

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
KARIMNAGAR | WEDNESDAY | 23 JUNE 2021

WEATHER

Max: 34.1°C
Min: 25.3°C
RH: 48%
Rain: Nil
Forecast: Cloudy sky. Moderate rain likely. Max/Min temp. 34/25°C

ASTROGUIDE

Plava: Uttarayana
Tithi: Jyeshtha Shuddha Trayodasi till 6.59 am, later Chaturdasi till 3.32 am (Thursday)
Star: Anuradha till 11.47 am
Variyam: 4.46 pm to 6.12 pm
Durmuhurtam: 11.52 am to 12.44 pm
Rahukalam: 12 noon to 1.30 pm
HJRI CALENDAR
Zeeqad 11,1442 AH
PRAYERS
Fajar: 4.33 am
Zohar: 12.28 pm
Asar: 4.55 pm
Maghrib: 6.59 pm
Isha: 8.16 pm
SUNSET TODAY 6.53 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.43 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 5.31 PM
MOONSET TOMORROW 3.59 AM

COUNTER POINT



Leaders who didn't get the invitation for this meet are going to form the Fourth Front!

SHORT TAKES

SENSEX HITS NEW RECORD, CROSSES 53K

Mumbai: The Sensex made a new high of 53,057 and crossed 53,000 mark for the first time on Tuesday but profit taking erased the day's gains as the index closed almost flat at 52,588.71 up 14.25 points or 0.03 per cent. Fifty-50 closed at 15,772.75 up 0.17 per cent or 26.25 points after touching 15,895 intraday. Strong global markets, record number of Covid vaccinations in a day, new daily Covid cases dropping below 50,000 and good rains cheered the market as it opened. Fifty-50 closed at 15,772.75 up 26.25 points.

■ Full report on Page 7

JD(U) likely to join Modi Cabinet

Patna: Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Tuesday left for the national capital, purportedly for medical reasons, though speculations ran rife that bargaining a decent share in the Union cabinet was also on the agenda of the JD(U) de-facto leader. The JD(U) has been a BJP ally for close to three decades, barring a hiatus in 2013-2017.

Nepal's Oli govt lands in crisis

Kathmandu: In a major blow to beleaguered Nepal Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli, the Supreme Court on Tuesday ruled that the appointment of 20 ministers by him was unconstitutional, invalidating his two recent Cabinet expansions after the dissolution of the House of Representatives.

■ Full report on Page 5

US biz wants more H1B visas

Washington: The US Chambers of Commerce has launched a campaign to address the shortage of skilled workforce in America, prominent among which includes urging the Biden administration to double the number of H-1B visas and eliminate per-country quota for the Green Card.

■ Full report on Page 5

WORLD | 5

Don't want vax? Go to India, says Filipino prez



deccanchronicle.com, facebook.com/deccannews, twitter.com/deccanchronicle

SPORTS | 8

Shami swings game India's way



TABLOID

Suresh Babu duped on fake vaccination drive



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Gupkar parties want special tag Kashmiri leaders ready to talk on all issues with the Centre

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC SRINAGAR, JUNE 22

The impasse seems to be breaking and the frozen political process in Kashmir may restart with the People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD), a major component of the former state's mainstream camp, on Tuesday agreeing to participate in the all-party meeting called by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at his official residence on Thursday. As reported by this newspaper last week, the PAGD is more than ready to bury the hatchet.



PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti (left) and National Conference president Farooq Abdullah after a meeting in Srinagar on Tuesday. — PTI

However, its leadership on Tuesday sought to dispel the notion that it has divorced or even veered

off from its basic plank — to seek restoration of the erstwhile state's special constitutional status which was revoked by the Centre on August 5, 2019. Former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister and PAGD president Farooq Abdullah, while announcing the alliance's decision to attend the all-party meeting on June 24, said: "Our stand is clear and all of you know what our stand is." He added there was no fixed agenda for the meeting and, therefore, "we can talk on any and every issue".

Desperate move



Opposition leaders meet at NCP President Sharad Pawar's residence in New Delhi on Tuesday. — DC

Pawar attempt to unite Opposition parties fails

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JUNE 22

The eight-party meet held at Maharashtra strongman and NCP supremo Sharad Pawar's residence here turned out to be "non-starter" for a united Opposition Third Front as was earlier being perceived. The meeting, that drew a lot of media attention as heralding the formation of a Third Front against the BJP juggernaut, was eventually termed as a "non-political meet" by the NCP.

Speaking to reporters, NCP leader Majeed Memon, who was among those present the meeting, said: "The meeting was called by Yashwant Sinha, not Sharad Pawar, this was not a political meeting. There are talks that the meeting was for a Third Front without the Congress, which is not the truth. There is no discrimination. We called all like-minded people. We also invited Congress leaders. They couldn't come. It's not true that we didn't invite the

BJP CALLS RAHUL 'CIRCUS'S CLOWN' AS CONGRESS PUTS OUT COVID PLAN

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JUNE 22

Comparing Congress leader Rahul Gandhi with a "circus's clown", the BJP on Tuesday claimed that whenever the country was at a crossroads in its battle against Covid-19, Mr Gandhi and the Opposition party try to derail the efforts by playing politics.

A day after over 86 lakh people got vaccinated in the country on the first day of the revised guidelines, Mr Gandhi attacked the Narendra Modi government for its

mismanagement of the Covid-19 crisis and also released a "white paper" on "what went wrong and how the nation can prepare for the imminent third wave".

Hitting back, the BJP said ever since the global pandemic hit India, the Congress has "really worked tirelessly to create hurdles and obstacles" to the Covid-19 management efforts and once again questioned whether or not the "Congress' first family" has been vaccinated.

party had sent out any invitations. "This is a highly overrated and speculative meeting," they said.

"It was not a political meeting but an interaction among like-minded people," CPI(M) leader Nilotpal Basu said.

CONG. OKAYS AMARINDER'S EXPLANATIONS

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JUNE 22

Punjab Chief Minister Capt. Amarinder Singh on Tuesday met the high powered committee constituted by the Congress president Sonia Gandhi. The committee, which consist of Mallikarjun Kharge, Harish Rawat and J.P. Agarwal, was briefed by the Punjab Chief Minister about the turmoil prevailing in the Punjab unit of the Congress. This was his second meeting with the committee in the last couple of days.

According to insiders, Capt. Singh explained all issues which were raised against him.

After the meeting, the committee member, Harish Rawat, said, "the party is satisfied with whatever was told to us by the Punjab Chief Minister and action taken in the sacrilege case and drug case."

The problem arose in Punjab when former state minister and Congress leader Navjot Singh Sidhu opened a front against Captain Singh charging him with not keeping the promises that he made to the people of the state.

Meanwhile it was a day of hectic political parleys in the national capital. Captain Amarinder Singh met senior leader Ambika Soni to sort issues out.

TS to banks: Keep off Rythu Bandhu

Finance team meets bankers after DC exposé

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, JUNE 22

Finance minister T. Harish Rao and Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar held an emergency meeting with bankers at the BRKR Bhavan on Tuesday in the wake of complaints that the banks were adjusting Rythu Bandhu amounts credited by the state government in the bank accounts of farmers to meet kharif cultivation expenses for repayment of their crop loan arrears.

Responding to a report published in these columns, "Banks take Rythu Bandhu, farmers struggle", on Tuesday, Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao directed the finance minister and the Chief Secretary to immediately convene a meeting with bankers and resolve the issue.

In the meeting, strict instructions were issued to banks against adjusting Rythu Bandhu amount for any other purpose. Bankers were directed to credit back the amount to farmers' accounts that were already deducted or adjusted towards crop loan



Finance minister T. Harish Rao and Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar during a meeting with bankers in Hyderabad on Tuesday. — DC

Strict instructions were issued to banks against adjusting Rythu Bandhu amount for any other purpose. Bankers were directed to credit back the amount to farmers' accounts

arrears or interest payment.

"Instances have come to the notice of the government that some banks are

not allowing the farmers to withdraw their Rythu Bandhu amount given by the government of Telangana and also adjusting the same against old dues. Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao issued directions to hold an emergency meeting with the bankers in this regard," said Somesh Kumar.

■ Page 2: Toll-free number for farmers launched

Modi defends Centre's Covid economic relief

New Delhi, June 22: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said the economic response to the Covid-19 pandemic was formulated to ensure that solutions do not follow a 'one size fits all' model, and asserted that "reforms by conviction and incentives" were undertaken on the back of "Centre-state bhagidari (partnership)".

In a post on social media platform LinkedIn, he said that in the backdrop of the financial crunch seen across the world, Indian states were able to borrow significantly more in 2020-21.

— PTI

increase in availability of resources was made possible by an approach of Centre-State bhagidari," the Prime Minister said in his post.

Noting that Covid pandemic has come with a whole new set of challenges to governments across the world in terms of policy-making, the Prime Minister said India was no exception and asserted that raising enough resources for public welfare is proving to be one of the biggest challenges.

Asserting that this nudge for reform is rare in Indian public finance, the Prime Minister said that it was a nudge, incentivising the states to adopt progressive policies to avail additional funds.

— PTI

PEOPLE IN STATE STILL LOVE MODI, SAYS UP BJP V-P

Lucknow, June 21: Newly-appointed Uttar Pradesh BJP vice-president and former IAS officer A.K. Sharma on Monday said people of the state love Prime Minister Narendra Modi the same way as they did in 2013-14.

In a letter dated June 20 and addressed to state BJP chief Swatantra Dev Singh, Sharma said, "In my humble opinion, even today, the people of Uttar Pradesh love Modi/ji the same they had done in 2013-14. To win the upcoming (UP Assembly) elections, the name and patronage of the mass leader is enough. Along with this, there are blessings of the party chief."

— PTI

2 AP officials get jail for contempt

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA JUNE 22

The Andhra Pradesh High Court on Tuesday sentenced two IAS officials to one month's imprisonment and a fine of ₹1,000 each for not implementing court orders on the filling of certain vacancies in the horticulture department.

Dealing with a contempt petition filed by the petitioners, Justice B.

Justice B. Devanand observed that the two officials — panchayat raj commissioner Girija Shankar and horticulture commissioner Chiranjeevi Chowdary — willfully disobeyed the court directions and deserved punishment.

The judge withdrew his order for the personal appearance of officials after government counsel said its orders would be implemented in two weeks.

Devanand observed that the two officials — panchayat raj commissioner

Girija Shankar and horticulture commissioner Chiranjeevi Chowdary —

willfully disobeyed the court directions and deserved punishment.

The judge called the officials for their personal appearance on Tuesday. However, he withdrew his order after state counsel Suman gave a commitment to the court that its orders would be implemented in two weeks.

■ Page 2: HC had given interim direction to AP

VIP | LUNCH

Vasalamarri springs into limelight with CM's visit

Village feasts as KCR plays host

L. VENKAT RAM REDDY | DC HYDERABAD, JUNE 22

Residents of Vasalamarri village had an unusually delightful day as they shared lunch with none other than Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao and interacted session with him for over an hour where they aired their grievances on Tuesday.

And a few of them were luckier as the Chief Minister himself and served the

dishes comprising 15 varieties of vegetarian and non-vegetarian items including biryani, chicken, mutton, fish, prawns, shrimp, etc in addition to sweets.

He went near each table and enquired with the villagers about the dishes and served food to a few of them. He also had lunch along with them.

The tiny village in Yadadri Bhongir district was adopted by the Chief Minister in November last

but he could not visit all these days due to Covid-19 restrictions.

On Tuesday, the Chief Minister, along with a few ministers and top officials, arrived at his adopted village by bus at noon.

The Chief Minister hosted lunch for the entire village of about 2,500 people.

Later, he held a *grama sabha* with villagers to discuss and devise plans to transform the village as "Bangaru Vasalamarri" in a year by ensuring all-

round development. He inspired villagers by sharing his thoughts and ideas on how great results could be achieved through collective hard work in a time bound manner.

The Chief Minister called upon the villagers to work towards self-governance and self-sustenance by developing the village into a model village.

■ Page 2: KCR promises ₹100 crore for adopted village



Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao interacts with a woman during a lunch that he hosted for the people of his adopted village Vasalamarri in Bhongir district on Tuesday. — DC

SHORT TAKES

HC FINDS FAULT WITH TS IN HMDA LAND ALLOTMENT

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JUNE 22

The Telangana High Court on Tuesday directed the government to submit the proceedings and allotment letter regarding the land allotment to HMDA in Survey No. 452/1 of Puppalguda village of Rajendranagar mandal in Ranga Reddy district.

A division bench was dealing with the appeal filed by private parties Kakatiya Enclave and others, who submitted that they had purchased 11.37 acres of land in Survey No. 452 in 2005. Their names were enrolled in the revenue records but the government declined their rights on the land, they said.

As per the government contention, this land was allotted to the then HUDA (presently HMDA) and by the time of giving possession to the HUDA, the panchanama was conducted. It submitted that there was a total 174 acres of land in the said survey number. But, the court found fault with the authorities in handing over the land without following proforma and asked the government to place the proceedings and how the land was allotted to the HUDA.

SMS ALERTS ON PLANNED POWER OUTAGES

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JUNE 22

Electricity consumers can expect to receive SMS alerts on their registered mobile phone numbers of scheduled power outages as the TS Power Distribution Company Limited (TSSPDCL) gears up for monsoon maintenance of the power supply network.

All power connections have been mapped with mobile numbers registered for the connection, a TSSPDCL official said.

Asked how tenants living in rented houses or apartments can receive the alerts, the official said a tenant can update the mobile number on the TSSPDCL website or the TSSPDCL app linking it to the service number that is found on the monthly bill.

Meanwhile, D. Prabhakar Rao, chairman and managing director of TS Transco and TS Genco, told TSSPDCL officials that any scheduled monsoon maintenance should be done area wise and the residents in those areas notified in advance to ensure people are aware of possible disruptions in power supply.

Chairing a review meeting on monsoon preparedness that was attended among others by TSSPDCL chairman and managing director G. Raghuma Reddy, and senior officials from the power utility, Prabhakar Rao said every effort should be made to ensure uninterrupted power supply for all consumers.

Officials were instructed to improve services provided by the 1912 helpline that connects to the Electricity Control Room.

FRAUDSTER ARRESTED FOR FALSE PROMISES

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JUNE 22

A cyber fraudster who cheated Tollywood actor Ali and a television channel under the guise of providing vaccination against Covid-19 has been arrested by the Cyberabad cybercrime police. The accused identified as Tikiksetti Nagendra Babu (27) is a chef working in a five-star hotel in Chennai.

According to the police, Babu cheated several high-profile persons promising to provide Covid-19 vaccines.

Assistant commissioner of police K. Balakrishna, Cyberabad Cybercrime Cell, said, “He used to collect mobile numbers of the persons he would target. Later, he used to contact them over phone and assure them to provide vaccination. He used to make them believe that he was from the health department.”

Falling prey to his fraud, many victims transferred lakhs of rupees as advance amount for the vaccine. As per the police records, he started committing crimes in 2016. The first case

was booked in Vijayawada, reportedly his hometown. Nagendra Babu used to trick victims under the guise of providing them with fancy phone numbers and faces three cases on this count.

Taking advantage of the Covid-19 pandemic, he hatched a plan to cheat the public by promising Covid-19 vaccination.

Delta plus on prowl, neglect will cost dear

KANIZA GARARI | DC
HYDERABAD, JUNE 22

Delta plus or AY1 variant of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19, is growing at the rate of 67 per cent around the world and 20 cases of this variant have been detected in India, among them one being in the temple town of Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh and eight others in Maharashtra.

The delta plus variant in India has a high transmission rate due to the delta B.1.617 or the double mutant. The emergence of this variant is seen as a process of evolution of the Coronavirus and is presently under observation for its various changes. It would be too early to speak of how infectious this version of the delta variant will be.

Experts opine that already one in three people in India are infected during the second wave of pandemic. The infection rate revealed by the seroprevalence in Ahmedabad was 33 per cent.

This means that there are a sufficient number of people with antibodies and with vaccination scaled up, there are chances of better immunity. But, safety protocols with vaccines have to be followed as there are chances of reinfection with delta variant B.1.617.2 even after full vaccination.

Experts say that due to the immune escape, there are concerns on efficacy of protection in a section of people.

Presently, the two new delta variants AY1 and AY2, are showing different combinations and stability has not been reached. There are additions and deletions in the virus as it is continuously replicating.

Researchers state that there are thousands of variants and all of them are not dangerous. Variants weaken or strengthen the virus. It is when it becomes stable in a mutation and strikes that is when the transmission, infection and fatality rate is calculated to understand the impact on host human

cells.

The AY 2 is found in two airport samples in India while 80 plus cases have been noted in California, USA.

Studying the changing pattern of the virus whose composition is of 30,000 letters with most important being S (spike), E (envelope), M (membrane) and N (nucleocapsid which has the RNA) attached to the human cells with spike protein must be constant. Acquiring genome samples from different regions of the country apart from airports gives an indication of the changes that occur locally.

A senior scientist on condition of anonymity said, “In India, the situation is very difficult as some states are aggressive in collecting samples from patients, sewage sites and opting for genome sequencing. Some states are not sending samples and only so when there is a spike in cases. There has to be a uniform policy where all states contribute an X number of samples every week.”

With most states unlocking and movement of people within the states and also internationally, experts are predicting the worst case scenario and want people to exercise maximum care.

Dr Suneetha Narreddy, senior consultant, infectious diseases, at Apollo Hospitals, said, “The virus is still in the community as the number of Covid cases are not zero yet. With the virus around and people moving, there will be transmission of disease which further mutations and evolution of new strains. How a new strain reacts will be decided on the extent of the outbreak. Evidence in other countries is an indication that there will be a third wave and we have to be extra careful.”

Which mutation will cause the third wave in India will depend on the opportunity provided by humans to them and their ability to transform despite the presence of vaccines, she said.

Districts continue to report cases

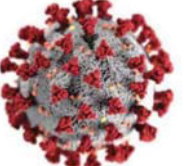
DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JUNE 22

The new Covid-19 cases have been generally declining but there are ups and downs in the past week that indicates that the virus is still there in the community. While the number of daily new cases may look small despite more than one lakh tests being carried out every day, all the districts are still reporting cases. Even districts with few cases have not been able to reach zero cases for a week.

This means transmis-

sion of the virus is a constant and on-going process and the decline will be slower than expected. With the unlocking of the state, the behaviour of the virus in the next two weeks as the behaviour of the people in following Covid-19 protocols.

Experts have asked people to maintain extra cautious when moving out, strictly maintain Covid safety guidelines like wearing masks properly, maintaining social distancing and hand washing, and to ensure that they take both doses of the vaccine on schedules.

DAILY COVID BULLETIN DATA	
	
Highest New Cases	
GHMC (Hyderabad)	133
Khammam	76
Karimnagar, Ranga Reddy	
and Suryapet	74
Nalgonda, Bhadradi	
Kothagudem	170
Medchal Malkajgiri	167

Update: Cases Deaths	
Fresh Cases	1,175
Deaths	10
Tests Done	1,24,907
Active Cases	16,640
Total Cases	6,15,574
Total Deaths	3,586
Lowest New Cases	
Komaram Bheem-Asifabad	3
Nirmal and Kamareddy	4
Adilabad and Jogulamba	
Gadwal	5
Narayanpet, Nizamabad	7
Medak	9

ADDAGUDUR SI, 2 OTHERS SUSPENDED

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JUNE 22

Rachakonda police commissioner Mahesh M. Bhagwat on Tuesday suspended Addagudur sub-inspector Mahesh, constable Rashid and Jannaiah who were

reportedly involved in the death of a 45-year-old Dalit woman, Ambadipudi Mariamma. He also appointed N. Shyam Prasad Rai, Malkajgiri assistant commissioner of police, as investigation officer in the case.

Parents ready if kids miss a year

96% of parents not to send kids to school

HARLEEN MINOCHA | DC
HYDERABAD, JUNE 22

Parents, especially of private school students in the city, expressed their disagreement with the government's order to open schools, even as detailed guidelines for operations are still awaited.

They said that they would not send young children to physical classes until there was a vaccine available for them. Some even said they would feel more comfortable in dropping a year of schooling if the government made attendance mandatory.

In an anonymous poll conducted by the Hyderabad Schools' Parents Association (HSPA), 96 per cent of parents who participated said they would not send their children to school this year.

Sanjay Agarwal, advocate and parent of students in Classes 4 and 5 in the city, said, “If the government mandates attendance, I would go to the school to allow online classes for my children. Our family has decided that none of our children will take physical classes this year. We cannot play with the lives of our children.”

On Twitter as well, parents demanded that vaccines for children and all teaching and non-teaching staff be made prerequisite to convince parents to opt for physical schooling. A Twitter user by the name Ravi Kiran city commented that there would be no school for their kids without a vaccine. “Incidents in the last few months have shown how ready and strong our healthcare system is,” some of them tweeted.

Concerns have also been raised on the situation that arose when schools were reopened at the beginning of this year, where several students and teaching and non-teaching staff got infected with Covid-19 especially in government and residential schools. However, the government is yet to give final guidelines for opening educa-

School managements to meet edu. minister

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JUNE 22

The functionaries of the Telangana Recognised Schools Management Association (TRMSA) representing private schools are meeting Education Minister Sabitha Indra Reddy on Wednesday in view of reopening of schools from July 1, as announced by the state government last week.

The association does not agree to the government's suggestion to further lower tuition and other fees. There exists a financial crisis. In order to sustain the operations, parents of all students in private budget schools should be mandated to pay the fees pending since March last year, it stresses.

“Hardly 30-40 per cent of the parents have paid the fees due to the abrupt closures. This has made it dif-

ficult for most schools to continue with their operations. Lowering the fees any further is not acceptable to us. Schools now conduct both offline and online classes. There will be added expenditure by way of bills, rents and sanitisation,” it said.

It added that no school has increased the fees in the past two years. “If the fees are reduced, we will not be able to pay salary to teachers and other staff,” said Sadulla Madhusudhan, TRMSA general secretary.

Another issue being taken up with the education minister is on preparation of an academic calendar for the new session. This was not done the previous academic year. The association also wants attendance made mandatory and to give 30 per cent weightage to attendance in the final results for students.

HC CLOSES PILs ON HIGH SCHOOL FEES; TS ISSUES NOTICES TO SCHOOLS

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JUNE 22

As the state government informed that it was taking stringent action against private schools which collected more than prescribed fees, the Telangana High Court closed two PILs on higher fees and online classes.

The division bench comprising Chief Justice Hima Kohli and Justice B. Vijayen Reddy was dealing with the PILs filed by parents' association and others, who brought to the notice of the court about the violations of government orders regarding school fees for the academic year 2020-21.

The government had issued GO 46 restraining

tional institutes in the state along with the conduct of physical and

online classes for the next academic year starting from July 1.

The government counsel submitted that the education department had already issued show cause notices to the schools, which violated the GO 46.

He submitted that some schools had collected various fees, apart from admission fees. After the replies to the show cause notices, action would be taken, the counsel stated.

Noting the government counsel's statement, the court closed the PILs.

After 60 years, gynaec fed gets prez from city

KANIZA GARARI | DC
HYDERABAD, JUNE 22

Dr S. Shantha Kumari, a senior gynaecologist hailing from Telangana state, will take over the post of president of the Federation of Obstetric and Gynaecological Society of India (FOGSI) on June 27.

Dr Kumari will be the first president of the society from both the Telugu states. She has completed her MBBS at Gandhi Medical College and specialised in Obstetrics and Gynaecology at Kasturba Medical College in Manipal. She is attached with Yashoda Hospitals in Hyderabad.

She is the 60th president of FOGSI and the event will be held in HICC, Hyderabad. In an interview with this newspaper, Dr Kumari explains the need for gynaecologists to be socially involved in women's issues and a strategic role that they can play.

What efforts made you realise that gynaecologists can be a part of addressing women's issues?

In 2015, I was in the working committee of the International Federation of Gynaecology and Obstetrics and realised that gynaecologists could play an important role in saying no to violence against women. Gynaecologists are the point of contact for women and their families and we are against any violence on women. It was decided to sensitise the medical fraternity and that is how project Dheera was shaped.

Dr S. Shantha Kumari

ONE OF Gynaecologists is the point of contact for women and their families and we are against any violence on women. It was decided to sensitise the medical fraternity and that is how project Dheera was shaped.

— DR S. SHANTHA KUMARI

respectful abortion care, reducing stillbirth, nutrition and reducing maternal mortality. There are many events which we are planning online and offline keeping the pandemic in mind.

How many women were able to reach out online during this pandemic?

There have been challenges but the hospitals for women are operating 24/7. We are looking at shaping our programmes, keeping the pandemic in mind. Hence there will be online and offline events with the focus on overall improvement of women's health, both medical and social.

How are you looking at your tenure in the ongoing pandemic?

We have collaborated with World Health Organisation, UNICEF and other agencies where the focus will be on

Road to recovery



A TSRTC employee announces the availability of buses to increase the occupancy in order to reduce losses at the busy Secunderabad railway station, in Hyderabad on Tuesday.

— P. SURENDRA

HC had given interim direction to AP

From Page 1

The horticulture department had in January 2020, issued a notification to fill village horticulture assistant posts. It later issued an amendment deleting several eligibility param-

eters. Some 35 candidates challenged this in court.

The High Court scrapped the amended notification and gave an interim direction to the government to consider the candidatures of the 35 petitioners too.

Even after exhausting all the legal remedies and courts giving a clear direction to consider the pleas of the 35, the officials ignored the orders. This forced the candidates to file a contempt case.

DEVELOPMENT | WORK

KCR appoints Bhongir collector as special officer

CM promises ₹100cr for village

From Page 1

He wanted them to work with the motto of ‘all for one and one for all’ and weed out discrimination or hatred towards each other in order to progress together.

The Chief Minister appointed Bhongir district collector Pamela Satpathy as the special officer for the develop-

ment of the village. He also announced that the government would release ₹100 crore ₹150 crore for the development of the village after finalising the plans and proposals. But the funds should be put to use properly which would be possible only when the entire village worked unitedly, he asserted.

“People should set aside their differences and

should not allow any kind of discrimination – caste, religion or even politics. Development should be our caste and religion. I appeal to all to spare two hours per week for the development of the village and we can transform the entire village within

one year,” he said. He suggested constituting various committees including village development, sanitation and drinking water, agriculture and others.

On the occasion, the Chief Minister sanctioned ₹1 crore for Bhongir municipality along with ₹50 lakh each to the remaining five municipalities of Alair, Bhoodan Pochampalli,

Choutuppal, Mothkur and Yadadri. He also allocated ₹25 lakh each for 421 gram panchayats in Yadadri Bhongir district from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund (CMRF) in addition to the funds sanctioned to all local bodies.

Earlier in the day, Rao performed a special puja at Lord Rama temple in the village after his arrival.

SHORT TAKES

MAN DRILLS HOLES
IN WALL OF BANK,
ROBS OVER ₹55L

New Delhi, June 22: A 34-year-old man was arrested for allegedly burgling over ₹55 lakh after breaking into a bank from an adjoining under-construction building in east Delhi's Farsh Bazar area, police said on Tuesday.

Without knowing about the accused, the bank officials had earlier entrusted him the task of fixing a hole in the wall inside their premises that he had himself drilled for committing the crime, police said.

The accused was wearing a helmet at the time of the burglary to hide his identity, they said. Police also said another person was arrested who received some amount of the stolen money. The two accused men have been identified as Hariram and Kalicharan (39), both residents of Vishwas Nagar, they said.

On Monday around 10.15 am, police received information regarding a burglary in a bank in Vishwas Nagar area.

Police inspected the spot and found that a hole was made in a wall of the server room of the bank from the adjacent under-construction building. Another hole in the wall of a strong room in the basement was made and cash worth ₹55,03,330 was stolen from the vault, a senior police officer said.

SCINDIA DUCKS
QUESTIONS ON
CABINET INDUCTION

RABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, JUNE 22

Amid growing buzz about the possible expansion of Union cabinet ahead of monsoon session of Parliament, BJP leader and Rajya Sabha member Jyotiraditya Scindia on Tuesday ducked the question whether he would be inducted in the Narendra Modi ministry, saying, "I am a *sevak* (servant) (of people)".

Talking to reporters at Shivpuri, nearly 300 km from here, on the sidelines of his visit to the district hospital, Scindia indicated that he was not to take up issues of people than hold any position.

"I have been serving the people for the last 17 years and I will continue to do so", Scindia said.

Replying to a question if he has changed his style of politics by trying to take his 'rivals' along with him, Scindia who joined BJP after snapping his nearly two decades long ties with Congress in March 2020, said, "I always carry everyone in the party with me".

Scindia was seen visiting local BJP leaders, not known to belong to his camp, in their houses in Gwalior-Chambal region in Madhya Pradesh during his recent visits to the state, generating curiosity among the party workers.

Earlier during his visit to Gwalior, Scindia slammed Congress for demanding to rechristen the formerly princely estate as "Virangana Laxmibai", describing it 'politically motivated'.

ARNAB NAMED
IN TRP SCAM
CHARGESHEET

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC
MUMBAI, JUNE 22

The Mumbai police has named Arnab Goswami, Editor-in-chief of *Republic TV* as an accused in the Television Rating Points (TRP) scam in its supplementary chargesheet.

The chargesheet was submitted before the Esplanade Metropolitan Magistrate's court by the police's Crime Intelligence Unit (CIU), which is conducting investigation into the case.

The police named Goswami and four others from ARG Outlier Media (that owns *Republic TV*) in their 1800 page supplementary charge sheet submitted before the court.

So far the police had chargesheeted 15 people in the case, including former CEO of Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC) Partho Dasgupta and *Republic TV*'s CEO Vikash Khanchandani. The alleged fake TRP scam came to light in October last year when the rating agency Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC) filed a complaint through Hansa Research Group (HRG), alleging that certain television channels were rigging TRP numbers.

Hence the charges invoked on the case relate to cheating, forgery, criminal conspiracy etc.



Vehicles stuck in a traffic jam in central business district after certain restrictions of lockdown were eased in Bengaluru on Tuesday.

— PTI

90% of deaths in 2nd wave
were needless, says Rahul

Rahul releases white paper, says Modi's tears can not wipe families' tears

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 22

The Congress on Tuesday released a white paper on the Covid-19 and its impact on India. Releasing the document, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi accused the government of having failed to prevent the second wave and warning that the third wave was impending. He said that 90 per cent of Covid-19 deaths in the second wave were "needless".

Attacking Prime Minister Narendra Modi he said, "90 per cent of people who died (in the second wave) could have been saved. Biggest reason (they died) was lack of oxygen. PM's tears can't wipe families' tears... his tears can't save them, oxygen can. But he didn't take it seriously as his focus was on Bengal (elections)." He demanded a



A health worker escorts an elderly woman to receive a dose of Covid-19 vaccine at a vaccination centre in Thiruvananthapuram on Tuesday.

— PTI

commission to look into "what went wrong" in the government's strategy and emphasised that a Covid-19 compensation fund must be created to help families who lost their bread-earners.

Gandhi said consultations with experts had yielded a four-pronged approach or four pillars. "Central pillar is vaccination. It is very important we have aggressive, 100 per cent vaccination," he

said.

The second pillar, he said, is to ensure adequate numbers of hospital beds and medical resources, including oxygen (and oxygen plants), medicines and equipment like ventilators.

On the question of pace of vaccination Gandhi did have praise for the government, after a record 86.16 lakh vaccine doses were administered on Monday he appreciated the work and said, "Yes... good work happened yesterday, but the government has to make this process work not just for one day but every day... until we've vaccinated our whole population," he stressed, adding, "The government must not view states as BJP-ruled or opposition states. There must be no bias."

After releasing the white paper Rahul Gandhi maintained that the intention

was not to point fingers but help India tackle the third wave.

He added, "The government should not repeat the mistakes it did in the first and second waves. It should be ready with infrastructure to tackle the third wave." Reacting to the Centre's plea in the Supreme Court that it doesn't have money to compensate for Covid-19 deaths, Gandhi said the government must announce a compensation package for the poor. An economic assistance process is also a significant part of the white paper published on Tuesday by the Congress.

He said, "Covid is an economic and social disease too. We have given NAY concept... if PM doesn't like the name he can change it but the aim is to have money reach the poor people."

'Delta Plus' found
making inroads

VINEETA PANDEY | DC
NEW DELHI, JUNE 22

Just as it was recovering from the sting of the mutated "Delta" variant of SARS-Cov-2, another mutated variant of the virus — "Delta Plus" — has been found to be making inroads in India. So far 22 cases of the "Delta Plus" variant have been found in genome sequenced samples from Maharashtra's Ratnagiri and Jalgaon; Palakkad and Pathanamthitta in Kerala; and Bhopal and Shivpuri districts of Madhya Pradesh. Maharashtra alone has 16 of these cases which the Union health secretary Rajesh Bhushan said is a "variant of concern."

However, sources in government said these numbers of Delta Plus cases are higher than 22 as some other states too are having infections of 'Delta Plus'.

They added that the only thing is that in MP, Maharashtra and Kerala these cases are found in clusters.

INSACOG, a consortium of 28 laboratories of the government, has informed that the Delta Plus Variant, currently a Variant of Concern (VOC), has the certain

characteristics like increased transmissibility, stronger binding to receptors of lung cells and potential reduction in monoclonal antibody response.

The 'Delta Plus' mutant has in total been found in nine countries — India, the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Portugal, Switzerland, Japan, Poland, China and Russia. The 'Delta' variant is now in 80 countries.

"Based on the recent findings of INSACOG, the Union health ministry has alerted and advised Maharashtra, Kerala and Madhya Pradesh regarding the Delta Plus variant of Covid-19 being found in some districts in these States. The Centre has sent an advisory to these states today explaining what kind of public health response should initiate to address this issue which presently looks fairly small in terms of numbers. But we would not like these to assume significant proportions and take a bigger form," said Bhushan.

He added genome sequencing of 45,000 samples has been done so far and the scientists are constantly monitoring the virus and its mutations.

Odisha: Vaccine
certificate must

AKSHAYA KUMAR
SAHOO | DC
BHUBANESWAR, JUNE 22

As part of its preventive measures against Covid-19, Odisha's Ganjam district administration on Tuesday advised all shopkeepers, vendors and other retailers to display their vaccination certificate in front of their shops.

District collector Vijay Amruta Kulange said the initiative would be helpful in checking transmission of the deadly virus and create confidence among the customers. He cautioned that enforcement will keep a strict vigil on implementation of the order.

"We request all shopkeepers, vendors and other professionals to display Covid vaccination

certificates (single/final dose) in front of their shops. It will create confidence among customers and help stop infections. It will be checked by the enforcement team," the Collector said.

Meanwhile, Lord Jagannath's Snana Yatra or bathing ceremony, an important ritual that precedes the annual Car Festival of the deity at Odisha's Puri, will this year be performed without congregation of devotees to avoid the possibility of Coronavirus infection.

On Tuesday, Puri district administration imposed prohibitory orders under Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) in the city, asking the devotees not to visit the place on the Snana Yatra day.

CLASS XII EXAM
STAY CANCELLED,
REITERATES SC

PARMOD KUMAR | DC
NEW DELHI, JUNE 22

The Supreme Court on Tuesday declined petitions challenging the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) and Indian Certificate of Secondary Education (ICSE) decision to cancel XII standard board examination while upholding the evaluation scheme framed by two boards for allocating marks to the students who were to appear in the cancelled exams.

The court said that the University Grant Commission will not commence the admission process in the universities and colleges till results by all the boards are declared.

"We hold that there is no need to interfere with the scheme propounded by CBSE/ICSE. It takes into account the concerns of all students" said a bench comprising Justice A.M. Khanwilkar and Justice Dinesh Maheshwari further said that, "Boards have decided to cancel exams in larger public interest. The policy adopted by CBSE was adopted by an expert body of 13 experts."

Having endorsed the evaluation scheme of two boards, the court rejected the plea that the students should be permitted to exercise the option at the beginning itself whether they wanted marks on the basis of the assessments of their performance in X, XI and XII (unit, mid-term and pre-board) standard examinations or they want to appear and write exams in physical conduct of examinations.

Former CM Badal
questioned by SIT

Chandigarh, June 22: Former Punjab chief minister Parkash Singh Badal was on Tuesday questioned at his official residence here by the SIT probing the 2015 Kotkapura police firing incident in Faridkot.

The Punjab Police Special Investigation Team (SIT) reached Badal's Sector 4 MLA flat and questioned him for nearly two-and-a-half hours.

The Punjab government had formed the new SIT led by additional director general of police L.K. Yadav to probe the Kotkapura police firing incident following the directions of the Punjab and Haryana High Court.

Senior SAD leaders including Maheshinder Singh Grewal, Prem Singh Chandumajra, Daljit Singh Cheema, besides SGPC chief Jagir Kaur were present at Badal's residence. Addressing the media,

the SAD leaders said Badal cooperated with the SIT, like he had done when a previous investigation team had questioned him two years ago. They said that at the time of the previous SIT, whose report was quashed by the Punjab and Haryana High Court, the investigations were conducted in a politically motivated manner and even now the agenda was allegedly politically driven.

The SIT had rescheduled the questioning after the 93-year-old Badal had expressed his inability to appear before it at a rest house in Mohali on June 16, saying he is not keeping good health. Still not in good health, Badal, however, is keen to fulfil his legal and constitutional duties as a law abiding citizen of the country. Harcharan Bains, principal adviser to SAD president Sukhbir Badal, said. — PTI

K'taka to consider opening higher
edu. institutions on experts advice

Bengaluru, June 22: Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa on Tuesday said the government will consider opening higher educational institutions in a phased manner after vaccinating students and teachers, following recommendations from the Dr Devi Shetty-led expert committee on possible Covid-19 third wave.

He said the committee has advised accelerating vaccinations as vaccines are the solution for Covid control.

"The committee has supported the relaxations in Covid curbs announced by the government, and have suggested opening up educational institutions in the days to come, starting with higher education colleges, after vaccinating," Yediyurappa said.

Speaking to reporters after meeting with the committee, he said with

● NO DISCUSSION has been taken with regard to opening schools as those below 18-years are not yet vaccinated.

regard to opening schools and colleges, the committee has suggested giving priority to students and teachers in vaccination, to start classes in a phased manner by reopening colleges for students above 18 years to begin with, after vaccinating them.

"The government is considering opening higher educational institutions in a phased manner after vaccinating students and teachers," the Chief Minister said in response to a question.

No discussion has been taken with regard to opening schools as those below 18-years are not yet vaccinated, and clinical trials are on to vaccinate them.

The Karnataka government had recently constituted a 13-member expert committee headed by eminent cardiologist and founder of Narayana Health Dr Devi Shetty to analyse and advise to control a possible third Covid-19 wave in Karnataka.

The committee met the Chief Minister on Tuesday and submitted an interim report.

"We have had detailed discussions regarding preparations for the Covid third wave. It is being said that children will be infected in a bigger number during the third wave and in this backdrop the committee has made some recommendations," Yediyurappa said.

Listing some recommendations made by the committee, the Chief Minister said, it has asked for setting up of HDU, ICU units for children at taluk and

district hospitals and also at medical college hospitals, and to set up children hospitals.

The committee has given some suggestions aimed at securing human and financial resources and to get help from experts to control the third wave, he said. They include getting help from various medical organisations, resolving the shortage of doctors and nurses, getting support from voluntary organisations, resource mobilisation with the help of corporate bodies, and most importantly public participation.

Noting that the committee has suggested giving priority towards getting rid of malnutrition, the CM said it has suggested providing psychiatric service at every hospital aimed at increasing the morale of children infected by Covid. — PTI

NEW METHODS

The decision sparks sharp reaction from IMA-U'khand unit, terms it 'illegal'

U'khand ayurvedic docs can prescribe Allopathy

Dehradun, June 22: The ayurveda-versus-allopathy debate has taken a new turn with the Uttarakhand government deciding to allow ayurvedic doctors to prescribe select allopathic medicines to patients in emergencies.

Making the announcement on the sidelines of a programme to mark the International Day for Yoga at the Uttarakhand Ayurvedic University here on Monday, Ayush Minister Harak Singh Rawat said the decision

was taken for the benefit of the people living in the state's remote hill areas, where the primary health centres mostly have ayurvedic doctors.

There are around 800 ayurvedic doctors in Uttarakhand and as many ayurvedic dispensaries, of which 90 per cent are located in the remote hill areas, he said.

The decision, which requires changes in the Uttar Pradesh Bharatiya Chikitsa Adhiniyam, will help people living in the

● THERE ARE around 800 ayurvedic doctors in Uttarakhand and as many ayurvedic dispensaries.

disaster and accident prone hill areas who are deprived of proper healthcare facilities, the minister said.

However, the announcement sparked a sharp reaction from the Indian Medical Association (IMA), Uttarakhand, which termed it "illegal". "It is illegal and falls into

the category of mixopathy," IMA, Uttarakhand secretary Ajay Khanna said.

"Mixopathy will only harm patients in an emergency. The Supreme Court and the high courts are very clear on this. Ayurvedic doctors cannot practise allopathy as they are not qualified for it," he said.

"How can ayurvedic doctors prescribe allopathic medicines without knowing about allopathy?" Khanna asked.

However, Bharatiya Chikitsa Parishad, Uttarakhand vice president and senior physician J.N. Nautiyal welcomed the decision, saying 80 per cent of the state's population, which is deprived of healthcare facilities, is going to benefit immensely from it.

On the IMA's reaction to the announcement, Nautiyal said, "The IMA has double standards. Ayush doctors work in the ICUs and emergency wards of hospitals. The IMA has no

problem with that. But now, when something is going to benefit such a large number of people in the hills, they have a problem." The ayurveda-versus-allopathy debate began in the country last month when Ramdev questioned the efficacy of allopathic drugs in the treatment of Covid, prompting the IMA's Uttarakhand unit to serve a defamation notice to the yoga exponent and demand a compensation of ₹1,000 crore from him. — PTI

SHORT TAKES

JUDGE DISMISSES
BID TO LOCK UP
FUJIMORI

Lima, June 22: A Peruvian judge on Monday dismissed a prosecutor's request for the detention of corruption-accused presidential hopeful Keiko Fujimori while the country awaits the outcome of June 6 elections in which she vied for the top job.

Fujimori, who narrowly trails leftist rival Pedro Castillo according to the unconfirmed vote count, risks an imminent corruption trial if she loses the race. If she wins, it will be delayed until after her term.

Fujimori has already spent 16 months in pre-trial detention on charges of taking money from scandal-tainted Brazilian construction giant Odebrecht to fund failed presidential bids in 2011 and 2016.

SARKOZY FACES
JAIL TERM IN POLL
FINANCING TRIAL

Paris, June 22: The trial of former French President Nicolas Sarkozy concludes Tuesday in Paris, after a month during which the court sought to determine whether he broke laws on campaign financing in his unsuccessful 2012 re-election bid.

The verdict is expected to be rendered at a later date. Prosecutors have requested a six-month prison term, as well as a six-month suspended sentence and a fine of 3,750 euros (\$4,468). Sarkozy, France's president from 2007 to 2012, denies wrongdoing. He is accused of having spent almost twice the maximum legal amount of 22.5 million euros (\$27.5 million) on the re-election bid that he lost to Socialist Francois Hollande.

THREE, INCLUDING
OFFICER, SUSPECT
KILLED IN DENVER

Arvada (US), June 22: A gunman is believed to have shot and killed an officer and another person in a shopping district in a Denver suburb before being fatally shot by police, authorities said.

An officer responded to a call at 1:15 pm on Monday about a suspicious incident near the library in the city of Arvada, and about 15 minutes later, a 911 call came in about shots fired and the officer hit, Deputy Chief Ed Brady said at a news conference. Another person believed to have been shot by the gunman was taken to a hospital and died, police said. The attacker also was shot and killed. Authorities didn't immediately describe the circumstances of the shooting.

CARCASSES OF
TURTLES ON
LANKA SHORE

Colombo, June 22: Nearly a hundred carcasses of turtles with throat and shell damage, as well as dozens of dead dolphins and a blue whale, have washed ashore in Sri Lanka since a container ship burned and sank, raising fears of a severe marine disaster.

Ecologists believe the deaths were directly caused by the fire and release of hazardous chemicals while the Singapore-flagged X-Press Pearl burned for 12 days and sank last week off Sri Lanka's main port in the capital Colombo.

Government officials, however, said these causes were "provisionally" confirmed and the investigation was continuing. The fire started on the ship on May 20 and dead marine species started washing ashore days later. A ship manifest seen by *The Associated Press* said 81 of the ship's nearly 1,500 containers held "dangerous" goods.

The Sri Lankan navy believes the blaze was caused by its chemical cargo, most of which was destroyed in the fire. But debris, including burned fiberglass and tonnes of plastic pellets have severely polluted the surrounding waters and a long stretch of the island nation's famed beaches. Post-mortem analysis on the carcasses are being performed at five government-run laboratories and separately by the Government Analysts Department, said an official of the wildlife department who spoke on condition of anonymity as the official was not authorised to speak to the media.

Protest rocks Paris



Demonstrators stand on the top of a truck during a rally called by the National Federation of Mines and Energy — General Confederation of Labour (FNME-CGT trade union) — in Paris on Tuesday. The workers are protesting against the Hercule project which is aimed at restructuring the French energy Group Engie.

— AFP

Oli's appointment of
20 ministers quashed

Unconstitutional, rules SC as Nepal's political crisis worsens

Kathmandu, June 22: (PTI) In a major blow to beleaguered Nepal Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli, the Supreme Court on Tuesday ruled that the appointment of 20 ministers by him was unconstitutional, invalidating his two recent Cabinet expansions after the dissolution of the House of Representatives.

A division bench of Chief Justice Chandra Shumsher Rana and Justice Prakash Kumar Dhungana ruled that Cabinet expansions after the dissolution of the House were unconstitutional and hence, the ministers cannot discharge their duties, a report in the *Kathmandu Post* said.

Two deputy Prime Ministers, Rajendra Mahata from Janata Samajwadi Party and Raghuraj Mahaseth from Oli's CPN-UML were among those who

lost the posts. Mahaseth was also the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

With the order, there are only five ministers left in Oli's Cabinet, including the Prime Minister.

The ministers include Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Bishnu Poudel, Education Minister Krishna Gopal Shrestha, Physical Infrastructure Minister Basant Nembang and Law Minister Lilanath Shrestha.

The court passed the

judgement on petitions filed on June 7 by six individuals, including senior advocate Dinesh Tripathi, demanding that the Cabinet expansions by the caretaker government of Oli be quashed.

Oli, 69, who is heading a minority government after losing a trust vote in the House last month, expanded his Cabinet on June 10 and June 4, inducting 17 ministers, amid widespread criticism and the ongoing political crisis in the Himalayan nation. Three state ministers were also appointed.

"The Supreme Court has issued an interim order asking not to allow the ministers appointed after the House dissolution to function," said senior advocate Tripathi.

The Supreme Court has cited Article 77 (3) in its ruling to quash the appointments.

It states if the Office of the Prime Minister falls vacant after the prime minister fails to win a vote of confidence or resigns, the same Council of Ministers shall continue to act until another Council of Ministers is constituted, the report said.

The petitioners had argued that since the government has already turned into a caretaker status following the announcement of the elections, the Constitution does not allow such a prime minister to appoint new ministers. The development comes when the Supreme Court is hearing the case regarding the reinstatement of the 275-member House of Representatives, which was dissolved by President Bidya Devi Bhandari on May 22 at the recommendation of Prime Minister Oli.

— PTI

US chambers seeks to
double H-1B visa quota

Washington, June 22: The powerful US Chambers of Commerce has launched a massive campaign to address the acute shortage of skilled and professional workforce in America, prominent among which includes urging the Biden administration and Congress to double the number of H-1B visas and eliminate per-country quota for the Green Card.

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

The demand to increase the H-1B quota, which currently is at 65,000 and another 20,000 for those who have higher studies from the US, is part of the America Works campaign launched by the US Chambers of Commerce early this month.

"We must arm workers with the skills they need, we must remove barriers that are keeping too many Americans on the sidelines, and we must recruit the very best from around the world to help fill high-demand jobs

— SUZANNE CLARK
President, US Chamber of Commerce

"As we stand on the cusp of what could be a great American resurgence, a worker shortage is holding back job creators across the country," US Chamber of Commerce president and CEO Suzanne Clark said.

Through the America Works Agenda, the US Chamber is calling for doubling the cap on employment-based visas, doubling the quota on H-1B and H-2B visas and implementing other reforms to the legal immigration system to help employers meet the demand for high-demand jobs in labour-strapped

sectors.

It is also calling for growing federal investments in employer-led job education and training programmes and expanding access to childcare for working parents.

"We must arm workers with the skills they need, we must remove barriers that are keeping too many Americans on the sidelines, and we must recruit the very best from around the world to help fill high-demand jobs," Clark said.

The Chamber called for changes to be made on the issuance of employment-based immigrant visas including doubling the cap on employment-based immigrant visas from 140,000/year to 280,000/year. Eliminate the practice of counting spouses and minor children under the annual Green Card quota, which, if done alone, would practically double the amount of employment-based immigrant workers our nation admits every year, it said.

— PTI

Eliminate the Per-



Kim Yo Jong

KIM's SISTER:
NO CHANCE OF
TALKS WITH U.S.

Seoul, June 22: The powerful sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un dismissed prospects for an early resumption of diplomacy with the United States, saying Tuesday that US expectations of talks would "plunge them into a greater disappointment." Kim Yo Jong's blunt statement indicates that the diplomatic impasse over North Korea's nuclear programme is likely to continue unless the North suffers greater economic and pandemic-related difficulties, some experts said.

Hope for a restart of nuclear talks flared briefly after Kim Jong Un said last week that his country must be ready for both dialogue and confrontation, though more for confrontation. US National Security adviser Jake Sullivan called Kim's comments an "interesting signal".

On Tuesday, Kim Yo Jong derided Sullivan's response. "It seems that the US may interpret the situation in such a way as to seek a comfort for itself," the official Korean Central News Agency quoted her as saying.

OZ FIGHTS U.N.
DOWNGRADE OF
BARRIER REEF

Canberra, June 22: Australia said Tuesday it will fight against plans to downgrade the Great Barrier Reef's World Heritage status due to climate change, while environmentalists have applauded the UN World Heritage Committee's proposal.

The committee said in a draft report on Monday that "there is no possible doubt" that the network of colourful corals off Australia's northeast coast was "facing ascertained danger". The report recommends that the world's most extensive coral reef ecosystem be added to Unesco's List of World Heritage in Danger, which includes 53 sites, when the World Heritage Committee considers the question in China in July.

The listing could shake Australians' confidence in their government's ability to care for the natural wonder and create a role for UNESCO headquarters in devising so-called "corrective measures", which would likely include tougher

Those refusing vax go to India: Duterte

Deaths in nursing homes up
32% in 2020 amid pandemic

Singapore, June 22: Warning that the second wave of the pandemic would be disastrous for the Philippines, President Rodrigo Duterte has threatened to arrest the Filipinos who don't want to get vaccinated against Covid-19 and asked them to leave and "go to India if you want or somewhere, to America".

Speaking during a pre-recorded televised public address on Monday, Duterte said that the country is facing a national emergency and "we must triple our efforts" to contain the virus, according to media reports from Manila. "Don't get me wrong. There is a crisis being faced in this country. There is a national emergency. If you don't want to get vaccinated, I will have you arrested. And I will inject the vaccine in your butt. You are pests. We are already suffering and you're adding to the burden," Duterte was quoted as saying by *INQUIRER.NET*.

"So all you Filipinos listening, watch out. Don't force my hand into it... I have a strong arm for that.

Washington, June 22: Deaths among Medicare patients in nursing homes soared by 32% last year, with two devastating spikes eight months apart, a government watchdog reported Tuesday in the most comprehensive look yet at the ravages of Covid-19 among its most vulnerable victims.

The report from the inspector general of the Department of Health and Human Services found that about 4 in 10 Medicare recipients in nursing homes had or likely had Covid-19 in 2020, and that deaths overall jumped by

169,291 from the previous year, before the Coronavirus appeared.

"We knew this was going to be bad, but I don't think even those of us who work in this area thought it was going to be this bad," said Harvard health policy professor David Grabowski, a nationally recognised expert on long-term care, who reviewed the report for *The Associated Press*.

"This was not individuals who were going to die anyway," Grabowski added. "We are talking about a really big number of excess deaths." Investigators used a generally accep-

ted method of estimating "excess" deaths in a group of people after a calamitous event. It did not involve examining individual death certificates of Medicare patients but comparing overall deaths among those in nursing homes to levels recorded the previous year. The technique was used to estimate deaths in Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria in 2017 and in New York City after the first Coronavirus surge last spring. It does not attribute a cause of death but is seen as a barometer of impact.

— AP

Nobody likes it. But if you won't get vaccinated, leave the Philippines. Go to India if you want or somewhere — to America. But as long as you are here and you are a human being that can carry the virus,

get yourself vaccinated," Duterte, known for his flamboyant and controversial remarks, said.

The Philippines is one of the worst-hit countries in South East Asia with more than one million cases and

over 20,000 deaths linked to Covid-19. According to studies cited in local media, more than half of Filipinos are unwilling to get vaccinated against Covid-19 over fears the shots are not safe.

— PTI

RODENT | SCOURGE

Carcasses, excrement are polluting farmers' water tanks

Oz to evacuate prison after mice attack

Canberra, June 22: A plague of mice that has ravaged vast swathes of eastern Australia has forced the evacuation of a prison while authorities repair air gnawed electrical wiring and clear dead and decaying mice from walls and ceilings.

Around 200 staff and 420 inmates will be transferred from the Wellington Correctional Center in rural New South Wales state to other prisons in the region during the next 10 days

while cleaning and repairs take place, Corrective Services Commissioner Peter Severin said on Tuesday.

"The health, safety and wellbeing of staff and inmates is our No. 1 priority so it's important for us to act now to carry out the vital remediation work," Severin said.

Millions of mice have caused havoc in the grain-growing region of Australia's most populous state for months, devouring crops and haysta-

cks as well as invading homes, businesses, schools, hospitals and prisons.

The most common complaint about the plague is an ever-present stench of mice urine and decaying flesh. People report being bitten by mice in bed.

Mouse carcasses and excrement in roof guttering are polluting farmers' water tanks and causing sickness. The remediation work at the prison will include investigating ways to protect the facility from

future mice plagues, which are a phenomenon largely unique to Australia.

Plagues usually happen when rain follows several years of drought. The current plague is the worst that many can remember in some areas. Severin said the mice infestation was worst in prison buildings that weren't built from concrete.

"The mice have got into... wall cavities, into roof spaces. They're dead

but then they start obviously decaying and then the next problem is mites," Severin told *Australian Broadcasting Corporation*.

Government mouse researcher Steve Henry said mice numbers had begun to plateau as the species always stops breeding during the Southern Hemisphere winter. But numbers could explode again if conditions are right in the spring.

— AP

DECCAN Chronicle

23 JUNE 2021

Yes we can: Jab milestone proves poor policy villain

India crossed a new milestone in its vaccination programme against Covid-19 pandemic on Monday when it administered 88.09 lakh doses, a record till now. The day also marks the launch of the revised vaccination policy that provides for the procurement of 75 per cent of the total vaccine available by the Union government for distribution to the states, scrapping the “Liberalised Vaccination Policy” which handed over the responsibility of inoculating people aged between 18 and 44 to the state governments. The government also had dropped its insistence on the people registering themselves on the CoWin app for being eligible for vaccination and instead made walk-ins possible where the health workers would register them. The twin measures would have immensely contributed to the surge in the vaccination numbers. Allegations of some of the BJP-ruled governments having planned the sudden spike notwithstanding, the success of the campaign, in fact, proves the point that India

has the logistical wherewithal to set higher vaccination targets and meet them and that the government’s tardy planning was the real villain.

As it stands today, India has vaccinated about 25 per cent of all its adults with at least one dose of the vaccine; every one in two persons above 45 have also been given at least one dose. Given that India will have to administer 82.1 lakh doses a day if we were to vaccinate all its adults by December 31, 2021, this momentum must be sustained. It is important that the Union government supported the states to maintain the tempo. It may be remembered that several states had to close down the vaccination camps they had opened. It must be

The success of the campaign proves the point that India has the logistical wherewithal to set higher vaccination targets and meet them and the government’s tardy planning was the real villain

ensured that all the camps are reopened now and that the vaccine supply chain does not suffer for lack of doses.

There are no definite reports about a third wave and who it will impact the most despite experts cautioning of its arrival in 8-12 weeks from now and the need to inoculate children, too. The World Health Organisation has advised all the south Asian countries to rev up the healthcare infrastructure in anticipation of a fresh wave. The WHO advisory should be seen as an endorsement of the demand which experts have been making for some time now about the need to upgrade our systems, especially in the rural areas. The second wave shook the nation by exposing the deep fissures in our healthcare delivery mechanism and their shortcomings, accentuated by an all-pervading ill-preparedness. Far too many precious lives have been lost, that too in tragic situations such as shortage of oxygen and essential drugs. It was not that there were no early warnings but the decision-makers sat on them.

The Union budget for 2021-22 had seen a substantial hike in financial allocation for the health and family welfare ministry — from ₹94,000 crore to ₹2.23 lakh crore. A part of the money is aimed at spending on projects with a span of several years, but the government should consider front-loading it and ensure that we are well-prepared for a third wave.

‘Dream team’ to advise TN govt

The state of Tamil Nadu, piloted by chief minister M.K. Stalin, has drafted a bevy of big name economists in its five-member Economic Advisory Council. Two macroeconomists, two development economists and a former Union finance ministry secretary are in a council that includes the Nobel laureate Ms Esther Duflo, feted for her work in poverty alleviation. The out-of-the-box thinking in putting together such a distinguished panel of honorary advisers upholds the primacy of the power of seasoned professionals to guide the state’s overall development.

It is said in jest that an economist is an expert who will know tomorrow why the things he predicted yesterday didn’t happen today. And at least two economists were not fully at ease with the larger scheme of things in India where they had major roles as RBI governor and chief economic adviser. The difference could lie in how accepting Tamil Nadu will be in putting into practice the advice on re-floating an economy hit by the pandemic.

Raghuram Rajan had an exceptional record in going against the tide and warning the US of the 2008 subprime crisis while others were busy fuelling what became globally the biggest economic meltdown until the pandemic of 2020. An optimistic surmise is that the highly industrialised state, the second wealthiest in the country in terms of GDP (estimated at \$290 billion in 2020-21), could get very sound advice. The state has also done well in the competitive environment of finding domestic and foreign investment for industry and services.

A reflection of the depth of thinking behind getting the new regime up and running is seen in proposals for an annual budget exclusively for agriculture, a separate ministry for management of water resources and a promise to use data to support decision making, especially in allocating scarce resources among competing claims. How much of financial resources will there be for public spending as the economy reopens may determine outcomes. No one can make water flow uphill but they have shown they are capable of putting thought into action.

Subhani



China is many things, but it’s definitely not ‘lovable’



Abhijit Bhattacharyya

The apparent recent volte face by Beijing’s imperial overlord Xi Jinping, who called for the creation of a fresh, “favourable” image of a “lovable” and “humble” Middle Kingdom reminds one of a popular Bengali saying: “*Bhoote mukhe Ram naam*”. (It is not a translation, but it has some of the same meaning as “the devil quoting scripture”.) The Hindu belief of the absurdity and impossibility of an evil and foul spirit of a dead man remembering Lord Ram, the ultimate in purity and pristine divinity — seen in the context of the People’s Republic in relation to the rest of the world — takes the whole scenario into the realm of farce. It can never be!

As long as Beijing and its 1.4 billion-plus population remains under the yoke of Emperor Xi and the ruthless and heartless Communist Party of China, which marks its centenary on July 1, the image of “love and humbleness” will prove elusive. Xi, who has been his nation’s paramount leader since 2012 (first as CPC general secretary, then as President), has followed a policy of avoidable aggression against the whole world, including all of China’s neighbours such as India, but with little to show for it. This so-called “change of heart” is just a tactical shift, in line with traditional Chinese deception as advocated in Sun Tzu’s *Art of War* and Chairman Mao Zedong’s *Military Writings*. Xi, like his mentors, tried to deploy the traditional tricks of the Dragon’s offensive-defence deceit: “Two steps forward, one step back”.

It will, therefore, be foolhardy to fall for Xi’s “charm offensive”; instead, we should study what lies behind the CPC’s new strategy. Can China’s diplomats and

soldiers truly shed their much-practised “wolf warrior” tactics and turn a new leaf? Unlikely. Playing to the gallery and muttering a few catch words like “lovable” and “humble” can’t convert the Han warriors into apostles of love, virtue, piety, piety and mercy as advocated by Lord Buddha or philosopher-king Ashoka’s initiative to spread peace, harmony and universal brotherhood after the devastation of Kalinga. Can Xi really spread Buddhism, the religion of peace, with his diplomatic “wolves” across the world? As they say, “charity begins at home”, and so can Beijing’s overlord make a start in Xinjiang and Tibet, in Taiwan and Hong Kong, with his new mantra of love and togetherness? Can we see the effects first in the Ladakh Himalayas and as non-Chinese vessels exercise their right of passage through the South China Sea to know that “lovable” China is for real?

To this writer, China’s motives and machinations stand brutally exposed due to the Wuhan-origin virus, which has devastated the demography of the entire planet. In all this, it is important to understand the way that some Chinese (Han) people — especially all who belong to the imperial durbar in Beijing and those who take their cues from them — look at the rest of the world. To them, China is the “sole civilisation” and the rest of the world are “barbarians” who are inferior — and thus need to be subjugated. The “barbarians” deserve contempt and should be made to kowtow before the Beijing durbar! Those who can’t be bullied should be conquered with cash, backed up by the PLA’s ever-expanding forces on land, sea and cyberspace — with its troll army spreading

its tentacles. The aim is to buy up every possible strategic asset overseas, by resorting to hostile takeovers of foreign tech companies, luring foreign politicians with cash or kind and manipulating the media by any or every means to build the image of the “lovable” Chinese.

A single country’s example will demonstrate this. The United Kingdom is a particular target of the CPC’s unwelcome attention, mainly due to its colonial history with a much-weakened Middle Kingdom — the Opium War (1839-1842), the retention of Hong Kong by London as a coveted commercial base up to 1997, the loot of the Chinese Emperor’s Summer Palace (1860) by British forces (which included a fair number of Indian soldiers), and the loss of almost all Chinese ports to the combined might of the West and Japan’s subjugation of Chinese territory in the early twentieth century. Britain’s strategic assets are thus a prime target for the CPC (like the “Carthage must be destroyed” psyche) for long.

Little wonder then that a top UK daily flagged in May 2021: “How China is buying Britain”. It showed how Chinese investors amassed a portfolio of UK businesses, infrastructure, property, and other assets worth nearly 135 billion pounds, almost twice as previously suspected. What shook the British establishment was the “swift and largely unnoticed buying spree which included purchases worth at least 44 billion pounds by Chinese state-owned-enterprises, linked to the PLA or CPC, or both. Alarmingly, over 80 of the 200 Chinese investments uncovered were since

The CPC’s economic/ commercial invasion of London is a clear warning. ‘The Chinese are coming’ is no longer a slogan, what is real is that the ‘Chinese have come to corner all’.

2019, a time when London-Beijing ties started growing tense. Wasn’t that a “hostile takeover bid”? These included critical British infrastructure providers like Thames Water, UK Power Networks, Heathrow Airport; in addition to shares in FTSE, 100 companies, prime property in London and at least 17 private schools. *New Statesman* reported in July 2020: “Weak rules allowed China to acquire significant stakes in British nuclear power, oil, steel, water, and transport.” In a classic reversal of historical forces, the “East Asian Company of China” was taking revenge on the old “East India Company” of our history books.

The CPC’s economic/ commercial invasion of London is a clear warning. “The Chinese are coming” is no longer a slogan, what is real is that the “Chinese have come to corner all”. All nations in the world should heed the danger signs — because the threat is real. And many have begun to wake up and started taking steps to protect themselves from the “China virus” in virtually every sector — from health to hydrology, commerce, industry, technology, and much more. The “total war” has begun, and it’s not the way the CPC had envisaged. The Belt and Road Initiative is no longer looking so attractive to foreigners, and many are challenging the Chinese, posing a serious threat to the CPC overlord’s grand plans. Hence his call to his minions to make China a “lovable” nation!

Post-script: As Xi’s New Delhi ambassador Su Weidong urged India — “Let’s cooperate, not confront each other” — came some other news: In one, “Chinese scam cheats 5 lakh Indians of crores”; and in another, “Dangerous Chinese spy-cum-criminal caught on India-Bangla border”. Are these the actions of a “lovable” country?

The writer is a Supreme Court advocate. The views expressed here are personal.

LETTERS

COVID PROTOCOL

The caption of the photograph on page 2 (*DC, June 22*) blames people for not maintaining social distance, but what about the photo on page 1 wherein Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao’s retinue violates the same at the foundation-stone laying ceremony of a multi super speciality hospital in Warangal? Some don’t have masks either. Actually, those in the former seem to be better spaced. Are not the politicians supposed to set an example in following the Covid protocols?

S. Nageswara Rao
Hyderabad

SPLITTING

The current topic is third wave. The mask, hand wash and distancing is fine. In our country a fourth factor must be made mandatory. No spitting in public places. These spitters are the real superspreaders infecting others with viral and bacterial diseases. For no mask the fine is ₹1,000, for spitting it should be ten times more.

Zarin Shafat Khan
Hyderabad

SCHOOLS

The TS govt had announced physically reopening of schools from July 1, but parents are in no mood to send their wards so soon. As per reports the third wave of Covid-19 is in the offing and children particularly are said to be vulnerable. So in spite of physical classes, online classes should be conducted for a month more. Meanwhile, how the maintenance of Covid-19 protocol is exercised in the schools may be observed by the govt. Parents are deeply worried about fees too.

S.M. Arif Hussain
Secunderabad

50 YEARS AGO IN

DECCAN Chronicle

2 plants grown on Salyut

MOSCOW, June 22. Viewers of Moscow television today saw two plants which have sprouted and put on leaves in weightlessness in the Soviet orbiting space laboratory Salyut, Tass reported.

Test Engineer Viktor Patsayev, pointing to the plants, said: “It is a great pleasure for us to watch these plants grow.”

The greenhouse takes up one of the compartments of Salyut.

Seeds of different plants were brought into the space station in vegetation sacs placed in a container.

Dilip Cherian
Dilli Ka Babu



I-T filing mess: Why try to ‘fix’ a system that wasn’t broken?

At a time when eking out new tax revenues in a shrinking economy is the only goal, an unwarranted self-goal has a lot of knickers in a twist in North Block. The question that’s hovering over Raisina Hill is, why fix something that isn’t broken? That’s a question everyone seems to be now asking when the new e-filing website of the income tax department, lauded and much tooted about, turned out to be a non-starter. I-T officials had announced that the new portal was even designed to be “taxpayer-friendly” and would help ease the filing process and reduce dependence on tax advisors.

Numerous glitches in the software have now left irate taxpayers stranded — they have reported even basic issues such as login problems and complain that old tax filings critical to users are not visi-

ble on the new portal. Meantime, the old reliable website has been unfortunately shut down and the new one doesn’t work. A ripe old mess that comes at a really inconvenient moment.

And since even finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman has tweeted about it, I-T officials are in a frenzy trying to salvage the situation with Infosys, the corporate supplier out-sourced with this task. A testing time for the newly-appointed acting chairperson of CBDT Jagannath Mohapatra to show his leadership skills. He took over his new assignment after his predecessor P.C. Mody hung up his bat after a prolonged and much extended innings that ended almost apocryphally on the very day the old website was shut down!

Hectic efforts are being made to fix the snafu — the vendor management tax babus are in talks with

Infosys and we are told that furious efforts are expected to ensure that the glitches will be removed very shortly. The taxpayers certainly hope so. Meanwhile, revenues are awaited.

GOVT TACKLES BABU CRITICS WITH FOOTBALL TACTIC

Football teams often employ a technique known as one-to-one marking during a game, in which a player is deputed to stop a rival player from taking possession of the ball for too long. Something along these lines is now in the works as the Centre’s sets about tackling the rising tide of insiders turned dissenters, especially if they happen to be retired babus who were once part of the ‘System’ but are now freely speaking their mind on issues that they feel strongly about.

What may perhaps be more

galling to the Centre is that the authors of these contrarian views are venerable ex-bureaucrats who were well-known for their administrative skills and subject expertise during their civil service career — former adviser to governor of Punjab and former ambassador to Romania Julio Ribeiro, former Cabinet secretary K.M. Chandrasekhar, former culture secretary Jawahar Sircar, former foreign secretary Shyam Saran and other similarly notable and “non-partisan” former civil servants. Their words carry weight. Collectively and individually they have written on wide-ranging subjects, including the PM Cares Fund, the farmers’ agitation, Article 370, the handling of the Covid pandemic, human rights abuses, the controversial Central Vista etc. They write edit page articles but also dash off open letters to

the Centre that are released to the media.

The government is clearly feeling affronted by this unsolicited advice, but since these are not ordinary voices that cannot be clamped by usual ploys, it has decided to retaliate by getting other “neutral” babus to respond to their colleagues. So, these days a critical piece on a delicate subject by a former babu is immediately responded to by another babu defending the government’s policies. If nothing else, it doesn’t hurt to muddy the waters without getting dirty yourself. And while the babus take on each other in the media, the government carries on with its usual business.

Share a babu experience! Follow dilipthecherian@Twitter.com. Let’s multiply the effect.

quick
BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	52,588.71	0.03
Nifty 50	15,772.80	0.17
S&P 500*	4,238.88	0.33
Dollar (₹)	73.87	0.28
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.18	0.31
Euro (₹)	88.36	0.19
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	46,213	0.09
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	74.73	-0.23
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.025	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.478	-0.007

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Kesoram Inds.
suspends work
at rayon factory

BK Birla Group company Kesoram Industries Ltd suspended work at its rayon factory in West Bengal's Hooghly district due to fall in demand. The company management blamed the slump in demand due to Covid-led disruptions for the suspension of work till further notice. The company employs 2,500 people in the loss making plant. Rayon division contribution is negligible for the company.

Sun settles
patent litigation
with Celgene

Sun Pharma said it has reached an agreement with Celgene Corporation, a subsidiary of Bristol Myers Squibb, to resolve the patent litigation regarding generic version of cancer drug Revlimid (lenalidomide capsules) in the US. As per the terms of the settlement, Celgene will grant Sun Pharma a licence to Celgene's patents required to manufacture and sell certain limited quantity of generic lenalidomide capsules in the US in 2022.

EV makers laud
Gujarat policy
with subsidy

Companies like Tata Motors, Mahindra and Hero Electric lauded the Gujarat government for bringing a new electric vehicle policy in the state. Chief minister Vijay Rupani unveiled the 'Gujarat Electric Vehicle Policy 2021', which has been designed to see at least 2 lakh electric vehicles on the state roads in the next four years. The state will provide subsidies ranging from Rs 20,000 to Rs 1,50,000 to buyers of vehicles.

NMDC's Q4 profit
after tax zooms
to ₹2,838 crore

India's largest iron ore producer NMDC said its profit after tax for the March quarter was 708 per cent higher at Rs 2,838 crore compared to Rs 351 crore during the year-ago quarter. Turnover stood at Rs 6,848 crore compared with Rs 3,187 crore a year ago. Sumit Deb, CMD, NMDC, said, "This has been an excellent year for the iron and steel sector and it gives me great pride to share these impressive results."

■ NCLT approves resolution plan
Jet Air to get
wings again

FC BUREAU
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, JUNE 22

The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) has ruled that Jet Airways India Ltd can resume operations under a new owner more than two years after it collapsed under heavy debt burden, according to Ashish Chhawchharia, the tribunal-appointed resolution professional.

Jet Airways, once the country's biggest private carrier, needs to apply for slots within 90 days and the aviation regulator will make a final decision on allotting them, reports said.

Describing the NCLT nod for the resolution plan as one of the biggest turnaround events for the troubled aviation sector, Chhawchharia hoped that the carrier will be back in the skies by the end of this year provided everything goes well.

The NCLT Mumbai bench, chaired by Mohammed Ajmal and V. Nallaseenapathy, has approved the resolution plan for Jet Airways that will have to be implemented in 90 days starting from June 22.

"We are delighted with the go-ahead to the plan. Certainly, we are quite hopeful of the airline's revival. And if all go well, we hope that by the end of this year, we can see some Jet Airways flights in the skies again," Chhawchharia, a partner at Grant Thornton Bharat



LLP, said.

The airline fell into bankruptcy in 2019 after failing to repay debts. A rescue plan was laid out last year by Dubai-based businessman Murari Lal Jalan and Kalrock Capital Management Ltd, a London-based financial advisory and alternative asset manager.

They pledged in December that Jet Airways would fly again by this summer, operating its historic domestic slots as well restarting international routes. The revival plan included a dedicated freighter service and hubs in smaller cities beyond Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru, according to a Bloomberg report.

Though it is difficult to say by when the issues of slots will be resolved, Chhawchharia said he was hopeful since the effective date for implementation of the plan is 90 days from the date of approval.

"Everyone will work towards that (resolution of the slot issue as well)," he noted.

In a separate statement, Chhawchharia said the

NCLT approval will pave the way for the revival of Jet Airways 2.0 even as there are a few concerns related to the availability of routes/slots for the airlines to fly again.

Even before Covid-19 crushed demand for air travel, the country was a tough place to make money in aviation. Bruising fare wars and high costs made it difficult for many carriers to survive. Kingfisher Airlines Ltd, once the country's second-largest domestic carrier, collapsed in 2012, and flag carrier Air India Ltd is saddled with debt and has been searching for a buyer for years.

Jet Airways has almost 21,000 creditors seeking claims of around \$6 billion. It has lost most of its landing slots in the time it hasn't been flying.

Investors remained optimistic about the airline successfully emerging from a restructuring, sending its shares soaring 316 per cent in 2020 despite the industry being plunged into crisis. Jet Airways rose 5 per cent on Tuesday.

Not against flash sales that benefit consumers: Govt

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, JUNE 22

The government on Tuesday clarified that discount sales will continue on e-commerce platforms, but not "fraudulent flash sales". The government stated that it will not seek disclosure of flash sales, but did not provide clarity as to how it will ascertain whether a flash sale is fraudulent.

Discount sales that benefit maximum to consumers will continue, but not fraudulent flash sales on the e-commerce platforms, Nidhi Khare, additional secretary in the consumer affairs ministry told the media.

"Such competition actually helps the business overall to bring goods at better prices to consumers. We are not against that," she said. However, in Monday's notification the ministry had defined "flash sale" as "a sale at significantly reduced prices, high discounts or any other such promotions or attractive offers for a pre-determined period of time on selective goods and services or otherwise with an intent to draw a large number of consumers". This definition applies to all sales events organised by e-commerce players.

Without elaborating on what is defined as "fraudu-

ONLINE CHANNELS SELL 45% MOBILES

New Delhi, June 22: Online channel accounted for about 45 per cent of the mobile phone sales in the country in 2020, according to Counterpoint Research.

Online sales accounted for about 26 per cent share of the global mobile phone market last year.

"Covid-19 had a big role in this change in consumer behaviour. By major country, India showed the highest online share at 45 per cent, followed by the UK

at 39 per cent and China at 34 per cent," the report said.

Online sales accounted for 31 per cent share in Brazil, 24 per cent in the US, 16 per cent in South Korea and 8 per cent in Nigeria, as per the report.

The share of online handset sales (global) in 2020 increased by nearly 6 per cent points compared to the previous year, while it increased by more than 10 per cent in terms of market size, it added.

— PTI

lent flash sales", she said that in western countries many times shell companies organise flash sales without any inventory, which is against the interest of consumers and limits fair competition.

Ankur Pahwa, partner and e-commerce sector leader, EY India, said, "In some of the western countries there are companies which put up only rejected and low quality products for a few hours or single day. They dupe customers by not having any return policy or product guarantee. In India, there are some very small e-commerce companies which do such fraudulent sales.

Probably, the government wants to regulate them."

But the government has not provided clarity on how it will find if a flash sale is fraudulent without seeking disclosure.

"We are not going to seek disclosure of flash sales. We are with sales that benefit maximum consumers. If someone wants to complain, there should at least be a provision," she said.

The government will take action on fraudulent flash sales if it receives any complaint, Khare said.

She said the consumer affairs ministry's role is to safeguard the interest of consumers and hence the draft rules. Otherwise, the

SENSEX CROSSES
53K-MARK BEFORE
RETRACING

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, JUNE 22

The Sensex crossed the 53000-mark for the first time and made a new high of 53,057 on Tuesday in intraday trade, but profit taking erased the day's gains as the index closed almost flat at 52,588.71, up 14.25 points. The Fifty-50 closed at 15,772.75, up 26.25 points.

Market volatility remained high ahead of the monthly derivative contracts expiry on Thursday.

Strong overnight global markets, record number of Covid vaccinations in a day, daily Covid cases dropping below 50,000 and good monsoon rains coverage cheered the market as it opened. But there was profit taking as valuations are looking stretched.

The market reaching all-time high is great news for hundreds of thousands of small investors who entered the stock market over the last 12-15 months, as they are sitting on pretty strong gains right now.

But analysts warned investors who entered the market during the pandemic period against the inherent risks. "Nearly every stock has a certain intrinsic value and with markets at all time highs, more and more stocks are trading close to or even higher than their carefully estimated intrinsic values," said Rahul Shah, co-head of research, Equitymaster.

The market is likely to see volatile trading till Thursday as equity derivative expiry and index heavy weight Reliance Industries annual general meeting are scheduled on June 24.

FIPIs were net sellers of equities worth Rs 1,027.94 crore.

Confidence levels drop for
working women, young pros

New Delhi, June 22: The second wave of the pandemic has left young Indian professionals and working women increasingly vulnerable to the economic uncertainty, says a survey.

According to LinkedIn's latest Workforce Confidence Index, the plight of India's working women has worsened after the second Covid-19 wave, as the Individual Confidence Index scores of female professionals fell from 57 in March to 49 in early June—a 4x decline compared to working men (58 in March to 56 in June).

Further, the pandemic's recent peak in India has amplified the importance of work experience and professional connections, as young Indians were found twice as worried as their older cohorts about the impact of Covid-19 on their careers.

Nearly 30 per cent of Gen Z professionals and



26 per cent of millennials are troubled due to lack of jobs, in comparison to 18 per cent of Baby Boomers, said the survey based on responses of 1,891 professionals from May 8 to June 4. Gen Z refers to those born between 1997 and 2015. Millennials are those born between 1981 and 1994/6 and Baby Boomers are born between 1946 and 1964.

"As India slowly begins to come out of the second wave of Covid-19 cases, we see the year-over-year hiring rate recover from a low of 10 per cent in April

to 35 per cent at the end of May. Despite this modest revival, confidence levels of working women and young professionals are amongst the lowest in the workforce today," said Ashutosh Gupta, country manager, LinkedIn.

Gupta said "twice as many working women are concerned with job availability compared to working men, and 30 per cent of Gen Z professionals worry due to lack of jobs."

The survey said, India's overall workforce confidence has declined after peaking in early March, with a composite score of 54 (down 4 points from 58 in March).

This decline in confidence is reflected strongly across professionals from creative industries such as entertainment, design, and media and communications, who expressed being uncertain about the future of their employers.

— PTI

YouTube wins user copyright fight in EU

FOO YUN CHEE
LUXEMBOURG, JUNE 22

Google's YouTube won its latest copyright-infringement challenge after Europe's top court said online platforms are not liable for users uploading unauthorised works unless the platforms failed to take quick action to remove or block access to the content.

The case marks the latest development in a long-running battle between Europe's \$1 trillion cre-

ative industry and online platforms, with the former seeking redress for unauthorised works that are uploaded.

It is also part of the wider debate on how much online platforms and social media should do to police the posting of unauthorised, illegal or hateful content, an issue that European Union regulators are targeting with tough new rules that could come into force next year.

"As currently stands, operators of online plat-

forms do not, in principle, themselves make a communication to the public of copyright-protected content illegally posted online by users of those platforms," the EU Court of Justice said.

"However, those operators do make such a communication in breach of copyright where they contribute, beyond merely making those platforms available, to giving access to such content to the public," judges said.

— Reuters

Non-finance firms
cut debt, shore up
reserves in FY21

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, JUNE 22

During the pandemic-hit FY21, listed non-finance companies used their increased profits to reduce debt and fortify reserves while keeping their investments low.

After studying the balance sheet data of 1,326 non-finance companies, the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) found that profits grew by 48.5 per cent in 2020-21.

This was used for deleveraging purposes and to reduce their outstanding borrowing and other liabilities. Outstanding borrowings declined by 9.3 per cent as of March 2021 compared to March 2020. This is the first time that listed companies registered a fall in outstanding borrowings since September 2010. The fall in outstanding borrowings seen in company financial statements squares with RBI data on credit disbursements. It shows that the outstanding loans to large companies as of March 2021 were 0.8 per cent lower than they were a year ago.

This brought down the debt: equity ratio of listed

companies significantly below that of unlisted companies. While the ratio for all companies, including listed and unlisted companies, as evident from the annual reports, was in the range of 1 to 1.1 in the five years till 2019-20, that of listed companies, as seen from their interim financial statements, was in the range of 0.5 to 0.6 with an average of 0.54.

Reserves and surplus of these non-finance companies also expanded 15 per cent over the year as of March 2021. This is the highest yearly jump in reserves in the last decade, said Mahesh Vyas, founder and CEO of CMIE.

While reducing debt and increasing reserves, investments suffered. Non-finance companies were not enthusiastic about deploying their profits into expansion of capacities. In spite of profits growing by a robust 48.5 per cent in 2020-21, companies grew their net fixed assets by a meagre 3.7 per cent at the year ended March 2021. The average year-on-year growth in net fixed assets since March 2017 has been close to 10 per cent.



Sanjiv Mehta

New Delhi, June 22: FMCG major HUL has added 30 per cent more capacity in its supply chain, making it more flexible and agile, while adding alternate sources in order to meet the challenges in case of a third wave of Covid-19, its chairman and managing director Sanjiv Mehta said on Tuesday.

Addressing the company's 88th annual general meeting (AGM) virtually, Mehta also expressed optimism that the rural markets will continue to be strong despite the second wave of the pandemic impacting the hinterlands.

With commodity prices increasing, the company is keeping a close eye on the situation and going for calibrated price hikes so as to avoid impacting consumers in a big way, he added.

Replying to a shareholder's query on the preparedness of the company in case of a third wave of the pandemic, Mehta said, "Now we have made the supply chain much more agile, we have taken a number of initiatives to improve efficiency. We have added much more flexibility in our supply chain by adding 30 per cent more capacity, and we aim to preserve resilience through alternate sourcing."

"We also continue to invest in technological capabilities, and we have invested in creating a very safe environment for our workforce, through tiered protocols," he added.

HUL's supply chain is undergoing a massive transformation across the verticals and the company is digitising upstream sourcing network which allows optimisation of cost, Mehta said.

— PTI

HYBRID | SPACE

It's not just office and home. There could be a satellite office too

Tata explores 'third place' in workplace model

SARITHA RAI
JUNE 22

The pandemic has changed the nature of work, accelerating the adoption of digital technologies by at least a decade and ushering in a hybrid model where work extends beyond offices and engages more women, Tata Sons chairman Natarajan Chandrasekaran said.

While the office remains a critical hub and staff will gradually return, the world won't return to its pre-Covid norm, Chandrasekaran, head of

India's biggest private-sector employer, said during the Qatar Economic Forum on Tuesday. The Indian executive, joined by fellow employers such as Iwag Plc CEO Mark Dixon, said workplaces will benefit from allowing staff greater leeway with the help of technology.

When the pandemic hit India in early 2020, the 150-year-old steel-to-airlines conglomerate scrambled to adapt to lockdown restrictions. At Tata Consultancy Services Ltd—its largest company by employee numbers and profitability



N. Chandrasekaran

—nearly half a million workers began working from home within weeks, continuing to deliver software projects and support to Wall Street banks,

retailers and airlines.

TCS declared early on it expects only a fourth of its workforce to be in the office on any given day by 2025. Yet many of its employees asked for a return to the office. Companies will have to adopt a model somewhere in-between, Chandrasekaran said during a session about the future of work.

"If the hybrid model has to work, let's not think of it as only office and home," he said. "There's going to be a concept of a third place. I call it a 'third place,' you may

want to call it a satellite office."

In India's case, it could also see improved workplace diversity, another positive outcome of a hybrid model, Chandrasekaran said. "Only 23 per cent of women who could be potentially working are in the workforce because issues like commuting, the lack of social infrastructure like child care," he said. "We should not miss this opportunity, it is not just good for GDP and growth, but also it is the right thing to do."

— Bloomberg

SHORT TAKES



Karnam Malleswari

Malleswari VC of Sports Varsity

New Delhi: The Delhi government on Tuesday appointed former Olympic medalist weightlifter Karnam Malleswari as the first Vice Chancellor of Delhi Sports University. “The Lt Governor, who is also Chancellor of Delhi Sports University, is pleased to appoint the Padmashri awardee as first Vice Chancellor of the university,” said an official order. Malleswari is the first Indian woman weightlifter to bring home an Olympic medal. She created history at the Sydney Olympics in 2000 by lifting 110 kilogram and 130 kilogram in the ‘snatch’ and ‘clean and jerk’ categories.

Born in Voosavanipeta near Amadalavalasa in Andhra Pradesh, Malleswari started her career when she was 12, under coach Neelamshetty Appanna. In 1997, she married a fellow weightlifter Rajesh Tyagi, and settled down in Delhi. In 1995, she received the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna, India’s highest sporting honour, and in 1999, the civilian Padma Shri award.

The Delhi Assembly had in 2019 passed a bill to set up a Delhi Sports University (DSU), which will offer graduation, post-graduation and doctorate degrees in cricket, football, and hockey among other sports. — PTI

Handball prez Jagan for Games

Hyderabad: Handball Federation of India president Arishanapally Jagan Mohan Rao has been nominated to attend the Tokyo Olympics as an Indian representative. With the Indian Olympic Association naming him in the Indian delegation to Tokyo, Mr Rao is the first official from Telugu states at the Tokyo Olympics so far.



A. Jagan Mohan Rao

After receiving the official letter from IOA secretary Rajiv Mehta on Tuesday, Mr Rao expressed happiness at the opportunity to watch the Olympics.

Maharaj bowls SA to series victory

Gros Islet: Keshav Maharaj completed just the second hat-trick by a South African in Test history as the Proteas completed a 158-run victory over the West Indies on the fourth day of the second Test of the two-match series at the Daren Sammy Cricket Ground in St Lucia on Monday. In the penultimate over before lunch the left-arm spinner removed Kieran Powell, Jason Holder and Joshua da Silva in successive deliveries to join fast bowler Geoff Griffen, who achieved the feat at Lord’s in 1960, in the record books. Maharaj then followed up with two of the last three to fall to finish with 5 for 36. — AFP

Brief scores: South Africa 298 & 174 bt West Indies 149 & 165 in 58.3 overs (Kieran Powell 51, Keshav Maharaj 5/36, Kagiso Rabada 3/44).

Live on TV

CRICKET

World Test Championship final, Reserve day: India vs New Zealand from 3pm on Star Sports 1, HD1

EURO

Group Stage: Sweden vs Poland, Slovakia vs Spain from 9.30 pm; Germany vs Hungary, Portugal vs France from 12.30 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 1, 2, HD

COPA AMERICA

Group Stage: Ecuador vs Peru from 2.30 am (Thursday); Brazil vs Colombia from 5.30 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 1, 2, HD

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SHAMI KABAB

Mohammed on fire as India bowl Kiwis out for 249



India pacer Mohammed Shami celebrates a New Zealand wicket during Day 5 of the World Test Championship final in Southampton on Tuesday.

— AP

New Zealand scored 114 runs in the post lunch session even as Shami and Ishant remained standout performer bowling their hearts out.

Jamieson and New Zealand’s all-time third highest six-hitter Southee got some easy runs at the

fag end which could prove to be useful in the final context.

But no amount of praise is enough for Shami, who brought India back in the match before New Zealand could press its foot on the pedal.

Such was his domina-

tion that Williamson managed only seven runs in an entire session of play.

Ross Taylor (11) was dismissed as Shami reaped the rewards for finding the fuller length which enticed the batsman to go for a drive.

— PTI

SCORECARD

India (1st Innings): 217
New Zealand (1st Innings): Tom Latham c Kohli b R. Ashwin 30, Devon Conway c M Shami b I Sharma 54, Kane Williamson c Kohli b I Sharma 49, Ross Taylor c S. Gill b M. Shami 11, Henry Nicholls c R Sharma b I Sharma 7, BJ Watling b M. Shami 1, Colin de Grandhomme lbw b M. Shami 13, Kyle Jamieson c J Bumrah b M. Shami 21, Tim Southee b R Jadeja 30, Neil Wagner c A Rahane b R. Ashwin 0, Trent Boult (not out) 7. **Extras (B-4, LB-10, NB-5) 19. Total (in 99.2 overs) 249.**

FoW: 1-70, 2-101, 3-117, 4-134, 5-135, 6-162, 7-192, 8-221, 9-234.

Bowling: Ishant Sharma 25-9-48-3, Jasprit Bumrah 26-9-57-0, Mohammed Shami 26-8-76-4, Ravichandran Ashwin 15-5-28-2, R. Jadeja 7.2-2-20-1.

India (2nd Innings): Rohit Sharma lbw b Southee 30, Shubman Gill lbw b Southee 8, Cheteshwar Pujara (batting) 12, Virat Kohli (batting) 8. **Extras (lb 4, nb 1, w 1) 6. Total (for two wickets in 30 overs) 64.**

FoW: 1-24, 2-51.

Bowling: Tim Southee 9-3-17-2, Trent Boult 8-1-20-0, Kyle Jamieson 10-4-15-0, Neil Wagner 3-0-8-0.

Rijiju hopes for best Olympic show ever

DC CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD, JUNE 22

Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju threw his weight behind Indian athletes on Tuesday, eve of International Olympic Day, promising all support from the government as they gear up to do the country proud at next month’s Tokyo Olympics.

“We need to galvanise the country in cheering our athletes. They need our support as they set out for the biggest sporting competition,” Rijiju said in an online interaction with media while

announcing the launch of a slew of programmes to pump up the Indian contingent ahead of the tough task in Tokyo.

“India’s presence at the Olympics must be big. For that we have short, medium and long term targets,” he said, setting off the 30-day countdown.

Asked about medal expectations, he did not put a number to it but said: “India should do better than what it has in the previous editions. We are looking forward to a new standard and record (in terms of medal count). I am very hopeful.”



Kiren Rijiju

“Our athletes have been provided the best platforms to practice, some of them are training abroad, others in important and well-equipped centres in

India. The government has been providing full support and reaching out to the athletes. The total funding through Annual Calendar and Training Competition (including TOPS — Target Olympic Podium Scheme) in the last four years has been ₹1,100 crore for the training of athletes,” he informed.

Speaking about the tough conditions imposed on the Indian contingent by Japan, Rijiju said “as per the Olympic charter there cannot be any discrimination against any country.”

DANISH DELIGHT

Denmark thrash Russia to reach Last 16, Austria edge through

Paris, June 22: Denmark powered into the last 16 of Euro 2020 with a brilliant 4-1 thrashing of Russia at a raucous Parken Stadium on Monday, helping to send five other teams through in the process. It was a joyous night in Copenhagen as goals from Mikkel Damsgaard, Yussuf Poulsen, Andreas Christensen and Joakim Maehle saw the hosts through in style, as Belgium scored two late goals to beat the Finns.

Kasper Hjulmand’s men will meet Wales in the last 16 in Amsterdam on Saturday.

“The most important (thing) is that we are now united as Denmark,” Maehle told Danish broadcaster DR after the win in front of a 25,000-strong crowd.

The results in Group B also saw Switzerland, who finished third in Group A, the Czech Republic, England, Sweden and France — all yet to play their final group games — move into the knockout phase.

AUSTRIA CLINCH HISTORIC WIN

Austria edged to a 1-0 win over Ukraine to beat their opponents to a spot in the last 16. Christoph Baumgartner’s 21st-minute goal proved enough for Austria to secure second place in Group C behind the Netherlands, who saw off North Macedonia 3-0 in a dead rubber in Amsterdam.

Austria will face Group A winners Italy at



Denmark’s Mikkel Damsgaard (right) celebrates after scoring his team’s first goal against Russia during a group match in Copenhagen on Monday.

— AFP

Wembley on Saturday for a quarter-final berth. “We wanted to write history,” Austria coach Franco Foda told uefa.com.

FINLAND ON THE BRINK OF EXIT

Belgium scored two late goals to see off a valiant Finland 2-0 on Monday, pushing their opponents to the brink of a group-stage exit.

Finnish goalkeeper Lukas Hradecky’s 74th-minute own goal and Romelu Lukaku’s third strike of the tournament ensured

Roberto Martinez’s Belgium finished top of Group B. The world’s number-one-ranked side will face a third-placed team in the next round on Sunday in Seville.

— AFP

CHAMPIONS PORTUGAL TAKE ON FRANCE, FACE RISK OF SHOCK EXIT

Budapest, June 22: Germany can secure a place in the last 16 of Euro 2020 on Wednesday, but holders Portugal are at real risk of crashing out despite a prolific start to Group F by Cristiano Ronaldo.

France top the section with four points heading into their final game against Portugal, a repeat of the Euro 2016 final, despite an underwhelming 1-1 draw with bottom side Hungary in Budapest.

Germany and Portugal are locked on three points apiece but Joachim Loew’s side crucially have the head-to-head edge follow-

EURO RESULTS	
Belgium (Lukas Hradecky 74-og, Romelu Lukaku 81)	2
Finland	0
Denmark (Mikkel Damsgaard 38, Yussuf Poulsen 59, Andreas Christensen 80, Joakim Maehle 82)	4
Russia (Dzyuba 70-p)	1
Austria (Christoph Baumgartner 21)	1
Ukraine	0
Netherlands (Memphis Depay 24, Georginio Wijnaldum 51, 58)	3
N. Macedonia	0



Paraguay’s Angel Romero takes a free-kick against Argentina during their Copa America match in Brasilia on Monday.

— AP

Argentina, Chile enter QF

Brasilia, June 22: Argentina and Chile on Monday booked their places in the Copa America quarter-finals, ending top of Group A after low-scoring matches that left the other two spots up for grabs.

Argentina logged its second win in three group matches played, beating Paraguay 1-0, with Alejandro “Papu” Gomez scoring the sole goal of a lacklustre match in Brasilia in the ninth minute.

The win placed Lionel Messi’s La Albiceleste top of Group A with seven points — enough to secure its spot in the next phase of the tournament being played in empty stadiums in coronavirus-battered Brazil.

The match marked a personal milestone for Messi, who tied Javier Mascherano’s record for the most games played for Argentina — 147.

COPA RESULTS

Argentina (Alejandro Gomez 10)	1
Paraguay	0
Uruguay (Arturo Vidal 66-og)	1
Chile (Eduardo Vargas 26)	1

But it was not a night of glory for Messi or his team, who in the second half seemed to resign themselves to defending a spirited, but ultimately fruitless, Paraguayan attack.

In the other match Monday, Chile drew 1-1 with Uruguay to end the day with five log points.

With four matches left to play in Group A, Paraguay has three points, Uruguay one, and Bolivia zero, meaning they all still stand a theoretical chance to go to the quarter-finals.

— AFP

30 DAYS TO GO

Final countdown begins for Tokyo

Tokyo, June 22: The Tokyo Olympics have weathered a historic postponement, an unprecedented ban on overseas fans and persistent domestic opposition, but with one month to go, the finish line is finally in sight.

The journey to this year’s Games has involved a long list of complications that sometimes threatened to make them the first modern Olympics cancelled in peacetime.

Now, just four weeks remain until the opening ceremony on July 23, and while the mood is far from jubilant, organisers might just have cause to celebrate.

The first Olympic teams are already in Japan, along with key officials and some overseas media. And polls suggest long-standing public opposition to the Games may be weakening as D-day approaches.

“We are in the full delivery phase,” International Olympic Committee chief

Thomas Bach said on Monday.

“Athletes are beginning to arrive in Tokyo, ready to make their Olympic dreams become a reality.”

It has been an uphill battle since the unprecedented decision to postpone the Games in March 2020, as the scale of the pandemic started to emerge.

NO CHEERING, NO HIGH-FIVES

Even with some spectators in the stands, there’s no doubt this year’s Games will be a pale imitation of Olympics past.

Cheering will be banned, and athletes can’t hug or high-five. They must wear masks at all times except when eating, sleeping or competing, and are only allowed to move between the Olympic Village and their venues. Punishments for violating the rules will range from verbal warnings and fines to being kicked out of the Games altogether.

— AFP

Indians at Games

Golfer Lahiri makes the cut

Seasoned pro Anirban Lahiri qualified for his second successive Olympic appearance after finishing as the best-placed Indian golfer in the final Tokyo Games Rankings for men released on Tuesday. The Indian made the cut at the 60th spot, the last available quota in the Games rankings. India was eligible for one spot and Lahiri was the highest-placed in the latest official world golf rankings at the 340th position. “Best surprise I have got in a while. @Tokyo2020 can’t believe I will have the opportunity once again to represent the tricolor,” Lahiri tweeted. Aditi Ashok is also in contention to make the cut.

SFI nominates 2 swimmers

The Swimming Federation of India has nominated Srihari Nataraj and Maana Patel to compete in the Olympics via the Universality places qualification system, which allows countries to recommend their two highest ranked swimmers for the showpiece if none makes the cut through the regulation process. The Universality quota allows one male and one female competitor from a country to participate in the Olympics.

Manpreet to lead India

India on Tuesday named incumbent Manpreet Singh as the skipper of the men’s hockey team for the upcoming Tokyo Olympics where he will have two deputies in defenders Birendra Lakra and Harmanpreet Singh. India had announced a 16-member team for the showpiece event last week but refrained from naming the team’s leadership group. “I am humbled to have this opportunity of representing India at the Olympics for the third time, this time as team Captain. It is a very proud moment for me to be given this charge,” Manpreet said.