

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | THURSDAY 3 | JUNE 2021

WEATHER



Max: 37°C
Min: 23°C
Rainfall: 6%

ASTROGUIDE

Pilava: Vaikashi 20
Tithi: Chaturthi
Star: Puratathi
Rahukalam:
1.30 pm to 3.00 pm
Yamagandam:
6.00 am to 7.30 am

PRAYERS

Fajar: 4.34 am
Lunar: 12.11 pm
Asar: 3.16 pm
Maghrib: 6.24 pm
Isha: 7.38 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.27 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.43 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 5.43 PM
MOONSET TOMORROW 6.27 AM

CORONA COUNT

CASES (+4,58,679)
DEATHS (+3,207)
2,84,06,613 3,36,923

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+33,658)
TN: 21,48,346 25,205

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

17,20,62,111

DEATHS

35,78,421

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES 219

worldometers.info



CITY | 2
Ex-AIADMK min seeks advance bail in sexual abuse case



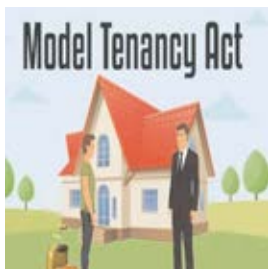
STATE | 3
State continues to see decline in corona infections

SPORT | 8
Kohli charged up for WTC battle



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New tenancy act limits deposit to 2 months' rent

New Delhi, June 2: The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the Model Tenancy Act, aiming to bring about wide-ranging reforms, including setting up of separate rent authorities, courts and tribunals in every district to protect the interest of both the owner and tenant.

For residential premises, tenants will have to submit security deposit of maximum two months' rent, while incase of commercial property, six months' rent will have to be deposited.

States and Union territories can adopt the Model Tenancy Act by enacting fresh legislation or they can amend their existing rental laws suitably.

The Act mandates for written agreement for all new tenancies, which will have to be submitted to concerned district 'rent authority'. ■ P6

CM writes to PM

State ups pressure on IVC reopening

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 2

The Tamil Nadu government has stepped up its pressure on the Centre on making the Integrated Vaccine Complex (IVC) at Chengalpattu functional at the earliest with Chief Minister M.K. Stalin sending a second letter in a week to Prime Minister Narendra Modi reminding him of the urgency of the moment.

"While I would like to reiterate our earlier request, I wish to highlight to you the urgency of the moment. Irrespective of whether it is the Union government or state government which is to find the partner to operationalise the plant, the need of the hour is to ensure that



there is absolutely no further delay in the process," the Chief Minister said. Mr Stalin had written to the Prime Minister on May 27 on the subject.

In a letter to Union health minister Harsh Vardhan, Mr Stalin demanded frontload delivery of June's allocation of vaccines as the state's stock is being exhausted. He also demanded a special allocation of 50 lakh doses for the state.

Patnaik writes to CMs on centralised vax purchase

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO
BHUBANESWAR, JUNE 2

Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Tuesday wrote a letter to all his fellow chief ministers seeking a consensus on the centralised procurement of Covid-19 vaccines by the Centre in view of the challenges faced by states.

Plea for SC guidelines on burial of bodies in Ganga

New Delhi, June 2: A plea has been filed in the Supreme Court seeking directions to the Centre and four states, including Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, to take immediate steps to remove the bodies found floating in river Ganga amid the ongoing wave of Covid-19 pandemic. The petition was filed by Youth Bar Association of India. —PTI

SC asks for data on vax purchase

PARMOD KUMAR | DC
NEW DELHI, JUNE 2

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

In a stern order, the top court asked the Centre to furnish details of the purchase of all vaccines — Covaxin, Covishield and Sputnik V — till date, including "file notings reflecting its thinking and culminating in the vaccination policy", dates of all



procurement orders placed and the quantity of vaccines procured. It also asked the Centre to "place on record a roadmap of projected availability of vaccines till 31 December 2021".

Saying that the issue of vaccination is absolutely essential and is the "singular most important task" for the government, the top court asked the

Centre to furnish the complete vaccine purchase data within two weeks.

The top court also sought data on the percentage of population that has been vaccinated (with one dose and both doses), as against eligible persons in the first three phases of the vaccination drive.

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

Dominica opposes Choksi plea

New Delhi, June 2: The Dominican government on Tuesday told the High Court that the petition filed by the fugitive diamond trader Mehul Choksi, wanted over the Rs 14,000 crore loan fraud at the Punjab National Bank, is not maintainable and it should not be

heard. Mr Choksi is an indian citizen and India is pressing for his early deportation, its prosecution told the court as the hearing began early on Wednesday (local time).

Choksi was caught in Dominica last week while trying to move to Cuba to escape extradition.

Pressure on TN govt to go ahead with exams; decision in 2 days

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR,
D. SEKAR | DC
CHENNAI, JUNE 2

With public opinion predominantly not favouring the cancellation of the Plus Two examinations of the state board, the state government deferred its decision on the issue by two days though the Centre has already called the examinations off for CBSE and ICSE boards.

Educationalists, activists and politicians pointed out that college admissions in the state are based on marks obtained in the final school examination and said the board examinations should be held by all means even if it is delayed by a month after the Corona spread subsided.

School education minister Anbil Mahesh Poyamozhi, who held discussions with CM M.K. Stalin, said the final decision on holding the examinations would be taken in two days when the opinion of students, parents, educationalists and medical experts would be sought. The government would also find out what the other states were planning to do with the school final examinations before taking a decision on the matter, he said. ■ P3

சொன்னதைச் செய்வோம் !

செய்வதைச் சொல்வோம் !

ஜூன் 3 முத்தமிழ் அறிஞர் கலைஞர் அவர்களின் 97^{வது} பிறந்த நாளை முன்னிட்டு

மக்கள் நலவாழ்விற்கு கொரோனா பாதிப்பு நிவாரண நிதியுதவி

இரண்டாவது தவணை ரூபாய் 2 ஆயிரம் மற்றும்

14 வகையான மளிகைப் பொருட்கள் வழங்கும் நிகழ்ச்சி

அரிசி குடும்ப அட்டைதாரர்களுக்கு கொரோனா சிறப்பு நிவாரணப் பொருட்களின் தொகுப்பு விவரம்

கோதுமை மாவு	- 1 கிலோ
உப்பு	- 1 கிலோ
ரவை	- 1 கிலோ
சர்க்கரை	- 1/2 கிலோ
உளுத்தம் பருப்பு	- 500 கிராம்
புளி	- 250 கிராம்
கடலை பருப்பு	- 250 கிராம்
கடுகு	- 100 கிராம்
சீரகம்	- 100 கிராம்
மஞ்சள் தூள்	- 100 கிராம்
மிளகாய் தூள்	- 100 கிராம்
உ தூள்	- 2 (100 கிராம்)
குளியல் சோம்பு	- 1 (125 கிராம்)
துணி சோம்பு	- 1 (250 கிராம்)

நாள் : 3.6.2021 வியாழக்கிழமை
நேரம் : காலை 10-30 மணி

இடம் : தலைமைச் செயலகம்
புனித ஜார்ஜ் கோட்டை

மாண்புமிகு தமிழ்நாடு முதலமைச்சர்

திரு. மு.க. ஸ்டாலின் அவர்கள்

- கொரோனா பாதிப்பு நிவாரண உதவியாக 14 மளிகைப் பொருட்கள் அடங்கிய பைகள் வழங்குதல்
- கொரோனா நோய்த்தொற்று நிவாரணமாக அறிவிக்கப்பட்ட இரண்டாவது தவணை ரூபாய் 2 ஆயிரம் வழங்குதல்
- தமிழ்நாடு அரசு அறிநிலையைத் துறையின் கீழ் ஒருகால பூஜையுடன் இயங்கும் 12,959 கோயில்களில் மாதச் சம்பளமின்றி பணிபுரியும் 14 ஆயிரத்திற்கு மேற்பட்ட அர்ச்சகர்கள், பூசாரிகள் மற்றும் பணியாளர்களுக்கு கொரோனா கால நிவாரண உதவியாக ரூபாய் 4 ஆயிரம், 10 கிலோ அரிசி மற்றும் 15 வகை மளிகைப் பொருட்கள் வழங்குதல்
- கொரோனா நோய்த்தொற்றால் இறந்த பத்திரிகையாளர் குடும்பத்தினருக்கு ரூபாய் 10 இலட்சம், மருத்துவர், மருத்துவப் பணியாளர், காவலர் மற்றும் நீதிபதிகள் ஆகியோரின் குடும்பத்தினருக்கு ரூபாய் 25 இலட்சம் வழங்குதல்

ஆகிய உதவித் திட்டங்களை வழங்கி நலத்திட்டங்களை தொடங்கி வைப்பார்கள்.

மேலும், “ உங்கள் தொகுதியில் முதலமைச்சர் ” திட்ட பயனாளிகள் 10 நபர்களுக்கு அரசு பயன்களை வழங்குவார்கள்.

வெ. இறையப்பு
தலைமைச் செயலாளர், தமிழ்நாடு அரசு

நம்மையும் நாட்டு மக்களையும் காப்போம் ! தொற்றில் இருந்து தமிழகத்தை மீட்போம் !!

உதவித் தொகை இரண்டாவது தவணை ரூ.2,000/-

கோவிட்-19 தொடர்பான சந்தேகங்கள் மற்றும் அவசர உதவிகளுக்கு

மாநில உதவி எண்கள்

104

044 - 2951 0400
044 - 2951 0500

94443 40496
87544 48477

சென்னை உதவி எண்கள்

044 - 4612 2300
044 - 2538 4520

தஞ்சையி் போட்டுக்கொள்வோம் !

சரியாக முக்கவசம் அணிவோம் !!

சமூக இடைவெளிக்காப்போம் !!!

தொற்றைத் தோற்கடிப்போம் !!!!

OTHER STORY

Hand over IVC facility to TN govt, says plea in SC

New Delhi, June 2: A PIL has been filed in the Supreme Court seeking a direction to the Centre to hand over premises of HLL Biotech facility near Chennai to Tamil Nadu government on lease for production of COVID-19 vaccines.

The plea submitted that to increase the domestic production of the vaccines the government has to utilise the unused Public sector units particularly, HLL Biotech Limited (HBL) which is a 100 per cent subsidiary of HLL Lifecare Limited, a Government of India (GOI) Enterprise under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. "Government of India mandated HLL to establish a state of art vaccine manufacturing unit termed as 'Integrated Vaccines Complex' (IVC) at Chengalpet near Chennai to produce lifesaving and cost-effective vaccines primarily to minimize the demand-supply gap and support GOI in the Universal Immunization program. "However, the facility is now is deserted campus with staff shortage, unpaid wages and financial troubles personifying the Integrated Vaccine Complex (IVC) in Chengalpet," said the plea filed by Tamil Nadu resident S Jimraj Milton. Referring to a news report, the plea stated that the Central government's state-of-the-art Integrated Vaccine Complex (IVC) at Chengalpet has not only been lying idle but has not manufactured a single vaccine in the past nine years. HLL Lifecare Limited, a Government of India enterprise under the Union Health and Family Welfare Ministry and that IVC was established in 2012 at an 'estimated' cost of Rs 594 crore and has a sanctioned staff strength of 408, of which nearly 251 posts are vacant, the plea said. —PTI

Drone used to keep tabs on illicit alcohol units

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 2

The Prohibition Enforcement Wing (PEW) of St Thomas Mount has employed a drone to keep tabs on tipplers who have been sourcing alcohol illegally and from illicit alcohol units in the suburbs, during the current lockdown.

The police team said they have employed a drone to keep an eye on the areas such as Thiruneermalai, Kadaperi, Naduveerapattu and Somangalam in the suburbs. They said that the use of the drone will also enable the PEW personnel to monitor remote locations and take quick measures to curb the sale of alcohol during the lockdown.

With Tasmac outlets across Tamil Nadu shut down due to the lockdown, the availability of liquor has reduced drastically and there have been several instances of tipplers making illicit alcohol in suburbs.

Stay masked, stay safe



A model of giant face mask put up at Mannady on Wednesday.

—DC



New College students associated with Youth Red Cross distribute food to the poor at Royapet in Chennai on Wednesday.

—DC

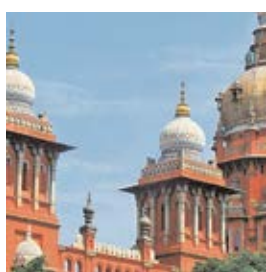
Both criminal case, departmental proceedings must go on simultaneously: HC

J. STALIN | DC
CHENNAI, JUNE 2

Holding that both the criminal case and the departmental proceedings should go on simultaneously, if the criminal case is not concluded within one year from the date of First Information Report, the Madras high court has directed the Tamil Nadu Public Service Commission to proceed with the departmental action, conduct enquiry against a section officer, who is allegedly involved in the TNPSC grade I selection answer sheet scam, and bring the issue to a logical end, even without awaiting the verdict in the criminal case.

Justice S.Vaidyanathan gave the directive while disposing of a petition filed by S.Kasiramkumar, which sought to quash the order of TNPSC, suspending him from service and to reinstate him into service, besides to pay 75 per cent of subsistence allowance.

According to the petitioner, while he was working as section officer in the TNPSC during the months of November/December 2017, police officers from Central Crime Branch, Chennai, requested him to appear in an enquiry pertaining to an alleged complaint as regards TNPSC grade I selection answer sheet scam. He duly attended the enquiry



on three occasions and clearly emphasized that, there was absolutely no lapse on his part and he has got no role in the answer sheet scam. In order to implicate someone, the police had deliberately detained him and on April 26, 2018, he was arrested by the police and a criminal case was registered against him, he added.

Corpn meets only 40% of vaccination target in city

T. SUDHEESH | DC
CHENNAI, JUNE 2

The Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC), which kicked off its vaccination drive last January planning to inoculate 80 lakh residents in the city in four months, has achieved only 40 per cent of its target so far.

GCC commissioner Gagandeep Singh Bedi, in a release, on Wednesday stated that the civic body was able to use 20,23,145 doses of vaccine till May 31. Out of this, 14,47,392 persons got their first dose while 5,75,753 people received both shots.

A total of 2,464 physically-challenged individuals received the shot through the civic body's door-to-door vaccination programme. At least 195 individuals among them received both doses.

Former commissioner G.

► "In May we had decided to intensify the vaccination programme by introducing 208 special camps across 15 zones. But the shortage of vaccines has affected the drive" said an official.

Prakash, inaugurating the vaccine programme on January 16, said the GCC was aiming at administering the vaccine free of cost to over 80 lakh residents in the city in four months. The new numbers prove that the plan did not fructify as the state is undergoing an acute vaccine shortage.

The statement further said the civic body was prioritising newspaper and milk vendors, auto and taxi drivers, shop employees, government staffers, foreign travellers, ship and airline employees, labourers engaged in essential works and college staff after the government opened up vaccination to those aged 18 and above.

"In May we had decided to

intensify the vaccination programme by introducing 208 special camps across 15 zones. But the shortage of vaccines has affected the drive. The vaccination will be intensified after receiving enough stock. Hopefully, next week onwards," said an official.

Meanwhile, the state is able to use at least 9,031,035 doses of vaccines and has halted vaccination of the 18-45 age group till June 5 due to shortage. Following this, Chief Minister M.K. Stalin wrote a letter to the Centre asking for immediate delivery of June's allocation of vaccines as the state's stock has exhausted.

According to public health experts, vaccination is the best way to contain

the spread of the virus. "Chennai has got the opportunity to have a significant amount of herd immunity to set in since it had already undergone a strong wave in the initial stages. So, the natural protection is still there. However, the vaccines, as per the available data, could provide personal protection to the individuals, reducing the impact of virus in the body. Hence, it's important to make the vaccines desirable among the public at this point of time," said an epidemiologist. It may be recalled that the sero-survey conducted on 26,135 samples by the department of health and family welfare across 37 districts in October-November last year had revealed that nearly one-third (31.6%) of the state's population are exposed to Covid-19.

₹2, 05,600 fine collected; Over 5,000 violation cases in a day

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 2

The Greater Chennai police on June 1 registered 5,179 cases for the violation of lockdown guidelines and seized 2,766 vehicles that were plying by flouting rules. Just on Tuesday, the GCP collected ₹2,05,600 in fine from nine shops for violating lockdown restrictions.

The complete lockdown that came into effect in the state from May 10 has been extended till June 7 and as per the orders from City Police commissioner Shankar Jiwal, a total of 153 checkpoints, at the borders of each police station's limit, were set up. These points were barri-

caded and policemen allowed only those with valid reasons and relevant documents to move around. On Tuesday, the traffic police registered 3,655 cases against those who were roaming around for any valid reason and a total of 563 vehicles were seized. The Law and Order police also registered 1,524 cases and seized 2,203 vehicles.

A total of 3,079 cases were registered against people for not wearing masks and 269 for not following personal distancing. The city police had also sealed nine shops that were found flouting lockdown guideline. They had collected fines of ₹2,05,600.

IndiGO hands over two passengers to police for not wearing mask

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 2

IndiGO on Wednesday handed over two passengers from its Bengaluru-Chennai flight to the police on arriving at the Chennai airport for not wearing masks despite repeated warnings from the flight crew, airport sources said.

According to the airport police, two Chennai passengers, Mohammed Harsath (22) and Thariq Rahman (29) on Bengaluru-Chennai flight on Tuesday night refused to wear masks despite several warnings by fellow passengers and flight crew. They also reportedly got into an argument with the cabin crew.

On landing at the

Chennai airport, the duo was handed over to the security officials. He was questioned by them and handed over to the Chennai airport police on Wednesday. They have been booked by the police. Further investigation into the matter is underway.

As per the DGCA's order, passengers refusing to wear a mask properly or follow social distancing norms during a flight despite repeated warnings could be put on a no-fly list for a period of three months to two years or more.

The DGCA has also said if a passenger refuses to comply with the instructions before a flight takes off, then he or she should be de-boarded.

Former AIADMK minister seeks advance bail in sexual abuse case

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 2

Former AIADMK Minister Dr.M.Manikandan, who apprehended arrest in connection with a sexual abuse case lodged by an actor, a Malaysian national, has filed a petition in the Madras high court, seeking anticipatory bail.

The actor in her complaint alleged that Manikandan lived with her for a few years in a house at Besant Nagar, promising to marry her, but he did not keep up his promise. Based on her complaint, the Adyar police registered a case against Manikandan for offences under section 417 (cheating), 376 (rape), 313 (causing miscarriage without woman's consent), 323 (voluntarily causing hurt), 506 (ii) (criminal intimidation) of IPC and section 67 (transmitting obscene material in electronic form) of the Information Technology Act.

In his petition filed through advocate R.John Sathyan, Manikandan submitted that there was no iota of truth in the allegations levelled against him and the entire complaint and the accompanying documents were concocted over a period and the complaint was lodged after several attempts for compromise were not accepted by the petitioner. The timing of the complaint, especially after the change of government, clearly shows that the defacto complainant was not aggrieved but only with an ulterior motive to extort money, she filed the complaint, he added.

He said considering the allegations made in the complaint by the complainant to be true, without accepting and admitting, the offences alleged cannot be legally sustained for the reasons that it was admitted fact that the complainant knew that the petitioner was a married person and even as per the complaint she compromised herself on the assurance to marry her given by the petitioner. It was pertinent to see that the complainant was an actress and an adult aged about 27 years at the time was a consenting party to the sexual intercourse. Hence the consent was an

active one as she was aware of the consequences of the alleged relationship. Hence the offence under section 417 and 376 of the IPC cannot be sustained. The allegations made against the petitioner do not constitute the ingredients of the offence under section 313 of the IPC as the complainant voluntarily caused abortion and there was no material whatsoever to show that it was done on the inducement of the petitioner, he added.

He said further, there was no material to show that the petitioner was the cause of the pregnancy. The alleged injuries attracting the offence under section 323 IPC cannot be used against the petitioner as it was not backed by medical records. Further, documents produced by the complainant shows that the complainant was creating documents against the petitioner. The settled law in so far as section 506 (ii) IPC was that the threat must be allegedly imminent and real. Whereas, in the case on hand, it was the complainant, who has been threatening the petitioner to extort money with a team and there was no material let in by the complainant to prima facie make out a case under section 506 (ii) IPC. The offence under section 67A of the IT Act was added only to aide the allegation that the naked photo of the complainant was sent to her and the petitioner allegedly threatened the complainant that he would upload the same to tarnish her image. The petitioner stoutly denies the allegation and the photo was taken by him and an unbiased and uninfluenced investigation would reveal by whom and what reason the photo was taken. The above allegation was only to sensationalize the issue, he added.

He said the complainant was an extortionist and operates a gang to set-up honey traps for vulnerable persons in the society. Further, thorough investigation revealed that the complainant had threatened several persons with similar allegations and an enquiry of the neighbours in the apartment would reveal the truth, he added.

Nilgiris dt gets 66% excess summer rains

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC
OOTY, JUNE 2

The Nilgiris has received 66 per cent excess rains in summer this year, with the hills poised to enter the southwest monsoon mode.

Though the Nilgiris is known to receive a good quantity of rainfall in summer, this year it was truly excess. The summer showers that usually begin in early March help the hills regain its greenery and colours after the severe frost in the preceding winter. The summer showers help the tea gardens to rejuvenate and also help in the cultivation of hill vegetables in a big way after the December-February lull due to a harsh winter.

The Indian Meteorological Department data for the period between March 1 and May 31

this year showed that Nilgiris received 350 mm of rainfall against the normal rainfall of 211 mm. That shows that Nilgiris recorded 66 per cent excess rainfall this summer.

Meanwhile, the heavy rains in the past two days indicate that Nilgiris has begun to enter the SW monsoon mode in time this year. The SW monsoon in Nilgiris, which stretches between June and September, would always bring copious rains. While the weathermen already predicted a good SW monsoon this year, the hills look forward to productive monsoon days ahead.



Chief Minister M. K. Stalin inaugurates a vaccination centre at Everwin school in Kolathur organised by Greater Chennai Corporation on Wednesday where 10,000 people got vaccinated. Corporation Commissioner Gagandeep Singh Bedi also present.

—DC

CM opens 2 Covid care centres in Radhapuram

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUNELVELI, JUNE 2

Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Wednesday inaugurated two oxygen-bed Covid care centres in the Radhapuram assembly con-

stituency in Tirunelveli district via video conferencing. Radhapuram and Valliyoor region reported many Covid-19 cases in Tirunelveli district. As these towns are located around 40 km from the

Tirunelveli medical college hospital, the state government, in consultation with Radhapuram MLA and Assembly Speaker M. Appavu, set up Covid care centres at Mannarpuram and Valliyoor to ensure

speedy treatment for the Covid patients in the region.

The centre set up at St Antony's College of Education, Mannarpuram village near Radhapuram has 140 oxygen beds with all

necessary facilities for treatment, according to Speaker Appavu who, along with Tirunelveli district collector Vishnu, was present during the inauguration.

The other Covid care cen-

tre set up at Valliyoor has 150 oxygen beds. The Speaker said that apart from free quality treatment, the Covid patients at the two centres would also be provided nutritious food free of cost.

IN BRIEF

Passenger held for smuggling gold bars in socksDC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 2

Customs officials at the Chennai airport have seized 140 grams of gold, worth ₹7.14 lakh from a passenger. The man was arrested. Based on intelligence, customs officials intercepted Sathish, 28 of Chennai who arrived from Doha in an Indigo airlines flight on Tuesday night, Chennai Customs said.

During his personal search, the officers found three bars concealed in his socks. Gold bars weighing 140 grams, worth ₹7.14 lakh was recovered and seized under the Customs act. The passenger has been arrested and further investigations are underway.

Drug smugglers held with ganja worth ₹2.10 LR. VALAYAPATHY | DC
TIRUCHY, JUNE 2

The police seized 21 kg of ganja worth ₹2.10 lakh along with a car, arrested three persons and are searching for one more at Tiruchy on Wednesday.

Acting on a tip-off, a police team attached to Woriyur police station led by inspector Maniraj intercepted the car at Konakkara road and seized the contraband.

Police arrested three occupants of the car - Govindaraj (24) of Srinivasanagar, Tiruchy, Arul Anandan (34) of Woriyur and Sukkan alias Lakshmanan (27) of Sivalaperi in Tirunelveli district. Police are on the lookout for Milton of Tiruchy.

Preliminary inquiry revealed that the contraband was being smuggled into Tiruchy city from Theni district. Further investigations are on.

TN continues to see decline in new Covid-19 infections

Chennai, June 2: Tamil Nadu on Wednesday registered 25,317 new Covid-19 infections, continuing with the decline in the daily trend since the recent past.

With this tally, the case-load is 21,48,346 while the death of 483 today took the toll to 25,205 till date, the Health Department said.

Recoveries outnumbered the new cases with 32,263 people walking out of health care institutions. The number discharged totalled 18,34,439 till date, leaving 2,88,702 active infections.

Among districts, Coimbatore recorded the maximum number of infections at 3,061 new cases followed by Chennai with 2,217, Erode 1,488, Salem 1,290 and Tiruppur 1,252.

The state capital leads in the number of total infections among districts with 5,09,234 cases overall.

The number of deceased also remains high in Chennai with 7,222 fatalities till date.

The number of samples tested today were 1,74,329 pushing the cumulative number of specimens examined so far to 2,80,16,841.

Chengalpet, Cuddalore, Kancheepuram, Kanyakumari, Madurai, Nagapattinam, Namakkal, Nilgiris, Thanjavur, Tiruvallur, Tiruvannamalai and Villupuram reported new cases each in excess of 500 today while the rest were scattered across other districts.

Among the 483 deceased, 115 succumbed to the virus sans any pre-exist-

ing illness and that included a 23-year-old man from neighbouring Chengalpet.

Earlier in the day, Medical Minister M Subramanian formally inaugurated a 155-bedded facility in Tiruvallur under the state government's plan to set up 1,000 oxygen beds in the neighbouring district.

After inaugurating the facility, Subramanian said it was the only unit in the State to offer both Covid-19 testing and treatment.

Referring to the decline in new Covid infections, the Minister said the virus spread was beginning to come under control and expressed hope that Tamil Nadu would soon become a Covid-free state.

On the vaccination front, he said Tamil Nadu

was expected to receive 42 lakh doses in June and five lakh doses were received on Tuesday.

"Currently, we have 6.50 lakh doses and with this we are able to vaccinate people for four days. And, it is expected that we will be receiving the doses from the Centre's allotment in a phased manner," he said.

Chief Minister M. K. Stalin has been taking various measures towards ensuring that there is no hindrance in vaccinating people, he said.

With the availability of liquid medical oxygen from places like Rourkela, the capacity of medical oxygen in the State has increased from 230 MT (as of May 7) to 660 MT as of today, said the Minister.

—PTI



Commissioner of police Shankar Jiwai visits Egmore police hospital and checks on corona affected police personnel on Wednesday.

—DC

Pudukkottai collector in home quarantineDC CORRESPONDENT
PUDUKKOTTAI, JUNE 2

B. Umamaheswari, the Collector of Pudukkottai, has gone into home quarantine after she tested positive for Covid-19 on Wednesday. Official sources said she had several symptoms including continuous fever and she took a Covid test, which was confirmed as positive.

Her personal staff and others who attend various government functions along with her are also likely to go for the Corona test, the sources added.

Minister: Karur to be made Covid-free dtDC CORRESPONDENT
KARUR, JUNE 2

Electricity minister V. Senthil Balaji said the Karur district administration and the health authorities are working towards making Karur a Coronavirus-free district and sought the people's cooperation for achieving this.

Senthil Balaji, accompanied by Karur collector Prashant M. Wadnere, inaugurated 80 oxygen beds in the old government hospital at Karur and another Covid care centre with 100 oxygen beds at a private school at Pallapatti near Karur.

He said efforts are underway to increase the number of beds up to 1,300 with oxygen facilities in all the government hospitals in the district.

Do not fall into the trap, Vaiko urges govt

From P1

The meeting was attended by top officials, including those concerned with school education and examinations.

Among the vocal voices against the cancellation of the Plus-2 final examination was MDMK general secretary Vaiko, who saw a conspiracy in the Centre doing away with exams of the CBSE and ICSE boards.

Wondering why the Centre had not called off the Neet and other entrance examinations for admissions in universities and professional courses if it was really concerned about the physical and mental health of the students, he said

the Centre would like to not hold the school final examinations even in future.

He pointed out that the New Education Policy proposed by the Centre envisaged admissions to universities and colleges to be made on the basis of students' performance in qualifying entrance examinations and said cancelling the examinations this year in the pretext of the pandemic was only to set the foundation for its plans.

Urging the state government to not fall into the trap, Vaiko said that marks were important for students who seek admissions in foreign schools and universities and apply for jobs.

Leading educationalist Prince Gajendrababu told *Deccan Chronicle* that when the students were preparing to apply for admission to professional colleges on the basis of their marks in the plus-2 examinations, cancelling the qualifying examination could create confusion.

He said the state would then be forced to make admissions on the basis of Neet and other entrance examinations held by the Centre, thus putting the State students at a disadvantage. So he recommended the holding of the board examinations after the pandemic.

The director of school education has also urged the

heads of all higher secondary schools to seek the opinion of parents, teachers and others through video conference on Thursday and file a report on the meetings to the chief educational officers in the districts, who in turn have been instructed to file their consolidated reports to the director.

Members of the public have also been asked to give their opinion on the question of holding the final examination for the plus-2 students in the State either by calling the telephone number 1441 or by sending an e-mail to tnschooledu21@gmail.com to help the government make the right decision.

MP calls for quality work in dam desilting

G. SRINIVASAN | DC
THANJAVUR, JUNE 2

Thanjavur MP and former union minister S.S. Palanimanickam has called for transparency and quality in desilting work in Thanjavur district.

Speaking at an official and later farmers' meeting to discuss desilting works, Palanimanickam appealed to the officials and engineers to work in order to bring a good name to the new government.

"You should understand the difference between this government and the previous government. There will not be any interference from us (politicians) in your work. So there should be fair play and commitment to your work", the MP said.

He asked the PWD engineers to install boards giving details of the work to give clarity to people at work sites. Farmers said that

works taken up should be completed before water is released in canals.

Pradeep Yadav, the monitoring officer for desilting works in Thanjavur district, assured that no work will be left halfway.

Farmers Sundara Vimalanathan from Swami Malai, V Jeevakumar from Budalur, and Veerasenan from Pattukottai spoke.

M. Govinda Rao, Thanjavur collector, said that 185 works had been taken up in Cauvery, Vennar, GA canal and Agniyar systems. A sum of Rs 20 crores had been allotted for this by the government. Works to a distance of 100 km have been completed. Kovi.Sezhiyan MLA and government whip, S. Ramalingam, Mayiladuthurai MP, MLAs Durai.Chandrasekaran, (Thiruvai yaru), T.K.G.Neelamegam, (Thanjavur) and Anbalagan, (Kumbakonam) participated in the meeting.

Four staff of YMCA College of Physical Education get reprieve

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 2:

Coming to the rescue of four teaching and non-teaching staff of YMCA College of Physical Education, Chennai, originally appointed by the college in the year 2000, but approval of appointment was granted by the authorities from the year 2007, the Madras high court has directed the Director of Collegiate Education to modify the date of grant of approval to the date of their initial appointment and pay the difference in salary and other benefits for the disputed period to them within 6 weeks.

Justice R.Mahadevan gave the directive while allowing the petitions filed by A.Punitha Kala

Mary, a junior assistant, V.Latha, a typist, Johnson Premkumar, assistant professor and J.Glory Darling Margaret, assistant professor, challenging the orders of the Director of Collegiate Education, granting approval to them from the year 2007.

According to the petitioners, they were appointed in the year 2000 by the college. The college sent proposals on September 8, 2000 and March 5, 2001, to the Director of Collegiate Education, requesting to grant approval for the said appointments. But the Director of Collegiate Education granted approval from the year 2007 instead of 2000. Aggrieved they sent a legal notice. However,

there was no response. Hence, they filed the present petitions.

The judge said it was seen from the documents that initially the YMCA Institution was enjoying the status of minority in view of the interim order granted by this court in 1998 and when the said order was in force, they were granted the minority status by a GO dated September 21, 2010, for a period of five years and therefore at the time of appointment of the petitioners in 2000, the Institution was in the minority status. Moreover, since the petitioners were appointed in the sanctioned vacant posts, prior permission from the authority concerned was not necessary, the judge added.



Prof. Dr.N.Kumar, Vice Chancellor, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, handed over ₹2 crore to Chief Minister M.K.Stalin in the presence of minister of agriculture and farmers welfare M.R.K.Panneerselvam in Chennai.

Ariyalur collector gives ₹50K to para-athleteDC CORRESPONDENT
ARIYALUR, JUNE 2

Ariyalur collector T. Rathna handed over a cheque for Rs 50,000 to a visually-impaired woman at Ariyalur on Wednesday to enable her take part in the two-day trial test on discus throw event to be held in Delhi on August 15 and 16.

Rathna told the media that Gandhi Sivagami of Jayankondam, who won 89 medals in different sports meets, has been selected in the preliminary round to participate in the para-olympics to be held in Tokyo, on behalf of the Tamil Nadu.

For her travel and stay expenses in Delhi, the district administration has made a donation of Rs 50,000, Rathna added.

BJP wants Stalin to follow MK

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 2

BJP state president L. Murugan urged Chief Minister M. K. Stalin to follow in the footsteps of his father the late M. Karunanidhi in adopting a conciliatory approach towards the Centre.

Whenever the DMK was in power, Karunanidhi openly stat-

ed that only through conciliation the State could get benefits from the Centre, Murugan said, adding that the DMK and its finance minister have forgotten about it.

"Only if your ministers maintained a cordial relationship with Central ministers would you be able to safeguard the interests of your people," the

BJP leader said in a statement on Wednesday, advising the Chief Minister to get more benefits to the State.

He referred to a few instances of state ministers having confrontations with the Central ministers and told the Chief Minister that efforts to protect the people was more important at his moment of crisis than playing politics.

Ceiling of Bhagavathy temple in Kanyakumari gutted

M. ARULOLI | DC
KANYAKUMARI, APRIL 2

The ceiling of the famous Bhagavathy Amman Temple at Mandaikadu in Kanyakumari district was damaged in an accidental fire on Wednesday.

The fire was noticed by the temple priests after the daily morning poojas at around 7 am and, on their alert, the fire-fighting teams

from Thuckalay and Colachel in the district rushed to the spot and put out the blaze. The ceiling, made of wood, was gutted completely, though the termite mound, considered as prime deity Goddess Parvathy, remained intact without any damage.

Being lockdown period, no devotee was present at the temple premises during the morning

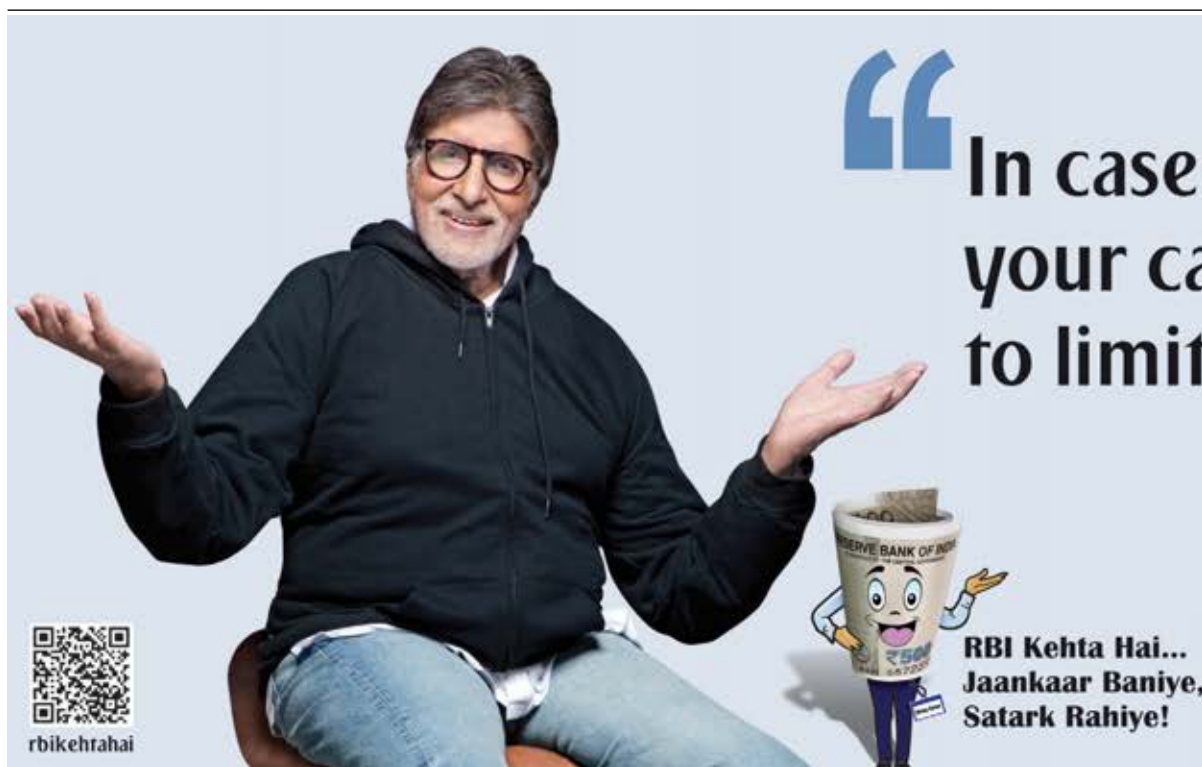
pooja and human casualty was avoided.

This 400-year-old temple, called 'women's Sabarimala', is popular even before the historical temple entry movement started in the state as all devotees irrespective of caste were allowed to worship here.

Information and technology minister T. Mano Thangaraj, MLAs M.R. Gandhi, Thalavai

Sundaram and G.J Prince and others rushed to the spot. The minister told the media that Chief Minister M.K. Stalin contacted him and instructed to make necessary arrangements to renovate the damaged temple premises.


According to a preliminary enquiry by the local police, the source of the fire might be the lighted camphor or 'dhee-barathana' fire.



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SHORT TAKES

MAN KILLS SON & WIFE, DRAGS HER BODY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SC ASKS FOR DATA ON VAX PURCHASE

From P1

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

"While filing its affidavit, UoI (Union of India) shall also ensure that copies of all the relevant documents and file notings reflecting its thinking and culminating in the vaccination policy are also annexed on the vaccination policy. Hence, we direct the UoI to file its affidavit within two weeks," the bench said in its May 31 order, which was uploaded on Wednesday on its website.

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

Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, who was heading the bench, told the Centre that "it is trite to state that separation of powers is a part of the basic structure of the Constitution," asserting that "the separation of power does not result in courts lacking jurisdiction in conducting a judicial review of policies."

"Our Constitution does not envisage courts to be silent spectators when constitutional rights of citizens are infringed by executive policies. Judicial review and soliciting constitutional justification for policies formulated by the executive is an essential function, which the courts are entrusted to perform," the court said in its 32-page order.

Flagging several other flaws in its vaccine policy - including shortage of vaccine doses and problems faced by rural people in accessing vaccines - the court also directed the Centre to give an outline for "how and when the Central government seeks to vaccinate the remaining population in phases 1, 2 and 3" and the "steps being taken by the Central government to ensure drug availability for mucormycosis (black fungus)." The court has fixed June 30, 2021, for further hearing of the case.

'SIDHU MISSING' POSTERS SURFACE

Amritsar, June 2: Street walls of the Amritsar East assembly constituency here on Wednesday appeared plastered overnight with a large number of posters, proclaiming that area MLA Navjot Sidhu has gone missing. The posters also announced a reward of ₹50,000 to anyone who traces the legislator and brings him back to the constituency.

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

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

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

— PTI

Livelihood matters



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

— PTI

MAHA LAUNCHES 'CORONA-FREE VILLAGES DRIVE'

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC MUMBAI, JUNE 2

In order to curb the spread of Coronavirus in rural areas, the Maharashtra government on Wednesday launched 'Corona-Mukta Gaon' (Corona-free Village) competition, which will reward the successful villages with handsome cash prizes. The scheme has been inspired by the feat of five villages in the state, which have managed to eradicate the virus from their jurisdiction.

The competition shall be held in all the six revenue divisions of the state with top three villages in each division getting cash prizes worth ₹50 lakh, ₹25 lakh, and ₹15 lakh. In addition to this, these winning villages shall also be provided additional funds of ₹50 lakh, ₹25 lakh, and ₹15 lakh each, as incentives for various development works.

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

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

PRIME ACCUSED IN GANGRAPE CASE SHOT AT BY POLICEMEN

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Police sources said the rape victim was trafficked from Bangladesh by a network of human traffickers active in her country, Assam, West Bengal, Telangana and Karnataka, three years ago.

Alapan chapter over, says Mamata

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

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, JUNE 2

West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday described the controversy over former state secretary Alapan Bandyopadhyay about his bureaucratic stint as a closed "chapter" since he took retirement.

The Trinamul Congress supremo, however, made it clear that her government would provide "full support" to the retired IAS officer of the 1987-batch who has been pulled up by the Centre in a show cause notice under penal charges of the Disaster Management Act seeking his explanation for skipping Prime Minister Narendra Modi's review meeting on the devastation of Cyclone Yaas at Kalaikunda Air Force Station on May 28.

"Please do not ask me any questions on Alapan

Bandyopadhyay. The case is over now. The chapter is also over now," Banerjee told the media about her chief adviser in his presence at the secretariat.

Asked on the show cause notice by the Centre to Mr Bandyopadhyay, she said, "I have already said that I would not make comments on him since he has taken retirement. Still, what is happening with him, the government will give full support to him."

Though Ms Banerjee did not reveal the nature of "full support" to the retired IAS officer, official sources indicated that the former state top bureaucrat is likely to get legal assistance from the state government as the ministry of home affairs has targeted him legally in its show-cause notice to keep the door ajar for his criminal prosecution which may result in imprisonment upto two years or a

fine or both. According to the MHA, Mr Bandyopadhyay, by skipping the PM's meeting, "acted in a manner tantamount to refusing to comply with lawful directions of the Central Government and is thus violative of Section 51(b) of the Disaster Management Act."

That was why he has been "called upon to explain in writing to this Ministry within a period of 3 (three) days, as to why action should not be taken against him under Section 51 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005 for the aforesaid violation under the Disaster Management Act, 2005."

It is, however, to be confirmed whether Mr Bandyopadhyay, who was heard on Tuesday about responding to the notice with proper grounds, has sent his reply to the MHA as the three-day deadline ends on Thursday.

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

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

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

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



Mamata Banerjee

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

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

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

— PTI

Army chief lauds jawans on 100 days of ceasefire at LoC

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

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

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

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

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

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

Gen. Naravane expressed appreciation to the jawans and commanders relentlessly battling the dual challenges of Pakistan-abetted terror and the global pandemic. He was briefed by Lt. Gen. Pandey on the overall situation at the LoC and the hinterland at the Badami Bagh headquarters of 15 Corps in Srinagar.

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

MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, JUNE 2

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

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma who was in New Delhi

● **THE MOB** damaged the building and also ransacked instruments at the CCC besides "brutally assaulting" the doctor, IMA said.

said, "24 culprits involved in this barbaric attack have been arrested and a charge sheet will be filed at the earliest. I am personally monitoring this investigation and I promise that justice will be served."

The incident took place after Giasuddin, a Covid-19 patient from Udali area, died at the hospital on Tuesday. According to a letter issued by the Hojai unit of Indian Medical

Association to the deputy commissioner of the district, the patient was admitted on Tuesday at 11 am and died three hours later at 2 pm.

The letter said that the mob damaged the building and also ransacked instruments at the CCC besides "brutally assaulting" the doctor. The IMA unit said that unless all the culprits involved in the attack are arrested by 7 am on Wednesday, all doctors of Hojai would boycott all out-patient duty services.

It also asked the government to provide all hospitals and CCCs with security cover, CCTV cameras and round the clock electricity.

WHY POMP, HC ASKS DELHI GOVT

New Delhi, June 2: The Delhi High Court on Wednesday said if the Delhi government could not ensure that people get both the doses of Covaxin within the stipulated time, then it should not have started vaccination centres with "much pomp and splendour". Justice Rekha Palli sought its stand on whether it can provide the second dose of Covaxin to those who got the first jab, before expiry of the incubation period.

TECH | TROUBLE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

● **THE PLEA** claimed that 5G technology threatens to provoke serious, irreversible effects on humans and permanent damage to the earth's ecosystems.

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

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

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

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

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

— PTI

MAN SINGS JUHI CHAWLA'S SONGS, INTERRUPTS PROCEEDINGS

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

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

The man, who was logging in the virtual hearing with different names first started singing *Ghoonghat ki aad mein dilbar ka didaar adhura...* and he was then removed.

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

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

— PTI



SHORT TAKES

THIRD GIANT PANDA CUB BORN IN MALAYSIA

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

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

COUP: MALI SUSPENDED FROM AFRICAN UNION

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

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

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

INDONESIA HALTS SALVAGE OF SUNKEN SUB

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

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

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

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

FOREIGN PLOT: JORDAN REFERS 2 TO SECURITY COURT

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

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

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

TWO RUSSIANS DO SPACEWALK AT INT'L STATION

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

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

APPOINT ENVOY FOR MYANMAR, INDONESIA URGES ASEAN

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

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

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

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

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



Isaac Herzog

ISSAC HERZOG ELECTED PREZ OF ISRAEL

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

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

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

His grandfather was the country's first chief rabbi. — AP

B.1.617 variant superspreader: UNHCR

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

United Nations, June 2: The highly-infectious Covid-19 variant first detected in India "threatens" to rapidly spread in the sub-region, including among refugees, the UN refugee agency has said as it warned of vaccine shortages in the Asia-Pacific region, including for asylum-seekers. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) spokesperson Andrej Mahecic, at a press briefing in Geneva on Tuesday, said that the fragile health systems in many countries in the Asia and Pacific region have struggled to cope with the recent surge of coronavirus cases.

"We are particularly worried about the situation in the Asia and Pacific region, which in the past two months has experienced the largest increase in the number of cases globally," he said. Over this period, there have been some 38 million recorded Covid-19 cases and more than half a million deaths, the UNHCR spokesperson said.

"The lack of hospital beds, oxygen supplies, limited Intensive Care Unit (ICU) capacities and scarce health facilities and services have worsened outcomes for those infected with Covid-19, particularly in India and Nepal.

The highly infectious variant of the virus which first emerged in India threatens to rapidly spread in the sub-region, including among refugee populations," Mahecic said. The B.1.617 Covid-19 variant, first detected in India, is divided in three lineages — B.1.617.1, B.1.617.2 and B.1.617.3.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has said that only B.1.617.2 is now a "variant of concern," observing that lower rates of transmission have been observed for the other two lineages, making them no longer variants of concern.

The B.1.617.2 is now labelled variant Delta and has been reported in 62 countries as of June 1. With Covid-19 raging in many parts of the world, the UNHCR warned of shortages of vaccines in the Asia-Pacific region, including for refugees and asylum-seekers.

UNHCR spokesperson Mahecic said: "We urge an immediate and stronger support for the COV-AX initiative, a worldwide effort aimed at achieving equitable access to Covid-19 vaccines.

— PTI

Nepal: Bench to be formed June 6

Kathmandu, June 2: A new Constitutional Bench of Nepal's Supreme Court will be formed on June 6 to hear a bunch of petitions challenging the dissolution of the House of Representatives, the Chief Justice announced on Wednesday after differences among justices delayed the crucial hearing.

Chief Justice Cholendra Shumsher Rana's announcement came as justices Deepak Kumar Karki and Anand Mohan Bhattarai on Wednesday opted out of the five-member Constitutional Bench, presided over by the Chief Justice and hearing the House dissolution case.

The two justices opted out after justices Tej Bahadur KC and Bam



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

— AFP

Penury hits 100 mn workers: UN

Geneva, June 2: The pandemic has pushed over 100 million more workers into poverty, the UN said Wednesday, after working hours plummeted and access to good quality jobs evaporated. In a report, the UN's International Labour Organisation (ILO) cautioned that the labour market crisis created by the pandemic was far from over, with employment not expected to bounce back to pre-pandemic levels until 2023 at the earliest.

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

"Without a deliberate effort to accelerate the creation of decent jobs, and support the most vulnerable members of society and the recovery of the hardest-hit economic sectors, the lingering effects of the pandemic could be with us for years in the form of lost human and economic potential, and higher poverty and inequality." The report showed that global unemployment was expected to stand at 205 million people in 2022 — far higher than the 187 million in 2019.

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

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But the situation is worse than official unemployment figures indicate.

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

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

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

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

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

The new directions have come after the Ministry of Health announced last week that Singaporeans and PRs are now required to present a report of the test, taken within 72 hours before departing for Singapore.

"Airlines must not allow

a passenger to board the flight to Singapore if that passenger fails to produce the result of the required PCR test or if the result of that PCR test is positive. They will be responsible to carry a person who is denied entry into Singapore back to the point of departure, said Margaret Tan, Security Director at the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore.

44% US troops back from Kabul

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

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

"US Central Command estimates that we have completed between 30-44 per cent of the entire retrograde process," it said on Tuesday.

President Biden in April announced that all American troops would be withdrawn from Afghanistan by September 11 this year, thus

bringing to end the country's longest war, spanning across two decades. Since the President's decision, the Department of Defence has retrograded the equivalent of approximately 300 C-17 loads of material out of Afghanistan and have turned nearly 13,000

pieces of equipment to the Defence Logistics Agency for disposition, CENTCOM said. The United States and the

Taliban signed a landmark deal in Doha on February 29, 2020 to bring lasting peace in war-torn Afghanistan and allow United States troops to return home from America's longest war.

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

STRONG CURRENTS

A small ship abandoned when it started to take in water

Philippines storm displaces hundreds

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

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

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

Coast guard personnel rescued villagers who were trapped in houses engulfed in rising floodwater, including in Southern Leyte province, where they carried 40 residents, including children, in waist-deep waters to a gymnasium.

More than 2,600 people were

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

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

an Armand Balilo said.

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

GREATER CHENNAI CORPORATION Electrical Department	
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E-tender Value Rs.1,55,36,400/-	
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SALEM CITY MUNICIPAL CORPORATION 2020-2021 -15 th Central Finance Commission (Tied Grant) ROBOT VEHICLE E - TENDER NOTICE - 2nd Call		
E4/Est.No.56/Vehicle/2020-2021	(Double Cover System)	Date : 28.05.2021
1. Supply and Delivery of Manhole cleaning Robot -2 Nos. (Bandicoot) With Transit Vehicles-2 Nos. at and Estimate Cost of Rs.91.50 Lakhs		
2. Bid document and other information available at (free of cost) www.tntenders.gov.in , www.tenders.tn.gov.in , www.salemcorporation.gov.in "e-submission" is also permitted.		
Date, time and Venue for Tender Procedures.		
3. Submission of bids - 03.06.2021 upto 22.06.2021 - 03.00 P.M.		
Opening of bids - 22.06.2021 at 03.30 P.M.		
DIPR/1676/TENDER/2021		
Commissioner, Salem Corporation		

DECCAN Chronicle

3 JUNE 2021

Targeting ex-chief secy to hit bureaucracy's morale

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Testing time for students

The cancellation of the CBSE and CISCE Class 12 board exams was, perhaps, the easier decision to make. It will resonate with the primary stakeholders who are students as anxiety levels were the highest among them and their parents amid the deadly second wave of Covid-19 pandemic. A spate of cancellations of state board exams is bound to follow though only four states among all states and UTs had expressed their opposition to the proposal to hold the exams. The decision to cancel emanated from the Prime Minister who, well aware of the nervousness in youth, may have lent an empathetic ear to the students' cause.

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

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

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Subhani



Protect vulnerable to heal fractures, revive economy



Patralekha Chatterjee

Dev 360

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

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

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

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

Currently, there are flickers of promise: the daily infections are falling in many places though Covid-19 deaths still remain high at around 3,000 every day. Worryingly, the virus continues to course through the countryside.

This week, manufacturing and construction work was allowed to resume in Delhi and some other areas, but with many roads remaining barricaded, transporting material is not easy and there is an acute shortage of labourers. Many have gone back home.

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

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

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

In the absence of a real social protection mechanism in the cities, people have gone back to their villages. This should surprise no one. Neither should it come as a surprise that this will impact attempts to unlock the economy.

"Overnight, we may not be able to formalise all informal workers, but we need to definitely start putting in place a more solid social protection mechanism as a matter of immediate priority," Prof. Basole stresses.

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

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

He speaks movingly about a school bus driver he knows who is trying to make a living ferrying vegetable from wholesale markets to retail shops.

"But this is not a stable way of earning a living. Admittedly this is only anecdotal, but it's not difficult to imagine many more such cases may be there."

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

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

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

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

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

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

measures such as NREGA and cash transfers also had a patchy coverage."

Given the unpredictable trajectory of the virus, it's hard to forecast when lockdowns may be reimposed. All the more reason to invest in a solid social protection mechanism to minimise the damage due to disruption.

"The State of Working India 2021" suggests some urgent policy measures. These include extending free rations under PDS beyond June, at least till the end of 2021, cash transfer of ₹5,000 for three months to as many vulnerable households as can be reached with the existing digital infrastructure, including but not limited to Jan Dhan accounts, expansion of MGNREGA entitlement to 150 days, revising programme wages upwards to state minimum wages, expanding the programme budget to at least ₹1.75 lakh crores, launching a pilot urban employment programme in the worst-hit districts, possibly focused on women workers, increasing the Central contribution in old-age pensions, automatically enrolling all MGNREGA workers who do construction work, as registered workers under the Building and Other Construction Workers (BoCW) Act so that they can access social security benefits and a Covid hardship allowance for Anganwadi/Asha workers of ₹5,000 per month for six months.

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

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

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

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

LETTERS

UNCHARITABLE REMARK

It is unfortunate that Justice Vipin Sanghi of the Delhi high court, while commenting on the centre's vaccination policy, has questioned it for prioritising the older people over the younger population saying, "it is only the younger people who are the future of this country." He has tried to justify his statement with his most uncharitable remark that the 80 year-olds are not going to carry this country forward. "Ideally, we should be able to save everyone, but if we have to choose, we have to save younger people," he said. How can a judge advocate death to the elders to save the youth? It is a wonder that the judge has conveniently forgotten that it is only the hard work and sacrifices of most of the elders that have built India into a good country. I still believe that the judge will not be that cruel to prefer the job for himself at the cost of his father's life. Doesn't he know that the government has a responsibility to save the lives of all?

Tharcus S. Fernando,
Chennai

QUIT SMOKING

May 31 happened to be World No Tobacco Day. For long, tobacco has been one of the leading causes of deaths in India. Statistics reveal that nine out of ten lung cancers are caused by cigarette smoking, which affects the stomach lining and intestines, and creates severe digestive problems. Smoke contains not only nicotine, but also soot (carbon particles) that are deposited on the walls of lungs. This reduces the capacity to breathe to a great extent and ultimately leads to diseases such as emphysema and chronic bronchitis. Tar, which is a residue of burnt cigarette paper, is a carcinogen. This can lead to cancer of lungs and oesophagus. Evidence from China, from where the coronavirus originated, shows that people who have cardiovascular and respiratory conditions caused by tobacco consumption, are at a higher risk of developing severe Covid-19 symptoms.

R. Sivakumar,
Chennai

Dilip Cherian
Dilli Ka Babu



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

rare thing!

EXTENSION RAJ

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SHORT TAKES

Will miss Marin at Games: Sindhu

New Delhi: Star Indian shuttler P. V. Sindhu on Wednesday wished Spain's Carolina Marin a speedy recovery after she was forced out of the Tokyo Games due to a freak knee injury and said she will miss the reigning Olympic champion at the quadrennial event. Marin suffered a torn anterior cruciate ligament in her left knee during training and pulled out of the showpiece event on Tuesday. "So sorry to hear about your injury. Hoping that you will recover soon and come back stronger," Sindhu, who had settled for the silver medal at Rio Games after losing to Marin in the final, said in a video message posted on twitter. "I will miss you at the Olympic Games but hope we compete against each other soon, so come back fast and recover soon. Lots of love," Sindhu said. — PTI

Pak departure to England delayed

Islamabad: The Pakistan cricket team's departure to England has been pushed back by two days after the Pakistan Super League final was rescheduled for June 24 in Abu Dhabi. The PSL was earlier scheduled to end on June 20 and the national team was due to leave for England on June 23 to play three ODIs and three Twenty20s. However, with the PSL final pushed back by four days, the national team will leave for England on June 25. The first ODI is scheduled for July 8 in Cardiff. Abu Dhabi will host the remaining 20 games of the PSL after Pakistan's premier domestic twenty20 league was postponed in March when several players and support staff tested positive for Covid-19. — AP

Task cut out for Ind against Qatar

Doha: Their preparation was far from ideal but India would take inspiration from the draw against Asian champions Qatar in 2019 when they face the same opponents in the second-leg match of the joint World Cup and Asian Cup qualifiers, here on Thursday. India had held mighty Qatar 0-0 in September 2019 here, a result considered as one of the best for the side in recent times. But India are playing their home match here as the Qatari capital was chosen as the centralised venue for all the remaining Group 'E' matches after the qualifiers were halted last year due to the Covid-19 pandemic. India's performance, however, has gone south since then while Qatar, the group toppers, have come into Thursday match on a high. — PTI

Ancelotti back as Real Madrid coach

Madrid: Carlo Ancelotti has rejoined Real Madrid as coach for the next three seasons, the Spanish club said on Tuesday. "Hello Madrid!" the 61-year-old Italian who succeeds Zinedine Zidane posted on Twitter. Ancelotti, who won the Champions League for Real Madrid during his first spell at the club between 2013 and 2015, will sign his contract and be presented to the media on Wednesday, the club said in a statement. It took less than a week for Real Madrid to turn the page on Zidane criticising the lack of confidence shown in him by the club hierarchy. Instead, Ancelotti is about to be reunited with the club president Florentino Perez who ruthlessly ousted the coach in 2015, just one year after he led the club to a 10th Champions League title. — AFP

Booker leaves Lakers in lurch

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

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NADAL MODE ON

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

Paris, June 2: Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal began their bids for Grand Slam history with comfortable wins on Tuesday. World No.1 Djokovic kicked off his bid for a 19th Grand Slam title with a 6-2, 6-4, 6-2 win over Tennys Sandgren inside an empty stadium. Nadal, the 13-time champion and chasing a record-setting 21st major, defeated Alexei Popyrin of Australia 6-3, 6-2, 7-6 (7/3). The Spaniard now has 101 wins against just two losses at the tournament. Djokovic saw off world number 66 Sandgren in straight sets for his fourth win in four meetings with the American.

Top seed Djokovic, the champion in Paris in 2016, is attempting to become the first man in more than 50 years to win all four Slams multiple times.

The Serb fired 33 winners and broke serve five times as he set up a clash with Pablo Cuevas of Uruguay for a place in the last 32. Nadal, meanwhile, has now won 26 sets in a row at the tournament.

NAVARRO LOSES MATCH AFTER CANCER RECOVERY

A "proud" Carla Suarez Navarro came close to winning her first match back after recovering from cancer at the French Open on Tuesday, but bowed out in the first round with defeat by Sloane Stephens.

The Spaniard was told in September 2020 that she was suffering with Hodgkin's lymphoma.

But almost nine months later, Suarez Navarro is back after recovering following eight chemotherapy and 15 radiotherapy sessions. The 32-year-old served for the match against 2018 runner-up Stephens but lost 3-6, 7-6 (7/4), 6-4. — AFP

OTHER RESULTS

Men's singles second round: Alexander Zverev (GER x6) bt Roman Safiullin (RUS) 7-6 (7/4), 6-3, 7-6 (7/1); Henri Laaksonen (SUI) bt Roberto Bautista Agut (ESP x11) 6-3, 2-6, 6-3, 6-2; Casper Ruud (NOR x15) bt Kamil Majchrzak (POL) 6-3, 6-2, 6-4; John Isner (USA x31) bt Filip Krajinovic (SRB) 7-6 (8/6), 6-1, 7-6 (7/5); Reilly Opelka (USA x32) bt Jaume Munar (ESP) 6-3, 6-2, 3-6, 7-5.

Women's singles second round: Elena Vesnina (RUS) bt Petra Kvitova (CZE x11) — walkover; Daria Kasatkina (RUS) bt Belinda Bencic (SUI x10) 6-2, 6-2; Polona Hercog (SLO) bt Caroline Garcia (FRA) 7-5, 6-4; Ana Bogdan (ROM) bt Naomi Osaka (JPN x2) — walkover; Victoria Azarenka (BLR x15) bt Clara Tauson (DEN) 7-5, 6-4.



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

Questions won't stop for Osaka

Paris, June 2: Unfortunately for Naomi Osaka, the questions will keep coming. There's nowhere to run and certainly no place to hide when you're a superstar travelling the world and playing on the biggest stages in tennis.

Some of the questions may be repetitive. Some may even be a bit negative, though for the most part those in the tennis media tend to treat top players with kid gloves.

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

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

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



Naomi Osaka

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

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

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

with having to answer questions from journalists at news conferences.

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

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

efforts to improve her mental health.

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

Frankly, until Osaka said she would not show up for her news conference and then blew off tournament organisers who wondered why, no one even knew there was a problem.

There's nothing inherently wrong with a system that requires athletes who are paid millions of dollars to perform to be asked about their play afterward. There's also nothing wrong with reporters asking an occasional question that may not fit the positive narrative Osaka wants when writing about the newest star in tennis.

It's part of the reason why tournaments like the French Open sell out expensive seats every year. It's a lot of the reason Forbes said Osaka made \$37 million in 2019, most of it in endorsements from companies that expect Osaka to generate lots of press for their products. — AP

Virat charged up for WTC battle

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

India take on New Zealand in the marquee game at Southampton from June 18. Currently, New Zealand are engaged in a two-Test series against England, while India would be in quarantine after landing there, including three days of hotel quarantine.

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

Virat insisted that it was also about the mindset.

"...it is not the first time we are playing in England, we all know what the conditions are like," he said.

"And even if you are used to the conditions, if you don't enter the field in the right frame of mind, you are going to nick that first ball or you are going to find it tough to pick wickets," added the superstar.

According to Kohli, his side would not have any issues even if it gets just

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

— VIRAT KOHLI
India cricket team captain

four practice sessions.

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

"Whether it is with the Indian team or India A as well, for the likes of (Mohammed) Siraj...so we are not bothered by that at all and we just want to get there and make the most of the opportunity at hand," he added.

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

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

— PTI



Devon Conway celebrates his century on Test debut at Lord's. — AFP

Conway hits ton on debut

London, June 2: Devon Conway became just the sixth batsman to score a hundred on Test debut at Lord's to leave New Zealand well-placed at stumps on the first day of their series opener against England.

The South Africa-born opener battled for the whole of Wednesday's play, with his 136 not out the cornerstone of New Zealand's 246-3 in a match that marks the return of spectators to international cricket in England after a 2020 season played behind closed doors because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Together with fellow left-hander Henry Nicholls (46 not out), Conway shared an unbroken stand of 132 after the tourists were in trouble at 114-3 on the first day of this two-match series.

On a day for debutants, Ollie Robinson marked his entry into Test cricket by leading England's attack with 2-50 in 16 overs.

But the 27-year-old Sussex fast bowler found himself under scrutiny when a number of racist

and sexist historic Twitter messages he had posted as a teenager resurfaced.

The tweets, dating back to 2012, left Robinson and the England and Wales Cricket Board in an especially embarrassing position given both teams had lined up before play for a 'Moment of Unity' meant to show their opposition to discrimination within cricket.

England, in the absence of the injured Ben Stokes and Jofra Archer, opted for an attack built on four right-arm quick bowlers and no specialist spinner after Jack Leach was omitted from their XI.

The only real variety came when England captain Joe Root bowled his occasional off-breaks.

Root, however, did come close to having Conway stumped by wicketkeeper James Bracey, one of two England debutants along with Robinson, on 117.

Brief scores (Day 1): New Zealand 246/3 in 86 overs (Devon Conway 136 batting, Henry Nicholls 46 batting, Robinson 2/50) vs England.

AUSSIE PLAYERS TO RAISE FUNDS FOR COVID-HIT INDIA

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

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

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

Croatia, Armenia play 1-1 stalemate

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

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

But Armenia made the most of a rare sortie into Croatia territory when Wbymar Angulo equalised in the 72nd minute.

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

Kosovo's neighbours North Macedonia came

close to claiming the scalp of Slovenia after Napoli midfielder Elif Elmas scored the opening goal.

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

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

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

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



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

Veda recalls Covid trauma in family

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

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

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

"...I still had to put up a brave face for the rest of the family. What I had to do in those testing couple of weeks was learn to tune myself out of my grief. But it keeps coming back to haunt you," she said. The middle-order batter said she was the only one in the family not to contract the virus and



Veda Krishnamurthy

ended up coordinating all the medical needs at that time. It was then that she realised how difficult it would have been for several other people to access basic care. "Going through my Twitter feed

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

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

"Mental strength is important. My oldest sister, Vatsala, had panic

attacks before she passed away from Covid," the 28-year-old said.

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

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