospitals and clinicians. In collaboration with INSACOG, the consortium aims to eventually make this a national effort by expanding to other strategic locations in India.

Financial support for the new initiative comes from the Rockefeller Foundation. This new effort will track emergence of viral variants which will be correlated to epidemiological data and clinical outcomes. The consortium plans to target sampling strategies coupled with intense surveillance and advanced computational techniques. It will also help in improving surveillance and epidemiology.

Dr Rakesh Mishra, Advisor, CSIR-CCMB, will lead these efforts along with Prof Satyajit Mayor, NCBS, Prof L.S. Shashidhar, Pune Knowledge Cluster, and Dr Anurag Agarwal, CSIR-IGIB. CCMB said the project will develop strategies and capabilities to identify variants of concern before they spread widely and cause outbreaks. This will also help correlate with clinical symptoms and disease severity, potentially associated with emerging variants.

Dr Vinay Nandicoori, Director, CSIR-CCMB, added, "All the partner institutes have been fighting Covid-19 since its very beginning in the country. This much-needed collaboration will bring all their strengths together in a structured fashion."

## JAGAN PUSHES 3 CAPITALS PLAN IN DELHI

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.

TELANGANA STATE POLICE HOUSING CORPORATION LIMITED (A Govt. of Telangana Undertaking)	
e-Procurement -Tender Notification-4	
Tenders for Civil works are invited for Tender Nos.T12 / 2021-22 dated 09-06-2021 for works: "Tender No. Work Situated in district & Total ECV (Rs. in Lakhs) respectively as follows: T12-Karnareddy-1.58.70; Schedule available in online from: 09-06-2021 onwards. Last date/time for submission of bids for Tender Nos. T12 Dated 14-06-2021/5.00PM(STN). Further details can be seen at website @ www.tender.telangana.gov.in R.O. No.: 12672-PP/CL/ADVT/1/2021-22 Sd/- CHIEF ENGINEER	

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA ROADS & BUILDINGS DEPARTMENT e-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE	
Online tenders are invited under e-procurement platform for One work at Yadadri temple with YATDA Funds in Yadadri Bhongir District vide Engineer-in-Chief (R&B), State Roads & CRN.No.11606/SRD/DECR/EE/DEE/AEE/2021, DT-06-2021. Tenderers can download the tender schedules from e-market place for i.e., https://tender.telangana.gov.in from 14-06-2021 to 08.00AM onwards. The last date of receipt of tenders is 21-06-2021 upto 04:00 PM. Further details can be seen at e-procurement market place i.e., https://tender.telangana.gov.in. DIPR No.224-DP/CL-Agency/ADVT/1/2021-22, Dt:10-06-2021 Sd/- Engineer-In-Chief (R&B) State Roads & CRN	

CSIR - NATIONAL GEOPHYSICAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE (Council of Scientific & Industrial Research) Uppal Road, Hyderabad-500007, Telangana, India	
नोटसाइंस-राष्ट्रीय भूविज्ञान संस्थान (आधिकारिक रूप से अधिकारिक अधिकारी परिवर्तन) उपल रोड, हैदराबाद-500007, तेलंगाना, भारत	
The Director, CSIR-National Geophysical Research Institute, Hyderabad invites e-tender from the contractors of appropriate class of CPWD, Railways, M/S. State PWD and also from those who have carried out similar types of works for CSIR and Semi-Government organizations amounting to 80% of one work or 60% of two works or 40% of Three works for the last 5 years and in case of Electrical work - Valid Electrical Licence of appropriate class to be submitted. Similar Type of Works means, Civil Construction works, Renovation works, Civil Work with Electrical works, and A.C. works.	
Tender Documents are available on Website i.e. etenders.gov.in Please keep visiting etenders.gov.in website for update(s)/ addendum/corrigendum etc., if any related to this NIT. Sd/- (M. Ananda Kumar) Administrative Officer	
Notification by the District Collector (See rule 7 (c)) Date : 29-05-2021 No.G1/1190/2018 Where a notification was issued vide letter No.G1/1190/2018. Dated:02-12-2020 and Published in the District Gazette No.24 Dated:02-12-2020 for acquisition of the land for establishment of the National Investment and Manufacturing Zone Project.Zaheerabad for the public purpose. In response to the said notification, the following affected persons (land owners) have come forward to settle their claims through negotiation. The details of the willing affected persons are as follows.	

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA REVENUE (L.A) DEPARTMENT 0/o THE DISTRICT COLLECTOR, SANGAREDDY FORM-F				
Notification by the District Collector (See rule 7 (c)) Date : 29-05-2021 No.G1/1190/2018				
Where a notification was issued vide letter No.G1/1190/2018. Dated:02-12-2020 and Published in the District Gazette No.24 Dated:02-12-2020 for acquisition of the land for establishment of the National Investment and Manufacturing Zone Project.Zaheerabad for the public purpose. In response to the said notification, the following affected persons (land owners) have come forward to settle their claims through negotiation. The details of the willing affected persons are as follows.				
(I) Land owners				
Yelgi Village Jharasangam Mandal Sangareddy District				
Sl. No.	Name and address No. of the land owner	Survey No.	Extent	Remarks
1	Bichamma W/o Anjungonda	32/21	0.15	
2	Vittal S/o Bichappa	34/21	0.18	
3	Sangamma W/o Venkatesham	34/24	0.09	
4	Venkatesham S/o Hanmantu	34/23	0.10	
5	Venkatesham S/o Hanmantu	34/21/1	0.16	
6	Mohammed Moin Ali S/o Mohammad Liyakath ali	37/1/1	1.03	1 Bore & Pipe line
7	Mohammed Mainoddin S/o Mohammad Liyakath ali	37/2	1.10	
8	Jangi Arjun S/o Narappa	42/2	0.23	
9	Jangi Ashok S/o Sanganna	49/2	0.23	
10	S Madhusudana Sharma S/o Rammath sharma	51/2	1.07	20 Teak trees
11	Vittal S/o Mallanna	55/5	2.00	
12	Vittal S/o Mallanna	55/2	2.00	
13	Vittal S/o Mallanna	55/3	2.01	
14	Syed Anjith miya S/o Syed Hussain ali	55/1	1.26	
15	Vittal S/o Mallanna	55/4	2.00	
16	Pentana S/o Papaiya	57/6/14	0.09	
17	Manenna S/o Yellappa	61/6/51	1.01	1 Bore & Pipe line
18	Manenna S/o Yellappa	61/6/4	1.00	
19	Pentaiah S/o Balaiyah	63/2	1.23	

# 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.

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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 its 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 its effort to contain China.

One potential irritant to the US-UK relationship is the Northern Ireland protocol. As the EU-UK 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-

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

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 unfailing 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 reaffirmed 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 reinstated 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 to create disorder or 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 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 remained silent. It's swallowed this disrepute 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.**

The writer is a television commentator and anchor

## LETTERS

### COVID-19 STILL HERE

Even though cases have dwindled and lockdown regulations are being relaxed, we still need to ensure that all the necessary precautions are taken (*Cops gear up for extended lockdown starting today, DC, June 10*). Until everyone is vaccinated, we must maintain social distancing and wear masks.

**Rudra Krishna**  
Hyderabad

Kudos to cops for doing their duty at the cost of their life. I was sorry to read that nearly 2,000 personnel from Hyderabad Commissionerate were infected by Covid-19 and 17 had succumbed. Cops indeed are leaving no stone unturned to enforce the lockdown. They deserve accolades.

**Mohammed Azmathullah**  
Hyderabad

Now that the strength of High Court judges will go up, the people of Telangana may expect speedy justice (*TSC gets big boost with 18 new judges, DC, June 10*). It is also imperative that complainants and pleaders should come prepared with witnesses and relevant documents without dragging the cases unnecessarily.

**G.V.N. Murthy**  
Hyderabad

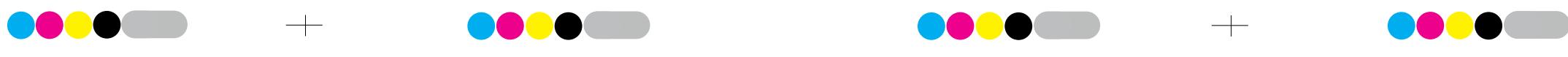
**SURPRISE CHANGE**  
I was surprised the CJJ replied to a school girl and appreciated her concern for the well-being of citizens (*CJJ lauds 10 year old's letter hailing SC, DC, June 9*). It is good to note we have such children and judges. It is a relief for citizens who are fed up with hate and fake news.

**Kshirasagara Balaji Rao**  
Hyderabad

**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".



## SHORT TAKES

**HC REFUSES TO STAY RELEASE OF FILMS ON SSR**

New Delhi, June 10: The Delhi High Court on Thursday refused to stay the release of several movies, purportedly based on the life of late Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput, including 'Nyay: The Justice' which is scheduled to be released on Friday, saying these films are neither portrayed as biopic nor factual narration of what transpired in his life.

"Posthumous privacy right is not permissible", the high court said in its interim order on a plea by Rajput's father to restrain such films.

The court said it found merit in the submissions of producers and directors that if information of events which have occurred is already in the public domain, one cannot plead any violation of right to privacy on a movie inspired from such events.

Some of the upcoming or proposed movie projects based on his son's life are - 'Nyay: The Justice', 'Suicide or Murder: A star was lost', 'Shashank' and an unnamed crowd-funded film.

Justice Sanjeev Narula dismissed the application by Rajput's father Krishna Singh seeking to restrain anyone from using his son's name or likeness in movies, saying the plaintiff has failed to satisfy the three-pronged test for grant of pre-emptory injunction to restrain exhibition of the films.

**ROSEWOOD TREES BEING CUT IN WAYANAD**

New Delhi/Kochi, June 10: Union environment minister Prakash Javadekar on Thursday sought a report from officials concerned on the issue of alleged mass felling and smuggling of centuries-old rosewood trees from the forest land in Kerala's Wayanad district.

This was disclosed by minister of state for external affairs V. Muraleedharan, who met Javadekar in New Delhi on Thursday seeking his intervention into the matter.

Talking to reporters in New Delhi, Muraleedharan, who is from Kerala, said the Union environment minister has sought a report from his officials on the basis of his complaint seeking action against the culprits, who had axed timber worth crores from the Kerala forests.

He alleged that the trees were looted from the forests under the shield of an order issued by the state government last year.

Demanding a comprehensive probe into the incident, Muraleedharan said the order was issued with the complete knowledge of the political leadership of state's ruling LDF.

"The role of the two ministers in the previous LDF government should also be investigated", he added.

The opposition Congress-led UDF had raised the issue in the Kerala Assembly on Tuesday, accusing the Left government of shielding the culprits.

**WOMAN JUMPS IN FRONT OF TRAIN WITH 5 DAUGHTERS**

Raipur, June 10: A woman and her five daughters allegedly committed suicide by jumping in front of a moving train apparently after a domestic dispute in Chhattisgarh's Mahasamund district, police said on Thursday.

Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel has directed the district administration to conduct a probe into the incident, that took place late Wednesday night, and take necessary action.

The bodies were recovered on Thursday morning from the railway tracks near Imlibhata canal bridge between Mahasamund and Belsanda, around 55 km from the state capital, police said.

As per preliminary information, Uma Sahu (45), a native of Bemcha village, had a quarrel with her husband on Wednesday.

After the tiff, the woman along with her daughters — Annapurna (18), Yashoda (16), Bhumiya (14), Kumkum (12) and Tulsi (10) — rushed to the railway tracks, located around 1.5 km from their village, and took the extreme step, said Mahasamund's Additional Superintendent of Police Megha Tembhurkar Sahu.

After being alerted in the morning, a police team reached the spot and sent the bodies for postmortem, she said.

**Sowing season**

A farmer prepares to plant paddy saplings in a field as transplantation in Punjab begins, in Amritsar on Thursday. The decision to begin sowing on June 10 came considering the shortage of labour due to the ongoing pandemic. — PTI

**On reforms, Sibal says leadership has to listen**

**Senior Congress leader says the issues raised were not addressed**

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 10

● THE LAST one year has been disastrous for the Congress and its leadership. Several top and upcoming leaders have openly questioned the functioning of the party. Inspite of the demand for internal elections nothing has moved forward.

"over my dead body", he disapproved of Jitin Prasada leaving the party and said that it is "Prasada Ram politics".

Sibal emphatically claimed that he would never join BJP, declaring

desperately needs reforms and the party leadership has to listen. At the same time, it was inexplicable, he said, that a person like Prasada would join the BJP. He said, "I don't want to comment on what the party leadership has done or not done. We have reached a stage in Indian politics where decisions of this nature are not based on ideology at all. They are based on what I now call 'Prasada Ram politics'".

Giving a message to the party he added, "Issues

were not addressed, that is true. They must be addressed as quickly as possible. We will continue to raise those issues. If the party for some reason tells me we don't need you, I will leave it. I am not in it for myself, but I will never in my life over my dead body join the BJP who I have opposed since my birth as a politician. That's my issue with Jitin Prasada."

The last one year has been disastrous for the Congress and its leadership. Several top and upcoming leaders have

openly questioned the functioning of the party. Inspite of the demand for internal elections nothing has moved forward. In the recently concluded Assembly elections the party fared poorly and till now there has been no fixing of responsibility over these debacles.

Deserts in the party at all levels are going on thick and fast. If these issues are not addressed soon the Congress will cede even more space to the BJP in the coming days.

**AICC panel submits report on Punjab**

New Delhi, June 10: A three-member AICC panel set up to end factionalism in the Punjab Congress submitted its report to party chief Sonia Gandhi on Thursday, suggesting a revamp of the state unit to accommodate all sections.

The panel chaired by Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge and comprising AICC general secretary-in-charge of Punjab affairs Harish Rawat and former MP JP Aggarwal has suggested that Navjot Singh Sidhu be "suitably accommodated" in the revamped unit. Sidhu's name is doing the rounds for inclusion in the state cabinet and elevation as deputy CM, but Chief

moderated in the revamped party unit.

Rawat said the report has been submitted to the Congress president, who would take a final call on the suggestions made. He did not divulge further details.

Though no major changes have been recommended at the top level in Punjab, sources said the panel has said that Navjot Singh Sidhu be "suitably accommodated" in the revamped unit. Sidhu's name is doing the rounds for inclusion in the state cabinet and elevation as deputy CM, but Chief

Minister Amarinder Singh is reportedly opposed to the move.

It is also learnt that Sidhu wants the post of PCC chief, but Singh is opposed to this idea as well. The CM has no objection to Sidhu joining the cabinet, however Sidhu had quit the Amarinder Singh government last year after his Local Bodies portfolio was changed.

The decision on Sidhu has been left to the Congress president, who will take the final call.

A change of party leadership in the state is also on the cards, but a final

call on whether to relieve incumbent Sunil Jakhar will be taken by the party chief. Jakhar had offered to quit last year but was asked to continue.

The panel held deliberations with a number of leaders from Punjab and heard the views of all including former PCC presidents and party MPs as the state prepares for the next year's Assembly elections.

The three-member panel held discussions at the party headquarters over the last week and also met Chief Minister Singh and Sidhu. — PTI

**Assam CM to Muslims: Adopt 'decent family planning' policy**

**MANOJ ANAND | DC**  
GUWAHATI, JUNE 10

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma here on Thursday said that the minority Muslim community should adopt "decent family planning" policy to bring down poverty and control the social problems.

Sarma while addressing a press conference to present a report card on completion of 30 days in office told reporters,

"We intend to work with the Muslim community to control population. The root cause of issues such as poverty, land encroachment etc., lies in uncontrolled population growth. I think we can put an end to a lot of social problems in Assam if the Muslim community adopts decent family planning norms."

The Chief Minister also made an appeal to organisations representing minority like All Assam Students Union (AASU) and Opposition party All India United Democratic

Front (AIUDF) to focus on population control initiatives in the Muslim community.

He said, "Assam government is going to take a few more steps which should encourage population control. I want to work with AASU and AIUDF on this."

Asserting the need of encouraging and supporting the need of education among Muslim women, the Chief Minister said, "You can't reduce poverty unless you control your population. I hope the community will respect the government's stand on this and work towards this."

The BJP government has already passed a population and women empowerment policy which prevented people with more than two children from securing government jobs in the Assam assembly in 2017. It also prevented them from contesting panchayat and municipal elections. However, policy is yet to be implemented.

Since taking over the office, the state government has launched a campaign to uproot encroachment mostly from religious places of Hindus at Sipajhar, Sootea, Hojai and Karmanganj.

All this encroachment is taking place because of abnormal population growth. If this trend continues, it will lead to shortage of living space and may soon result in conflict. Some are saying that such eviction drives shouldn't happen. But we can't allow people to illegally settle on forest land or land belonging to temples," said the Chief Minister.

Sarma also indicated that his government will soon pass a Bill in the state Assembly to stop the state from becoming the transit route of cattle smuggling.

Pointing out that the existing laws in the state don't consider the transit of cattle as illegal, Sarma said that cattle brought for smuggling to Bangladesh from other states are transported through Assam to India-Bangladesh border in Meghalaya.

Interested and willing govt. employees may forward their application complete in all respect through proper channel in the prescribed format to The Director, Serious Fraud Investigation Office, 2nd Floor, Pt. Deendayal Antyodaya Bhawan, B-3 Wing, CGO Complex, Lodhi Road, New Delhi-110003 within 60 days from the date of publication of this advertisement in the Employment News. For details, etc. visit [www.sfio.nic.in/www.mca.gov.in](http://www.sfio.nic.in/www.mca.gov.in).

Since, this is a deputation post, private candidates need not to apply. Separate applications may be forwarded for each post along with photocopies of up to date ACRs/APARs for the last 5 years, duly attested (on each page) by an officer of the level of Under Secretary or above, Vigilance Clearance Certificate, Integrity Certificate and the Certificate of major/ minor penalty imposed on the officer during the last 10 years of his service. The Cadre Controlling Authority may also certify that the particulars furnished by the officer have been verified and found correct, Those who have already applied may apply afresh.

Applications without ACRs/APARs, Vigilance Clearance or otherwise found incomplete will not be considered.

**Delhi's 1st smog tower to be ready by Aug. 15**

New Delhi, June 10: Environment minister Gopal Rai on Thursday said Delhi's first smog tower at Connaught Place will be ready by August 15.

The Delhi cabinet had approved the project in October last year. The 25-metre-tall structure, being set up to improve air quality in a radius of around 1 km, was supposed to be ready by June 15.

The Covid-19 pandemic delayed the construction work of the smog tower, the first-of-its-kind in India, at Baba Kharak Singh Marg. The work is being expedited.

The ambitious project will be ready by August 15, Rai told reporters here.

China also has such smog towers, but this one works on different technology. The ones in China suck the polluted air from the bottom and release the clear air from the top, whereas this smog tower works in the opposite direction, he said.

The smog tower at Connaught Place will be able to purify 1,000 cubic metres of air per second, the minister said. He also said many experts have different views about the efficacy of smog tower. — PTI

**INDIAN COUNCIL OF MEDICAL RESEARCH**  
V. Ramalingaswami Bhavan, New Delhi**Adv.No. ICMR/Sc-E(Dental)/2021/1-Pers.****RECRUITMENT NOTICE FOR SCIENTIFIC POSITIONS**

Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), an Autonomous Organization under Department of Health Research, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, invites online application(s) up to 26.06.2021 till 5:30 PM to fill up the 04 vacancies of **Scientist 'D'(Dental)** from Indian Citizens for appointment on regular basis under Direct Recruitment with all India transfer **liability under the Council**.

Those candidates who have already applied in reference to ICMR website advertisement need not apply again.

For detailed advertisement, please visit ICMR website at <https://recruit.icmr.org.in>

Sd/- (Jagdish Rakesh)  
Assistant Director-General (Admn.)  
Davp 17152/11/0002/2122

**Government of India**  
Ministry of Home Affairs  
Department of Border Management**Appointment of Member (Planning & Development) in the Land Ports Authority of India (LPAI)**

Applications are invited by the Department of Border Management, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India to fill up the post of **Member (Planning & Development)** of the Land Ports Authority of India (LPAI) under the Land Ports Authority of India Act, 2010 (31 of 2010).

2. The details and other terms & conditions are available on the website of the Ministry of Home Affairs at <http://mha.gov.in> and <http://lpa.gov.in>

3. Last date for receiving applications is 22nd July, 2021 (applications received after this date will not be considered).

4. Address for sending applications is as below:  
Mr. Manoj Kumar Jha,  
Deputy Secretary (BM-II),  
Room No.12,  
2nd Floor, Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium,  
Department of Border Management, Ministry of Home Affairs,  
New Delhi-110001  
Email: [mk.jha65@nic.in](mailto:mk.jha65@nic.in)

davp 19142/11/0003/2122

**National Horticulture Board**  
Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare,  
Government of India  
Plot No 85, Institutional Area, Sector-18,  
Gurugram (Haryana)-122015  
Tele: 0124-2342992  
Email: [md@nhb.gov.in](mailto:md@nhb.gov.in)  
Website [www.nhb.gov.in](http://www.nhb.gov.in)

Applications are invited for filling up one post of Deputy Managing Director in the National Horticulture Board (NHB) on deputation basis (including short term contract) in the Pay Level 13-A (Pay Matrix Rs. 131100-216600) as per 7th CPC. Applications complete in all respect giving details such as Educational Qualification and Experience etc, in the prescribed format should reach to the Managing Director of the Board, through proper channel at the following address, within 30 days of the publication of this advertisement in the Employment News.

Managing Director  
National Horticulture Board  
Plot No 85, Sector 18  
Institutional Area, Gurugram-122015 (Haryana)

The detailed information such as Educational Qualification, Experience and application Format etc are available at NHB website [www.nhb.gov.in](http://www.nhb.gov.in) as well as the Department website viz. [www.mdh.gov.in](http://www.mdh.gov.in).

Davp 01113/11/0001/2122

Managing Director

**Government of India**  
Ministry of AYUSH**Financial assistance for skill development in AYUSH sector**

Ministry of AYUSH invites application in the prescribed format under Central Sector Scheme for Skill Development under Champion Services Sector Scheme for Medical Value Travel for the year 2021-22 from the institutions recognized by Central Council of Indian Medicine (CCIM)/ Central Council for Homoeopathy (CCH)/ Healthcare Sector Skill Council under Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship.

2. Financial assistance to conduct skill development training in AYUSH sector up to Rs. 1.5 lakh (for short term courses) / 3.00 lakh (for midterm course) per training program will be provided to the institutions and Rs. 9000 will be provided to the students as stipend.

3. The eligible institutes may submit complete applications in prescribed format along with the required documents/ information to judge the eligibility of the institution. The detailed guidelines are available on the website of the Ministry of AYUSH i.e. <https://main.ayush.gov.in/schemes>

4. The applications in triplicate complete in all respect along with check list should reach to the Advisor (Ay.), Champion Services Sector Scheme Medical Value Travel, M/o Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha & Homeopathy, Room No. 207, 2nd Floor, Ayush Bhawan, B-Block, GPO Complex, INA, New Delhi-110023 on or before 30th June, 2021.

Davp 17201/11/0011/2122

**Government of India**  
SERIOUS FRAUD INVESTIGATION OFFICE  
2nd Floor Pt. Deendayal Antyodaya Bhawan  
B-3 Wing, CGO Complex, Lodhi Road, New Delhi-110003.  
No. 2/1/2021-Admn.SFIO

## SHORT TAKES

**COVID CASES FALL BELOW 500-MARK, BHOPAL UNLOCKED**

RABINDRA NATH CHOURHURY | 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 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.

**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 Ayilar, 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.

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. 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.

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**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

NAYAR 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.

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 Vimuktal Prakalprast Sanghatana (Organisation of Airport Project-affected People) has opposed the move insisting on the name of Mr Patil.

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**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 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 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 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.

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

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.

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

## 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 You-safzai 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 Lakkhi 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 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 kilogrammes 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

## INDIA TO GET A SHARE OF 80 MN US 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

## 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.

— 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

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

According to the lawsuit, JBS prevented Musl-

## Allies to look beyond Covid at G-7 summit

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

## Johnson slammed for taking plane, not train, to Cornwall

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-ringled 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 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. Lest anyone forget that the virus is stillraging, there will be daily

● 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.

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

in response. According to figures posted on the UK government website, domestic flights generate about six times more greenhouse gases than rail travel. 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-

stocks — though he didn't say when. Johnson also noted that the British government helped fund development at Oxford University of the AstraZeneca vaccine, which accounts for one in three doses around the world.

France said President Emmanuel Macron wanted to see "results and not just announcements" on vaccines. "We need a specific calendar — how many people worldwide and especially in Africa will be vaccinated" before a meeting of the G-20 in Rome in October.

— AP

## JBS settles Muslim bias lawsuit for \$5.5 million

## Cyberattack: JBS paid \$11mn ransom

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 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.

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

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

According to the lawsuit, JBS prevented Musl-

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

im 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

## 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

## 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 its launch pad ahead of its planned blastoff 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 scientific experiments.

The main section of the

Tianhe, or Heavenly Harmony, station was launched into orbit on April 29.

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.

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 tenta-

tive 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.

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 ten-

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.

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

## 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 IAMAI grievance board



The IAMAI 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, Reelrada, 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.

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## ■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

These resources actually belong to the nation and they will be monetised by bidding them out to interested entities

— Dharmendra Pradhan



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.

ONGC was then allowed to retain 49 fields on condition that their performance will be strictly monitored for three years.

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.

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 growth in the segment. "The investment in 1MG strengthens Tata's ability to provide superior customer experience and high quality healthcare products & services in the e-pharmacy and e-diag-



### 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

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 startups. 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.

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 billion in FY21 from \$14.51 billion 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 institution 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 transaction 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

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 the 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."

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 Enquire 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

Assets monetisation via Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvITs) and Real Estate Investment Trust (REITs) is likely to pick up in next one year as these instruments are being made investor friendly, says rating agency Icra.

Real estate assets worth over Rs 1 lakh crore could be listed in the near to medium term. Infrastructure assets with three-to-five years of operating track record in segments like, roads, gas pipeline, digital fibre, power transmission and renewables are ideal candidates for monetisation. Of these assets worth over Rs 2.5 lakh crore are expected to be monetised via InvIT in next one year, Icra said.

### Powering up

■ Adani Enterprises ■ Adani Total Gas  
■ Adani Transmission  
■ S&P BSE Sensex Index-Last Price

Source: Bloomberg

### Adani's energy companies have outpaced Sensex in the past few months



**SHORT TAKES**  
**Ollie to take break after controversy**

**London:** Pace bowler Ollie Robinson has decided to take a short break from cricket.

The 27-year-old missed England's second Test against New Zealand after being suspended from all international cricket pending the outcome of a disciplinary investigation into a historical racist and sexist tweet.

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 earlier this week. 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." — AP

**Five Indian girls in 'The Hundred'**

**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 Deepi Sharma and batswoman Jemimah Rodrigues in the 100-ball tournament involving eight men's and women's teams. While 17-year-old Verma joins Birmingham Phoenix as a replacement for New Zealand's Sophie Devine, Sharma will turn out for the London Spirit. Mandhana, the Indian T20 vice captain, is set to form an opening partnership with England's Danni Wyatt at Southern Brave and Rodrigues will feature for Northern Superchargers. — PTI

**Henry strikes as England collapse**

**Birmingham:** 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.

**Brief scores (at tea):** England 152/4 in 56 overs (Rory Burns 73 batting, Henry Matt 2/36) vs New Zealand.

**10 cricketers for Hall of Fame**

**Dubai:** The ICC will induct 10 legends of the game into its illustrious Hall of Fame, with two players each from five eras, dating back to cricket's early days, joining an existing list of 93 of the world's greatest.

The global cricket body on Thursday announced a special edition of the ICC Hall of Fame to coincide with the first-ever World Test Championship final, to be contested between India and New Zealand, from June 18 in Southampton.

As many as 10 legends of the game who have made a significant contribution to the history of Test cricket will be inducted to join the 93 players, who are already in the illustrious list, taking the total to 103. "It is an honour for us," ICC acting chief executive Geoff Allardice said. — PTI

**Suns burn Nuggets for NBA series lead**

**Los Angeles:** Chris Paul scored 17 points and handed out 15 assists on Wednesday to propel the Phoenix Suns to a crushing 123-98 victory over Denver and a 2-0 lead in their NBA playoff series.

Veteran point guard Paul was the keystone of the Suns' dominant victory, pulling down five rebounds and finishing the night without a turnover.

Every Suns starter scored in double figures and Phoenix did not give the Nuggets a chance to celebrate the NBA Most Valuable Player award that Denver center Nikola Jokic received on Tuesday.

Devin Booker scored 18 points for Phoenix. Deandre Ayton added 15 points and 10 rebounds and also kept Jokic in check for much of the night. Jokic finished with 24 points, 13 rebounds and six assists, sitting out the fourth quarter with Phoenix in full control. — AP

# THE BIG SHOW

**Djokovic sets up French Open semifinal with Nadal**

**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 bat-

tle,"

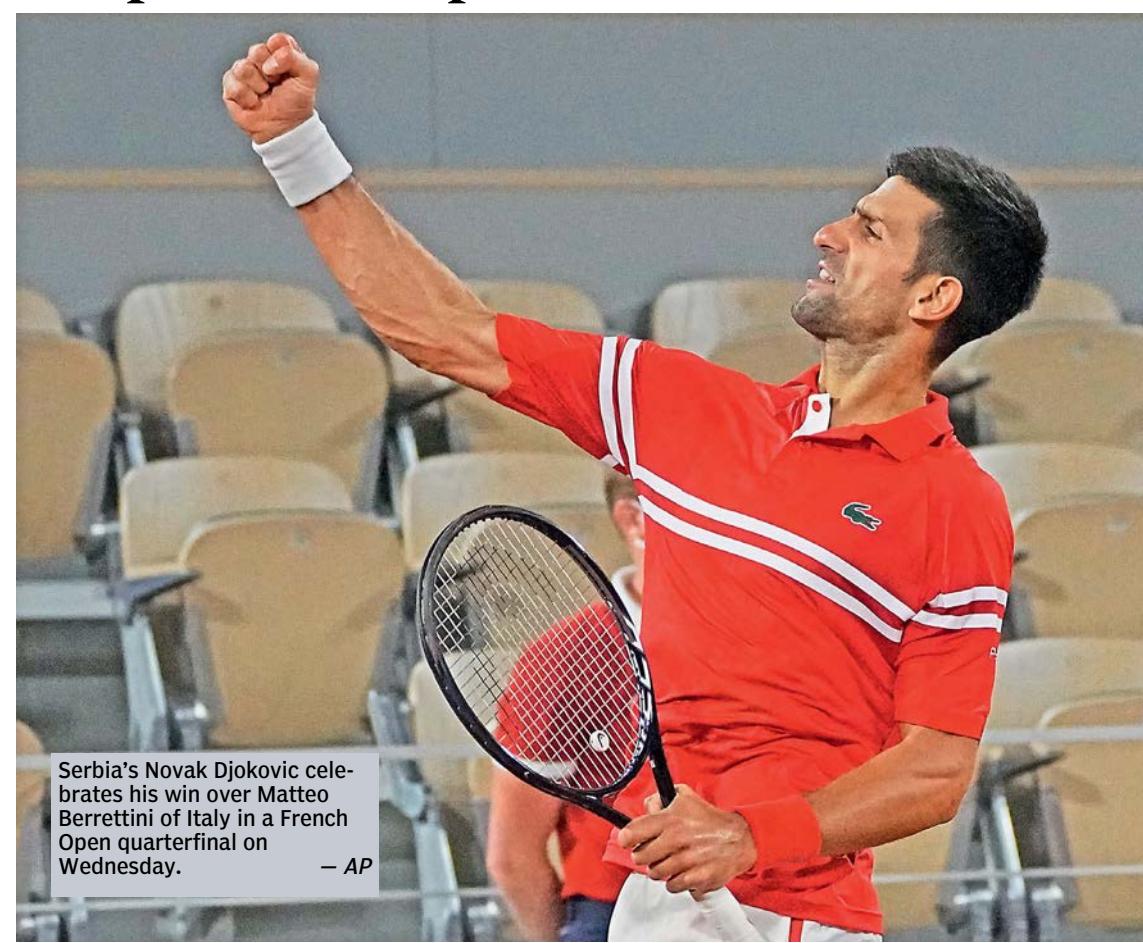
Although Djokovic has the edge at 29-28 in their overall rivalry stretching back 15 years, Nadal enjoys a 7-1 record in their French Open meetings and is 19-7 overall on clay.

Djokovic's last win over the Spanish star on a clay court was in Rome five years ago.

Nadal's record in Paris now stands at 105 wins against just two losses.

With Djokovic's quarter-

final extending beyond the national 11pm curfew, play was halted for around 20 minutes at 3-2 in the fourth set so that 5,000 fans could be funnelled out of Court Philippe Chatrier. — AFP



## Pavlyuchenkova in first Slam 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 Krejcikova 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 but capitalised on a fourth break point against Zidansek to break back for 2-2. — AFP

## DHAWAN INDIA CAPTAIN ON LANKA TOUR, BHUVI DEPUTY

**New Delhi, June 10:**

Opener Shikhar Dhawan was on Thursday named as captain of the Indian team that will travel to Sri Lanka for a limited-overs tour next month while pacer Bhuvneshwar Kumar will be his deputy.

India are scheduled to clash with Sri Lanka in three One-day Internationals and as many Twenty20 matches on the tour that will begin on July 13 and conclude on July 25 at the R Premadasa International Cricket Stadium, Colombo.

The Indian cricket Board named a 20-member squad that has all-rounder Hardik Pandya and spin duo of Kuldeep Yadav and Yuzvendra Chahal.

Young guns like Devdutt Padikkal and Prithvi Shaw

expectedly feature in the

squad that also has two

wicket-keeper batsmen in

young Ishan Kishan and Sanju Samson. — PTI

**THE SQUAD**

■ Shikhar Dhawan (captain), Bhuvneshwar Kumar (vice-captain), Prithvi Shaw, Devdutt 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 Chakravarthy, Deepak Chahar, Navdeep Saini, Chetan Sakariya. **Net Bowlers:** Ishan Porel, Sandeep Warrier, Arshdeep Singh, Sai Kishore, Simarjeet Singh.

**WHAT THEY SAID**

He was a rockstar, a legend, a rage. I remember I used to queue up to watch him fight in Manipur. He inspired me. He was my hero. It is a huge loss. He has gone too soon.

— M.C. MARY KOM  
boxing great

He was exceptional in the ring and a character off it. What a talent and equally sad is how he could not achieve more.

— GURBAX SINGH SANDHU  
former national coach

May his life's journey & struggle forever remain a source of inspiration for the upcoming generations.

— VIJENDER SINGH  
Olympic-medallist boxer

I'm deeply saddened by the demise of Shri Dingko Singh. One of the finest boxers India has ever produced, Dingko's gold medal at 1998 Bangkok Asian Games sparked the Boxing chain reaction in India.

— KIREN RIJU  
Sports Minister

He never consciously tried to warm up to anyone for personal gains, be it coaches, the federation, officials, no one. He had such confidence in his talent. That's why he was a hero.

— AKHIL KUMAR  
CWG gold-medallist boxer

**PITCHED | BATTLE**

## HCA brass serve prez show cause

**DC CORRESPONDENT**

HYDERABAD, JUNE 10

The Hyderabad Cricket Association heavyweights are hilariously back to throwing punches, and counters.

On Thursday, five office-bearers held an Apex Council meeting in the absence of president Mohammed Azharuddin and decided to issue him a show cause notice for serving a show cause to them!

.

cricket committees will meet, discuss and finalise the calendar in the next two weeks," they stated.

Acting on this, Azhar also released a statement. "A coterie of tainted members, who are facing an enquiry by the HCA Ombudsman under rule 41(1)(b) have issued a show cause notice to the President, Mr Mohammad Azharuddin, to the Apex Council members, which is against the Memorandum of Association Rules and Regulations — 2018 of HCA as any Show Cause notice has to be issued by the Apex Council itself and not by an individual office bearer," the five — vice-president John Manoj, secretary R. Vijayandhan, treasurer Surendra Agarwal, joint secretary Naresh Sharma and councilor Anuradha — said in a statement after their meet at the Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium in Uppal.

.

"There is no point in these tainted people conducting the so called Apex Meeting and issuing show cause to President. These people are not eligible to conduct any meeting pending enquiry against them.

"It is public knowledge that a majority of the members of the same coterie are attending the courts accused in various corruption cases that involve kickbacks and misappropriation of public money... The money meant to be spent on the poor yet talented cricketers will continue to be swallowed as long as we have these whales around," Azhar wrote.

"These type of actions will not cause me to back off. I never will. The fight will be until corrupt are out of the institution and till Hyderabad Cricket has gained its lost glory, with the support of my like minded campaigners — the member secretaries," Azhar said.

## Compassion



Hyderabad Cricket Association secretary R. Vijayandhan presents a cheque for ₹5 lakh to the widow of Ranji Trophy cricketer Ashwin Yadav, who passed away in April this year aged 33 due to cardiac arrest, leaving behind his wife and three sons.

## Half-a-century of distance running

**DC CORRESPONDENT**

HYDERABAD, JUNE 10

Hyderabad athlete Prabhakar Rao Mulagala has been pumping his legs on athletics tracks as well as tough terrains for over half-a-century now. Yes, it's been 51 years since the sexagenarian who turns 69 on Friday has been actively involved in long distance running.

Having started in the 1970s, Prabhakar trained under scientifically sound coach late Keshav Reddy and won many national as well as international medals. His best timings include 2 hrs 28mins in marathon, 3.5 mins in 1500m, 14.25 mins in 5000m, 29.56 mins in 10000m, 8.56 mins in 3000m steeple chase and 42mins 52.9secs in the 14.5k races.

In days when marathons were not so popular, Prabhakar took part in more than 20 of them, finishing with times of 2 hours 30-40 mins. His trophy cabinet is impressive, showcasing 300-plus medals won in big as well as small races.



However, the advanced distance running coach is not done yet. Even the current pandemic has failed to stop him — he covers kilometres in double digits on his treadmill at home!

**Suns burn Nuggets for NBA series lead**

**Los Angeles:** Chris Paul scored 17 points and handed out 15 assists on Wednesday to propel the Phoenix Suns to a crushing 123-98 victory over Denver and a 2-0 lead in their NBA playoff series.

Veteran point guard Paul was the keystone of the Suns' dominant victory, pulling down five rebounds and finishing the night without a turnover.

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Devin Booker scored 18 points for Phoenix. Deandre Ayton added 15 points and 10 rebounds and also kept Jokic in check for much of the night. Jokic finished with 24 points, 13 rebounds and six assists, sitting out the fourth quarter with Phoenix in full control. — AP



Dingko Singh

ly stands in solidarity with his wife and family and pray for the departed soul," he added.

The Manipuri superstar, who won his maiden national title (sub-junior) as a 10-year-old, was among the first modern stars of Indian boxing with his Asian Games gold and inspired the likes of six-time world champion M.C. Mary Kom among others.

A fearless competitor in the ring, Dingko beat two Olympic medalists — Sontaya Wongprates of Thailand and Timur Tulyakov of Uzbekistan — en route to the Asian Games gold medal in Bangkok, which was a remarkable feat for an Indian boxer at that time.

"In this hour of grief and loss, the Boxing fami-

## BOXING BLOCKBUSTER WHO DREW CROWD TO THE RING

**New Delhi, June 10:**

He exploded on the scene like a seasoned superstar. Not many fit this description in Indian sports, especially without an Olympic medal, but then Dingko Singh was unlike most.

All of 42 and four years after losing over 70 per cent of his liver to cancer, Dingko breathed his last at his Impahal home on Thursday, leaving Indian boxing stunned and the many he inspired with a deep sense of void in their lives.

His single biggest sporting achievement was an Asian Games gold in the 199



## Quick passes



**England midfielder Jack Grealish (left) and defender Ben White (right) take part in a training session at St George's Park in Burton-upon-Trent, England, on Thursday, ahead of the Euro football competition.** — AFP

## No more positives, jabs for Spain side

Spain celebrated another round of negative test results on Wednesday and welcomed the announcement that the squad would get vaccinated ahead of the European Championship.

The news came after "La Roja" expanded their parallel squad to 17 players following the detection of two Coronavirus cases this week — defender Diego Llorente tested positive on Tuesday and captain Sergio Busquets on Sunday. Both players left the team's training camp and were put into isolation.

Coach Luis Enrique called up 11 players from Spain's under-21 squad to join six other players who had already been training separately from the main team. No other players have tested positive so far, the Spanish football federation said.

— AP

## Danes to lift mask rules, boost crowd

Denmark on Thursday announced the easing of several Covid measures, regarding the use of face masks, bar and restaurant opening hours, and crowd sizes at Euro matches as it prepares to lift all restrictions by October 1.

Masks will no longer be required as of June 14, except on public transport during rush hour and for standing passengers. That requirement will subsequently be lifted on September 1. Bars and restaurants will be allowed to stay open until midnight as of June 11, compared to 11 pm currently. As of July 15, they will be allowed to remain open until 2 am.

— AFP

## Ukraine asked to change jersey

European football's governing body UEFA on Thursday demanded that Ukraine make changes to their jersey for Euro 2020 to remove a "political" slogan that sparked protests from Russia.

European football's governing body said the message "Glory to our Heroes", a rallying cry during the 2014 anti-Russia protests in Ukraine that is featured inside the shirt, was "clearly political in nature".

On Tuesday, Russia had sent a letter of complaint to UEFA over the yellow jersey which also features on the front of Ukraine including Crimea, which was annexed by Russia in 2014.

— AFP

## Hungarian PM with fans on knee boo

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban on Thursday defended his country's football fans who booted the Ireland team as they took a knee before a Euro 2020 warm-up game in Budapest.

Before the game on Tuesday, sections of the crowd at the Szusza Ferenc stadium in the Hungarian capital Budapest booted the Irish players for kneeling to highlight the issue of racial injustice.

"If you are a guest in a country, then understand its culture, and don't provoke the locals, don't provoke the host if you visit as a guest," Orban told a press conference.

The fiercely anti-immigration premier said he "agreed" with the Hungarian fans who booted, and that kneeling in protest "has no place on a sports field".

— AFP

## CONTINENTAL CLASH

**Heavyweights gear up for top kick as Euro football begins**

Rome, June 10: Somehow it seems appropriate that Italy, the first country in Europe that was overwhelmed by the Coronavirus pandemic, is hosting the opening game of the European Championship.

Even if Euro 2020 is kicking off in 2021.

The biggest crowd to gather in Italy for a year-and-a-half will witness an Azzurri squad aiming for the title play a Turkey team aiming to spring a surprise on Friday at Stadio Olimpico in Rome.

"We've been waiting a year for this European Championship and we can't wait to experience hearing 15,000 people singing the European anthem," Italy defender Leonardo Bonucci said.

After embarrassingly failing to qualify for the 2018 World Cup, Italy won all 10 of their qualifying matches for Euro 2020 and enter on a 27-match unbeaten run.

"We want to go all the way. Other national teams have more experience but we can play with anyone. We don't have a (Romelu) Lukaku or a Cristiano Ronaldo. Our strength is the team," Bonucci said.

Turkey took four points off France in qualifying, including a 2-0 win over the World Cup champions, and lost only one of their matches to finish second in the group.

"Being in this tournament and playing in the



A combination of file pictures shows Italy's forward Lorenzo Insigne (left) celebrating a goal and Turkey's striker Burak Yilmaz reacting after scoring. Italy face Turkey in the Euro opener in Rome on Friday.

— AFP

- After embarrassingly failing to qualify for the 2018 World Cup, Italy won all 10 of their qualifying matches for Euro 2020 and enter on a 27-match unbeaten run. They play Turkey in the tournament's opening match on Friday at the Stadio Olimpico in Rome.

## opening match makes us proud. In every opening game there are surprises and I hope we can also spring one," Turkey coach Senol Gunes said.

## POLITICAL UNDERCURRENT

The matchup also features some political undertones after Italian Premier Mario Draghi labeled Turkey President Recep Tayyip Erdogan a dictator in April. Turkey summoned Italy's ambassador to protest, and a presidential spokesman demanded that Draghi retract his words. Draghi, however, did not issue a public apology or retraction.

Draghi is not expected to attend the match since he'll be in Britain on Friday attending a G7 summit. Erdogan is also not expected to attend.

## FAN PROTOCOLS

The Italian government decided that the Stadio Olimpico can be filled to 25 per cent capacity for the four games it will host.

That amounts to a maximum of 15,948 spectators.

Fans arriving at the stadium will have their body temperature measured by thermal scanners before being let in.

— AP

## STAT BOX

- For the first time in history, the Euro tournament will be spread across 11 different venues in Europe.
- All the teams, including defending champions Portugal and World Cup winners France, are divided into six groups with four teams each. The top two teams of each group and four best third-placed teams will qualify for the Last-16 stage of the competition.
- Of the 11 host countries, seven — Denmark, England, Germany, Netherlands, Italy, Russia, and Spain — have qualified for the tournament. Two others — Hungary and Scotland — made it via the playoffs, while Romania and Azerbaijan missed out.
- Finland and North Macedonia are the two teams that are making their debut in the tournament.

## ITALY-TURKEY 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 Arnhem.

— S. PERVEZ QAISER



Portugal defender Nuno Mendes (right) is challenged by Israel midfielder Gadi Kinda during their friendly match at the Jose Alvalade stadium in Lisbon on Wednesday in preparation for the Euro football competition.

— AFP

## FRENCH BANK ON FEROCIOUS FORWARDS

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-continent event, while top-ranked Belgium and a youthful England side will be major threats.

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 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, dubbed the tournament's group of death.

Ronaldo is now 36 but is still going strong and is supported by a better squad than five years ago, which also boasts the outstanding talents of Joao Felix, Bruno Fernandes, Bernardo Silva and Ruben Dias.

— AFP

## Champs warm-up in style

Lisbon (Portugal), June 10: Cristiano Ronaldo scored to lead Portugal to a 4-0 win over Israel in their final warm-up match before defending their European Championship title.

Ronaldo scored in the 44th minute to take his international tally to 104 goals. He will enter Euro 2020 five goals away from tying the all-time scoring record for a men's national team. The record is held by former Iran striker Ali Daei, the only other male

football player to surpass the 100-goal milestone.

Bruno Fernandes and Joao Pedro also scored for Portugal, which was coming off a 0-0 draw at Spain in their first warm-up match last week.

Ronaldo missed a few good chances before finally finding the net with a left-footed shot from inside the area at the Jose Alvalade Stadium. His goal came two minutes after Fernandes had opened the scoring with a low shot from near the

penalty spot after a pass by Cancelo, who added to the lead with a nice low strike into the corner in the 86th.

Fernandes scored his second goal by hitting the top corner with a shot from outside the area in stoppage time.

Portugal coach Fernando Santos started with Fernandes, Bernardo Silva and Diogo Jota playing alongside Ronaldo, who was substituted in the 72nd. Joao Felix was not included in

the match squad. Pepe and Ruben Dias led the defense.

Portugal will play Euro 2020 in a difficult Group F that also includes Germany, France and Hungary. They will open against Hungary on Tuesday in Budapest. They then face Germany on June 19 and France on June 23.

Portugal won their first European title by beating host France in the final at Euro 2016.

— AP

## Neymar to spearhead Brazil in Copa

- Neymar, who missed Brazil's 2019 Copa America win due to injury, will lead a squad with just one change: returning from injury, 36-year-old Chelsea defender Thiago Silva will replace Rodrigo Caio of Flamengo.
- There are two notable absences for the defending champions, both due to injury: Dani Alves of Sao Paulo, the captain of the 2019 squad, and Philippe Coutinho of Barcelona.

The bigger question-marks hanging over the tournament, scheduled to open on Sunday when Brazil face Venezuela, are playing out off the pitch.

Brazil's Supreme Court is due to rule whether the Copa America can go

ahead, after opponents of far-right President Jair Bolsonaro moved to block it, arguing it poses a health risk. There were rumors Brazil's players would boycott the tournament, upset over their country's decision to play host. But they said in a statement that although they "are against organizing the Copa America," they would "never say no to the Brazilian national team."

— AFP

## BRAZIL SQUAD

**Goalkeepers:** Alison (Liverpool, England), Ederson (Manchester City, England), Weverton (Palmeiras).

**Defenders:** Alex Sandro

Juventus, Italy), Danilo (Juventus, Italy), Emerson (Barcelona, Spain), Renan Lodi (Atletico Madrid, Spain), Ederson (Real Madrid, Spain), Felipe (Atletico Madrid, Spain), Marquinhos (Paris Saint-Germain, France), Thiago Silva (Chelsea, England).

**Midfielders:** Casemiro (Real Madrid, Spain), Douglas Luiz (Aston Villa, England), Everton Ribeiro (Flamengo), Fabio (Liverpool, England), Fred (Manchester United, England), Lucas Paqueta (Lyon, France).

**Forwards:** Everton (Benfica, Portugal), Gabriel Barbosa (Flamengo), Gabriel Jesus (Manchester City, England), Neymar (Paris Saint-Germain, France), Richarlison (Everton, England), Roberto Firmino (Liverpool, England), Vinicius Junior (Real Madrid, Spain).

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