

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

HYDERABAD | SATURDAY | 5 JUNE 2021



## WEATHER

Max: 34°C  
Min: 25°C  
RH: 84%  
Rain: 1.7 mm  
Forecast: Partly cloudy.  
Rain likely. Max/Min temp. 36/25°C

## ASTROGUIDE

Plava: Uttarayana  
Tithi: Vaishakha Bahula Ekadasi full day

Star: Revathi till 11.28 pm  
Varjyan: 10.08 am to 11.55 am  
Durmuhurtam: 5.44 am to 7.28 am

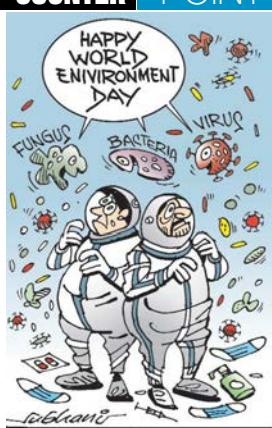
RahuKalam: 9 am to 10.30 am  
HIJRI CALENDAR  
Shawwal 23, 1442 AH

## PRAYERS

Fajar: 4.31 am  
Zohar: 12.24 pm  
Asar: 4.50 pm  
Magrib: 5.53 pm  
Isha: 8.10 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.48 PM  
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.40 AM  
MOONRISE TOMORROW 2.17 AM  
MOONSET TODAY 2.43 PM

## COUNTER POINT



## SHORT TAKES

## Indian team fails to arrest Choksi

New Delhi: India's multi-agency team that had gone to Dominica to bring back Mehul Choksi is headed back home on a Qatar Airways private jet after the island nation's high court adjourned the hearing on the fugitive diamantaire's habeas corpus petition, sources said. Publicly available flight data showed that the jet took off from the Melville Hall Airport in Dominica at 8.09 pm (local time) on June 3 and is travelling towards Madrid.

■ Report on Page 8

## RBI keeps interest rates unchanged

Mumbai: The Reserve Bank of India on Friday left key interest rates unchanged at record lows as it reiterated its commitment to keep its monetary policy accommodative, to help the economy recover from the worst outbreak of Covid-19 infections. It lowered its forecast for India's economic growth to 9.5 per cent for current financial year ending March 31, 2022, from the previous 10.5 per cent estimate.

■ Page 11: Forex reserves touches \$600 billion

DROP BY DROP

## Govt agencies fail to strengthen bund, prevent dumping of waste

## Musi stays dirty despite 'cleaning'

MADDY DEEKSHITH | DC  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 4

Musi River, once the city's lifeline as the drinking water source, has been reeling under multi-dimensional issues with most of them stemming from unkept promises made by successive governments. The nodal agencies that have been entrusted with the task of the river's beautification and rejuvenation have been indulging in an eye-wash while ignoring the crux of the problem.

Even as the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) and Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (HMWS&SB) have been ignoring strengthening of the bund and arresting the dumping of residual waste into the river, the revenue department has been wasting time

## WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

in the name of surveys for removing encroachments on Musi. Hyderabad Metro Rail Limited (HMRL), which has dumped huge piles of debris during the construction, has not bothered to remove it. Adding to the woes, the state government has only allocated ₹200 crore from its annual budget for restoration of the river and beautification of the riverfront.

The earlier Congress government had spent ₹34 crore to construct a rubber dam and beautification works. The dam was built in 2009 using Austrian technology and was expected to hold enough water to fill the area behind it and recreate the sign of a river in full flow. Over the years, floods have completely



The Musi River near the Telangana High Court is in a poor condition due to lack of maintenance.

damaged the infrastructure and the rubber dam. After the formation of Telangana, the government

dusted off the project report and decided to give a face-lift to Musi at an estimated cost of ₹740 crore, with 70

per cent of the funding coming from the National River Conservation Directorate (NRCD). Due to a fund crunch, the project lay ignored in the first term of the TRS government. In the meanwhile, the project cost escalated to ₹1,665 crore.

After forming the Musi Riverfront Development Corporation Limited (MRDCL), the authorities have done less to improve the water quality of the river and more for themselves. The government, which has allocated ₹377.35 crore for 2017-18 managed to spend ₹0.32 crore and another ₹2.80 crore in 2018-19 while allocating the same amount from the State budget. It has continued with similar amounts during the financial years 2019-20 and 2021.

■ Page 5: Plans remain on paper



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## ₹43K-cr for 'Make in India' subs

### Defence ministry approves 6 conventional submarines for Navy

PAWAN BALI | DC  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 4

● THE DEFENCE Acquisition Council also approved proposals for acquiring various military weapons including air defence guns and ammunition for the Indian Army for ₹6,800 crore

In a mega make-in-India deal, the Defence Acquisition Council headed by defence minister Rajnath Singh on Friday approved the domestic production of six new-generation stealth submarines in collaboration with foreign players under Project P75(I) estimated at ₹43,000 crore. The project was first initiated in 2007 and it will take nearly a decade before the first submarine is delivered.

The submarine deal was given the go-ahead amid reports that the country's sole nuclear-powered attack submarine INS Chakra is on its way back to Russia as the agree-

ment for its lease is coming to an end. The Navy will thus be without a nuclear-powered attack submarine for many years till another advanced version of the submarine, Chakra III, comes from Russia on a 10-year lease for which a \$3 billion deal was signed in 2019. The INS Chakra is reported to be giving trouble as it was getting old and its lease, which was ending in January,

was not sought to be extended.

Nuclear-powered attack submarines (SSNs) are the equivalent of the most dangerous underwater sharks which hunt submarines and ships and are equipped with torpedoes, anti-ship cruise missiles and land-attack cruise missiles.

The DAC on Friday approved the issue of a request for proposal (RFP) for the construction of six conventional submarines for Project P75(I) under the strategic partnership model. The RFP will be issued to defence shipyard Mazagon Docks and private sector giant Larsen and Toubro, who were selected as Indian strategic partners to bid

for the submarine project by the DAC last year in January.

Mazagon Docks and L&T will now collaborate with any of the five foreign companies to submit their bids. These foreign companies are Russian Rosoboronexport, French Naval Group, South Korean Daewoo, German Thyssenkrupp Marine Systems and Spanish Navantia.

Last year the DAC had approved these five foreign companies as the potential Original Equipment Manufacturers that could collaborate on the project.

China is now investing heavily in its Navy and has the fastest growing naval assets in the world.

### Border control



Army vehicles are seen leaving for Leh on the Manali-Leh highway on Friday possibly carrying reinforcement of troops along the border areas. — PTI

### COWIN NOW IN TELUGU, NINE LANGUAGES

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 4

The Central government's website and mobile application for checking vaccination centres, registration for jabs and availability of slots, CoWIN, has now been made available in Telugu, and nine other languages, it was announced on Friday.

Until now, the CoWIN website was available in English and Hindi making it difficult for many who did not know these languages to register themselves for vaccination. On Friday, the Centre announced that the website henceforth could be accessed in Telugu, Marathi, Malayalam, Punjabi, Gujarati, Assamese, Kannada, and Oriya.

"I resigned as MLA twice earlier during the TS agitation on the direction of the TRS for the sake of the state's self-respect. I am resigning again today for self-respect as I can't continue as a slave," he said.

## Etala leaves TRS, to resign as MLA

To give Speaker letter today; silent on his plans

IREDDY SRINIVAS  
REDDY | DC  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 4



Former health minister Etala Rajendar addresses a press meet at his residence in Shamirpet on Friday. — DC

## TRS churns out plans to win bypoll

L. VENKAT RAM  
REDDY | DC  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 4

The TRS leadership sprang into action soon after former minister Etala Rajender announced his decision to resign from the party and the Assembly, to brace party leaders and cadre for the imminent bypoll to the Huzurabad Assembly seat that has to be held within six months.

The party leadership expects the Election Commission to hold the bypoll sometime in September.

According to sources in the TRS, party president and Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao discussed the party's strategy

with senior leaders after Rajendar's announcement.

It was decided to go all out to retain the Huzurabad seat with a big majority and to adopt the aggressive strategy of the recent Legislative Council polls and the Nagarjunasagar Assembly bypoll in which the TRS emerged victorious.

Ministers will camp in the constituency for three months as election in-charges, while TRS MLAs, MLCs, ZPTCs, and sarpanchs of erstwhile Karimnagar district will be given the task of micro-level booth management to reach out to every voter.

■ Page 2: Huzurabad growth plans laid out

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**NAGARAM, NEAR** Indian oil Station, "S.V.Shantiniketan" Flats Ready to move 2 & 3BHK Rs.34 Lakhs onwards. Ph: 8374189206/9848892582. (HYCL/2122/C00426)

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**3 BHK** Luxury Flats @ 3750/- Sft in gated community with club house & amenities @ Pocharam, near New Infosys Campus from Rs.48.96 lacs onwards. Mod. Builders 7677120120. (B/2122/C00144)

**3 BHK** Luxury Flats @ 3750/- per Sft in gated community with club house & amenities @ Jayathnagar nr LB Nagar. 2 BHK starts from 27.22 lacs & 3 BHK from 44.85 lacs onwards. Mod. Builders 7677120120. (B/2122/C00145)

**BAGH AMBERPET**- New Nallakkula, opp to Papai Da Dhaba, Sivam Road, Sai Tulips apts. 4 BHK 2860 sqft Delux flat- Possession in 6 months. Contact: 9000204280. (A/2122/C00121)

**SUPER LUXURY** Gated Community 4bhk Apartments for Sale in Banjara Hills Ready to Occupy with all Amenities Like Swimming Pool, Gym Etc. Sizes 3550-4400sqft on 3cr onwards. Contact: 793184957. (HYMM/2122/C00337)

**BANJARAHILLS - SRI** Chakra Apt, Road no 14, B.N.Reddy colony main road facing 3 BHK 2354 sqft Delux flat with Interiors- Possession ready. Contact: 9000240280. (A/2122/C00123)

**1700 SFT** built-up area, 3BHK, Ground floor, 2nd floor, 3rd floor. INDEPENDENT house on 300 square plot UDS 80 sqyds, east facing for immediate sale at chikoti garden, bequmpet. Residential Property. Contact: 9949899747. (HYMM/2122/C01335)

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**MULTIPLE FLATS**

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**SUNCITY - SAI** Vijaya Neer Colony, Near Massab Tank - Prime Location. Well built, Independent 3 BHK, 2 bath, balcony, car park, 1st floor house. Quiet locality, no water problem. Ph:9705317310 (W/2122/A/000190)

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**DELUXE HOUSE** for Sale, 1000Sft, 1st Floor, W.Face, Sri Mahalaxmi Tirumala Sapphire Apts., Near Alif Cafe X Road. Ph:9849807924, 8522917163. (HYMM/2122/C01370)

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**PLOT**

**PLOT FOR** sale @Chilkur Eternity, 1000sqyds in well developed layout in walkable distance to Temple, 2000ft Negl. call: 9000816600 (HYMM/2122/C01345)

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**SHORT TAKES**  
**JNTU LIKELY TO HOLD FINAL YEAR SEM-2 EXAMS**

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 4

The Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University, Hyderabad (JNTU-H) on Friday said it was exploring the feasibility of conducting the final year second semester exams of BTech/BPharm in conventional or offline mode. The exams centres will be set up in a way that students can appear for exams from their hometown or village.

The varsity instructed principals of all colleges offering fourth year BTech/BPharm courses to make arrangements to contact final year students and take three cluster options in order of preference from each student.

As per the circular released by JNTUH, the places that the students were opting should have at least one JNTUH affiliated engineering or pharmacy college. If any student does not submit their options, it will be assumed that their preference is the parent college. The college exam branch staff will upload the student preference online by June 12.

**CCMB: DELTA VARIANT BEHIND VARANASI CASES**

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 4

Covid-19 in Varanasi and its adjoining areas, many of which fall in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Lok Sabha constituency, is being driven by the Coronavirus variant, Delta, formerly identified as variant B.1.617, the city-based Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) has said.

The premier research lab, part of the CSIR lab network in the country, said a study of Coronavirus variants it undertook with the Banaras Hindu University (BHU), Varanasi, in which they collaboratively sequenced genomes of Coronavirus variants in Varanasi and its neighbouring areas, found at least seven major strains of the virus circulating in these regions. The samples that were sequenced were mostly collected in April by the Multidisciplinary Research Unit at BHU and in all, 130 samples were sequenced in this study.

This Delta variant, which was found in 36 per cent of samples collected by BHU, has been among the primary drivers of the Covid-19 second wave in the country. The study also found that the B.1.351 variant, renamed Beta, which was first detected in South Africa, was also found in the area.

"This study confirms yet again that the Delta variant is the most widespread coronavirus variant in the country right now. But at the same time, it is imperative for us to keep an eye on other emerging variants in the country to prevent another unprecedented surge of cases," Dr Rakesh Mishra, adviser, CCMB said.

● **THE DELTA variant, which was found in 36 per cent of samples collected by the Benaras Hindu University (BHU), has been among the primary drivers of the Covid-19 second wave in the country. The study also found that the B.1.351 variant, renamed Beta by the WHO, which was first detected in South Africa, was also found in the area.**

**Risky zone**



Women crowd at the Nampally area hospital for a regular check-up. They visit the hospital on Mondays and Fridays and risk catching Covid-19 as the authorities have not enforced norms.

— P. SURENDRA

## Kids at receiving end as Covid-19 spreads

**Around 2-3% children might need to be hospitalised, say experts**

KANIZA GARARI | DC  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 4

With 2,86,326 new cases of Covid-19 reported from March 15 in Telangana, a fear now is that children will fall prey to the pandemic and they might be faced with multisystem inflammatory syndrome in the coming weeks.

An expert group under the chairmanship of Dr A.K. Deorari has gone through national and international data indicating that some two to three per cent children will require hospitalisation in the second wave. In the worst case scenario, it can increase to five per cent.

For this reason, hospitals must improve capacity in their treatment to meet the demand as it arises from this month.

With a large number of families suffering from Covid in the second wave, children are likely to show symptoms three weeks later. The symptoms to watch out for are continuous fever, vomiting, diarrhoea, pain in the stomach, rashes in the skin, heavy breathing, redness or swelling of lips and tongue, redness or swelling of hands and feet,

headache and dizziness.

With more people from rural areas falling prey to the Covid-spread in the second wave, the fear is that only some 40 per cent of the affected will go to the private sector facilities and as high as 60 per cent will opt for treatment at government hospitals.

For this reason the district hospitals must have at least 10 per cent beds reserved for sick children. They must also have paediatricians and other specialists at hand.

Dr Faisal Nadhi, paediatrician at Rainbow Hospitals, explained: "There are set protocols in place to treat MIS-C. We have treated children in the first wave too. Awareness about these symptoms helps parents come to hospitals early. The first wave has created this awareness and in the second wave too, we are hoping for the same. It can be easily treated if they come in early."

In the first wave, MIS-C was noted in children from September 2020 onwards. In the second wave, experts say June and July will see these cases.

Dr Ravi Kumar, professor and paediatrician at Niloufer Hospital, said: "Healthy children will not require hospitalisation and they recover with medicines. The worry is for children who are suffering from co-morbid conditions like problems of kidney stones, congenital heart disease, cerebral palsy, tuberculosis and obesity."

"If there is an unrecognised ailment, it can get aggravated during these times. These can be complications. For healthy children, these problems are not noted. We have seen less than 1 per cent of cases in the first wave."

Paediatricians said challenges were noted in asymptomatic cases where both parents were infected with Covid but were not aware of it. It is only when the child is brought to hospital with MIS-C that they know that they have suffered from Covid-19. These asymptomatic cases pose a problem as the child is not brought in early and it would require aggressive treatment for cure. Experts say awareness and alertness will help.

## Surge in cases in 4 dists cause for major concern

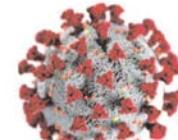
DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 4

Four districts in the state — Khammam, Karimnagar, Nalgonda and Bhadrakothi Kothagudem — are witnessing a surge in cases despite a decline in other parts of the state. These four districts cause a concern as new infections are high.

New cases reported from Bhadrakothi Kothagudem are 767, Karimnagar 777, Khammam 966 and Nalgonda 1091 in the last seven days. This leads to serious concern as these are major districts for economic activity in the monsoon season. Khammam is a border town with Andhra Pradesh and the rising numbers in this district will require proper control measures, according to experts.

With the onset of monsoon, there will be movement of workers from different districts and also interstate travel. So, it is utmost important for the population to be

**DAILY COVID BULLETIN DATA**



**Update: Cases | Deaths**

June 4, 2021	
Fresh Cases	2,175
Deaths	15
Tests Done	1,36,096
Active Cases	30,918
Total Cases	5,87,664
Total Deaths	3,346

**Highest New Cases**

GHMC	253	Nirmal	5
Nalgonda	175	Adilabad	8
Khammam	144	Kamareddy	9
Karimnagar	113	Komaram Bheem-Apisabadda	11
Bhadrakothi-Kothagudem	110	Narayanpet	12

vaccinated before this movement begins. A senior health official says, "Once the high-risk group of 7 lakh people are vaccinated, the government will have to concentrate on farm labourers as they move to different parts for work. Monsoon has set in early and they will move out for work for their livelihood. They will need protection."

With the rural areas being infected in large

numbers during the second wave, unlocking will require that they follow safety protocols of masks and social distancing in the mandis, fertilizer shops and during procurement of seeds. These will be the new hotspots and they will need extra care and alertness in managing them.

Decline in urban areas of mild cases is noted but serious cases are still a challenge.

**JAB | REQUEST Min. says exporting vaccine was a wrong decision**

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 4

Telangana state has urged the Centre to import Covid-19 vaccines from countries that have them in surplus. This, IT minister K.T. Rama Rao said, will help states vaccinate their people.

"Universal Covid-19 vaccination is the only permanent solution for dealing with the present crisis," said the minister while inaugurating a 150-bed intensive care unit (ICU) for Covid-19 patients at the Telangana Institute of Medical Sciences (TIMS) in Gachibowli here.

Rama Rao pointed out that 50 crore vaccines manufactured by AstraZeneca are lying unused in countries like Norway, Denmark, Canada and the USA. "What is preventing the centre from

opening dialogue with these countries and procuring the vaccines. This will allow for vaccination of half of the Indian population," he stated.

The minister regretted that the Central government has depended only on two companies — Bharat Biotech and Serum Institute of India — for supply of vaccines, though it would not be possible for them to meet the huge demand of the country. "Central government policy on procurement and administration of vaccines is faulty. Exporting vaccines to other countries when we have a large population was a wrong decision. We now need vaccines but there are no sufficient stocks.

Opening up vaccination process for 18-44 years group without sufficient stocks. Incidentally, the Telangana state government and

Hyderabad Software Enterprises Association (HYSEA) member companies are coordinating in providing ventilators, oxygen cylinders, beds, masks, flow meters and other equipment to TIMS, Kondapalli District Hospital, Sarojini Devi Eye Hospital, Niloufer Hospital, Gandhi Hospital, King Koti and Fever Hospital.

Rama Rao, along with principal secretary Jayesh Rajan, Cyberabad police commissioner V.C. Sajjanar, Ranga Reddy district collector Amoy Kumar, and health and medical education director Dr K. Ramesh Reddy went around the TIMS hospital and met patients. The minister spoke to patients and inquired from them about the treatment being given to them.

## Kishan opens three-day Bhagyanagar literary fest

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 4

The three-day online Bhagyanagar Literary Festival organised by Think India began on Friday with Union minister of state for home G. Kishan Reddy lamenting that children these days are not able to experience the joys of listening to stories from their grandparents.

"With the increasing adoption of Western culture by us, children are missing out on stories from the Panchatantra and the joy of learning from listening to stories," he said.

The minister said that, by adopting Western culture, people are increasingly forgetting our own culture, and recalled the value

of reading classical Indian works such as Kalidasa's Abhigyan Shakuntalam. He also spoke about the importance of the Vedas, the Quran, and the Upanishads.

Among those who were expected to speak during the online literary festival included Sunil Ambekar, Makarand Paranjape, Sushil Pandit, Shantanu Gupta, Shefali Vaidya, Pallavi Joshi, Tuhin Sinha, Swati Goel Sharma, Sanjeev Newar, Jayant Sinha, Abhijeet Iyer-Mitra, Radhakrishnan Pillai, Abhinav Prakash, Amish Tripathi, Manoshi Sinha, and Sahana Vijayakumar.

## Neighbours' insults lead to four deaths

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 4

Humiliated by neighbours, a 30-year-old man strangled his wife and two kids and died by suicide at his residence in Nagaram.

According to police, their neighbours at West Gandhinagar in Nagaram used to pick up quarrels with Bikshapati, an autorickshaw driver, his wife Usha, 28, and their kids, aged 7 years and 10 years, and reportedly humiliated them on multiple occasions.

On Thursday night, the neighbours had an altercation with Bikshapati. It was decided to call elders to settle the dispute.

Police recovered from the scene a note addressed to police which reportedly accused Bikshapati's neighbour O. Ramesh and his family of mentally torturing him and his family, due to which they were taking their lives.

Police have booked a case under section 306 (abetment to suicide) of IPC. The bodies have been shifted for post-mortem examination.

## HYUNDAI GIVES EQUIPMENT FOR STATE HOSPS

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 4

The Hyundai Motor India Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Hyundai Motor India Ltd, on Friday donated 100 oxygen concentrators and 50 BiPaP machines to Telangana government for distribution in its hospitals.

The foundation said that it will be installing an oxygen plant at Uttoor in Adilabad district. These activities were part of Hyundai's 'Back To Life' project that "works to deliver critical oxygen products to provide relief in areas most affected by Covid in various states," it said.

The equipment, together worth ₹1 crore, were handed over to Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar by Kuen Han Yi, MD, Hyundai Engineering Corporation, India.

 सत्यमेव जयते	<b>BUREAU OF INDIAN STANDARDS</b> Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution (Department of Consumer Affairs), Govt. of India Manak Bhawan, 9 Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, New Delhi-110002	
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### INDICATIVE ADVERTISEMENT

#### RECRUITMENT FOR POST OF SCIENTIST-B

Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), a statutory body under the administrative control of Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, Govt. of India, is the National Standards Body of India and is responsible for activities in the field of Standardization, Product and System Certification, Hallmarking of Gold/Silver Jewellery, Laboratory Testing etc., in the country. BIS is also responsible for Standardization and Certification at the International level. BIS offers excellent career opportunities to bright, young dynamic persons for the post of Scientist-B in the specified disciplines and categories. These posts are in the Pay Level 10 as per the Seventh Central Pay Commission plus allowances as applicable. The gross emoluments at the time of joining will be approximately Rs. 87,525/- at Delhi at present.

Discipline	Number of vacancies (including backlog vacancies)						Horizontal Reservation for Person with Benchmark Disabilities (including backlog vacancies)
	Total	UR	OBC	SC	ST	EWS	
Civil Engineering	13	05	04	01	02	01	01 HI, 01 ID&MI/MD
Instrumentation Engineering	02	01	01	00	00	00	-
Environmental Engineering	02	01	01	00	00	00	-
Chemistry	07	02	02	01	01	01	01 HI
Textile Engineering	04	02	01	00	01	00	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>09</b>	<b>02</b>	<b>04</b>	<b>02</b>	

#### Abbreviations:

## IN BRIEF

**Dasoju slams govt for scribe's arrest**

**Hyderabad:** AICC spokesperson Dr Dasoju Sravan came down heavily on the TRS government for arresting journalist Raghu Ramakrishna and claimed that Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao is reminding people of the infamous Kasim Razvi. Highlighting how the people had fought against the Razakars and dethroned even more powerful and cruel dictators, Dr Sravan said that the Chief Minister and his followers would face the fate of the Razakars if they do not mend their ways.

**KAVITHA SAYS OZ HELPING OUT INDIANS**

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 4

TRS MLC Kalvakuntla Kavitha, the Telangana Jagruthi president, had a virtual meeting with Sarah Kirlew, the Australian Consul-General in Chennai, to mark the first anniversary of the conclusion of the Australia-India Strategic Partnership.

Kavitha complimented the Australian government for its increasingly inclusive stance towards immigrants and the active role that policymakers have taken in Australia to prevent discrimination against Indian students. She also highlighted the fact that many entrepreneurs of Telugu origin and from Hyderabad have set up educational institutions and enterprises in Australia now.

Kirlew, highlighted the recent work done by the Australian government to promote student safety and informed that even during the Covid pandemic many students from abroad and of Indian origin stayed back in Australia on their campuses and received support from the universities.

**HC: DO YOU NEED 100 YRS TO PAY COMPENSATION?**

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 4

The Telangana High Court on Friday fumed at the state government for delaying payment of compensation for lands acquired by it towards several projects.

A division bench comprising Justice M.S. Ramachandra Rao and Justice K. Lakshman took exception to the fact that compensation was not paid for lands acquired in 2003 for the Jurala project in Mahabubnagar district.

Critical of the two-decade delay, the bench asked the government if it would take centurys to clear dues to landowners.

The bench was dealing with contempt cases filed by some landowners, whose land was acquired in 2003 and award was decided in 2010. The land owners had approached the district court for enhancement of the Award amount, where they got a favourable order. However, challenging the district court orders, the government filed first appeal before the High Court seeking to stay the enhancement.

The High Court had directed the government to deposit 50 per cent of the amount due to the landowners, with an option to let the landowners to take compensation from the deposits. However, despite the orders issued by the High Court around a year and half back, the government has not deposited the 50 per cent amount following which the landowners filed a contempt case. The court directed deposit of ₹4 crore within two weeks, lest authorities face dire consequences.

**Give free vaccines to all: Cong. tells govt**

**Centre, TS govt failed to curb pandemic: Uttam**

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 4

The state Congress on Friday called upon the government to start universal free vaccination to save the people from Covid pandemic.

TS Congress president Uttam Kumar Reddy submitted a memorandum with this plea to Governor Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan along with Congress Legislature Party leader Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, MPs Revanth Reddy and Komatireddy Venkat Reddy and former MP Ponnambalam Prabhakar.

Addressing the media, Uttam Kumar Reddy criticised both the central and state governments, saying they have failed to control the pandemic. Through the memorandum, the Congress leadership has conveyed their anguish to the President through this memorandum, he said.

He pleaded that vaccines should be given free of cost to all the adult population. The target of vaccinating all the adults by December 31 would not be achievable until it is done at the rate of one crore persons every day. At the present pace of vaccination, it takes three years to achieve the target of vaccinating all in the country, he said.

Coming down heavily on the Chief Minister for the state's failure in controlling the pandemic spread, he said the TRS government failed to arrange medical facilities and medicines. Even though the Congress made a complaint to the governor in this connection some 15 months ago, the chief minister has taken the matter lightly, Uttam said.

Uttam Kumar Reddy pleaded that Covid-19 treatment should be listed in the Aarogyasri scheme immediately for the people to derive its benefits. Satyagrahas would be held by the party on June 7 at the state and district headquarters seeking free treatment to Covid-19 and black fungus patients.



TPCC president N. Uttam Kumar Reddy presents a memorandum asking for free universal vaccination against Covid to Governor Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan as party leaders (from left) Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka and Komatireddy Venkat Reddy look on, at Raj Bhavan in Hyderabad on Friday.

— DC

**Geetha Reddy seeks action against Ramdev**

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 4



Dr J. Geetha Reddy



Baba Ramdev

Senior Congress leader Dr J. Geetha Reddy demanded that the Centre prosecute Baba Ramdev and Balakrishna of Patanjali Group for their utterances against the medical fraternity and for claiming that allopathy was a 'stupid science', at a time when doctors were fighting relentlessly against Covid-19.

She demanded stringent action against both of them for misleading people on allopathy and for inciting communal discord.

In a letter written to Union health minister Dr Harsh Vardhan and law minister Ravi Shankar Prasad, on behalf of the AICC All India Professionals' Congress (AIPC), Dr Geetha Reddy said "Baba Ramdev's remarks were not only ill-conceived and dangerous but also contributed to vaccine hesitancy in an already fearful climate. He also claimed that people succumbed to the illness because of allopathic medicines rather than oxygen shortage".

"To make matters worse, Ramdev's close-

aide Acharya Balakrishna, chairman of Patanjali Group, added a communal twist with his tweet that it was all a conspiracy to convert the entire country to Christianity and to malign both yoga and ayurveda by targeting Baba Ramdev. He further instigated communal fears by urging the countrymen to wake up before it is too late. Adding fuel, Ramdev asserted that he would convert at least 1,000 allopathic doctors to ayurveda," Geetha Reddy, who is also regional coordinator, south zone, AIPC, stated.

The actions of Baba Ramdev and Balakrishna are in clear violation of Article 51A of the Constitution, Indian Penal Code 1860 and the Disaster Management Act 2005 and attracted legal action, she noted.

"Such statements are dangerous and harmful to the public and detrimental to public health. They ought to be prosecuted as their comments are dissuading people from getting vaccinated," she added.

She expressed concern over the Centre's failure in initiating swift action against them.

"Unfortunately, the Centre has not just failed in its duty but is, in fact, encouraging spreading of fake news, rumour-mongering against vaccinations and doctors, and inciting communal hatred," the Congress leader said.

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## SHORT TAKES

## LOCAL TRANSPORT CAN ADD TO FINAL COST OF FUEL

From page 1

Before Friday's 28 paise hike, the previous increase of 27 paise per litre was on June 1.

While local transportation costs can contribute to the final price at the pump in some places, this cost is very negligible and the real cost that people pay comes from the taxes that are levied by both the state and Central governments on petrol.

The Telangana state government levies a value added tax of 35.2 per cent on every litre on petrol, that as on Friday works out to ₹25.62, and the tax on diesel in the state stands at 27 per cent which works out to ₹19.84 per litre.

Diesel cost ₹93.38 per litre in Hyderabad on Friday. The Centre, on its part, collects ₹32.90 per litre on petrol and ₹31.80 as tax on every litre of diesel sold in the bunks.

## IMD WARNS OF HEAVY RAIN IN PARTS OF TS

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, JUNE 4

As the southwest monsoon heads towards Telangana, the state would witness more showers, weather officials have predicted. On Friday, rains lashed several parts of the state and its capital.

The highest rainfall till 8.30 pm in the state was recorded at Jalal Pur in the Yadari-Bhuvanagiri district, which received 84 mm of rainfall from 8.30 am on Friday. In the city, the highest rainfall was recorded at the South Hastingapura Community Hall, with 36.3 mm of rainfall, the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) said.

"We predict heavy rains in the northern districts of the state. For the city, however, there would be light to moderate rains coupled with thunder. We expect the intensity of the rains in the city to reduce from the day after tomorrow," said IMD Hyderabad director Dr K. Nagaratna.

## MINORITIES PANEL ISSUES NOTICE TO CS

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, JUNE 4

The National Commission for Minorities issued a notice to Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar to remind him to reply within 10 days with regard to the demolition of two mosques and a temple in the Secretariat complex.

The commission had sought a clarification from the government over the razing of the places of worship when the old Secretariat complex was demolished in the first week of July 2020.

On a petition of MBT leader Amjadullah Khan Khalid, the commission had sent a letter on August 28 last seeking a reply but the state government did not furnish one.

The commission requested the government to send the reply within 10 days, failing which it will take action under the relevant laws. Meanwhile, it is learnt that the roads and buildings department has finalized the design of the proposed masjid.

**THE NATIONAL** Minorities commission had sought a clarification from the government over the razing of the places of worship when the old Secretariat complex was demolished in the first week of July 2020.

## LOST YOUTH

## Transition from online to offline may affect social behaviour

## Unusual school life may affect kids

HARLEEN MINOCHA | DC HYDERABAD, JUNE 4

Child psychologists suggest that several outgoing school students could face difficulties in adopting normal social behaviour as they enter college in an offline setting.

"Students have been socially disconnected for a long time now. Classes are being conducted online, there is no peer support, and over the past few months, they have seen so much that they will be mentally and emotionally impacted for some time

going forward," Dr Motukuri Ramchander, Telangana Psychologists Association state president said.

Students in several schools have expressed their disappointment over not being able to meet friends and classmates like usual and even missing out on big school events and functions like investiture ceremony, sports functions, and farewell parties. "Even though I believe it was a responsible decision to move the farewell for outgoing batch students owing to conditions out-

side, it felt a little empty when we realised that we will not be able to have the usual fun that previous batches have had. This is one big event every student looks forward to as school life comes to an end, but we didn't get the opportunity to live it," said Sukhjeet Kaur, a Pallavi Model School student here.

Another student from the school, Palash said that he is looking forward to being on the campus of a college soon and reliving the social connection he had experienced about two years ago now.



K. Rama Rao

the feudal society. He received the Kendra Sahitya Akademi award in 1995 for this book.

On February 22 in 1997, KaRa founded a library called 'Katha Nilayam,' an archive of Telugu literary works. The library, which was

opened with around 800 short-story books, is now estimated to have nearly one lakh books including KaRa's own works.

His first, *Chitranguta*

was a mini-story. Some of his popular story books include: *Theerpu* in 1963, *Veerudu Mahaveerudu*, *Himsa*, *No Room*, *Sneham*, and *Jeevana Dhara*. His stories were translated into Russian and English.

He had an association with Visakhapatnam where he worked as a teacher at St. Anthony's High School.

Inspired by KaRa Master's Katha Nilayam in Srikakulam, a liter-

ary lover Abbigari Rajendra Prasad also established Katha Nilayam at Nandalur in Kadapa.

Literary lovers expressed grief over KaRa Master's death. Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy said, "The death of KaRa master is a great loss to Telugu literature and also people of the Telugu states. He was one of the literary luminaries of North Andhra."

Vice President M. Venkaiah Naidu recalled his association with the writer. "KaRa was known as a master language writer, narrator and critic," he said.

Ravikanth said that the situation will especially be difficult for children who have dealt with the trauma recently.

"Several families have lost their elders. Children have lost their grandparents and many have chosen to stay aloof ever since. Such students will face more difficulty in getting back to a social life once they are back in schools or colleges. Not being able to live a normal school life has brought about some sadness in almost all students," Dr Ravikanth told this correspondent.

## WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

## Biomedical waste output spurts during pandemic

CSE green report says TS treated less than 50% of sewerage

T.S.S. SIDDHARTH | DC HYDERABAD, JUNE 4

The ongoing Covid-19 crisis has resulted in an enormous increase of burden of biomedical waste disposal in the state, with Telangana state generating as much as 4,960 kg of Covid-related waste every day in the state. Across India, the Covid-19 related biomedical waste this May stood at 2,03,000 kg a day, accounting for a third of all biomedical waste generated in the country every day, according to the 'State of the Environment 2021: In Figures', compiled by the Centre for Science and Environment, New Delhi.

The report also noted that Telangana state treated less than 50 per cent of sewerage it generated and pegged the daily generation of sewerage in the state at 2,660 million litres per day.

On the forest front, the report said Telangana state recorded an unusually high number of forest fire alerts – 19,256 – between January 1 and May 31 this year. It also said the state witnessed a 25 per cent drop in the value of non-timber forest produce (NTFP) values between 2016-17 and 2017-18, in Telangana state and put the NTFP value for 2017-18 at ₹25,482 lakh.

While that was the case with NTFP, timber too lost a substantial chunk of its value – by an astounding 31 per cent – where the value of timber provisioning services in 2017-18 was put at ₹18, 660 lakh.

With respect to the per hectare economic value of forests in the state, the report said the value of timber per hectare in Telangana during 2017-18 was ₹666, NTFP was ₹227, with each hectare of forests in the state valued at ₹8,338 for its carbon retention service.

Nationwide, the report said with respect to natural calamities, the country witnessed 21 major weather events which claimed over 1,374 lives in 2020. In the year the state saw 61 people losing their lives to heavy rain and floods that lashed Telangana state from August 15 last year, till October 20.

## SCR TO RECYCLE 42.7L LITRES OF WATER A DAY

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, JUNE 4

The South Central Railway (SCR) is planning on recycling 47.2 lakh litres of water each day, once the additional six plants are installed in Secunderabad, Vijayawada and Guntakal divisions.

This effort along with several others are being undertaken by the SCR towards the mission to conserve water, announced by the railway minister. It will result in saving of around ₹32 crore annually, by rationalising pumping hours at stations and saving up to 20 per cent water.

Other initiatives of the SCR include construction of 'pagdandi' bunds for 84.4 km along the tracks to retain water and recharge ground water. Eighty new ponds have been constructed in an area of 17.79 hectares, while 39 ponds have been rejuvenated.

The rejuvenation of 17 heritage wells has further helped in yielding 7.2 lakh litres water.



Officials rejuvenate a heritage well under a project taken up by the SCR. — DC

## ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION VITAL, SAYS GOV.

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, JUNE 4

Governor Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan on Friday called on people to resolve and rededicate themselves to protect the environment as survival and sustainability was dependent on such actions.

In a message on the occasion of World Environment Day on Saturday, the Governor said, "In true spirit of the World Environment Day-2021 theme, 'Reimagine. Recreate. Restore,' we all need to strive for the restoration of the ecosystem. It is important to note that this year also marks the beginning of the UN's Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.

## BE CONSCIOUS OF NATURE, URGES KCR

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, JUNE 4

Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao on Friday urged people to protect the environment on the occasion of World Environment Day on Saturday.

He said that the pandemic situation had once again proved that there was no other wealth as precious as the environment. He said the sordid situation of people desperately seeking pure air for survival could be overcome only by protecting the environment.

Rao said that the state government has initiated several measures and action plans to hand over a healthy environment to the future generations. He said there was a ban on use of cheap quality plastics and programmes like Haritha Haram that are aimed at increasing the green cover, including in rural and urban areas for which the state won national acclaim.

The AqI of Tirumala, at 11 am on Friday, was 42, whereas it was 28 during the same period last year and 67 in 2019. Around 10,000-20,000 vehicles, including two-wheelers, TTD Vehicles and APSRTC used to ply in Tirumala before lockdown. As only a few are being allowed now, air pollution has come down considerably.

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The AQI of

# DECCAN Chronicle

5 JUNE 2021

## Change in pension rules a bid to stifle critical voices

Earlier this week, the government amended Rule 8 of the Central Civil Services (Pension) Rules 1972. It aims to prevent retired officials from writing books or newspaper articles or give interviews without taking prior approval from the current heads of those organisations. In practice, this is likely to amount to a blanket ban unless, in a specific case, the government wants to promote a viewpoint through a retired officer.

It is evident that changing the pension rules amounts to dangling the threat of withholding or even withdrawing the pension earned through decades of dedicated service. This seems an intimidation tactic. In a recent interview, former Army chief Gen. V.P. Malik (Retd) said the amendment "requires a review" and that it was "overarching". The military leader, who led the Army with distinction in the Kargil war, chose to speak his mind although the military is not covered under the change made. He rightly noted the Official Secrets Act was adequate deter those who seek to compromise national security.

A retired chief of both the Intelligence Bureau and Research and Analysis Wing, A.S. Dulat, who was an adviser in Atal Behari Vajpayee's PMO, is an author of many books and newspaper articles and is often interviewed in the media, has said he wouldn't be seeking permission. He also said the amendment "isn't right". He wondered aloud in an interview if the changed rule would apply even if he chose to write literature or poetry. And there's a reason for this.

The threatened backdoor ban would apply to writing that is related to the "domain of the organisation, including references or information about any personnel and his/her designation, and expertise of knowledge gained by virtue of working in that organisation". If the government turned nasty, this could easily apply to a short story, poem or novel where insights or experiences of a period are referred to.

Why link pension, widely seen as an inalienable part of government service, to drummed-up fears on national security? It is necessary to raise the question as it is amply clear that through their writings and interviews, and through their contribution to think tanks whose discussions are frequently reflected in public forums, retired senior officials enrich the national conversation by raising the level of debate and discussion. They help us better grasp matters relating to national security, on which millions of rupees from the exchequer are spent. The process makes for an aware citizenry, an unquantifiable attribute that aids society and the State by preparing people for times of crisis. The experience of retired senior officials, when made public, also enhances the scope of knowledge production.

There are 18 departments in the Second Schedule of the RTI Act that are covered under the amended order covering pensions. These include the IB and RAW, the paramilitary forces like BSF, CRPF, ITBP, CISF, Assam Rifles, SSB, SF, the special branch and CID in select locations like the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Dadra, Nagar Haveli and Lakshadweep. The Enforcement Directorate, Narcotics Control Bureau and the Central Economic Intelligence Bureau, outfits which are suspected to be used to harass political opponents, are also covered.

The list of departments suggests that the government is sensitive to any criticism or implied criticism in the future to policies related to Kashmir and the Northeast or distant maritime regions where the intelligence and security services are salient, and is keen that suppressing dissidents and political opponents is cost-free.

## SDG: Gaps flagged, bridge them

Look at the dashboard of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) India Index of Niti Aayog showing data that was released on Thursday. It throws up little surprise — some Indian states are seen making steady progress while some fail to catch up in improving the lot of their people. And the pattern continues to be similar to what we have seen over all these decades — the South and West are doing relatively well compared with the northern and eastern states. Kerala retains its top position with 75 points while Tamil Nadu has shared the second spot with Himachal Pradesh, each scoring 74 points. Bihar is at the bottom of the list with 52 points. India as a nation has improved its own position by scoring 66 points against last year's 60 on the back of better performance in areas such as clean energy, urban development and sanitation. The 2021 index covers 17 goals, 70 targets and 115 indicators compared with last year's 17 goals, 54 targets and 100 indicators.

As per Niti Aayog, the SDG India Index is intended to provide a holistic view on the social, economic and environmental status of the country as a whole as well as those of the individual states and the Union territories and to provide decisionmakers with critical data for action. It is designed with the help of the United Nations and is expected to help states "understand reasons for differential performance and devise better strategies to achieve the SDGs by 2030". It should also throw light on the areas where more investment is needed. It's now over to the states to understand the gaps and focus their priorities.

Data are dead numbers unless the people who are entrusted with the job make proper use of it. It calls for a political will and sagacity.

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Farrukh  
Dhondy  
**Cabbages &  
Kings**



"How does a seed turn mud into trees?  
God won't say!  
Numbers of leaves defy infinites  
Nature at play!  
Odours the animals, pollen the bees  
The eternal way.  
The sun sets; birds dance on the  
breeze  
The sky is grey..."

— From Wobhi Theek by Bachchoo

BBC's Di interview,  
Harry & Meghan...  
Why do the Brits  
'love' their Queen?

**T**he most famous remark of the late Princess Diana in her BBC interview with journalist Martin Bashir was: "Well, there were three of us in this marriage, so it was a bit crowded."

It was not a revelation. Prince Charles had weeks before admitted in a publicised interview his relationship with Camilla Parker Bowles.

The remark was perceived by the media and the public as an insight into Diana's suffering and seen as an assault on the morals and integrity of the royal family. It precipitated the Queen's agreement that Charles file for a divorce.

At the time there was a lot of speculation about how Martin Bashir had persuaded Diana to give him

that interview and launch the royal scandal. Last week, 25 years after the broadcast, the report of an inquiry into that question has been published. The report, compiled by Lord Dyson (not the muck-suction tycoon) was an exposure of Martin Bashir's perfidious and possibly criminal means of obtaining the interview. Lord Dyson severely criticised the coverup of his actions by the BBC.

The report reveals that Bashir, a junior BBC journalist, got a colleague in the BBC to forge bank statements which "proved" that the press were paying Princess Diana's staff to spy on her and give them details of her relationship with an Army officer called James Hewitt. Bashir took these forged bank statements to Earl Spencer, Diana's brother, and persuaded him that Diana should tell all in an interview before the media went on to characterise her as the villain in the triangle — or quadrilateral?

In the interview, Diana admitted her relationship with Hewitt before it got exposed as scandalous. Perhaps she could have, quite justifiably, said: "Well, since there were three of us in this marriage, I assumed there could be a fourth!"

The BBC apparently knew about the forged documents and Martin Bashir's devious means of obtaining the interview and covered it up. Bashir was not reprimanded or disciplined and was, years later, hired as the BBC's head of religion.

Bashir protests that Diana was quite willing to give him an interview in any case and that his forged documents weren't instrumental in helping persuade her to speak to him.

The 25-year-old episode has been brought to light again and became the focus of media attention displacing, however briefly, the reports from the world and especially India on the Covid devastation, the Israel-Hamas conflict and terrorist activity in Mozambique. Prince William gave an interview attacking the BBC and claiming the interview had lied directly to his mother's death.

The newspapers were in the main very happy to use the Dyson report to attack the BBC without making the connection between Diana's death two years later in a speeding car which crashed in a Parisian tunnel as it was being relentlessly pursued by — no, not gremlins — the same newspaper paparazzi.

That the public is interested in the shenanigans and quarrels of the royal

family is not surprising. There's always something to report. The last three focuses on the royals were in themselves, even to a republican like myself, gentle reader, momentarily entertaining.

A year ago, Prince Andrew, the Queen's favourite son, was interviewed on the BBC's *Newsnight* programme about his involvement or friendship with the late Jacob Epstein, the paedophile billionaire who procured young girls for him.

And then there was the Prince Harry and Meghan Markle interview with Oprah Winfrey in the United States. It was seen as an assault on the prejudices and repressive controls within the royal family and caused an estrangement between Harry, his father and brother William.

The death and funeral of Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, brought Prince Harry back briefly to England but the focus shifted from Philip's deeds and gaffes to the froideur between Harry and William.

The Windsor Castle funeral, with the restrictions on gatherings imposed by the Covid lockdown, prevented any mass congregation of citizens, but still they came in their hundreds to profess their love for a man they had never met.

I completely understand, gentle reader, the admiration one may feel for, say, Muhammad Ali, Nelson Mandela or even one of the cricketers or Bollywood actors, male and female — though I suspect the last three have some affinity to the worship of deities. But love?

I just like you, have various experiences covered by the word. Parental, both ways, romantic and even loving a favourite flower, food or wine... but for members of a privileged, parasitical and patronage-lending, mostly idle family?

It's not that I feel Cromwellian in my republicanism. And I certainly don't feel that a Parliament dominated by the likes of Boris Johnson and the freeport and deport Indian variants, Priti Patel and Wishi Sunak, or the mendacious health secretary Matt Hancock are doing a better job than if we are all left to Liz II. My faith in parliamentary democracy has been deeply shaken through assessing the actions of elected leaders and parties of several nations in this our sad vale of oppressions. But the hope is that Prime Ministers are not permanent and that even in those countries the populace doesn't love them like the tribal Brits just "love" their Queen.

Subhani



## The business of gagging retired spooks isn't easy

Parsa  
Venkateshwar  
Rao Jr

### LETTERS

#### RARE GESTURE

Thirty specially designed buses that will serve as mobile intensive care units for Covid patients across the state is a boon (30 buses equipped to provide intensive care, DC, June 4). Such selfless acts are praiseworthy.

Dr Nousheen Khanum  
Hyderabad

#### WELCOME ORDER

Democracy lovers welcome the Supreme Court order in the Vinod Dua case (*Sedition charge against Vinod Dua quashed*, DC, June 4). It's even more pleasing that the court defended the fundamental right of a journalist to criticise the ruling dispensation. It's a timely shot in the arm to the fourth estate.

Phani Marur  
Hyderabad

#### REDUCE PRICES

The skyrocketing price of fuel, edible oil and food items are adding to hardships of people reeling under the pandemic with job loss and reduced salaries. I request the TS government and the Centre to take steps to control the prices.

Shaik Khader  
Secunderabad

#### THIRD WAVE ENROUTE

While appreciating the TS government for steps taken to contain Covid-19, it must not become complacent as reports of a third wave are coming in. If government and people do not prepare to fight, they will have to pay the price.

Dr G.V. Kumar  
Hyderabad

**50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN CHRONICLE**

#### Orders reserved on bail petition

HYDERABAD, June 4  
The Sixth City Magistrate, Mr. Y. Venkateswara Rao, today reserved orders on the bail petition of Thakur V. Hari Prasad, Honorary Secretary of A.P. Welfare Fund, and posted the case for tomorrow.

The Magistrate remanded Diwakar Shetty, joint secretary of Kannada Natya Ranga, to judicial custody for 15 days. The State Crime Branch CID officials arrested Diwakar Shetty last evening on charge of cheating and misappropriation.

The writer is a Delhi-based commentator and analyst

**During the Shah Commission hearings after the Emergency, P.N. Haksar, Indira Gandhi's one-time confidant, told the commission that not all orders were put in writing. It is often left to the eyewitness or the victim to speak the truth.**

HYDERABAD, June 4  
The Queen's favourite son, Prince Andrew, was interviewed on the BBC's *Newsnight* programme about his involvement or friendship with the late Jacob Epstein, the paedophile billionaire who procured young girls for him.

And then there was the Prince Harry and Meghan Markle interview with Oprah Winfrey in the United States. It was seen as an assault on the prejudices and repressive controls within the royal family and caused an estrangement between Harry, his father and brother William.

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That the public is interested in the shenanigans and quarrels of the royal

## SHORT TAKES

## GUJARAT ALLOWS OFFICES TO RUN WITH 100% STAFF

Ahmedabad, June 4: In the wake of a significant decline in Covid-19 cases, the Gujarat government on Friday announced that private as well as government offices in the state can now function with 100 per cent staff from June 7.

The decision was taken by Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani, an official release issued on Friday said. All government offices will remain open on Saturday (June 5), it added.

Private as well as government offices in Gujarat have been functioning with 50 per cent staff since the beginning of May, when the state witnessed a substantial rise in infection cases. The state government had allowed only half the work force in offices in a bid to curb the spread of the virus.

However, the number of daily infections has come down drastically in the last couple of weeks. On Thursday, Gujarat recorded 1,207 new cases and 17 deaths.

## ASSAM HALTS 1ST DOSE OF COVAXIN DUE TO SHORTAGE

Guwahati, June 4: The Assam government has stopped administering the first dose of Covaxin due to its shortage, and will accord priority to 1.50 lakh people who are due for the second dose of the jab, a state minister said on Friday.

The current stock of Covaxin in the state is 20,000 but "we will get 50,000 more doses within the next few days", minister for health and family welfare Keshab Mahanta said.

He also urged those who are slated for the second dose to not panic as the gap between the two doses has been increased from 28 to 42 days, and said they will be inoculated within the stipulated time.

The state has received 15,000 doses of vaccine on Friday, he added. Assam has 3.20 doses of Covishield and the vaccination process with it will continue as per schedule, the minister said.

## ALL MP DISTRICTS OUT OF RED ZONE, SAYS SHIVRAJ

DC CORRESPONDENT  
Bhopal, June 4

All the 52 districts in Madhya Pradesh have emerged out of the red zone, bringing the Coronavirus pandemic in the state under control, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said on Friday.

Reviewing the pandemic situation in the state, Chouhan said no district is in the red zone now and all the districts in the state have been reporting a positivity rate below five per cent for the past one week.

The review meeting has indicated that 30 out of 52 districts in the state have been reporting positivity rate below one per cent since last one week, while the other 22 have been maintaining 1.5 per cent positivity rate since the last seven days.

Three districts, Alirajpur, Jhabua and Katni have reported no fresh case on Friday, while four districts, Bhind, Mandla, Singrauli and Tikamgarh, recorded only one case each on the day.

## AMBUBACHI MELA CANCELLED FOR SECOND YEAR

Guwahati, June 4: The Ambubachi Mela at Assam's famed Kamakhya Temple here has been cancelled for the second consecutive year due to the Covid situation but rituals associated with the four-day annual fair will be performed by the priests from June 22.

The event, during which temple doors are closed for four days due to the belief of the annual menstrual cycle of Goddess Kamakhya, attracts over 25 lakh devotees from across the globe who seek blessings of the presiding deity when the doors are opened on the fifth day.

The Shakti Peeth atop the Nilachal Hill shall remain closed for visitors till June 30 and a decision regarding its reopening will be taken in consultation with the Kamrup Metropolitan district administration, a statement issued by the Maa Kamakhya Devalaya said on Friday.

No devotee shall be allowed to enter or stay on the temple premises and no arrangement for their food and lodging shall be made, it said.

## Kerala announces ₹20K-cr relief

₹5 cr set aside for children orphaned due to Covid; ₹1,000 cr to be used for free vaccination

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,  
JUNE 4

Pinarayi Vijayan government which came to power for the second time in Kerala after the recent polls, has presented its maiden budget on Friday which comprised a ₹20,000 crore special package to deal with the huge crisis triggered by Covid 19 second wave.

While presenting the budget in state Assembly, Kerala's finance minister K.N. Balagopal announced that as part of the package ₹2,800 crore would be spent on facing health emergency situation.

The minister said ₹8,900 crore would be pumped into the market through various social welfare measures including social welfare pensions.

This would in turn help people who have been plunged into grave crisis

due to loss of livelihood. Besides, ₹8,300 crore has been set aside for interest subsidy on loans granted for reviving the economy.

The minister said all community health centres, taluk and district hospitals will have 10 isolation beds each. Each medical college to have separate blocks for dealing with epidemics. Oxygen plant with a capacity of 150 metric tonne would be set up.

Balagopal said ₹1,000 cr would be utilised for providing free Covid vaccination for all above 18 years of age.

The minister announced that ₹500 crore would be spent on providing infrastructure facilities including equipment for mass vaccination drive. The government has set aside ₹5 crore for children who lost their parents due to Covid. Each orphaned

child would be given ₹3 lakh.

Balagopal said the emphasis of the new budget was on ensuring health and food for all especially during the pandemic period. With the state still fighting the second wave, the current challenges posed by the pandemic are also adversely impacting the state's development, he added.

He said the government was also gearing up to face the challenges that third wave might pose.

People spared of tax hike as Pinarayi government focuses on reviving Covid hit economy.

While sparing the people of additional tax burden, the minister said this was not the right time to impose taxes. However, he said that considering the 18.7 per cent dip in state's revenue due to Covid crisis, it would be difficult to move forward without an

increase in tax and non tax revenues.

Balagopal said the government hoped to shore up more revenues when the economy comes back on track.

## Special package for coastal areas

The minister announced a special package for the state's coastal areas which witnessed widespread destruction due to recent cyclones and rains. The government would spend ₹5,300 crore as part of coastal package for coastal conservation activities including construction of integrating tetrapods and diaphragm walls.

A special loan package of ₹2,500 crore had been announced for farmers and ₹1,000 crore loans through Kudumbasree.

Opposition slams the

government and said the budget is packed with

deceit. Opposition leader V.D. Satheesan said the government had deceived the people by making false claims. The government had earlier claimed that ₹8,900 crore would be transferred directly into the hands of people. However, now it has retracted from the announcement which clearly indicates their trickery.

Satheesan said the former finance minister Thomas Isaac before demitting office had claimed that he was leaving behind ₹5,000 crore in state's exchequer. Where is the money? asked Satheesan.

## State reports 16,229 new cases; 25,860 recover

Kerala reported 16,229 new cases of Covid on Friday even as 25,860 people recovered from infection.

The number of active cases in the state fell to 1,74,526. During the last 24 hours 1,09 lakh tests were carried out in the state and the test positivity rate was 14.82. The state also reported 135 Covid deaths on Friday.

As of now 6.93 lakh people are under observation across the state including 6.57 lakh under home or institutional quarantine.

The state government has announced that additional restrictions would be put in place in the state from June 5. Only shops selling essential commodities and the units which supply raw materials for various industrial establishments would be allowed to function.

The restrictions are being imposed with the objective of preventing third wave of Coronavirus, expected to hit in December this year, in the state.



Naveen Patnaik

## ODISHA CANCELS CLASS XII EXAMS, SAYS PATNAIK

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC  
BHUBANESWAR, JUNE 4

After the Central Board of Education (CBSE), Council of Higher Secondary Education (CHSE), Odisha also on Friday cancelled the Class 12 (Plus II) examinations this year. The decision was taken in view of the uncertain conditions due to Covid-19 pandemic and feedback received from various stakeholders.

Announcing the decision, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik said, "Education and livelihood have been the worst affected during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. However, keeping everyone safe in this pandemic is most important. Keeping in this view, the Plus II examinations conducted by CHSE have been canceled this year. Ample opportunities will come in future and the civilisation will grow, only if we survive now," he stated.

The Chief Minister also directed the CHSE to consult experts for recommendations and take steps to compile results of Plus II students as per a well-defined objective criteria in a time-bound manner.

## K'ATAKA TO HOLD CLASS X EXAMS IN JULY: MIN.

Bengaluru, June 4: The Karnataka government on Friday announced that the SSLC or 10th standard examinations will be held in July third week while cancelling the second year pre-university course (PUC) exams this year in view of the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The PUC second year students will be promoted to the next level and the grading will be based on their performance in the first PUC exam.

"The SSLC exam will have one multi-choice question paper for mathematics, science and social science and one more question paper for languages," Karnataka primary and secondary education minister S.uresh Kumar told reporters.

The multi-choice question paper bearing 40 marks will be easy and straight and there will not be any indirect questions, he said. Kumar said there will be a supplementary examination for those students who are affected by the Covid-19. The exam results will be out by August.

The exams will be conducted in 6,000 centres, which is double last year, the minister said, adding, each room will have 10 to 12 students. — PTI



A health worker collects swab samples for Coronavirus tests in Nagercoil of Tamil Nadu on Friday.

— PTI

## TN likely to extend curbs with relaxations

## Decision on class XII exams only by Monday, says minister

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, JUNE 4

The total lockdown now in force in the state is expected to continue for one more week with a few minor relaxations like letting shops selling essential items open for a few hours in a day even as officials and experts deliberated on the merits and demerits on Friday.

The meeting presided over by Chief Minister M.K. Stalin was attended by most top officials of the state like chief secretary V. Irai Anbu, health secretary J. Radhakrishnan and DGP J.K. Tripathi besides medical experts and various health department officers.

Since the two week total lockdown had led to the number of cases coming down in most parts of the state, many were in favour of continuing it for at least another week with a view to enable the rate of infection to come under control.

But many officials warned against it citing the state of the economy, pointing out the livelihood problems faced by the people mostly in the lower

district education officers, government officials and experts, some wanted the conduct of the examinations after the Covid-19 crisis was over while others favoured its cancellation.

The minister would hold a meeting with leaders of the Legislative parties in the state assembly on Saturday before finalising the issue, which has gained significance after the Centre cancelled examinations for the

CBSE and ICSE boards.

Queries came up on the granting of marks to the students in the event of calling off the examinations and concerns were also raised on fixing the eligibility for admission to colleges without granting marks, particularly when the government was mulling over not taking into consideration the scores obtained in NEET or any other qualifying examination.

ticularly those in the western part of the state.

Suggestions were made on opening big markets with restrictions and allowing businesses and commercial activities to resume in a small manner, though it was pointed out that such moves could turn risky and lead to spike in cases.

The government has also been receiving informal representations from various traders' bodies requesting the relaxation of the lockdown to enable them open their businesses, the closure of which had led to loss of livelihood for many people.

But the lack of discipline among the general people in following Covid-19 prevention norms has been a matter of concern for officials and also health experts, who feel that only a lockdown would ensure that people do not move around and spread the virus.

## Movement against plastic hit hard due to single-use items

## PPE, masks, shields adds to waste crisis

New Delhi, June 4: The

crisis of plastic and biomedical waste is deepening with each Covid case as millions of people use and throw face shields, surgical masks, gloves and PPE suits, once used primarily in hospitals and now an indispensable part of everyday life.

The movement against plastic has taken a battering in the pandemic with dependency on single-use plastic surging and households contributing to the tonnes of biomedical waste being generated, worried experts said ahead of World Environment Day on Saturday.

There has been a general increase and since it is a crisis situation, we are not thinking of plastic but general prevention. The focus is no longer plastic, so that is a problem, Ravi Agarwal, founder director of the environmental NGO Toxics Link, said.

A lot of biomedical waste like masks and PPE kits are also being generated in general homes

amounting to a 17 per cent increase in biomedical waste generation solely because of the pandemic.

Besides Covid-related waste from hospitals and homes with positive patients, there is pandemic promoted waste from non-Covid homes, including not just protective gear but also plastic packaging with more and more people using home deliveries for essential and non-essential shopping.

Under the existing waste disposal rules, biomedical waste is segregated into four categories Yellow (highly infectious waste such as human, animal, anatomical, soiled), Red (contaminated recyclable waste generated from disposables items like tubing, bottles tubes, syringes), White (waste sharps,

needles, syringes with fixed needles), and Blue (broken or discarded and contaminated glassware, including medicine vials).

Considered potentially infectious, all Covid waste, irrespective of content, is tagged Yellow and incinerated.

On the face of it, India seems well equipped to handle this extra load of biomedical waste with a national incineration capacity of 800 tonnes a day. But experts said there are other factors that needed to be taken into account.

Like the fact that due to the health crisis, non-Covid biomedical waste generation has also gone up. Secondly, these incinerators are meant for waste that has been segregated.

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The zoo veterinary team investigated the case and started treatment as per protocol. A team of experts from Tamil Nadu Veterinary and Animal Sciences University also joined the team later.

Later, 9 of the 11 lions tested positive in the examination conducted at Bhopal-based National Institute of High Security Diseases (NIHSAD). One of them died on Thursday evening.

Samples of the swabs have now been sent to the Indian Veterinary Research Institute Bareilly and the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology, Hyderabad on Friday to ascertain whether the reported findings are in the nature of false positives or the animal could have died of comorbidities.

## TN: Lioness dies of suspected Covid-19

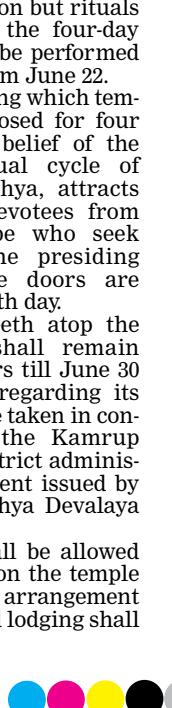
P.A. JEBARAJ | DC  
CHENNAI, JUNE 4

A nine-year-old lioness housed at the Arignar Anna Zoological Park in Vandalur has died of suspected Coronavirus infection on Thursday evening.

Eight other lions have also been tested positive for SARS-CoV-2.

The deceased lioness named Neela had been asymptomatic and showed some nasal discharge only the day before her death and had been treated immediately.

According to the statement from the zoological park, five lions housed in animal house 1 of the Safari Park Area of Arignar Anna Zoological Park showed anorexia (loss of appetite) and occasional coughing on May 26.



## SHORT TAKES

**BROWN SUGAR WORTH ₹2 CR SEIZED IN ODISHA**AKSHAYA KUMAR  
SAHOO | DC  
BHUBANESWAR, JUNE 4

The Special Task Force (STF) of Odisha Crime Branch on Friday seized huge quantities of brown sugar and arrested three persons at Jaleswar area in Balasore district.

The market value of the seized contraband weighing 2 kg is estimated to be over ₹2 crore, state Crime Branch deputy inspector general (DIG) Jay Narayan Pankaj said.

"It's a massive quantity worth over ₹2 crore. We have arrested three persons who are prima facie involved in the illegal trade. The trio belong to Balasore district. We had already seized 33 kg of brown sugar and 66 quintal ganja and arrested several peddlers since we launched our special drive last year," he added.

From the quantity of the contraband recovered from the trio, it becomes clear that they were not the retailers but were trading wholesale. It's too early to determine their modus operandi as the investigation is at an early stage, Pankaj added. The Crime Branch STF and the Odisha police have recently intensified the anti-narcotics crackdown across the state and they continue to book the traffickers on many occasions.

Dismissing the perception that shutdown would help the smugglers, the DIG clarified that the curfew had no impact on smuggling of brown sugar as transportation of small quantities is easier unlike ganja which is trafficked in bulks.

**PITHANI SENT TO 14-DAY JUDICIAL CUSTODY**SHAHAB ANSARI | DC  
MUMBAI, JUNE 4

Siddharth Pithani, late actor Sushant Singh Rajput's friend, was on Friday sent to 14-day judicial custody in connection with a drugs case.

Pithani was Rajput's former roommate and one of those who reportedly found the actor's body hanging from the ceiling fan on June 14 last year. Pithani had been questioned by the NCB last year in connection with the probe. He had been living with the late actor for about a year at the time of his death.

Pithani was served with a notice under section 67 of NDPS Act but he didn't join the investigation following which the NCB Mumbai had to gather intelligence about Pithani's whereabouts in Telangana State.

An NCB team from Mumbai went to Hyderabad where they arrested Pithani.

He has been arrested on multiple charges like consumption of drugs, financing illicit traffic and harbouring offenders and punishment for abetment and criminal conspiracy.

Later, on May 30, the NCB questioned two former domestic workers of Rajput in the drugs case. The investigating agency had issued summons against Neeraj and Keshav. Both the workers came on the radar of the NCB after Pithani was arrested.

**FADNAVIS: MAHA HIDING DEATHS IN MUMBAI**SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC  
MUMBAI, JUNE 4

Former Maharashtra chief minister Devendra Fadnavis on Friday once again alleged that the authorities are under-reporting a huge chunk of Covid deaths in Mumbai. Accusing the state government of doing jugglery in the number of coronavirus deaths in Mumbai, Fadnavis claimed that 40 per cent of the total Covid deaths have been shown as deaths due to other reasons. According to the official data, 14,922 people died in Mumbai due to Covid till Friday.

The Maharashtra court on Friday reported 14,152 new cases raising a total number of positive cases 1,96,894. A total death reported in Maharashtra is 98,771 since outbreak of pandemic. Mumbai reported 24 deaths, taking the overall toll in the city to 14,989.

Mr Fadnavis said that he has been raising the issue of Covid deaths repeatedly. "I have informed the state government about the jugglery regarding Covid deaths through several letters. Especially in Mumbai, 40 per cent deaths were reported attributing them to other reasons," he said.

**Back to work**

A roadside vendor prepares a tent as unlocking of lockdown begins in Gurugram on Friday.

**BJP sacks its Bihar MLC**NAYEAR AZAD | DC  
PATNA, JUNE 4

Simmering discontent within the NDA surfaced on Friday when BJP suspended one of its MLC Tunna Pandey for making statements against Chief Minister Nitish Kumar.

Tunna Pandey had recently stoked a controversy by calling Chief Minister Nitish Kumar a "Chief Minister of circumstances" and also threatened to expose him for "having a connection with liquor mafia since 2006".

BJP state president Sanjay Jaiswal on Friday issued his suspension letter in which he said that "a show-cause notice was served to you by the party's disciplinary committee for making comments against the party line. Instead of furnishing a valid explanation, you made another statement. You are being suspended with immediate effect".

Taking a strong objection to his controversial statements against the CM, the BJP disciplinary committee Chief Vijay Singh had served him a notice on Thursday seeking an explanation from Mr. Pandey within 10 days.

Sources said that action was initiated against Tunna Pandey after NDA allies JD(U) and HAM raised the issue with BJP state president Sanjay Jaiswal. Later when he was approached for his

**TUNNA PANDEY** had recently stoked a controversy by calling Chief Minister Nitish Kumar a "Chief Minister of circumstances"

comments regarding the issue, Mr. Pandey said that "I will give explanations regarding my statements to my party leaders soon".

He has been targeting Nitish Kumar ever since the NDA formed a government in Bihar. Recently he created a flutter in state politics by saying that "the mandate in 2020 elections was in favour of Tejashwi Yadav but Nitish Kumar became the Chief Minister by misusing official machinery".

He also refused to withdraw his statements against Nitish Kumar saying that he was not afraid of speaking the truth. "I will expose Nitish Kumar's alliance with liquor mafias in Bihar. My party is BJP but I am also a public representative so nobody can stop me from speaking the truth".

Reports suggest after he was served notice from the BJP Tunna Pandey had met Osama Shahab, son of former RJD MP Mohammad Shahabuddin. There is also a buzz that he is in touch with RJD leadership and may join the party soon.

His brother Bachcha Pandey is RJD MLA from the Barharia assembly constituency in the Siwan district.

**SCRIBE BOOKED ON CHARGES OF ATTEMPTING TO CAUSE RIOT**YUSUF JAMEEL | DC  
SRINAGAR, JUNE 4

The Jammu and Kashmir has filed an First Information Report (FIR) against a journalist based in northern Bandipore district over a WhatsApp status which referred to over 20 schoolchildren who died due to drowning in Wular, the Asia's largest freshwater lake, in May 2006 as "martryed".

The WhatsApp status of Sajid Maqbool Raina, a reporter with local news gathering agency - KNO - has the photographs of 20 victims with the caption, 'Walur martyred...30th May 2006'.

It also says, "The children share graves here. Brothers have been buried together, somewhere three children are buried in the same grave. The tragedy is still fresh. #Boat collapsed". (sic)

The FIR registered at the Bandipore police station on May 31 under sections 153 (want only giving provocation with intent to cause riot—if not committed) and 505 (statements conducing to public mischief) of the Indian Penal Code accuses Sajid of uploading the "provocative post" on social media which may hurt the sentiments of the local people and could also disturb peace.

The sections of Valley's media fraternity have expressed shock and dismay at the police action. However, a police official who spoke to this newspaper on the condition of anonymity said that the criticism is "unwarranted." He said, "The reporter has not used the word martyrs for the deceased children but martyred, implying they were deliberately killed".

**SC RELIEF FOR JOURNALIST IN RAPE CASE**

New Delhi, June 4: The Supreme Court on Friday dismissed a plea challenging the Delhi High Court order granting anticipatory bail to a Mumbai-based journalist in a rape case lodged against him by a 22-year-old woman.

We find no reason to interfere. The special leave petition is dismissed, said a vacation bench of Justices Navin Sinha and Ajay Rastogi while rejecting the plea filed by the complainant.

The high court had on May 13 granted anticipatory bail to journalist Varun Hirani while rejecting the plea filed by the complainant.

The complainant has alleged that she was raped by the accused at a five-star hotel in Chanakyapuri on February 20.

Hirani had approached the high court after his anticipatory bail plea was dismissed by a trial court here on March 12.

**Faith matters**

Bandaru Dattatraya, Governor for Himachal Pradesh, offers prayers at Hanuman Temple in the Raj Bhavan premises in Shimla on the occasion of Hanuman Jayanti.

**DOCS NEED PROTECTION FROM COVID, BJP GOVT'S CALLOUSNESS: RAHUL**

New Delhi, Jun 4:

Critical of the government's handling of Covid, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Friday said doctors need protection from coronavirus and the BJP dispensation's callousness as he made an appeal to save them.

"Doctors need protection from coronavirus as well as BJP governments' callousness. Save the savours," he said on Twitter.

Meanwhile, BJP leader Anurag Thakur said on Friday that the Congress is upset over the Central Vista project as it is not named after "Gandhi Family".

He asked Rahul Gandhi that why did he not question chief ministers of Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra who have granted approval the projects similar to Central Vista.

**Covid is the biggest challenge, says Modi****Modi hails Indian scientists for developing vaccines****Punjab making profit from vaccination, accuses BJP**DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 4

With the Congress leadership busy diffusing a possible political crisis in Punjab in the wake of growing infighting, the BJP on Friday accused the Amarinder Singh-led state government of deserting people during the ongoing pandemic and "making a profit from vaccination."

Citing media reports claiming that the Punjab government made profits by selling its quota of vaccines to private hospitals - which cost the government ₹420 per dose, were sold at ₹1,060 and were then administered by hospitals at a price for ₹1,560 - the BJP also took a swipe at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and told him that

"Our scientists, within a year, developed 'Made in India' vaccine and made it available to the countrymen," he said.

India has indigenously developed Covaxin vaccine against coronavirus.

He said within a year, scientists made the country self-reliant by making Covid testing kits. In a short span, they discovered many drugs to treat coronavirus and developed ways to speed up oxygen production.

"Because of your contribution, immense talent, the country is fighting this big war (against coronavirus)," Modi said.

On the occasion, Modi reiterated his call for an Atmanirbhar Bharat

**THE BJP** cited reports claiming that the Punjab made profits by selling its quota of vaccines to private hospitals.

instead of giving lectures to others, he should first consider how to set things right in the state ruled by his party. "Today the entire (Congress) party and the government of Punjab are in Delhi. Who will look after Punjab?

Ignoring Punjab for their internal fight. This is a big sin of Congress," said senior BJP leader and Union minister Prakash Javadekar.

After the state government came under fire over alleged profiteering from its quota of 1.14 lakh vaccines by diverting most of them to private hospitals, who sold them at an "exorbitant price," the Punjab government withdrew its order to provide one-time limited vaccine doses to the age group of 18-44 years through private hospitals and directed the hospitals to immediately return all the vaccines available with them.

Punjabi chief minister Amarinder Singh, who arrived in the national capital on Thursday, met a three-member committee, set up by the Congress high command to resolve infighting in the party's state unit, at All India Congress Committee (AICC) headquarters.

Targetting Mr Gandhi, Mr Javadekar said that Punjab has been badly hit by the Covid-19 pandemic but there is no proper management of inoculation drive in the state.

"But the country's goals and dreams are based on the foundation of the 21st century. Which is why the goals of the CSIR are also extraordinary," he said.

He urged the scientists to go ahead keeping in mind the 75 years of Independence, with clear goals and time bound framework, with a clear direction. This will help in changing the work culture, he said.

"Which is why our goals should be two steps ahead of the future. We have to work on the needs of this decade and future decades from now," he stressed.

India wants to be self-reliant in a number of sectors, ranging from agriculture, disaster management to defence technology, vaccine to viral

tual reality, and biotechnology to battery technology, he said.

He said India is now showing the way to the world in sustainable development and clean energy, and is playing an important role in progress in other countries with its software and satellite development.

Modi said with regards to disaster management, the world has a pandemic like coronavirus before it. But similar challenges will be in store in the future. For example, experts worldwide are predicting climate change, he said.

"Our scientists, our institutions should prepare ourselves for this future challenges with a scientific approach," he said.

India wants to be self-reliant in a number of sectors, ranging from agriculture, disaster management to defence technology, vaccine to viral

— PTI

**The team led by CBI DIG was stationed in Dominica for seven days to bring back Choksi****Indian team sent to bring back Choksi leaves Dominica**

New Delhi, June 4: India's multi-agency team that had gone to Dominica to bring back Mehul Choksi is headed back home on a Qatar Airways private jet after the island nation's high court adjourned the hearing on Choksi's habeas corpus petition.

A habeas corpus petition is filed for producing before a court a person who is under arrest or in unlawful detention.

It is likely that the next hearing may take place after a month and the businessman will remain in Dominica, local media reported. Judge Bernie Stephenson will decide the next date of hearing after meeting both sides, media outlet Antigua News Room said.

The team led by CBI DIG Sharda Raut was stationed in Dominica for nearly seven days to bring back Choksi, who is wanted in

the ₹13,500-crore Punjab National Bank (PNB) scam, to India. On Thursday, the Dominica High Court adjourned the hearing on Choksi's habeas corpus petition.

Interpol Red Notice against him, arrived before presiding Roseau Magistrate Court in black shorts and a blue T-shirt from the Dominica-China Friendship Hospital, where he is undergoing treatment. His application for bail was rejected.

Choksi and his nephew Nirav Modi had fled India in the first week of January 2018, weeks before the PNB scam rocked the Indian banking industry.

The duo allegedly bribed officials of the state-run bank to get Letters of Undertaking (LoU) on the basis of which they availed loans from overseas banks that remained unpaid.

The allegedly corrupt bank officials did not enter these LoUs in the

core banking software of PNB, thus evading scrutiny. The non-payment of these LoUs or bank guarantees worth ₹13,500 crore resulted in default and became a liability on the bank. Choksi had mysteriously gone missing on May 23 from Antigua and Barbuda, where he has been staying since 2018 as a citizen since he fled Delhi.

He was detained in neighbouring island country Dominica for illegal entry after a possible romantic escapade with his rumoured girlfriend.

His lawyers alleged that he was kidnapped from Jolly Harbour in Antigua by policemen looking like Antiguan and Indian and brought to Dominica on a boat.

— PTI



Mehul Choksi is taken in a wheelchair to the Magistrate's court by police after his arrest for illegal entry into the country in Roseau, Dominica. — AP

## SHORT TAKES

**FIRE AT JUVENILE DETENTION KILLS 6 KIDS IN EGYPT**

Cairo: A fire broke out on Thursday at a juvenile detention center in Egypt's capital of Cairo, killing at least six children, officials said.

The officials said the fire followed a fist-fight between two children in one ward at the facility, located in the city's Marj district. More than two dozen other children were injured, they said.

Police are holding those running the facility as prosecutors investigate the cause of the fire, the officials said.

The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to brief media.

It was not immediately clear what caused the fire. Initial investigation blamed an electric short-circuit for the blaze, according to state-run media.

The state-run newspaper *Akhbar el-Yom* reported that the children were not able to flee the fire because the ward was locked.

**JAILED SAMSUNG LEADER FINED FOR PROPOFOL SHOTS**

**Seoul:** South Korean prosecutors fined the jailed de facto leader of the giant Samsung group 50 million won (\$45,000) on Friday for illegally taking shots of the anaesthetic propofol. Lee Jae-yong — the 168th richest person in the world according to Forbes — is currently serving a two-and-a-half year prison sentence for bribery, embezzlement and other offences in connection with the corruption scandal that brought down ex-South Korean president Park Geun-hye.

He is also standing a separate trial over alleged stock manipulation that effectively eased the path for him to take control of the family conglomerate. Propofol is normally a medical anaesthetic but is also sometimes used recreationally. An overdose of the drug was given as the cause of pop star Michael Jackson's death in 2009.

Lee was accused of having repeatedly taken it at a plastic surgery clinic in Seoul in 2017 and 2018.

**GERMAN CLERIC TO QUIT OVER CHURCH ABUSE**

**Berlin:** A leading German cardinal and confidant of Pope Francis, Cardinal Reinhard Marx, offered to resign Friday over the Catholic Church's "catastrophic" mishandling of clergy sexual abuse cases, declaring in an extraordinary gesture that the scandals had brought the church to "a dead end." The archdiocese of Munich and Freising, where Marx has served as archbishop since 2007, published his resignation letter to the pope online, in multiple languages, and the cardinal said Francis had given him permission to make it public.

"It is important to me to share the responsibility for the catastrophe of the sexual abuse by Church officials over the past decades," the 67-year-old Marx wrote in the letter. But he also issued a challenge of sorts for his fellow bishops to use the opportunity of the scandal to save the church and reform it. There was no immediate comment from the Vatican, where Marx sits on powerful financial and political committees.

**12 OZ FIRMS FINED FOR BREAKING PELL ORDER**

**Canberra:** A judge on Friday ordered a dozen Australian media companies to pay fines from 1,000 Australian dollars (\$766) to AU\$450,000 (\$345,000) for breaching a gag order by publishing references to Cardinal George Pell's since-overturned convictions in 2018 for child sexual abuse.

Dozens of companies, reporters and editors were initially charged with contempt and breaching a suppression order over their coverage of the convictions, which were banned from publication in Australia until February 2019.

Such suppression orders are common in the Australian and British judicial systems. But the enormous international interest in an Australian criminal trial with global ramifications highlighted the difficulty in enforcing such orders in the digital age. The media companies pleaded guilty in February to 21 charges of contempt in a plea deal in the Victoria state Supreme Court.



People hold up their phones with the light on in the Causeway Bay district of Hong Kong on Friday, after police closed the venue where Hong Kong people traditionally gather annually to mourn the victims of China's Tiananmen Square crackdown in 1989 which the authorities have banned citing the Coronavirus pandemic and vowed to stamp out any protests on the anniversary. — AFP

**HK park empty for 1st time in 32 years on Tiananmen anniv.**

**Cops enforce ban public commemorations but protests flicker at distance**

**Hong Kong, June 4:** A Hong Kong park that traditionally hosts huge vigils on the anniversary of China's deadly Tiananmen Square crackdown lay empty for the first time late Friday as police blocked access, but flashes of defiance still flickered across the city.

Huge crowds have routinely gathered in Hong Kong's Victoria Park to mark the anniversary of Chinese troops crushing peaceful democracy protests in Beijing's Tiananmen Square on June 4, 1989.

Hundreds were killed in the crackdown, by some estimates more than 1,000.

Public commemorations are forbidden on the mainland and, until recently, semi-autonomous Hong Kong was the one place in China where large scale

remembrance was still tolerated.

This year's vigil was banned at a time when authorities are carrying out a sweeping clampdown on dissent following huge and often violent democracy protests two years ago.

Police threw cordon around the Victoria Park, keeping crowds out and leaving the venue free of candle carrying mourners for the first time in 32 years.

city last year to stamp out dissent.

Unable to muster en masse, many Hong Kong residents still found other ways to mourn the dead.

Activists who approached the park were stopped and searched, while officers used loud hooters and signs to call for people to disperse from nearby streets.

Some officers displayed signs warning chanting crowds that they were in breach of a sweeping new national security law

Beijing imposed on the

**POLICE THREW**  
cordons around the Victoria Park, keeping crowds out and leaving the venue free of candle carrying mourners for the first time in 32 years.

Police arrested an organiser of Hong Kong's annual candlelight vigil remembering the deadly crackdown in Beijing's Tiananmen Square, warned people not to attend the banned event and cordoned off parts of the venue on Friday as authorities mute China's last pro-democracy voices.

In past years, tens of thousands of people gathered in Hong Kong's Victoria Park to honour those who

died when China's military put down student-led pro-democracy protests on June 4, 1989.

Hundreds, if not thousands, were killed. China's ruling Communist Party has never allowed public events on the mainland to mark the anniversary and security was increased at the Beijing square, with police checking pedestrians' IDs as tour buses shuttled Chinese tourists in and out.

Chinese officials say the country's rapid economic development in the years since what they call the "political turmoil" of 1989 proves that decisions made at the time were correct.

Efforts to suppress public memory of the Tiananmen events have lately turned to Hong Kong. — AFP/AP

**China urges closer Afghan ties as US pullout looms**

**Beijing, June 4:** China is urging closer security and economic cooperation with Afghanistan in an apparent effort to bolster its influence in the region as the US and its allies prepare to withdraw their forces from the country.

The official *Xinhua* News Agency reported that foreign ministers from China, Afghanistan and Pakistan met via video conference on Thursday and agreed that the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan should be carried out in a responsible and orderly manner to prevent the deterioration of the security situation in Afghanistan and the return of "terrorist forces."

It quoted Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi as saying the three countries "needed to strengthen communication and cooperation" for the sake

of Afghanistan's interests and those of neighbouring countries.

The security and stability of Afghanistan and the region are facing new challenges, with foreign troops' withdrawal from Afghanistan accelerated, the peace and reconciliation process in Afghanistan impacted, and armed conflicts and terrorist activities becoming more frequent," Wang was quoted as saying. China has long resented the presence of US and allied forces in Afghanistan, but is equally wary of the country becoming a haven for insurgents that could threaten security in its Xinjiang region that shares a narrow border with Afghanistan.

Xinhua said Wang, Afghan Foreign Minister Mohammad Haneef Atmar and Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi "stressed the need to ...

forbid any terrorist organisations or individuals from using their territories to engage in criminal activities against other countries."

China has sought to invest in Afghan resources, particularly copper, but constant fighting between the government, the Taliban and other groups has largely held back such projects. China has also sought to boost already close ties with Pakistan through its Belt and Road initiative, but the country's economic weakness and security problems have blunted the success of that drive.

The United States is preparing to wrap up its longest war by withdrawing the last of its 2,500-3,500 troops along with 7,000 allied Nato forces by September 11 at the latest, generating fears of increased chaos in a country already deeply insecure. — AP

**London, June 4:** Group of Seven finance ministers kicked off talks Friday with optimism growing that the world's wealthiest countries will support US-backed plans for a minimum global level of corporate tax.

British finance minister Rishi Sunak was hosting the meet — held in person after an easing of Covid restrictions and attended by counterparts from Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States.

The talks were preparing the ground for a broad-based summit of G7 leaders in Cornwall, southwest England starting on June 11, which will include US President Joe Biden on his first foreign tour since taking office in January.

Momentum is building for a minimum level of corporate tax to prevent multinationals like tech giants from playing the system to boost profits.

Corporate tax is one of two pillars in efforts for global fiscal reforms, the other being a "digital tax"

to allow countries to tax the profits of multinationals headquartered overseas.

It is increasingly clear that in a complex, global, digital economy, we cannot continue to rely on a tax system that was largely designed as in the 1920s," Sunak said in opening remarks.

"And I would just say this: The world has noticed. And I believe they

**S. Korea air chief quits as abused woman ends life**

**Seoul, June 4:** South Korea's air force chief resigned on Friday, apologising and taking responsibility for the death of a member of the force who took her own life, according to her family, after being sexually harassed by a colleague.

"I would like to extend my apology to the citizens and deep condolences to the deceased person and her family, after being sexually harassed by a colleague," Lee said in a statement.

Lee Seong-yong offered to step down a day after an air force master sergeant was arrested on charges of molesting and injuring a female colleague of the same rank in March.

The family of the victim said she had suffered mental distress and persistent bullying, and accused the air force of trying to cover up the assault and silence her over the past two months.

President Moon Jae-in immediately accepted Lee's resignation, his press secretary said, making him the shortest serving South Korean air

force chief after appointing him in September.

"I would like to extend my apology to the citizens and deep condolences to the deceased person and her family, after being sexually harassed by a colleague," Lee said in a statement.

The case sparked a public outcry after the woman's family filed a petition with Moon's office on Tuesday calling for a thorough investigation and punishment for those involved. More than 326,000 people have signed it so far.

Moon ordered an investigation on Thursday including on how the air force handled the case, as the family reported three officials at Lee's base to military prosecutors, accusing two of them of dereliction of duty and attempted compulsion and the other of sexual harassment. — Reuters

**NZ allows way for China extradition**

**Wellington, June 4:** New Zealand's top court on Friday left open the possibility that a man could be extradited to China to face murder charges in a landmark case that has big diplomatic implications.

It remains uncertain whether the extradition of Kyung Yup Kim will proceed in a case that has already dragged on for more than a decade.

The dispute hinges on whether New Zealand can be assured that Kim will get a fair trial if he's sent to China and won't be tortured. New Zealand doesn't have an extradition treaty with China.

New Zealand's Supreme Court on Friday didn't make a final ruling on the case but asked for more information from Justice Minister Kris Faafoi and others to be submitted by the end of July.

The 3-2 split decision found that it was possible for New Zealand to get sufficient assurance from China about Kim's welfare, partially overturning an earlier appeals court ruling.

Such assurances could include confirmation that representatives could visit Kim at least every 48 hours during the investigation and that the trial take place in Shanghai. But times have changed since a previous justice minister from a conservative government backed extradition. Faafoi is from a liberal government and will decide how to proceed at a time when relations with China have deteriorated.

The court acknowledged Faafoi might see things differently, saying he would be "entitled to depart from the previous minister's decision." — AP

**Corporate tax 'in sight' as G7 meets**

Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak speaks to Canada's finance minister Chrystia Freeland (right) on the first day of the G7 Finance Ministers Meeting at Lancaster House in London on Friday. — AFP

over a minimum global minimum corporate tax rate.

They then hope to reach broader agreement at a G20 finance meeting scheduled for July.

Ministers also plan to commit to "sustain policy support", or stimulus, for "as long as necessary" to nurture economic recovery, while addressing climate change and inequalities in society, according to the document.

Furthermore, they will urge "equitable, safe and affordable access to Covid-19 vaccines" everywhere.

The thorny topic of the regulation of digital currencies such as bitcoin will also be on the agenda. Biden has called for a unified minimum corporate tax rate of 15 percent in negotiations with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and G20. His proposal has so far won broad support from countries such as France and Germany, as well as the International Monetary Fund. — AFP

have high expectations for what we all can agree over the coming days.

"Opportunities to make truly lasting reforms like this do not come very often, and I sincerely hope that we seize the moment." The finance chiefs and central bankers of the world's seven richest nations will express "strong support" and a "high level of ambition"

**EXCITEMENT | APPREHENSION 11-day long annual celebration of cinema, will be held in person from July 6 to 17th**

**Cannes film festival all set to showcase 61 films**

Jodie Foster

around this year's opening film — French director Leos Carax's *Annette*, starring Adam Driver and Marion Cotillard.

Handsome in that very

French shabby-chic, chain smoking style, Carax is known for his "poetic, enigmatic" films that often tell tales of "tortured love". Carax's last film to premiere at Cannes was *Holy Motors* in 2012. It has been ranked as the 16th greatest film of the 21st century in a BBC critics' poll. Annette is a musical about a provocative stand-up comedian and his wife, a world-famous soprano, and the unexpected turn their life takes when their daughter Annette is born, a girl with a unique gift".

Also in the Competition

section this year is *Flag Day*, a thriller directed by and starring Sean Penn, as well as Wes Anderson's *The French Dispatch*. The comedy-drama's ensemble cast includes the starlings of American cinema, from Benicio delToro, Tilda Swinton and Frances McDormand to Willem Dafoe, Bill Murray and Owen Wilson.

Forty-five years after she was part of the Palais Croisette, in Competition alongside Taxi Driver was Shyam Benegal's Hindi film, *Nishant*, starring Shabana Azmi.

Smita Patil, Naseeruddin Shah, Girish Karnad and Amrish Puri.

This year there is no Indian film in Cannes' official section.5

## SHORT TAKES

UN WITHDRAWS  
GAZA DIRECTOR  
AFTER THREATS

**Jerusalem:** The UN agency for Palestinian refugees says it has recalled its Gaza director after he faced threats over remarks in which he appeared to praise Israel's "huge sophistication" in carrying out precision strikes during last month's Gaza war.

UNRWA, which provides essential health, education and other services in the territory, said late on Thursday that it was "seriously concerned" about the threats, including a "very large protest" outside its Gaza headquarters on Monday.

It said Gaza director Matthias Schmale and his deputy have been recalled to UNRWA's headquarters in east Jerusalem for "consultations." The agency cited media reports that "Palestinian factions" had declared Schmale and his deputy persona non grata in Gaza but said it received no formal notification to that effect.

ROHINGYA  
REFUGEES LAND  
OFF INDONESIA

**Aceh, Indonesia:** A boat filled with dozens of Rohingya, mostly women and children, landed on an island off the Indonesian coast early Friday (Jun 4), according to a reporter and the UN refugee agency.

It is the latest wave of arrivals by the persecuted minority in Muslim-majority Indonesia, after often perilous, months-long sea journeys from cramped refugee camps in Bangladesh — next to their native Myanmar.

The group of about 80 Rohingya landed on tiny Pulau Idaman, a small island just off the coast of northern Sumatra, a reporter said, citing figures from local officials.

The UNHCR, the UN's refugee agency, also confirmed the landing but declined to discuss details. It was not clear where the group departed from before Friday's arrival.

Idaman island resident Muhammad Upin said he spotted the refugees' boat early Friday morning.

AUSTRIA GRAPPLING  
WITH VIOLENCE  
AGAINST WOMEN

**Vienna:** The 35-year-old woman was working at a tobacco shop in Vienna when authorities say her ex-boyfriend doused her in gasoline and set her ablaze in March. In April, another woman the same age was found shot to death in her home in the Austrian capital, also reportedly by her ex-partner.

They were the sixth and ninth women to be killed in Austria this year, and five more have followed in the weeks since. That has brought this year's total so far to 14 slain women, making the Alpine nation one of the few European Union countries where the number of women killed is higher than the number of men.

The recent high-profile cases have led to widespread protests, demands for government intervention and condemnations from Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz and President Alexander van der Bellen. "Too little is being done to protect women from violence," van der Bellen said recently after meeting with representatives of women's shelters and violence prevention organisations.

SA SEEKS RED  
NOTICE AGAINST  
GUPTA BROTHERS

**Johannesburg:** The National Prosecuting Authority Johannesburg has asked Interpol to issue a Red Notice against Indian-origin businessman Atul and Rajesh Gupta, their wives and business associates, according to an official. The move aims at bringing them to South Africa so that they stand trial for their alleged role in a R25 million fraud and money laundering case linked to the failed Estina Dairy Farm project in Free State province.

A Red Notice is a request to law enforcement worldwide to locate and provisionally arrest a person pending extradition, surrender or similar legal action, according to the Interpol website. Atul and Rajesh, along with their elder brother Ajay, have also been accused of siphoning billions of Rands from the state-owned corporations through their alleged closeness to former South African president Jacob Zuma.

## Lancet: Pfizer vax weaker vs Delta variant

Antibodies found to be five times lower in neutralising virus strain originally identified in India



Tunisians working in the tourism industry receive a dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 Coronavirus vaccine on Friday in Tunis. The North African country reopened its borders to tour operators in late April but then ordered a new week-long partial lockdown at the start of May because of a spike in Coronavirus cases. — AFP

## Fauci tells China to release health records of nine bat cave patients

**Washington, June 4:** Top US scientist Anthony Fauci has urged China to release the medical records of nine people who fell sick with a coronavirus-like illness prior to the outbreak, saying they could provide insights into whether the pandemic came from a lab.

The "lab leak" theory has gained increasing traction, fuelled by reports that six miners fell ill in 2012 and three researchers from the Wuhan Institute

of Virology became sick in 2019 after visiting a bat cave in the southwestern Chinese province of Yunnan.

In an interview with *The Financial Times* on Thursday, US President Joe Biden's chief medical adviser said the records could answer critical questions over the contested origins of Covid-19 in Wuhan, where a pandemic that has killed over 3.6 million people worldwide began.

"I would like to see the medical records of the three people who are reported to have got sick in 2019," Fauci said. "Did they really get sick, and if so, what did they get sick with?"

"The same with the miners who got ill years ago... What do the medical records of those people say?" he asked.

"It is entirely conceivable that the origins of Sars-CoV-2 was in that cave and either started spreading naturally or went through the lab."

Fauci has previously said he believes Covid-19 was a natural occurrence, though he has admitted to not being "100 percent" certain. China wholly rejects the lab leak theory, and has instead accused the US of peddling conspiracies and politicising the pandemic to divert attention from the high death rates there. Evidence to support the hypothesis is also scant. — AFP

STUDENT BLOCK  
IN GERMANY  
QUARANTINED

**Berlin, June 4:** A tower block housing students in the German city of Dresden has been put under quarantine after a resident who had returned from India died.

The city says mandatory coronavirus tests will be carried out on all residents Friday and they will remain under quarantine until Tuesday, by when test results and sequencing should be complete. It didn't specify how many people are affected.

A statement said the young man who died after contracting Covid-19 had no known previous conditions, and his condition deteriorated rapidly, leading authorities to suspect that he was infected with the delta variant, first discovered in South Africa. — PTI

**Paris, June 4:** A stroll in Pablo Picasso's footsteps in Montmartre; breathing in the scents of Provence; a humbling walk along D-Day beaches: these and all of France's other attractions will once again become easily accessible to most foreign tourists from next week — if they are vaccinated.

France is putting itself back on the menu as a destination for international tourists who have had coronavirus jabs. The government announced on Friday that they are removing the need for coronavirus tests for vaccinated Europeans. It is also allowing vaccinated tourists from most of the rest of the world, including the United

States, to come back, provided they have a negative test.

The relaxed rules will kick in from Wednesday, offering a boost for France's tourism sector. However, tourism will not be possible from countries wrestling with virus surges and worrisome variants. The "red list" for the moment has 16 countries, including India, South Africa, and Brazil. Outside of Europe, most of the rest of the world is classed as "orange" in the new travel rulebook released on Friday. — AP

**Paris, June 4:** A stroll in Pablo Picasso's footsteps in Montmartre; breathing in the scents of Provence; a humbling walk along D-Day beaches: these and all of France's other attractions will once again become easily accessible to most foreign tourists from next week — if they are vaccinated.

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## quick BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	52,100.05
Nifty 50	15,670.30
S&P 500*	4,225.86
Dollar (₹)	73.0
Pound Sterling (₹)	102.91
Euro (₹)	88.44
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	47,917▼388
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	71.95
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.028
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.564 -0.063

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

## Govt caps trade margin on O2 machine at 70%

The government has capped the trade margin on oxygen concentrators at 70 per cent at the distributor level. The chemicals and fertilisers ministry said the decision has been taken in view of volatility in the MRP of oxygen concentrators. As per information collected by the government, margin on the oxygen concentrators at the distributor level currently ranges up to 198 per cent, the ministry added.

## SBI lends ₹3,725 cr to Jewar Intl airport near Delhi



The Yamuna International Airport Pvt Ltd (YIAPL) has secured a loan of Rs 3,725 crore from the SBI for developing the Noida international airport at Jewar in UP. YIAPL is a Zurich Airport International subsidiary. The entire loan has been underwritten by SBI on a door-to-door loan tenor of 20 years," Christoph Schnellmann, CEO, YIAPL, said. Door-to-door loan means the principal and interest have to be paid within 20 years.

## TCPL launches 'Sonnets By Tata Coffee' brand

Tata Consumer Products Ltd (TCPL) has made a foray into the premium roast and ground coffee segment with the launch of brand 'Sonnets By Tata Coffee'. Through this brand, TCPL is eyeing customers seeking a special coffee experience. These are microlot coffees that are limited edition offerings and are processed on the estates in a distinctive manner, it said. The aim is "to make it the go-to choice for the well-travelled."

## Bayer opens consumer health division in India

Bayer said it has launched its Consumer Health division in India comprising 10 brands across the categories of allergy, dermatology, nutrition and analgesics. These brands include Saridon, Supradyn, Becozym C Forte, Benadon, Alaspan, Canesten and Bayer's Tonic. The brands Saridon and Supradyn licensed to Piramal Consumer Products division in the past, have been transitioned back to Bayer, it said.

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## Economy to grow at 9.5%; inflation seen at 5.1% RBI cuts growth forecast, leaves rates untouched

FALAKNAAZ SYED

MUMBAI, JUNE 4

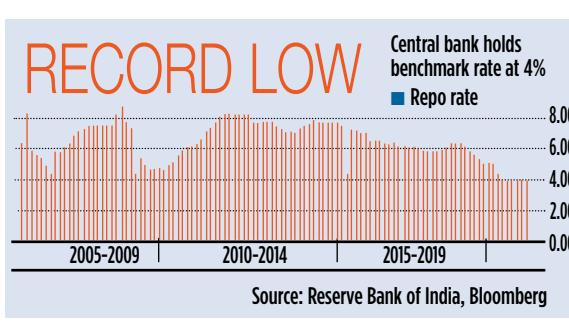
Caught between slowing growth amid the second wave of the Covid pandemic and inflationary pressures, the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) monetary policy committee (MPC) stayed put on policy rates on Friday. The MPC also continued with its accommodative stance "as long as necessary" to support growth.

A status quo in the policy repo rate means that there is unlikely to be any change in your equated monthly instalments (EMIs) on your home loans or car loans as of now. On the flip side, your fixed deposits too would continue to fetch the same low returns.

This was the committee's second bi-monthly monetary policy meeting of the current fiscal and it was widely expected that the rates would remain steady. The MPC, which is the rate setting panel, has kept the repo rate unchanged in the last five bi-monthly policy meets, too.

The six-member monetary policy committee headed by governor Shaktikanta Das voted unanimously for keeping repo rate - RBI's key lending rate - unchanged at 4 per cent, and the reverse repo rate - the borrowing rate - at 3.35 per cent.

"The MPC was of the view that at this juncture, policy support from all sides is required to regain the momentum of growth that was evident in



Source: Reserve Bank of India, Bloomberg

### REITERATES CONCERN OVER CRYPTO TRADING

SUVASHREE GHOSH

JUNE 4

The RBI reiterated its concerns over cryptocurrencies, clarifying its stance on digital assets just days after the regulator told banks to set aside a 2018 ban on trading.

"There is no change in RBI's position," RBI governor Shaktikanta Das told reporters. "We have major concerns around cryptocurrency, which

we have conveyed to the government."

Das' comments come less than a week after the central bank told banks, which are needed to help facilitate crypto trades, not to cite a 2018 RBI circular as a reason to prevent such transactions. The order, which has since been struck down by the Supreme Court, can't be cited or quoted from, it said.

—Bloomberg

H2:2020-21 and to nurture the recovery after it has taken root. Accordingly, the MPC decided to keep the policy rate at its current level of 4 per cent and to continue with the accommodative stance as long as necessary to revive and sustain growth on a durable basis and continue to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 on the economy, while ensuring that inflation remains within the target going forward," said the RBI governor.

The RBI has projected CPI inflation at 5.1 per cent for FY22 with 5.2 per cent in Q1; 5.4 per cent in

Anticipating some impact on the economy of the second Covid-19 wave, the RBI also trimmed the growth forecast by 100 basis points at 9.5 per cent from 10.5 per cent. Inflation for FY22 was revised upwards by 10 basis points with risks broadly balanced.

One basis point is one hundredth of a percent age point.

The RBI has projected CPI inflation at 5.1 per cent for FY22 with 5.2 per cent in Q1; 5.4 per cent in

Q2; 4.7 per cent in Q3; and 5.3 per cent in Q4 FY22. The rising trajectory of international commodity prices, especially of crude, together with logistics costs, pose upside risks to the inflation outlook while a normal south-west monsoon should help to keep cereal price pressures in check.

Deploying an expanded set of tools to support financial conditions in the economy, including interventions in bond and foreign exchange markets, the RBI also continued with its targeted support approach to the most stressed segments.

"We believe inflation management could pose a serious challenge to RBI when the fuel price pass through starts to occur," said India Ratings.

The bigger move was with regards to yield management as the RBI stressed on smooth liquidity management and orderly government securities borrowings. To soften the G-SAP yield, the RBI announced G-SAP 2.0 with a higher amount of Rs 1.2 lakh crore.

On the liquidity front, the RBI has created a new on-tap liquidity window for contact intensive sectors and allocated an additional Rs 16,000 crore to Sidhi to meet the funding requirements of micro, small and medium enterprises.

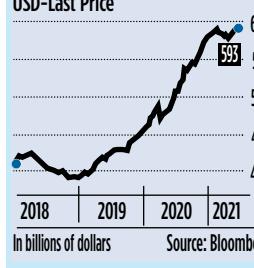
Das further stated that his focus now will be on equitable distribution of systemic liquidity than on simply providing adequate systemic liquidity.

## FX reserves to help manage global spillovers: Das

### Forex buffers

Forex pile will help fight spillovers

■ India foreign exchange reserves USD-Last Price



In billions of dollars Source: Bloomberg

ANIRAN NAG

JUNE 4

The country's foreign exchange reserves have by all indications crossed \$600 billion, central bank chief Shaktikanta Das said, a huge buffer that will help insulate Asia's third-largest economy from global spillovers and volatile external flows.

Earlier this year, the country's forex reserves briefly surpassed Russia's to become the world's fourth-largest, as the Reserve Bank of India continued to hoard dollars to cushion the economy against any sudden outflows. The reserves are enough to cover around 15 months of imports and have been bolstered by rising inflows into the booming stock market and FDI.

"While these flows ease external financing constraints, they also impart volatility to financial markets and asset prices, while producing undesirable and unintended fluctuations in liquidity," Das said.

—Bloomberg

## EU, UK open antitrust probe against Facebook over classified ads

KELVIN CHANAP

LONDON, JUNE 4



announcement that it launched its own probe to examine whether Facebook's collection and use of data gave it an unfair advantage over competitors providing classified data and online dating services.

The coordinated effort represents an escalation by European regulators in their battle to rein in the dominance of big tech companies. The focus of the investigations highlights a longstanding concern that the data they collect from people or businesses using their platforms is used to get an advantage over competitors, which could include those same businesses.

Facebook collects vast troves of data on the activities of users of its social network and beyond, enabling it to target specific customer groups, said Margrethe Vestager, the European Commission's executive vice president in charge of competition policy.

We

will

look in detail at whether this data gives Facebook an undue competitive advantage, in particular on the online classified ads sector, where people buy and sell goods every day, and where Facebook also competes with companies from which it collects data, Vestager said.

The

UK's Competition and Markets Authority said in a simultaneous

## Restaurant stock leaps over panda pregnancy



SHOKO ODA

JUNE 4

Shares of a Tokyo-based Chinese restaurant operator surged after local media reported that a panda at a nearby zoo may be pregnant, stoking investor speculation of increased foot traffic in the area.

Totenko Company stock jumped as much as 29 per cent, the most in almost four years, after local broadcaster FNN reported that Shin Shin, a giant panda at Tokyo's Ueno Zoo, may be expecting. The zoo had announced earlier in March that Shin Shin and Ri Ri had mated twice.

Tokyo governor Yuriko Koike confirmed the reports, local broadcaster NTV reported. Seiyoken, another nearby eatery, rose as much as 11 per cent, with trading more than five times the three-month average.

The restaurant stock has served as a gauge for panda-related news in the past. In February 2017, Totenko shares also jumped after Ueno Zoo announced that the same pair of pandas had mated. Shares surged again when Shin Shin gave birth to a cub the same year in June.

The news coincides with the reopening of the popular Ueno Zoo on Friday, which had been closed since December amid the Covid-19 outbreak in Tokyo. Visits require a reservation and the zoo is limiting visitors to 2,000 a day under infection prevention protocols.

The pandas are one of the main draws to the zoo.

—Bloomberg

## FM pushes ministries, PSUs to step up capex

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO

NEW DELHI, JUNE 4



Nirmala Sitharaman

ous measures to expedite infrastructure investment were discussed.

Besides, Sitharaman will also hold a meeting with heads of public and private sector insurers on Saturday for faster settlement of claims under the Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJ-B) and Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMBSY) during the pan-

try.

According to finance ministry sources, the minister discussed capital expenditure road map of key ministries and the central public sector enterprises (CPSEs) under them, the status of the implementation of budget announcements, and vari-

for that particular fiscal.

Investment will include expenditure incurred on new plant, machinery, equipment and associated utilities, research and development (R&D), and transfer of technology relating to the facilities setup for the products.

Investment in R&D should not exceed 15 per cent of the total committed investment, the guidelines added.

The application window for the scheme will be open from June 15 to September 15 this year and no applications will be accepted after that.

The guidelines also said an applicant will have to submit a claim for disbursement of incentive on an annual basis for the sales made in a financial year along with audited financial statements.

"No second hand/used refurbished plant, machinery equipment, utilities shall be used to manufacture the eligible product," the guidelines said.

In case an applicant does not meet criteria of threshold investment and threshold net incremental sales for any given year, it would not be eligible for disbursement of incentive

## PLI guidelines for white goods issued

New Delhi, June 4:

Investments made in land and building required for a project will not be covered under the production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme for ACs and LED lights and these would not be considered for determining eligibility of a company to avail of benefits of the programme.

The company had posted a consolidated net loss of Rs 68.59 crore in the same quarter in the previous financial year. Bharat Forge said in a regulatory filing.

Consolidated revenue from operations during Q4FY21 stood at Rs 2,082.85 crore as against Rs 1,741.92 crore in the year-ago quarter.

For the financial year ended March 31, 2021, the company posted a consolidated net loss of Rs 126.97 crore. It had posted a consolidated net profit of Rs 349.25 crore in the previous year.

Consolidated revenue from operations in 2020-21 stood at Rs 6,336.26 crore against Rs 8,055.84 crore in the base year (2019-20) and cumulative incremental investment in the preceding fiscal.

"Investment in land and building (including factory building or construc-



tion) required for the project or unit will not be covered under the scheme and therefore shall not be considered for determining eligibility under the scheme."

Expenditure on consumables and raw material used for manufacturing shall not be considered as investment.

"No second hand/used refurbished plant, machinery equipment, utilities shall be used to manufacture the eligible product," the guidelines said.

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Investment in R&D should not exceed 15 per cent of the total committed investment, the guidelines added.

The application window for the scheme will be open from June 15 to September 15 this year and no applications will be accepted after that.

The guidelines also said an applicant will have to submit a claim for disbursement of incentive on an annual basis for the sales made in a financial year along with audited financial statements.

The

## SHORT TAKES

## Milkha stable in ICU, wife unwell

**Chandigarh:** Legendary Indian sprinter Milkha Singh is "better and more stable" as he battles Covid-19 in the ICU of the PGIMER hospital here even as his wife and former volleyball captain Nirmal Kaur's condition deteriorated because of the same ailment.

Milkha also received a phone call from Prime Minister Narendra Modi enquiring about his health on Friday.

In a statement, Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER) said that Milkha is better than Thursday when he was brought to the hospital with dipping levels of oxygen.

"On the basis of his medical parameters today, his condition has been observed better and more stable than yesterday," PGIMER's official spokesperson, Prof Ashok Kumar, said. — PTI

## Ex-hockey player Usman no more

**New Delhi:** Former India hockey player Usman Khan has died after a prolonged battle with cancer, the sport's governing body in the country said on Friday while condoling his death. Khan was 76 and survived by three sons and a daughter. He breathed his last in Madanapalle, Andhra Pradesh after a long battle with cancer. Khan, a retired assistant commissioner of Customs, Chennai, was a stylish left winger. He played hockey at the Madras Azam Ground before shifting to Kolkata, where joined the Customs. In Kolkata, Khan played for the Calcutta Customs and also represented Bengal in the national championships for several years. Hockey India president Gyanendra Ningombam expressed his condolences to Khan's family. — PTI

## Tech Mahindra, Fide in big league

**Chennai:** The FIDE on Friday announced a new partnership with Tech Mahindra Ltd for the Global Chess League (GCL), which will also have former world champion Viswanathan Anand as its official mentor and partner to shape the league. The memorandum of understanding signed by FIDE with Tech Mahindra, a leading provider of digital transformation, consulting and business re-engineering services and solutions, focuses on creating the Global Chess League, a project first proposed by the latter earlier this year. "Now, with the support of FIDE, the Global Chess League will be provided with an accredited and exclusive status as the only world league officially recognised by the governing body of the sport of chess," a press release here said. — PTI

## IOA seeks relief from shut down

**New Delhi:** Indian Olympic Association (IOA) President Narinder Batra has requested Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to allow them to operate from their office premises for completing administrative work linked to the upcoming Tokyo Olympics.

Due to the Covid-19 surge in the national capital, the Delhi government had ordered shutting down of all premises that don't fall under the essential category. However, the number of cases has reduced in recent days and the capital is inching towards easing of restrictions. "We request and appeal to You Sir to allow the office of Indian Olympic Association to function from Monday 7th June 2021 to enable IOA to upload the mandatory required data," Batra wrote in the letter. — PTI

## Moin's son Azam in Pak T20 team

**Karachi:** Pakistan on Thursday named uncapped Azam Khan, son of former captain Moin Khan, in the T20 squad for the tours of England and West Indies. The selectors also recalled Imad Wasim for the three T20 matches in England and five in the West Indies besides Haris Sohail for the three ODIs in England. Muhammad Abbas and Naseem Shah have also won back spots in the Test squad. — PTI

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# Swiatek shimmers

Nadal celebrates birthday with victory; Zverev too wins



Poland's Iga Swiatek returns the ball to Sweden's Rebecca Peterson during their women's singles match of the French Open tennis tournament at the Roland Garros in Paris on Thursday. Swiatek won 6-1, 6-1. — AFP

Kazakh 21st seed Elena Rybakina, with a possible quarterfinal against old rival Victoria Azarenka up for grabs.

Also, former world number one Azarenka, who stunned Williams in their 23rd meeting in last year's US Open semi-finals, cruised past Madison Keys 6-2, 6-2 to reach the Roland Garros fourth round for the first time since making the last four in 2013.

Earlier, defending champion Iga Swiatek breezed through to the third round, however, beating Rebecca Peterson 6-1, 6-1 on Court Simonne-Mathieu. The No. 8-seeded Pole next faces No. 30 Anett Kontaveit. — AFP

## OTHER RESULTS

**Men's third round:** Kei Nishikori (Japan) bt Henri Laaksonen (Switzerland) 7-5, 0-0 — RET; Federico Delbonis (Argentina) bt Fabio Fognini (Italy) 6-4, 6-1, 6-3; Alexander Zverev (Germany) bt Laslo Djere (Serbia) 6-2, 7-5, 6-2; Serena Williams (USA) bt Danielle Collins (USA) 6-4, 6-4. — AP

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