

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

HYDERABAD | THURSDAY | 3 JUNE 2021

**WEATHER**

Max: 34.7°C  
Min: 22.0°C  
RH: 67%  
Rain: Nil

**Forecast:** Partly cloudy.  
Rain likely. Max/Min  
temp. 35/24°C

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**NATION | 7****HC finds Juhi 5G plea defective****SPORTS | 12****Big guns advance at French Open****TABLOID****'I am not single. However, I am far away from marriage'**

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**ASTROGUIDE**

Plava: Uttarakaya  
Tithi: Vaishakha Bahula Navami till 2.23 am (Friday)  
Star: Purvabhadra till 6.38 pm  
Varjyanam: From 5.06 am (Friday)

Durmuhuram: 10.04 am to 10.56 am; 3.16 pm to 4.08 pm  
Rahukalam: 1.30 pm to 3 pm

**HJRI CALENDAR**

Shawwal 21,1442 AH  
PRAYERS

Fajar: 4.32 am  
Zohar: 12.24 pm  
Asar: 4.49 pm  
Magrib: 6.53 pm  
Isha: 8.09 pm

**SUNSET TODAY 6.47 PM**

**SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.40 AM**  
**MOONRISE TOMORROW 1.08 AM**  
**MOONSET TODAY 1.07 PM**

**COUNTER POINT**

Now, every day is  
bicycle day... we can't  
afford petrol!

**SHORT TAKES****Arun Mishra to head NHRC**

New Delhi: Former Supreme Court judge justice Arun Mishra on Wednesday took charge as the new chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission, official sources said. The post had been lying vacant since Justice H.L. Dattu, ex-chief justice of India, had completed his tenure in December 2020. "Justice Arun Mishra today joined as the new chairperson of the NHRC. One panel member also joined," the sources said.

**BCI panel to fix law exams mode**

New Delhi: The Bar Council of India has constituted a 'high level expert committee' to decide the method of examination and evaluation for LL.B students in view of ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. The apex bar body said the committee was formed in view of requests of several students from across the country, including 273 from the Faculty of Law, Delhi University.

**CEC pushes for new voters**

New Delhi: Chief Election Commissioner Sushil Chandra has made a fresh push with the government to allow multiple dates in a year for citizens turning 18 to register themselves as voters. As of now, an individual who has attained the age of 18 years as on January 1 of that year, or before is eligible to be enrolled in the voters' list. People have to wait for an entire year to register as a voter.

**8,700 die on rail tracks in 2020**

New Delhi: Over 8,700 people were mowed down on railway tracks in 2020 even though passenger train services were severely curtailed due to the national Coronavirus lockdown, with officials saying many of the victims were migrant workers. The Railway Board shared the data on deaths in the year 2020 in its reply to a question by Madhya Pradesh-based activist Chandra Shekhar Gaur under the RTI.

## KCR orders digital land survey

**Pilot to begin from June 11 in 27 villages; statewide survey later****DC CORRESPONDENT**  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 2

Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao on Wednesday ordered a digital survey of agriculture lands in 27 select villages across the state on a pilot basis from June 11.

He directed officials to select three villages from his home constituency Gajwel and select the remaining 24 villages from the other 24 districts.

Based on the outcome of the pilot survey, the digi-

The Chief Minister said in the countries where land disputes are settled, their GDP went up by 3 to 4 per cent.

tal survey will be extended later to the entire state. After the completion of the digital survey of agricultural lands, the survey will be undertaken in all urban areas.

The Chief Minister held a review meeting at Pragathi Bhavan on the digital survey with repre-

sentatives from various agencies and senior officials of government.

In a press release issued here on Wednesday, the Chief Minister said, "We have brought in Dharani portal only to protect the land rights of the poor."

He said that initially, the pilot survey should be done in the villages where there were no land disputes. Later in the villages which have government and forest department lands.

■ Page 4: Create awareness among people, says CM

## KCR pays tributes to TS martyrs

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 2

Telangana State Formation Day celebrations were held on a subdued note across the state on Wednesday due to the ongoing Covid-19 restrictions, for the second consecutive year.

Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao led the state in the celebrations by hoisting the national flag at Pragathi Bhavan. He paid floral tributes to martyrs at Telangana Martyrs' Memorial at Gun Park.

The Chief Minister also visited Raj Bhavan to convey birthday wishes to Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan on her birthday which coincided with the State Formation Day.

He presented a bouquet to the Governor and wished her a healthy and long life. The Governor conveyed her wishes to the Chief Minister on the occasion of State Formation Day and Chandrashekhar Rao completing seven years in office.

President Ram Nath Kovind, Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi greeted the people of Telangana on the occasion of the State Formation Day.



Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao pays tributes to martyrs memorial at Gunpark in Hyderabad on the occasion of the State Formation Day on Wednesday.

## Why not free vax for everyone: SC

**Says policy is irrational, asks for purchase data****PARMOD KUMAR | DC**  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 2

The Supreme Court on Wednesday slammed the Centre for asking it to keep its hands off the Covid vaccination policy and termed the government's decision to provide free vaccination to 45-plus, health care and frontline workers in Phase I, but in Phase II allowing private hospitals to charge those in 18-45 group as "irrational" and "arbitrary".

In a stern order, the top court asked the Centre to furnish details of the purchase of all vaccines — Covaxin, Covishield and Sputnik V — till date, including "file notings reflecting its thinking and culminating in the vaccination policy", dates of all procurement orders placed and the quantity of vaccines procured. It also asked the Centre to "place on record a roadmap of projected availability of vaccines till 31 December 2021".

Saying that the issue of vaccination is absolutely essential and is the "singular most important task" for the government, the top court asked the Centre to furnish the complete vaccine purchase data within two weeks' time. The top court also sought data on the percentage of population that has been vaccinated (with one dose and both doses), as against eligible persons in the first three phases of the vaccination drive.

"Policy of Centre for conducting free vaccination for groups under first two phases and replacing it with paid vaccination by states/UTs and private hospitals for persons in 18-44 years age group is prima facie arbitrary, irrational," said a special bench of Justices D.Y. Chandrachud, L.N. Rao and S. Ravindra Bhat hearing a suo motu case on Covid-19 management.

Referring to the Union Budget for 2021-22 which earmarked ₹35,000 crore for procuring vaccines, the court also asked Centre to clarify "how these funds have been spent so far and why these funds cannot be utilised for vaccinating all (free of cost) in the 18-44 group".

The top court objected to the Centre's affidavit claiming that "any over-zealous judicial intervention, though well-meaning, in the absence of expert advice may lead to unintended circumstances where the executive is left with little room to explore innovative solutions."

Justice D.Y. Chandrachud asserted that "the separation of power does not result in courts lacking jurisdiction in conducting a judicial review of policies."

## VACCINE SLOTS FOR STUDENTS GOING ABROAD

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 2

Students going for higher education abroad will be vaccinated on a priority basis from June 5 at the Institute of Preventive Medicine (IPM), Narayanguda. This follows a decision taken by the State Cabinet on May 30.

An online slot booking system for the convenience of these students is being developed and this will be made functional on June 4. The online link will be available on <https://www.health.telangana.gov.in>.

about the time period of the vaccination and how it was going to administer the vaccines in rural areas, particularly in tribal and scheduled areas."

All details must be reported to the court by June 10. The government submitted to the court that 37 lakhs people above the age of 45 years were yet to get their first shot of the vaccine, whereas only 12.86 lakhs had taken two doses out of the 92 lakhs in Telangana, who are above the age of 45 years.

## HC orders cap on hospital charges

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 2

before the court and submit the reasons.

A division bench comprising Chief Justice Hima Kohli and Justice Vijayesh Reddy said as several complaints were reported about fleecing of Covid patients by private hospitals, the state government should fix the price cap for Covid treatment.

On other hand, the court was unhappy with the health department's decision to cancel the licences of 22 private hospitals for overcharging patients. The court suggested the government put control over private hospitals as the 'Sword of Damocles' on their heads, instead of delisting them from providing services.

The fresh GOs should be submitted to the court by June 10, the court said, adding that if the government was reluctant to issue the fresh GOs, then the principal secretary of health should appear

■ Page 2: Book hospitals for overcharging, says HC



A circular halo is seen around the sun in Hyderabad on Wednesday. Experts called it a natural phenomenon that occurs depending on the clarity in the sky.

## SUN HALO MAKES CITY'S MIDDAY SUPER EXCITING

**HARLEEN MINOCHA | DC**  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 2

Hyderabadis were in for a surprise when a sun halo was formed in the peak noon hours, on Wednesday, an unusual solar spectacle, called a '22-degree circular halo'.

Several people in the city stopped work and rushed outside to click pictures of the rare sight.

However, astronomy experts say it is a natural occurrence depending on the clarity in the sky.

They said halo forms due to the refraction of light

■ Full report on Page 2

## Gulf companies fail to pay service benefits to workers who returned to India due to pandemic

## Gulf returnees clueless on end of service benefits

**DURGA PRASAD****SUNKU | DC**  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 2

the purpose.

Approximately 30,000 migrants are yet to receive the end of service benefits, according to activists. Speaking to this newspaper, P. Ravindra, a Gulf returnee, said, "I had a contract with a construction firm for four years. At the end of the contract due to the pandemic, I returned to India. As the Indian government had imposed a lockdown, I could not return and then my visa expired. The company asked me to resign. It has been a year since I submitted

Many of the Gulf migrants returned to India on Vande Bharat flights, which the government operated to bring back Indians living abroad.

Around 30,000 migrants are yet to receive the end of service benefits, which run into few lakhs for each of them.

Activists from south Asian countries came together and started the campaign 'Justice for Wage Theft' to help them to get back their money.

Ied my resignation yet they didn't clear my end of service benefits. I have to get around ₹2 lakh."

Ravindra who is the sole breadwinner of the family

has to take care of his wife and three children including two daughters. Now he is going for labour work to eke out a living and has a debt of ₹6 lakhs. If he gets

the benefits from the construction company where he used to work, he is planning to clear his debts.

Another returnee Goli Naresh said, "I used to work as a carpenter and returned to India due to the pandemic. My father, mother and sister are dependent on me. I had the responsibility of performing my sister's marriage. With a lot of hope, I went to the Gulf to earn money. However, my dreams have been shattered due to the pandemic. I have worked for almost four years. The company didn't give me the end of service benefits which is around ₹1 lakh."

"Many of the Gulf migrants returned forgoing the service benefits. Vande Bharat flights started on May 7 and brought many of them back. The company even bought the tickets and sent them back," Mandha Bheem Reddy, president of Emigrants Welfare Forum, a member of Gulf JAC said.

Many activists from south Asian countries came together and started the campaign 'Justice for Wage Theft'.

Explaining the plan of action, Reddy said, "We would like to do justice to migrants. According to the same, during the initial phase, we are planning to write a letter to the respective companies. If they still don't consider our requests, we are planning to influence them through Indian Embassy. If those too don't work, as a last resort we will wage a legal battle. We will go to the labour courts in the Gulf countries and file a petition."

## ONE MORE DIES DUE TO BLACK FUNGUS, PRESENTS CHALLENGE TO DOCTORS

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 2

The Government ENT Hospital recorded one more death due to black fungus on Wednesday, making the total number of officially recorded deaths in the hospital to two.

The treatment response of patients for whom fungus has invaded beyond noses and eyes is presenting a challenge, according to doctors.

"Discoloration around nose and eye region is noted but the invasion is deep inside the body and that makes treatment a challenge," a senior doctor said.

The hospital is carrying out surgeries in two shifts every day where more than 20 surgeries are taken up.

The total patients in the hospital are 314. A total of 62 patients were discharged from the hospital in the last three days.

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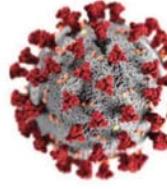
## Tests ramped up even as TS sees fewer cases

1 lakh average tests daily; Tracing, tracking turns aggressive

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 2

### DAILY COVID BULLETIN DATA

#### Update: Cases | Deaths



| June 2, 2021 |          |
|--------------|----------|
| Fresh Cases  | 2384     |
| Deaths       | 17       |
| Tests Done   | 1,08,696 |
| Active Cases | 33,379   |
| Total Cases  | 5,83,228 |
| Total Deaths | 3,313    |

| Highest New Cases |     |
|-------------------|-----|
| GHMC (Hyderabad)  | 307 |
| Ranga Reddy       | 135 |
| Mehal-Malkajgiri  | 116 |
| Nalgonda          | 170 |
| Khammam           | 167 |

| Lowest New Cases       |    |
|------------------------|----|
| Nirmal                 | 9  |
| Kamareddy & Narayanpet | 13 |
| Adilabad               | 11 |
| Nizamabad              | 21 |
| Komaram Bheem-Apisabad | 15 |

With about a lakh of samples tested in the state on a daily basis, the tracing and tracking of Covid-19 cases are done aggressively in Telangana. When the numbers decline, the testing must be more as this means there are chances of missed cases, which can lead to super spreader situations.

Testing in the state is ramped up as the epidemiologists, district health officials and nodal officials are moving from place to place to keep track of the situation.

A health official in Karimnagar says, "We have instructions from the government to carry out the surveillance as seriously as it was done during the time of the swine flu.

Vulnerable areas where there are more than five cases are visited in the districts."

There are also large crowds at public health

centres as people are queuing up for vaccination.

Local groups are pressuring doctors at these centres for out-of-turn vaccination.

Bowenpally, Malkajgiri, Musheerabad, Maula Ali, Yaprall and Alwal have seen large queues for vaccination since morning. A worry is that this too can lead to a spread of the virus.

The Covid positive numbers were going down and then increasing. This was noticed in districts like Bhadrak, Kothagudem, Karimnagar, Khammam, Mahabubabad, Nalgonda, Siddipet and Warangal Urban.

Experts say that the next one week is crucial as movement of people will also indicate movement of virus. With the onset of the monsoon season, seasonal changes, wind movements and emergence of other flu viruses in the ecosystem, there will be more cases; and strict monitoring is required.

## Book hosps for overcharging, HC tells govt

From Page 1

Considering the proposals put forward by counsel S.N. Arjun Kumar, the court suggested the government initiate criminal proceedings against the private hospitals which overcharge the patients and impose a penalty 10 times higher than the overcharged amount, instead of cancelling their licenses.

The bench was dealing with PILs related to the management of Covid-19 in Telangana. The Director of Public Health appeared virtually before the court and replied to several queries posed by the court. He explained that a total amount of around Rs 3 crore had been returned by the private hospitals to some of the victims of exorbitant charges.

He also submitted that Telangana had enough medicines to deal with the black fungus cases and post-Covid complications. Apart from the ENT Hospital, Gandhi

Hospital in Warangal and the Government Hospital in Nizamabad have been designated to give treatment to black fungus.

Senior counsel L Ravichander brought to the notice of the court the discrepancies in government websites on bed availability.

He explained that even after several hospitals were delisted from the Covid designated hospitals list, the old number of beds were appearing in the website. He also pointed out the non-constitution of a state-level experts committee to monitor cases, despite the court orders.

Concerned over a possible third wave, and anticipating its impact on children, Justice Kohli said our future generations, on which we were all going to depend, should be safeguarded from the third wave. She directed the government to file a counter, explaining how it could enhance the paediatric services.

## Alumni take up fight to save BVB Vidyashram

HARLEEN MINOCHA | DC  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 2

At least 3,000 alumni of Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan's Vidyashram School in Rajendranagar area of the city are leading a campaign across the country to save the institution from closure.

They are making all out efforts to ensure that National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRD PR) extends the lease of land on which the school stands by another 30 years. Vidya Babu observed.

Braratiya Vidya Bhawan in Rajendranagar currently has 1,400 students, apart from 50 teachers.

The campaign by the alumni has been garnering support with several politicians of the state, like Himachal Pradesh governor Bandaru Dattatreya and former Chevella MP Konda Vishweshwar Reddy writing to the central government for extension of the lease.

## Don't put curbs on lawyers: HC to TS

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 2

Justice K. Lakshman of the Telangana

## SHORT TAKES

## TAX EXEMPTION GIVEN TO DAIRY, POULTRY UNITS

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 2

The Municipal Administration and Urban Development department on Wednesday exempted property tax payments for poultry and dairy units in all urban local bodies (ULBs) including the GHMC areas. However, poultry and dairy units have to pay a nominal amount of ₹100 annually.

The department released GO 92 pertaining to ULBs in the state and GO 431 for GHMC area, granting the exemption.

"Government orders that the poultry and dairy units are exempted from payment of property tax, subject to payment of a nominal amount of ₹100 per annum to ensure that property records are maintained in property taxation registers of Greater Hyderabad," GO no 431 read.

In GO 92, the government orders that "poultry and dairy units are exempted from payment of property tax subject to payment of nominal amount of ₹100 per annum to ensure that property records are maintained in property taxation registers of ULBs."

## MAN KILLS WIFE FOR OBJECTING ADULTERY

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 2

A Husband has killed his wife by hitting the woman with a stick right on her head. The incident took place on Wednesday morning in an area under the Jeedimetla police station limits following a quarrel over the man's extramarital affair.

Kethavath Raju and his wife Kethavath Suvarna hailed from Nagarkurnool district and migrated to the city in search of livelihood some time ago. A fight broke out between the couple over Raju's extramarital affair with a woman relative.

When Suvarna got wind of the affair she confronted Raju with the information and this led to a quarrel. "In a fit of rage, Kethavath Raju hit his wife with a stick on her head. This led to her instant death," said Jeedimetla police.

Neighbours soon informed the police. Cops reached the spot and shifted the body to Osmania General Hospital for autopsy. Raju meanwhile escaped from the spot and a manhunt has been launched to arrest him, police said.

## VIRUS | SIDE-EFFECTS

## In severe cases, low immunity compromises creation of antibody

## No antibodies in few co-morbid people

KANIZA GARARI | DC  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 2

Covid-19 antibodies are not seen in a section of the people suffering from thyroid, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases as also cancer and HIV-AIDS patients due to their weak immune system.

Experts say different kinds of antibodies are generated and what is counted in the case of Covid-19 is the spike in the antibodies. "We are seeing many patients whose test results for antibody testing are showing insufficient or minimum antibodies, and are thus giving them a negative report after recovery."

Those who have taken both doses of vaccine are also not showing antibodies as there is not sufficient production of these by the human cells.

The case of 50-year-old thyroid patient Sameera Ahmed is cited. She got infected with Covid-19 twice but had no antibodies created in her body. When she checked with doctors, they said such a trend has been noted in a few cases. The thyroid condition of the patient could be a reason for minimum antibodies in the body.

Dr Shyam Kalavalapalli, senior endocrinologist, explains: "The second layer of B cells produces antibodies. In some patients, it is found that the first layer of T cells in the human body fights the

virus. Due to this, antibodies are not produced. This has been noted in mild and asymptomatic cases."

In severe cases, the theory is that antibody creation is not there as the immunity of the body is compromised. Since this is an emerging virus and there are different variants, multiple studies have been carried out to understand this phenomenon. "Irrespective of antibody creation it is important to understand that vaccines do grant protection and testing for antibodies is not recommended."

But there have been cases wherein patients who were given both doses of the vac-

cine too suffered from Covid-19 and died. This has raised issues of whether the vaccine is providing sufficient protection in terms of antibodies.

A doctor explained: "Vaccine is found to reduce the severity of the disease in the general population. There will be some cases where the disease is severe due to the other co-morbid conditions. Vaccine grants 70 per cent protection and not 100 per cent. For this reason, continuation of the safety protocols by the vaccinated people is a must."

Antibody test is not being recommended as people are panicking after they find that their body does not have

built antibodies against the virus. Healthcare workers, doctors and those from the pharmaceutical sector checked regularly on their antibodies. This practice had been followed in the first wave term too, and it was then that the discrepancies came to light. Patients who did not have antibody creation after recovery panicked and it led to anxiety.

These, according to sources, have led the government to not recommend antibody testing until and unless it's an urgent requirement. This is to control the panic and anxiety problems which could lead to other mental health problems too.

sons in the Charminar circle. However, the field inspection conducted by this newspaper revealed that the corporation authorities have been continuing to give jab to ineligible persons at Bowenpally Market Yard.

This apart, corporation authorities are yet to recognise the staff working in nurseries and city parks as either frontline workers or super spreaders. Sai Kumar, working in Public Gardens said despite several requests, the authorities were refusing to give them jabs. "In the upcoming monsoon, we are ones who distribute saplings to politicians, bureaucrats and citizens. We get in contact with several people while distributing saplings at designated nurseries and ironically, the authorities have been refusing to vaccinate us," he added.

With the government announcing the launch of a special drive to administer Covid vaccines to super spreaders, the GHMC initiated the process of issuing coupons (tokens) to the vendors at different city markets. The vendors who have received the coupons from the sanitary field assistants (SFAs) and other staff members have been giving them to ineligible persons. In fact, the corporation authorities have suspended officials in the Charminar circle for handing over the coupons to ineligible persons.

When the issue was taken to the notice of chief secretary Somesh Kumar, city mayor Gadwal R. Vijayalakshmi, GHMC commissioner DS Lokes Kumar and additional commissioner for health Santosh Badavath, all of them maintained silence.

## ICMR APPROVES CCMB'S DRY SWAB-BASED DIRECT RT-PCR

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 2

A simple and fast method of dry swab-based direct RT-PCR developed by the city-based Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB), has been approved by the Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) and commercial production of the new test kits has begun.

According to CSIR-CCMB director Dr Vinay Nandicoori, using the new method, "one can simply break open the cells by using a buffer solution and use them for RT-PCR directly. There is no need for separate steps of RNA extraction and purification".

CCMB adviser Dr Rakesh Mishra said that the "RNA extraction, even with automation, takes 4 hours for roughly 500 samples. We believe the new method can bring testing time and cost by almost half".

CCMB has tied up with Meril Diagnostics for manufacturing the swab-based tests, and the company can manufacture two crore test kits a month, and the cost of each kit works out to ₹40 to ₹50. "Reducing the time needed for the current RT-PCR tests will help scale and speed up testing in India," according to Meril vice president (corporate strategy) Sanjeev Bhatt.

**CCMB HAS** tied up with Meril Diagnostics for manufacturing the swab-based tests, and the company can manufacture two crore test kits a month, and the cost of each kit works out to ₹40 to ₹50.

## IMD warns of stormy weather for 48 hours

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 2

The atmosphere over Telangana state will likely roil over the next two days with the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) predicting stormy weather all over the state on Thursday and Friday, with some isolated locations in several districts very likely to receive heavy rain on these two days.

While thunderstorms, lightning and heavy rain appear to be on the cards for the state over the next few days, down south on the sea along the Kerala coast and the adjoining Arabian Sea, clouds have been gathering, the IMD said, adding that the conditions were just about right for the official onset of the Southwest Monsoon over India on Thursday.

For Telangana state, the IMD said heavy rain could occur in Mulugu, Jayashankar-Bhupalpally, Bhadrak-Kothagudem, Khammam, Nalgonda, Suryapet, Mahbubabad, the two Warangal districts, Janagaon, Siddipet, and Yadadri-Bhongir, will likely experience thunderstorms accompanied by lightning, the IMD said.

It said heavy rain of up to 10 mm occurred at isolated places in Kammareddy, Kumaram Bheem, M.Malkajgiri and Adilabad districts since Tuesday night, while Hyderabad till Wednesday evening received 24.4 mm of rain.

The highest temperature of the day, 42.3 degrees Celsius, was recorded at Medak, Karimnagar,



Oxygen Express brought to the state by SCR on Wednesday.

## SCR gets 2,000 tonnes of liquid oxygen for TS

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 2

Indian Railways has so far brought 2,026 tonnes of liquid medical oxygen for use in Telangana state hospitals, with the South Central Railway division running 22 special oxygen expresses.

While transportation of the first 1,000 tonnes of medical oxygen took 23 days, the introduction of containerised cryogenic tanks contributed to the transportation of the rest of the medical oxygen in just eight days, the SCR has said.

Acknowledging the SCR staff to work with the same spirit of service and sense of urgency, SCR General Manager Gajanan Mallya said the special trains were operated "with a highest sense of urgency

**IN ALL**, SCR, till June 2, operated 22 such special Oxygen Express trains which carried 113 cryogenic tanks filled with liquid medical oxygen.

to ensure that medical oxygen reaches the needy states in the fastest possible time".

In all, SCR, till June 2, operated 22 such special Oxygen Express trains, which between them, carried 113 cryogenic tanks filled with liquid medical oxygen. These special trains were operated from both the eastern and western parts of the country with Oxygen Express trains coming from Odisha, another 4 trains from Jharkhand, followed by 2 trains from Gujarat.

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## SHORT TAKES

**HC SEEKS INFO ON TEACHERS, COPS WHO DIED OF COVID**DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 2

The Telangana High Court on Wednesday directed the state education department to file an affidavit explaining how it assisted the families of teachers who succumbed to Covid, after they were forced to perform duties during elections, which were conducted in Telangana State in the month of April.

The court sought details from the department if the families had been given death benefits marked for Covid warriors. The data should be submitted precisely. Earlier, the court had directed the government to consider the teachers and police personnel, who succumbed to the Covid after they participated in the election duty as Covid warriors.

The court also directed the civil supplies corporation to explain how it was providing grains and rice to the 90 lakh BPL families in Telangana during the pandemic. Counsel Chikkudu Prabhakar said to the court that all the 9 million population belonging to BPL were starving for food and were dying of hunger.

**KCR: CREATE AWARENESS ABOUT SURVEY**

From Page 1

The survey should be conducted in a mixed bunch of villages where there are no disputes and where there are disputes and get the field level experience on the matter.

After this, the Chief Minister wanted total guidelines prepared for the total survey in the state.

He discussed with survey agencies the guidelines for the survey. He also enquired with them about the proposed action plan in depth. He suggested to them that state-of-the-art technology should be utilised so that there should not be any dispute over even an inch of land.

The Chief Minister said that it would be the responsibility of agencies to conduct the survey perfectly and if there was any laxity on their part, the government would not hesitate to take action against them.

He wanted them to conduct the digital survey based on the traditional method of the "Tippin survey". He also suggested that gram sabhas should be conducted to create awareness among people on the survey. He said the government would extend its cooperation in this regard from time to time. District collectors, MLAs, MPs and other public representatives would be available to cooperate with the survey. He reiterated that the entire responsibility of the survey rested with the agencies.

**THE CHIEF MINISTER** said that it would be the responsibility of agencies to conduct the survey perfectly and if there was any laxity on their part, the government would not hesitate to take action against them. He wanted them to conduct the digital survey based on the traditional method of the "Tippin survey".



Tolichowki in Hyderabad sees chock-a-block traffic during the lockdown relaxation period on Wednesday.

- S. SURENDER REDDY

# Owaisi slams BJP gag order on ex-officials

## Pension rule changes of civil servants questioned

ATHER MOIN | DC  
HYDERABAD JUNE 2

**WHAT IS NEW** is the rule to withhold their pension?" This, he said, was because the government was unable to use the OSA, given its "near non-existent prosecution skills."

He said such politically loaded tactics now defined the Modi Government. "Threaten one, threaten some, deter all."

Intelligence professionals are the easiest to pick on, given that

all of whom accessed national secrets and secret documents during their work.

"Are intelligence officials special just because they do the dirty work bordering on criminality for you," he asked the PM.

The MIM leader asked, "Will you now stop the pension of RVS Mani, who was handling intelligence files in the Ministry of Home Affairs for writing the book, 'The Myth of Hindu Terror: Inside account of the Ministry of Home Affairs 2006-2010'?"

they largely live a life of invisibility during and after service, Owaisi said. Owaisi asked whether the government has the guts to ban the most-prolific post-retirement "writers", civil servants, and those in the armed forces and the judiciary,

# Cops slow on land-grab case, complaints Mekala

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 2

**SPEAKING TO DECCAN CHRONICLE**, Srinivas, an advocate, said, "Investigation is being intentionally delayed. Further, even though the court ordered that a case be booked against the MLA and tahsildar by May 17, police did so only five days after the deadline".

Speaking to *Deccan Chronicle*, Srinivas, an advocate, said, "Investigation is being intentionally delayed. Further, even though the court ordered that a case be booked against the MLA and tahsildar by May 17, police did so only five days after the deadline".

Police have intentionally slowed down the probe against Uppal MLA Bethu Subhas Reddy of TRS and Kapra tahsildar K. Goutham Kumar for land grabbing, complainant Mekala Srinivas Yadav has alleged.

According to Docket Order (a copy of which is in possession of this correspondent), "despite restraining orders from High Court, the accused persons illegally trespassed onto the property of complainant

without due process of law. As a result, the complaint was referred to Jawahar Nagar police." When contacted, Jawahar Nagar police said, "There is no negligence and the case is under investigation". They refused to comment any further on the issue.

Incidentally, the Uppal MLA and Kapra tahsildar had been booked by Jawahar Nagar police of Rachakonda commissionaire in a land grabbing case on May

21 following directions from the local court in Medchal.

The case was registered under Indian penal code sections 120 B (criminal conspiracy), 166 A (public servant disobeying direction of law), 167 (public servant framing incorrect document), 168 (public servant unlawfully engaging in trade), 170 (personating public servant), 171 (wearing garb or carrying token used by public servant with fraudulent intent), 447 (punishment for criminal trespass), 468 (forgery for purpose of cheating), 471 (whoever fraudulently uses as genuine a forged document), 307 (attempt to murder), and 506 IPC (criminal intimidation).

The accusation of the complainant is that attempts are being made to stymie the investigation.

A senior member of the drug controller department said, "When all stocks of amphotericin B, posaconazole and Remdesivir are still unable to get them over the counter. This has led to protests from patients, pharmacists and stockists as these medicines are not available to the needy. Similar was the situation with regard to oxygen. TDIA said these irrational orders have derailed the entire system of drug supply and the blame was being heaped on the 57 drug inspectors working in the state. The number of inspectors should have been 71 as per the sanctioned posts. Staff shortage has added to the burden of drug inspectors who have to give a daily account of oxygen supply, amphotericin B, posaconazole and other critical medicines to the government. They have to also monitor movement of drug batches from company to Telangana State Medical Services and Infrastructure Development Corporation (TSMSCD)."

Chandrashekhar said similar instructions were issued in May 2021 to all inspectors to freeze supply of anti-fungal drugs Fluconazole and Voriconazole. These are not available in the market now. People suffering from fungal infections other than black fungus have no medicines for their treatment as a result.

Likewise, the TDIA president said oral directions had been issued to freeze stocks of Amphotericin B Liposomal, posaconazole tablets, used for Covid-19

therapy in the initial stages and available in the supply chain must be immediately brought to headquarters at Vengala Rao Nagar in Hyderabad. Thus hydroxychloroquine was not available in the market, leading to a hue and cry from patients suffering from rheumatoid arthritis and systemic lupus erythematosus patients who require this medicine. Only then the medicine was made available in the retail chain, though through limited outlets.

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Explaining details, TDIA president M. Chandrashekhar pointed out in early stages of the pandemic in 2020, instructions had been issued on WhatsApp that all hydroxychloroquine tablets, used for Covid-19

KANIZ GARAI | DC  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 2

Telangana Drug Inspectors Association (TDIA) has said oral and confusing orders issued on WhatsApp by higher authorities have led to shortage of critical medicines for patients suffering from various diseases in the state.

A letter to director, Drugs Control Administration, signed by 24 of 57 drug inspectors in the state, says, "We are only following orders given on WhatsApp by the government, department, director of public health and director of medical education. This has led to confusion in functioning and resulted in patients running around for medicines."

Explaining details, TDIA president M. Chandrashekhar pointed out in early stages of the pandemic in 2020, instructions had been issued on WhatsApp that all hydroxychloroquine tablets, used for Covid-19

and Remdesivir injections. Thus, patients of rheumatoid arthritis who require Remdesivir are still unable to get them over the counter. This has led to protests from patients, pharmacists and stockists as these medicines are not available to the needy. Similar was the situation with regard to oxygen. TDIA said these irrational orders have derailed the entire system of drug supply and the blame was being heaped on the 57 drug inspectors working in the state. The number of inspectors should have been 71 as per the sanctioned posts. Staff shortage has added to the burden of drug inspectors who have to give a daily account of oxygen supply, amphotericin B, posaconazole and other critical medicines to the government. They have to also monitor movement of drug batches from company to Telangana State Medical Services and Infrastructure Development Corporation (TSMSCD)."

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**SHORT TAKES****TSRTC CELEBRATES FORMATION DAY AT BUS BHAVAN**DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 2

Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TSRTC) celebrated the seventh State Formation Day with corporation's managing director Sunil Sharma hoisting the national flag at the Bus Bhavan here.

Addressing media, Sunil Sharma said TSRTC had formulated different schemes to generate revenue of about Rs. 14 crore per day before the second wave of Coronavirus. But the virus attack has pushed the corporation into difficulty.

He appreciated that despite the adversity, TSRTC employees are working hard with full commitment and without fear. This has come to notice of the state government, which has arranged for vaccination of all corporation employees.

The managing director hoped Covid pandemic will end soon and all buses run as usual, thereby earning good revenue and achieving a very good occupancy ratio.

On the occasion, all executive directors pooled in money and distributed one month's dry rations to all outsourced contract workers of TSRTC.

**COPS RECEIVE AWARDS ON FORMATION DAY**DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 2

Gajwel assistant commissioner of police Palakuri Narayana and a constable from Hyderabad city Y. Ram Reddy have been awarded Mukhyamantri Sarvonnata Police Pathakam for outstanding performance by Telangana government on occasion of State Formation Day on Wednesday.

Greyhounds junior commando G. Anjaneyulu received the Shourya Patakamu while ACP (Special Branch - North zone) Jogula Narsaiah of Hyderabad city police and seven others bagged Mahonathna Seva Pathakam medals.

Constable Ram Reddy has been recognised for his crucial role in establishing social media and public interface platforms for better service delivery. Hyderabad Commissioner's Task Force North Zone inspector K. Nagaswara Rao is among 92 police personnel from across the state awarded the Uttama Seva Pathakam. City's additional DCP Traffic (North) Aggadi Bhaskar and 464 others have been selected for Seva Pathakam. Likewise, nine officers from Anti Corruption Bureau, seven from DG (Vigilance and Enforcement), 17 from Disaster Response and Fire Services and 18 from Special Protection Force have received various awards.

**VACCINE MUST FOR PARENTS WITH KIDS BELOW 8 YEARS**DC CORRESPONDENT  
ANANTAPUR, JUNE 2

In view of a possible outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic's third wave, the government said it would vaccinate parents who have children below eight years. Anantapur joint collector Dr A Sira directed the district medical & health department to concentrate on necessary measures to protect children.

A special drive will be taken up to vaccinate the parents who have children less than eight years old as part of measures to control the spread of Covid-19 (in the likelihood of a) third wave", she said and added that the priority for vaccination will also be given to auto drivers and NGO volunteers involved in the service of Covid-hit patients.

Health department teams at all primary health centres and sub centres in the mandals will conduct surveys to list out children suffering from cardiac and respiratory complications.

**HOSPITAL GOOF-UP****On Formation Day, Governor urges unity for state growth**

**Tamilisai celebrates birthday recalling services made by martyrs**

ATHER MOIN | DC  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 2

Telangana Governor Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan on Wednesday called upon people to join hands in the progress and prosperity of the state, which she said was marching forward towards all-round development.

Addressing the Telangana Formation Day celebrations here on Wednesday, she said, "We all need to strive to transform Telangana, the youngest state of the country, into the number one state in the country in different sectors." Expressing happiness over Telangana making a special mark of its own in agriculture, information technology and pharmaceutical sectors, Soundararajan said it should be our common resolve that Telangana be the number one state in all the sectors.

Referring to her birthday coinciding with that of the Telangana State Formation Day, the Governor termed it as a divine coincidence. Speaking on the prevailing pandemic situation, she said, "Mask is everyday protection. The vaccine is permanent protection. Public education and adherence to preventive norms are the ways to end the spread of the Covid pandemic. This second wave must be the end of all waves and we all must prevent any further waves."

On the occasion, the Governor remembered those who laid down their lives in the fight for the formation of the separate state and paid rich tributes to them. She also expressed gratitude and saluted the frontline warriors for their continued service and sacrifices during the pandemic.

The Governor felicitated commissioners of police of Hyderabad, Rachakonda and Cyberabad.

Anjani Kumar, Mahesh Bhagwat and VC Sajjanar respectively for their exemplary services and blood donation activities during the Covid-19 pandemic. Military officers A Joshi, Inderdeep Singh and Indian Red Cross Society representative Dr K Pitchi Reddy, superintendents of Gandhi Hospital, King Koti Hospital and Ayurvedic Hospital were also honoured by the Governor for their invaluable services in treating Covid patients in their hospitals.



Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao wishes Governor Dr. Tamilisai Soundararajan on her birthday and exchanges greetings on the occasion of Telangana State Formation Day in Hyderabad on Wednesday.

— BY ARRANGEMENT



TPCC Chief N. Uttam Kumar Reddy hoists the national flag in Gandhi Bhavan on the occasion of 7th Telangana State Formation Day in Hyderabad on Wednesday.

— P. ANIL KUMAR

**BJP at Centre, TRS in state have failed: TPCC president**DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 2

● THE TPCC chief underlined that by forming the state, Sonia Gandhi had recognised the aspirations of Telangana people who had fought for six and a half decades for statehood.

CLP leader in council Shabbir Ali, and party leaders Anjan Kumar Yadav and Neralia Sarada.

The TPCC chief underlined that by forming the state, Sonia Gandhi had recognised the aspirations of Telangana people who had fought for six and a half decades for statehood.

The TPCC president called upon Congress cadre to work hard and bring the party to power in the 2023 assembly elections for doing justice to Telangana.

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Neither has the BJP-led government at the centre bothered to fulfil the promises made under the APRA in the last seven years of its rule.

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# DECCAN Chronicle

3 JUNE 2021

## Targeting ex-chief secy to hit bureaucracy's morale

**T**he way the Narendra Modi government is going about evidently trying to punish the recently retired chief secretary of West Bengal, Alapan Bandopadhyay, is unlikely to fill the civil service with confidence or motivation.

Across the Union government bureaucracy, especially at senior levels where policies are grappled with, the Delhi Durbar under the present PM is widely thought to be hamstrung by signs of cliquishness, leaving the energetic and the hard-working demoralised. The Bandopadhyay episode could deepen faultlines caused by favouritism.

Policymaking and policy implementation are apt to be a casualty in such a setting since civil servants hesitate to offer frank and unbiased assessments in the process of policy formulation for fear of falling foul of the regime and eventually be singled out for unwarranted disciplinary action on false pretexts. The example of Mr Bandopadhyay has every potential to exacerbate such anxieties. This is bad for India. Because only a favoured few were consulted, major policy missteps such as demonetisation ensued.

**It is irrelevant how the Bandopadhyay affair ends. What is pertinent is that the episode is malodorous. Its ramifications extend to weakening the structures of governance...**

Senior levels of the civil service and retired top civil servants appear to have been flabbergasted by the treatment being meted out to the former West Bengal chief secretary. It seems hardly believable that the topmost civil servant of a state should be sought to be punished for being 15 minutes late for a meeting called by the PM. This was the so-called PM-CM meeting to review the impact of the cyclone Yaas which was full of BJP leaders who had no place in such a discussion. To make matters more absurd, Mr Bandopadhyay is being proceeded against under the Disaster Management Act.

In a major newspaper article, a former cabinet secretary has noted that the chief secretary was to retire from service on May 31, but at the state government's request was granted an extension as chief secretary. However, only four days later, he was asked to report for work in New Delhi on the day he was to superannuate. This is after the Kalaikunda incident, giving scope for the conjecture that the Centre's action has a political trigger and an upright civil servant finds himself caught in the crossfire.

The retired senior official has indicated that the move against Mr Bandopadhyay was peremptory in nature as Mr Bandopadhyay had not been cleared for "deputation" by the state. Nor had the Centre requested his services on deputation. Besides, he had not been empanelled for the post of secretary in GOI. In the event, the relevant rule that the Centre prevails over a state — when there is a difference over the release of an officer on deputation — does not apply in this particular case.

It is not unlikely that the ayatollahs of rule-making in New Delhi were only too aware of this aspect and therefore chose to summon the former chief secretary under the National Disaster Management Act to receive his punishment. (It is telling that the yoga teacher-entrepreneur Ramdev does not attract the penal provisions of NDMA for traducing the medical effort against Covid.)

In the final analysis it is irrelevant how the Bandopadhyay affair ends. What is pertinent is that the episode is malodorous. Its ramifications extend to weakening the structures of governance and administration in India, besides casting in prejudice the valuable principles of Centre-state relations on which our federalism rests.

## Testing time for students

**T**he cancellation of the CBSE and CISCE Class 12 board exams was, perhaps, the easier decision to make. It will resonate with the primary stakeholders — who are students as anxiety levels were the highest among them and their parents amid the deadly second wave of Covid-19 pandemic. A spate of cancellations of state board exams is bound to follow though only four states among all states and UTs had expressed their opposition to the proposal to hold the exams. The decision to cancel emanated from the Prime Minister who, well aware of the nervousness in youth, may have lent an empathetic ear to the students' cause.

Simpler it may have been to choose cancellation over conduct of exams but the hard part begins only now as acceptable objective criteria have to be defined in the onerous task of judging students on merit for university. The future of over one crore Class 12 students in various streams, including 14 lakh in CBSE, is at a crossroads (about 1.43 crore students appeared for different school leaving exams in 2020). While performance in internal school assessments during Class 12 or Plus-2 may be used to determine the tabulation of marks, it might be altogether fairer if a student's performances from classes 9 to 12 were to be collated and weightage given to that too. Fixing the evaluation procedure is going to be an unenviable task.

The elite institutions in engineering and medical have their own entrance tests to determine admissions, but arts and science colleges have traditionally depended on marks in school finals. A common universities entrance test might be worth considering but there too the question remains of timing an objective test amid the pandemic whose third wave is expected later in the year. The intricate task of finding a level playing field is not going to be achieved without inviting complications. Beyond that lies a greater threat to a whole generation of students who have to put up with less than satisfactory Zoom education as opposed to the congeniality of real-world learning in classrooms among peers.

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Dilip Cherian  
**Dilli Ka Babu**

## Too much PMO! Ex-babus chide Modi on vaccine policy, state ties

**I**n the context of the second Covid surge, a group of 116 former civil servants has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi accusing the government of not addressing the crucial issues at stake.

What makes this "open letter" significant is that the signatories include former Cabinet Secretary K.M. Chandrasekhar, former foreign secretary and national security adviser Shiv Shankar Menon, former health secretary K. Sujatha Rao, former adviser to the Prime Minister T.K.A. Nair, former chief information commissioner Wajahat Habibullah and former Delhi lieutenant governor Najeeb Jung, among others.

Now unfettered by civil service regulations and free to speak their mind, these former babus, who call themselves the Constitutional Conduct Group, have alleged that the Centre has botched the efforts to tackle the spread of the pandemic and urged Mr Modi to take urgent action, including centralising procurement and supply of vaccines which should be administered

free and universally to all Indians. They have also expressed concern about the "steady erosion of the Cabinet system of governance" (too much PMO!) and deteriorating ties with the states.

Of course, there is nothing new in the missive. The ordinary citizens, Opposition parties, and even the judiciary in several states have been raising these same issues. The "coalition" of the willing that Mr Modi seemed to have created since his ascent to power in 2014 is now beginning to crack. The government had managed the narrative adroitly so far, but in the face of the Covid pandemic, it now seems unable to contain the growing dissent in the country over its pandemic policy.

**KHEMKA SETS OFF CENTRE-HARYANA TUSSLE ON POSTINGS**  
The unrelenting Ashok Khemka has struck again. The Haryana cadre IAS officer and whistleblower has brought to light blatant violations of the civil service rules by the Haryana government. It appears that the state

government has been appointing IPS, IPoS and IRS officers to IAS cadre posts such as principal secretary without the Centre's sanction.

Sources say that Mr Khemka had made a representation to Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba in December last year, but it has taken a while for the department of personnel and training (DoPT) to sit up and finally take notice.

The department has now called for a detailed report from the Khattar sarkar on the status of these postings. It has advised the state administration to stick to the IAS cadre rules and not appoint other all-India cadre officers to IAS cadre posts of principal secretaries and certainly not for a period beyond three months, without the department's prior approval. Some may recall that a similar situation had arisen in Nagaland where the government was appointing state service officers to IAS cadre posts.

Mr Khemka, the officer who flagged the issue, should be satisfied with the Centre's response since it is such a

rare thing!

### EXTENSION RAJ

The Modi sarkar has given a year's extension for Intelligence Bureau chief Arvinda Kumar and RAW chief S.K. Goel in the interest of "continuity". Both are IPS officers. Interestingly, these extensions come after the setback to plans when both senior IPS officers, Rakesh Asthana and Y.C. Modi, were left out of the race to become the CBI chief. This, only after the Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana objected to their names, citing a Supreme Court ruling which states that only officers who have more than six months left for retirement could be considered.

But the government lost no time in quickly approving extended terms, in the case of IB and RAW chiefs. Note, it is only an extension and not a new appointment. Insiders say that the extension to the two officers was given after relaxing the existing rules.

Similarly, there is buzz that the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) chief Pramod Chandra Mody is hoping

for another extension. This, after two extensions, one of six months and another of three months already!

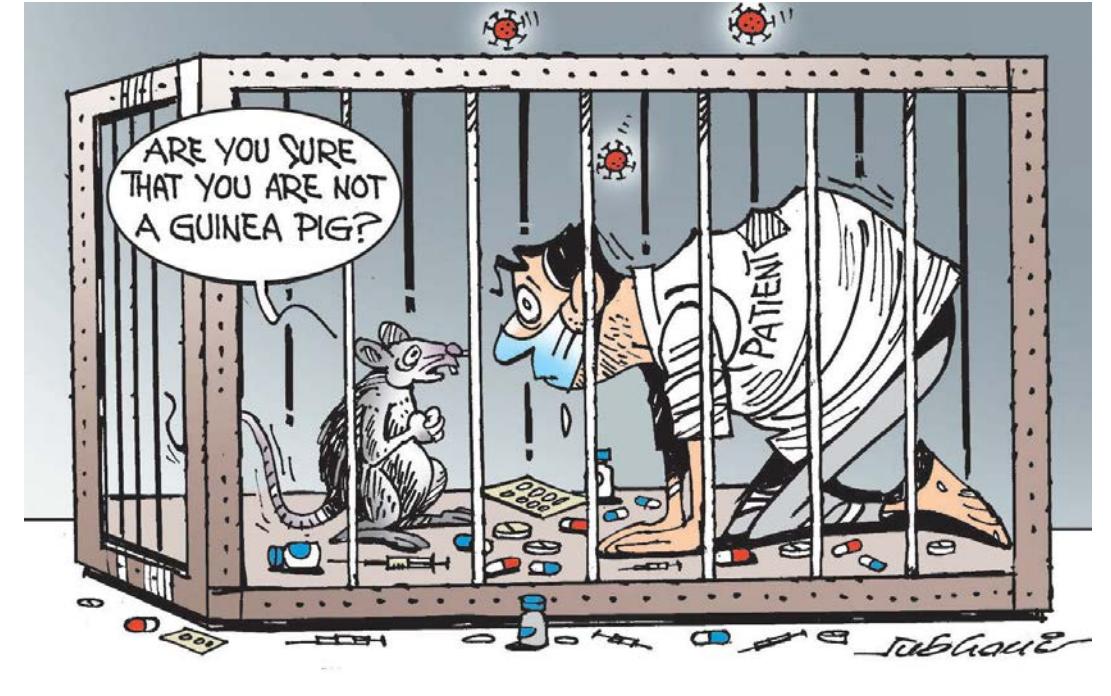
Of course, it will be argued that it is the PM's prerogative to retain trusted officers in supra-sensitive posts such as the IB and RAW chiefs. It also doesn't hurt a bit, if you are also close to the national security advisor Ajit Doval.

Questions will, of course, be asked about the problems such extensions create within the next in line. While the line of succession at IB is not really affected much by Mr Kumar's extended term, but in the case of Goel, the extension will ensure that at least two senior RAW officers will retire before his extended term ends.

While this practice allows the favourites to continue for a bit longer, it does kill the hopes of officers hoping to retire at the top of their service. But that's the subject for another day... keep watching this space.

*Share a babu experience! Follow dilipcherian@Twitter.com. Let's multiply the effect.*

Subhani



## Protect vulnerable to heal fractures, revive economy

Patralekha Chatterjee  
Dev 360

**I**ndia's prisoners offer a telling insight into the state of the country's economy. In Uttar Pradesh, the country's most populous state, 21 jail inmates have recently written to the authorities saying they don't want parole. Their reason: staying in prisons is "safer and healthier" during the Covid-19 pandemic. They know that in the world outside, there won't be free food nor regular health checkups and they will have to struggle for a living.

The signs of economic distress are everywhere. Even as the Centre and state governments continue to weigh in on the grim maths between lives and livelihoods, it is becoming obvious that social protection for our vulnerable makes for a compelling moral argument as well as an economic and social one.

Without it, neither the pandemic-battered economy nor the fractured will gain normality any time soon.

India has begun to take baby steps to emerge from the lockdowns that were triggered by the sharp spike in coronavirus cases in the "second wave".

Why is this not a bigger issue? Perhaps the heart-breaking images of deaths, often without dignity, have something to do with it.

"The huge health crisis and graphic images of the dead have overshadowed the severe economic crisis across the country. Not only has the informal sector been rendered more precarious, many who earlier had salaried jobs are now being forced into odd jobs and errands just to survive as a result of the pandemic, lockdowns and various other restrictions," says Prof. Basole.

This time around, there was transport so there have been no long marches down national highways like last year, after the first nationwide lockdown. But clearly, many

labourers who come to big cities in search of livelihoods have little faith in their employers or the State to look after them during lockdowns.

"In the past year, we have not put in solid social protection mechanisms for migrant workers or those working in the informal sector. There is the odd relief scheme for limited periods or cash transfer through Jan Dhan, but these have limited reach," says Amit Basole, associate professor of economics at Azim Premji University, one of the key authors of a study, "The State of Working India 2021: One year of Covid-19", brought out by the university.

The report says mobility restrictions, such as those caused by lockdowns, predictably lead to income losses due to decreased economic activity. "We find that a 10 per cent decline in mobility was associated with a 7.5 per cent decline in income. This number is useful to keep in mind when estimating the impact of future lockdowns," it cautions.

Predictably, the poor who lack cushions have been the worst-hit. Nearly half of formal salaried workers moved into informal work, either as self-employed (30 per cent), casual wage (10 per cent) or informal salaried (nine per cent) workers, between late 2019 and late 2020.

Women have been affected more and households have tried to cope by cutting back on food intake, selling assets, and borrowing informally from friends, relatives, and moneylenders.

Government relief measures have helped, but exclusions were also common. In a recent commentary, "The Covid-19 Crisis and People's Right to Food", development economists Jean Dreze and Annmarie Somanchi note that relief measures helped, but they were patchy.

"A large majority of the population had access to PDS in 2020 (with enhanced monthly rations for eight months), and this played a critical role in averting the worst. But it's possible some of the supplementary rations got diverted, initially at least, and significant minority of poor households had no access to PDS at all for lack of a ration card. Other relief

All these measures together will cost money — approximately ₹5.5 lakh crores of additional spending and bring the total fiscal outlay on Covid relief to around 4.5 per cent of GDP over two years.

But what will be the cost of not having this large fiscal stimulus, given the magnitude of the distress?

As Dreze and Somanchi put it: "The Covid-19 crisis brings out once again that India needs a more reliable and comprehensive social security system."

*The writer focuses on development issues in India and emerging economies. She can be reached at patralekha.chatterjee@gmail.com*

### LETTERS

#### LOCKDOWN RULES

The public has found an opportunity to crowd the roads with the government easing lockdown rules (*Hyderabad gets back to normalcy, DC, June 2*). The government must maintain strict rules while adhering to lockdown.

**Paris Katherine**  
Hyderabad

#### FUEL PRICES

In Hyderabad, petrol cost ₹98.20 per litre on June 2 when the whole state is under lockdown. Fuel charges have come down across the world due to lack of demand and excess supply but in India why is it going up? Government talks about one nation one tax in GST but exempts fuel from it and charging exorbitant taxes from citizens in the name of different hidden charges. It reflects the double standards of the governments.

**T. Kailash Ditya**  
Hyderabad

#### JOB GOING AWAY

Unemployment has crossed 11 per cent and a number of people pushed below the poverty line is estimated at 23 crore as inflation edges higher than last year in commodities. The figures are worrisome. When will the government wake up to get economy back on track?

**Vikas Panchareddy**  
Hyderabad

#### VIP CONVOYS

When people are forced to visit hospitals with various issues and others trying to book a slot for vaccination, where is the need for the Telangana Formation Day celebrations which made the Chief Minister come out and traffic came to a grinding halt between Paradise flyover and Begumpet?

**N. Nagarajan**  
Hyderabad

### 50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

#### Thakur V. Hari Prasad arrested

**HYDERABAD, JUNE 2.** Thakur V. Hari Prasad, Honorary Secretary of the Andhra Pradesh Welfare Fund, was arrested today. He has been lodged in the Central Crime Station.

Mr. Hari Prasad who is being produced before a City magistrate tomorrow for remand, has been charged with misappropriation, cheating, falsification of accounts and forgery.

The Andhra Pradesh Welfare Fund has been conducting the raffles in the State, for utilising the proceeds for welfare schemes.



Dilip Cherian  
**Dilli Ka Babu**



**Too much PMO!  
Ex-babus chide  
Modi on vaccine  
policy, state ties**



## SHORT TAKES

**MAN KILLS SON & WIFE, DRAGS HER BODY**

Kota, Jun 2: A man hacked his wife to death and dragged her body for several metres on the street here, police said on Wednesday, adding that their nine-month-old son who was injured in the attack died in hospital later.

After the incident which took place in Rampura on Tuesday night, the man surrendered to the police.

Following a brawl, Pintu alias Sunil Valmiki (40), a resident of Bhatpada area, attacked his wife Seema (35) with an axe which led to her on-the-spot death. Deputy Superintendent of Police and Circle Officer Ram Kalyan said.

He then dragged her body for 70-80 metres on the street which created panic and terror in the area, the DSP said.

Leaving the body on the street, Valmiki surrendered at Rampura police station and confessed to the crime.

The couple's son Avinash was injured during the incident and died during treatment in hospital on Wednesday morning, police said.

However, it is not clear how the child suffered injuries.

Police has sent the bodies of the woman and the child for post-mortem, the DSP said.

A probe is underway to ascertain the motive behind the murder, he said.

**TIGER CARCASS FOUND IN PENCH**

Seoni, June 2: The decomposed carcass of a tiger was found in Madhya Pradesh's Pench Tiger Reserve and forest officials suspect it to be a case of territorial fight between two felines.

A patrolling team spotted the carcass on Tuesday in Ghatkhora buffer forest area of the tiger reserve. Pench National Park's field director Vikram Singh Parihar said in a press release.

Senior officials and experts rushed to the spot and examined the carcass, he said, adding that all body parts were found intact.

A dog squad was also sent to the spot, but no evidence of any illegal activity was found, Parihar said. The animal's viscera was collected and sent for a forensic examination, he added.

The tiger reserve's deputy director, M.B. Sirciya, said that the feline, aged between 12 and 14 years, apparently died eight to 10 days back as the carcass was highly decomposed. "An examination of the spot indicated that the tiger might have died following a conflict with another tiger, but the exact cause of the death will be ascertained only after the forensic examination," he said. After the autopsy, the carcass was disposed of as per guidelines of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), Parihar said.

Madhya Pradesh has a number of tiger reserves, including Kanha, Bandhavgarh, Pench, Satpura and Panna.

Meanwhile, a 70-year-old man was mauled to death by a leopard in Gujarat's Bhavnagar district on Wednesday, a forest department official said.

The incident took place in Padhyarka village under Mahuva range of the Shetrangji wildlife division in Greater Gir area, Chief Conservator of Forest (Wildlife), Junagadh, Dushyant Vasavada said.

There have been several cases of human-animal conflict in forested areas of Gujarat in the recent past.

**'SIDHU MISSING' POSTERS SURFACE**

Amritsar, June 2: Street walls of the Amritsar East assembly constituency here on Wednesday appeared plastered overnight with a large number of posters, proclaiming that area MLA Navjot Sidhu has gone missing.

The posters also announced a reward of ₹50,000 to anyone who traces the legislator and brings him back to the constituency.

The posters were pasted by an NGO, 'Dhan Dhan Baba Deep Singh Ji' stating, Congress MLA Navjot Singh Sidhu is missing.

NGO representative Anil Kumar Vishist Bunty alleged that Sidhu had been inaccessible to the residents of the Amritsar East assembly constituency.

He also alleged a lack of development of the area and claimed that heaps of garbage and stranded water on the roads could be seen anywhere in this assembly segment. Even his wife Navjot Kaur Sidhu was also not accessible, he further alleged.

— PTI

**Up in arms**

Social Democratic Party of India activists burn an effigy of Lakshadweep Administrator Praful Khoda Patel outside Raj Bhavan in solidarity with the people of Lakshadweep in Thiruvananthapuram on Wednesday. — PTI

**PRIME ACCUSED IN GANGRAPE CASE SHOT AT BY POLICEMEN**

Bengaluru, June 2: One of the accused in the assault and gangrape of a Bangladeshi woman here, was shot at and injured as he tried to escape by allegedly attacking a police team that had gone to arrest him on Wednesday.

The incident comes days after two of his accomplices were shot at and injured by the city police during an escape attempt.

With this, 10 people have been arrested in connection with case so far, police said.

Following a tip off, a police team went to nab the kingpin, Shahbaz, at Rampura here this morning.

On seeing the police party, the man attacked them using a knife and tried to flee, they said.

However, the police opened fire at him in self defence and caught the accused.

He was injured in the leg while a head constable also sustained injuries in the attack, they added.

The accused was taken to the hospital for treatment.

According to police sources, the rape victim was trafficked from Bangladesh by a network of human traffickers active in her country, Assam, West Bengal, Telangana and Karnataka, three years ago. Later, the 22-year-old woman was forced into prostitution by the gang. Following a financial dispute, she was assaulted by six people, including a woman, and later four of them gangraped her days ago. — PTI

**Alapan chapter over, says Mamata**

**Chief Minister assures 'full support' to the bureaucrat after Centre serves him notice**

**Centre's claim of jabs by 2021-end a hoax: Mamata**

Kolkata, June 2: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday dubbed as "hoax" the Centre's claim of vaccinating the entire population above the age of 18 years by 2021, and asserted that the union government must provide jab free of cost to states.

"That claim is just a hoax. The Centre says things like these. Before the Bihar elections, they had promised to inoculate its population after the elections, but nothing happened," she told reporters at the state secretariat.

Banerjee said considering the gap between doses, the process to vaccinate

the entire eligible age group should take six months to a year to complete.

"The Centre is not sending vaccines to states. Whatever little stock that is supplied, gets depleted within days... It must give free vaccines to state governments," she said.

The central government had on Monday said it expects to inoculate the country's adult population by the end of the year.

Meanwhile, the authorities cancelled Wednesday's press conference to announce the schedule of class 10 and 12 board examinations in West Bengal amid the Covid-19 pandemic. No reason was assigned for the cancellation. — PTI



Mamata Banerjee

was inoculated so far.

The entire eligible age group should take six months to a year to complete.

She said her government has spent ₹150 crore to procure vaccines, but only 1.4 crore of the state's over 10-crore population could

**JILTED LOVER KILLS WOMAN IN RUNNING TRAIN, HELD**

RABINDRA NATH CHOWDHURY | DC BHOPAL, JUNE 2

A jilted lover allegedly killed a woman by slitting her throat in a running train near Sehore railway station in Madhya Pradesh. Police said on Wednesday. The incident occurred in a coach in Indore-Bhopal Express on Tuesday night.

Police on Wednesday arrested a youth, Sagar Soni (25), in connection with the incident. The accused reportedly confessed before the police that he had an affair with the deceased Muskan Hada (21) and murdered her out of vengeance as she had stopped talking to him.

The accused was working as a newspaper hawker in the trains. The deceased was coming to Bhopal in the train to meet her friend. The slain woman had spotted the accused in her coach when the train left Dewas railway station and called her brother Piyush on phone fearing threat to her life from him.

Later, the accused suddenly attacked her by slitting her throat and then jumped out of the running train to escape.

She died on the spot.

**Army chief lauds jawans on 100 days of ceasefire at LoC**

PAWAN BALI & YUSUF JAMEEL | DC NEW DELHI/SRINAGAR, JUNE 2

On the eve of completion of 100 days of the ceasefire with Pakistan at the Line of Control, Army Chief Gen. M.M. Naravane on Wednesday reached Kashmir on a two-day visit to review the situation on the ground at the border and counter-terrorist operations in the Valley.

The Indian and Pakistani DGMOs had agreed to observe a ceasefire at the LoC from February 24 midnight in a major de-escalatory move. The truce has mostly held till now, even though there

were reports of some firing incidents at the international border. The Pakistan Army used to fire to give cover to terrorists to infiltrate into J&K. India and Pakistan signed a truce agreement in 2003 but it was frequently violated.

The Army Chief on Wednesday visited units and formations where he was briefed by local commanders on the security situation and the steps being taken to identify and target the overground workers' (OGWs) network involved in radicalisation and recruitment of youth into terrorist ranks. He was accompanied by Northern Command GOC-in-C Lt. Gen. Y.K. Joshi

and 15 "Chinar" Corps commander Lt. Gen. D.P. Pandey.

Gen. Naravane expressed appreciation to the jawans and commanders relentlessly battling the dual challenges of Pakistan-abetted terror and the global pandemic.

He was briefed by Lt. Gen. Pandey on the overall situation at the LoC and the hinterland at the Badami Bagh headquarters of 15 Corps in Srinagar.

Gen. Naravane held a separate meeting with J&K lieutenant-governor Manoj Sinha at Raj Bhavan and is due to interact with civil officials and some others for a broader assessment of the overall security scenario.

**J&K youth snatches rifle from cop, shoots him**

DC CORRESPONDENT SRINAGAR, JUNE 2

A Kashmiri youth snatched the service rifle of a policeman and then shot him with it during his interrogation at a camp of the J&K police's counter-insurgency Special Operations Group (SOG) in Tral area of Pulwama district on Wednesday.

The senior police officials who are on the spot to monitor the situation "closely and cautiously" have called the mother and other family members of the youth to supplement their effort towards persuading him to surrender, the latest reports from Tral said.

The police sources said that Amin was detained by the police for questioning over his alleged links with militants.

While being interrogated, he snatched the service weapon of policeman Amjid Ahmad, and murdered her out of vengeance as she had stopped talking to him.

IGP Kashmir, Vijay Kumar while confirming it told local news agency GNS, "One suspect during questioning snatched the weapon of one policeman and fired upon in which one constable was injured. SSP Awantipora is trying to make him surrender. No other policemen were inside the room and there was no hostage situation."

The sources said that Amin's brother was allegedly a militant who was killed by the security forces during a gunfight in 2019.

The police sources said that Amin was detained by the police for questioning over his alleged links with militants.

Online tender is invited under e-procurement platform for One (1) Road work under Non Plan, in Rangareddy District, 1st call vide E-in-C (R&B), State Roads & CRN, e' NIT, No. 07/E-in-C (R&B), SR & CRN/CRN/2021-22 Dt. 29.05.2021 (2) Tenderers can download the tender schedules and have further details from e-market place i.e., www.tender.telangana.gov.in. The last date of receipt of tenders is 14.06.2021 up to 3:30 pm.

R.O. No. 194-DPL-AGENCY/ADVT/1/2021-22

Sd/- Engineer-in-Chief(R&B) State Roads & CRN

## TECH TROUBLE

Court questions Chawla for filing the suit without approaching government

**HC calls Juhi's suit against 5G 'defective'**

New Delhi, June 2: The Delhi High Court on Wednesday termed as defective the suit of actress-environmentalist Juhi Chawla against setting up of 5G wireless networks in the country and said it was filed for media publicity. The court also questioned Chawla for filing the suit without giving any representation to the government on concerns related to the technology.

Justice J.R. Midha said the plaintiffs, Chawla and two others, were required to first approach the government for their rights and if denied, they should come to the court.

The court, which reserved order on the suit after hear-

ing the arguments of various parties, also asked as to why as many as 33 parties have been added to the plaint and said it is not permitted under the law.

It is not the sweet will of the plaintiff to join as many parties and cause of action. Please see the memo of parties. Tell me how you have joined them. Every party cannot be arraigned in the suit, the judge said.

The court further said, "It is a defective plaint. This suit has been filed only for media publicity and nothing more than that. It is very shocking."

"Did you approach the government with a representation? If yes, is there any denial?" the court

asked to which the plaintiffs counsel replied in negative. The court said in the suit, the plaintiff says I have personal knowledge of paragraphs 1 to 8 only.

Plaintiff has no personal knowledge of the plaint. I am surprised. How can it be? Is the suit permissible when the plaintiff has no personal knowledge of the averment? I have not seen a suit where a person says I don't know, please conduct an inquiry, the judge said.

The court asked about the knowledge of plaintiffs on the facts and warned to prosecute them on filing false claims.

The plea claimed that 5G technology threatens to provoke serious, irreversible effects on humans and permanent damage to the earth's ecosystems.

The court asked about the knowledge of plaintiffs on the facts and warned to prosecute them on filing false claims.

The plea claimed that 5G wireless technology threatens to provoke serious, irreversible effects on humans and permanent damage to the earth's ecosystems.

The suit, filed by Chawla, social worker Veeresh Malik and Teena Vachani, said that if the telecom industry's plans for 5G come to fruition, no person, animal, bird, insect and plant on earth will be able to avoid exposure, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, to levels of RF radiation that are 10x to 100x times greater than what exists today. — PTI

The man, who was lodging in the virtual hearing with different names first started singing 'Ghoonghat ki aad dilbar ka daidaar adhura...' and he was then removed.

He again joined the proceedings and started singing 'Lal lal hoton pe gori kiska naam hai...' and was again removed from the hearing.

On a lighter note, Chawla's lawyer said maybe the person is already affected by the radiations.

— PTI

**MAN SINGS JUHI CHAWLA'S SONGS, INTERRUPTS PROCEEDINGS**

New Delhi, June 2: Some of the hit songs of actress Juhi Chawla's movies made their way in the proceedings before the Delhi High Court on Wednesday when a man started singing them during the virtual hearing.

The action of the man resulted in the periodic interruption of hearing and on the judge's directions, the person was repeatedly removed from the hearing, but he kept on joining and started singing till the time the proceedings were locked.

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA ROADS AND BUILDINGS DEPARTMENT e' Procurement Notice

\*e' NIT No. 07/E-in-C (R&B), SR & CRN/CRN/2021-22 Dt. 29.05.2021

Online tender is invited under e-procurement platform for One (1) Road work under Non Plan, in Rangareddy District, 1st call vide E-in-C (R&B), State Roads & CRN, e' NIT, No. 07/E-in-C (R&B), SR & CRN/CRN/2021-22 Dt. 29.05.2021 (2) Tenderers can download the tender schedules and have further details from e-market place i.e., www.tender.telangana.gov.in. The last date of receipt of tenders is 14.06.2021 up to 3:30 pm.

R.O. No. 194-DPL-AGENCY/ADVT/1/2021-22

Sd/- Engineer-in-Chief(R&B) State Roads & CRN

कार्यपालक अभियंता का कार्यालय

ग्रामीण विकास विश

## SHORT TAKES

PLEA TO REMOVE  
BODIES FLOATING  
IN GANGAPARMOD KUMAR | DC  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 2

The Youth Bar Association of India on Wednesday moved the Supreme Court for an immediate removal of the human bodies floating in the Ganga and other rivers and give them dignified cremation or burial. The petition claimed that these bodies were of Covid-19 victims whose families did not have the resources for their disposal.

The petitioner has sought directions to the Centre, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Bihar, and West Bengal, to issue guidelines or formulate a standard operating procedure for proper disposal of the bodies.

The plea filed through advocate Manju Jaitley said floating of corpses in the river would cause environmental hazards besides violation of the guidelines of the National Mission for Clean Ganga.

It has sought directions to the chief secretaries of the four states and the district magistrates to ensure no corpse is allowed to be thrown in the river on any ground and stern action be taken against the culprits. It has referred to an earlier verdict of the top court that the dignity of a dead person must be maintained and respected.

**HC ASKS MAHA TO  
SUBMIT INFO OF  
FIRs DURING COVID**

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC  
MUMBAI, JUNE 2

Hearing a suo motu PIL on the issue of increasing number of Covid cases, the Bombay High Court on Wednesday directed the Maharashtra government to submit details of all FIRs registered and arrests made during the pandemic and the present crime rate in the state. The direction came after the state's counsel, advocate general Ashutosh Kumbhakoni, told the HC that while orders of the state high-powered committee were being followed on granting emergency parole to eligible inmates in a bid to decongest prisons during the pandemic, jails across the state were still crowded.

On Wednesday, the bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice G.S. Kulkarni reiterated that the state must address the issue of overcrowding in prisons.

Advocate Kumbhakoni informed the court that following the HC's orders passed over the last two months on decongesting prisons and following Covid safety protocols in prisons, 2,168 inmates from seven prisons in the state had been released on interim bail as per the high-powered committee's guidelines.

He, however, said that many inmates who were eligible for the release were not applying for temporary bail.

**WHY START VAX  
CENTRES WITH  
POMP: HC TO DELHI**

**New Delhi, June 2:** The Delhi High Court on Wednesday said if the Delhi government could not ensure that people get both the doses of Covaxin within the stipulated time, then it should not have started so many vaccination centres with "much pomp and splendour".

Justice Rekha Palli issued notice to the Delhi government and sought its stand on whether it can provide the second dose of Covaxin to those who got the first jab, before expiry of the incubation period of six weeks between the two doses.

The court also issued notice to the Centre on two pleas to make the second dose of both vaccines against Covid-19—Covaxin Covishield—available in the national capital.

"Why did you (Delhi government) start it (vaccination) if you were not sure you can provide the second dose also? You should have stopped. Maharashtra stopped when it found it cannot provide second dose. You opened so many vaccination centres everywhere with so much pomp and splendour and now you say you don't know when the second dose stock would be available," the court said while hearing the two petitions.

One of the petitions has been moved by a lawyer, Ashish Virmani, who received the first dose of Covaxin on May 3 and since May 29 has been unable to book a slot for receiving the second jab which has to be taken within six weeks of the first.



An old woman sells Indian blackberry (jamun) and vegetables during lockdown at a market in Coimbatore on Wednesday.

## Maha launches 'corona-free villages drive'

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC  
MUMBAI, JUNE 2

**THE COMPETITION**  
shall be held in all the six revenue divisions of the state with top three villages in each division getting cash prizes worth ₹50 lakh, ₹25 lakh, and ₹15 lakh.

**COMPETITION HAS**  
been announced on the backdrop of Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray's appeal to people in rural areas to strive hard for making their villages corona-free.

Rural areas in Maharashtra have been hit hard by the second Coronavirus wave than the urban parts of the state.

More Covid-19 cases have been recorded as villages compared to cities, prompting the state machinery to concentrate more on rural areas.

The total prize money for the corona-free competition will be ₹5.40 crore, said Mushrif. "Every village in the state will be asked to form five teams to implement various initiatives for the eradication of Coronavirus. Villages shall be judged on the basis of 22 different criteria by a special committee of experts for their work during the period June 1, 2021 to March 31, 2022," he added.

The competition has been announced against the backdrop of Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray's appeal to people in rural areas to strive hard for making their villages corona-free. In his address, he had also praised the efforts of villages, which have attained Covid-free status.

"The corona-free village competition has been launched with an aim to encourage the efforts to chase the virus away from the rural areas and make the entire state free of coronavirus at the earliest," said state rural development minister Hasan Mushrif.

The competition has been announced against the backdrop of Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray's appeal to people in rural areas to strive hard for making their villages corona-free.

In his address, he had also praised the efforts of villages, which have attained Covid-free status.

The Indian Medical Association wrote to Union home minister Amit Shah, stating that there was a "barbaric attack yesterday...and it was an extremely inhuman attack", and requested for "immediate strict action on culprits".

Meanwhile, the Assam State Branch of the IMA on Wednesday called for all doctors in the state to abstain from outdoor patient services. The body has demanded that all culprits be booked immediately and there should be a speedy trial.



People wait in a long queue to buy liquor from a wine shop after the ease in the ongoing lockdown restrictions in Jammu on Wednesday. Policemen were deployed outside wine shops to maintain order and ensure adherence of Covid-19 guidelines. — PTI

## Mob assaults doc, ransacks hospital in Assam; 24 held

**The young doctor was kicked and thrashed with brooms, utensils**

MANOJ ANAND | DC  
GUWAHATI, JUNE 2

In what has created anger in the medical fraternity as well as civil society of the state, a mob brutally assaulted Seui Kumar Senapati, a young doctor, and other staff of a Covid Care Centre (CCC) at Udali in central Assam's Hojai district. The assault, recorded on a mobile phone, showed the young doctor being kicked and thrashed with brooms and utensils by the mob on Tuesday afternoon. The video triggered a sharp protest from doctors and others.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma who was in New Delhi said, "24 culprits involved in this barbaric attack have been arrested and a charge sheet will be filed at the earliest. I am personally monitoring this investigation and I promise that justice will be served."

The incident took place after Giyasuddin, a Covid-19 patient from Udali area, died at the hospital on

## 32 die of black fungus at Indore hospital in 20 days

**Indore, June 2:** As many as 32 patients have died of mucormycosis in the last 20 days at a government-run hospital in Madhya Pradesh's Indore city, an official said on Wednesday. Of late, several cases of mucormycosis, also known as the black fungus, a serious infection, have been found in people who have recovered from Covid-19.

The Maharaja Yeshwantrao Hospital (MYH) in the state's industrial hub Indore has been treating a number of black fungus patients not only from here, but also from various other districts.

Tuesday. According to a letter issued by the Hojai unit of Indian Medical Association to the deputy commissioner of the dis-

trict, the patient was admitted on Tuesday at 11 am and died three hours later at 2 pm.

The letter said that the

mob damaged the building and also ransacked instruments at the CCC besides "brutally assaulting" the doctor. The IMA unit said

that unless all the culprits involved in the attack are arrested by 7 am on Wednesday, all doctors of Hojai would boycott all out-patient duty services.

It also asked the government to provide all hospitals and CCCs with security cover, CCTV cameras and round the clock electricity. "Instructions have been given to superintendent of police Hojai to arrest all persons involved in the assault," the special Director General of Police G.P. Singh said.

The eight other patients suffering from the black fungus have no record of contracting Covid-19, he informed. The statistics show that 93 per cent of the patients contracted the black fungus after recovering from Covid-19, he said.

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Meanwhile, the Assam State Branch of the IMA on Wednesday called for all doctors in the state to abstain from outdoor patient services. The body has demanded that all culprits be booked immediately and there should be a speedy trial.

## MP, U'Khand, Guj. cancel state exams

DC CORRESPONDENTS  
with agency inputs  
Bhopal, JUNE 2

Taking a leaf from the Centre, Madhya Pradesh government on Wednesday decided to cancel the class 12 state board examinations in the interest of safety of the students amid the raging Covid-19 pandemic. Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan took to Twitter to announce his government's decision to not hold this year's class 12 board exam in the state.

The class 12 board examinations (conducted by MP Board of Secondary Education) for the year 2020-21 have been cancelled. The life of students is precious for us. We can take care of their career

later. We have constituted a committee of ministers who will consult experts and decide on students' evaluation", he said.

The Gujarat government also decided to cancel the state board exams for class 12. "The state government decided to scrap the exams for class 12 of the Gujarat Secondary and Higher Secondary Board after taking into consideration the Centre's decision to scrap the exams for class 12 students of the CBSE given the pandemic," state education minister Bhupendrasinh Chudasama said.

Uttarakhand intermediate board examinations were also cancelled in view of the prevailing Covid-19 situation in the state. "Children's health and safety is equally important for their future, as our Chief Minister had said. Echoing this view, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced cancellation of

DC CORRESPONDENT  
with agency inputs  
CHENNAI, JUNE 2

The Tamil Nadu government will make known its decision on holding the plus two board exam in the state in two days' time, after conferring with experts, state school education minister Rajnath Singh earlier, several states opined that the board exam could be conducted with precautionary measures in place.

Chief Minister M.K. Stalin will take the final call on the issue after the views of education and medical experts and teachers among others were elicited, besides considering the stand of other states in this pandemic times, he said.

"Children's health and safety is equally important for their future, as our Chief Minister had said. Echoing this view, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced cancellation of

the CBSE exam on Tuesday," the minister said on Wednesday.

Addressing reporters here after attending a meeting with Stalin, Poyyamozhi said during a meeting convened by Union defence minister Rajnath Singh earlier, several states opined that the board exam could be conducted with precautionary measures in place.

Maharashtra school education minister Varsha Gaikwad on Wednesday said a proposal has been sent to the disaster management authority regarding the state board exams for Class 12 students and a decision on the issue will be taken in a couple of days.

She said the issue was discussed at a meeting of the state cabinet here, a day after the Centre cancelled the CBSE Class 12

board exams citing the prevailing Covid-19 pandemic which has hit Maharashtra hard, students' health remains the top priority for the state government.

Karnataka primary and secondary education minister Suresh Kumar on Wednesday said an appropriate decision will be taken soon on holding board exams in the state. "Regarding holding SSLC (class 10) and second year Pre-University (class 12) exams, an appropriate decision will be taken at the earliest," the minister said in a statement.

He said discussions are underway with teachers, education experts and parents in this regard and an appropriate decision will be taken soon keeping in mind the health of the students and their future. The Goa government will go through decisions taken by other states and also consult the Union education ministry before taking a call on Class 12 board exams, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant said. Notably, the Centre on Tuesday cancelled the CBSE Class 12 board exams in view of the Covid-19 situation.

Chhattisgarh government, however, on Tuesday set in the process of holding the "exam from home" for the class 12 board examinations in the state. The students have been asked to collect their question papers and blank answer papers from June 1 to June 5 and submit their answer papers within five days of receiving the question and blank answer papers.

## Experts hail the decision to cancel the board exams in view of the pandemic

## Challenge to decide fair evaluation criteria: Experts

**New Delhi, June 2:** Education experts and stakeholders believe the bigger challenge before the CBSE now is coming up with a fair evaluation criteria for class 12 students whose exams have been cancelled and demanded that the policy is notified soon.

The experts hailed the decision to cancel the board exams which were earlier postponed in view of the second wave of Covid-19 pandemic. Given the current situation, it is the right decision to cancel the CBSE Board exams.

There is no way we could have held exams without compromising the safety of children. While we welcome the decision, we hope the modalities would be worked out quickly in consultation with stakeholders, they said.

"Since class marks are important factor that affects students' career, we expect CBSE to ensure students don't get affected with the methodology of awarding marks," said Praveen Raju, Co-Chair, FICCI ARISE, a collegium of stakeholders aimed at promoting quality educa-

tion. In a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday, it was decided that the CBSE will take steps to compile the results of class 12 students as per a well-defined objective criteria in a time-bound manner.

"The next step is equally critical and crucial in terms of deciding the process and criteria based on which the children's performance will be gauged. This should be done keeping in mind that many of them make that extra effort during the last

mile and hence, should be given due advantage," said Charu Wahi, Principal, Nirmal Bhartia School.

According to Vishnu Karthik, CEO, The Heritage Schools, the decision on cancellation of board exams has provided some clarity and assuaged stress levels among students and parents but the challenge now is for the CBSE to arrive at an alternative criteria to determine grade 12 marks. "Any delay or any confusion on the new grading criteria will lead to more confusion and stress among students. Clear directions should also be provided to Indian universities to modify their admissions criteria so meritocracy and fairness are not compromised," he said.

Shishir Jaipuria, Chairman, Anandram Jaipuria Group of Educational Institutions believes deserving students must be allocated grades or marks corresponding to their yearly performance. "It's a challenge that will require a great deal of meticulous thinking for arriving at a just criterion for academic assessment. I'm sure the schools and boards will rise to the challenge and deliver what's best for the students," he said. Rajiv Bansal, Director-Operations - Global Indian International School (GIIS), said admission in undergraduate courses, across India and internationally, are dependent on class 12 results, therefore, the sooner these details are announced, the better it would be for the students, their parents, and the entire academic community. — PTI

## SHORT TAKES

## 23 MIGRANTS MISSING, TWO DEAD OFF TUNISIA

Zarzis, Tunisia, June 2: At least 23 migrants were missing and two bodies recovered from the sea off Tunisia, the Red Crescent reported Wednesday, after the military said more than 100 migrants were intercepted.

The Tunisian navy said a boat headed for Europe from Zuwara in Libya was intercepted on Tuesday near Misrak oil platform, some 67 kilometres (52 miles) off the coast.

The migrants - 37 Eritreans, 32 Sudanese and an Egyptian, aged between 15 and 40 - were handed over to the Red Crescent and International Organization for Migration in the southern port of Zarzis.

## POLISARIO LEADER LEAVES SPAIN, FLIES TO ALGERIA

Madrid, June 2: The leader of Western Sahara's independence movement, whose presence at a Spanish hospital sparked a diplomatic row with Rabat, left Spain overnight and flew to Algeria, a government source said Wednesday.

He's "in Algeria," the source told AFP.

Later on Tuesday, Spain's foreign ministry said Polisario Front leader Brahim Ghali would be leaving from Pamplona airport but did not say where he would be going.

Ghali's departure came hours after he was quizzed by a Spanish judge over allegations of torture and genocide, which he denied, in a video hearing from the hospital in northern Spain where he spent six weeks recovering from Covid-19.

## REMAINS OF U.S. KU KLUX KLAN HEAD TO BE MOVED

Washington, June 2: A project to disinter a Ku Klux Klan leader and move his remains to a museum started Tuesday, local US media reported, adding the work would be funded by \$200,000 of anonymous donations.

Nathan Bedford Forrest was a leading pro-slavery Confederate army general during the American Civil War, and the first "Grand Wizard" of the racist Ku Klux Klan organization from 1867 to 1869.

A pedestal on top of his grave in a park in Memphis, Tennessee, will be removed first, before his remains - along with those of his wife - are taken to the new National Confederate Museum, WMC5 news said.

## BELARUS ACTIVIST STABS SELF, RETURNED TO JAIL

Moscow, June 2: A Belarusian activist who was hospitalised after stabbing himself in the neck in court has been returned to prison following surgery, the Viasna rights group said Wednesday.

Stepan Latypov, 41, on Tuesday rammed a pen into his neck on the first day of his trial on several protest-related charges during a hearing seen by government critics as part of a sweeping crackdown on political opposition.

Viasna, citing Latypov's relatives, said Wednesday the activist was returned to prison and that family had been able to deliver him a parcel there.

Latypov was detained last September and went on trial in the capital Minsk on several charges including creating protest symbols and resisting law enforcement.

## PAK JOURNALIST SUMMONED FOR 'DEFAMING' ARMY

Islamabad, Jun 2: A Pakistani journalist recently beaten by unidentified men in his apartment said Tuesday he was summoned by authorities to answer allegations he defamed a key national institution, a term often used for the military. Asad Ali Toor, who works for the Aaj News Pakistani TV channel, said he was consulting his lawyer to decide whether to appear before the Federal Investigation Agency on June 4.

The development comes a week after three armed men forcibly entered Toor's apartment in the capital Islamabad, saying they were from Inter-Services Intelligence. The assailants repeatedly slapped Toor, accusing him of criticising the agency. However, the ISI has distanced itself from the attack, saying it was not involved. Pakistan Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmad has said authorities are close to arresting the assailants.

## Lease sale to Trump Hotel



The Trump International Hotel is seen through security fencing in Washington, DC on Wednesday. The Trump Organisation is attempting to sell the lease to the hotel after failing to do so in 2019 before the pandemic hit. — AFP

## Iran warship on fire, sinks in Gulf of Oman

**Blaze began around 2.25 am, efforts to save Kharg failed**

## Burning ship with chemicals sinking off Sri Lanka port

Tehran, June 2: The largest warship in the Iranian navy caught fire and later sank Wednesday in the Gulf of Oman under unclear circumstances, semi-official news agencies reported.

The Fars and Tasnim news agencies said efforts failed to save the support warship Kharg, named after the island that serves as the main oil terminal for Iran. The blaze began around 2.25 a.m. and fire-fighters tried to contain it, Fars said. The vessel sank near the Iranian port of Jask, some 1,270 kilometers (790 miles) southeast of Tehran on the Gulf of Oman near the Strait of Hormuz — the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf.

Photos circulated on Iranian social media of sailors wearing life jackets, evacuating the vessel as a fire burned behind them. State TV and semi-official news agencies referred to the Kharg as a "training ship." Fars published video of thick, black smoke rising from the ship early Wednesday morning. Satellite photos from Planet Labs Inc. ana-

lyzed by The Associated Press showed the Kharg off to the west of Jask on Tuesday.

Satellites from the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration that track fires from space detected a blaze at the site of the Jask that started just before the time of the fire reported by Fars. The Kharg serves as one of a few vessels in

from Sri Lanka and India climbed onto the vessel and extinguished a blaze that had been burning for 12 days.

"The rear end of the vessel is being submerged. This was at the same time as the rescue team got on board in order to facilitate the towing of the vessel to deeper seas for safety reasons," Sri Lanka Navy spokesman Indika de Silva said.

"The ship is under water, the water level is above the deck. The ship is going down," de Silva said.

On Wednesday morning experts were trying to tow the ship farther out to sea, some 9 nautical miles away from the Colombo port where it had been anchored since May 20, to prevent its sinking at the current position which would have caused severe pollution. — PTI

lyzed by The Associated Press showed the Kharg off to the west of Jask on Tuesday.

Satellites from the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration that track fires from space detected a blaze at the site of the Jask that started just before the time of the fire reported by Fars. The Kharg serves as one of a few vessels in

the Iranian navy capable of providing replenishment at sea for other ships. It also can lift heavy cargo and serve as a launch point for helicopters.

The warship, built in Britain and launched in 1977, entered the Iranian navy in 1984 after lengthy negotiations that followed Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution. Iran's navy

typically handles patrols in the Gulf of Oman and the wider seas, while the country's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard operates in the shallower waters of the Strait of Hormuz and the Persian Gulf. In recent months, the navy launched a slightly larger commercial tanker called the Makran, which served similar functions as the Kharg. — AP

## Russia adopts 'extremist' bill

## Kremlin to exit overflight treaty

Moscow, June 2: Russia's upper house on Wednesday overwhelmingly backed legislation expected to be used to ban allies of Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny from running in elections, the latest move in a crackdown on the opposition.

The bill, overwhelmingly approved by the Federation Council, would make it impossible to run in parliamentary elections for leaders, sponsors and rank-and-file members of "extremist" groups.

A Russian court is considering whether to designate Navalny's political network an extremist organisation and could make a decision as early as next week. Critics of President Vladimir Putin say Russian authorities are widening a campaign against the opposition ahead of parliamentary elections in September.

After Navalny was jailed

President Donald Trump withdrew from the pact. As a presidential candidate, Biden had criticised Trump's withdrawal as "short-sighted."

Moscow has signalled its readiness to reverse the withdrawal procedure and stay in the 1992 treaty if the United States returns to the agreement. After the Russian upper house voted to leave the treaty, it would now come to Russian President Vladimir Putin for signing. — AP

and many of his allies arrested, two more political activists, Dmitry

Gudkov and Andrei Pivovarov, were detained over the past two days.

Pivovarov, the former executive director of Open Russia, a just disbanded pro-democracy group, was pulled off his Warsaw-bound flight on Monday.

The 39-year-old faces up to six years in prison for his involvement in an "undesirable" organisation. A court was expected to decide whether to remand him later Wednesday. On Tuesday, police detained Gudkov after conducting raids on homes of his allies and relatives. The 41-year-old former opposition lawmaker faces up to five years in prison for allegedly failing to pay a debt under an old lease agreement. Gudkov is likely to be formally charged on Wednesday, said human rights association Agora whose lawyer represents him. Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the detentions were a purely legal matter. — AFP

Gudkov and Andrei Pivovarov, were detained over the past two days.

## RACIAL VIOLENCE

Last June, former President Donald Trump was greeted by protests during his visit

## Biden marks Tulsa Race Massacre in graphic speech

Tulsa, June 2: An emotional President Joe Biden marked the 100th anniversary of the massacre that destroyed a thriving PoC community in Tulsa, declaring Tuesday that he had "come to fill the silence" about one of the nation's darkest — and long suppressed — moments of racial violence.

He said that "hell was unleashed, literal hell was unleashed." And now, he said, the nation must come to grips with the following sin of denial. "We can't just choose what we want

to know, and not what we should know," said Biden. "I come here to help fill the silence, because in silence wounds deepen." After Biden left, there was a spontaneous singing by some audience members of a famous civil rights march song, "Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around."

The events on Tuesday stood in stark contrast to then-President Donald Trump's trip to Tulsa last June, which was greeted by protests. Or the former

President's decision, one year ago, to clear Lafayette Square near the White House of demonstrators who gathered to protest the death of George Floyd, a PoC man, under the knee of a white Minneapolis police officer.

In 1921 — on May 31 and June 1 — a white mob, including some people hastily deputised by authorities, looted and burned Tulsa's Greenwood district, which was referred to as Black Wall Street. On Tuesday, the President,

## Pelosi rules out having Biden create Jan. 6 panel

Washington, June 2: House Speaker Nancy Pelosi is ruling out a presidential commission to study the January 6 insurrection at the Capitol, telling House Democrats on Tuesday that having President Joe Biden appoint a panel is unworkable even after the Senate blocked an independent probe last week.

Pelosi laid out possible next steps after Friday's Senate vote, in which Senate Republicans blocked legislation to create an independent, bipartisan panel to investigate the siege by former President Donald Trump's supporters. She proposed four options for an

highly respected panel that investigated the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

The other options involve the House investigating the attack, meaning the probes would be inherently partisan.

Pelosi suggested that she could appoint a new select committee to investigate the siege or give the responsibility to a single committee, like the House Homeland Security panel, which wrote the original bipartisan bill to create the commission.

Alternately, Pelosi said committees could simply push ahead with the investigations that are already underway.

— AP

## MALAYSIA TO SUMMON CHINESE ENVOY OVER JETS

Kuala Lumpur, June 2: Malaysia's government will issue a diplomatic protest against an "intrusion" by 16 Chinese military aircraft into its airspace, the foreign minister said.

Foreign Minister Hishammuddin Hussein said late Tuesday that he will summon the Chinese ambassador to explain "this breach of the Malaysian airspace and sovereignty." Malaysia's air force said its radar picked up the Chinese aircraft Monday near Malaysian-administered Luconia Shoals, a rich fishing ground in the disputed South China Sea. The Chinese planes then moved nearly 60 nautical miles (110 kilometers) off the coast of Sarawak on Borneo island. After attempts to contact the aircraft failed, the air force sent its fighter planes to identify them. They were Illyushin Il-76 and Xian Y-20 strategic transporters, flying at between 23,000-27,000 feet (7,000-8,000 meters)

The campaign was disclosed last week by Microsoft, which linked it to the same group of Russian intelligence operatives responsible for the massive SolarWinds intrusion that breached federal agencies and private corporations. The company said over the weekend that it was "still not seeing evidence of any significant number of compromised organizations at this time."

The White House on Friday similarly downplayed the cyber assault as "basic phishing," in which hackers use malware-laden emails to access networks, and said US agencies had largely fended it off. Still, officials say the US government's action on Friday was aimed at preventing any further exploitation of victims, though the Justice Department also warned that the hackers may have used additional backdoor accesses to get into networks between when the hacking first began and the time that the domains were seized.

"If there are requests from the Americans they will be promptly considered," Peskov said. "There are contacts through diplomatic channels, Kremlion spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

"It is quite clear that criminality and challenges in the cybersphere will be on the agenda one way or another," he said. — AFP.

ment to proactively disrupt hacking activity prior to the conclusion of a criminal investigation," Assistant Attorney General John Demers, the Justice Department's top national security official, said in a statement. — AP

— AP

## Firefighter kills colleague, wounds another at fire stn.

Santa Clarita, June 2: An off-duty Los Angeles County firefighter fatally shot a fellow firefighter and wounded another at their small community fire station Tuesday before going to his nearby home, setting it on fire and apparently killing himself.

He was not scheduled to work today. He came back and confronted the on-duty personnel, a visibly shaken Osby said.

I cannot speak to the mindset of the shooter. I can say that it's very tragic and sad that that would be a decision point of one of the members of the Los Angeles County Fire Department. The gunman, who was not identified, then went to his house less than 10 miles (16 kilometers) away, which authorities found engulfed in flames. — AP

## ASIAN OFFICER ATTACKED IN 'HATE' CRIME

San Francisco, June 2: A San Francisco police officer responding to a call about a man making threats to people in Chinatown was attacked by the suspect, who was later arrested on assault and hate crime charges, authorities said.

Surveillance video showed the female officer, who is of Asian descent, approach Gerardo Contreras on Friday and tell him to turn around and put his hands on his head. — AP

joined by top PoC advisers, met privately with three surviving members of the Greenwood community who lived through the violence, the White House said. Viola "Mother" Fletcher, Hughes "Uncle Red" Van Ellis and Lessie "Mother Randle" Benningfield Randle are all between the ages of 101 and 107.

Biden said their experience had been "a story seen in the mirror dimly" "But no longer," the president told the survivors. "Now your story will be known

in full view." Outside, Latasha Sanders, 33, of Tulsa, brought her five children and a nephew in hopes of spotting Biden. "It's been 100 years, and this is the first we've heard from any US President," she said. "I brought my kids here today just so they could be a part of history and not just hear about it and so they can teach generations to come."

John Ondiek, another Tulsa in the crowd following Biden's speech on cellphones, said he was

encouraged that "There aren't just PoC people here. That tells me there's an awakening going on in this country." As many as 300 PoC Tulsans were killed, and thousands of survivors were forced for a time into internment camps overseen by the National Guard.

Burned bricks and a fragment of a church basement are about all that survive today of the more than 30-block historically PoC district. — AP

**SHORT TAKES****THIRD GIANT PANDA CUB BORN IN MALAYSIA**

Kuala Lumpur, June 2: A giant panda loaned to Malaysia from China has given birth to a rare third cub during its stay in the Southeast Asian country, wildlife officials said Wednesday. The cub was born Monday at Kuala Lumpur zoo to Liang Liang, who has been on loan to Malaysia since 2014 along with a male panda, Xing Xing, said the country's wildlife department.

Officials have been unable to get a close look at the new cub, and do not yet know its sex as it is being closely cared for by its mother. The first cub, Nuan Nuan, was born in August 2015 and was sent to China in 2017 as part of Beijing's agreement with Malaysia over cubs born in captivity.

**COUP: MALI SUSPENDED FROM AFRICAN UNION**

Nairobi, June 2: The African Union announced it was suspending Mali with immediate effect and threatened the impoverished country with sanctions, after a second military coup in nine months.

The putsch has sparked deep concerns over stability in the volatile Sahel region and warnings of economic penalties from across the international community.

The AU "decides... to immediately suspend the Republic of Mali from participation in all activities of the African Union, its Organs and institutions, until normal constitutional order has been restored in the country", the body's Peace and Security Council said in a statement late Tuesday.

**INDONESIA HALTS SALVAGE OF SUNKEN SUB**

Jakarta, June 2: Indonesia has called off its bid to salvage a military submarine that sank off the coast of Bali, killing all 53 crew aboard, the navy said Wednesday.

The KRI Nanggala 402 disappeared in April while it was scheduled to take part in live torpedo training exercises.

An underwater rescue vehicle later spotted the German-built sub lying on the sea floor more than 800 metres (2,600 feet) deep, broken in several parts and confirming there was no hope of finding survivors. Chinese salvage ships were sent to help with efforts to haul up the vessel.

But Indonesia's military said Wednesday that it was ending the operation after a meeting with Chinese naval counterparts.

**FOREIGN PLOT: JORDAN REFERS 2 TO SECURITY COURT**

Amman, June 2: Jordan has referred the cases of two former senior officials accused of taking part in a foreign plot linked to the half-brother of King Abdullah II to a national security court, the official Petra news agency reported.

Bassem Awadallah, a former Cabinet minister and one-time head of the royal court, and Sharif Hassan bin Zaid, a member of the royal family, were swept up in a wave of arrests in April.

Prince Hamzah, a former crown prince, was placed under a form of house arrest. The government accused them of being part of a foreign plot to undermine the stability of the country, which is a close Western ally.

**TWO RUSSIANS DO SPACEWALK AT INT'L STATION**

Moscow, June 2: Two Russian cosmonauts ventured out of the International Space Station Wednesday on a spacewalk to prepare for the arrival of a new Russian module.

It's the first spacewalk for both Oleg Novitsky and Pyotr Dubrov, who arrived at the space station in April, and it's expected to last about 6 1/2 hours. The two needed to get the space station ready for the undocking and disposal of the Pirs docking compartment, which will be replaced later this year by the new Nauka (Science) multi-purpose laboratory module. They have already replaced a fluid flow regulator and also need to replace biological and material science samples on the exterior of the Russian modules. The two team up with NASA astronauts Mark Vande Hei, Shane Kimbrough and Megan McArthur; Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency astronaut Akihiko Hoshide; and European Space Agency astronaut Thomas Pesquet.

**APPOINT ENVOY FOR MYANMAR, INDONESIA URGES ASEAN**

Jakarta, June 2: Indonesia's foreign minister on Wednesday urged the Association of Southeast Asia Nations to immediately appoint a special envoy on Myanmar in response to its military coup, and reiterated a call for the safety of civilians as the ruling junta cracks down on opposition.

After holding talks with EU foreign affairs chief Josep Borrell in Jakarta, Retno Marsudi said Indonesia is continuing to communicate with the ASEAN chair and other member countries following their demand for an immediate end to killings and the release of political detainees in Myanmar.

Asean leaders met in April in Jakarta with Myanmar's coup leader, Senior Gen Min Aung Hlaing. They also agreed that a dialogue between parties in Myanmar should immediately start, with the help of the Asean envoy.

The special envoy appointment must be completed immediately, Marsudi said. The safety and well-being of the Myanmar people must continue to be a priority." An Indonesian diplomat familiar with the Myanmar issue said Wednesday that Brunei, which currently holds ASEAN's rotating chairmanship, will send Second Foreign Minister Erywan Yusof to meet the junta on Saturday.

The diplomat said the visit is aimed at seeking Myanmar's approval of the Asean envoy. — AP



Isaac Herzog

**ISSAC HERZOG ELECTED PREZ OF ISRAEL**

Jerusalem, June 2: Isaac Herzog, a veteran politician and the scion of a prominent Israeli family, has been elected president, a largely ceremonial role.

An anonymous vote was held on Tuesday among the 120 members of the Knesset, or parliament. Herzog, 60, is a former head of Israel's Labor Party and opposition leader who unsuccessfully ran against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in the 2013 parliamentary elections. He will succeed Reuven Rivlin, who is set to leave office next month.

Herzog is scion of a prominent Zionist family. His father, Chaim Herzog, was Israel's ambassador to the United Nations before being elected president. His uncle, Abba Eban, was Israel's first foreign minister and ambassador to the United Nations and United States.

His grandfather was the country's first chief rabbi.

— AP

**Washington, June 2: The Biden administration on Tuesday suspended oil and gas leases in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, reversing a drilling programme approved by the Trump administration and reviving a political fight over a remote region that is home to polar bears and other wildlife and a rich reserve of oil.**

The Interior Department order follows a temporary moratorium on oil and gas lease activities imposed by President Joe Biden on his first day in office. Biden's Jan. 20 executive order suggested a new environmental review was needed to address possible legal flaws in a drilling programme approved by the Trump administration under a 2017 law enacted by Congress. Former President Bill Clinton vetoed a GOP plan to allow drilling in the refuge in 1995, and the two parties have been fighting over the region ever since. — AP

**Biden suspends Alaska oil leases****B.1.617 variant superspreader: UNHCR**

Agency warns of vax crunch in the Asia-Pacific region, including for asylum-seekers



Movie-goers watch Danish Oscar-winning movie "Druk" (Another Round) featuring Danish actor Mads Mikkelsen (on screen) at a temporary open-air cinema in Berlin's Kulturforum (Culture Forum) area, as restrictions were eased amid the novel Covid-19 pandemic. — AFP

**EU FOR REVAMP OF CHECK-FREE ID TRAVEL AREA**

Brussels, June 2: The European Union unveiled plans Wednesday to revamp Europe's ID check-free travel area after national Coronavirus restrictions placed new strains on tourism, travel and business throughout the bloc over the last year. The travel zone, known as the "Schengen area", is made up of 26 countries: 22 EU nations plus Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. Normally, people and goods move freely between these countries without border checks.

The new strategy aims to beef up Europe's external borders, through the Frontex border agency and a state-of-the-art digitalised entry and exit system to keep an eye on who enters or leaves. Cooperation between police and national security agencies and improved visa policies are also foreseen. — AP

**MELBOURNE LOCKDOWN FOR ONE MORE WEEK**

Melbourne, June 2: Melbourne was ordered Wednesday to remain in lockdown for another week, as Australian authorities try to stamp out a quick-spreading Coronavirus strain they described as an "absolute beast". Five million city residents were hoping to exit a seven-day lockdown just before midnight Thursday, but those plans have been thwarted by the spread of the "Kappa" variant, which originated in India.

"We've got to run this thing to ground otherwise people will die," Victoria's acting state Premier James Merlino said, describing this strain of the virus as "quicker and more contagious than we have ever seen before". Australia is battling to stop a cluster of 60 cases from growing in its second-biggest city, and to remain one of the few countries in the world without endemic transmission.

The border remains closed to most travellers — with the exception of New Zealand. — AFP

**Penury hits 100 mn workers: UN**

Geneva, June 2: The pandemic has pushed over 100 million more workers into poverty, the UN said Wednesday, after working hours plummeted and access to good quality jobs evaporated.

In a report, the UN's International Labour Organisation (ILO) cautioned that the labour market crisis created by the pandemic was far from over, with employment not expected to bounce back to pre-pandemic levels until 2023 at the earliest.

The ILO's annual World

Employment and Social Outlook report indicated that the planet would be 75 million jobs short at the end of this year compared to if the pandemic had not occurred. And it would still count 23 million fewer jobs by the end of next year. Covid-19 "has not just been a public health crisis, it's also been an employment and human crisis," ILO chief Guy Ryder said.

"Without a deliberate effort to accelerate the creation of decent jobs, and support the most vulnera-

ble members of society and the recovery of the hardest-hit economic sectors, the lingering effects of the pandemic could be with us for years in the form of lost human and economic potential, and higher poverty and inequality." The report showed that global unemployment was expected to stand at 205 million people in 2022 — far higher than the 187 million in 2019.

But the situation is worse than official unemployment figures indicate.

Many people have held onto their jobs but have seen their working hours cut dramatically. In 2020, 8.8 percent of global working hours were lost compared to the fourth quarter of 2019 — the equivalent of 255 million full-time jobs.

While the situation has improved, global working hours have far from bounced back, and the world will still be short the equivalent of 100 million full-time jobs by the end of this year, the report found.

— AFP

**Ensure passengers have -ve report, S'pore tells airlines**

Singapore, June 2: The authorities here have told airlines to ensure that those coming to Singapore have a valid negative coronavirus test report before boarding a flight.

The measure applies on Singapore citizens and permanent residents (PRs) too, a Channel News Asia report said.

Previously only long-term pass holders and short-term pass visitors

entering Singapore were required to present a negative COVID-19 polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test report.

The new directions have come after the Ministry of Health announced last week that Singaporeans and PRs are now required to present a report of the test, taken within 72 hours of departure, said Margaret Tan, Security Director at the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore.

"Airlines must not allow

a passenger to board the flight to Singapore if that passenger fails to produce the result of the required PCR test or if the result of that PCR test is positive.

They will be responsible to carry a person who is denied entry into Singapore back to the point of departure, said Margaret Tan, Security Director at the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore.

Under the US-Taliban pact, the US has agreed to withdraw all its soldiers from Afghanistan in 14 months. There are currently 2,500 American troops left in Afghanistan, the lowest level of American forces in the war-torn country since 2001. Since the US-led invasion that ousted the Taliban after the September 11, 2001 attacks, America has spent more than \$1 trillion in fighting and rebuilding in Afghanistan.

About 2,400 US soldiers have been killed, along with tens of thousands of Afghan troops, Taliban insurgents and Afghan civilians.

— PTI

**Nepal: Bench to be formed June 6**

● NEPAL PRESIDENT Bidya Devi Bhandari dissolved the 275-member House of Representatives on May 22 for the second time in five months.

Kumar Shrestha refused to recuse themselves from the case. *The Himalayan Times* reported.

Nepal President Bidya Devi Bhandari dissolved the 275-member House of Representatives on May 22 for the second time in five months and announced snap elections on November 12 and November 19 on the advice of Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli.

— PTI

11 September 2021: President Joe Biden's ambitious target of 100 per cent removal of United States military personnel from Afghanistan — the war-torn country. About 2,400 US soldiers have been killed.

06 facilities have been officially handed over to Afghanistan's Ministry of Defence by the United States, the US Central Command said in an update on the withdrawal of American forces from Afghanistan till May 31.

American troops would be withdrawn from Afghanistan by September 11 this year, thus bringing to end the country's longest war, spanning across two decades. Since the President's decision, the Department of Defense has retrograded the equivalent of approximately 300 C-17 loads of material out of Afghanistan and have turned nearly 13,000 pieces of equipment to the Defence Logistics Agency for disposition, CENTCOM said.

The United States and the Taliban signed a landmark deal in Doha on February 29, 2020 to bring

**44% US troops back from Kabul**

Washington, June 2: The US Central Command has said that an estimated 30 to 44 per cent of American troops have been withdrawn from Afghanistan until last month, inching closer to achieve President Joe Biden's ambitious target of 100 per cent removal of its military from the war-torn country by September 11 this year.

The US has also officially handed over six facilities to Afghanistan's Ministry of Defence, the US Central Command (CENTCOM) said in an update on the withdrawal of American forces from Afghanistan till May 31.

Forecasters said the storm Choi-wan was southwest of central Masbate province early Wednesday with sustained winds of 65 kilometres (40 miles) per hour and gusts of up to 90 kph (56 mph). It was moving northwestward and may weaken as it blows toward the South China Sea on Thursday, they said.

At least three people died, including a 14-year-old villager who rushed with her father to a riverbank to rescue their farm animals in intense rain but were swept away by strong currents in Norala town in South Cotabato province. The father remains missing, the Office of Civil Defence said.

Coast guard personnel rescued villagers who were trapped in houses engulfed in rising floodwa-

**Philippines storm displaces hundreds**

Manila, June 2: A tropical storm has left at least three people dead and displaced hundreds of villagers in the southern and central Philippines, where it triggered floods and landslides, officials said Wednesday.

Forecasters said the storm Choi-wan was southwest of central Masbate province early Wednesday with sustained winds of 65 kilometres (40 miles) per hour and gusts of up to 90 kph (56 mph). It was moving northwestward and may weaken as it blows toward the South China Sea on Thursday, they said.

At least three people died, including a 14-year-old villager who rushed with her father to a riverbank to rescue their farm animals in intense rain but were swept away by strong currents in Norala town in South Cotabato province.

Coast guard personnel rescued villagers who were trapped in houses engulfed in rising floodwa-

ters to a gymnasium.

More than 2,600 people were displaced, mostly by floods, in 18 southern villages, including about 600 villagers who moved to evacuation centres. Officials said more spaces were needed to shelter the evacuees as a safeguard against the Coronavirus.

More than 3,000 passengers and cargo handlers were stranded in central and southern seaports after sea travel was suspended by the coast guard due to stormy weather. A small cargo ship laden with sand and gravel was abandoned by its crew when it started to take in water near Albueria town in central Leyte province. The crew was safe, coast guard spokesman Armand Balilo said.

About 20 tropical storms and typhoons batter the Philippine archipelago each year. The Southeast Asian nation is also located in the Pacific Ring of Fire, a seismically active region where volcanic eruptions and earthquakes occur frequently. — AP

**STRONG CURRENTS A small ship abandoned when it started to take in water**

Philippines, June 2: A small ship was abandoned when it started to take in water

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## quick BITES

### INDICATORS %

|                        |             |        |
|------------------------|-------------|--------|
| Sensex                 | 51,849.48   | -0.16  |
| Nifty 50               | 15,576.20   | 0.01   |
| S&P 500*               | 4,209.71    | 0.18   |
| Dollar (₹)             | 73.08       | -0.23  |
| Pound Sterling (₹)     | 103.36      | 0.01   |
| Euro (₹)               | 89.01       | 0.18   |
| Gold (10gm)* (₹)       | 48,772 ▲116 | 0.23   |
| Brent crude (\$/bbl)*  | 71.15       | 1.28   |
| IN 10-Yr T-bill yield* | 6.005       | 0.00   |
| US 10-Yr T-bill yield* | 1.593       | -0.022 |

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

### Assocham seeks wage support, interest subsidy

Assocham asked the government to extend relief measures such as regulatory easing, wage support, and interest subsidy for the MSMEs. As the states are in the process of easing lockdowns, the trade and industry would need support to pick up their business thread again, it said. It has suggested that the surplus funds of ESIC should be used for providing wage support measures/stimulus packages for the employees.

### Ruchi Soya enters nutraceuticals; to sell 10 products



Ruchi Soya Industries said it has made a foray into the nutraceuticals and wellness segment and initially will launch 10 products under the brand 'Patanjali' and 'Nutrela'. Ruchi Soya aims to have a range of products across various categories in the next one year, it said. To start with, the firm is launching 10 products, including vitamin B12, iron complex, vitamin D, vitamin C and zinc complex, daily energy and weight gain, among others.

### SMS alerts for IPO process via UPI only from next yr

Markets regulator Sebi gave time till January 1, 2022 for implementation of guidelines pertaining to SMS alerts under the UPI system for shares applied and allotted during an initial public offering. Earlier, the deadline for putting in place automated web portal with respect to IPOs through UPI system has also been extended to October 1. The framework was to come into force from May 1.

### Rossari Biotech to acquire Unitop Chem for ₹420 cr

Speciality chemicals manufacturer Rossari Biotech announced the acquisition of Unitop Chemicals, a supplier of surfactants, emulsifiers, and specialty chemicals, for Rs 421 crore. Rossari will buy 100 per cent equity capital of Unitop, with 65 per cent shares acquired upon closure of the transaction, and the balance 35 per cent over the next two years. The total consideration for 100% stake is Rs 421 crore.

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## ■ States will have to change rent laws Union Cabinet clears Model Tenancy Act

SANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, JUNE 2

The Union Cabinet has on Wednesday approved the much-awaited Model Tenancy Act, which is expected to give a fillip to rental housing and property markets across the country.

The Act, the government said, will help overhaul the legal framework on rental housing, enable creation of adequate rental housing stock, and enable institutionalisation of rental housing.

The states and Union territories can now adopt the law through fresh legislation or by amending existing rental laws.

As per the Act, the states can set up rent authorities in cities, and landlords and tenants will have to be present before the authority to get rent agreements registered. The Act will also enable setting up of rent courts or tribunals to address rent-related disputes. These courts will have to pass an order within 60 days of receiving a complaint.

Further, the Act has several provisions to safeguard the interests of both tenants and landlords. Tenants will be liable to pay double the rent for two months and four times the rent in the consequent months if they overstay in a property.

Landlords in states that adopt the policy will not be able to ask for more than two months of rent as security deposit.

The Act also stipulates that the tenant cannot sublet the whole or part of the accommodation without the landlord's permission.

Similarly, landlords need to give a written notice 24 hours in advance to visit the premises. They cannot make a visit before 7 am and after 8 pm.

Naredco president Nirajan Hirandani said the new law "would make things easier for all stakeholders tenants, landlords

Unless mentioned in the

### UNLOCKING VACANT PROPERTIES

- Tenants will be liable to pay double the rent for two months and four times the rent in the consequent months if they overstay in a property
- Landlords can approach the rent court asking for eviction, if the tenants fail to pay the rent for two months
- Landlords cannot ask for more than two months of rent as security deposit
- Landlords will have to give three months' notice to the tenant before raising the rent

rent agreement, the landlord cannot hike the rent during the agreement period. The landlord will have to give three months' notice to the tenant before increasing the rent. Further, the landlord will be responsible for the structural maintenance of the property.

Landlords in states that adopt the policy will not be able to ask for more than two months of rent as security deposit.

The Act also stipulates that the tenant cannot sublet the whole or part of the accommodation without the landlord's permission.

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### STANCHART UNIT TO LAUNCH CRYPTO TRADING PLATFORM

LAWRENCE WHITE & ALUN JOHN  
JUNE 2

A Standard Chartered PLC unit intends to establish a cryptocurrency brokerage and exchange platform in Britain and Europe, targeting institutional clients, the bank said on Wednesday.

The new exchange will be created by a joint venture between SC Ventures, the bank's innovation arm, and BC Technology Group, which operates Hong Kong-licensed cryptocurrency exchange OSC.

The move from Asia, Africa and Middle East-focused StanChart is one of the strongest endorsements yet from a mainstream lender for cryptocurrencies, as global banks juggle clients' interest in the digital coins with concerns about their risks.

StanChart's platform will target the European market, connecting institutional traders with counterparties trading bitcoin, ether and other digital assets. —Reuters

FALAKNAAZ SYED  
MUMBAI, JUNE 2

With the second phase of the Covid-19 pandemic impacting consumption and growth, the monetary policy committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is likely to maintain status quo on policy rates, continue with an accommodative policy stance and ensure adequate liquidity in the system in an effort to stimulate growth. The MPC, which is the rate setting panel, began its three-day deliberations on Wednesday and would announce its decision on Friday.

The MPC has kept key policy rates unchanged in the last five bi-monthly policy meets. The RBI's annual report 2020-2021, released last week, has already made it clear that "the conduct of monetary policy in 2021-22 would be guided by evolving macroeconomic conditions, with a bias to remain supportive of

While the country's GDP growth has sequentially improved, the near-term outlook for the economy remains clouded with extreme uncertainty and downside risks. Since the previous monetary policy review in April 2021, most of the states have

growth till it gains traction on a durable basis while ensuring that inflation remains within the target".

The report added that the central bank would ensure that the system-level liquidity remains comfortable during 2021-22, is aligned with the stance of monetary policy, and monetary transmission continues uninterrupted while maintaining financial stability.

In the assessment of the RBI, the evolving CPI inflation trajectory is likely to be subjected to both upside and downside pressures. The food inflation path will critically depend on the temporal and spatial progress of the south-west monsoon in 2021.

M Govinda Rao, chief economic advisor of Brickwork Ratings, said, "The better-than-expected GDP numbers provide much-needed comfort to the MPC on the growth outlook.

However, with the imposition of partial lockdown-like restrictions to contain the virus spread in several parts of the country, the downside risk on growth recovery has intensified. Hence,

the RBI is likely to continue with its accommodative monetary policy stance in the decision of the MPC meeting to be announced on June 4 2021."

announced stringent lockdowns, reflected by a jump in Oxford's Stringency Index for India from 58 at the start of April to 74 during the month of May.

These restrictions have severely impacted business activities with the contact-intensive sector facing the highest strain while mobility dropped significantly compared with Q3 and Q4 of FY21.

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### BYJU'S, GOOGLE IN TIEUP TO OFFER SCIENCE, MATHS IN SCHOOLS

New Delhi, June 2: Education technology firm Byju's on Wednesday announced a partnership with tech giant Google to offer a learning solution for schools.

With this, the simplicity, flexibility and security of Google Workspace for Education and Byju's content pedagogy come together on the 'Vidyaarthi' platform to aid effective learning at school, according to a statement.

This integration of Google Workspace for Education with Byju's would offer a collaborative and personalised digital platform for classroom organisation, available for free to participating educational institutions, the statement added.

"With a commitment to digital education, Google Workspace for Education will combine Byju's unparalleled pedagogy to empower educators in their journey towards digital transformation," the statement said.

Built on the Vidyaarthi platform, this partnership will provide direct access to Byju's math and science pedagogy and visually rich learning solutions, including chapter-wise slides, ready-made assignments, data banks, summary docs, handouts, tests, among others.

The acceptance of online learning in the last one year has led to the swift digitisation of the education system, Byju's noted.

—PTI

## Mercedes to sell cars directly to customers

MICHAEL GONSALVES  
PUNE, JUNE 2

Mercedes-Benz, India's biggest luxury car maker, on Wednesday announced it will completely revamp its sales model in the country and sell its new cars directly to customers.

Through a new 'Direct To Customer' model, which the company terms as the 'Retail of the Future', the Pune-based German car-maker said it will start selling its cars directly to customers from the October-December quarter.

The dealers will remain an integral part but will not be involved in transactions with the customer or buy stock from Mercedes-Benz.

In this new circular sales model, customers will contact dealerships (now called franchise partners) to buy a Mercedes car. But the dealer's responsibility will rest on providing a suitable brand experience to the customer through showcasing Mercedes-Benz cars, offering sales consulting and test drives.

The dealer will facilitate the sale of the car as well but Mercedes-Benz India will own all the stock of its manufactured/imported models. Customers will be invoiced directly by Mercedes-Benz and there will be no financial transactions with the dealer.

For customers, it means transparent prices, and an end to bargaining for a better price. Mercedes-Benz said, as the cars will be now sold directly to customers by the company itself.

The industry's first new retail service will be implemented in India from Q4 2021 onwards, Mercedes-Benz said.

The Indian arm of the German carmaker will now own the entire stock of cars, sell them via appointed dealers, invoice the new cars to its customers directly, process the order and fulfill them, and offer one price and purchasing experience for customers.

The dealer, on the other hand, will handle establishing and maintaining customer contacts, developing the market, and facilitating the sale of Mercedes-Benz cars.

Mercedes-Benz India will be responsible for centrally managing the selling price of all new cars, owning and managing the entire stock of new cars, and processing and fulfilling delivery time.

Schwenk said dealers will continue as brand representatives, maintaining their connection with customers and strive to offer the best customer experience in the market.

The dealers will continue to cater to after-sales service, remain brand representatives in the market, will be responsible for developing customer relationships, will continue to manage operational handling of customer interactions, and will continue local retail marketing activities.

## Biden targets tax break on property capital gains

DAVID KOCIENIEWSKI & CALEB MELBY  
JUNE 2

President Joe Biden is pushing to close a tax break that helped his predecessor amass a fortune.

The Democrat has proposed narrowing a tax code provision that allows real estate investors to avoid capital gains taxes when they sell property, as long as they use the gains to buy more. Former president Donald Trump's most valuable investment, which traces back to his \$95 million purchase of a west-side Manhattan development site, has benefited with the rule.

In 2005, when Trump's partners agreed to sell the site for \$1.8 billion—a deal Trump resisted—his cut was about \$500 million. Because the partners then used the capital gains from the sale to purchase two office towers, they and Trump didn't owe any tax on their gains. Today, Trump's stake in the buildings is worth about \$1.2 billion before accounting for debt. Biden's plan would eliminate that kind of manoeuvre for Trump and thousands of others with real estate investments.

The so-called 1031 like-kind exchange rule, named after a section of the tax code, was created a century ago to aid family farmers. It has evolved into a beloved tool of property moguls.

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## MERCHANDISE EXPORTS JUMP IN MAY

SANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, JUNE 2

Despite the second wave of infections, merchandise exports grew both yearly and sequentially in May. With imports declining sequentially, the trade deficit shrunk to an eight-month low of \$6.32 billion in May.

Merchandise exports in May 2021 stood at \$32.21 billion—67.39 per cent higher than the low base of \$19.24 billion in the lock-down-hit May 2020. The exports were also 7.93 per cent higher than \$29.85 billion in the pre-pandemic May 2019. Most importantly, exports continued to grow sequentially by 6.6 per cent compared to \$30.21 billion in April 2021, despite the second wave.

In the case of imports of \$38.53 billion, there has been an increase of 68.54 per cent over \$22.86 billion in May 2020, but a decline of 17.47 per cent over \$46.68 billion in May 2019. Imports were also 15 per cent down sequentially compared to \$45.21 billion in April 2021.

This helped India cut its trade deficit to \$6.32 billion compared with \$15.24 billion in April 2021 and \$16.84 billion in May 2019. However, the trade deficit was higher than \$3.62 billion in the lock-down hit May 2020.

The merchandise trade deficit shrunk to an eight-month low \$6.3 billion in May 2021 from \$15.2 billion in April 2021 as the state-wise restrictions widened, curbing domestic demand for both gold and oil. A predominant 63 per cent of the decline in the trade deficit in May 2021 relative to April 2021 was on account of the collapse in gold imports, with the balance led by a narrower oil deficit," said Aditi Nayar of Icra.

## Firm to promote digital agriculture in rural India

LIBBY GEORGE, SABRINA VALLE & NIGEL HUNT  
JUNE 2

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**SHORT TAKES**  
Will miss Marin at Games: Sindhu

New Delhi: Star Indian shuttler P. V. Sindhu on Wednesday wished Spain's Carolina Marin a speedy recovery after she was forced out of the Tokyo Games due to a freak knee injury and said she will miss the reigning Olympic champion at the quadrennial event.

Marin suffered a torn anterior cruciate ligament in her left knee during training and pulled out of the showpiece event on Tuesday. "So sorry to hear about your injury. Hoping that you will recover soon and come back stronger," Sindhu, who had settled for the silver medal at Rio Games after losing to Marin in the final, said in a video message posted on Twitter.

"I will miss you at the Olympic Games but hope we compete against each other soon, so come back fast and recover soon. Lots of love," Sindhu said. — PTI

**Pak departure to England delayed**

Islamabad: The Pakistan cricket team's departure to England has been pushed back by two days after the Pakistan Super League final was rescheduled for June 24 in Abu Dhabi. The PSL was earlier scheduled to end on June 20 and the national team was due to leave for England on June 23 to play three ODIs and three Twenty20s.

However, with the PSL final pushed back by four days, the national team will leave for England on June 25. The first ODI is scheduled for July 8 in Cardiff.

Abu Dhabi will host the remaining 20 games of the PSL after Pakistan's premier domestic Twenty20 league was postponed in March when several players and support staff tested positive for Covid-19. — AP

**Task cut out for Ind against Qatar**

Doha: Their preparation was far from ideal but India would take inspiration from the draw against Asian champions Qatar in 2019 when they face the same opponents in the second-leg match of the joint World Cup and Asian Cup qualifiers, here on Thursday.

India had held mighty Qatar 0-0 in September 2019 here, a result considered as one of the best for the side in recent times. But India are playing their home match here as the Qatari capital was chosen as the centralised venue for all the remaining Group 'E' matches after the qualifiers were halted last year due to the Covid-19 pandemic. India's performance, however, has gone south since then while Qatar, the group toppers, have come into

Thursday match on a high. — PTI

**Ancelotti back as Real Madrid coach**

Madrid: Carlo Ancelotti has rejoined Real Madrid as coach for the next three seasons, the Spanish club said on Tuesday. "Hello Madrid!" the 61-year-old Italian who succeeds Zinedine Zidane posted on Twitter.

Ancelotti, who won the Champions League for Real Madrid during his first spell at the club between 2013 and 2015, will sign his contract and be presented to the media on Wednesday, the club said in a statement. It took less than a week for Real Madrid to turn the page on Zidane criticising the lack of confidence shown in him by the club hierarchy.

Instead, Ancelotti is about to be reunited with the club president Florentino Perez who ruthlessly ousted the coach in 2015, just one year after he led the club to a 10th Champions League title. — AFP

**Booker leaves Lakers in lurch**

Los Angeles: Devin Booker scored 30 points as the Phoenix Suns left LeBron James and the depleted Los Angeles Lakers facing elimination from the NBA playoffs on Tuesday with a crushing 115-85 victory. Phoenix took full advantage of the injury absence of the Lakers' Anthony Davis to dominate the Lakers from early in the first quarter before romping to a comfortable win. — AFP

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# NADAL MODE ON

Rafael, Djokovic start off with a winning note in French Open



Rafael Nadal of Spain returns the ball to Alexei Popyrin of Australia during their men's singles match at the French Open tennis tournament in Paris on Tuesday. Nadal won in straight sets at 6-3, 6-2, 7-6 (7/3). — AFP

## Questions won't stop for Osaka

Paris, June 2: Unfortunately for Naomi Osaka, the questions will keep coming. There's nowhere to run and certainly no place to hide when you're a superstar travelling the world and playing on the biggest stages in tennis. Some of the questions may be repetitive. Some may even be a bit negative, though for the most part those in the tennis media tend to treat top players with kid gloves.

Regardless, it's part of her job to answer them. That's not going to change, even with Osaka's withdrawal from the French Open after refusing to appear at the news conferences every other top player accepts as part of the job.

Only now she'll have even more questions to answer.

That's not entirely Osaka's fault, though she did herself no favors by the clumsy way she handled her mini media revolts in Paris. She blew off her first post-match news conference, after declaring earlier in a posting online that she didn't want to



hear the same questions over and over and saying that reporters tend to kick players while they are down.

In other words, she didn't want to answer questions about why she didn't play better on clay.

Osaka rebounded a bit in a second statement announcing her withdrawal, and that's where it gets tricky. She revealed she had suffered long periods of depression after winning the U.S. Open in 2018 and that she suffers great anxiety when faced

with having to answer questions from journalists at news conferences.

We all can and should be sympathetic to that. Depression and anxiety can be devastating and debilitating, as anyone who has suffered from them or dealt with a family member who has them knows so well.

Nobody should begrudge Osaka's decision to withdraw from a major championship because she's having trouble coping with those issues. Indeed, we should all support her

efforts to improve her mental health.

But let's make this clear, this isn't a media problem. It isn't a news conference problem.

Frankly, until Osaka

said she would not show up for her news conference and then blew off tournament organisers

who wondered why no one even knew there was a problem.

There's nothing inherently wrong with a system that requires athletes who are paid millions of dollars to perform to be asked about their play afterward.

There's also nothing wrong with reporters asking an occasional question that may not fit the positive narrative Osaka wants when writing about the newest star in tennis.

It's part of the reason why tournaments like the French Open sell out expensive seats every year.

It's a lot of the reason Forbes said Osaka made \$37 million in 2019, most of it in endorsements from companies that expect Osaka to generate lots of press for their products. — AP

## Croatia, Armenia play 1-1 stalemate

Paris, June 2: World Cup runners-up Croatia were held to a 1-1 draw by Armenia on Tuesday in their first warm-up match for Euro 2020.

Inter Milan winger Ivan Perisic opened the scoring for the home side in the 24th minute, with coach Zlatko Dalic's team up against England, the Czech Republic and Scotland at the Euros.

Instead, Armenia made the most of a rare sortie into Croatia territory when Wbeymar Angulo equalised in the 72nd minute.

Lazio striker Vedat Muriqi hit all four goals, including one penalty, as Kosovo out-classed San Marino 4-1.

Kosovo's neighbours North Macedonia came close to claiming the scalp of Slovenia after Napoli midfielder Elif Elmas scored the opening goal.

But home hearts were broken as Domen Crnjic snatched an equaliser for Slovenia in the seventh minute of injury time.

North Macedonia are drawn with Austria, the Netherlands and Ukraine at the June 11-July 11 Euros.

Slovakia, in Group 'E' alongside Poland, Spain and Sweden, were held to a 1-1 draw by Bulgaria.

In the only game pitching two Euro-bound sides against each other, the Poles played out a 1-1 draw against Russia, in Group 'B' with Belgium, Denmark and Finland. — Agencies



Croatia's Duje Caleta-Car (left) and Armenia's Tigran Barseghyan fight for the ball during a friendly match at Velika Gorica on Tuesday. — AFP

## Veda recalls Covid trauma in family

New Delhi, June 2: "Completely destroyed" after losing her mother and sister to Covid-19 recently, Indian women's team cricketer Veda Krishnamurthy says she is slowly learning to tune herself out of that grief and stressed on the importance of mental health assistance in crisis situations.

Nine members of Krishnamurthy's family battled the disease and her mother and sister passed away within two weeks of each other last month in Karnataka. "I'm a big believer in

what destiny holds for you, but I really hoped that my sister would come back home. When she didn't, I was completely destroyed. All of us were broken to pieces," Krishnamurthy told ESPNcricinfo.

"...I still had to put up a brave face for the rest of the family. What I had to do in those testing couple of weeks was learn to tune myself out of my grief. But it keeps coming back to haunt you," she said. The middle-order batter said she was the only one in the family not to contract the virus and ended up coordinating all the medical needs at that time. It was then that she realised how difficult it would have been for several other people to access basic care. "Going through my Twitter feed

at the time, I felt a lot of people were struggling with something as basic as getting a doctor to instruct them on what they should be doing — whether that was isolating at home or something else," she recalled.

Speaking about the mental aspect of dealing with a health crisis and the ensuing tragedy of such a magnitude, Krishnamurthy said her mother and sister also suffered from anxiety while battling the illness.

"Mental strength is important. My oldest sister, Vatsala, had panic attacks before she passed away from Covid," the 28-year-old said.

Krishnamurthy also revealed that she has dealt with mental health issues of her own in the past and called for a structured support system for those in need.

"A lot of people who are playing cricket currently know what mental health is, but it is also important to accept that if the system is not doing anything to offer you mental-health assistance, you can and must find the support for yourself if you can afford it," she added. — PTI



## Virat charged up for WTC battle

Mumbai, June 2: India captain Virat Kohli is not too concerned about the limited preparation time that his team will get for the World Test Championship final against New Zealand as he believes that it has the requisite understanding of conditions from its past experience of playing in England.

**We don't have any issues even with four practice sessions heading into the WTC final, because we are absolutely sure of what we can do as a team and we all have played in England.**

— VIRAT KOHLI  
India cricket team captain

four practice sessions.

"...we don't have any issues even with four practice sessions heading into the game, because we are absolutely sure of what we can do as a team and we all have played in England.

"...look, in the past we have landed in places three days prior even in a proper schedule and have had a hell of a series and hell of competition, so it is all in the head," Kohli said in the pre-departure press conference.

Kohli echoed coach Ravi Shastri's thoughts about the World Test Championship final holding a lot of value.

"All of us take a lot of pride in playing Test cricket, and the way, we have progressed as a side is an example of what Test cricket means to us. So, for all of us as a unit, those who have been part of the Test side for many years, this is like an accumulation of all the hard work," he said.

— PTI

## DOMESTIC PLAYERS PITCH FOR CENTRAL CONTRACTS

New Delhi, June 2: As the BCCI works out a compensation package and a formula to distribute it for the Covid-19 hit domestic cricketers, voices demanding central contracts for such players are getting louder with seasoned names like Jaydev Unadkat, Sheldon Jackson and Harpreet Singh Bhatia leading the chorus.

Last month, former India player and domestic veteran Rohan Gavaskar had also called for state associations to introduce contracts for players over and above their match fees, just like it is for the national team.

Majority of domestic players don't get to play IPL, don't have job security and rely heavily on match fees, which took a beating last season with Ranji Trophy being cancelled due to the pandemic.

Saurashtra captain and India player Jaydev Unadkat doesn't need the security of a contract but he feels it should be introduced for the top 30 cricketers of the state.

"Talks over central contracts were happening even before the pandemic. Even cricketers at the age group level should be compensated for the lack of cricket, it will keep them motivated and then hand contracts to senior players," Unadkat said.

## Conway hits ton to bolster Kiwis

London, June 2: New Zealand's Devon Conway joined a select group of cricketers on Wednesday by marking his Test debut with a splendid hundred (136 off 240 balls) at Lord's to lead New Zealand to 246 for 3 against England at the end of first Day's play.

The South Africa-born opener found himself thrust into the action straight away after New Zealand captain Kane Williamson won the toss and batted in the first of a two-match series against England.

But while star batsman Williamson and the experienced Ross Taylor both fell cheaply, the 29-year-old Conway pressed on to a 163-ball century, reaching the landmark with a flamboyant whipped legside four, his 11th boundary off England debutant fast bowler Ollie Robinson.

Only five other batsmen had previously scored a Test debut hundred at Lord's, with Conway the first New Zealand international to achieve the feat.

New Zealand had the better of the morning session to be 85-1 at lunch after Williamson won the toss.

But James Anderson, equaling retired former captain Alastair Cook's England record of 161 Test appearances, struck in the first over after the interval to remove star batsman Williamson for 13 as the runs dried up.

And fast bowler Robinson, who'd earlier dismissed Tom Latham, then had the 37-year-old Taylor lbw for 14.

Latham and Conway made a steady start against England new-ball greats Anderson and Stuart Broad after Black Caps skipper Williamson won the toss.

Brief scores (Day 1): New Zealand 246/3 in 86 overs (Devon Conway 136 batting; O. Robinson 2/50) vs England.

## AUSSIE PLAYERS TO RAISE FUNDS FOR COVID-HIT INDIA

Sydney, June 2: Top Australian cricketers including star pacer Pat Cummins will participate in a 12-hour gaming live stream on Thursday to raise money for UNICEF Australia's India Covid Appeal.

The brainchild of pacer Josh Lalor, the initiative will let fans watch the likes of Cummins, spinner Nathan Lyon and the pace duo of Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood on a live stream when they talk about cricket and showcase their gaming skills in a bid to raise AUD 100,000. The fundraiser will begin at 1:30 pm IST and will also see participation from Moises Henriques, women cricketer Alyssa Healy and South African Rilee Rossouw among others.

"Being a cricketer from Australia, we have a unique relationship with Indian people," Lalor told cricket.com.au. — PTI