

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
ANANTAPUR | FRIDAY | 25 JUNE 2021



WEATHER

Max: 35.0°C
Min: 17°C
RH: 56%
Rainfall: Nil
Forecast: Cloudy sky. Misty morning. Max/Min temp. 35/17 °C

ASTROGUIDE

Plava: Uttarayana
Tithi: Jyeshtha Bahula Padyami till 9.02 pm
Star: Moola till 6.40 am; Purvashada till 4.25 am (Saturday)
Variyam: 5.14 am to 6.40 am; 3.22 pm to 4.49 pm
Durmuhurtam: 8.24 am to 9.16 am; 12.45 pm to 1.37 pm
Rahukalam: 10.30 am to 12 noon
HIJRI CALENDAR
Zeeqad 13,1442 AH
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.08 am
Zohar: 12.05 pm
Asar: 4.11 pm
Maghrib: 5.47 pm
Isha: 7.02 pm
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.08 AM
SUNSET TODAY 6.33 PM
MOONSET 03.19 AM
MOONRISE 03.35 PM

COUNTER POINT



Crisis is over... no threat to its government for the next 48 hours!

SHORT TAKES

China caused border row: India

New Delhi: India on Thursday said China's amassing of a large number of troops close to the border last year and attempts to unilaterally alter the status quo seriously disturbed peace and tranquillity in the region. India's comments on the matter came a day after China said its military deployment in the region is a normal "defence arrangement" to respond to actions by the "relevant" country. India said these acts are in violation of its bilateral agreements with China.

India asks Opec to cut oil prices

New Delhi: With domestic retail fuel prices jumping to record high, India on Thursday pressed oil cartel OPEC for 'affordable' oil price within a 'reasonable band' and that the producers should phase out production cuts. Petroleum minister Dharmendra Pradhan in virtual dialogue with Opec secretary general Mohammad Sanusi Barkindo reiterated concerns over oil prices shooting above \$75 per barrel.

MEA: Will pursue Nirav Modi case

New Delhi: After fugitive diamond merchant Nirav Modi lost the first stage of his extradition appeal in the UK High Court, the external affairs ministry on Thursday said it has noted the decision and will continue its efforts to pursue his early extradition to India to face justice. MEA spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said, "We will continue efforts to pursue his early extradition."

S&P cuts India growth to 9.5%

New Delhi: S&P Global Ratings on Thursday cut India's growth forecast for the current fiscal to 9.5 per cent, from 11 per cent earlier, and warned of risk to the outlook from further waves of Covid pandemic. The agency lowered the growth outlook saying that a severe second Covid-19 outbreak led to lockdowns imposed by states.

WORLD | 4

McAfee antivirus founder dead

SPORTS | 5

Ronaldo equals record for most goals

TABLOID

Britney wants her life back

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State decides to cancel Class 10, inter exams

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 24

Ending a long anxious wait, the Andhra Pradesh government on Thursday announced cancellation of Class 10 and Intermediate second year (Class 12) examinations. The decision comes within hours of the Supreme Court bench expressing its dissatisfaction over the adamant stand of the state government in deciding to conduct the examinations in the last week of July, while many states had done away with the examinations.

At a high-level meeting, chaired by Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, minister for education Adimulapu Suresh and higher officials of the education department explained about the apex court directions and it was decided to cancel both exams.

Addressing a press meet later, Suresh said that the court had ordered that all the states should declare the examination results by July 31, which was impossible as Andhra Pradesh would take 45 days to evaluate the exam papers. He announced that the government would appoint a high-

Declare results by July 31: SC to states

New Delhi, June 24: The Supreme Court on Thursday directed all the state boards to declare results of internal assessment of Class 12 examination by July 31, making it clear that each board is free to formulate its own evaluation method for students and there can't be a "fit-all" scheme.

The apex court, which said it would not pass any direction for a uniform assessment scheme across the country for students whose board exams have

been cancelled amid the Covid-19 pandemic, directed the state boards to ensure that schemes are formulated and notified at the earliest and not later than 10 days from Thursday.

A bench of Justices A M Khanwilkar and Dinesh Maheshwari said, "We direct all the state boards to ensure that the schemes are formulated and notified at the earliest and not later than 10 days from today and also declare the results."

Meanwhile, Telugu Desam MLC Nara Lokesh termed the decision as a victory for students, parents and teachers after their relentless agitation demanding cancellation.

He said that it was after a two-month agitation that Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy had relented and cancelled the exams. CPI state secretary K. Ramakrishna also welcomed the government's decision.

● **EDUCATION MINISTER Suresh** said the Supreme Court had ordered that all the states should declare the examination results by July 31, which was impossible as the state needs 45 days to evaluate the exam papers.

power committee to look into the announcement of results and awarding of marks.

AP SEES SLIGHT RISE IN COVID INFECTIONS

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 24

Thursday saw a slight rise in Covid19 infections in Andhra Pradesh, with the registration of 4,981 such cases on its daily chart against the 4,684 cases on Wednesday. A total of 38 new deaths were registered, increasing the death toll to 12,452.

As many as 6,464 patients were discharged following recovery from infection across 13 districts and 88,622 samples were tested in which 4,981 were found infected. The state conducted a total 2,14,49,636 Corona tests in the 13 districts so far.

The total Covid19 infections in the 13 districts were of 1,86,70,17 of which the total recoveries were 17,98,380. The East Godavari district was on top of the daily chart, with 943 new infections, followed by Chittoor with 854, West Godavari 593, Sriakulam 500, Prakasam 380, Krishna 372, Anantapur 283, Nellore 269, Guntur 267, Kadapa 238, Visakhapatnam 115, Kurnool 107 and Vizianagaram 80 new cases of infections.

■ **Page 3: East Godavari tops in fresh Covid cases**

Jagan to spend ₹34,000cr for housing infra

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 24

The Andhra Pradesh government will spend ₹34,000 crore on providing basic infrastructure in mega housing colonies in the 13 districts.

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Thursday said that the whole country is looking towards AP for its construction of 30 lakh houses under mega housing programme. He instructed officials to have a dedicated phone number to receive complaints and suggestions on the mega housing programme.

Reddy held a review meeting on the progress of construction of houses, action plan on developing infrastructure facilities in Jagananna colonies and TIDCO houses and directed officials to solve any problems in arranging water and electricity facilities. He said the works should be completed within a week in all layouts.

The Chief Minister instructed the officials to take appropriate measures to ensure that other rates, including transport

charges, do not rise abruptly in view of house constructions. He said it's his dream to spend ₹34,000 crore to develop infrastructure facilities in Jagananna colonies.

Reddy said there should be no scope for corruption and no compromise over quality. He said the goal was to provide the best living standards to the poor and colonies should not be turned into slums.

During a review on TIDCO houses, officials informed that 2,08,160 units would be completed in eighteen months and around ₹10,000 crore will be spent on it.

■ **Page 2: Construction of 7 lakh houses to begin in July**

MONEY | MATTERS

State team ends dispute over land compensation by landlords Nellore to get Midhani's alloy plant

PATHRI RAJASEKHAR | DC NELLORE, JUNE 24

The sustained efforts of revenue authorities and APIIC have put an end to land compensation issues that had delayed the proposed aluminium alloy plant of Midhani in association with Nalco, spread over 110 acres in Boddurapalem near Nellore.

Incidentally, it is the first defence manufacturing facility of Mishra Dhatu Nigam (Midhani) outside of Hyderabad and the organisation is expected to invest ₹2,000 on the facili-

ty, which has vast employment potential.

While 57.14 acres is government land, the remaining belonged to Cooperative Joint Farming Society (CJFS). The CJFS land was assigned to the landless poor (one acre per beneficiary) free of cost for cultivation in the 1980s but the land was resumed in 2010 as none of the beneficiaries utilised the land.

However, the government assigned the lands once again after 2013 at the rate of 60 cents per head to the old beneficiaries and some more eligible per-

sons. In 2017, in a bid to allot the land required for Midhani, APIIC paid ₹10 lakh compensation per acre of CJFS land, although the market value was only ₹4 lakh.

Meanwhile, the assignees collected ₹10 lakh per acre initially but started demanding ₹56 lakh per

acre citing the amount paid for lands acquired for Coca-Cola unit in the neighbourhood.

In fact, they obstructed the construction of the compound wall, when Midhani started the work and moved the High Court to realise their demand.

In this backdrop, industries minister Mekapati Goutham Reddy, a team of revenue officials led by SPSR Nellore district collector K.V.N. Chakradhar Babu, officials of Midhani and APIIC negotiated with those involved in the litigation and convinced them to

accept a one-time settlement of ₹4 lakh per petitioner as a final settlement.

Expressing satisfaction over the outcome of deliberations, Chakradhar Babu said a public hearing was held on April 15 and they were awaiting environment clearance and Consent for Establishment for the project.

Goutham Reddy said that decks are cleared for Midhani to recommence construction works. He thanked Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu and DRDO chairman G. Satheesh Reddy.

PM: J&K polls after rejig of Assembly segments

Says he wants to end Dilli Ki Duri and Dil Ki Duri

RAJNISH SHARMA with agency inputs NEW DELHI, JUNE 24

In a major initiative, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday reached out to the people of Jammu and Kashmir, saying that he was committed to remove "Dilli ki doori" as well as "Dil ki doori", and also reiterated that he was committed to restoring full statehood to J&K at an "appropriate time".

Mr Modi expressed his views at a marathon meeting of over three hours with 14 top J&K leaders from eight different parties, which included four former CMs — Ghulam Nabi Azad, Mehbooba Mufti, Farooq Abdullah and Omar Abdullah. Home minister Amit Shah and national security adviser Ajit Doval were among those present.

This is the first time top political leaders from J&K held detailed talks with Prime Minister Modi and other Central leaders like



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during an all-party meeting with various political leaders from Jammu and Kashmir, in Delhi on Thursday.

— PTI

Amit Shah since J&K's special status under Article 370 was abolished in August 2019 and the state was split up into two Union territories of J&K and Ladakh.

Talking to reporters after the meeting, former CM Omar Abdullah said both Mr Modi and Mr

Shah pledged they were committed to restoring Jammu and Kashmir's statehood.

The Centre wants to hold Assembly polls immediately after the delimitation commission submits its report, but senior Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad urged the Prime

● **HOME MINISTER** Amit Shah tweeted that the delimitation exercise and holding of peaceful elections in the Union Territory are key milestones in restoring statehood.

● **FAROOQ ABDULLAH** said his party National Conference would continue to challenge through legal and constitutional means the abrogation of special status of Jammu and Kashmir under Article 370 of the Constitution.

Minister to restore full statehood before conducting the polls, he said.

He said that his father, National Conference president Farooq Abdullah, said there was an urgent need to rebuild trust in J&K.

■ **Page 2: Mehbooba wants revival of talks with Pak**

Power projector



Indigenous aircraft carrier *INS Vikrant* docked at Ernakulam Wharf ahead of defence minister Rajnath Singh and Navy chief Admiral Karambir Singh's visit to Southern Naval Command, in Kochi on Thursday. Singh said *INS Vikrant* will be completed soon and is likely to be commissioned as the country completes 75 years of Independence.

— PTI

AP opposes Centre's Maritime Bill

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 24

The Andhra Pradesh government has objected to certain provisions of the proposed Indian Ports Act, 2020, amendment bill mooted by the Union shipping ministry at a virtual meeting of the Maritime State Development Council held on Thursday.

Industries minister Mekapati Goutham Reddy, who attended the virtual meet chaired by shipping minister Mansukh L. Mandaviya, conveyed the AP government's objection to

the proposed port bill, saying its provisions went against the Constitution.

"We support the good deeds and decisions taken by the Centre. But we told them that they cannot take away our rights. The power of supervision and control over the ports is vested in the state governments. We have to study the draft bill and sought one month's time for this to present our views. A committee will be appointed to study the provisions," the minister said in a statement.

The minister made it

clear that the Indian Ports Bill, 2020, is welcome only if the Centre agreed to some changes. The AP judiciary department is reviewing the draft bill.

Goutham Reddy said the bill provides the setting up of a Maritime Port Regulatory Authority for 160 minor ports in India.

"As per the same law, 13 major ports have 13 regulatory authorities. This increased discrimination between minor and major ports. Hence, as in the case of major ports, each state should delegate the powers of Maritime Port

Regulatory Authority to the respective State Maritime Boards," he said.

He said the central government should not interfere in the regulatory responsibilities of minor ports. Instead, state governments should be empowered to control ports.

"In order to take the economy of the states forward, the role of ports within those states is crucial. This is because only states provide the key infrastructure and land allocation for minor ports," he said.

Twitter India MD spared from action

Bengaluru/Ghaziabad, June 24: In a relief to Twitter India head Manish Maheshwari, the Karnataka High Court on Thursday restrained the UP police, which has summoned him in connection with a pro-be related to the assault of an elderly Muslim man at Ghaziabad, from initiating coercive action against him.

The single bench of Justice G. Narendar said the police can examine Maheshwari through virtual mode. "If the police desire to examine the petitioner (Manish Mahesh-

wari), they may do so through virtual mode."

"If the matter requires consideration, we list it on June 29. Meanwhile, restraining the respondents from initiating any coercive action against the petitioner," the court maintained.

Appearing on behalf of Maheshwari, advocate C.V. Nagesh said someone had posted a video on the Twitter alleging that a Muslim was forced to chant 'Jai Sri Ram' and 'Vande Mataram'. When he refused, his beard was cut.

— PTI

SHORT TAKES

NEW POSTINGS
FOR 22 DSPs
IN STATEDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 24

Twenty-two Deputy Superintendents of police were transferred on Thursday, following the recommendations of the Police Establishment Board. The transfer orders were signed by Director-General of police Gautam Sawang. The DSPs were directed to report in their new place of posting immediately.

N. Ramya, SDPO, Kalyandurg is posted as SDPO, (Prob.DSP) Penukonda, in the existing vacancy.

V. Narayanaswamy Reddy, DSP, SB, Guntur Rural, is posted as SDPO, Darsi, in place of K. Prakash Rao, who was asked to report at the police headquarters, Mangalagiri.

D. Viswanath SDPO, Srikalahasti was posted as SDPO, (Prob.DSP) Guntakal, in place of S. Sharfuddin who was transferred to the police headquarters, Mangalagiri.

V. Srinivasa Reddy, DSP, Traffic, Kadapa was posted as DSP, SB, Chittoor.

G. Rajeev Kumar DSP, RSTF, Kurnool, was posted as DSP, DISHA, Krishna, in place of Abdul Azeez, transferred to the police headquarters, Mangalagiri.

Y. Srinivasa Rao, DSP, posted as DSP, SC/ST Cell, Nellore in place of M. Veera Kumar who was transferred as DSP, SB, Srikakulam.

Ch. Srinivasa Rao, DSP, SB, Srikakulam, was posted as ACP North, Visakhapatnam.

B. Venugopal, DSP, was posted as DSP Traffic, Tirumala.

S. Venkateswara Rao, DSP, ACB, was posted to Vigilance and Enforcement.

P. Bharatmataji, DSP, CID, was posted to Traffic, Machilipatnam.

Sk. Masum Basha, DSP, Traffic, Machilipatnam, was posted as to CCS, Rajahmendravaram

B. Rama Krishna, DSP, posted as DSP, CID.

M.J.V. Bhaskara Rao, DSP, posted to CCS, Rajahmendravaram.

Md. Abdul Subhan, DSP, posted to Traffic, Nellore.

P. Mallikarjuna Rao, DSP, Traffic, Nellore, transferred as DSP, Traffic, Ongole.

B. Nagabhushana Rao, DSP, posted as DSP/AC, 2 Bn. APSK Kurnool.

Dr V. B. Raj Kamal, SDPO, Paderu, posted as ACP South Visakhapatnam.

S. Khader Basha, SDPO, Chintoor, posted as ACP Central, Vijayawada.

Y. Srinivasa Reddy, ACP, Central, Vijayawada City, posted as SDPO Dhone.

S.R. Vamsidhar Goud, DSP, posted as DSP intelligence.

APPSC TO CLEAR
DOUBTS OF GROUP-1
EXAM ASPIRANTSDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 24

The AP Public Service Commission (APPSC) refuted allegations about illegalities in the selection of candidates for Group-1 posts under the sports quota. APPSC member S. K. Salaam Babu said that the allegations levelled by a few people were "baseless and totally false". He said that APPSC was ready to clear all doubts of the candidates regarding the selection.

Speaking with the media here on Thursday, Salaam Babu said it was untrue that 70 candidates had been selected for Group-1 posts under the sports quota. On the allegations of change of Group-1 booklets in Kakinada and Srikakulam exam centres, he said that the APPSC replaces damaged booklets from the buffer stocks; hence the booklets were provided according to norms and there was no chance for any illegality.

Salaam Babu said that there are no anomalies in the digital valuation of Group-1 exam papers as the APPSC had intimated aspirants about the digital valuation a year ago. He said that the APPSC had studied the digital valuation processes in several states for two months and approved its implementation in the state. He said that there was a separate wing to look after the question paper setting and answer paper valuation, and there is no involvement of others.

The official said the APPSC is ready to clear the doubts of Group-1 aspirants.

Salaam Babu said that unemployed persons had asked the APPSC to increase the number of posts in the job calendar, and the commission had forwarded them to the government and was awaiting a decision.

Kshatriya Corporation launched



Minister Ch. Sriranganatha Raju (right), Kshatriya community MLAs, and MLC thank Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy for launching the Kshatriya Corporation, at the camp office in Vijayawada on Thursday.

State against changes in
Airport Amendments bill

If GOI stakes are sold, there will not be any control on airports

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, JUNE 24

The state government has strongly opposed some amendments in the Airports Economic Regulatory Authority of India (Amendment) Bill 2021 as they would lead to monopolisation in the civil aviation sector.

Margani Bharat, YSRC Parliamentary Party Chief Whip, who is on the civil aviation parliamentary standing committee, opposed the Bill in the Airport Economic Regulatory Committee meeting at New Delhi on Thursday and raised several issues that he said would prove harmful to

airports and passengers.

He clarified that the state was not opposing privatization, but would oppose monopoly in privatisation. He said that the amendment of Section 2(i) of the parent Act has a very deep meaning and the repercussions would be terrible.

He said that the intention behind the proposed amendment was to privatise airports under AAI and the Centre would bundle or pair some airports and impose development charges and other tariffs on passengers to benefit the concessionaire.

He said that the foundation for the bill was in 2019 as the then AAI chairman

made a statement in 2019 that Vijayawada and Tirupati airports would be privatised. Bharat said that he had opposed the statement at that time. The MP said that ₹750 crore was allocated for expansion and modernisation of Vijayawada and ₹200 crore for the Tirupati airport. He questioned how AAI and Ministry of Civil Aviation were justifying the move for privatisation after investing nearly ₹1,000 crore for their expansion. He said that there are six airports in Andhra Pradesh and three of them are international airports. Kurnool airport started its operations in March and can't

assess its viability while Rajama-hendravaram airport is incurring losses ₹32.84 crore. Now once this Bill becomes an Act, the ministry will hand over all these airports to private players either through bunching or pairing and the private players would fleece passengers.

Bharat said that the Civil Aviation Ministry has decided to sell its residuary stake in Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru and Hyderabad airports and the government has given these airports on PPP mode and concessioners are allowed to operate for 25 to 30 years. If GOI stakes are sold, there will not be any control.

CONSTRUCTION OF
7 LAKH HOUSES TO
BEGIN IN JULY

FROM PAGE 1

They said that works related to mapping, geo-tagging, issuing of job cards, registration were almost complete and construction of 3.03 lakh houses have already started. Construction of seven lakh houses would start by July 10 and the first phase of houses would be completed by next June.

Ministers Botsa Satyanarayana and Ch. E. R. U. V. a. d. a. S. Sriranganatha Raju, municipal administration special CS, Y. Sri Lakshmi, housing special CS Ajay Jain, finance secretary KVV Satyanarayana, housing secretary Rahul Pandey, energy secretary Nagulapalli Srikanth, APSHCL managing director Narayana Bharat Gupta and other officials were present.

YSRC SLAMS OPPN
FOR SPREADING
FALSE NEWSDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 24

Government public affairs adviser Saijala Ramakrishna Reddy slammed the Opposition and a section of the media for allegedly conspiring against CM Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy and the state government by spreading false information.

Speaking to the media, Ramakrishna Reddy said that Chief Minister Reddy had actively participated in many protests as Opposition leader during the TD regime and the previous government had filed cases against him.

Based on SC's guidelines on cases against political leaders, the cases were closed after investigation by lower courts and the HC has taken suo motu cognisance on the issue. Earlier, the then HC judge Justice Rakesh Kumar took up the cases and made harsh comments against the CM and the government and the SC gave a stay on it.

Mehbooba wants revival
of talks with Pakistan

From Page 1

"The trust deficit among the people of Jammu and Kashmir needs to be addressed to immediately by the Centre, and for that the process of restoration of complete statehood is necessary," he said.

On the delimitation commission, Mr. Abdullah said the central leadership was told that the exercise in itself was defeating the very purpose with which the BJP-led government had carried out the exercise of abrogation of special status on August 5, 2019.

"On one hand the central leadership claimed the decision in August 2019 was taken for a complete merger of Jammu and Kashmir with the Union of India, and on the other Jammu and Kashmir is treated differently by bringing in separate delimitation commissions for Assam and us."

"If the delimitation commission for Assam was withheld and Assembly elections held there, then why not for Jammu and Kashmir? Isn't this defeating the very purpose of the central leadership?" he asked.

The former CM said even the Central leadership was of the view that the government could not be run by bureaucrats and a political government was needed to take charge.

Said Mr. Abdullah: "Our party president has made it clear that as and when an invite for the (delimitation) commission meeting

will come, we will take consider it."

Senior Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad told reporters he put forward various points on behalf of his party at the meeting, including restoration of complete statehood, followed by elections. "I have also asked for a rehabilitation process for Kashmir Pandits, release of political prisoners, and domicile rules whereby the Centre guarantees jobs for the people of Jammu and Kashmir," Mr. Azad told reporters.

PDP president Mehbooba Mufti told reporters the meeting went off well and she complimented the Prime Minister for initiating back-channel talks with Pakistan that led to the ceasefire agreement at the Line of Control and decrease in infiltration levels.

"I have requested the Prime Minister that, if need be, we could talk to Pakistan once again for further boosting the peace process," she said.

On the abrogation of Article 370, Ms. Mufti said her party would continue to fight for its restoration. "After all, the special status has not been given to us by Pakistan. It was given to us by late Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar (Vallabhbhai) Patel. We will continue to fight for restoration of the special status through legal and constitutional means," she said.

While stressing on his

commitment to granting full statehood once again to J&K PM Modi sought "co-operation and assistance" from the senior State leaders urging them to help in the delimitation process which will help in redrawing new Assembly constituencies to hold elections. Assembly elections in J&K will be held only after the delimitation exercise can be completed. Sources said most J&K leaders at the meeting expressed their willingness in assisting the Election Commission and local administration to help complete the delimitation process at the earliest.

Top government sources said most participants at the meeting agreed on the need to further strengthen the democratic process, and the holding of the District Development Council elections was just the beginning. "Our priority is to strengthen grassroots democracy in J&K. Delimitation has to happen at a quick pace so that polls can happen and J&K gets an elected government that gives strength to J&K's development trajectory," Mr. Modi said in a tweet after the meeting.

Sources said the Centre also agreed to setting up a committee to review the cases of all political prisoners irrespective of whether they have been released or were still in detention.

The committee is likely to be headed by lieutenant-governor Manoj Sinha.

Vizag to be South India's
hub for fitness equipmentV. KAMALAKARA RAO I
DC
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 24

Vizag would become the southern India hub for manufacture of fitness equipment if the present plans of the Andhra Pradesh industries department for a tie-up with the Bangalore-based Stayfit Health and Fitness World Pvt. Ltd materialised.

At present, there is no fitness manufacturing unit in south India. The existing units at Jalandhar in Punjab are not able to fully meet the country's requirements. India imports \$5 billion worth of fitness equipment like treadmills from Taiwan, the US, and China.

The Stayfit management met state industries Minister Mekapati Goutham Reddy, who, in principle, extended the state's support to the project and advised them to come with a detailed project report.

● KEY POINTS:

- Vizag likely to be a hub for fitness manufacturing plant in south India
- The estimated project cost is ₹700 crore
- 5000 odd employment opportunities assured
- India currently imports \$5 billion worth of fitness equipment from the US, China, and Taiwan
- Bangalore-based fitness company eyes Vizag to establish the project
- AP industries department gives in-principle approval for the project
- Nearly 100 acres of land is required

The firm is eyeing on Visakhapatnam since it would be easy for export of the products across the globe due to the presence of air and sea links.

Stayfit managing director G. K. Ganapathy Reddy said company representatives would come to Vizag next week to identify a location for the project. It

requires 100 acres of land. The estimated cost of the project would be around ₹700 crore with assured direct and indirect employment to nearly 5,000 people.

"India currently imposes an import tax of 31 per cent including GST on every imported fitness product from countries like China, the US, and Taiwan. This apart, it takes nearly 60 days to get the product from foreign countries. If we start our project here, we will start supply from the plant fast and the price would be affordable," Ganapathy Reddy said.

Ganapathy Reddy, who hails from Puttaparthi in Anantapur district, said they also kept Chennai as an alternative option.

"We are currently preparing a detailed project report and studying locations in Vizag. We will submit our report to the government shortly. I personally hope for our project being set up in Andhra," he said.

BOAT RIDE TO
PAPIKONDALU
FROM JULY 1DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, JUNE 24

As the Covid-19 spread has reduced, the state government has given the go-ahead to run the tourist boat service to Papikondalu on Godavari river from July 1, Tourism Minister Muthamsetti Srinivasa Rao has said.

The Minister held a meeting with tourism officials and boat operators in Vijayawada on Thursday. He said the boat rides that were suspended temporarily due to Covid-19 spread would now be resumed.

He said a committee was formed with officials of police, revenue, irrigation and tourism departments to supervise the boat operations through nine command control rooms.

Rao advised operators to provide all requisite equipment like GPS, life jackets, first aid kits and public address system in the boats. There are 300 boats in the state, of which 48 belonged to the tourism department.

The Minister said tourism is generating a lot of income and providing employment. Tourism should not be politicized. Liquor will be made available in tourism restaurants and it should be understood from the right perspective.

AP GOVERNOR
CONGRATULATES
K. MALLESWARIDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 24

Andhra Pradesh Governor Biswa Bhushan Harichandan congratulated Karnam Malleswari, the only Indian woman weightlifter to win an Olympic medal, on her appointment as Vice Chancellor of the first Sports University by the Delhi government.

Governor Harichandan said Malleswari had become a household name in the country after she won the bronze medal in weightlifting at the 2000 Sydney Olympics. The Governor said Karnam Malleswari is an inspiration to sportspersons in the country, having won 29 international medals including 11 gold medals in the World Championships, Asian Weightlifting Championships etc. and has been conferred the Arjuna Award, Padma Shri and Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna Award.

Governor Harichandan said it is a proud moment for the people of the state that Malleswari, who hails from Srikakulam district in Andhra Pradesh, has been appointed as Vice-Chancellor of the Sports University.

‘Chalo Rajoli’ bid foiled,
Cong workers detainedDC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL, JUNE 24

The 'Chalo Rajoli Banda' call given by All India Congress Committee

(AICC) Secretary and Former MLA Sampath Kumar created tense moments at Rajolibanda Diversion Scheme (RDS) near Kosgi in Kurnool district. About 500 cars and motorbikes were taken out by Congress party sympathizers from Alampur to register their protest at the RDS for what they feared was

"illegal diversion of Tungabhadra water" for use by Kurnool farmers. However, the procession was stopped at a village near Baligere in

Karnataka on the TS-Karnataka border. The workers, including Sampath Kumar, were detained and released later.

Alleging that Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrababhan Rao was not protecting interests of farmers, particularly in Gadwal and Alampur constituencies, which have maximum ayacut benefits from RDS waters, he said if AP draws four tmc of water from RDS farmers will suffer heavy losses, he said.

Adoni DSP Vinod Kumar had deployed about 50 policemen at the RDS site to address any untoward incident.

CPI SECRETARY SAYS NO ONE IN AP WILL
THINK OF TELANGANA'S WELFAREDC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, JUNE 24

CPI national secretary Dr K. Narayana strongly condemned the comments of Telangana State Minister Vemula Prashant Reddy, who said that everyone in Lanka is a demon, and that no one in Andhra Pradesh will think of Telangana's welfare.

Addressing a press conference here on Thursday, Dr Narayana said that the tongues of those who make provocative comments like Minister Prashant Reddy should be cut. He said the Minister's comments cannot give provide any solution to water disputes between the two states.

The CPI leader also wondered how CM K. Chandrababhan Rao was

retaining Prashant Reddy in his Cabinet after he made such objectionable remarks against the people of a neighbouring state. He said Rao was in big trouble now, as a byelection was approaching with Eadla Rajendar quitting the TRS and the Assembly.

He said that AP had the right to use surplus waters in the Krishna, and that the CMs of the Telugu states should hold discussions on the matter. If the two CMs intend to discuss the matter, the Centre should mediate to find out a solution.

Shifting his focus to the Centre, Dr Narayana said the recent meeting at Nationalist Congress Party Chief Sharad Pawar's house was a preliminary attempt to set up a third front.

TTD SPECIFIED AUTHORITY
CHAIRMAN, CONVENER TAKE OATHDC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, JUNE 24

TTD EO Dr K.S. Jawahar Reddy and Additional EO A. V. Dharma Reddy on Thursday took oath as Chairman and Convener of Specified Authority respectively on in front of the presiding deity of Lord Venkateswara at Tirumala temple.

The Additional EO first administered the oath to EO as Specified Authority

Chairman at Bangaru Vakili in front of Srivaru and later he took oath as Convener. After taking oath, they both participated in the

Jyestabhishekam programme took place at Sampangi Prakaram. Speaking to media persons outside the temple, Dr Jawahar Reddy said, with the blessings of Swamyvaru he was appointed as TTD EO last year.

"To avoid frequent harassment, we went to the High Court and got a decree in our favour in 2018. Yet the officials, despite production of these court orders, went ahead and demolished the structure," Suresh Kumar said.

He said he lodged a formal complaint in the police station and would file a contempt petition in the High Court in a day or two.

Murthy, an active Congress member, subsequently became a corporator.

Murthy obtained plan approval for constructing shops in 1970 and another plan for construction of the house in 1989. The endowments department went to a lower court challenging the ownership and later to an appellate court. The department lost on both the occasions, Suresh Kumar said.

K. Shanti came with police and JCBs and demolished the entire structure without giving advance notice. "The officials showed no mercy and the shopkeepers lost their livelihood and we lost our shelter," Suresh Kumar said.

He said the land was registered in the name of his grandfather Kumili Suryanarayana Murthy in 1969 and the family had link documents dating

PROPERTY ISSUE

Venkateswara temple officials ran bulldozers forcibly

Building razed, owners to file case

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 24

Owners of a building located in a prime locality on Station Road here which was demolished by the Venkateswara Swamy temple authorities said they would file a contempt of court petition in the High Court. They said the High Court had given a decree in favour of the building owners.

A member of the family,

B. Suresh Kumar, told *Deccan Chronicle* on Thursday said that the building having three shops in the front and the residence in the rear was constructed on 649 square yards, and costs ₹12 crore as per the market value. The family said they had been living in the house for six decades.

He said that on June 22, the temple authorities headed by assistant commissioner of endowments

SHORT TAKES

BC PRESIDENT KRISHNAIAH MEETS CM

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 24

National BC Welfare Association president Krishnaiah has called on the CM at the camp office on Thursday and requested him to put pressure on the Centre as regards the demands related to BC communities.

Krishnaiah lauded the CM for his "transparent, corruption-free and efficient governance" and said the credit for introducing the historic BC Bill in Rajya Sabha goes to the CM. He said Jagan implemented BC welfare steps like the setting up of 56 BC corporations and allotting 50 per cent quota for BC, SC, ST and Minorities in nominated posts and contract works.

YOUTH ARRESTED FOR DUPING MOBILE SHOP OWNER

DC CORRESPONDENT
Nellore, June 24

Kavali One Town police on Thursday arrested a 27-year-old engineer for posing as a trainee IAS officer and duping a mobile shop owner. The accused, Vayila Venkateswarlu was also named in chain snatching cases, police.

According to police, Venkateswarlu of Chinnanattu in Annagaripalem panchayat, Kavali mandal, purchased a mobile phone and a gadget worth ₹32,700 at Sri Mobiles in Sankar Complex in Kavali town on June 16.

Claiming that he was a trainee IAS officer, he gave shopkeeper Panuganti Madanbabu ₹2,300 and a cheque for ₹35,000. He also produced a fake ID of his designation.

Madanbabu sent his son along with Venkateswarlu to the bank to deposit the cheque. When the amount was not credited to the account even after a long wait, the shopkeeper went to the bank to inquire. He was told that there was no money in the account of Venkateswarlu.

Police led by Kavali One Town circle inspector launched investigation and nabbed Venkateswarlu at the railway station on Thursday. They seized the mobile phone, fake ID card, bank passbook and a cheque book.

The CI said that Venkateswarlu was a BTech graduate from Ongole and he had worked in a software firm in Hyderabad in 2016. Venkateswarlu was involved in chain-snatching cases and cheating cases since 2017 and has a suspect sheet in Kavali Rural station.

Police led by Kavali One Town circle inspector launched investigation and nabbed Venkateswarlu at the railway station on Thursday. They seized the mobile phone, fake ID card, bank passbook and a cheque book.

No concern for safety



Women in large numbers wait outside a bank without maintaining physical distance to receive the amount deposited in their accounts through various Government Welfare Schemes, at Aadarshnagar in Visakhapatnam on Thursday.

— K. MURALI KRISHNA

No Delta variant infection in Visakhapatnam: DMHO

Decline in positive cases, may bounce back if careless

K.M.P. PATNAIK | DC
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 24

District medical and health officer Dr P. Satyanarayana scoffed at rumours and social media posts that Visakhapatnam had reported a case of the Delta variant along with 50 cases reported from various parts of the country.

Dr Suryanarayana said that they send one per cent of the total samples

Health officials also advised the public to maintain Covid protocol to ensure their own safety.

to the ICMR every week and get back reports of analysis. The institute would send back a detailed report if the Delta variant was found in any positive case.

"I also received several inquiries after a report was shown on TV chan-

nels but there is no truth in it," the DMHO told DC on Thursday.

He said, however, that the health system in Vizag district has been put in place to meet any challenges.

He advised that though the trends have been showing a decline in positive cases, there were chances of it bouncing back if people lowered their guard.

He said that he has seen people swarming

around markets without masks and jostling close to each other after the curfew was relaxed on Monday.

Several health officials also advised the public to maintain Covid protocol to ensure their own safety.

They said it was advisable if the traders and people imposed self-lockdown like in several developed countries that fought the virus successfully.

Anil rebukes TD leaders for false charges

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, JUNE 24

Minister for water resources, Dr P. Anil Kumar Yadav rebuked his critics for leveling serious charges against him over sand excavation in Penna River near Nellore.

Addressing media persons at his residence here on Thursday, he slammed TDP leaders for their charge against his role behind sand mining for the last nine months in the Penna River while reminding that there was water in the river till March this year.

"Though I don't want to react to such baseless allegations, I decided to

reply to prevent the wrong message going to the people from TDP leaders with respect to Jagananna colonies also," said the minister. He advised TDP men to stop the mudslinging activities.

Earlier Dr Anil Kumar said they are planning to arrange canteen facilities for the contract and outsourcing municipal workers similar to the military canteens for providing essentials to them at reasonable prices.

The Minister formally inaugurated counters for collecting the details of EPF, ESI, Insurance and others of the workers in Nellore Municipal Corporation office

premises on Thursday. Anil Kumar said these counters are opened for the workers and the staff members to collect data of 50 families per day.

Minister said the commissioner is taking special interest in the long pending issues of the workers and has been trying to resolve them on a war footing.

He said they are giving compassionate appointments for five families who lost their family heads now and would provide for another threw families shortly. Nellore rural legislator K. Sridhar Reddy, Commissioner K. Dinesh Kumar, and others were present.

GVMC to develop 8th zone DY

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 24

A dumping yard at Cheemalapalli under 95th ward of the Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC) will be developed soon.

The GVMC Council recently approved a grant of ₹11.72 crore to develop this yard, which accommodates nearly 250 tonnes of waste including 50 tonnes of wet waste dumped daily by the people of 10 wards in Zone 8.

The dumping yard was established a decade ago but was neglected by the corporation. No scientific disposal system was established, said M. Demudu, the 95th ward corporation.

"A pungent smell is

continuing to assail the residents of this area. We brought this issue to the notice of the corporation several times, but finally got respite after the proposal was approved in the Council," Demudu said.

The GVMC officials said that though the project was approved at the GVMC Council, it would take another three to four months to get financial sanctions from the government. The GVMC has to send the file to the state government as the project is not supposed to be taken up under general works of the corporation, the officer added.

The Cheemalapalli dumping yard is one of the five stocking points of the main dumping yard at Kapuluppada on the city outskirts.

It is located in the

southwest of the city, surrounded by Gopalapatnam, China Mushidiwada along Visakhapatnam-Araku road.

The city has 98 wards. The corporation earmarked a stocking point for every 10 wards. The waste from these stocking points is transported to the main dumping yard at Kapuluppada, which daily receives nearly 1,000 tonnes of waste.

Cheemaluppada is located 25 km away from Kapuluppada. The GVMC sanitary wing team collects the waste to Kapuluppada without scientific segregation of the waste.

Once the yard is developed, the segregation work will be done at the stocking point, the public health official from the GVMC said.

EAST GODAVARI TOPS IN FRESH COVID CASES

From Page 1

Ten Covid19 deaths were registered in Chittoor district, five each in East Godavari and Krishna districts, four each in Guntur and Nellore, three each in Srikakulam and West Godavari, and one death each in Anantapur, Kadapa, Visakhapatnam and Vizianagaram districts.

East Godavari is on top in total Covid19 cases with a total of 2,58,543 infections followed by Chittoor 2,16,538, Guntur 1,60,649, West Godavari 1,58,799, Anantapur 1,52,944, Visakhapatnam 1,47,554, Nellore 1,26,171, Kurnool 1,21,287, Prakasam 1,19,290, Srikakulam 1,17,805, Kadapa 1,05,138, Krishna 99,792 and Vizianagaram 79,612 cases.

HELP DESKS AND CC CAMERAS IN ALL THE HOSPITALS

DC CORRESPONDENT
ONGOLE, JUNE 24

Officials supervising the medical and health activities have been told to arrange 24x7 help desks and install CC TV Cameras in all the hospitals including private hospitals as part of measures to tackle the impending third wave of Covid-19.

Prakasam District Collector Pravin Kumar told them to form Covid-19 management committees in all the villages of the district and enhance the infrastructure in all the hospitals.

Addressing senior officials of the district during a review in Ongole on Thursday, Collector underlined the need to establish isolation centres at the village level and increase the covid testing from present 7,000 to 9,000 per day besides expediting the vaccination process.

He told the officials to prepare an action plan to arrange 3,000 beds with oxygen facility and oxygen plants in all the hospitals to effectively tackle the third wave.

Joint Collector (Secretariats and Development) T.S. Chetan, Joint Collector (Asra and Welfare) Krishnaveni and ZP CEP Devananda Reddy were present among others.

VIZAG RTC TOPS IN GENERATING EARNINGS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 24

APSRTC vice-chairman and managing director Ch. Dwaraka Tirumala Rao on Thursday said that the Visakhapatnam region topped among all regions in the state in generating revenue during this Covid-19 induced crisis.

The region was able to achieve nearly 80 per cent of the total revenues in the Vizianagaram zone of the corporation by handling the cargo and parcel services, he added.

Earlier, Tirumala Rao visited Tagarapuvallasa, Maddilapalem, Waltair, and Dwaraka bus stations to take stock of the situation at the depots, wherein the services were partially suspended for nearly four months due to the second wave.

Individual liberty vital, says CID chief Sunil Kumar

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 24

Protecting individual liberty is the most vital of the laws, said CID Chief PV Sunil Kumar while addressing his officials across the state in a zoom conference on better understanding of law in view of the recent judgments.

He said arresting a person meant suspending his individual liberty for a brief period of time. Individual liberty to move freely is a right assured to every citizen of India by the constitution. Hence arrest should not be a matter of routine but a result of application of mind and judgment, the CID chief said.

"Don't apply law as you understand and interpret. Apply law as interpreted by Supreme Court and High Courts" he said

The chief further said Article 22 (2) of the Constitution prescribed that every person who was arrested and detained in custody shall be produced before the nearest magis-

trate within a period of 24 hours of such arrest excluding the time necessary for the journey from the place of arrest to the court of the magistrate and no such person shall be detained in custody beyond the stipulated period without the authority of the magistrate, he explained.

He explained about the position of law under the light of section 167 Criminal Procedure code which laid provision for interstate arrests and transit warrants.

He also narrated the recent discussion about Disha Ravi's arrest from Bangalore by Delhi police in the toolkit case.

Mr Sunil Kumar released an arrest Checklist, which comprises all rights of the person arrested which are enlisted by DK Basu judgement, Sections 41, 50, 51, 100, 56 and 57 of criminal procedure code.

DIGs of CID Nayak, S. Harikrishna and several SP s and several officers from all parts of the state attended.

TD lodge complaint against YSRC

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, JUNE 24

The Telugu Desam leaders at Ravulapalem lodged a complaint with Ravulapalem police station, seeking to take action against the YSRC cadre and the leaders who attended in welcoming procession to the MLC Thota Trimurthulu. The TDP leaders G. Pattabhi Ramarao, Amalapuram Parliament Telugu Yuvatha President Sathish Raju, M. Ananda Rao and others lodged a complaint with the Ravulapalem police. They said that during the covid-19 pandemic, the followers of Thota Trimurthulu did not follow the Covid-19 protocols and violated the Diseases Disaster Act as they attended with huge crowds without maintaining social distance and also

not wearing masks.

The TDP Kothapeta constituency BC Cell President K. Vijaya Sagar, S. Srinu and others were present. However, the Ravulapalem police said that the TDP leaders have not lodged complaints, but they submitted only the representation.

The TDP leaders recollected that when some of the TDP workers caught illegal sand vehicles and handed over the police during the first wave of the Covid-19. However, the police did not take any action. Expressing concern over the inaction of the police, they staged agitation. They said that Ravulapalem police booked cases against the TDP cadre, finding fault with the agitation during the Covid-19 pandemic instead of taking action against the wrongdoers.

KURNOOL SEB COPS SEIZE GOLD WORTH RS 2.5 CR

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL, JUNE 24

Kurnool Special Enforcement Bureau (SEB) police on Thursday seized a gold jewellery worth ₹2.50 crore on National Highway 44 near Panchalingala checkpoint, a border area between Andhra Pradesh and Telangana state under Kurnool taluka police station limits.

SEB police took custody of one Mahaveer Jain, a resident of Bengaluru, while he was transporting 5.085 kgs

of gold jewellery in a hired vehicle. Kurnool DSP K.V. Mahesh along with Taluka circle inspector Kambagiri Ramudu and SEB circle inspector Sreenivasulu addressed the media at Taluka police station and explained the circumstances of the arrest.

The DSP said that the accused was reportedly working in Arihant Gold Jewellery in Shivajinagar of north Bengaluru.

A case was registered and investigation is on, he said.

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IN BRIEF

Noted filmmaker Sivan dies at 89

Thiruvananthapuram: Veteran still photographer and film-maker Sivan died on Thursday, family sources said. He was 89. Noted filmmakers Sangeeth Sivan, Santhosh Sivan and Sanjeev Sivan are his sons. "It's with great sadness that I share with you all d tragic news that my father, Sivan, breathed his last today," Sangeeth Sivan, his son and noted film director, posted on Facebook. Sivan was the first press photographer in Kerala. He was also the still photographer of the classic Malayalam movie *Chemmeen* which was released in 1965.

UNNAO RAPE VICTIM WRITES TO PRESIDENT, PM

Unnao (UP), June 24: The Bharatiya Janata Party on Thursday changed its candidate for the post of the district panchayat chief here after the Unnao rape victim objected to the party's choice, alleging that he is "very close" to former MLA Kuldeep Singh Sengar, who was convicted for the crime.

Sengar, a former Bharatiya Janata Party MLA from Unnao's Bangarmau seat, was accused of rape by the victim in 2017. A Delhi court had sentenced Sengar to life imprisonment in the case in December 2019.

The party's decision came after the rape victim wrote to President Ram Nath Kovind, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister in this regard.

The rape victim also claimed danger to her life if the Bharatiya Janata Party gives ticket to Arun Singh, who held the post of the Nawabganj block panchayat chief.

The elections for the post of the zila panchayat chairman are scheduled for July 3.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) had earlier denied the charge, with its district president Raj Kishore Rawat terming it "baseless" and suggesting that the allegations may be a part of a "conspiracy" by the Opposition.

Snana yatra

Devotees, blatantly avoiding Covid-19 guidelines, carry the idols of Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra on a boat to celebrate Snana Yatra festival in Balurghat on Thursday. The Snana Yatra or bathing ceremony of Lord Jagannath at Puri in Odisha, which is normally witnessed by over five lakh devotees every year, was performed without the presence of any outside worshippers other than the temple priests. — PTI

Rahul fighting Modi only on Twitter, charges Shiv Sena

Sena praises Sharad Pawar for his attempts to bring the Opposition together

SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC MUMBAI, JUNE 24

Congress slighting country to target Modi, says Nadda

DC CORRESPONDENT BHOPAL, JUNE 24

The Shiv Sena on Thursday took a jibe at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi claiming that he criticises Prime Minister Narendra Modi only virtually, on Twitter, and not on the ground.

The Uddhav Thackeray-led party also praised the NCP chief Sharad Pawar's efforts for holding a meeting in Delhi to bring the Opposition together and said that the meeting should have been organised by Gandhi.

The Rashtramanch meeting, hosted by Pawar in the Capital at his residence on Tuesday, was attended by leaders of eight Opposition parties, including the Trinamul Congress (TMC), the Samajwadi Party, the Aam Aadmi Party, the Rashtriya Lok Dal and the Left amid heightened speculation about the possibility of a third front against the BJP.

The Sena in an editorial in its party mouthpiece

India has earned a bad name in the world for the worsening pandemic situation in the country.

Nadda said Congress leaders had overlooked the fact that in their zeal to attack BJP and Modi, they were tarnishing the image of the country.

The BJP leader took a jibe at Nath reminding him that he was leading a government in Madhya Pradesh that did nothing but making money from transfer and posting of government employees during its 15-month tenure that ended in March, 2020.

Saamana on Thursday said that the Opposition parties should come together as it is the need of parliamentary democracy. But in the last seven years,

the existence of Opposition at the national level has not been seen at all. "Regional parties and their leaders in many major states have opposed

The executive committee of state BJP met for the first time after three years. Nadda said Congress leaders have disappeared from the scene during the corona period whereas BJP leaders and workers have extended their helping hands to the people at this hour of crisis risking their lives.

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan slammed Congress for making baseless charges against the Centre as well as the state government on the issue of handling the pandemic and vaccination.

The BJP or Modi-Shah with full strength and even defeated them in the Assembly elections," the editorial pointed out. The Sena said that the

Congress Party did not give importance to the Rashtramanch. "Actually, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi should have organised such a meeting. The popularity of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his government is not the same as before, it has reduced. But the Opposition is weak to take advantage of it," the editorial added.

The editorial also said that Rahul Gandhi should join hands with Pawar to unite all Opposition parties. "It is true that Rahul Gandhi attacks Modi's style of working, his mistakes but he is in the virtual field of 'Twitter'," the Sena added.

The editorial also said that Pawar made efforts to bring the Opposition parties together but questions are being raised over his leadership.

"One can't expect that the Congress will take a lead for this exercise as the Congress Party itself does not have a national president for several months," it said.

Delimitation, J&K elections important: Shah

New Delhi, June 24: Union home minister Amit Shah on Thursday said the delimitation exercise and holding of peaceful elections in Jammu and Kashmir are important milestones in restoring statehood as promised in Parliament.

The home minister's comments came after a three-and-half-hour-long meeting held by Prime Minister Narendra Modi with 14 political leaders from Jammu and Kashmir, including four former chief ministers.

"We are committed to ensure all round development of J&K. The future of Jammu and Kashmir was discussed and the delimitation exercise and peaceful elections are important milestones in restoring statehood as promised in Parliament," Shah said in a tweet.

He said Thursday's meeting on Jammu and Kashmir was held in a very cordial environment.

"Everyone expressed their commitment to democracy and the Constitution. It was stressed to strengthen the democratic process in Jammu and Kashmir," Shah said in another tweet.

The four former chief ministers of the erstwhile state who participated in the discussions were Farooq Abdullah and his son Omar Abdullah of the National



Amit Shah

Conference, Congress' Ghulam Nabi Azad and PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti.

Four former deputy chief ministers were in attendance too — Congress' Tara Chand, People's Conference leader Muzaffar Hussain Baig and BJP's Nirmal Singh and Kavinder Gupta.

CPI-M leader Mohammed Yusuf Tarigami, Jammu and Kashmir Apni Party (JKAP) chief Altaf Bukhari, Sajjad Lone of the People's Conference, J&K Congress head G.A. Mir, BJP's Ravinder Raina and Panthers Party leader Bhim Singh also formed part of the delegation.

This is the first interaction between the central leadership and mainstream parties since August 5, 2019, when the Centre revoked Jammu and Kashmir's special status under Article 370 and bifurcated it into union territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. — PTI

MAOIST HIDMA TESTS COVID +VE: COPS

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, JUNE 24

Commander of Maoists' battalion number one Hidma, who was allegedly involved in major Naxal attacks on security forces in insurgency-hit Bastar in Chhattisgarh in the last one decade, has

been infected with Coronavirus, police quoting two Naxal couriers arrested recently said on Thursday.

According to a senior police officer posted in Bastar, two members of Maoists' supply network were arrested in south Bastar district of Bijapur last week.

WORLD

IN BRIEF

NO CONFIDENCE: TRUDEAU SURVIVES VOTE

Ottawa, June 24: The minority government of Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau survived a parliamentary vote of no confidence Wednesday in a face-off over the proposed budget, eliminating the possibility of early elections this summer.

The House of Commons voted 211 to 121 in favor of approving the budget, which was proposed in April and contains a plan to spend CAN\$101.4 billion (69 billion euros) over three years.

The conservative opposition voted together against Trudeau, who was able to hang on thanks to the support of three other smaller blocs in the lower chamber.

LANKA RELEASES 16 LTTE TERROR SUSPECTS

Colombo, June 24: Sri Lanka on Thursday released 93 prisoners, including 16 LTTE terror suspects held without charges, after they were pardoned by President Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

The prisoners were released on the presidential pardon on the occasion of Posen Poya, an annual festival celebrated by Sri Lanka's Buddhist majority to mark the arrival of Buddhism in the country. Prison spokesman Thushara Upuldeniya said the suspects belonging to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) were among the 93 who had received the presidential pardon.

They have been released from the prison in the northern town of Jaffna and the north-central town of Anuradhapura. They were arrested under the provisions of the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA).

Sri Lankan presidents on significant Buddhist days use their executive authority to release prisoners after necessary recommendations from authorities.

The main Tamil party, the TNA, has been pressing along with rights groups to seek the release of Tamil political prisoners.

Some H-1B seekers can resubmit form

USCIS will consider plea to have been filed on the original receipt date if properly resubmitted

Washington, June 24: Some foreign guest workers in the US will be able to re-submit their applications for the H-1B visa, the most sought-after non-immigrant visa among Indian IT professionals, if their petition was solely rejected because it was based on the initial registration period, according to a federal agency.

According to the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), such re-submission of applications is for those whose applications have been rejected

or administratively closed solely because the requested start date was after October 1, 2020.

The H-1B visa allows US companies to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise. Technology companies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and China.

"If your FY 2021 petition was rejected or administratively closed solely because your petition was based on a registration sub-

mitted during the initial registration period, but you requested a start date after Oct. 1, 2020, you may re-submit that previously filed petition, with all applicable fees," USCIS said.

"Such petitions must be re-submitted before October 1, 2021. If properly resubmitted, we will consider the petition to have been filed on the original receipt date," the USCIS said. In 2020, USCIS implemented an electronic registration process for the H-1B cap.

Prospective petitioners seeking to file H-1B cap-sub-

● **PROSPECTIVE PETITIONERS** seeking to file H-1B cap-subject petitions, including for beneficiaries eligible for the advanced degree exemption, must first electronically register and pay the \$10 H-1B registration fee for each beneficiary.

ject petitions, including for beneficiaries eligible for the advanced degree exemption, must first electronically register and pay the \$10 H-1B registration

fee for each beneficiary.

"The electronic registration process has streamlined processing by reducing paperwork and data exchange and provided overall cost savings to employers seeking to file H-1B cap-subject petitions," it said. According to USCIS, for fiscal 2021, the number of petitions filed during the initial filing period was below the number projected as needed to reach the numerical allocations.

This discrepancy was likely related to multiple factors, including the eco-

nomical, political, and public health uncertainty created by the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the fact that FY 2021 was the first year that we implemented the electronic registration process. "Therefore, in August 2020, we selected additional registrations that were held in reserve. The filing period for registrations selected in August ended on November 16, 2020," it said.

"Some petitioners indicated a start date after October 1, 2020. We rejected or administratively closed those

petitions because they were based on registrations submitted during the initial registration period but indicated a start date after October 1, 2020. Upon reconsideration, we no longer believe that the regulations required us to reject or administratively close those petitions," the USCIS said.

The move comes days after the US Chambers of Commerce launched a campaign to address the acute shortage of skilled and professional workforce in America. — PTI

McAfee founder found dead in prison

Madrid, June 24: Antivirus software pioneer John McAfee was found dead in his jail cell in Spain on Wednesday, officials said, shortly after a court approved his extradition to the United States where he was wanted for tax evasion.

The 75-year-old was found dead in his cell in the Brians 2 penitentiary near Barcelona "apparently from suicide," a spokeswoman for the Catalan branch of the legal body which oversees Spain's courts, the General Council of the Judiciary (CGPJ), also confirmed that McAfee had been found dead in his cell at around 7:00 pm (1700 GMT) of an apparent suicide. McAfee has been in jail in Spain since he was arrested at Barcelona airport in October 2020, just as he was about to board a flight to Istanbul.

He is alleged to have deliberately failed to file tax returns between 2014 and 2018, despite earning millions from consulting work, cryptocurrencies



John McAfee

and selling the rights to his life story.

If convicted, he could have faced up to 30 years in prison. In a statement, Catalonia's regional justice department said only that an investigation was opened after an unnamed 75-year-old inmate facing extradition to the United States was found dead in his cell at the prison.

"Guards and medical staff intervened immediately to perform resuscitation measures but doctors eventually certified his death," the statement added. Spain's National Court earlier on Wednesday said it had approved McAfee's extradition to the United States.

The decision could still have been appealed and

the extradition needed approval from the Spanish cabinet. According to the US extradition request filed in November and quoted in the ruling, McAfee earned more than 10 million euros (\$12 million) in 2014-18, but never filed a tax return.

"To conceal his income and assets from the Internal Revenue Service... the defendant ordered part of his income to be paid to straw men and placed property in their names," it said.

Since making a fortune in the 1980s with the antivirus software that still bears his name, McAfee had become a self-styled cryptocurrency guru, claiming to make \$2,000 a day.

McAfee in 1987 founded the computer security software company and ran it for seven years before resigning.

His life after than became a headline-grabbing mix of controversies involving drugs, weapons and even murder.

McAfee had more than one million followers on Twitter, where he described himself as a

"lover of women, adventure and mystery".

In a tweet on June 16, he said the US authorities believed he had "hidden crypto".

"I wish I did," he added. "My remaining assets are all seized. My friends evaporated through fear of association. I have nothing. Yet, I regret nothing." McAfee's wife Janice has long complained that he was "not doing well" in jail and had faced delays in getting "proper medical care" in prison in Spain.

"The US authorities are determined to have John die in prison," she tweeted on Sunday.

"The media have continued to vilify him, per their narrative, and there is no hope for him ever having a fair trial in America," she added.

McAfee made headlines after he moved to Belize and his neighbour in the Central American country was mysteriously murdered in 2012, a crime that remains unsolved.

Police in Belize wanted to question McAfee — who claimed he was nowhere near the victim on the night he died — as a per-

son of interest in the case.

After the police found him living with a 17-year-old girl and discovered a large arsenal of weapons in his home, McAfee disappeared. "I am not a madman," said the British-born former NASA programmer whose anti-virus company was bought by Intel in 2010.

"I am eccentric, gracious, attentive, kind, humorous. We humans are funny creatures." The dead neighbour's family later filed a wrongful death suit against McAfee and in 2019 a court in Florida found against him, ordering him to pay the family more than \$25 million.

A documentary titled "Gringo: The Dangerous Life of John McAfee" released in 2016 focused on his life in Belize.

McAfee was arrested in the United States for driving under the influence in 2015, only to unsuccessfully run for US president the following year.

His political stances included ramping up defences against cyberattacks from China and Russia. — AFP

Apple Daily sells out final edition

Hong Kong, June 24: The final edition of Hong Kong's last remaining pro-democracy paper sold out in hours Thursday, as readers scooped up all one million copies of the *Apple Daily*, whose closure was yet another sign of China's tightening grip on the semi-autonomous city. Across the densely populated metropolis, people lined up early in the morning to buy the paper, which in recent years has become an increasingly outspoken critic of Chinese and Hong Kong authorities' efforts to limit the freedoms found here but not in mainland China.

The paper was gone from newsstands by 8:30 am. The newspaper said it was forced to cease operations after police froze \$2.3 million of its assets, searched its office and arrested five top editors and executives last week, accusing them of foreign collusion to endanger national security.

"This is our last day, and last edition, does this reflect the reality that

Hong Kong has started to lose its press freedom and freedom of speech?" an *Apple Daily* graphic designer, Dickson Ng, asked in comments to *The Associated Press*. "Why does it have to end up like this?" The paper printed one million copies for its last edition — up from the usual 80,000.

On the front page was splashed an image of an employee in the office waving at supporters surrounding the building, with the headline "Hong Kongers bid a painful farewell in the rain. We support *Apple Daily*."

While pro-democracy media outlets still exist online, it was the only print newspaper of its kind left in the city. The pressure on the paper reflects a broader crackdown on Hong Kong's civil liberties, ramped up after massive anti-government protests in 2019 unsettled authorities. In response, they imposed a sweeping national security law — used in the arrests of the newspaper employees. — AP

SHORT TAKES

Atanu-Deepika enter mixed final

Paris: Star archery couple Atanu Das and Deepika Kumari assured India its first medal from the ongoing World Cup Stage 3 by entering the final of the mixed pair event with a comeback 5-3 win over Spain here on Thursday. Atanu and Deepika, who are India's best medal hope in the upcoming Tokyo Olympics, were at their best to make their first final together here they will face the Netherlands in the summit clash on Sunday. This will be their first mixed pair final together as they gear up for the Tokyo Olympics in less than a month's time. World number three Deepika is also in the hunt for a second medal, having advanced to the individual semi-final for the second successive time this year. — PTI

Shooter Pratap finishes 7th in WC

Osijek (Croatia): India's Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar finished seventh in the men's final, while the country's women shooters failed to get past the qualifying round in the 10m air rifle event of the ISSF World Cup here on Thursday. The 20-year-old Aishwary, who finished with a score of 628 in the qualification round, shot a total of 143.9 before being eliminated from the final of the men's 10m air rifle event. Deepak Kumar (626) and Divyansh Singh Panwar (624.7) failed to make the final ending 14th and 25th respectively in the qualifying round. In another disappointing show, the trio of Anjum Moudgil, Apurvi Chandela and Elavenil Valarivan failed to enter the finals of the women's 10m air rifle. — PTI

RedBird acquires 15% stake in RR

New Delhi: Investment firm RedBird Capital Partners, which has invested in the parent company owning iconic football club Liverpool and baseball team Boston Red Sox, has acquired a 15 per cent stake in the IPL franchise Rajasthan Royals. However, the deal amount has not been disclosed. Manoj Badale-owned Emerging Media owns majority stake in the IPL team which won the inaugural edition in 2008. "Following the transaction, RedBird will hold 15 per cent stake in the Royals and Emerging Media will increase its ownership from 51 per cent to 65 per cent," a release on the Royals website stated. Badale said the deal is a testament to the global standing of the IPL. — PTI

Sania-Bethanie crash out of Viking

Eastbourne (UK): Indian tennis star Sania Mirza and her doubles partner Bethanie Mattek-Sands lost their first round match in straight sets at the Viking International Eastbourne here. The unseeded Indo-American pair lost 3-6 4-6 to the Christina Mchale and Sabrina Santamaria of USA in a match that lasted one hour 18 minutes late on Wednesday night. The 34-year-old winner of six Grand Slams in doubles will pair up with Mattek-Sands in the women's doubles event of Wimbledon, starting on June 28. — PTI

Dutee, Hima eye Olympic berth

Patiala: A host of top Indian track and field athletes, including the likes of star sprinters Dutee Chand and Hima Das, will make one last attempt to book their Olympic berths in the National Inter-State Championships beginning here on Friday. Graded as 'B' category event by World Athletics, the five-day event offers some of the top athletes the chance to either breach qualifying standards for an automatic Olympic berth or garner valuable ranking points to make it to the Games. Dutee missed the automatic qualification mark of 11.15 seconds by two-hundredths of a second during the Indian Grand Prix 4 here on Monday, though she broke her own national record. She will be looking to do better and book an automatic berth. — PTI

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Time for overhaul
Skipper Kohli hints at changes in India Test side

Southampton, June 24: India skipper Virat Kohli has indicated an overhaul of his Test team after the stunning loss to New Zealand in the World Test Championship final here, saying that "right people who have the right mindset to perform" will be brought in following a reassessment.

Senior batsman Cheteshwar Pujara managed 8 off 54 balls in the first innings and consumed 35 balls for his first run. He then scored just 15 runs off 80 balls in the second essay. In the end, New Zealand chased down a 139-run target without much trouble.

"We will continue to reassess and continue to have conversations around what are the things required to strengthen our side and not follow or fall prey to certain patterns," Kohli said.

It can be safely assumed that some of the seniors will be on borrowed time and only a stellar performance in the five-Test series against England in August can secure their futures.

"We will not wait for a year or so and have to plan ahead. If you see our white ball team now, we have great depth and guys are ready and confident. Same thing needs to be done with Test cricket.

"You have to reassess and replan and understand what dynamics work for the team and how we can be fearless. Bring in right people who have right mindset to perform," the skipper added.

For the current management, a 50 off 80 balls is of more value than a 15 off 80 which can put unneces-



India captain Virat Kohli looks disappointed after losing to New Zealand in the World Test Championship final.

Kohli rues lack of build-up games

Kohli said his team wanted to play first-class games to build up for the five-Test series against England in August but their request was turned down for reasons not known to him.

The Indian team on Thursday will disperse for a three-week break from

the bio-bubble and reassemble in Nottingham on July 14 for the preparations of the Test series starting August 4.

Asked if a few first-class games would have been better, the skipper said that it depended on people who created the itinerary.

"That doesn't depend on us," he said.

"We obviously wanted first-class games which I believe has not been given to us. I don't know what the reasons for that are,"

the straight-talking Indian captain said.

This would mean that there will be intra-squad simulation games once again but the Indian captain feels that three weeks of preparation will be good enough for the series.

Better team won, says Shastri

Big things don't come easy, said India coach Ravi Shastri on Thursday as he acknowledged that New Zealand were the better

Virat wants best-of-three for WTC final

Southampton, June 24: Echoing the views of head coach Ravi Shastri, India skipper Virat Kohli has said that the best Test team in the world should be decided by a best-of-three final and not a one-off game like it was in the inaugural edition.

"Well, look, firstly, I'm not in absolute agreement of deciding the best Test side in the world over the course of one game, to be very honest," Kohli said in the post-match press conference.

"If it is a Test series, it has to be a test of character over three Tests, which team has the ability to come back into the series or totally blow away the other team.

"It can't just be a pressure applied over two days of good cricket and then you suddenly are not a good Test side anymore. I don't believe in that."

— PTI

team in the World Test Championship final that his side lost after an especially poor batting performance.

"Better team won in the conditions. Deserved winners after the longest wait for a World Title. Classic example of Big things don't come easy. Well played, New Zealand. Respect," wrote Shastri on Twitter.

Prior to Wednesday, New Zealand's only ICC title came way back in 2000.

— PTI



New Zealand skipper Kane Williamson poses with the WTC Mace at the historic Hambledon Cricket Club, also known as the cradle of cricket.

— ICC

Kane salutes his affable Kiwi stars

Southampton, June 24: New Zealand captain Kane Williamson saluted the commitment of his star-shorn side as he savoured the "special feeling" of winning the inaugural World Test Championship mace by beating India, relying on "bits and pieces to stay in games and be competitive".

With the World Test Championships triumph, the "nice guys" of world cricket showed that they don't always finish last. The win over mighty India has also made up for the heartbreak of successive ODI World Cup final losses in 2015 and 2019.

Williamson termed their final win over India as the "pinnacle" but stopped short of calling it the country's biggest achievement in the game.

"I've been part of (New Zealand cricket) for a short while, it's a very special feeling, the first time in our history we've come

away with a world title," Williamson said in post-match press conference on Wednesday.

"We've had 22 players over the last two years, and they've all played their part and the support staff and the guys who played this match, it's a special achievement to be savoured.

"I think for us, we know we don't always have the stars, and we use our bits and pieces to stay in games and be competitive," added the likeable captain in the post-match presentation.

He said it is nice to be finally end up on the right side of the result.

"Well, obviously it's the pinnacle, isn't it, really, being involved in the final. Like I said, a formidable side in India. 2019 was a great occasion and a brilliant game of cricket, as well. But obviously a slightly different feeling being on the right side of the result for us."

— PTI

Hadlee hails Black Caps as 'best ever'

Wellington, June 24: Sir Richard Hadlee has hailed Kane Williamson's world Test champion side as the best in New Zealand's cricketing history, describing its performances in the past two years as simply "outstanding".

"This is a special day in the history of NZ cricket, a day to celebrate the magnificent achievement of winning the inaugural World Test Championship," Hadlee said in a statement.

"It was a thrilling Test match, with twists and turns throughout...it was



(From left) Kiwi pacers Kyle Jamieson, Tim Southee, Trent Boult and Neil Wagner.

— Twitter

a dominant BLACKCAPS performance over a very good Indian team. Over the years NZC have built a significant depth of play-

ers, which makes us one of the most competitive teams in world cricket.

"It's fair to say that this current group of players

is the best in our history," he added.

Baz feared title would elude again

Watching the WTC Final with a nervous trepidation, former skipper Brendon McCullum feared that the Blackcaps may yet again come close but would not win a world title.

However, McCullum's joy knew no bounds when Kane Williamson and Ross Taylor took New Zealand past the finish line to be crowned the first ever World Test Champions.

"They've been on a pretty amazing journey for the last few years and they've been so close to tasting the ultimate success," McCullum told 'SEN Radio'.

"To do it in the purist form of the game is just something quite magnificent. I'm not sure it's really sunk in just yet, to be honest.

"Overnight the game was on a bit of a knife's edge, but it almost had the feeling of the previous two World Cups that we'll get close but we won't quite get across the line," he added.

— PTI

DRAWMATIC END

Ronaldo equals scoring record as Portugal hold France to advance

Budapest, June 24: Cristiano Ronaldo scored two penalties to equal the all-time international goalscoring record and help holders Portugal edge into the last 16 of Euro 2020 with a 2-2 draw against France in Budapest on Wednesday.

Portugal will face the world's top-ranked side Belgium in the first knockout round in Seville on Sunday.

Fernando Santos' men moved through as one of the four best third-placed sides, for the second straight Euro, from Group F behind France and Germany, who only just qualified after a dramatic 2-2 draw with Hungary in Munich.

"We did everything I wanted us to do (in the 4-2 defeat) against Germany," Portuguese coach Santos told RTP. "The result was clearly fair."

Ronaldo gave his side the lead just after the half-hour mark with his first spot-kick, before France hit back through Karim Benzema's two goals either side of half-time.

But, with Portugal heading out as it stood with Hungary leading Germany, Ronaldo helped win and then scored their second penalty with half an hour remaining.

The 36-year-old's fifth goal of the group stage extended his record tally of Euro goals to 14 and drew him level with for-



Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo celebrates after scoring a goal against France in the Euro 2020 at Budapest on Wednesday.

— AP

mer Iran striker Ali Daei, in his 178th international match.

World champions France will next take on Switzerland in Bucharest on Monday.

"It was a fight, it wasn't easy," France coach Didier Deschamps told TF1. "We tried to win and at the end of the match, obviously, knowing the result of Germany, that allowed us to be first, which is the best place."

"I know very well that a new competition will be

starting from the last 16."

The first real chance of the game fell to France forward Kylian Mbappe after quarter of an hour, but the 22-year-old's wait for a Euro goal was extended by Rui Patricio's parried save.

Goal No. 109 for Ronaldo

Ronaldo scored his 109th goal for Portugal in Wednesday's Euro game against France to equal former Iran striker Ali Daei's all-time interna-

EURO RESULTS	
Portugal	2
(Cristiano Ronaldo (31-p, 60-p)	
France	2
K Benzema (45+2-p, 47)	
Germany	2
(Kai Havertz 66, Leon Goretzka 84)	
Hungary	2
(Adam Szalai 11, Andras Schafer 68)	
Spain	5
(Martin Dubravka 30-og, Aymeric Laporte 48, Pablo Sarabia 56, Ferran Torres 67, Juraj Kucka 71-og)	
Slovakia	0
Sweden	3
(Viktor Claesson 93, Emil Forsberg 2, 59)	
Poland	2
(R Lewandowski 61, 84)	

LEON-HEARTED GERMANY ROAR INTO LAST 16

Munich (Germany), June 24: Leon Goretzka came off the bench to rescue Germany's Euro 2020 campaign with a late equaliser as a nerve-shredding 2-2 draw against Hungary in Munich on Wednesday set up a last-16 high-octane showdown with giants England.

Adam Szalai gave Hungary a shock early lead and although Germany drew level through Kai Havertz in the second half, the Hungarians went back in front almost immediately through Andras Schafer.

With six minutes left, Goretzka fired home a crucial equaliser to set up a blockbuster tie against England at Wembley on Tuesday, eliminating Hungary who finished bottom of Group F.

"I am absolutely delighted — we have no doubts now and are full of confidence," said Goretzka amid.

Germany only narrowly avoided a repeat of their shock group-stage exit, as defending champions, at the 2018 World Cup in Russia.

"We made mistakes but fought and showed superb morale," said Germany coach Joachim Loew, who was six minutes from ending his 15 years in charge with an embarrassing defeat.

"Now it will a real highlight to play against England at Wembley."

— AFP

EURO ROUND OF 16		
June 26	Wales vs Denmark in Amsterdam	9.30 pm
June 27	Italy vs Austria in London	12.30 am
	Netherlands vs Czech Republic in Bucharest	9.30 pm
June 28	Belgium vs Portugal in Seville	12.30 am
	Croatia vs Spain in Copenhagen	9.30 pm
June 29	France vs Switzerland in Bucharest	12.30 am
	England vs Germany in London	9.30 pm
June 30	Sweden vs Ukraine in Glasgow	12.30 am

COPA | AMERICA

Referee's 'pass' gives Brazil win

Rio de Janeiro, June 24: Brazil continued their winning romp through the Copa America on Wednesday, eking out a controversial 2-1 victory against Colombia after struggling most of the match to answer a magnificent bicycle-kick goal by Luis Diaz.

The 11th-hour win gave the "Selecao" a perfect nine points from three matches in the South American championships, and extended their current winning streak to 11 matches.

However, the victory was steeped in controversy: Brazil's second-half equalizer, a Roberto Firmino header, was preceded by a Neymar pass that glanced off Argentine referee Nestor Pitana.

Colombia heatedly argued afterward that play should have been stopped, but Pitana ruled neither side was hindered and allowed the match to continue.

COPA RESULTS

Brazil	2
(Roberto Firmino 78, Casemiro 90+10)	
Colombia	1
(Luis Diaz 10)	
Ecuador	2
(Renato Tapia 23-og, Ayrton Preciado 48)	
Peru	2
(Gianluca Lapadula 49, Andre Carrillo 54)	

PERU HOLD ECUADOR

In the early match, Ecuador and Peru failed to settle who advances to the quarter-finals, drawing 2-2 in Goiania.

Ecuador took the early lead from an own goal, the ball going in off the foot of Peru's Renato Tapia in a jostle in front of the goal in the 23rd minute.

Ayrton Preciado scored in stoppage time to close the first half with Ecuador ahead of Peru 2-0.

— AFP



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