

SHORT TAKES

BANDI ACCUSES CM OF RULING LIKE DICTATOR

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JUNE 10

BJP state president Bandi Sanjay Kumar on Thursday charged that Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao's rule is like a dictatorship wherein there is no freedom to raise people's issues. Anyone who raises voice on behalf of the people is suppressed, he stated. Addressing a meeting of party general secretaries along with BJP Telangana affairs in-charge Tarun Chugh, Sanjay said Etala Rajendar has been targeted by Chandrasekhar Rao as the former minister did not sing praises of the CM.

He accused the Chief Minister of targeting people who opposed his decisions. BJP state president was critical of police for "kidnapping" journalist Raghu for the latter's critical reports.

Sanjay expressed worry that the free vaccination announced, Prime Minister Narendra Modi may not be carried out effectively in the state as hospitals lacked the requisite facilities. He asked the state government to recruit as many staff as needed in a timely manner for carrying out the vaccination.

The BJP state president regretted that the government has failed to purchase grains from farmers even though the monsoon season has started.

PROTEST AGAINST FUEL HIKE: TPCC

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JUNE 10

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) president N. Uttam Kumar Reddy on Thursday called upon the party rank and file to participate in protests across petrol pumps on Friday opposing the spiraling petrol and diesel prices in the country and demanding immediate slashing of prices.

In a statement, he lamented the frequent increase in fuel prices even as people are facing indescribable hardships due to Covid-19.

He said that the All India Congress Committee has called upon the party leaders and workers to stage protests opposing the manner the prices were increasing. He said that the protests would start at 11 am.

Reddy said that DCCD presidents should participate in the protests at their respective district headquarters and constituency in-charges at the headquarters of the Assembly constituencies, town and mandal in-charges in their respective towns and mandal headquarters.

He said that an off-shoot of the fuel price hike has been the steady increase in prices of essential commodities. He said that in the past 13 months the prices of petrol have risen by Rs25.72 per litre and diesel by Rs 23.93 per litre. He said that the prices have been raised 43 times and this is an example of the loot engineered by the Centre.

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Back to shopping



The surroundings of Charminar were abuzz with commercial activity as lockdown norms were relaxed across the state on Thursday.

— P. SURENDRA

BJP prepares cadre for Huzurabad bypoll

Rajendar likely to get on board, say BJP sources

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JUNE 10

In the context of Etala Rajendar's exit from the KCR ministry, the BJP in Telangana is preparing its cadre for a tough electoral fight in the Huzurabad bypoll and would implement the Dubbak campaign strategy there too.

BJP sources say Rajendar and his close associates are likely to join the BJP at an event in Delhi on June 14 in the presence of national party president J.P. Nadda. Etala is likely to resign from his MLA

post on June 12.

On Thursday, party leaders including state in-charge Tarun Chugh and party president Bandi Sanjay, as well as seniors like D.K. Aruna and Muralidhar Rao met at the state party office in Nampally. They had an overview of at the evolving electoral strategy of the ruling TRS in Huzurabad. Party in-charge Tarun Chugh, national vice president D.K. Aruna and OBC National Morcha president Dr K. Laxman would call on Etala Rajendar at his residence as a courtesy call. They would dis-

cuss with him about the future strategies for the BJP in state polls. The party is likely to a p p o i n t in-charges for each mandal with involvement of former ministers and former MLAs and they would visit the respective constituencies regularly and interact with the local cadre.

After the Nagarjunasagar bypoll, the party conducted a review and identified the loopholes in its campaign strategies. New strategies will be shaped in consultation with Etala.

Telangana added 46,489 new IT jobs in FY 21, taking the total IT/ITES employment to 6,28,615, the sector witnessing a year-on-year growth of 7.99 per cent compared to ₹1.28 lakh crore in FY20.

"Despite the Covid19 pandemic, Telangana once again proved its mettle by registering a growth of 12.98 per cent in the IT/ITES exports at ₹1,45,522 crore. TS has seen more than double the estimated average national growth rate during this period and the employment in the IT/ITES sector has increased by 7.99 per cent," he said.

Telangana attracted several top global companies like Amazon Web Services, Goldman Sachs, and MassMutual last year. Amazon Data Services is setting up three data processing centres in Fab City, Pharma City and Chandanvely in Telangana with a total investment of ₹20,761 crore.

On the economic front, Telangana's growth rate has outperformed the national growth rate and its share in the national GDP has further increased from 4.74 per cent in FY20 to five per cent in FY21. The GSDP (Gross State Domestic Product) during 2020-21 was ₹9.78 lakh crore.

The growth rate fell due to Covid pandemic by 1.26 per cent but it is significantly better in terms of India's projected GDP contraction at 8 per cent. In 2020-21, the state recorded a per-capita income of ₹2,27,145 compared to the national average of Rs 1,27,768. Telangana attracted cumulative investments of ₹2.15 lakh crore, creating 15.6 lakh jobs since 2015.

The TSIIIC developed 10 new Industrial Parks and allotted 810 acres of land to 453 industries with an expected investment of ₹6,023 crore and potential employment of 7,623.

AGRICULTURE

The resilience of the Telangana economy was aided by agriculture and allied sectors, which grew by 20.9 per cent, dwarfing the three per cent growth in the same segments at the national level. The primary sector has contributed 20.6 per cent, secondary 19.1 per cent and the tertiary sector 60.3 per cent to the Gross State Value Added (GSVA) for 2020-21.

The minister said Telangana has unveiled a new single-window industrial policy TS-iPASS in 2015 and the same has facilitated cumulative investments of over ₹2.14 lakh crore, creating 15.6 lakh jobs.

Decent growth for IT firms despite pandemic, says KTR

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JUNE 10:

Despite the Covid19 pandemic, Telangana State achieved a decent growth in information technology and industrial sectors in 2020-21, according to IT and industries minister K.T. Rama Rao.

Releasing the annual reports of the Industries and IT departments on Thursday, Rama Rao said Telangana recorded nearly 13 per cent growth in IT and ITes exports, which rose to over ₹1.45 lakh crore. Telangana has managed to do better even in terms of overall economy, he said.

The minister urged the Centre to live up to its commitment of 'Make-in-India' and work with state governments to support MSMEs that are suffering due to the pandemic. The Centre must immediately disburse the ₹20 lakh crore economic stimulus package announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi last year, he said.

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MA&UD, minister K.T. Rama Rao takes part in the launch of the annual report of IT and Industry Department at MCRHRD, Hyderabad on Thursday.

— DC

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HC rejected state's claim to land

From Page 1

On the government's contention that land abutting nalas belong to the government, the judge said the government recorded land as vacant government land and there was no mention of nala. Even if there was the nala, the land cannot be construed as government land.

'Nala' can mean anything

● **WE ARE making serious efforts to establish the government ownership in the apex court as land value is more than ₹200 crore. It is equally important for the municipal and police to help us in protecting the land,"** the district revenue official pointed out.

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more than ₹200 crore.

It is equally important for the municipal and police to help us in protecting the land," the district revenue official pointed out.

Covid wave reducing but caution advised

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JUNE 10

The second wave of Covid-19 is seeing a steady decline and yet the risk of people getting infected exists in the public sphere. Districts like Yadadri Bhongir have recorded 46 new cases (290 in a week), Warangal urban 61 new cases (445 in a week) Suryapet 84 new cases (537 in a week) and Mahabubabad 68 new cases (461 in a week).

Chances of infection are more in areas of agriculture, fishing and other economic activities as crowds gather.

In Bhadrachalam, several cases of infection were reported during the past week due to the fishing activity. There were 86 new cases on Thursday while the week has seen 95 cases on June 7 and 110 on June 4.

While the unlocking is on, caution is advised to those who are planning house warming ceremonies or small social gatherings at home. Restaurants must avoid drawing people in.

Dr Lav Kumar, president of IMA Telangana says: "Covid-appropriate behaviour has to be followed during the unlocking. There are some who are vaccinated and others who are yet to do this. Those who are vaccinated cannot give up safety measures as the

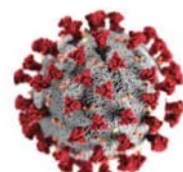
virus is still active. People have to refrain even from small gatherings."

Doctors say there must be more awareness drives so that people continue to refrain from unnecessary travel and social activity. Till the cases are down, any activity will only lead to small events of super-spreaders.

At present, 90 per cent of government isolation and oxygen beds are empty while 50 per cent of the oxygen beds is vacant in private hospitals.

With people in districts, neighbouring states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu recording higher numbers of cases, patients are coming in from border areas to private hospitals. Sporadic cases have been reported in Nanded and these are coming to Hyderabad for treatment. Experts say alertness and caution must be maintained.

DAILY COVID BULLETIN DATA



Update: Cases | Deaths

Fresh Cases	1,798
Deaths	14
Tests Done	1,30,430
Active Cases	23,561
Total Cases	5,98,611
Total Deaths	3,440

Highest New Cases	Lowest New Cases
GHMC 179	Adilabad 6
Khammam 165	Komaram Bheem Asifabad and Kamareddy 7
Nalgonda 151	Narayanpet 10
Ranga Reddy 107	Medak and Nirmal 11
Medchal Malkajgiri 95	Jangaon 15

MOVE TO DEMOLISH 135-YEAR-OLD WARANGAL PRISON DRAWS FLAK

DC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, JUNE 10:

Even as the Telangana state government initiated the shifting of the 956 inmates of the Warangal central prison to build a multi-speciality hospital in its place, experts are

questioning the feasibility and the loss of a heritage site.

Public policy expert Donthi Narasimha Reddy opined that with the Telangana economy in tatters caused by public policies, economic downturn, the Covid-19 pan-

demic and lockdown, the rationale for undertaking an expensive demolition and construction activity which could cost ₹1,000 crore, albeit with public health objective, is not clear.

The Warangal central jail was set up during the

period of the sixth Nizam of Hyderabad, Mir Mahboob Ali Khan, in 1886.

Even though it is not listed as a heritage construction, its edifice has heritage characteristics. It currently occupies 54 acres.

The state government will write to the Centre informing it of the withdrawal of its case from the Supreme Court. The sharing of Krishna waters between the Telugu states is to be done by the Krishna water disputes tribunal, which also is responsible for allotment of water to Maharashtra and Karnataka through which the river flows.

Soon after the formation of Telangana State in 2014, the CM sought the

formation of a new tribunal. TS later filed the petition in the SC in 2015 as the Centre did not take any steps.

Union water resources minister Jagendra Singh Shekhawat had stated that once Telangana withdrew its case, the Centre will seek legal opinion and decide whether or not to constitute a new tribunal; or give new terms of reference to the existing tribunal, the Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal-II.

WATER DISPUTE

Centre agreed to resolve row if state withdrew case from SC

TS' Krishna dispute case withdrawn

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JUNE 10:

In a significant step to facilitate a Central push for resolving the long-pending Krishna water sharing dispute between Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, the TS government has withdrawn its case from the Supreme Court in this respect.

Official sources said the government has filed a plea in the Supreme Court on Thursday, seeking withdrawal of the case.

● **TS LATER filed the petition in the SC in 2015 as the Centre did not take any steps.**

TS had filed a petition in the Supreme Court in 2015 after the Centre did not respond to its demand for constituting a new tribunal for Krishna water sharing under the Interstate River Waters Disputes Act of 1956.

At the apex council meeting held by the Centre in December last

with the two states, the Centre agreed to look into the water reallocation plea on condition that the TS withdrew its case from the SC.

In the meeting, chief minister Chandrashekar Rao had agreed to do this but did not issue the order so far.

This week, the CM directed the officials to withdraw the case immediately. He reportedly told officials that it's for the Centre now to fulfill its assurance to both the

states. The state government will write to the Centre informing it of the withdrawal of its case from the Supreme Court. The sharing of Krishna waters between the Telugu states is to be done by the Krishna water disputes tribunal, which also is responsible for allotment of water to Maharashtra and Karnataka through which the river flows.

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OTHER STORIES

TASK FORCE SEIZES
TOBACCO PRODUCTS
WORTH ₹4.5 LAKHDC CORRESPONDENT
NIZAMABAD, JUNE 10

Taskforce police raided two godowns in Dichpally on Thursday and seized gutka in large scale. On receipt of information, taskforce inspector Shakir Ali along with his team raided the godowns of Dhanalaxmi and Ramdev wholesale shops. Police found gutka and other tobacco products worth ₹4.5 lakhs and seized them. The shop owners Narsaram and Shankar Lal were arrested.

OFFICIALS TOLD
TO SPEED UP
ROAD WORKSDC CORRESPONDENT
KHAMMAM, JUNE 10

Minister for Transport Puvvada Ajay Kumar told the officials to speed up development works by not compromising in the quality.

Ajay, who visited the road widening works in Manchukonda in Raghunathapalem mandal, said that the government is providing black top road connectivity to the villages in a phased manner. He said that Koyalachalaka to Papatapalli road will benefit more than fifteen villages. He expressed discontent over the progress of the works done so far.

Ajay said that the officials should remove the power poles that were in the middle of the road immediately. Manchukonda will be shaped like a good one after completion of road widening works, he added.

He said that Shambadri Urban Development Authority sanctioned ₹2 crore for the expansion works. The engineers were asked not to hit the drinking water pipelines while the road widening works and complete the works as soon as possible.

SCR OBSERVES
GLOBAL LEVEL
CROSSING DAYDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JUNE 10

South Central Railway (SCR) on Thursday observed the International Level Crossing Awareness Day educating road users about remaining alert while driving through railway level crossings, so that precious lives can be saved.

In a statement, SCR underlined that safety for road users at level crossings is being enhanced rapidly.

Within 2020-21 itself, 81 manned level crossings have been replaced with construction of limited height subways, road under bridges and road over bridges.

During the current financial year 2021-22, seven level crossing gates have been replaced with help extended by state governments in the SCR region.

International Level Crossing Awareness Day is observed to spread awareness among road users globally about ensuring their safety at level crossings.

SCR general manager Gajanan Malya has advised road users about being alert while driving through railway level crossings, so that precious lives are not endangered.

Etala's outreach sparking
mass exit of TRS cadres

Several leaders quitting in protest against humiliation to Rajendar

DC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, JUNE 10

Several leaders are openly extending their support to former health minister Etala Rajendar and submitting mass resignations from the ruling TRS party in Huzurabad constituency in this district.

Rajendar's decision to conduct a tour of various mandals in the constituency that he currently represents, to garner support from various sections of the people, is gaining good response.

After returning from the Delhi, Rajendar first went to his native Kamalapur and sought the blessings of the people. He sharply criticised chief minister Chandrasekhar Rao and said, "It is going to be a Kurukshetra war in Huzurabad and the fight will be between justice and injustice."

The Telangana Rashtra Samithi Vidyarthi (TRSV) leaders of five mandals in the constituency sent their resignation letters to the TRS and announced their support to Etala Rajendar.

The police intervened as the TRSV leaders tried to reach Gandhi Chowk of Jammikunta town to announce their resignation and tried to stop them. However, they forcefully proceeded to the Jammikunta square and announced their mass resignations from the TRS party.

They alleged that the police acted in a rough manner with them even as they followed the Covid guidelines and marched in a peaceful manner to the Gandhi Chowk. "This is nothing but a suppressing of the voice of democracy in the state," they alleged.

TRSV leaders said they were unable to digest the humiliation meted out to the former health minister by the TRS leadership. "He worked hard for the Separate Telangana cause and sacrificed everything.



TRSV leaders of five mandals who submitted mass resignations to the TRS in support of former minister Etala Rajendar, at Jammikunta in Karimnagar district on Thursday. —BY ARRANGEMENT

BJP national gen. secy
to meet TRS dissidentsDC CORRESPONDENT
NIZAMABAD, JUNE 10

Former minister Etala Rajendar, former MLA Enugu Ravinder Reddy, Karimnagar former zilla parishad chairperson and TRS undivided Nizamabad district in-charge Tula Uma will join BJP on June 14.

BJP national general secretary and Telangana state in-charge Tarun Chugui will reach Hyderabad and meet the TRS dissident leaders to invite them into the party fold.

Meanwhile, Ravinder Reddy has been busy with a series of meetings with his supporters in Yellareddy Assembly constituency for the last few days.

Many second-rung leaders and activists supported his decision to join BJP.

Ravinder Reddy explained to the cadre how he was humiliated in TRS after his defeat in the 2018 Assembly elections. The party cadre split into two groups with one group supporting Ravinder Reddy and the other rallying behind sitting MLA Jajala Surender, who had switched over from Congress.

To protect the cadre, the ruling party is taking utmost care in Yellareddy Assembly constituency, but in vain.

Sudden spell



Motorists were caught unawares by the downpour in the afternoon in Karimnagar on Thursday —DC

Govt hosps in for major revamp
Sattupalli area hosp. to upgradeDC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, JUNE 10:

The allocation of an additional ₹10,000 crore by Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao to provide quality medical services to the poor people would be a boon to the health sector, said Tribal, Women and Child Welfare Minister Satyawati Rathod.

She inspected the site on survey no. 551 for the Medical and Nursing Colleges allotted to Mahabubabad district on Thursday and said the town would soon become a medical hub. Apart from these, a teaching hospital, oxygen plant and T-diagnostic centre at a cost of ₹2.73 crore has been set up here recently. The state run hospitals would be strengthened in all respects on par with private hospitals.

"With the completion of the district collectorate complex and the approval of the proposed

DC CORRESPONDENT
KHAMMAM, JUNE 10

Upgrading of Sattupalli area hospital from 50-beds to 100-beds is a boon for people of the region, particularly those injured in road accidents.

Residents of Sattupalli and surrounding areas have suffered a lot as there are no emergency facilities in the area hospital for treating victims who sustain serious injuries in road mishaps. Many families have lost their near and dear ones while shifting the injured to Khammam hospital, which is 82 kilometres away. As there is no Intensive Care Unit (ICU), doctors at

land for the medical college. We request CM KCR to visit Mahabubabad for the inaugural function,"

TS TD can pull down
TRS, claim its leadersDC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, JUNE 10

The leaders who have criticised that Telugu Desam has ceased to have any presence in Telangana must remember that for the past few days, the entire state politics have been revolving around the TD, pointed out the TD Karimnagar parliament segment president Ambati Joji Reddy.

Speaking to the media here on Thursday, he said that if Chandrababu Naidu once again focussed on strengthening the party in Telangana, the future of Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) would be in peril. Sensing this, Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao is trying to rope in big leaders of TS TD into TRS.

By trying to lure away TS TD president L. Ramana into his party, KCR still believes that there is a strong cadre and leaders in the TD party. On a number of occasions, he had said that the TD party vanished from Telangana. If that was so, why was he then running after the TD leaders, Reddy questioned.

Vowing to uphold the self-respect of Telugu people, Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao formed the TD party and that day only a foundation was laid for the establishment of 'Rama Rajyam.' But continuing his family rule in the state and looting the public money, KCR was plotting conspiracies against the loyal leaders who worked hard for the achievement of separate statehood of Telangana,

he criticised.

CM KCR was fully aware what would happen if the cadres of TD party combined into a force and he was also aware of how serious a problem it would be for TRS in future. It was the TD party which was going to play a key role in bringing down the KCR from his throne. The TD party already prepared an action plan in this regard, he claimed.

In the name of schemes, both father KCR and son KTR were trying to betray the people of Telangana. People must differentiate between what they found before and after the formation of Telangana state. People were living in miserable conditions like slaves with no employment opportunities under the TRS rule said the TD leader said.

Officials told to set
up CT-scan service
at govt hospitalDC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, JUNE 10

District collector Shashanka on Thursday advised officials of the health department to speed up the work on the CT-Scan centre at the government main hospital and start its service by June 25.

The collector visited the hospital and assessed the progress of the works for the CT-Scan centre and special wards for small children. He also gauged the progress of the works on the garden and the parking area in the hospital premises.

Shashanka asked nodal officer Manoj Kumar to keep track of the progress of civil and electrical works daily along with the

other technical works for the establishment of CT-Scan.

Keeping in view the third wave of the Coronavirus, special wards are set up for small children. Steps would be taken for providing basic facilities in the wards.

A beautiful park is being erected in which flowering plants and greenery will be introduced. The collector had asked officials to make necessary arrangements for vehicle parking in the hospital premises.

Hospital superintendent Dr Rathnamala, RMP Dr Shouraiha, nodal officers Manoj Kumar and Pulvi Madhusudhan and TSMIDC executive engineer Devander Kumar were among those present.

IFTU DEMANDS HIKE
IN WAGES FOR SCCL
CONTRACT WORKERS

Kothagudem: Indian Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU) demanded the management of Singareni Collieries Company Limited (SCCL) to pay higher wages to the contract workers on par with Coal India Limited (CIL). IFTU president B. Prasad said that the workers are unable to lead their lives with the present wages due to sky-rocketing of prices of all essential commodities. He said that the SCCL is earning massive profits with the hard work of contract labourers and wages should be on par with CIL.

He called on all the trade unions in India to discuss the contract workers' matter in the eleventh wage board meeting to be held soon.

US MISSION TO INDIA
TO TAKE UP STUDENT
VISAS FROM JUNE 14

Hyderabad: The United States Mission to India will open the July and August student visa appointments at posts across India on June 14, the U.S Embassy in India announced on Thursday via Twitter. They added that they were making every attempt to facilitate travel in time for the fall semester, and that student visas remain a top priority.

To view the availability and schedule an appointment, students will have to visit the website, <https://ustravel-docs.com/in>. "Prior to your visa interview, please review your I-20 program start date. Students beginning a new programme with a program start date on or after August 1 may travel to the United States up to 30 days prior to the programme start date and do not need to submit a request for a national interest exception," it said.

"Continuing students may also resume their programs on or after August 1, and travel 30 days before their program resumption date. We are unable to approve expedite-requests for Fall 2021 students with scheduled appointments in July or August. If your appointment date may result in a potentially late start, please reach out to your school to discuss options," the Embassy added.

HISTORY | FADES

Warangal central jail was set up during the period of sixth Nizam of Hyd

Historic central jail demolition move flayed

DC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, JUNE 10

Even as the Telangana state government initiated the shifting of the 956 inmates of the Warangal central prison to build a multi-specialty hospital in its place, experts are questioning the feasibility and the loss of a heritage site.

Public policy expert Donthi Narasimha Reddy opined that with the Telangana economy in tatters caused by public policies, economic downturn, the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown, the rationale for undertaking an expensive demolition and construction activity which could cost Rs 1000 crore, albeit with public health objective, is not clear.



Officials shifting prisoners from the Warangal Central Prison to other jails. —BY ARRANGEMENT

jail was set up during the period of the sixth Nizam of Hyderabad, Mir Mahboob Ali Khan,

in 1886. Even though it is not listed as a heritage construction, its edifice has heritage

characteristics. It currently occupies 54 acres. However, the sprawl of 54 acres for a hospital is an assumption. With no public document to support, either in the form of a GO or Detailed Project Report, the ultimate extent of the hospital is likely to be less than 54 acres.

The government of Telangana is likely to convert part of this land to augment its finances. It may, in fact, come with a model where a private developer is asked to develop hospital buildings in exchange for prime urban land," Narasimha Reddy said.

He also pointed out that there is no information available in the public domain about the land-use zone, under

which the current jail and MGM hospital are covered. With no clear information on the proposed site for the open-air jail, its status in the Master Plan and City Development Plan is hazy as well.

Telangana INTACH co-convenor P. Anuradha Reddy suggested that it is better to retain a historic space and explore options to set up the health facility outside the city instead of bringing the deadly disease into the city.

"The state government has concluded the matter without even considering the public opinion. We have been protecting structures like clock towers etc. This structure should be treated in a similar way," she stated.

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SHORT TAKES

COVID CASES FALL BELOW 500-MARK, BHOPAL UNLOCKED

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, JUNE 10

For the first time in the last three months, fresh Coronavirus positive cases in Madhya Pradesh dipped below 500 mark on Thursday.

Madhya Pradesh reported 453 fresh cases on Thursday taking the tally of cases to 7,86,755.

The state has recorded 36 deaths in the last 24 hours taking the death toll to 8,441.

"This was the first time during the second wave that hit the state in March that the positivity rate in Madhya Pradesh has dropped to 0.5 per cent", state home minister Narottam Mishra said.

He said the active cases in the state have also come down to 7,071.

While ten out of 52 districts in the state reported zero fresh cases on Thursday, 35 districts reported less than ten cases.

Only two districts in the state, Bhopal and Indore, reported more than 100 fresh cases on Thursday. While Bhopal reported 104 fresh cases, Indore reported 144 cases.

Meanwhile, Bhopal was unlocked on Thursday following a dip in the positivity rate in the city. The positivity rate in Bhopal has now dropped to 1.2 percent. However, night curfew in the city will remain in force, the district crisis management committee has decided. Barring cinema halls, gyms, and swimming pools and sports complexes, all other business establishments have been allowed to resume operation on Thursday.

HC 'EXTENDS' STAN SWAMY'S STAY AT PRIVATE HOSPITAL

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC MUMBAI, JUNE 10

The Bombay High Court on Thursday allowed a request made by the lawyer and extended Jesuit priest and activist Stan Swamy's stay in a private hospital in Mumbai till June 18, as he has been tested Covid positive.

Swamy, 84, who has been arrested in the Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case, was on May 28 shifted from the Taloja prison in neighbouring Navi Mumbai to the Holy Family Hospital here after he filed a petition, seeking interim bail on medical grounds. After being shifted to the private hospital, he tested positive for Covid-19 infection.

On Thursday, his counsel Mihir Desai told a the division bench of Justices S.S. Shinde and N.J. Jamadar that Swamy had tested positive for Covid and hence, his stay at private hospital should be extended.

Upon Desai's request the bench said Swamy shall remain admitted at the private hospital till June 18, and posted the petition for hearing on June 17. The court also directed the hospital to submit in a sealed envelope medical reports of Swamy by the next date of hearing.

SEPT. 15 LAST DAY FOR PADMA AWARD ENTRIES

New Delhi, June 10: The Centre on Thursday said it was committed to transform the Padma awards into "People's Padma" and urged all citizens to make nominations and recommendations, including self-nomination, for the prestigious civilian honours.

The Union home ministry said online nominations or recommendations for the awards, to be announced on the eve of Republic Day, 2022, are open, with the last date being September 15, 2021.

The ministry said in a statement that such nominations and recommendations will be received online only on <https://padmaawards.gov.in>.

The Padma awards, namely, Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri, are amongst the highest civilian awards of the country.

The government is committed to transform the Padma awards into "People's Padma" and all citizens are therefore requested to make nominations, recommendations including self-nomination, the statement said. The nominations and recommendations should contain all relevant details specified in the format available on the portal, including a citation in narrative form (maximum 800 words), clearly bringing out the distinguished and exceptional achievements, and the services the person rendered in her or his respective field or discipline, it said.



A vendor attempts to sell shoes to a customer after markets reopened in Bhopal on Thursday.

— PTI

Bihar revises Covid-19 toll by 72% after HC flags flaws

State health dept also revised recovery rate which came down to 97.65 per cent

NAYEAR AZAD | DC PATNA, JUNE 10

The total number of Covid-19 death toll has jumped to 9,429 after the figures were revised by the Bihar health department.

The actual figure provided by the state health department till Monday was 5,424 but after the health department recounted the deaths in all 38 districts the toll jumped by more than 72 per cent.

Among the districts, Patna recorded 2,293 deaths, followed by Muzaffarpur with 609,

● **AMONG THE DISTRICTS**, Patna recorded 2,293 deaths, followed by Muzaffarpur with 609, Nalanda 463, Begusarai 454, East Champaran 425, Darbhanga 342 and Madhubani 317.

After recounting death figures, the state health department has also revised the recovery rate which came down from 98.70 to 97.65 per cent.

The move came after the Patna High Court flagged irregularities in the data and directed the state government to conduct an audit.

According to officials from the state health department here, the audit was carried out in all 38 districts by a team of experts. The revised figures also include those who died due to post-Covid complications and who died on their way to the hospital.

"Most of the deaths occurred during the second wave of the pandemic. The increase in the figure was due to deaths which occurred during home isolation, post-Covid complications or at the private hospitals".

Additional Secretary (Health) Pratayya Amrit told reporters in Patna. When asked whether the state health department was planning to initiate action against officials who failed to register figures related to Covid deaths, he said that "the government would take stern action against those who showed laxity in registering these figures".

After the revised figures stoked a political controversy, state health minister Mangal Pandey said that the state government

had been working on revising the figures for the past few weeks and released it on Tuesday.

The revised death figures have triggered a political row in Bihar. Blaming Chief Minister Nitish Kumar for irregularities in Covid-19 death figures, leader of the opposition Tejashwi Yadav in a tweet said that "The death toll suddenly jumped to 4,000 in a day. The government is still hiding the actual statistics. There have been 20 times more deaths than being claimed by the Nitish Kumar government".

While Kerala reported - 6.37 per cent vaccine wastage, West Bengal recorded -5.48 per cent.

Chhattisgarh reported 15.79 per cent vaccine wastage while Madhya Pradesh reported 7.35 per cent.

States like Punjab, Delhi, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra reported 7.08 per cent, 3.95 per cent, 3.91 per cent, 3.78 and 3.63 per cent and 3.59 per cent respectively. The data showed that a total of 790.6 lakh vaccines were supplied to

Kerala man hides his 'lover' in a room for 10 years

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JUNE 10

In a story that can beat any blockbuster, a Kerala youth hid his lover in his house for ten long years.

The parents and siblings of the man who were staying in the same house, are yet to come to terms with what had happened. The story sounded totally unbelievable to the local residents.

The incident happened in Ayilur, about 30 km from Palakkad town.

With Covid-19 pandemic and frequent lockdown making means of livelihood extremely difficult, Rahman the hero of the story, decided to end his lover Sajitha's decade long "room isolation".

Rahman was 24 and Sajitha 18 when they decided to elope. Since the couple belonged to different religions, their families were totally opposed to the relationship.

Recollects Rahman, "We were into two years courtship when Sajitha suddenly left her home. Though I got some money, it was taken by family delivering a blow to my plans to take a house on rent. I still can't believe how we spent ten years."

Rahman who is an electrician, even connected the door handle with electric wire and fixed an automatic lock. He passed minor electric current through the handle to prevent anyone from opening the door.

He claims that Sajitha didn't fall ill even once in last 10 years. For mild fever and headache he used to give paracetamol tablets.

Rahman never used to take up work after sunset in order to be with his wife. Sajitha said she can't believe that her ten years were spent in a room.

"My husband took full care. He shared food mainly breakfast and dinner, stocked bread and biscuits. I never felt any difficulty. I used to watch TV using headphones and that's how I spent time in his absence," she said.

Since there was no attached bathroom, the washroom was used mainly during night and early morning.

Rahman was forced to end his wife's room confinement after his family started suspecting his strange behaviour.

"I was actually upset by Covid pandemic. But my parents thought some evil spirit had entered my body. They even took me to sorcerers," he said.

Since there was a missing case, both were produced in a local court and let off after they conveyed their willingness to stay together.

— PTI

New Delhi, June 10: Kerala and West Bengal recorded negative wastage of Covid-19 vaccines in May, saving 1.10 lakh and 1.61 lakh doses respectively, while

Jharkhand reported maximum wastage of 33.95 per cent, according to government data.

While Kerala reported - 6.37 per cent vaccine wastage, West Bengal recorded -5.48 per cent.

Chhattisgarh reported 15.79 per cent vaccine wastage while Madhya Pradesh reported 7.35 per cent.

States like Punjab, Delhi, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra reported 7.08 per cent, 3.95 per cent, 3.91 per cent, 3.78 and 3.63 per cent and 3.59 per cent respectively.

The data showed that a total of 790.6 lakh vaccines were supplied to

states and UTs in May out of which total vaccinations were 610.6 lakh while 658.6 lakh shots were utilised and the closing balance was 212.7 lakh.

The vaccination in May was less as compared to April in which a total of 898.7 lakh vaccinations were done, 902.2 lakh vaccines were utilised and the closing balance was 80.8 lakh.

India's first dose coverage of the 45-plus population till June 7 was pegged at 38 per cent with Tripura's coverage being 92 per cent, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh 65 per cent each, Gujarat 53 per cent, Kerala 51 per cent and Delhi 49 per cent.

Tamil Nadu's first dose coverage of the 45-plus population is at a low of 19 per cent, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh at 24 per cent each and Bihar at 25 per cent.

— PTI

Beneficiaries stand in a queue as they wait to receive a dose of Covid-19 vaccine at a hospital in Jaipur on Thursday.

— PTI

Children.

Currently, the cell headed by an Assistant Commissioner of police (ACP) rank officer is functioning on trial basis and will actively operate once the pandemic situation is over, said Bhubaneswar Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Umashankar Dash.

Sources said around 800 cases related to missing of minor children are pending at police stations under the Bhubaneswar-Cuttack Commissionerate police.

"At a review meeting, 800 minor girl missing cases were found registered at different police stations.

In view of this, we have launched a special cell headed by an ACP with an inspector and two sub-inspectors as members to deal with these cases. The cell has already rescued 30 minor girls from different areas in the state," he added.

The opposition parties in Odisha and civil society organisations have been demanding since long for the constitution of a special cell to trace out the missing children.

They contended that the special cell was a better mechanism than the special drives launched from time to time for rescue of the missing children.

Ambedkar opposes name for airport

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC MUMBAI, JUNE 10

The controversy has erupted over the naming of the upcoming Navi Mumbai International Airport in Maharashtra with the locals and political leaders opposing the proposal of giving the name of Shiv Sena supreme late Bal Thackeray to the project.

On Thursday, prominent Dalit leader Prakash Ambedkar, objected to naming the airport after Mr Thackeray and said that the locals' demand for it to be named after former parliamentarian late D.B. Patil should be honoured.

Announcing his support, Mr Ambedkar, the grandson of Dr BR Ambedkar, said that locals' demand to name the airport after Mr Patil is fair and appropriate. He said, "Patil's contribution to Navi Mumbai's development has been immense. He fought for the rights of sons of the soil who offered their

land for the city's growth. The local residents of Ulwe, Kopar and Panvel had given their ancestral land for the airport project and hence their feelings should be respected by the rulers."

Patil has also played a major role in shaping the social life of Maharashtra as he contributed to the movement for the rights of OBC's. He represented Raigad district in the Lok Sabha for four times and also held the post of opposition leader in the state assembly, said Mr Ambedkar.

The naming controversy has flared up after the City and Industrial Development Corporation (CIDCO), which is the nodal government agency for the project, recently passed a resolution to name the airport after Bal Thackeray. The locals, under the banner of Vimaltal Prakaipgrast Sanghatana (Organisation of Airport Project-affected People) has opposed the move insisting on the name of Mr Patil.

Concern over low vax coverage among FLWs

DC CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs NEW DELHI, JUNE 10

With Bihar revising its figures and putting the total number of fatalities caused by Covid-19 at 9,429, India reported its highest single-day spike of 6,148 deaths, pushing the toll to 3,59,676.

This is even as daily infections have been steadily showing a downward trend — with 94,052 fresh Covid infections reported in a day — less than one lakh for the third straight day.

India, earlier, registered the highest fatalities due to Covid-19 on May 21 with 4,529 deaths, which crossed both the US and Brazil's record deaths in 24 hours. It surpassed the US' 4,468 deaths reported on January 12, 2021 and 4,211 in Brazil on April 6, 2021.

The total number of Covid cases in India till now stand at 2,91,83,121 out of which 2,76,55,493 people have recuperated

till date, according to the Union health ministry's data updated on Thursday.

Active cases have reduced to 11,67,952 comprising 4 per cent of the total infections, while the national Covid-19 recovery rate has improved to 94.77 per cent, it said.

A net decline of 63,463 cases has been recorded in the total number of Covid-19 cases in a span of 24 hours, the data updated at 8 am showed.

The Central government on Thursday expressed concern over low Covid vaccination coverage among healthcare and frontline workers and asked all states and Union Territories to focus on second dose coverage among this most vulnerable and crucial section. The Centre advised them to sharpen their focus and prepare effective plans, keeping them as the priority.

In the meeting, chaired by Union health secretary

Rajesh Bhushan and called to review the progress of vaccination, it was highlighted that while the national average for the first dose administration among healthcare workers (HCWs) is 82 per cent, for the second dose it is only 56 per cent.

Further, the coverage in 18 states and Union territories, including Punjab, Maharashtra, Haryana, Tamil Nadu, Delhi and Assam is below the national average in this aspect.

For frontline workers (FLWs), the national average of first-dose coverage is 85 per cent but for the second dose it is only 47 per cent.

Nineteen states and Union territories, including Bihar, Haryana, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Puducherry, Telangana, Karnataka and Punjab have reported a second-dose coverage of frontline workers below the national average.

ANNUAL | FEST In 2020, the Rath Yatra was held sans devotees for first time in its centuries-long history

Odisha bans Rath Yatra of Lord Jagannath

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, JUNE 10

The Odisha government on Thursday announced a ban on the Lord Jagannath's much-awaited annual nine-day Rath Yatra festival at all places in the state except Puri.

Puri is the prime abode of Lord Jagannath. It is here Lord Jagannath and His two siblings — Lord Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra — are worshipped in a gigantic temple called Srimandir.

During the Rath Yatra, the deities of Srimandir visit Srigundicha Temple, located at a distance of 2

kilometres. Lakhs of devotees from across the country and abroad gather at Puri during this time to see the wonderful spectacle of the deities riding the colourful chariots.

The decision to ban Rath Yatra was taken as the state is struggling hard to contain the Coronavirus pandemic. Odisha Development Commissioner Pradeep Kumar Jena made the major announcement saying that the festival which begins from July 12 will be held in Puri with strict adherence to guidelines laid out by the Supreme Court.

In 2020, the Rath Yatra

festival which is also known as Car Festival, was held sans devotees for the first time in its centuries-long history because of the Covid-19 situation.

"Odisha government has always given supreme importance to the safety and well-being of the public. With the second wave of Covid pandemic continuing and threat of a possible third surge looming, public gathering during the grand festival which attracts lakhs of devotees from all around the world needs to be curbed. This apart, since it is a mass festival celebrated with much fanfare across

Odisha and outside, restrictions on public participation in the celebration are necessary," Jena said during a press briefing.

He added that servitors testing (RT-PCR) Covid negative or those fully vaccinated will be allowed to participate in the rituals.

As per the Supreme Court's guidelines, only 500 servitors will be allowed to pull each chariot during the festival.

Curfew will be clamped in Puri for the festival and only essential and emergency services will be allowed.

Vehicular movement to

and from Puri will be restricted during Rath Yatra.

Direct live telecast of the festival will be facilitated to interested media outlets and broadcasters by the I&PR department of Odisha government.

At all other Lord Jagannath shrines across Odisha, only rituals will be conducted within the premises of the temples and the public will not be allowed to participate, the DC informed.

Meanwhile, the Odisha police on Thursday launched a special cell in Bhubaneswar to deal with cases related to missing and kidnapping of minor

children.

Currently, the cell headed by an Assistant Commissioner of police (ACP) rank officer is functioning on trial basis and will actively operate once the pandemic situation is over, said Bhubaneswar Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Umashankar Dash.

Sources said around 800 cases related to missing of minor children are pending at police stations under the Bhubaneswar-Cuttack Commissionerate police.

"At a review meeting, 800 minor girl missing cases were found registered at different police stations.

SHORT TAKES

POPE REJECTS
CARDINAL'S
RESIGNATION

Rome, June 10: Pope Francis refused Thursday to accept the resignation offered by German Cardinal Reinhard Marx over the sex abuse scandal in the church, but said a process of reform was necessary and that every bishop must take responsibility for the "catastrophe" of the crisis. Francis wrote a letter to Marx in response to the German's bombshell announcement last week that he had offered to resign as archbishop of Munich and Freising over the church's mishandling of abuse cases.

PAK TO HOLD PoK
ASSEMBLY POLLS
ON JULY 25

Islamabad, Jun 10: Pakistan-occupied Kashmir's top election official announced on Thursday to hold the general election for the legislative assembly on July 25, despite appeals to postpone the polls for two months due to the threat of resurgence of the Coronavirus. Last year, Pakistan conducted the legislative assembly election in Gilgit-Baltistan.

India had slammed Pakistan for its decision to hold elections in Gilgit-Baltistan and said any action to alter the status of the militarily-occupied region has no legal basis.

PAK CLERIC HELD
FOR MALALA
KILL THREAT

Islamabad, June 10: A Muslim cleric in northwest Pakistan has been arrested under the tough anti-terrorism act for threatening to kill Malala Yousafzai in a suicide attack and instigating people against the Nobel Laureate for her recent comments on marriage, police said. Mufti Sardar Ali Haqqani, a cleric, was arrested in Lakki Markwat district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province on Wednesday. In an interview to *Vogue* magazine, 23-year-old Malala revealed that she is not sure if she will ever marry.

MYANMAR
MILITARY PLANE
CRASH KILLS 12

Bangkok, June 10: A well-known senior Buddhist monk was among at least 12 people who died when a plane belonging to Myanmar's military crashed Thursday in the country's central Mandalay region, state media reported.

Army-run *Myawaddy TV* said a boy was one of two survivors on the flight from the capital, Naypyitaw, to Pyin Oo Lwin, also known as Maymyo. The other person taken to a hospital was reported to be a member of the military, but several other unconfirmed reports said he later died.

JUNTA HITS
SUU KYI WITH
GRAFT CHARGES

Yangon, June 10: The Myanmar junta has hit deposed civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi with corruption charges over claims she accepted illegal payments of gold and more than half a million dollars in cash, state media reported Thursday.

The country has been in turmoil since the generals ousted Suu Kyi on February 1, with more than 850 civilians killed in a brutal crackdown by security forces on near-daily protests against the coup.

The 75-year-old Nobel laureate, who has been in custody since the putsch, is facing a raft of wide-ranging criminal charges, including sedition and breaching a colonial-era secrecy law. The latest charges relate to allegations by the former Yangon region chief minister that Suu Kyi illegally accepted \$600,000 in cash from him along with around 11 kilograms of gold.

The Anti-Corruption Commission found evidence that Suu Kyi had committed "corruption using her rank", according to the *Global New Light of Myanmar*, a state-run newspaper. "So she was charged under Anti-Corruption Law section 55." She is also accused of abusing her authority when renting two areas of land for her charitable foundation.

After weeks of legal wrangling, two of Suu Kyi's trials are due to start in earnest next week, hearing evidence from witnesses.

In Naypyidaw, the remote capital purpose-built by the previous military regime, her trial on charges of violating restrictions during last year's election campaign and possessing unlicensed walkie-talkies will start on Monday.

A separate case is scheduled to start on June 15.

Ring of fire



In this image taken from Arlington, Virginia, and released by Nasa, a partial solar eclipse rises behind the US Capitol on Thursday. Northeast states in the US saw a rare eclipsed sunrise, while in other parts of the Northern Hemisphere, this annular eclipse will be seen as a visible thin outer ring of the sun's disk that is not completely covered by the smaller dark disk of the moon, a so-called "ring of fire".

— AFP PHOTO/NASA/BILL INGALLS

US to buy 500mn
Pfizer vaccines

Washington, June 10: The US will buy 500 million more doses of the Pfizer Covid-19 vaccine to share through the global COVAX alliance for donation to 92 lower income countries and the African Union over the next year, a person familiar with the matter said Wednesday.

President Joe Biden was set to make the announcement Thursday in a speech before the start of the Group of Seven summit. Two hundred million doses — enough to fully protect 100 million people — would be shared this year, with the balance to be donated in the first half of 2022, the person said. National security adviser Jake Sullivan told reporters Wednesday that Biden was committed to sharing vaccines because it was in the public health and strategic interests of the US. As Biden embarks on his first foreign trip, he is aiming to show "that democracies are the countries that can best deliver solutions for people everywhere." "As he said in his joint session (address), we were the arsenal of democracy in World War

— PTI

INDIA TO GET A
SHARE OF 80 MN
US VACCINES

Washington, June 10: India will be receiving a share of the 80 million (8 crores) unused Covid-19 vaccines through the UN-backed COVAX global vaccine sharing programme that President Joe Biden has announced, according to a senior State Department official.

On June 2, President Biden announced that the US will allocate 75 per cent — nearly 1.9 crores of the first tranche of 2.5 crore doses — of unused Covid-19 vaccines from its stockpile through the UN-backed COVAX global vaccine sharing programme to countries in South and Southeast Asia as well as Africa.

II," Sullivan said. "We're going to be the arsenal of vaccines over this next period to help end the pandemic."

— AP

Wastewater virus:
Sensor developed

London, June 10: UK and Indian scientists have jointly developed a low-cost sensor that can detect fragments of the virus responsible for Covid-19 within wastewater, paving the way for health officials to get a better understanding of how prevalent the disease is in a larger area.

The technique, developed by researchers from the University of Strathclyde and the Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay, could be used to enable widespread monitoring of

Covid-19 prevalence in low- and middle-income nations which struggle to conduct mass testing.

The sensor can be used with portable equipment that uses the standard Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test to detect the SARS-CoV-2 virus, without the need for the expensive chemicals and lab infrastructure needed for real-time quantitative PCR tests, according to the research published in the journal *Sensors and Actuators B: Chemical*.

— PTI

NAVALNY TEAM
TO FIGHT AFTER
EXTREMISM TAG

Moscow, June 10: Jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny's anti-corruption group vowed Thursday to fight on after a court branded it an "extremist" organisation and ordered its closure.

Western countries and the European Union were quick to condemn Wednesday's late-night ruling, but senior Russian officials doubled down, describing Navalny as an agent collaborating with Washington.

The court decision was the latest move against critics of President Vladimir Putin. Some of his loudest opponents have fled the country and several prominent activist groups and independent media have closed.

The ruling bans Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation (FBK) and a network of regional offices from operating and, under a recently passed law, prevents those previously associated with the groups from running in parliamentary elections.

The FBK was defiant, saying in a Thursday morning Twitter post: "We woke up, smiled with destructive intent and knowing that we are a 'danger to society' will continue to fight corruption!"

What exactly it will be able to do is unclear in the wake of the ruling, which followed a hearing behind closed doors.

Navalny's key allies still in Russia are under close law enforcement supervision, some under house arrest, and other prominent aides have gone into exile.

Navalny was jailed for more than two-and-a-half years in February after he returned from Germany where he had been convalescing following a poisoning attack in Siberia that he blamed on the Kremlin.

— AFP

Allies to look beyond
Covid at G-7 summit

Before pandemic, Boris wanted it to be climate-dominated meet

London, June 10: There will be roundtable meetings, one-on-one chats and a group photo against a picturesque backdrop. When leaders of some of the world's richest nations meet Friday at the English seaside for a three-day Group of Seven summit, much of the choreography will be familiar.

But the world has changed dramatically. Since the G-7 last met two years ago, the Coronavirus pandemic has killed more than 3.7 million people and decimated economies with lockdowns and layoffs. So when British Prime Minister Boris Johnson welcomes US President Joe Biden and the leaders of France, Germany, Italy, Japan and Canada to the cliff-ringed Carbis Bay beach resort in southwest England, pandemic recovery — "building back better," in a phrase both Biden and Johnson like — will top the agenda.

Johnson said the meeting would help move on from "a miserable period of competition and squabbling" that marked the early response to the pandemic. "This is the moment for the world's greatest and most technologically advanced democracies to shoulder their responsibilities and to vaccinate the world, because no one can be properly protected until everyone has been protected," he said in an article published Thursday, a day before the summit's official start.

Before the pandemic,

Johnson slammed for taking
plane, not train, to Cornwall

Plymouth, June 10: UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson is being criticised for flying to the Group of Seven summit meeting in Cornwall, rather than taking the train, as he presses world leaders to do more to fight global warming.

Environmental activists bombarded Johnson's Twitter feed with suggestions that the prime minister should practice what he preaches after he posted a photo of himself climbing off the plane accompanied by a call to make the world "better, fairer and greener." "This is how serious Boris Johnson is about combating the climate em-

● **ACCORDING TO** figures posted on the UK government website, domestic flights generate about six times more greenhouse gases than rail travel.

● **A TRAIN** journey to Cornwall takes about five hours, compared with less than 90 minutes for a flight.

ergency: He flew to Cornwall," Zarah Sultana, a lawmaker from the opposition Labour Party, tweeted

Johnson planned this to be a climate-dominated summit. He had wanted to make it a major staging post to November's international COP26 meeting on climate change in Glasgow, eliciting ambitious targets for slashing carbon emissions and expanding green industries.

That's still on the agenda, but the meeting will be dominated by Covid-19, with discussions focusing on physical and economic recovery and building resilience against future pandemics. Lest anyone forget that the virus is still raging, there will be daily

Coronavirus tests for attending politicians, diplomats, staff and journalists. Biden made a vaccine pledge before the meeting got underway, announcing that the US will buy 500 million more doses of the Pfizer vaccine to share with poorer countries over the next year.

That upped the pressure on Johnson, who has not yet sent any of Britain's vaccine doses abroad. Almost four-fifths of adults in the UK have had the first of two shots. Johnson said Thursday that Britain would donate "millions" of doses from surplus

in response. According to figures posted on the UK government website, domestic flights generate about six times more greenhouse gases than rail travel. A train journey to Cornwall takes about five hours, compared with less than 90 minutes for a flight. Johnson is hosting leaders from the world's seven richest democracies during this weekend's summit at the Carbis Bay resort in Cornwall.

The agenda includes talks on climate change, the global response to Covid-19 and the taxation of multinational corporations.

— AP

JBS settles Muslim bias
lawsuit for \$5.5 million

Denver (US), June 10: The second-largest producer of beef, pork and chicken in the US will pay up to \$5.5 million to settle a lawsuit that claimed the company discriminated against Muslim employees at a meat processing plant in northern Colorado.

The US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission filed the lawsuit in federal court in Denver in 2010, saying JBS Swift & Company discriminated against employees at its beef processing plant in Greeley by denying them bathroom breaks and disciplining them more harshly than other workers because they were Muslim, immigrants from Somalia, and PoC.

JBS USA LLC, doing business as JBS Swift & Company, must pay the \$5.5 million to about 300 employees who were included in the settlement, which was announced by the commission on Wednesday.

Nikki Richardson, a spokeswoman for JBS USA, said the company does not admit any liability in the settlement, prohibits all discrimination

Cyberattack: JBS
paid \$11mn ransom

Denver (US), June 10: The world's largest meat processing company says it paid the equivalent of \$11 million to hackers who broke into its computer system late last month. Brazil-based JBS SA said on May 31 that it was the victim of a ransomware attack, but Wednesday was the first time the company's US division confirmed that it had paid the ransom. "This was a very difficult decision to make for our company and for me personally," said Andre Nogueira, the CEO of JBS USA.

"However, we felt this decision had to be made to prevent any potential risk for our customers." JBS

said the vast majority of its facilities were operational at the time it made the payment, but it decided to pay in order to avoid any unforeseen issues and ensure no data was exfiltrated. The FBI has attributed the attack to REvil, a Russian-speaking gang that has made some of the largest ransomware demands on record in recent months.

The FBI said it will work to bring the group to justice and it urged anyone who is the victim of a cyberattack to contact the bureau immediately. It targeted servers supporting JBS's operations in North America and Australia.

— AP

and harassment at its facilities and "is committed to diversity and inclusion in the workplace."

According to the lawsuit, JBS prevented Mus-

lim employees from praying and harassed them when they tried to pray during scheduled breaks and bathroom breaks.

— AP

WIFE OF 'EL CHAPO' PLEADS GUILTY TO U.S. CHARGES

Washington, June 10: The wife of Mexican drug kingpin Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman pleaded guilty Thursday to charges in the US and admitted that she helped her husband run his criminal empire. Emma Coronel Aispuro, wearing a green jail uniform, appeared in federal

court in Washington and pleaded guilty to three federal offences as part of a plea deal with federal prosecutors. The charges include knowingly and willfully conspiring to distribute heroin, cocaine, marijuana and methamphetamine for several years.

— AP



Emma Coronel Aispuro

FINAL | FRONTIER

Beijing avoids ISS due to US concerns over its programme's secrecy

China ready to send first crew to space station

Beijing, June 10: The rocket that will send the first crew members to live on China's new orbiting space station has been moved onto the launch pad ahead of its planned blast-off next week. The three astronauts plan to spend three months on the space station, far exceeding the length of any previous Chinese mission. They will perform spacewalks, construction and maintenance work and carry out science experiments.

The main section of the

Tianhe, or Heavenly Harmony, station was launched into orbit on April 29. Cargo spacecraft sent up last month carried fuel, food and equipment to the station in preparation for the crewed mission.

The Long March-2F Y12 rocket carrying the Shenzhou-12 spaceship was transferred to the launch pad at the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwest China on Wednesday, the China Manned Space Engineering Office said in a brief statement. Its ten-

tative launch date is next Wednesday.

The space agency plans a total of 11 launches through the end of next year to deliver two laboratory modules to expand the 70-ton station, along with supplies and crew members. Next week's launch will be the third of those, and the first of the four crewed missions planned.

Another cargo mission is planned for September, shortly after which a replacement crew will be sent up, according to reports.

The station's other two modules are expected to be launched next year.

China said in March the astronauts training for the upcoming crewed missions were a mix of space travel veterans and newcomers and included some women. China has sent 11 astronauts into space to date, all of them pilots from the ruling Communist Party's military wing, the People's Liberation Army. The first Tianhe crew will be all male, though women will be part of future crews on

the station, according to Yang Liwei, who orbited Earth in China's first crewed mission in 2003 and is now an official at the space agency.

The Tianhe builds on experience China gained from operating two experimental space stations earlier in its increasingly ambitious space programme. Chinese astronauts spent 33 days living on the second of the previous stations, carried out a spacewalk and taught science classes that were beamed

down to students.

China landed a probe, the Tianwen-1, on Mars last month that carried a rover, the Zhurong. It also has brought back lunar samples, the first by any country's space programme since the 1970s, and landed a probe and rover on the moon's less explored far side. Beijing doesn't participate in the International Space Station, largely due to US concerns over the Chinese programme's secrecy and its military connections.

— AP

LANKA PROBES
OIL SLICK FROM
SINKING SHIP

Colombo, June 10: Sri Lanka announced an investigation Thursday into a possible oil slick reported off its west coast where a container ship is submerged after burning for 13 days.

Coast Conservation Minister Nalaka Godahewa said local experts were asked to examine an oil patch of about 0.35 square kilometres where MV X-Press Pearl ran aground. "I visited the area by boat yesterday and what we noticed was a thin film of oil which looked like diesel," Godahewa said in Colombo. "It did not look like bunker oil, but we have asked our experts to examine." It reported an onboard acid leak and caught fire just as it was due to enter the Colombo harbour on May 20.

— AFP

DECCAN Chronicle

11 JUNE 2021

FinMin signals need for urgency in vaccine drive

The Union finance ministry's suggestion that the government plan an accelerated vaccination drive against pandemic Covid-19 in August and September reflects the sense of urgency that appears to have gripped the corridors of power. That it has come close on the heels of two important announcements adds to its import: in the first, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in a reversal of earlier policy, announced that the government would procure and distribute doses for free to the state governments to inoculate people aged above 18; the second is the government's decision to purchase 44 crore doses of the Covishield and Covaxin. This contract, coupled with the last week's deal with Hyderabad-based Biological E for the procurement of 30 crore doses, will significantly augment vaccine availability in the country. The number could look inadequate, especially since warding off a third wave would call for inoculating the children, too. However, the government seems to have finally woken up to the challenge. That's good news.

The procurement of the required number of doses solves only part of the problem; administering them to ensure herd immunity is the real task. It is to this end that the Union finance ministry has come up with a series of suggestions. In its monthly economic report, the department of economic affairs of the ministry calls for vaccinating at least 70 crore people in August and September this year by launching an accelerated vaccination programme in mission mode.

Going by the specifics, the report is perhaps the first such comprehensive reports a Union ministry has produced on Covid containment. It has identified the real problem on hand and suggested an actionable programme considering the multiple factors that could play out while hitting the ground. The report says 92 lakh people must be vaccinated every day if we were to achieve the target. This is a formidable challenge given that the peak daily vaccination as of now is 42.65 lakh. However, this figure was attained by deploying people in shifts that spanned 8-9 hours a day; a 24 by 7 programme will take us to the target in time, the report argues.

The ministry estimates that 216 crore doses will be made available in the country between August and December. It advocates use of technology to circumvent logistical issues that could crop up. In a bold deviation from the vaccination policy till now, the report advocates for the government reaching out to the population by organising mass vaccination centres, integrating shopping areas and drive-ins with schools and primary health care centres.

While the ministry has said such steps are required to boost investor confidence, the primary beneficiary will be the people themselves who can resume their daily lives and return to their jobs once the pandemic is under control. The report also contains a grim warning about the speed with which the second wave has spread in the rural areas, suggesting how important it is to prevent a third wave. It is up to the government now to design an exhaustive plan with achievable milestones.

Just good optics for BJP

Former Union minister Jitin Prasada has defected from the Congress to the BJP. This should make little difference to either party. Mr Prasada did not bring value to the Congress when he was there and is unlikely to be a harbinger of benefits to his new party, especially when preparations will soon be afoot for the Assembly election in UP early next year.

The lineage principle operates conspicuously in Congress (and now increasingly in other parties) and this appears to be the reason why Mr Prasada came into the Lok Sabha twice on the Congress ticket and was even made minister. Seeing that his party was in a state of disrepair in UP, his home state, he had tried to switch to BJP before the 2019 Lok Sabha poll but evidently negotiations did not work out. He pulled so little weight. This factor has not gone away. If anything, even in the Congress Mr Prasada had slipped from being lightweight to featherweight. And yet, the BJP has taken him in. This is because the party is embattled chiefly on account of very poor Covid management.

In addition, the Adityan regime has sundered the caste coalition that gave the party a huge victory in 2017. The Brahmins, who form just a little less than 15 per cent of the vote, are reportedly badly alienated. Mr Prasada, being from that caste, has in recent times tried to project himself on a caste basis. While that by no means makes him a tact politician emerging from that caste, the BJP will accept any symbolic boost.

So, the defection makes for some good optics for the BJP and bad optics for the Congress, but that is about as far as it goes. Mr Prasada has badly lost parliament and Assembly polls in the recent past. He would hope BJP would field him in the upcoming state polls and that he will win on their ticket. That is the best his ambition can take him for now.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

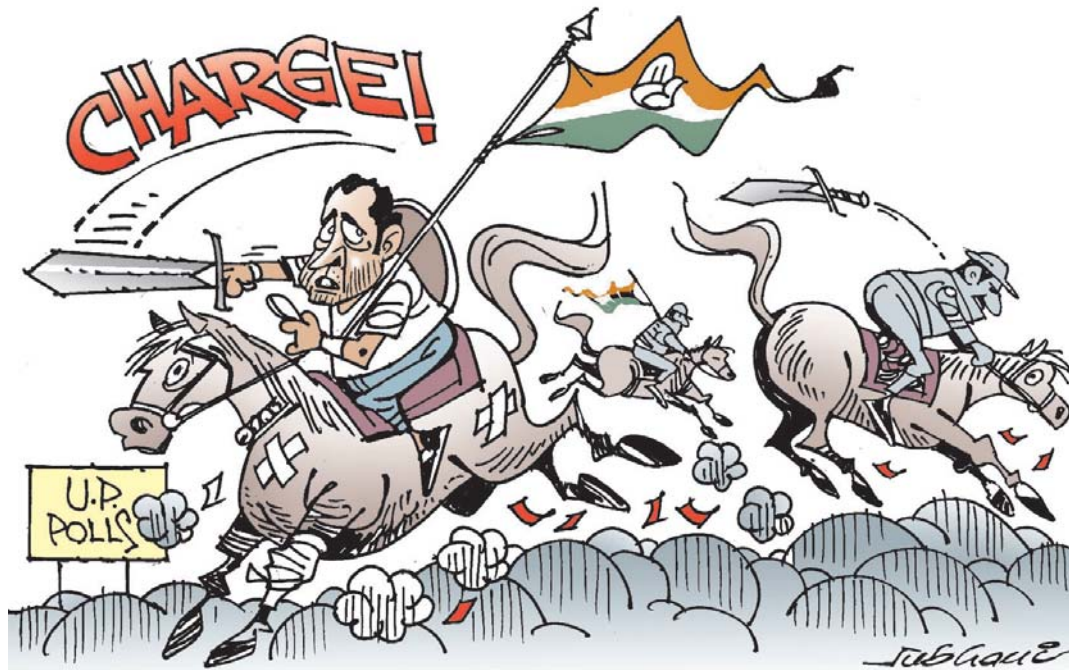
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Subhani



Sedition: Time for SC to enforce its own rulings



Karan Thapar

As I See It

It is time to define the limits of sedition", said Justice D.Y. Chandrachud of the Supreme Court on June 1, and his comment was received with considerable applause. I'm afraid it left me puzzled. The Supreme Court did that nearly 60 years ago in the 1962 Kedar Nath Singh case. What we need is meticulous and unflinching enforcement of what the court had laid down as the law of sedition, and not a fresh definition. Perhaps that's what Justice Chandrachud meant, but it's not what he said.

Let me explain. In the Kedar Nath Singh judgment, the Supreme Court read down Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code, which is the law of sedition. It first said the section would be limited to "such activities as would be intended, or have a tendency, to create disorder or disturbance to public peace by resort to violence". It then pointedly added: "We have no hesitation... to limit the application (of this section) to acts involving intention or tendency to create disorder, or disturbance of law and order or incitement to violence". Frankly, it couldn't have been clearer than that.

However, at least on four separate occasions thereafter, the Supreme Court reconfirmed this reading down of Section 124A. That first happened in 1995, in the Balwant Singh case, when the court ruled that the "Khalistan Zindabad" slogan is not seditious. Remember, this ruling referred to slogans raised in an open marketplace on the day Indira Gandhi was killed. Despite that the court's position was clear and forthright: "Raising some slogan only a couple of times ... which neither evoked

any response nor any reaction from anyone in the public cannot attract the provision of Section 124A". And then the court significantly added: "The police officers exhibited lack of maturity and, more, of sensitivity in arresting the appellants for raising the slogans... (the slogans) did not constitute any threat to the government as by law established nor could the same give rise to feelings of enmity or hatred among different communities or religions or other groups".

Thereafter, in the Bilal Ahmed Kaloo case and the Common Cause case, the Supreme Court restated the 1962 ruling. That happened again in 2016 when the court explicitly said: "We are of the considered opinion that the authorities while dealing with offences under Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code shall be guided by the principles laid down by the Constitution Bench in Kedar Nath Singh versus State of Bihar." Doesn't this mean there is no doubt or confusion about the Supreme Court's position?

Yet for those who still have doubts, the Supreme Court delivered a fifth reaffirmation, this time, ironically, three days after Justice Chandrachud's perplexing comment. A bench presided over by Justice U.U. Lalit in the Vinod Dua case said Section 124A is limited "only to such activities ... involving incitement to violence or intention or tendency to create public disorder or cause disturbance of public peace". This means, both before and after Justice Chandrachud's comment, the Supreme Court's position has been made crystal clear, and there's no need for further definitions of the

limits of sedition.

What is needed is enforcement of the law laid down by the court as far back as 1962. This is necessary because the court's ruling is continuously and deliberately flouted. We need the court to recognise this as contempt and act.

Let me give you a few facts. The website Article 14 claims 65 per cent of the sedition charges against 10,938 individuals since 2010 were brought after 2014. In that category, 96 per cent of sedition cases "for criticising politicians and governments over the last decade" were registered after 2014. According to Article 14, this amounts to "a 28 per cent increase in the number of sedition cases filed each year between 2014 and 2020 ... compared to the yearly average between 2010 and 2014". Finally, the National Crimes Records Bureau seems to confirm these figures with its own, which show a 165 per cent increase in cases of sedition between 2016 and 2019.

This means not only is the law of sedition repeatedly abused but the amount of abuse is steadily increasing. It also means that for 60 years the Supreme Court's ruling has been deliberately disregarded by all governments (both Central and state) and their police forces. This is nothing short of contempt. There is no other term for it.

Yet the court has watched in silence. It's swallowed this disrespect of its rulings. It's tolerated this defiance of the law. Not once has it objected. Or even commented.

What is needed is enforcement of the law laid down by the court as far back as 1962. The court's ruling is continuously and deliberately flouted. We need the court to recognise this as contempt and act.

It's not that the Supreme Court has been equally tolerant and forgiving of other instances of contempt. It took suo moto cognisance of the Prashant Bhushan case even though the attorney general advised against it. So, when elected governments and the police are in contempt — which has to be worse — why has it been unwilling to act or even speak out? That may sound like a rhetorical question but, actually, it's a finger pointing at the court.

So I say today to Justice Chandrachud, it's not definitions of sedition we need but the enforcement of a law that your predecessors had laid down several generations ago. And, if I'm honest, we need something else as well — an explanation from the court why it did not speak out and act earlier. Remember, by failing to do so, it allowed abuse of the law to continue and proliferate. It also accepted disrespect and disregard of its rulings. Simply put, that's defiance of the law.

But does the Supreme Court also owe us an apology? Since I'm being bold, let me also be precise — an apology for not defending the law laid down by its own judgments and also an apology for not standing up for its own authority.

The Supreme Court let the country down in 1975 with its ADM Jabalpur ruling. Justice Chandrachud had the moral strength to accept this even though his father was a Supreme Court judge at the time. Isn't the failure to enforce its definition of sedition for almost 60 years almost as bad? Think of the innocent people — cartoonists, students, journalists, historians, authors, actors, directors and, by some accounts, little children — who suffered because the Supreme Court kept silent while the law was blatantly defied. Yes, I think an apology is due.

The writer is a television commentator and anchor

LETTERS

COVID-19 STILL HERE

Even though cases have dwindled and lockdown regulations are being relaxed, we still need to ensure that all the necessary precautions are taken (*Cops gear up for extended lockdown starting today, DC, June 10*). Until everyone is vaccinated, we must maintain social distancing and wear masks.

Rudra Krishna
Hyderabad

Kudos to cops for doing their duty at the cost of their life. I was sorry to read that nearly 2,000 personnel from Hyderabad Commissionerate were infected by Covid-19 and 17 had succumbed. Cops indeed are leaving no stone unturned to enforce the lockdown. They deserve accolades.

Mohammed Azmathullah
Hyderabad

SPEEDY JUSTICE

Now that the strength of High Court judges will go up, the people of Telangana may expect speedy justice (*TS HC gets big boost with 18 new judges, DC, June 10*). It is also imperative that complainants and pleaders should come prepared with witnesses and relevant documents without dragging the cases unnecessarily.

G.V.N. Murthy
Hyderabad

SURPRISE CHANGE

I was surprised the CJI replied to a school girl and appreciated her concern for the well-being of citizens (*CJI lauds 10 year old's letter hailing SC, DC, June 9*). It is good to note we have such children and judges. It is a relief for citizens who are fed up with hate and fake news.

Kshirasagara Balaji Rao
Hyderabad

50 YEARS AGO IN

DECCAN Chronicle

A flying hotel

MOSCOW, June 10. Three Soviet cosmonauts settled in today for a long stay among the homely comforts of their 'Flying Hotel' a Salyut space station fitted out for hot food, cold drinks and leisure reading. TASS described the 25-ton station as a spacious and comfortable temporary home for cosmonauts Georgi Dobrovolsky, Vladislav Volkov and Viktor Patsayev. "The standard of comfort is high here," Tass said. "There are vacuum cleaners, water heaters, devices for warming food refrigerators — in other words it is a modern flying hotel where even a library of the cosmonauts' favourite books is maintained".

Brexit trade deal later this month. The deal with Australia is part of the UK push to join the CPTPP, an 11-nation free trade agreement centred on the Pacific. If the UK joins this agreement, it will not only deepen this country's links with an area of growing economic and strategic importance but it will also ensure that the UK is part of a group that will become crucial to the global trading system if tensions between the West and China were to make it impossible for the World Trade Organisation to function.

The UK needs to stabilise its relationship with the EU. It will be that much harder for the free world to stand up to Russia and China if the UK is at loggerheads with its neighbours. It will require compromise and humility on both sides to fix the issues around the Northern Ireland protocol. It would be bad for the Western alliance if Britain and the EU became the European equivalent of Japan and South Korea, two key US allies who fall out at the slightest provocation.

By arrangement with the Spectator

James Forsyth



Why G-7 summit in Cornwall this weekend matters more than most

It's risky planning a trip to the British seaside at any time of year. But if the weather forecast is to be believed, Boris Johnson will get away with this gamble at the weekend's meeting of the G-7 at Carbis Bay in Cornwall.

Brexit's critics were always going to seize on any evidence that Britain was being sidelined by the rest of the world after leaving the European Union. It's fortunate for the government the UK is hosting this year's summit. This G-7 is unusually consequential. It's the first time these leaders will meet in person for well over a year. This will give the meeting momentum; it's hard to think of a worse format for diplomacy than group video calls. It's also the first summit of the new US administration. Every G-7 summit when Donald Trump was in the White House was a damage-limitation exercise. But President Joe Biden is an old-school believer in the Western alliance, and he'll be keen to make these events work. Just look at the G-7 deal on a global minimum level of corporation tax. This was achieved, in large part, because of

America's willingness to let other major economies tax its giant technology firms. Finally, this week's summit has an immediate practical problem to solve: how can the developing world get enough vaccine doses? (In a sign of how Covid-19 is still derailing diplomacy, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi will only attend virtually because of the severity of the pandemic there.)

Britain's top foreign policy priority is the US relationship. As Mr Biden was preparing to take office earlier this year, many speculated Britain would be hampered in its bid to have a good relationship with his team because of its previous close ties to the Trump administration. This has turned out to be wrong. The US and UK are more closely aligned now than they were under Mr Trump.

The US and the UK both believe the world is entering into a new era of competition between the democratic and autocratic worlds. This is a view that's not yet shared by all of the G-7. The UK has invited Australia, India, South Korea and South Africa to this year's summit to launch a "Democratic 11" of

free countries. Mr Biden wants this to pave the way to an international "Summit for Democracy". The South Africans are a late addition after there were objections that the initial "D10" plan lacked African representation. But the Asian tilt of this group is no accident. The UK sees this as crucial to any effort to contain China.

One potential irritant to the US-UK relationship is the Northern Ireland protocol. As the UK-EU standoff over the issue intensifies, Mr Biden, who makes much of his Irish ancestry, is expected to raise the issue with Mr Johnson in their bilateral discussions, though even the EU expects the intervention to be relatively mild.

The second priority is collective security. If the UK had one great diplomatic success during the Trump years, it was in keeping NATO together. Given Mr Trump's ambiguity about the whole principle that an attack on one was an attack on all, it is an achievement in itself that the alliance has survived.

After the G-7 is over, Mr Biden will travel to Brussels for the Nato summit next week. The White House has con-

firmed Russian authoritarianism will be discussed, demonstrating the alliance's traditional utility. But Russia is, ultimately, a declining threat. As America's focus shifts to the Pacific, Nato will need to become more relevant to the struggle to contain China. This will have to involve partnerships with groups like the Quad — the emerging alliance of the US, Japan, India and Australia, which is working to counter China in the South China Sea.

The UK, with its connections to India and Australia and its role as the biggest European contributor to Nato, is well placed to argue for this shift. It won't be easy to move the alliance in this direction given, for instance, Germany's publicly stated desire not to divide the world into opposing blocs. But attitudes to Beijing are changing fast. The EU signed an investment treaty with China at the end of last year — yet just three months later it joined a coordinated Western effort to impose sanctions on Chinese officials over abuses in Xinjiang.

The final priority is free trade. The UK hopes to sign its first full post-

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	52,300.47	0.69
Nifty 50	15,737.80	0.65
S&P 500*	4,243.03	0.56
Dollar (₹)	73.05	-0.09
Pound Sterling (₹)	102.96	0.46
Euro (₹)	88.86	0.10
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,127*259	0.53
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	72.40	0.25
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.019	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.487	-0.002

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Creditors to vote on Suraksha, NBCC final offers

Jaypee Infratech's financial creditors decided to put the bids of NBCC and Suraksha Group to vote after both parties submitted final offers for the debt-laden company. The winning bidder will acquire Jaypee Infratech Ltd as well as complete more than 20,000 pending flats in the NCR region. The voting process is likely to start from Monday next week and continue till June 23.

Justice Sikri to head IMAI grievance board



The IMAI said former Supreme Court judge Justice Arjan Kumar Sikri will chair the Grievance Redressal Board of the recently formed Digital Publisher Content Grievances Council. The DPCGC has 14 publishers of online curated content as members, including Amazon Prime Video, Alt Balaji, Apple, BookMyShow Stream, Eros Now, Firework TV, Hoichoi, Hungama, Lionsgate Play, MX Player, Netflix, Reeldrama, Shemaroo and Ullu.

Tata Group spent ₹2,500 cr in Covid relief: Chandra

Tata Sons chairman N. Chandrasekaran said group companies have collectively extended a help of Rs 2,500 crore towards Covid-19 relief across both the waves of the pandemic that started in March 2020. Speaking at the TCS AGM, Chandrasekaran said more than the financial commitments, the work done on the ground by the group firms, like helping build hospitals and expanding O2 capacity, has been the focus area.

Skoda drives in all-new Octavia at ₹26 lakh

Skoda, the Czech car-maker, launched the fourth generation new Skoda Octavia sedan with a starting price of Rs 25.99 lakh for the Style variant and the Laurin and at Rs 28.99 lakh for the Klement variant. At present it rivals only the Hyundai Elantra as Honda Civic and Toyota Corolla have been discontinued in the Indian market. The new Skoda Octavia is powered by a 2.0-litre, four-cylinder TSI turbo-petrol engine.



ONGC, OIL set to lose large oil, gas blocks Next auction is for major fields: Govt

FC BUREAU NEW DELHI, JUNE 10

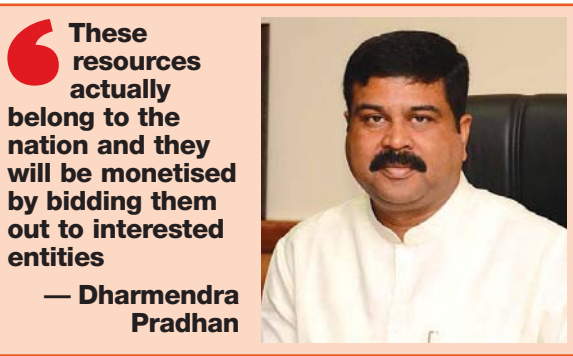
In a bid to maximise the country's hydrocarbon production, the government will auction non-monetised large oil and gas fields of state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) and Oil India Ltd (OIL), petroleum minister Dharmendra Pradhan said on Thursday.

The statement comes weeks after his ministry asked India's largest oil and gas producer ONGC to sell a stake in producing oil fields such as Ratna R-Series in western offshore to private firms and get foreign partners in KG basin gas fields.

Speaking on the launch of the third round of auction of small, discovered fields, he said companies cannot indefinitely sit on resources they may have discovered. "These resources actually belong to the nation and they will be monetised by bidding them out to interested entities," he added.

As many as 32 oil and gas blocks with 75 discoveries have been offered in the Discovered Small Field (DSF) round-III. These small and marginal fields were discovered by both ONGC and OIL, but they were not economically viable to be developed due to the fiscal regime and their small size.

Under the DSF, liberal terms, including pricing and marketing freedom, are offered, to make them viable. "There will be no



These resources actually belong to the nation and they will be monetised by bidding them out to interested entities — Dharmendra Pradhan

DSF next time. Rather, for the next time, it will be a 'major' round (auction of large fields)," Pradhan said.

He said the Directorate General of Hydrocarbons (DGH), the oil ministry's technical arm, has the "full mandate" to identify unmonetised major fields that could be offered for bidding. "Resources don't belong to a company. They belong to the nation and the government. They cannot lie with a company indefinitely. If somebody cannot monetise them, we will have to bring a new regime," he added.

For a nation that imports 85 per cent of its oil needs, resources lying idle for a long time cannot be permitted, he said.

"Our objective to maximise production. So, we have to look at all options available. We cannot have a situation where fields are lying with some for a long time and are not being developed," he said.

This would be the third attempt by the ministry to

get ONGC to privatise its oil and gas fields.

In October 2017, the DGH had identified 15 producing fields with a collective reserve of 791.2 million tonnes of crude oil and 333.46 billion cubic metres of gas, for handing over to private companies in the hope that they would improve upon the baseline estimate and its extraction.

A year later, 149 small and marginal fields of ONGC were identified for private and foreign companies on the grounds that the state-owned enterprises should focus only on the bid ones.

According to reports, the first plan could not go through because of strong opposition from ONGC. The second plan went up to the Cabinet, which on February 19, 2019, decided to bid out 64 marginal fields of ONGC. But that tender got a tepid response.

ONGC was then allowed to retain 49 fields on condition that their performance will be strictly monitored for three years.

Nigeria courts India's Koo to take on Twitter

New Delhi, June 10: Koo on Thursday said the Government of Nigeria has set up an official account on the Indian microblogging platform, which is looking at making deeper inroads into the African nation.

The development comes in the backdrop of a standoff between the Nigerian government and Twitter. Last week, the Nigerian government had announced an indefinite suspension of the US social media platform in that country.

Koo co-founder and CEO Aprameya Radhakrishna in a post on Koo said, The official handle of the government of Nigeria is now on Koo!

Interestingly, he also shared the information on Twitter saying: A very warm welcome to the official handle of the Government of Nigeria on @kooindia! Spreading wings beyond India now.

Last week, the Nigerian government had said it was suspending Twitter indefinitely after the company removed a contentious tweet that President Muhammadu Buhari made about a secessionist movement.

Following this, Koo had said the platform is available in Nigeria and that it is keen on adding new local languages for users in that country.

Now that there is an opportunity for microblogging platforms in Nigeria... Koo is looking at introducing local Nigerian languages in the app, Radhakrishna had said. —PTI

Tata Digital acquires majority stake in 1MG

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JUNE 10

After acquiring online grocery store BigBasket and investing in fitness-focused startup Curefit, Tata Digital, a 100 per cent subsidiary of Tata Sons, the holding company of salt-to-software Tata empire, is expanding its digital presence in the fast-growing e-pharma space by buying out a majority stake in 1MG Technologies.

Incorporated in 2015, 1MG provides access to a wide range of products like medicines, health and wellness products, diagnostics services and tele-consultation to customers. It has three diagnostics labs and a supply chain covering over 20,000 pin codes. It is also engaged in B2B distribution of medicines and other healthcare products.

According to consultants RedSeer, 1MG is a leading player in the e-health space, which touched a gross merchandise value of \$1.2 billion in FY20 and is estimated to have clocked \$2 billion in FY21. E-health has been one of the biggest beneficiaries of the Covid-19-driven lockdown, seeing a 3x jump in user households. This space has seen several major deals happening in recent times. Reliance had acquired a majority stake in Netmeds, and Medlife was bought over by its rival PharmEasy. The presence of large conglomerates like Reliance and Tata in the space will fuel faster



BHARATPE TO TAKE OVER PAYBACK INDIA

New Delhi, June 10: Merchant payment and lending service provider BharatPe on Thursday said it has acquired Payback India from American Express and ICICI Investments Strategic Fund.

The firm did not disclose the financial details of the deal.

This is the first acquisition by BharatPe and will make Payback India a wholly owned subsidiary of BharatPe.

Payback India, launched in 2010, is a multi-brand loyalty programme with over 100 million members. It has a network of over 100 offline and online partners and allows its customers to earn and redeem points on transactions. —PTI

nostics space through a technology led platform," said Pratik Pal, CEO of Tata Digital.

Though the company did not divulge the financial details of the transaction, it had invested Rs 100 crore in 1MG through debt a few months back.

It was later reported that Tata Digital was eyeing a 65 per cent stake in 1MG, valuing the outfit at about Rs 1,200 crore, but no word on this has come from either companies.

Tata Group has been fast expanding its digital business both organically and inorganically. While it already has a presence in the horizontal space with Tata Cliq, Tata Digital has been acquiring key players in some of the fast-growing verticals. It had recently acquired a controlling stake in BigBasket. Reliance too is betting big in this segment with its JioMart. The segment already has biggies like Walmart and Amazon expanding their footprint. The online grocery market has grown 30 times in the last eight years to reach \$3 billion. It is now expected to grow at a 59 per cent compound annual growth rate to \$18 billion by 2024, RedSeer estimates.

A few days back, Tata Digital announced its investment of \$75 million in Curefit. In fact, group patriarch Ratan Tata had realised the potential of digital business in its initial years and has been investing in digital start-ups. Curefit was one among them. He has even exited Lenskart with handsome returns.

growth in the segment. "The investment in 1MG strengthens Tata's ability to provide superior customer experience and high quality healthcare products & services in the e-pharmacy and e-diag-

SONA COMSTAR'S ₹5,550-CR IPO OPENS ON 14TH

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, JUNE 10

Auto components manufacturer Sona BLW Precision Forgings' (Sona Comstar) Rs 5,550-crore IPO opens on June 14 in the price band of Rs 285 to Rs 291 per share of Rs 10 face value.

Sona Comstar designs and manufactures automotive systems and components for electrified and non-electrified powertrain segments and supplies across the US, Europe, India and China.

The public issue is an offer for sale of shares worth Rs 5,250 crore by US-based private equity firm Blackstone, which holds 66.28 per cent stake in the company through the entity Singapore VII Topco III Pte. Ltd.

Also there is a fresh issue of shares worth Rs 300 crore by the company.

Sona Autocomp Holding owns the remaining 33.72 per cent stake.

The firm aims to use the proceeds from the fresh issue to repay over Rs 240 crore of its borrowings.

The issue has 10 per cent shares reserved for retail individual investors and 75 per cent for institutional investors.

RBI hikes ATM interchange fee

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, JUNE 10

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Thursday increased interchange fee for ATM transactions from Rs 15 to Rs 17 per financial transactions and from Rs 5 to Rs 6 for non-financial transactions, effective August 1, 2021.

The charges were last revised in August 2012.

To compensate the banks for the higher interchange fee, the RBI has increased the ATM charges per transaction for customers from Rs 20 to Rs 21 from January 1, 2022, over and above the free transactions permitted.

The interchange fee is a

Banks to increase the ATM transaction charges from ₹20 to ₹21 from January 1, 2022

fee paid by the card issuing bank to the operator/bank of the ATM when a customer makes a transaction at an ATM that does not belong to the card issuing bank. While the card-issuing bank is called the issuer, the latter is called an acquirer. This charge is divided between the acquirer and the company maintaining the ATM, a reason why banks discourage customers from using other banks' ATMs.

Industry players wel-

comed the move. Rustom Irani, MD & CEO, Hitachi Payment Services, which provides ATM services, said, "We are grateful to the RBI and the government for this progressive step of increasing the interchange rate. This will help us...deploy additional ATMs which are particularly needed in semi urban and rural locations to provide financial access and enable financial inclusion."

Pranay Jhaveri, country manager-India & South Asia, Euronet Worldwide said, "This move will definitely give a fresh impetus to deployment of ATMs across India and help improve the penetration."

Credit to textiles drops to 3-year low

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JUNE 10

In line with the slower manufacturing activity and exports, credit availed of by the textiles and apparel sector declined 20 per cent in the December quarter, the lowest in three years.

As of December 2020, the quarterly credit availed of by the sector stood at Rs 1.62 lakh crore, which was 19.8 per cent lower than Rs

2.02 lakh crore received in the same quarter in 2019. This was the lowest quarterly credit in three years-lower than Rs 1.82 lakh crore in December 2017, as per Sidbi-CRIF High Mark data.

On a sequential basis, December quarter credit declined 12.37 per cent.

The number of active loans in the sector stood at 4.26 lakh as of December 2020 and 95 per cent of the overall credit by volume

went to MSME borrowers. Of this, 76.7 per cent of the credit volume was accounted for by the micro enterprises.

Apparel Export Promotion Council chairman A. Sakthivel said a Rs 16,000-crore special liquidity facility being provided by the RBI to the Sidbi at repo rate will support MSMEs for easier access to credit.

NPAs at 16.92 per cent was lower than 24.61 per cent in December 2019.

LPC framework can strengthen banks balance sheets: Experts



MADHUSUDAN SAHOO NEW DELHI, JUNE 10

Financial experts have called for use of an 'LPC framework' to help banks and non-banking financial institutions (NBFCs) strengthen their balance sheet. Lenders would be better prepared to tackle the problem of increased non-performing assets (NPA) by adopting the LPC framework.

In the framework, 'L' stands for maintaining higher liquidity on the balance sheet, 'P' for having a higher provisioning cover and 'C' stands for higher capitalisation and lower leverage.

"Use of the LPC framework will help banks and NBFCs to fortify their balance sheet and enhance their resilience to the impact of the pandemic. It is expected that the ongoing pandemic may cause an increase of the NPA in banks," Krishnan Sitaraman, senior director & deputy chief ratings officer, Crisil Ratings said, while addressing a webinar.

Bankers also feel that the financial sector- especially banks and other lending institutions-is currently facing headwinds with the spread, intensity and duration of the pandemic and the accompanying lockdown measures taken by the government. "The LPC framework is a good concept to be followed by the banks, NBFCs and other lending institutions," said Dr M. Narendra, former CMD of Indian Overseas Bank and Adviser to Enque Collaboration.

Narendra also noted that, "During the last year and the current year, banks have maintained sufficient liquidity."

CONCENTRATED POSITIONS

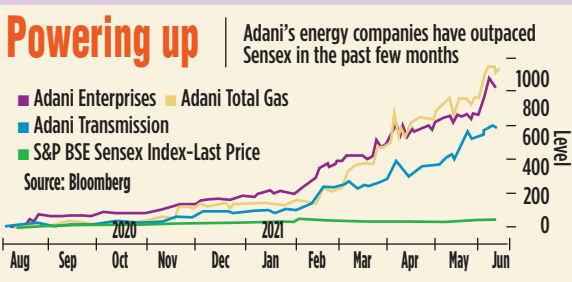
Asymmetric risk-reward as large investors avoid Adani

\$43-bn jump in Adani fortune fraught with risks

ANTO ANTONY JUNE 10

A rally in the stocks of companies controlled by Indian billionaire Gautam Adani has added almost \$43 billion to his wealth this year, catapulting him to the spot of the second-richest person in Asia. Some analysts say the gains are fraught with risk.

Adani's net worth of \$76.7 billion got a boost from a 330 per cent jump in Adani Total Gas Ltd, a 235 per cent rise in his conglomerate's flagship Adani Enterprises Ltd and a 263 per cent increase in Adani Transmission Ltd this



year. Adani Group stocks, especially these three, "look extended," Bloomberg Intelligence analysts Gaurav Patankar and Nitin Chanduka wrote in a June 10 note after analysing technical indicators.

"Among the biggest for-

eign investors are a few Mauritius-based funds holding over 95 per cent of assets in these companies," the analysts wrote. "Such concentrated positions, along with negligible onshore ownership, create asymmetric risk-reward as large investors conspicuously avoid

Adani."

The analysis underscores the vulnerability of the rapid wealth surge Adani has seen in 2021, beating the gains for Warren Buffett and his compatriot Mukesh Ambani. A representative for Adani Group declined to comment immediately.

The overseas funds hold a large chunk of shares, effectively reducing the public float and leaving the stocks prone to volatility, the analysts wrote. Elara India Opportunities Fund, Apms Investment Fund, Cresta Fund, Albula Investment Fund, Lts Investment and Asia Investment Corp have put more than 95 per cent of

their assets in Adani Group firms, according to data compiled by Bloomberg Intelligence.

The ports-to-power conglomerate also got a boost after MSCI Inc included three more Adani firms to its India benchmark index last month, taking the group's total footprint to five. This leads to mandated buying by investors that track this index.

"Adani stocks trade 150-200 per cent above 200-day moving averages, and statistically look extended," Bloomberg Intelligence analysts wrote. "Tesla was 126 per cent above the 200-day when it peaked this year."

—Bloomberg

SHORT TAKES

Team India begin training in group

Southampton: India carried out their first group practice session at a ground adjacent to Ageas Bowl here on Thursday, five days after being allowed staggered training in the run-up to the World Test Championship final against New Zealand. The WTC final is scheduled to be held from Jun 18 to 22. It was the first time the players mixed with their teammates on the ground after being allowed to run in the gymnasium and the main playing field at different time slots on completion of the third day of their hard quarantine in the UK. "We have had our first group training session and the intensity was high. Fire. #TeamIndia's preparations are on in full swing for the #WTC21 Final," the BCCI wrote in a twitter post along with a short video of the session. — PTI

Harman to play for Manchester

London: India's T20I skipper Harmanpreet Kaur and teen batting sensation Shafali Verma will be representing the Manchester Originals and Birmingham Phoenix respectively in the inaugural edition of The Hundred in the UK starting on July 21. The duo will be joined by opener Smriti Mandhana, all-rounder Deepti Sharma and batswoman Jemimah Rodrigues in the 100-ball tournament involving eight men's and women's teams. While Verma, who is the No. 1 ranked T20 batter, joins Birmingham Phoenix as a replacement for New Zealand's Sophie Devine, Sharma will turn out for the London Spirit. Mandhana, the vice captain, is set to form a devastating opening partnership with England's Danni Wyatt at Southern Brave and Rodrigues will feature for Northern Superchargers. — PTI

Enable spinners to bowl doosra: Ash

Southampton: Saqlain Mushtaq was the only spinner who bowled a "legal doosra" during his playing career, feels India's star spinner Ravichandran Ashwin, who wants game's governing body ICC to do away with the current elbow flexion of 15 degrees to a permissible level. While Saqlain started the doosra revolution, the others who bowled the wrong "un" included Muttiah Muralitharan, Harbhajan Singh and Saeed Ajmal. "According to me, let's not do away with it (doosra) but enable spinners to bowl the doosra responsibly with an appropriate bend," Ashwin said in his YouTube show. — PTI

Neymar to lead Brazil in Copa

Sao Paulo: The Copa America has been rocked by one surprise after another, but there were none Wednesday as Brazil coach Tite named his squad for the troubled tournament, led by superstar Neymar. The defending South American champions will keep a roster nearly identical to the one that beat both Ecuador and Paraguay 2-0 this month to extend the Selecao's win streak in World Cup qualifying to six matches. Paris Saint-Germain striker Neymar will lead a squad with just one change: returning from injury, 36-year-old Chelsea defender Thiago Silva will replace Rodrigo Caio of Flamengo. — AFP

Axed Robinson to take short break

London: Pace bowler Ollie Robinson has decided to take a short break from cricket. He missed England's second Test against New Zealand after being suspended from all international cricket pending the outcome of a disciplinary investigation into historical racist and sexist tweets. Robinson issued an apology for the posts he sent in 2012 and 2013, when he was in his late teens, which were unearthed and shared online on the day he made his Test debut against the Black Caps. A statement from the player's county, Sussex, announced: "After a difficult week, Ollie has decided to take a short break from the game to spend time with his young family." — PTI

Continental gala

Heavyweights gear up for top kick as Euro football begins

London, June 10: Euro 2020 finally kicks off on Friday as Cristiano Ronaldo's Portugal prepare to defend their title and world champions France seek a rare double a year after the tournament was delayed by the coronavirus pandemic.

France's fearsome forward line makes them favourites to win a third European crown at the pan-continental event, while top-ranked Belgium and a youthful England side will be a major threat.

For the first time the tournament is taking place in 11 cities across Europe instead of one or two countries despite the lingering shadow cast by the Covid-19 crisis.

Dublin and Bilbao were dropped from the list of host cities after being unable to give guarantees they could meet UEFA's requirement of accommodating limited numbers of spectators, but Seville stepped in for Bilbao while Dublin's games went to London and Saint-Petersburg.

The action gets under way at Rome's Olympic Stadium on Friday, where Italy take on Turkey in front of 16,000 fans.

Favourites France are not in action until Tuesday in the headline act of the first round of group matches when the world champions take on Germany in Munich.

"All the other countries envy us," said a recent front page of French sports daily *L'Equipe* underneath pictures of Kylian Mbappe, Karim Benzema and Antoine Griezmann.

All eyes will be on 33-year-old forward Benzema, who was recalled after an international exile of five-and-a-half years following a prolific season for Real Madrid. Holders Portugal and Hungary complete Group F. Ronaldo is now 36 but is still going strong and is supported by a better squad, which also boasts the outstanding talents of Joao Felix, Bruno Fernandes, Bernardo Silva and Ruben Dias.



Euro 2020 mascot 'Skillzy' poses with the winners' trophy.

— Twitter

HEAD-TO-HEAD

● **Matches:** 11. Italy won 8. Turkey won 0. Draw: 3

EURO MEETINGS

1962: Italy beat Turkey 6-0 in Bologna.

1963: Italy beat Turkey 1-0 in Mithat Pasa

2000: Italy beat Turkey 2-1 in Arnheim.

— S. PERVEZ QAISER

CAN ENGLAND TRIUMPH AT HOME?

England have the carrot of knowing both semi-finals and the final will be played at Wembley, while Italy and the Netherlands are eager to impress after failing to qualify for recent tournaments.

Captain Harry Kane believes England will start their bid to win Euro 2020 in a "better place" than they were before reaching the 2018 World Cup semi-finals.

"I feel like now we've had a bit more experience, players in the biggest games for their club and obviously players who have played in that World Cup have had that experience as well," he said.

— AFP

Azzurri set sights on Turkey dinner

Rome, June 10: Top Italy striker Ciro Immobile will be looking to shake off the demons of World Cup failure as the 'Azzurri' return to the big stage in Friday's European Championship opener against Turkey in Rome.

Roberto Mancini's resurgent four-time world champions are being touted as possible dark horses after failing to qualify for the 2018 World Cup.

But Italy lack the high-profile strike partnerships of rivals such as Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo and Joao Felix, France's Kylian Mbappe and Karim Benzema and England's Harry Kane and Marcus Rashford.

And despite a club-record 150 goals in five seasons for Lazio, Immobile has been unable to shake off the tag of being unable to score when it matters.

The 31-year-old bore the brunt of criticism for fail-

ing to find the net in the World Cup play-off defeat to Sweden in November 2017.

"I didn't want to play anymore, it was too much sadness to manage and negative thoughts," recalled Immobile.

Mancini has rebuilt Italy since, with the team on a 27-match unbeaten run.

Immobile won the European Golden Shoe in the 2019-2020 season for his 36 league goals, and scored 20 last campaign as Lazio finished sixth.

For the former Borussia Dortmund and Sevilla reject this could be his last chance to shine on the bigger stage.

"I have a strong personality," he insists.

"I'm not very gifted technically, but where I don't get there with the technique I get there with strength, tenacity and cunning."

— AFP

Pellegrini joins Italy's injury list

Lorenzo Pellegrini on Thursday joined Italy's injury list on the eve of their Euro 2020 opener against Turkey, the Italian Football Federation (FIGC) confirmed. Italy have submitted a request to UEFA to bring in Fiorentina's Gaetano Castrovilli in their 26-man squad after Pellegrini pulled up with a muscular problem in training mid-week.

Ukraine told to remove slogans

Ukraine must modify their team shirt for the Euro after UEFA upheld part of a Russian complaint about slogans and a map that included Crimea. The yellow-and-blue shirt design unveiled on Sunday angered Russian officials by including an outline of Ukraine's land territory with the Crimea region which Russia annexed in 2014. The fresh ruling allows the map to stay on the shirt.

Pope blesses UEFA officials

Pope Francis met with UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin and other soccer officials on Thursday to offer his blessings before the Euro Championship kicks off in Rome. The Argentine-born Francis is an avid soccer fan and a noted supporter of Buenos Aires team San Lorenzo. Italian soccer federation president Gabriele Gravina also took part in the meeting inside the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican.

EURO FIXTURES

GROUP A	GROUP B	GROUP C
Turkey Italy Wales Switzerland	Denmark Finland Belgium Russia	Netherlands Ukraine Austria North Macedonia
GROUP D	GROUP E	GROUP F
England Croatia Scotland Czech Republic	Spain Sweden Poland Slovakia	Hungary Portugal France Germany

GROUP STAGE

June 12	Turkey vs Italy Wales vs Switzerland Denmark vs Finland	Group A Group A Group B	12.30 am 6.30 pm 9.30 pm
June 13	Belgium vs Russia England vs Croatia Austria vs N. Macedonia	Group B Group D Group C	12.30 am 6.30 pm 9.30 pm
June 14	Netherlands vs Ukraine Scotland vs Czech Republic Poland vs Slovakia	Group C Group D Group E	12.30 am 6.30 pm 9.30 pm
June 15	Spain vs Sweden Hungary vs Portugal	Group E Group F	12.30 am 9.30 pm
June 16	France vs Germany Finland vs Russia Turkey vs Wales	Group F Group B Group A	12.30 am 6.30 pm 9.30 pm
June 17	Italy vs Switzerland Ukraine vs N. Macedonia Denmark vs Belgium	Group A Group C Group B	12.30 am 6.30 pm 9.30 pm
June 18	Netherlands vs Austria Sweden vs Slovakia Croatia vs Czech Republic	Group C Group E Group D	12.30 am 6.30 pm 9.30 pm
June 19	England vs Scotland Hungary vs France Portugal vs Germany	Group D Group F Group F	12.30 am 6.30 pm 9.30 pm
June 20	Spain vs Poland Italy vs Wales Switzerland vs Turkey	Group E Group A Group A	12.30 am 9.30 pm 9.30 pm
June 21	Ukraine vs Austria N. Macedonia vs Netherlands	Group C Group C	9.30 pm 9.30 pm
June 22	Finland vs Belgium Russia vs Denmark	Group B Group B	12.30 am 12.30 am
June 23	Czech Republic vs England Croatia vs Scotland Sweden vs Poland Slovakia vs Spain	Group D Group D Group E Group E	12.30 am 12.30 am 9.30 pm 9.30 pm
June 24	Germany vs Hungary Portugal vs France	Group F Group F	12.30 am 12.30 am

ROUND OF 16

June 26	2A vs 2B	Match 37	9.30 pm
June 27	1A vs 2C 1C vs 3D/E/F	Match 38 Match 39	12.30 am 9.30 pm
June 28	1B vs 3A/D/E/F 2D vs 2E	Match 40 Match 41	12.30 am 9.30 pm
June 29	1F vs 3A/B/C 1D vs 2F	Match 42 Match 43	12.30 am 9.30 pm
June 30	1E vs 3A/B/C/D	Match 44	12.30 am

QUARTERFINALS

July 2	Winners of Matches 41 and 42	Quarterfinal 1	9.30 pm
July 3	Winners of Matches 38 and 40 Winners of Matches 37 and 39	Quarterfinal 2 Quarterfinal 3	12.30 am 9.30 pm
July 4	Winners of Matches 43 and 44	Quarterfinal 4	12.30 am

SEMIFINALS

July 7	Winners of Quarterfinal 1 and 2	12.30 am
July 8	Winners of Quarterfinal 3 and 4	12.30 am

THE FINAL

July 12	Winners of Semifinals	12.30 am
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MATCHES LIVE ON SONY TEN 2, HD, SONY TEN 3, HD (HINDI), SONY SIX, HD (MALAYALAM & BENGALI), SONY TEN 4, HD (TAMIL & TELUGU)

Anastasia in dream final

Paris, June 10: Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova beat Tamara Zidansek in straight sets to reach a first Grand Slam final at the French Open on Thursday at a record 52nd attempt.

The 29-year-old Russian defeated world number 85 Zidansek 7-5, 6-3 and will face Greek 17th seed Maria Sakkari or Barbora Krejickova of the Czech Republic for the title on Saturday, 14 years after her Grand Slam debut.

Pavlyuchenkova, a quarter-finalist in Paris a decade ago, became the first woman to play more than 50 majors before making her first final, breaking the previous mark of 44 set by 2015 US Open runner-up Roberta Vinci.

"I am so tired and so happy, it is very emotional," said Pavlyuchenkova.

"It was difficult, I tried to fight very hard and to work on the tactical side. It is important to stay focused and in the right zone for the final on Saturday."

The 31st seed dropped serve in the opening game on a sun-drenched Court Philippe Chatrier.

SALISBURY-KRAWCZYK WIN MIXED DOUBLES

Joe Salisbury became the first Briton to win the French Open mixed doubles in 39 years on Thursday as he and American partner Desirae Krawczyk beat Aslan Karatsev and Elena Vesnina 2-6, 6-4, 10-5 in the final. It is a second Grand Slam title for Salisbury, 29, who won the 2020 Australian Open men's doubles with Rajeev Ram.

The 27-year-old Krawczyk finished runner-up in last year's women's doubles at Roland Garros with Alexa Guarachi. — AFP



Russia's Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova serves to Slovenia's Tamara Zidansek during their semifinal in the French Open at the Roland Garros on Thursday.

— AP

THE RESULTS

Women's SF: Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova (RUS x3) bt Tamara Zidansek (SLO) 7-5, 6-3.
Men's QF: Novak Djokovic (SRB x1) bt Matteo Berrettini (ITA x9) 6-3, 6-2, 6-7 (5/7), 7-5.

DJOKOVIC TO TAKE ON NADAL IN SEMIS

Paris, June 10: Novak Djokovic said facing Rafael Nadal for the 58th time on Friday, with a place in the French Open final on the line, will be "a great battle" against his "biggest ever rival".

Djokovic secured the eagerly-awaited clash when he reached his 40th Grand Slam semifinal with a 6-3, 6-2, 6-7 (5/7), 7-5 win over Italy's Matteo Berrettini.

It will be his 11th appearance in the last-four in Paris where he was champion in 2016.

Nadal, the 13-time winner, beat Argentina's Diego Schwartzman 6-3, 4-6, 6-4, 6-0 to make the semi-finals for the 14th time. He will be playing in his 35th Slam semi.

"I'll probably pick Rafa as the biggest rival I've ever had in my career," said world number one

Djokovic.

"The anticipation for the match against him, any match, any surface, any occasion, is always different from any other. Let's have a great battle."

Although Djokovic has the edge at 29-28 in their overall rivalry stretching back 15 years, Nadal enjoys a 7-1 record in their French Open meetings and is 19-7 overall on clay. — AFP

DHAWAN TO LEAD INDIA ON SL TOUR

New Delhi, June 10: Shikhar Dhawan has been confirmed as captain, while pacer Bhuvneshwar Kumar will be his deputy as the BCCI named a 20-member squad to tour Sri Lanka in July. All matches will be played at the R Premadasa International Stadium in Colombo.

Among the youngsters to get a look in are Devdutt Padikkal, Ruturaj Gaikwad and Chetan Sakariya, all of who impressed in the domestic circuit and Indian Premier League recently. The experienced Karnataka allrounder Krishnappa Gowtham also gets a call up, alongside experienced white-ball spinners Yuzvendra Chahal and Kuldeep Yadav. Tamil Nadu and Kolkata Knight Riders spinner Varun Chakravarthy gets another chance with the national squad after he missed out on the Australia tour due to injury after being originally named in the T20I squad. — Agencies

SQUAD

Shikhar Dhawan (Captain), Prithvi Shaw, Devdutt Padikkal, Ruturaj Gaikwad, Suryakumar Yadav, Manish Pandey, Hardik Pandya, Nitish Rana, Ishan Kishan (Wicket-keeper), Sanju Samson (Wicket-keeper), Yuzvendra Chahal, Rahul Chahar, K Gowtham, Krunal Pandya, Kuldeep Yadav, Varun C, Bhuvneshwar Kumar (Vice-captain), Deepak Chahar, Navdeep Saini, Chetan Sakariya
Net Bowlers: Ishan Porel, Sandeep Warrier, Arshdeep Singh, Sai Kishore, Simarjeet Singh

Dingko dies after battle with cancer

New Delhi, June 10: Asian Games gold medal-winning former boxer Dingko Singh, who inspired a generation of Indian pugilists with his swashbuckling ring craft and flamboyant personality, died on Thursday after a long battle with liver cancer.

He was 42 and had been fighting the disease since 2017. He is survived by his wife Babai Ngangom, a son and a daughter.

During his battle with cancer, the former bantamweight (54kg) boxer's health woes were compounded by a bout of jaundice and Covid-19 last year. "We lost a legend," Olympic-bound boxer Vikas Krishan said summing up what he meant to Indian boxing.

Dingko's gold in the

Dingko Singh

Bangkok Asiad was the first in 16 years for Indian boxing after Kaur Singh's top finish at the regional showpiece's 1982 edition.

Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju offered condolences on his demise along with the national federation and a host of Indian boxers, some of whom have only heard tales of his dazzling persona. — PTI

RORY BURNS BRIGHT, BUT HOSTS COLLAPSE ON DAY 1

Birmingham, June 10: Matt Henry struck twice on his return to international cricket as a much-changed New Zealand reduced England to 152-4 at tea on the first day of the second Test at Edgbaston on Thursday.

England, who had been 72-0, lost three wickets for 13 runs shortly after lunch as they slumped to 85-3, with captain Joe Root out for just four. But opener Rory Burns, fresh from his hundred in the drawn first Test at Lord's last week, was still there on 73 not out.

Henry, one of six changes to New Zealand's side, deserved his interval figures of 2-36 in 13 overs. The paceman, in for the veteran Tim Southee — one of three New Zealand players rested ahead of next week's inaugural World Test Championship final against India at Southampton — started the slump.

Dom Sibley tried to leave a Henry away-swing but was caught behind for 35. England's 72-1 became 73-2 when Zak Crawley's miserable run continued with a duck, the batsman caught in the slips after a loose shot off left-arm paceman Neil Wagner — the only surviving member of New Zealand's attack from Lord's. — AFP

Brief scores (Day 1, at Tea): England 152/4 in 56 overs (Rory Burns 73 (batting), Dom Sibley 35, Matt Henry 2/36) vs New Zealand

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