

SHORT TAKES

NO RELIEF FROM
TS HIGH COURT
FOR SRILAKSHMIDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JULY 2

The Telangana High Court on Friday refused to issue directions to stop trial against Y. Srilakshmi, senior IAS officer in Andhra Pradesh, at the CBI court in relation to the lease given to Obulapuram Mining Company (OMC).

The court directed the CBI to file a memo before the CBI court stating that the probe was complete in this case.

Srilakshmi had filed the petition before the Telangana High Court seeking to issue directions to the CBI court to stop further proceedings against her in the OMC case until the border issue between AP and Karnataka is finalised.

Her counsel said the issue of the border of the two states was pending before the Supreme Court.

TSHC SEEKS DETAILS
IN JAGAN'S QUID
PRO QUO CASESDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JULY 2

The Telangana High Court on Friday sought case-wise details from the CBI about the quash petitions filed by the accused in relation to the Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy quid pro quo cases. The CBI has filed 11 chargesheets and had booked government officials as accused. Most of the accused have approached the High Court seeking to get their names removed.

On Friday, Justice Shamim Akthar was dealing with quash petitions filed by Hetero Pharma and its director Srinivas Reddy, Srinivas Balaji, who is accused in the Lepakshi Knowledge Hub cases, Jitendra Hirwani of Indu group and Embassy realtors.

T. Niranjan Reddy, counsel for Hetero, said the High Court had quashed the case against the India Cements managing director and sought similar relief. He complained that there was political influence on the CBI to register the cases against the industrialists and others. He said that with the land allotments from the government, Hetero had developed Mediciti and nearly 3,000 people were getting employment.

Sunder, CBI counsel, denying the allegations of political influence, said that there were 103 accused in 11 cases. He said the case relating to the India Cements MD does not apply to other cases.

GUNTUR, KADAPA
LAGGING BEHIND IN
HOUSING WORKS

From page 1

On the first day, as against a target of 1.28 lakh, the ground for some 2.02 lakh houses has been readied. This was a new record, he said.

Only two districts — Guntur and Kadapa — lagged behind in the ground-laying work on the first day. The highest number of grounding — for 42,342 houses — was in Chittoor district against the target of 17,000. This was followed by 24,566 groundings in West Godavari against a target of 15,000. For Vizianagaram, the ground was laid for 23,480 houses against a target of 8,900.

In Krishna, it was 16,732 against the target of 15,700. As for Kurnool, it was 16,168 against 10,500. For Srikakulam, it was 15,853 against 8,000.

Demand to take up 2 Kurnool projects

Experts say Gundrevula, Vedavati projects have assured allocation of water and administrative sanction from AP government

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL, JULY 2

The demand for taking up construction of the Gundrevula and Vedavati projects has come to the fore again with the escalation of tensions between Telangana state and Andhra Pradesh over the sharing of river waters.

Irrigation experts said both projects have assured allocation of water and administrative sanction from the AP government.

The BJP state unit is holding a 'river water manthan' at Kurnool on Sunday to make its stand clear on the sharing of Krishna waters, while its Telangana state unit is readying to stand by the interests of the neighbouring state.

Kapil Eswaraya, a senior BJP leader, said about 50 delegates would turn up at the manthan. A report would be submitted to the high command in New Delhi.

He said while Kurnool district had projects like Gundrevula and Vedavati, the state government was looking at Galeru Nagari and other irrigation projects which do not have assured allocation of water.

The issue will be solved if both the Chief Ministers meet personally and discuss the utilisation of assured and sharing waters from the Krishna river as per earlier agreements instead of writing letters and giving media statements.

He said that according to agreements, AP has been assured 62 per cent water from Srisailem and Telangana state 38 per. On Friday, Srisailem ahd 42.6 tmc ft (thousand million cubic feet) of water (total capacity 215.8 tmc ft) and the level stood at 822.30 feet (full level 885 ft).

An official of AP's Srisailem Right Bank Hydroelectric Station (SRBHES) said that they are ready to generate electricity with the available water but the government had not directed them to do so. AP's Srisailem powerhouse has seven generators of 110 million units each. He said rains have been forecast for July and August, and the Srisailem reservoir will get enough water to generate power.

The AP police continued deployment of forces at Srisailem reservoir, Pothireddypadu head regulator, and Rajolibanda Diversion Scheme (RDS) in view of water disputes with Telangana, Atmakur DSP Y. Shruthi said.

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Police personnel at the Nagarjunasagar project in Nalgonda district on Friday.

— BY ARRANGEMENT

TS intensifies power
generation from damsDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JULY 2

Notwithstanding the stiff resistance and complaints by the Andhra Pradesh government, TS Genco (Generation Corporation) continues to generate hydel power at irrigation projects over river Krishna at the rate of almost 30 MW per day since June 29 with the security cover provided by the Ts government by deploying a large police force at the dams.

The total installed capacity of hydel power in Telangana state is 2,441 MW. Of this, over 90 per cent is from projects on the Krishna. Nagarjunasagar, Srisailem, Pulichintala and Jurala projects comprise 2,369 MW of the installed capacity.

The TS Genco has produced over 100 MW power for the last four days since June 29, when the tussle erupted over generation of hydel power with the Andhra Pradesh government complaining to the Centre against Telangana state.

TS Genco is utilising hydel power to operate the Kaleshwaram lift irrigation pumps, which require a large amount of power. The government is incurring a heavy expenditure on account of using thermal power.

To overcome this, the state government has decided to utilise cheaper hydel power to the maximum extent during monsoon, which is suitable for hydel power generation when inflows will be huge in projects.

The TS government has started lifting Godavari water from the Kaleshwaram project to fill reservoirs starting from Medigadda, Annaram, Sundilla to Mid-Manair project and Mallannasagar, using what are called 'Bahubali motors' for their size.

The Srisailem Left Bank Canal has the highest installed capacity of 900 MW followed by Nagarjunasagar (815 MW), Lower Jurala (240 MW), Jurala (234 MW), Pulichintala (120MW) and Nagarjunasagar left canal (60MW).

TS urges Centre to
ignore Jagan's letterDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JULY 2

Telangana state ministers on Friday urged the Centre to ignore the letter written by Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy complaining against the TS government for taking up hydel power generation at irrigation projects across the Krishna.

Energy minister G. Jagdish Reddy and tourism minister V. Srinivas Goud addressed separate press conferences to lash out at Jagan Mohan Reddy for allegedly misleading the Centre with "fake complaints".

The TS energy minister asked the AP Chief Minister to do some soul-searching to understand how the situation had arisen that he had to write to the Prime Minister.

"Jagan himself has created this situation. Our Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao had extended a hand of friendship and offered to settle all water disputes amicably. He offered to share surplus Godavari water since availability of water in Krishna is comparatively low. But Jagan unilaterally decided to construct the Rayalaseema Lift Irrigation Scheme and expand the Pothireddypadu project to divert Krishna water to AP illegally," the TS minister said.

At Srisailem, the TS Genco produced 9.72 MW power on June 29, 12.97 MW on June 30 and 13.79 MW on July 1.

At Nagarjunasagar, it generated 6.76 MW on June 29, 16.12 MW on June 30 and 15.95 MW on July 1. At Pulichintala, it has produced 0.06 MW on June 29, 0.55 on June 30 and 0.80 on July 1.

These figures indicate that TS Genco has been increasing generation at

He urged the AP Chief Minister to remember that Telangana was a state and not a part of Andhra Pradesh. Telangana has a Chief Minister who never compromises when it comes to protecting the interests of the state, he said.

"YSR could divert Krishna water to AP because there was no one to question him then. All Telangana Congress leaders were like his slaves and kept mum in order to protect their own posts. But today KCR will not stay silent if Jagan diverts Krishna water like his father. We showed what we can do with hydel power generation," he added.

Srinivas Goud stated that at no one has the power to stop hydel power generation by the TS government. "It's our right to generate hydel power from our share of Krishna water in irrigation projects. The purpose of Srisailem project itself is power generation but Seemadhara rulers converted it as a multipurpose project to benefit their region," Goud alleged.

He urged Modi and Union Jal Shakti minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat not to issue orders in haste in response to the AP Chief Minister's letter like Krishna River Management Board (KRMB) asking the TS government to stop hydel power generation.

all projects day after day while the AP government is stepping up opposition. The hydel generation is not being taken up at a single project on river Godavari due to poor water levels in Singur which has installed capacity of 15 MW, Nizamagar (10 MW), Pochampad (36 MW), Peddapalli mini hydro (9.2 MW) and Palair mini hydro (2 MW). There is zero production in these projects at present.

JAGAN URGED TO
MOUNT PRESSURE ON
CENTRE AGAINST TSDC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, JULY 2

Devagudi Chandra Mouliswar Reddy, convenor of Rayalaseema Ethipothala Sadhana Samiti, clarified that the then Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao held an all-party meeting in 1984 and declared Srisailem project as an irrigation project.

Addressing a press conference here on Friday, he said that according to GO No. 107 (September 28, 2004) pertaining to the management of Srisailem project in the combined Andhra Pradesh, the minimum water level in Srisailem should be 854 feet.

He said that the Telangana state government was violating this by releasing water through Srisailem left power station, which would be a grave injustice to Rayalaseema. He alleged that despite the ruckus, the Krishna River Water Management Board was playing the role of a silent spectator.

He said the Telangana government was not only taking up projects contrary to the Bachawat tribunal allocations, but also ignoring laws made by the united Andhra Pradesh. He said water disputes embodied in the State Separation Act were being dealt with in violation of Section 89. He said that Nagarjunasagar water should be released only for agricultural purposes.

Reddy said that it is not enough to write letters to the Union Government against Telangana's power generation. Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy should bring direct pressure on the Centre.

He demanded the BJP to spell out its stand on the Rayalaseema lift scheme. He said that they would continue to protest against construction of illegal projects in Telangana.

Sangham district secretary Gali Chandra and others were also present.

● Devagudi Chandra Mouliswar Reddy said that the Telangana state government was violating this by releasing water through Srisailem left power station.

Forces bent on
fomenting AP-TS
enmity, says SajjalaDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JULY 2

Government adviser Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy on Friday disclosed that Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has written letters to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Jal Shakti minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat asserting state government has complete rights on the share of water that belongs to Andhra Pradesh and will fully utilise its quota.

Ramakrishna Reddy made it clear that Telangana is generating electricity against rules, which will severely impact AP. In this regard, he pointed out that the TS government is not even listening to the wiser counsel of Krishna River Management Board (KRMB) on "improper" usage of water.

The government adviser suspected certain forces are trying to create conflict between the two states. It is foreseeing such eventually that Jagan Mohan Reddy has written to the Prime Minister and Jal Shakti minister seeking to resolve the dispute at the earliest, with the Centre taking responsibility for managing the projects.

Ramakrishna Reddy pointed out that

Telangana government has started power generation even before the water level has reached 800 feet. He explained that the full allocation of 44,000 cusecs of water from Pothireddypadu can be drawn only if water level reaches 881 ft in Srisailem, which is possible only during flood period, which lasts less than 15 days. The aim of Rayalaseema Lift-Irrigation Project is to draw this allocated water fully in lesser time. Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao not only supported this idea and project but encouraged its construction.

The government adviser reminded TS Chief Minister that though the two Telugu states are divided in terms of administration, they are indeed a single state as far as Telugu people are concerned. He pointed out that the two Chief Ministers had agreed in the past to work for the benefit of both the states and resolve issues in a friendly way. "On multiple occasions, Chandrasekhar Rao himself had said he is aware of difficulties being faced by Rayalaseema people with regard to water and there is a need for solution," Ramakrishna Reddy recalled.

Minister: DPR is readied
for Neradi barrage on AOBDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JULY 2

Irrigation minister Anil Yadav said a detailed project report (DPR) would be prepared on the irrigation project, the Neradi barrage over river Vamsadhara on the Andhra-Odisha border village in Srikakulam district.

The minister toured the area on Friday along with deputy chief minister Dharmanra Krishna Das. He interacted with the people of Andhra and Odisha. Yadav said three lakh acres will be irrigated if the Neradi project including the work on the barrage is completed.

People of Odisha came to the site and explained their problems to the minister and said they were positive about the construction of the barrage.

20 gates of Prakasam barrage
opened, 8,500 cusecs let out

From page 1

Krishna river conservator A. Raja Swaroop Kumar said, "We have lifted 20 gates out of the total 70 at the barrage and released nearly 8,500 cusecs of water downstream into the sea."

Moreover, there is a demand to expedite construction of a new barrage across the Krishna river at Damuluru of Ibrahimpatnam mandal in Krishna

district, located at 23 km distance upstream from Prakasam barrage as it is designed to store nearly 10 tmc ft of water in its reservoir and estimated to cost nearly ₹2,000 crore. The project has gone for retendering process at present.

If this project is executed, it will help store water instead of draining into the sea as Prakasam barrage has storage capacity of just 3.07 tmc ft.

DISHA | APP

CM approves plans to recruit additional staff for strengthening Disha call centres, says there is no compromise on women's safety

Govt to expedite work on 18 courts to try cases of crime against women

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JULY 2

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has said women police should be made active in village and ward secretariats so that women will not have to go to police stations to make a complaint in distress situations.

He conducted a review meeting at the camp office here on Friday on the Disha project for women safety. He told the officials that awareness and training should be provided to women police on the Disha App. Collectors and SPs should hold review meetings on public issues as well as women's safety every two weeks.

The CM said Zero FIR opportunity should be the aim. Women hesitate to go to police stations to make complaints. They should have opportunity to do so through women police at village level itself. Women

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JULY 2

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has asserted that there should be no delay in providing assistance to women victims of atrocities. Focus should be laid on every case and justice should be delivered to the victims.

police should be given training in all features of the Disha App.

The reception system in police stations should be strong, the CM said, and added that officials must set up a display board at police stations to explain to the public as to how the Disha App works.

Officials must focus attention on setting up 18 special courts for crimes against

The officials explained the impact of Disha cases in detail to the chief minister during the review meeting held here on Friday.

The officials informed Jagan that they are arranging a job to the father of victim in the Kurnool incident while her mother can continue in her job at a dispensary there. They said a counter is

women and 19 special courts for crimes against children, the CM said.

Officials said the Disha Bill is pending with the Union Ministry of Women and Child Welfare. Reminders have been sent. The CM himself wrote to Union minister for Women and Child Welfare, Smriti Irani, requesting her to expedite the process of approval.

being filed in the high court seeking a CBI inquiry into the incident. A house site of five cents and five acres of agricultural land were identified for transfer of ownership to the victim's family.

The CM advised officials to pay due attention and ensure justice is done to the victims/complainants.

Details of Disha cases in which chargesheet was filed within seven days: Rape cases: 34; Rape & POCSO cases: 49, POCSO cases: 79, violence against women: 524, other cases: 829. Total cases 1515.

Details of Disha cases in which charge sheet was filed within 15 days: Rape cases: 76; Rape & POCSO cases: 106, POCSO

cases: 174, violence against women: 1075, other cases: 1815. Total cases: 3246.

Disha impact: Sheets opened: Cyber bullying sheets: 1,531, sexual offenders: 2017, database created and sexual offenders geo-tagged: 2,11,793. people punished for crimes against women after Disha initiatives were taken: 143.

and protection of women. He also approved procurement of 145 Scorpio vehicles for Disha patrolling. These vehicles will be allotted to the police stations related to colleges, universities, engineering colleges and other important places.

The CM also agreed to set up six new Disha police stations across the state. He promised to fill 61 posts in the forensic department

and asked officials to complete the construction of the 'center for excellence labs' in Tirupati and Visakhapatnam.

Discussions were also held at the review meet on the use of Disha App for the Abhayam project. It was noted that the features in Disha App are better and the goals of the Abhayam project are also being attained.

Disha app is popular
among women: CM

From page 1

The Chief Minister explained that Disha App has become popular among women in AP. Some 19.83 lakh downloads of the app were done and 3,03,752 SOS requests received through this App in the last 1.5 years. Of these, 1,823 calls were actionable and FIRs have been registered in 221 cases.

The CM said Women Help Desks have been set up in 700 police stations across the state to enable women approach police stations with ease. Some 12 Designated Mahila Courts and 9 Exclusive POCSO courts are operational in

the state for trial of offences against women and children.

He stated: "As many as 162 rape cases and 1,353 sexual offence cases have been charged within seven days of receiving the complaints, since December 2019. A total of 498 Zero FIRs were registered. The average time to complete investigation in cases of crime against women has gone down from 117 days in 2017 to 41 days in 2021.

Jagan Mohan Reddy said the investigation compliance rate in sexual offences for current year is 90.17 per cent in Andhra Pradesh as compared to the national average of 35 per cent.

IN BRIEF

YVU SCHOLAR GETS POST IN SOUTH KOREA

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, JULY 2

Nava Koteswara Rao, a researcher with Material Science and Nanotechnology Department at Yogi Vemana University (YVU), Kadapa, has been selected as senior scientist at a prestigious institution in Republic of Korea.

He will be heading to National NanoFabrication Centre in Daejeon city. 52 people were selected from around the world.

SPUTNIK VACCINE NOW AVAILABLE IN KURNOOL

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL, JULY 2

Amid the Covid-19 vaccine scarcity, the Kurnool city has got one more choice to get the jab. For the first time in the Rayalaseema region, Sputnik vaccine with 91.6 per cent efficiency has been made available at Gouri Gopal Hospital. The vaccine is administered to people above 18 years of age, said the hospital management, and is priced at ₹1,145 per dose. It is also proved to be efficiently working for the Delta variant of Covid-19, it added.

FORMER MLA PAMISETTY PASSES AWAY

DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, JULY 2

Former MLA Pamisetty Ranganayakulu, who was also former APCO chairman from Hindupur passed away on Friday due to serious health issues.

Ranganayakulu was formerly a close aide of slain chief minister N.T. Rama Rao who had sacrificed MLA seat to N.T. Rama Rao when he opted for the Hindupur Assembly segment in 1989 polls. Ranganayakulu worked as APCO chairman and later joined Chandrababu Naidu group during differences in TD.

The former MLA Ranganayakulu who was also leading one of silk houses in Muddireddypalli area in Hindupur area had recently joined YSRC following differences with the TD leaders even as the MLA Nandamuri Balakrishna tried to pacify the situation. He died while being treated at a government hospital on Friday night. Leaders from all parties expressed condolences to family members of former MLA.

SP ASKS WOMEN TO REPORT ANY PROBLEM TO COPS

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, JULY 2

District SP Karur Karunapati Nagendra Kumar Anburajan warned that strict action will be taken on those who commit crimes against women and girls in the district for mental or physical abuse. Women and girls in the district are advised to report any problem or difficulty anywhere, mentally or physically, to the police immediately. Information can be given by dialing 100 or calling the District SP at 9440796900. He said the complainants' details were kept confidential and to complain fearlessly. He said the police officers had been instructed to conduct surprise inspections at the places where gangsters were harassing girls and catching them and registering cases. The police checks and patrols have been intensified in all parks, railway stations, bus stands, colleges, ladies' hostels and tourist areas. The SP asked every woman in the district to download the Disha app. SP Anburajan explained that in case of danger, if the SOS button is pressed, the police will reach the spot in a matter of moments and rescue them.

RAYALASEEMA, COASTAL DISTRICTS GET RAIN

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JULY 2

Many areas in the coastal and Rayala-seema districts received light to heavy rain on Friday under the influence of the active southwest monsoon. Amadalavalasa in Srikakulam district received 63 mm of rainfall while Visakhapatnam city received a maximum of 53 mm of rainfall, which lasted for nearly

Chittoor's Covid rate leaves people worried

Positivity rate is more than 10 per cent in 37 mandals

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, JULY 2

Baffled by the increase in the number of Covid-19 positive cases in nearly 19 mandals in Chittoor district compared to last week, public health experts suspect that mutant variants of the virus could have resulted in a high transmission rate. Chittoor is one of the four districts in the State that is continuing the 6 pm to 6 am curfew.

According to sources, the test positivity rate, which is considered by the state government as a barometer for revising curfew restrictions, was

more than 10 per cent in 37 out of 67 mandals in the district. It is said to have increased by at least 5.54 per cent in over 35 PHCs.

During the first wave of Covid-19, the district recorded 88,617 cases by the end of 2020. But, in the election month of April, nearly 33,112 cases were reported in the district while in May it more than doubled at 72,417 cases. Similarly, 116 Covid-19 patients succumbed in April and 331 in May, as against 850 deaths in the entire 2020. The district has recorded 597 cases in the last 24 hours as on Friday.

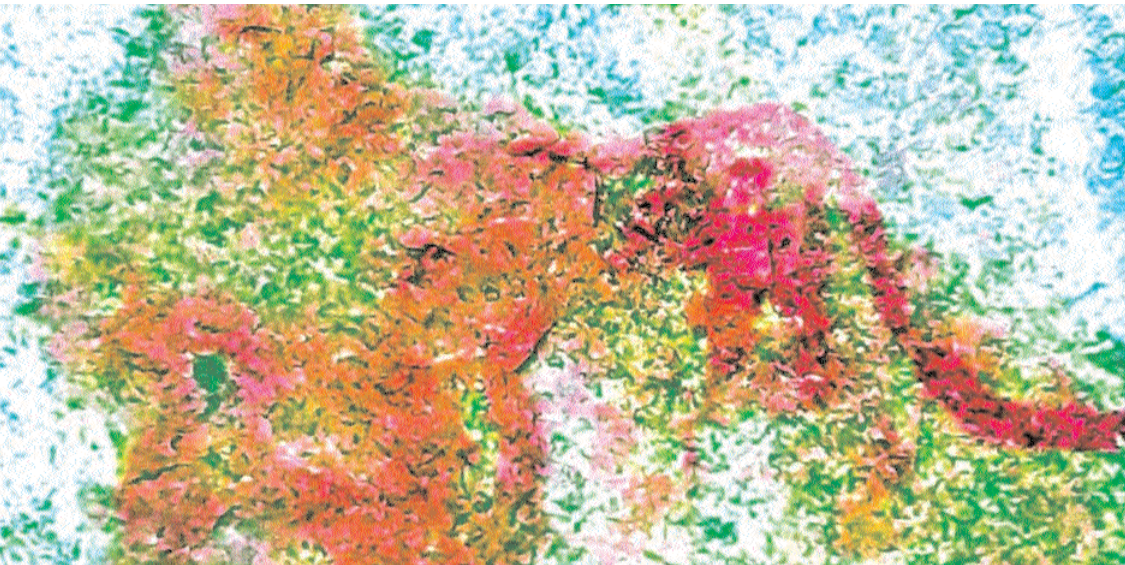
Though the test positivity rate as well as the number of daily infections had come down substantially in the district over the past few weeks, the rate of decline is comparatively slower.

A senior health official, who spoke to DC on condition of anonymity, suspected that the Delta variant, coupled with gaps in tracing and isolation strategies, may have played a role in the high transmission rate in parts of the district.

"This variant is one and a half times more infectious. This could be the main reason for most family members testing

positive after one member is infected. We can't confirm this now, as the evidence should come from genomic sequencing," he added.

At present, samples of Covid patients from the district are being sent to labs in other states and the reports come quite late. The delay has made it difficult for the authorities to ascertain as to which variant is more damaging. For instance, in the case of the first Delta plus variant found in Tirupati, the person's sample was sent to Hyderabad's CCMB on April 5 and the result was out on June 23.



Rock art found at Fakkeeroni mitta near Medikonda village in Jogulamba Gadwal district.

Paleolithic age art treasure found in Medikonda

DC CORRESPONDENT
MAHBUBNAGAR JULY 2

New Telangana History Group (NTHG), which is looking for hidden art treasures, which could back to the paleolithic age, has found rock art at

Fakkeeroni mitta near Medikonda village in Jogulamba Gadwal district. Disclosing their findings, which was dated back to 10,000 years, Hanum-annagari Vema Reddy said they had discovered colourful

rock art measuring six feet in length and four feet in breadth. Rock art comprises images of tigers, human shapes, and wild animals. The expression of the artist clearly depicts the depth of his understanding of

the mechanics of this art form. Though such images were identified earlier in rock art found in Pandavula gutta, Goparajapalli, Hastalapur, Vatti Malla, the Medikonda rock art is different, Reddy said.

DC impact: Navy marks 'No Fly Zone' in 3km area

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JULY 2

Responding to a report published in *Deccan Chronicle*, the Indian Navy on Friday announced that an area of three km from the perimeter of Indian Naval installations in Visakhapatnam has been designated as a "No Fly Zone".

The reports, 'Amid vital installations, drones not authorised'

and 'No drone has police permission in Vizag' were published on June 29. In an official release here on Friday from the Eastern Naval Command, all individuals and civil agencies are prohibited from flying any non-conventional aerial objects, including drones or unmanned aerial vehicles within the zone.

The Navy will destroy or confiscate any non-conventional aerial

object including drones or UAV found flying. Further, the operator found violating these orders will be charged under the provisions of the IPC.

Approval for utilisation of drones by any operator or civil or government agency is governed by the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs. Approval from DGCA is to be obtained through the Digi Sky website.

KAKINADA STANDS SEVENTH IN NATIONAL RATINGS OF SMART CITY

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, JULY 2

Kakinada is in the forefront among smart cities in Andhra Pradesh and has seventh position in all-India rankings for accomplishing smart city concepts.

Announcing this on Friday, Kakinada municipal commissioner Swapnil Dinkar Pundkar pointed out that the city has shown effective results in several sectors, including implementation of projects, issuing work orders, transfer of funds to special purpose

ZERO JUDGES FROM BCs, STs IN HC DECRIED

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JULY 2

Andhra Lawyers Association has decried no representation to judges from backward classes and scheduled tribes in Andhra Pradesh High Court.

In a letter addressed to Chief Justice of India Justice N.V. Ramana, Andhra Lawyers Association said that out of AP High Court strength of 37 judges, only 19 judges are working at present and of them, two from other states, five from judicial service, two from SC communities and 10 from other communities and added that there was no representation of judges from BCs and STs.

The lawyers said that between 2009 and 2013, two lawyers aged 58 years were appointed as judges of AP HC and between 2017 and 2020, nearly 10 lawyers at the age of 57 years were appointed as judges to AP HC.

The lawyers alleged that the judges in the Supreme Court and High Courts were appointing those who were familiar to them or their blood relatives as judges in the higher courts while those from three to four other castes were also being appointed to higher courts causing injustice to the lawyers from BCs and STs as they were not being considered for appointment as judges to higher courts.

VAHANA MITRA DATE EXTENDED

Vijayawada: Minister Perni Venkatramaiah alias Nani, said that the last date for applying "YSR Vahana Mitra" 2021-22, second phase has been extended to July 6.

₹17 LAKH AID TO KATHI MAHESH

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JULY 2

The Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy government has released financial assistance of ₹17 lakh for the treatment of film actor and critic Kathi Mahesh Kumar, who was injured in a road accident. To this effect, a letter was officially released from the Chief Minister office on Friday. The amount was released from the CMRF.

CM to take part in mega event after long gap of Covid-19

DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, JULY 2

After a drag of 16 months due to the Covid pandemic and resultant lockdowns, Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy's first mega programme will be held at Rayadurgam in the district on July 8, marking Farmers' Day.

The chief minister has been guarded in his approach and had even cancelled a public meeting as part of the election campaign for Tirupati bypolls. Alternatively, most of the government schemes and programmes were launched by him via virtual mode.

"The chief minister will take part in the Farmers Day celebrations and birth anniversary of deceased former chief minister Rajasekhara Reddy on July 8. A public meeting is being organised at the high school grounds on Molakalmuru road in Rayadurgam town," R&B minister Shankar Narayana said here on Friday.

The minister reviewed matters with the officials

and representatives at Rayadurgam on Friday and visited the location where the public meeting will be conducted.

The CM's programme coordinator Thalashila Raghuram said Jagan is keen on attending the farmers day event, at which the services of deceased YSR to farmers will be highlighted. He asked officials and leaders to make the event a big success.

Collector Nagalakshmi has directed district officials to coordinate matters in ways also as to ensure the programme is held by following the Covid norms and protocols. Masks will be distributed at the venue along with thermal screeners and sanitizers.

In the view of monsoon impact and possible rain, R&B officials were asked to take proper care of the venue for the public meeting. SP Satya Esubabu said the Covid norms will be strictly followed at the meeting venue.

MP Talari Rangaiah and MLA Prakash Reddy, were among those present.

Govt owes ₹12.28 crore to midday meal agencies

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, JULY 2

Agencies serving midday meals to schoolchildren in Kadapa district are getting increasingly worried in the absence of timely release of funds by the state government. They feel that they are caught in huge debts, which is close to ₹12.28 crore.

There are 715 upper primary and high schools in the district, with an overall student-strength of 1,34,136. The 2,569 primary schools boast of 1,29,584 students. Roughly ₹7.5 crore for upper primary and high schools and ₹3.48 crore for 2,569 primary schools are due to midday meals agencies,

which number around 5,745 with a staff strength of 7,298. These assistants are paid monthly honorarium and the dues have touched ₹1.3 crore.

Schools remained closed last year due to corona, and some opened partially in November. Midday meals bills are due to agencies from February to April 19 for elementary schools and for Class X students until the end of April.

District education officials plead helplessness. "We have nothing in our hands and funds will be credited directly to the accounts of the agencies," they said, adding that they would take up the matter to the higher-ups.

21-yr-old undergoes abortion due to medical negligence

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, JULY 2

A 21-year-old woman got her pregnancy aborted in V R Puram mandal in the Agency area due to the alleged negligence of two registered medical practitioners (RMPs).

According to the Rekapalli primary health centre (PHC) medical officer, four days ago, an auxiliary nurse midwife (ANM) of the centre went to the girl's house for routine check-up and to observe the condition of the girl as she was in the third month of her pregnancy. The ANM noticed that she was weak and was suffering from vomiting and bleeding problems and advised her to go to the government hospital for treatment.

Meanwhile, she approached an RMP of Chintagaala village, who conducted typhoid and malaria tests on her and gave her saline and other tablets and sent her home. Again, when an ASHA worker came for a check-up, she also advised her to go to the government hospital. But meanwhile, another

RMP of Rekapalli approached her and gave treatment and two injections.

On Thursday evening, when the Rekapalli PHC medical officer Dr M. Sundar Prasad was reviewing with the ANMs and ASHA workers, the ANM narrated the issue. Dr Prasad immediately went to the girl's house on Thursday night and observed that her condition was critical and performed abortion to her. He also conducted Covid-19 tests on her and her husband and both were tested positive. Dr Prasad submitted a report to the ITDA project officer A. Venkata Ramana on this issue.

Dr Prasad told this reporter that he had made it clear to the RMPs in the mandal that they should not give any treatment without making Covid-19 tests and also they should bring their conditions to his notice without fail as it was their responsibility as per the ICMR guidelines. But, the RMPs neglected the norms and caused to perform abortion.

SRISAILAM COPPER PLATE GRANT OF MAHADEVA OF CHAMGALVA DYNASTY

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL, JULY 2

The recent excavation of copper plates at Ghanta Matham in Srisaillam when deciphered revealed the massive grants of medieval rulers in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.

P Chenna Reddy, dean of Telugu University and former Director of Archeology said. "This single copper

plate, recovered recently during the course of renovation work in Ghanta-matham at Srisaillam, Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh, was issued by the king Mahadeva of Chamgalva dynasty ruling from Dvarakapura, (Halebidu), Karnataka."

He said it is written in Sanskrit language and Nagari characters, dated Saka 1419.



IN BRIEF

DESHMUKH CLAIMS CBI PROBE ILLEGAL

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC MUMBAI, JULY 2

Terming the CBI inquiry against him as illegal, Anil Deshmukh, the former Maharashtra home minister, on Friday complained to the Bombay High Court that he is facing inquiry over corruption charges in breach of legal procedure while even 26/11 terrorist Ajmal Kasab got the benefit of the rule of law.

Raising the question of prior sanction to book Deshmukh being a government servant senior counsel Amit Desai on behalf of Deshmukh contended before the court that even though preliminary inquiry against applicant was initiated on the orders of this court but the central probe agency didn't seek prior sanction from the Maharashtra government to prosecute the NCP leader, who was at the time a public servant.

Advocate Desai argued before the division bench of Justice S.S. Shinde and Justice N.M. Jamadar this absence of sanction made the inquiry against Deshmukh, on the charges of corruption and misconduct, illegal.

The bench was hearing the petition filed by Deshmukh challenging the FIR registered by the CBI against him in the aftermath of corruption allegations made against him by former Mumbai police commissioner Param Bir Singh.

Advocate Desai said section 17A of the Prevention of Corruption Act mandated that the police or any other investigating agency procure a prior sanction to prosecute a public servant. The bench, however, pointed out that section 17A protected an officer's conduct that was in discharge of his or her official duties.

NOW, PETROL CROSSES ₹100 IN CHENNAI

New Delhi, Jul 2: Petrol price on Friday crossed the ₹100-per-litre mark in Chennai as well as in some places in Punjab and Kerala after fuel prices were hiked yet again.

Petrol is priced at over ₹99 a litre in Delhi and Kolkata - the only metro cities which haven't seen the ₹100 mark yet.

Petrol price was hiked by 35 paise per litre on Friday but there was no change in diesel rates, according to a price notification of state-owned fuel retailers.

On Thursday, the price of domestic cooking gas (LPG) was hiked by ₹25.50 per 14.2-kg cylinder. A subsidised and non-subsidised cylinder now costs ₹834.50 in Delhi. The increase in petrol price - 33rd in two months - took rates across the country to fresh highs.

In Chennai, the petrol price rose to Rs 100.13 a litre.

MORE NATIONS OKAY INDIAN VACCINES

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC NEW DELHI, JULY 2

A total of 12 European Union (EU) member-nations have till now decided to give Indian nationals vaccinated with Covishield exemptions from travel restrictions in their countries, government sources said on Friday, with the Netherlands joining the bandwagon as well.

These nations are Austria, Germany, Slovenia, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Spain, Switzerland, Estonia, Netherlands, Latvia and Finland, sources said.

Estonia, meanwhile, has in addition decided to give exemptions to Indians vaccinated with Covaxin as well, sources said.

Meanwhile, at his weekly briefing on Friday, external affairs ministry spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said, "The EU has now instituted a digital covid certificate for exempting restrictions on the movement of vaccinated people. Our expectation is that Indians who have been vaccinated through our domestic vaccination program would be treated at par with those vaccinated in the EU and CoWin vaccination certificate would be recognised by the EU on a reciprocal basis. Such CoWin vaccination certificates can be authenticated on the CoWin website itself. We are in touch with EU member states in this regard for reciprocal acceptance. I understand that a number of EU countries have already taken positive steps in this direction."

TAMIL NADU EATERIES CAN OFFER DINE-IN FROM MONDAY

G BABU JAYAKUMAR & D SEKAR | DC CHENNAI, JUL 2

Ushering in a single norm lockdown for the entire State, Chief Minister M K Stalin has permitted all eateries to offer dine-in facility from 6 am to 8 pm and done away with e-registration or e-pass for travel within the State from Monday.

Announcing the new lockdown restrictions and relaxations that would be in force till July 12 and common for all the districts, Stalin said hotels, lodges, guest houses and dormitories would open their doors for guests but with 50 per cent occupancy.

While most of the relaxations announced for the 27 districts with less Coronavirus spread will now be applicable for the remaining 11 that are now under strict restrictions, it would be strict no for inter-State bus service, international travel, theatres, bars, swimming pools, social and political gatherings, entertainment, sports and cultural events, schools and colleges and zoos.

The same old rule for marriages and funerals would continue with only 50 guests and 20 mourners allowed to take part.

Some of other relaxations are permission for business to business exhibitions with strict adherence to Covid-19 protocols, including mandatory RT-PCR test, IT sector offices to function with 50 per cent attendance and opening of clubs, gyms and sports facilities.

Liquor shops will be open from 10 am to 8 pm, buses will run within the State with no air conditioning, research scholars can attend to their work, tea shops can entertain 50 per cent clientele.

CHAUTALA RELEASED FROM TIHAR JAIL

New Delhi/Chandigarh, Jul 2: INLD chief Om Prakash Chautala walked free from the Delhi's Tihar Jail Friday after serving a 10-year sentence in a recruitment scam, his party workers welcoming him with flower petals and drum beats at the capital's border with Haryana.

The former Haryana chief minister told party workers that he will continue to fight for farmers and the poor.

Chautala (86), who was already out on parole, reached the Tihar Jail on Friday to complete formalities after which he was released, prison officials said.

Director General (Delhi Prisons), Sandeep Goel, said, "After necessary formalities, he (Chautala) has been released".

Last month, the Delhi government had passed an order granting a six-month special remission to those who have served nine-and-half years of their 10-year prison sentence to decongest jails in view of the Covid pandemic.

According to officials, since Chautala has already served nine years and nine months of his sentence, he was eligible to get out of prison. Chautala was jailed in 2013 in connection with a teacher recruitment scam. He was on emergency parole since March 26, 2020 due to the Covid pandemic and was scheduled to surrender on February 21, 2021.

However, his parole had been extended by the high court. As on February 21, he had two months and 27 days of jail time left which has been counted as remitted. O P Chautala, his son Ajay Chautala, and 53 others were convicted and sentenced in the case of illegal recruitment of 3,206 junior basic teachers in 2000.

Crucial visit



Union minister of state for home G. Kishan Reddy during a visit to the BSF Frontier headquarters in Jammu. After the visit, the minister tweeted, "Had the opportunity to interact with several officers across ranks, serving in this distinguished CAPF. Always an enriching experience to spend time with our personnel". (sic)

- PTI

Ruckus forces Dhankhar to cut short inaugural address

BJP MLAs protest lack of mention of post-poll violence in Assembly speech

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, JULY 2

A huge ruckus by West Bengal BJP MLAs forced governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on Friday to leave the Assembly without finishing his inaugural address to the House for the first budget session of the third Trinamul Congress government.

The turn of events that unfolded on Friday afternoon was not only unprecedented in the state legislature's history, but also was rare in the relations between the governor and the BJP. At 2 pm, Mr Dhankhar rose to deliver his speech in the

House. He was, however, greeted by angry BJP MLAs, headed by Leader of the Opposition Suwendu Adhikari, who shouted slogans at him from the Opposition benches. Soon they went to the well of the House and burst into noisy protests there as well.

All of them were carrying posters and placards of persons they claimed were their party workers who became victims of the post-poll violence unleashed by the ruling Trinamul Congress in the state after coming to power on May 2.

They were furious after finding no mention of the

post-poll violence on their party workers in the state in the copies of the governor's address, which is customarily drafted by the state government, which were given to them.

Disrupted by the stir, an anguished governor stopped his speech for a minute and apparently expressed his displeasure to Assembly Speaker Biman Banerjee, who spoke to chief minister Mamata Banerjee. Mr Dhankhar then resumed his address, which was however hardly audible due to the BJP MLAs' loud demonstration.

After four minutes, a disappointed governor cut

short his speech and tabled it in the House. Escorted by the Speaker and the CM, Mr Dhankhar then walked out of the Assembly and left for Raj Bhavan.

Mr Adhikari said, "With awe and wonder we found that the governor's address scripted by the state government lacked any mention of the post-poll violence. It also claimed that there have been no atrocities since May 2 and what is referred to as post-poll violence is false, apart from blaming the Election Commission for the anarchy during its rule in the state for the Assembly polls. That is

why we protested."

On the disruption of the governor's speech, the Nandigram BJP MLA added: "He is a very sensitive person. Our protests perhaps compelled him to cut short his address suddenly."

Lashing out at him, parliamentary affairs minister Partha Chatterjee said: "The way the Leader of the Opposition bragged about his party MLAs' protest has turned out to be a balloon... Their aim was to create indiscipline and obstruct the proceedings of the House in front of the governor, whose door they knock on otherwise."

IAF chief: Jammu airbase didn't have advanced anti-drone system

PAWAN BALI | DC NEW DELHI, JULY 2

Calling the drone attack at Jammu air base as a terrorist act, Indian Air Force (IAF) Chief Air Marshal R.K.S. Bhadauria said on Friday that Air Force is in the process to boost its anti-drone capability to counter such attacks.

He said that the Jammu airbase did not have the advanced anti-drone system and it did not house any critical asset.

"What happened at Jammu was essentially a terrorist act which attempted to target our assets there... that attempt failed, our assets were not damaged. There were two explosives used," he said.

The Air Chief Marshal said that one of the explosives was "fragmentation in nature, more meant to kill people if they were to come on to that scene." Two personnel suffered minor injuries during the attack. In the first ever

● The Air chief said that the Air Force has also worked extensively with DRDO for a hard-kill anti-drone system.

drone attack on Indian soil two drones were used to drop low-intensity improvised explosive devices (IEDs) on Indian Air Force's Jammu air base on the intervening night of June 26-27.

"We have gone over this subject in terms of the implications of this kind of capability in the hands of non-state actors and the kind of effect the drone capability and the armed drone capability would have on even future conflicts," he said.

"All those issues have been looked at and many of these projects were already undertaken and some have already been fielded and it is from the indigenous industry especially the soft kill options are already in the field. This particular base did not have critical assets

and we did not have that system fielded in there," said Bhadauria.

He said that there are standard operating procedures at such bases to deal with drone threats "but this happened on a night when there was no visibility". "In terms of our ability to counter such (drone) its already, some ability has already come and much more is coming. In fact another month from now deliveries will start for another such system from indigenous sources," he said. (sic)

The Air chief said that the Air Force has also worked extensively with DRDO for a hard-kill anti-drone system.

"They have nearly functional system. It is under trial. Some improvements need to be done in order to achieve the kind of distances we need to effectively target such activities and that it's just a matter of time before we finish the trials and put it into production so that element will also come

DOMINICA PM SAYS GOVT. NOT BEHIND CHOKSI ABDUCTION

New Delhi, Jul 2: Dominica Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit has termed "total nonsense" the claims that his government was involved in alleged abduction of diamantaire Mehl Choksi, wanted in ₹13,500 crore scam in Punjab National Bank, from neighbouring Antigua and Barbuda, local media there reported.

In his weekly "annou palay" show, Skerrit said his government will allow the court to carry out its process regarding Choksi and gave the assurance that his rights and obligations will be respected, *Dominica News Online* reported.

Skerrit refuted the allegations of a plot between India and Dominica government to kidnap Choksi from neighbouring Caribbean country Antigua and Barbuda, where he was staying since 2018 as a citizen, after fleeing from India, and bring him to Dominica, the news portal reported.

- PTI

U'KHAND BJP MLA ACCUSED OF RAPE

Dehradun, Jul 2: BJP's Jwalapur MLA Suresh Rathore has been accused of rape by a former party colleague, according to police here.

A case of rape was lodged against the MLA at the Bahadarabad police station of Haridwar on Thursday night after a lower court's order. Rathore is the second BJP MLA from Uttarakhand after Mahesh Negi against whom such serious charges have been levelled.

Rathore has been accused of rape and criminal intimidation by the complainant.

BIG LOSS Army soldier killed and another wounded in the fierce gunfight in Valley

LeT commander among 5 militants gunned down

DC CORRESPONDENT SRINAGAR, JULY 2

Five suspected Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LeT) militants including a district level commander and an Army soldier were killed and another wounded in a fierce gunfight which broke out in Hanjin village of Jammu and Kashmir's southern Pulwama district on Thursday night and continued through Friday afternoon.

The police officials identified the slain commander as Nishaz Husain Lone alias Khitab and said that among the four other LeT cadres killed with him was

a Pakistani national Abu Rehan alias Tawheed. The other three slain militants are Danish Manzoor Sheikh, Amir Wagay and Mehran Manzoor- all local Kashmiris.

Hawaladar Kashiray B. of the Army's 44 Rashtriya Rifles laid down his life while fighting the militants, said an official.

The injured soldier has been admitted to a military hospital in Srinagar, he said.

The police said that the fighting started when its counterinsurgency Special Operations Group, the 44 Rashtriya Rifles and Central Reserve Police

Force (CRPF)'s 182 and 183 battalions together launched a cordon-and-search operation at Hanjin in Rajpora area of Pulwama to flush out militants, dead or alive. It said that the militants holed up in the village after the troops moved in, however, turned down repeated surrender offers from the latter.

The police said that due to darkness the operation was suspended late Thursday night, but the cordon remained intact through the night. The fighting resumed at first light on Friday "after the militants once again

refused to surrender and instead opened a barrage of gunfire injuring two soldiers one of whom succumbed later.

The Army said that two AK-47s, one SLR, two pistols and "other war like stores" were recovered from the encounter site.

Inspector General of Police (Kashmir range), Vijay Kumar, termed the killing of militants as "another big success".

Meanwhile, the J&K police on Friday claimed foiling an ex-filtration bid through the Uri sector of the Line of Control (LoC) by arresting four persons.



Locals inside a house that got partially damaged during an encounter between security forces and militants, at Rajpora in Pulwama district on Friday.

- PTI

SHORT TAKES

SYRIA SEEKS AID TO REHABILITATE IS-LINKED MINORS

Beirut: Syria's Kurds on Friday urged international help to set up rehabilitation centres for minors linked to the Islamic State group, after charges they were holding "hundreds of children" in adult prisons.

Acknowledging that some jihadist-linked minors were being held in adult prisons, separate to the many more in camps, senior Kurdish foreign affairs official Abdelkarim Omar said around 30 teenagers have lately been transferred out of one overcrowded camp.

He spoke just days after the International Committee of the Red Cross said "hundreds of children — mostly boys, some as young as 12 — are detained in adult prisons" in northeast Syria.

FALL OF TIGRAY CAPITAL MARKS NEW PHASE

Addis Ababa: Rebel fighters in Ethiopia's war-hit Tigray stunned the world this week by retaking the regional capital Mekele, sparking boastful statements by their leaders and rowdy street celebrations by their supporters.

It came exactly seven months after those same fighters were driven out by the army of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, a Nobel Peace Prize winner who now finds himself mired in an ugly war.

Abiy's government has since announced a unilateral ceasefire, while the rebels have gone on to seize most of Tigray, the northernmost region of Ethiopia. As the UN Security Council is expected to hold its first public meeting on Friday on the conflict, world leaders are mulling what comes next — and whether worst-case humanitarian scenarios can be avoided.

MURDERED MP'S SISTER ELECTED IN KEY UK VOTE

London: Labour leader Keir Starmer breathed a sigh of relief on Friday after the party eked out victory in a special election in one of its northern strongholds, easing discontent after a series of poor showings by Britain's main opposition party.

Starmer praised Kim Leadbeater's 323-vote triumph in the election to represent the Batley and Spen district of West Yorkshire in the House of Commons as a "fantastic result." While the margin of victory was far below the 3,525-vote cushion Labour achieved in 2019, polls had suggested the party could lose the seat it has held since 1997.

Starmer, who has led Labour since April 2020, is under pressure after the party posted dismal results in local elections in May, then lost a special election in Hartlepool, which it had held for 62 years. The party is seeking to stop the momentum of Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Conservatives, which made inroads in Labour's traditional working class strongholds during the 2019 parliamentary elections. Leadbeater is the sister of Jo Cox, who was the Labour lawmaker for the district when she was murdered in 2016.

6MN EU CITIZENS APPLY TO STAY IN UK AFTER BREXIT

London: More than six million EU citizens have applied to stay in the UK after Brexit, the government said Friday, nearly twice the number thought to be living in Britain before it left the bloc.

There was a late flurry of applications ahead of a June 30 deadline for the settlement scheme, designed to allow EU citizens residing in the UK to retain the same rights as they enjoyed before Brexit.

But since the end of the Brexit transition period on January 1, EU citizens wishing to settle or stay have faced tougher tests to secure residency and employment.

The final figure of 6.02 million applications, with 5.1 million grants of status, is far higher than the 3.7 million EU nationals originally estimated to be in the country when the scheme launched in March 2019.

More than 4,00,000 applications were made in the final month before the scheme ended, the Home Office said, adding that those who had missed the deadline on "reasonable grounds" could still make a late application.

Turkey may run airport in Kabul

Seeks political, financial, logistical support from UN, Nato in order to execute proposal

Istanbul, July 2: Turkey's defence minister said on Friday that negotiations over his country's proposal to operate and secure the key international airport in Afghanistan are taking place.

Defence Minister Hulusi Akar said Turkey was discussing the plan with several countries. "There must be some political decisions at the United Nations and NATO, and an agreement must be reached with the Afghan government," he said, adding that Turkey was seeking political, financial and logistical support from various countries.

He emphasised that a final decision had not yet been reached, but negotiations with the United States were continuing and the plan would be executed after the Turkish president's approval.

Earlier this summer, Turkey proposed to operate and provide security for Kabul's Hamid Karzai International Airport in the aftermath of the US pullout from Afghanistan.

● **AN AGREEMENT** on the protection of the airport has become increasingly urgent as the final withdrawal of the remaining 2,500-3,500 US troops and 76,000 allied NATO soldiers nears a conclusion.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan discussed it with US President Joe Biden at their first face-to-face meeting during the NATO summit in mid-June.

An agreement on the protection of the airport has become increasingly urgent as the final withdrawal of the remaining 2,500-3,500 US troops and 76,000 allied NATO soldiers nears a conclusion.

On Friday all U.S. troops left Bagram Airfield after 20 years. The airfield had been the epicenter of the countrywide military operation to defeat the Taliban and hunt down al-Qaida perpetrators of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States.

NATO-member Turkey has over 500 troops in Afghanistan and already plays a significant role at the airport. Akar has previously said Turkey has no plans to deploy more troops.

"The airport must be open and operate. If the airport doesn't work, embassies will pull out, and in such a situation, Afghanistan would become an isolated state," the defense minister said.

Without a separate agreement on the airport the current operations would have to be maintained under the Resolute Support Mission, which is the current US-led military mission.

Until there is an agreement it is not clear that the U.S. and NATO can declare their military mission in Afghanistan over. "We have stated our intent. We said we can stay if these conditions are realized," Akar said.

The minister's comments were carried by official Anadolu news agency. — AP



Women demonstrators clash with Turkish police as they protest against Turkey's decision to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention, in Istanbul. Police fired tear gas at protesters in Istanbul demonstrating against Turkey's controversial exit from a treaty combatting femicide and domestic abuse. — AFP

Turkey withdraws from treaty protecting women

Istanbul, July 2: Turkey formally withdrew on Thursday from a landmark international treaty protecting women from violence, and signed in its own city of Istanbul, though President Recep Tayyip Erdogan insisted it won't be a step backward for women.

Hundreds of women demonstrated in Istanbul later Thursday, holding banners that said they won't give up on the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention. "It's not over for us," one read. Similar protests were held in other Turkish cities.

Erdogan ended the country's participation in the convention with a surprise overnight decree in March, prompting condemnation from women's rights groups and Western countries. A court appeal to stop the withdrawal was rejected this week.

Erdogan announced his "Action Plan for Combating Violence against Women" on Thursday, which includes goals such as reviewing judicial processes, improving protection services and gathering data on violence.

"Some groups are trying to present our official withdrawal from the Istanbul convention on July 1st as going backwards," he said. "Just like our fight against violence towards women did not start with the Istanbul Convention, it won't end with our withdrawal."

In March, the Turkish Presidency's Directorate of Communications issued a statement saying the Istanbul Convention was "hijacked" by those "attempting to normalise homosexuality — which is

incompatible with Turkey's social and family values." Erdogan emphasized traditional family and gender values Thursday, saying combatting violence against women was also a fight to "protect the rights and the honor of our mothers, wives, daughters."

US State Department spokesperson Ned Price tweeted that Turkey's withdrawal was "deeply disappointing and a step backward for the international effort to end violence against women." Women, LGBT groups and others have been protesting the decision. They say the convention's pillars of prevention, protection, criminal prosecution and policy coordination, as well as its identification of gender-based violence, are crucial to protecting women in Turkey. — AP



Activists hold placards reading 'Patents kill', 'Free vaccine' and 'Waive patents' during their march to European Union mission in Kiev on Friday in a rally in support of vaccination action called, 'Vaccinate our world'. Participants urge EU members to support the proposal to waive patent protection for life-saving Covid-19 vaccines. — AFP

Oz tightens border controls to curb risk of virus variant

Canberra, July 2: Australia plans to halve commercial passenger arrivals due to virus risks as parts of the country emerged from lockdowns on Friday. Australia will reduce its cap on arrivals from 6,000 passengers a week to 3,000 by July 14 to reduce pressure on hotel quarantine, Prime Minister Scott Morrison said after a meeting with state and territory leaders.

Australia already has some of the world's tightest border restrictions aimed at keeping Covid-19 out of the country. The new restrictions add to obstacles faced by 34,000 Australian citizens and permanent residents stranded overseas and registered with the government as wanting to come home.

The government will charter more airliners to repatriate Australians, but the reduced limit on commercial passenger arrivals could continue until next year.

"If medical advice changes between now and then, if medical advice suggests that we can alter that, then of course the National Cabinet has always been receptive to that advice and we'll continue to monitor that," Morrison told reporters, referring to his decision-making meetings with the state and territory leaders. "We wouldn't want to keep those caps in place any longer than we had to," he added. Almost half the Australian population locked down since last week due to clusters mostly of the delta variant of the Coronavirus that is thought to be more contagious. — AP

UAE bans travel to 14 countries including India

Dubai, July 2: The UAE government on Friday prohibited its nationals from traveling to 14 countries, including India and Pakistan, in a major step to arrest the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The UAE's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MoFAIC) and the National Emergency Crisis and Disasters Management Authority (NCEMA) announced that its citizens are prohibited from travelling to India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Namibia, Zambia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, Sierra Leone, Liberia, South Africa, and Nigeria.

"Exempt from the decision are the UAE diplomatic missions in the aforementioned countries; emergency treatment cases; official delegations and previously authorised business and technical delegates," they said in a statement released to the UAE's official news agency WAM. — PTI

Germany vows no lockdowns for vaccinated

Berlin, July 2: Germany's health minister on Friday said people who are vaccinated against Covid will not have to go into full lockdown again and will enjoy more freedoms than unvaccinated people in case of another virus resurgence.

"As long as there are no mutations that impact the protection from vaccines... then being fully vaccinated means that restrictions of the kind we saw last winter will not be necessary, needed or legally appropriate," Jens Spahn told reporters in Berlin.

Germany currently has very low infection numbers and has relaxed most of its virus curbs, but concerns are growing about the spread of the more contagious Delta variant and the likelihood of cases climbing again because of summer travel.

Spahn reiterated pleas for Germans to roll up their sleeves to prevent a fourth pandemic wave this autumn. — AFP

Covid tests must in schools to avoid 'harmful effects': WHO

Copenhagen, July 2: The World Health Organisation said Friday that Covid-19 tests should be carried out in schools — even when no cases have been detected — to avoid the "harmful" effects of remote learning.

Screenings in schools had previously only been recommended if a cluster of coronavirus cases has been identified, but the

WHO now believes PCR or rapid antigen tests should be given even in the absence of symptoms among students and staff.

"The summer months offer a valuable window of opportunity for governments to put in place the right set of measures that will help keep infection rates down and avoid resorting to school closures," Hans Kluge,

WHO's regional director for Europe, said in a statement issued together with UNICEF and UNESCO.

He added that closing schools "as we have seen, have such a harmful effect on the education, social and mental well-being of our children and youth." "We can't allow the pandemic to rob children of their education and development," said Kluge. — AFP

France denies Pacific nuke tests cover up

Paris, July 2: The French government denied any cover up on Friday over radiation levels in the Pacific following its nuclear testing in the region, as discussions were held in Paris about the legacy of the explosions.

A two-day roundtable meeting called by French President Emmanuel

Macron in April began on Thursday following fresh allegations that the testing between 1966-1996 caused hidden atmospheric and ground pollution.

"There was no state cover up," Genevieve Darrieusq, junior defence minister, said in a brief comment on the sidelines of the event where she has ruled out any official apology from France.

In March, online investigation site Disclose created waves when said it had analysed some 2,000 pages of French military documents declassified in 2013 about the nearly 200 tests carried out around French Polynesia.

Using statistical modelling and help from academics and specialists, it

concluded that "French authorities have concealed the true impact of nuclear testing on the health of Polynesians for more than 50 years."

The roundtable discussion, which Macron attended on Thursday without making any public comment, has met with a mixed response from Polynesian politicians. — AFP

CYBER | SECURITY

Rogue networks used Kubernetes, an open-source tool originally developed by Google

NSA discloses hacking methods used by Russia

Washington, July 2: US and British agencies disclosed on Thursday details of "brute force" methods they say have been used by Russian intelligence to try to break into the cloud services of hundreds of government agencies, energy companies and other organisations.

An advisory released by the US National Security Agency describes attacks by operatives linked to the GRU, the Russian military intelligence agency, which has been previously tied to major cyberattacks abroad and efforts to disrupt the 2016 and 2020 American elections.

In a statement,

Cybersecurity Director Rob Joyce said the campaign was "likely ongoing, on a global scale." Brute force attacks involve the automated spraying of sites with potential passwords until hackers gain access.

The advisory urges companies to adopt methods long urged by experts as common-sense cyber hygiene, including the use of multi-factor authentication and mandating strong passwords. Issued during a devastating wave of ransomware attacks on governments and key infrastructure, the advisory does not disclose specific targets of the campaign or

its presumed purpose, saying only that hackers have targeted hundreds of organisations worldwide.

The says GRU-linked operatives have tried to break into networks using Kubernetes, an open-source tool originally developed by Google to manage cloud services, since at least mid-2019 through early this year. While a "significant amount" of the attempted break-ins targeted organisations using Microsoft's Office 365 cloud services, the hackers went after other cloud providers and email servers as well, the said.

The US has long accused Russia of using and toler-

ating cyberattacks for espionage, spreading disinformation, and the disruption of governments and key infrastructure.

The Russian Embassy in Washington on Thursday "strictly" denied the involvement of Russian government agencies in cyberattacks on US government agencies or private companies. In a statement posted on Facebook, the embassy said, "We hope that the American side will abandon the practice of unfounded accusations and focus on professional work with Russian experts to strengthen international information security."

Joe Slowik, a threat analyst at the network-monitoring firm Gigamon, said the activity described shows the GRU has further streamlined an already popular technique for breaking into networks.

He said it appears to overlap with Department of Energy reporting on brute force intrusion attempts in late 2019 and early 2020 targeting the U.S. energy and government sectors and is something the US government has apparently been aware of for some time. Slowik said the use of Kubernetes "is certainly a bit unique, although on its own it doesn't appear worrying." — AP



Russian President Vladimir Putin chairs a Security Council meeting at the Kremlin, in Moscow, Russia, on Friday. — AP

DECCAN Chronicle

3 JULY 2021

Take note of grim signals, warnings in Xi's speech

If the founding of the Communist Party of China in Shanghai in 1921 in the shadow of the Russian revolution of 1917 — *Ten Days that Shook the World* — as the title of a famous contemporary book by an American journalist put it — was an event that would hardly have been noticed, CPC's July 1 centenary would be analysed around the world. This is chiefly on account of the speech of Xi Jinping, CPC general secretary and President of his country for life.

It is a speech that sets out China's vision of the next one hundred years to build a mighty military machine. This seems an eerie recall of Hitler's resolve as he went about building the Third Reich. In his hour-long address, Mr Xi noted that "on the journey ahead" the country and the Party "should always be prepared for potential dangers" and "balance development and security imperatives".

For India, which has come to share a border with China in its Himalayan north and east after the obliteration of Tibet's national status and China's militarist push through Aksai Chin into Indian Ladakh, the special address brings home the fact that India will be face to face with a national security state where the people's military will be the driving force in securing China's vision of the next one hundred years.

Under the leadership of the Communist Party, the "people's military" will be the "strong pillar" of strengthening socialism. China, Mr Xi warned, won't accept "sanctimonious preaching" from "those who think they have a right to lecture us". This is no doubt upbraiding the US (which is in the habit of pointing fingers at those that don't show it love and affection).

China's leader also declared that his country will not tolerate any power trying to "bully" or "subjugate" it.

Any attempt to do so will be "on a collision course with a great wall of steel". It needs to be clarified that while some of the international news reporting on the centenary event in Beijing speaks of Mr Xi warning of "broken heads" and "bloodshed" if there is a bid to bully China, the official English language version of the speech circulated by the Chinese news agency Xinhua (and carried on the portal of Nikkei Asia) carries no such reference. If the official English version has been duly edited under the Party's guidance to soften the original, then India should take note. It is broken heads and bloodshed that was headline news from Galwan in June 2020.

Mr Xi's special address collapses the Communist Party, the Chinese state, and the Chinese people, making clear China's intention to perpetuate its one-party State. It opens with the sentence that July 1 was a "great and solemn day in the history of the CPC and the Chinese nation."

China's strongman says that "socialism with Chinese characteristics" "transformed" the country, through "reforms", from being a "highly centralised planned economy" to becoming a "socialist market economy". It is this which had made China "a moderately prosperous society in all respects" and the country is on course to becoming a "great modern socialist country in all respects" in the next one hundred years. Evidently, the Vietnam Communists paid greater attention to the military state aspect and did not send Mr Xi's felicitations on the big day, but the CPI(M) and the CPI did. Both noted China's success against the pandemic. CPI highlighted the need for peace on the border while the CPI(M) eulogised CPC's history.

Subhani



Drones as weapons: India is facing a new challenge



Syed Ata Hasnain

It is not something really unexpected. Whenever a serious initiative is taken by the establishment in India towards normalisation of the situation in Jammu and Kashmir or a fillip is given to a process which is otherwise languishing, there invariably comes a dampener in the form of an unexpected high-profile event. Such events become trendsetters or an element of transformation in the conflict situation, both in the military and political fields. Former Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's famous Lahore Yatra ended with the Kargil intrusion in 1999. Narendra Modi's effort to give India-Pakistan relations a touch of informality with his surprise visit to Nawaz Sharif's family home outside Lahore in December 2015 was met a week later by the Pathankot attack on the first day of 2016. The successful campaign "Operation All Out" launched by the Indian security forces through 2017-18 triggered the Pulwama attack in early 2019; the aim was to send home a message on the relevance of the proxies. Given this backdrop, as soon as the top Indian leadership invited 14 leaders of J&K's mainstream political parties for talks and consultations to break the ice after the two-year disquiet, an initiative dampener designed to take away attention from the positives was expected. In the context of our current times, such an expectation should also have been because of the relative frustration among those who are opposed to the Indian narratives over J&K. In the two years since the constitutional decisions, the Indian government broke the stranglehold that separatists, ter-

rorists and Pakistan's Deep State had established in J&K. By its relentless actions against inimical elements and a successful programme of cultivation of international opinion, the government made all these supposed stakeholders irrelevant to the people of J&K.

Was the drone attack serious enough to be classified as a spectacular event which could prospectively have an effect on the J&K situation? We have had mass casualty events earlier which acted as trendsetters and had the potential of being gamechangers. The 2016 Uri attack and 2019's Pulwama were two such events. Both acted as sparks with the message of extant proxy capability and to convey that the battle was still on. So, unlike conventional operations, this is a typical characteristic of hybrid conflict; it rises and falls in intensity and manifestation. After the successful run of counter-terror operations through the 1990s, the proxies adopted the so called "fidayeen" tactics of suicide attacks on Indian forces' camps and government installations. This forced the deployment of an out-of-proportion ratio of troops to secure billets, camps and facilities. For some time, it did create fair consternation in the forces' ranks. The run of such attacks lasted for about five years, by when the forces found solutions to reduce their impact. But making suicide attacks impossible could never be achieved.

There is another interesting analogy which deserves recall. We were hit hard by the improvised explosive devices used by the LTTE in Sri Lanka. That threat came back to hit us in Kashmir too in the 1990s. It was supposed to be crude technology which should have been

countered by sophisticated neutralisation through the electronic spectrum, especially when the trigger system moved on to the remote mobile type. For a long time, the Army tried a plethora of neutralisers, but the IED has continued to remain a threat till as late as Pulwama. The United States was hit by car bombs in Afghanistan and Iraq; no credible counter to that has yet been developed. What I am alluding to is the fact that counters to an emerging technology or even a crude antiquated one may not always be found. One has just to learn to minimise the impact if the device gets past all security and manages to strike. This is exactly what the threat from drones may end up as. We are just witnessing the advent of drone tactics in the field, in the terrorist domain in our environment and there is unnecessary finger pointing alleging tardiness by the military. In the armed forces, a lot of effort has been going on in the past decade to study the threat from drones, but more in the domain of conventional warfare employing armed fixed-wing drones. The use of the quad and hexa helicopters of a smaller variety have also been under the scanner ever since logistics drops from across the border were seen in Punjab and parts of Jammu division. The feasibility of the use of these to drop lethal payloads or be employed as rammers from the sky was anticipated. Now that the nature of threat becomes more focused, the specific measures to counter them will be refined progressively. Besides technology, which is the obvious answer,

there will have to be awareness training and specific reporting procedures developed for the civilian population too as the threat is of a nature that can proliferate rapidly. It will not be restricted to military targets alone, but also to a wider variety which will have an effect on society at large; recalling the basics of the terrorist mantra.

Did the Jammu incident and the subsequent sightings of drones have a specific purpose? I call these "relevance operations", desperate efforts at the revival of relevance. The Lashkar-e-Tayyaba is under pressure with Hafiz Saeed serving a jail sentence due to his involvement in terror financing. Recently, blasts have occurred outside his house in Pakistan with reported casualties. The LeT's capability to be of significance in Kashmir has taken a beating and it is desperate to get back to business, especially since the Deep State in Pakistan will want it to keep the resistance alive even as they worry about Afghanistan. That task may manifest itself in different ways; perhaps a drone threat is one way, the innovative one.

Lastly, a question that is being frequently asked in several quarters is whether a drone attack on an Air Force base is an act of war? It is best to parry that question for now, more due to the regional geopolitical environment and the developing internal dynamics in J&K. Specific answers to this question will not be available as the issue remains rooted in the grey zone. It's not as if we are giving Pakistan any leeway. It's just that we are recognising the world has moved far beyond the either/or labelling of events which might require specific responses. Our response too may be in the realm of pragmatic realism, which is awaiting the right opportunity.

The writer, a retired lieutenant-general, is a former GOC of the Srinagar-based 15 ("Chinar") Corps

Did the Jammu incident and the subsequent sightings of drones have a specific purpose? I call these 'relevance operations', desperate efforts at the revival of relevance.

LETTERS

FREE HEALTHCARE

It is highly encouraging that the CJI has underscored the importance of universal free healthcare (*CJI calls for universal free healthcare in India, DC, July 2*). He has given voice to it and made no bones about the inadequacy of medical infrastructure in the country. It is high time that healthcare is declared as 'national trust area'.

Dr C. Ghanshyam
Visakhapatnam

CORRUPTION

Corruption in India is an all pervasive and inadequately checked (*No honest tsildars in India: Raj. Min, DC, June 30*). Whether the bribe giver or taker is responsible has been left unanswered question for centuries. The reason corruption thrives is lack of political will. But the real culprit is anti-corruption agencies like ACB, CBI, CID, IB and top brass of police. Many of the culprits are left scot-free due to loopholes in laws and inordinate delays in judicial trials.

K. Venkataramudu
Anantapur

CURB FUEL PRICES

The Centre must resolve the surge in fuel prices at the earliest as it is affecting all adults irrespective of their financial standing (*Fuel price paradox, DC, July 2*). The only solution is to bring it under GST.

K. Nehru Patnaik
Visakhapatnam

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editor@deccanmail.com. You can
also send them to Editor, Deccan
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50 YEARS AGO IN

DECCAN Chronicle

Space heroes cremated

MOSCOW, July 2.

Millions of Soviets joined weeping Moscowites in paying homage to their three space heroes, Georgi Dobrovolski, Vladislav Volkov and Viktor Patsayev who were cremated in a solemn function here last night. The urns containing the ashes of the Soyuz 11 cosmonauts were taken to the Soviet Army headquarters building where they will be on view to the public.

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Farrukh Dhondy
Cabbages & Kings



*"The essence of democracy
Is that every citizen feels free
Where no one's a minion
And every opinion
Can be expressed quite openly."*

— From *The Sound and Akoori*, by Bachchoo

Why democracy often turns ugly: Prejudice & hate as Batley votes...

Ugly are the ways of democracy in which all manner of prejudice, idiotic belief, irrational allegiance, self-righteous opinion and perceived individual material benefit guide the hand as it hovers above the ballot box. But OK, that being said, gentle reader, I suppose one has to agree with Winston Churchill when he said it's the best worst system of being ruled.

The byelection for a Member of Parliament in the Yorkshire constituency of Batley was a paradigm of this ugliness. These towns of Yorkshire and Lancashire were developed as the manufacturing base of textiles in the nineteenth century. Indian historians record the sale of Lancashire cotton to the subcontinental colony and the boycotting of these by the Independence movement in favour of Swadeshi fabric and khadi.

After the Second World War, these mills suffered an acute shortage of labour. None of them could recruit workers for the night and even for some hard-pressed day shifts. This chasm of dearth was filled in the 1950s and 1960s through the import of immigrant labour, in main from Mirpur in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

Hence the population of Batley is, despite the closure of the mills in the era in which Margaret Thatcher was Prime Minister, still 25 or so per cent immigrant and Muslim. This immigrant population traditionally supported the Labour Party in every election for the last several decades. *Mais plus ca change!*

Its last MP, Tracy Brabin, was a Labour member and she resigned to contest and take up the mayoralty of West Yorkshire. The MP before her was one Jo Cox, who was stabbed to death on the streets of Batley by a maniac who claimed to be a white supremacist Nazi. Now, with the resignation of her successor, the byelection was called. Jo Cox's sister, Kim Leadbeater, stood as the Labour candidate. And before I tell you the result, gentle reader, let me sum up the nastiness of the campaign.

Ms Leadbeater is openly lesbian and that, in an advanced democracy such as Britain — in contrast to, shall we say, an election in Iran — ought not to matter one jot. There are several gay and lesbian MPs in the British Parliament as the population, by and large, doesn't concern itself with the sexual orientation, or even the adulterous behaviour, of the candidates when casting their votes.

But perhaps not in Batley. For why? Enter George Galloway. This maverick is a professional Scottish politician who was once a member of the Labour Party but was thrown out of it for turning up in Iraq when Britain was fighting a war there and virtually bending the knee to Saddam Hussein. He has since made himself an advocate of "Islamic" causes, mainly international support for Palestine and virulent criticism of Israeli domestic policy which veers, though Mr Galloway is adamant in his denial of it, into blatant anti-Semitism.

Mr Galloway parachuted himself into the Batley byelection standing for a fantasy outfit he founded called The Workers Party. His object wasn't to get elected and represent the constituency, but to take Muslim immigrant votes

away from Labour so that the Conservatives could take the seat. His object was to demonstrate that the Labour Party can't continue to be led by Sir Keir Starmer. His campaign posters in the town declared that Sir Keir Starmer must go.

I must admit, gentle reader, that I know this George Galloway and while I can concur with his support of Palestine against Israeli policy and its murderous attacks, I don't have much time for him. I came across him in the 1970s and 1980s, through left-wing events.

Then, when my daughters were of secondary school age, they were accepted by an ex-grammar school even though we lived outside the catchment area. Mr Galloway's daughter also lived outside the area and he got her in after arduous appeals and pulling strings.

He recalled this as an injustice when we met in Karachi at a literary festival some years ago. Myself and other writers were surprised to see billed as the chief guest and speaker at the festival, the non-literary, non-writer George Galloway, invited we suppose for his stance on Iraq.

When, one evening, the writers piled

into a coach taking us to a British Council party, the organiser boarded the bus saying: "Farrukh, George Galloway wants you to ride with him in his chief-guest limo." The entire coach began to derisively jeer. I was embarrassed, but for politeness' sake rode with George to the party.

In Batley, Mr Galloway courted the Muslim vote through support for those Muslims who disapproved of Kim Leadbeater for being a lesbian and shouted at her as she campaigned, saying she will support the spread of lesbian and gay "propaganda" in their children's schools. Mr Galloway also accused her of having an anti-Palestinian and pro-Israeli stance. None of this is true. But it's politics and nastiness, prejudice and lies are par for the course.

Despite all this, Ms Leadbeater won the seat for Labour with a narrow majority of 326 votes. The disturbing fact, however, is that Mr Galloway polled 21 per cent of the vote, which is approximately the percentage of the Muslim population of the constituency.

Mr Galloway, perhaps in a feeble imitation of Donald Trump, has now declared that he will go to the courts to challenge the result.

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	52,484.67	0.32
Nifty 50	15,722.20	0.27
S&P 500*	4,338.16	0.42
Dollar (₹)	74.75	-0.22
Pound Sterling (₹)	102.78	-0.06
Euro (₹)	88.38	0.00
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	46,615.251	0.53
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	75.92	0.11
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.065	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.451	-0.029

* As of 8:30 PM IST

India joins global deal on minimum tax

India has joined the global deal on endorsing global minimum tax on multinational companies. It expects a consensus to be reached by October. Around 130 countries on Thursday had adopted a statement outlining a consensus on taxation. The deal calls for a global minimum tax of 15 per cent. Under it, countries could tax their companies' foreign earnings up to 15 per cent if they go untaxed through subsidiaries in other countries.

50% price hike in ranitidine, ibuprofen allowed



The National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority said it has allowed a one-time increase of 50 per cent in the ceiling prices of nine scheduled formulations of three drugs, carbamazepine, ranitidine and ibuprofen to ensure their availability. While carbamazepine is an anti-epileptic drug, ranitidine is used for the treatment of ulcers of the stomach and intestines and ibuprofen is used to relieve pain from various conditions.

In talks with investors for fund raise: VIL

Cash-strapped Vodafone Idea (VIL) said it is in active talks with potential investors for fund raising, and asserted that 'floor price' remains the "best and most preferred" fix for industry's woes arising from tariff-related issues. VIL confirmed that it has approached government to extend moratorium on spectrum instalments. VIL highlighted that sector's biggest pain point comes from pricing issues.

Laurus Labs gets DRDO licence to make 2DG

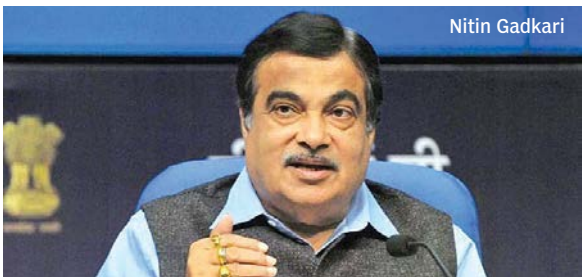
Laurus Labs said it has received the licence from Defence Research and Development Organisation to manufacture and market Covid-19 treatment drug 2-Deoxy-D-Glucose (2DG). 2DG has been given emergency approval by the Drugs Controller General of India for use on Covid-19 patients. On June 28, Dr Reddy's Lab had announced the commercial launch of 2DG.



Shops now eligible for priority loans, stimulus Retail, wholesale trade granted MSME status

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, JULY 2

The government has recognised retail and wholesale trade as MSME, making them eligible for the benefits like priority sector lending and pandemic stimulus packages. MSME minister Nitin Gadkari said the government has revised the guidelines for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to include retail and wholesale trade under the category. "Retail and wholesale trade were left out of the ambit of MSME, now under the revised guidelines, retail and wholesale trade will also get the benefit of priority sector lending under RBI guidelines," Gadkari said.



Apart from priority sector lending, traders will also be eligible for all the benefits provided to MSMEs, including the stimulus packages and Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme announced for the pandemic-ic-hit enterprises. All those enterprises which have a turnover of less than Rs 250 crore will be eligible to be considered

as MSMEs. The expanded definition of MSME will benefit 2.5 crore retail and wholesale traders, the government said. But the Confederation of All India Traders (Cait) says there are more than 6.5 crore retailers and wholesale traders who will benefit from this decision. "These traders have been providing employment to about 40 crore people and

generating an annual turnover of Rs 115 lakh crore. The pandemic-hit traders will now be able to restore their businesses by obtaining necessary finances which were earlier denied by banks and other financial institutions," said Praveen Khandelwal, secretary general of Cait. This could throw a lifeline to lakhs of traders who have either shut shop or are on the verge of closure due to the pandemic. In order to be categorised as MSME, these traders will have to register on the Udyam Registration portal. "This landmark decision will have a structural impact for the sector, helping it get formalised," said Kumar Rajagopalan, CEO, Retailers Association of India.

Urban Indians prefer job to cash handout: LSE study

JAIVEER SHEKHAWAT
JULY 2

A majority of urban Indians left unemployed by the coronavirus pandemic want the government to guarantee them jobs like it does for people in rural areas, says a study by the London School of Economics. An overwhelming 82 per cent of respondents surveyed for the report 'City of dreams no more, a year on: worklessness and active labour market policies in urban India' favoured job guarantees followed by 16 per cent for cash transfers.

Even most of those who had received cash handouts from the government in the wake of the pandemic preferred having job protection over financial assistance, wrote Swati Dhingra and Fjolla Kondirolli, the authors of the report. The central government currently guarantees at least 100 days of employment in a financial year to every household in rural areas. Budget allocation for the programme was stepped up last year amid the pandemic, and authorities reported as much as a 50 per cent increase in

enrolment for the programme. The study re-contacted respondents in India covered in an earlier survey following the first wave of the pandemic. Unlike last year when Prime Minister Narendra Modi imposed a sweeping nationwide lockdown to stop the virus's spread, movement curbs this time around were localised with limited economic fallout. Still, the study found 40 per cent of re-contacted workers had no work or pay, 10 months on from the first lockdown months. "Younger individuals, in

the bottom half of pre-Covid earnings, experienced higher levels of worklessness," the authors wrote, based on responses from 4,763 individuals between January and March this year in three lower-income states of Bihar, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh. Some other findings of the survey are: Urban individuals have been unemployed for the last six months on average; and the share of employed individuals who had a full year's work has halved from the previous year.

— Bloomberg

EXPORTS RISE 47%, TRADE DEFICIT AT \$9.4 BILLION

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, JULY 2

Merchandise exports in June stood at \$32.46 billion, 47 per cent higher than the same month last year and 30 per cent higher than June 2019. From surplus in June last year, trade balance moved to a deficit of \$9.4 billion. At \$32.46 billion, exports grew from \$22 billion in June 2020 and \$25 billion in June 2019. On a sequential basis too, exports grew from \$32.27 billion in May 2021 and \$31 billion in April 2021. Major commodity groups that recorded growth in June 2021 included rice, other cereals, iron ore, organic and inorganic chemicals, petroleum products, plastic and linoleum and engineering goods. Merchandise imports in June stood at \$41.86 billion —96.33 per cent up over \$21.32 billion in June 2020 and 2 per cent over \$41.03 billion in June 2019. India had a trade deficit of \$9.4 billion in June against a trade surplus of \$0.71 billion in June 2020. But the deficit narrowed down by 41.26 per cent over the \$16 billion deficit in June 2019.

Unicorn Cars 24 nears \$250 mn deal with DST

SARITHA RAI
JULY 2

India's Cars24 Services Pvt Ltd is in talks with Yuri Milner's DST Global and other investors for a funding round that could double the used-vehicle site's value to \$2 billion, a person familiar with the discussions said. India's biggest online marketplace for pre-owned cars is set to raise \$200 million to \$250 million from existing backers including DST, which may lead the round, said the person, who asked not to be named discussing a private deal. Other investors including Moore Capital Management could join the deal, which could close in a few weeks, the person added. The pact could value Cars24 at \$1.6 billion to \$2 billion, up from about \$1 billion in November, when it closed a Series E round, the person said. Used-vehicle sales are booming in India because consumers are shunning mass transit systems to avoid catching Covid-19. While the pandemic has



stymied sales of new autos, pre-owned cars are in demand as cost-conscious buyers seek value for money. Cars24 and DST Global representatives declined to comment. Moore representatives didn't respond to emails seeking comment. The startup, based in Gurgaon on the outskirts of New Delhi, was founded in 2015 by Vikram Chopra, Mehul Agrawal, Ruchit Agarwal and Gajendra Jangid to make the used-vehicle trade smoother. Buying and selling cars in India has long been an anxiety-ridden, bumpy process dominated by street-corner mom-and-pop sales yards, with consumers distrustful of the

pricing and the condition of the vehicle. Cars24 aims to make the purchase of a pre-owned vehicle as easy as buying a refrigerator or a smartphone online. It prices vehicles based on AI algorithms and uses data to determine which car would give the new owner least trouble. The vehicles are refurbished in the company's reconditioning facilities before being listed on its platform. Cars24 has a seven-day no-questions-asked return policy and provides a six-month warranty. It also sells pre-owned motorcycles and scooters and offers financing. The startup said earlier this month it has expanded to Australia and the United Arab Emirates and plans to enter other markets in the Middle East and Southeast Asia this year. In November, Cars24 said its website traffic had increased by four times since the start of the pandemic. Its existing investors include Sequoia Capital India, Exor Seeds, Kingsway Capital Partners and others.

—Bloomberg

IOC works on aluminium battery to take on Li-ion

DEBJIT CHAKRABORTY & RAJESH KUMAR SINGH
JULY 2

A drive to reduce dependence on imported materials and technology, especially from China, is pushing India to invest in a battery technology that uses aluminium rather than lithium as the key ingredient. Indian Oil Corporation, the nation's largest oil refiner, has teamed up with startup Phinergy Ltd to develop the Israeli company's aluminium-air battery. India has few exploitable options to produce lithium, the key metal for the current generation of electric-vehicle batteries, but its eastern jungles hold large reserves of bauxite, the ore used to make aluminium. "Lithium is scarce in the country and we started scouting for an element which is abundantly available as a natural resource," said Indian Oil R&D director S.S.V. Ramakumar.

India is among the top 10 bauxite producers. It has some 600 million tonnes of the ore in proven reserves, according to the US Geological Survey, though India's mining ministry estimates that untapped resources may be many times that amount. Moreover, the country has invested heavily in production of aluminium over the years to become the world's second-biggest smelter of aluminium. "Clearly the special consideration here is that aluminium is in better supply than lithium," said James Frith, head of energy stor-

age at BNEF in London. "But with the ever-falling prices of lithium-based systems, developers will be under pressure to find niche applications where aluminium-oxygen can gain a foothold." An aluminium-air battery could win advantages over its lithium-ion rival in three other crucial ways, Ramakumar said: It's potentially cheaper, vehicles using it would have a longer range, and it's safer. The battery works by tapping electricity generated when aluminium plates react with oxygen in the air. It has one of the highest energy densities for a battery. But the system has a number of drawbacks that have kept it from wide-scale use since it was first proposed in the 1960s.

Chief among them is the cost of materials that need to be added to the battery to prevent the power from dropping and the fact that the cells can't be recharged. Instead, Phinergy's plan is for users to be able to quickly swap in a new battery and send the used one to a recycling facility. It takes just three minutes to replace the battery, about the time it takes to fill up at a gas station, Ramakumar said. The fuel retailer plans to use its network of filling stations as swapping points. In comparison, lithium-ion batteries often contain hazardous materials that can be toxic if not disposed of correctly, making them harder to recycle. By 2035, the world will have accumulated about 4 million tonnes of Li-ion bat-

teries that have reached the end of their lives, according to a BloombergNEF estimate. Lithium is already entrenched in the EV market and absorbs most of the research dollars, with many potential challengers based on sodium, magnesium or aluminium focused on smaller segments such as backup power systems, energy storage or low-power transport, like forklifts. Yet demand both from electric transport and renewable energy storage means India could provide a market big enough for aluminium-air batteries to find a role. Battery demand will rise to as much as 185 gigawatt hours by 2035, according to BNEF. Amara Raja Batteries Ltd, India's largest producer of lead-acid cells, is examining existing lithium-based technologies as a "next growth engine," though also sees scope for alternatives to be developed, Vijayanand Samudrala, the firm's president of new energy, told a BNEF summit on Tuesday. "I don't think there's a final word on the maturity of the technology. I can see at least two or three generations of technology shift happening in the batteries area in the next 10 years," he said. Indian Oil made a strategic investment in Phinergy in early 2020, and the Indian firm's 30,000 service stations can "serve as the infrastructure for the deployment of Phinergy's technology," the Israeli company said in an e-mail.

— Bloomberg

IDP to acquire British Council's IELTS biz

FC BUREAU
CHENNAI, JULY 2

The British Council will sell its business of conducting English language test IELTS in India to IDP Education Limited, an international organisation offering student placement in various countries. IDP will acquire the Indian business for 130 million pounds. IDP and British Council have been partners in conducting the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) globally. British Council employees working on IELTS in India will become part of the IDP team and the transaction is expected to be completed in August. IELTS is the world's most popular English language test for study and migration and is trusted by more than 10,000 organisations. It is recognised for school and university entrances in many English speaking countries, including the UK and the US, Canada and Australia. It is also required for visa and citizenship purposes in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the UK.



This sale to its partner IDP will ensure that the continuity of the tests remains. The proceeds of the sale will enable the British Council to improve its financial position which has been impacted by Covid-19, said Kate Ewart-Biggs, interim CEO of the council. The British Council is a UK charity governed by Royal Charter and a UK public body. It received 179 million pounds in grant funding from the UK government in 2021-22. The council has been present in India for 73 years now. Andrew Barkla, CEO of IDP, said, "This agreement marks the start of a new chapter for IELTS in India." Australia-listed IDP has operations in more than 50 countries. In 2019, four million IELTS tests were held globally, said IDP. It did not share national-level numbers.

Lull in equity market ahead of new earnings season

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, JULY 2

The market took a pause during the week from the record-breaking rally of May-June, and before the next earning season begins. After four consecutive sessions of decline, benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty-50 closed in the green on Friday, gaining around 0.3 per cent. For the week, the Nifty-50 ended 1.10 per cent lower at 15,722 after forming a new high early in the week at 15,915.65. The Sensex crossed the 53,000 mark intra-day touching 53,126.73 for the first time during the week but closed 0.82 per cent down for the week at 52,484.67.

The broader market outperformed during the week, with the BSE Mid-cap down by 0.45 per cent and the BSE Small-cap up by 1.80 per cent. Amongst sectors, BSE Power was the biggest loser, shedding 4.1 per cent followed by the BSE Oil & Gas, which corrected over 2.5 per cent while sectoral indices, including BSE Metals, Auto, and IT corrected between 0.5 to 1.5 per cent during the week. The BSE Pharma was the biggest gainer rising over 3.5 per cent. The first quarter earnings season will begin from mid-July and the market is keen to know how India Inc traversed the Covid second wave.

OLA ELECTRIC SCOOTER REVEALED

MICHAEL GONSALVES
PUNE, JULY 2

Ola Electric is gearing up for the launch of its first electric scooter. The firm is expected to announce price of its e-scooter later this month. The new electric scooter from the company is expected to be priced around Rs 1 lakh and it will take on rivals like Ather Energy's 450X. Bhavish Aggarwal, chairman and group CEO at Ola Electric, on Friday posted a video of him riding the Ola Electric scooter on Twitter, hinting that the scooter is now ready for a market launch.



Virgin Galactic plans Branson space trip before Bezos blasts off

JUSTIN BACHMAN
JULY 2

Richard Branson plans to fly to space on July 11, days before a similar trip by fellow billionaire Jeff Bezos. The shares of Branson's Virgin Galactic Holdings Inc surged. Virgin Galactic's VSS Unity spacecraft will also carry three other company employees and two pilots from the launch site in New Mexico, according to a company statement Thursday. Bezos is planning a trip to space July 20 from nearby West Texas aboard a rocket made by

Blue Origin, the Amazon.com Inc. founder's space company. Branson will evaluate the "private astronaut experience," the company said, as Virgin Galactic prepares to offer space-flights to well-heeled customers in 2022. "After more than 16 years of research, engineering, and testing, Virgin Galactic stands at the vanguard of a new commercial space industry, which is set to open space to humankind and change the world for good," Branson said in the statement. Virgin Galactic soared

23 per cent to \$53.20 after the close of regular trading in New York. The trip will be Virgin Galactic's fourth flight to space with crew members. Joining Branson will be Beth Moses, the company's chief astronaut instructor, who has flown previously; Colin Bennett, an operations engineer; and Sirisha Bandla, vice president of government affairs. Virgin Galactic executives have said they intend to resume ticket sales after Branson's flight. It suspended sales after a 2014 crash killed a test pilot.

—Bloomberg

SANJAY MADAN IS REGIONAL ED, NTPC SOUTH

Sanjay Madan, regional executive director (Western Region -II) has taken additional charge as RED (South) from Friday. A graduate in Mechanical Engineering from Bhopal University, Madan joined NTPC as executive engineer trainee in 1983. In his 38-year career in NTPC, he worked in various capacities at NTPC-VRHDyachal, NTPC-Dadri, SRHQ and Corporate Centre.



SHORT TAKES

India look to avoid the English sweep

Worcester: An under-fire Indian women's team would be desperate to address vice-captain Harmanpreet Kaur's prolonged lean patch as they seek to stop a marauding England side from completing a 3-0 sweep in the final ODI here on Saturday.

Having lost six out of the last seven ODIs, the Mithali Raj-led side are finding it difficult to stem the rot as they face the ignominy of another one-sided series defeat after being thrashed by the South African women on home soil. While the bowlers did up their game in the second ODI with a much-improved performance, the batting has left the team down yet again with skipper Mithali left to do all the heavy lifting, which is also affecting her game. — PTI

Bravo blazes as WI level SA series

Grenada: Dwayne Bravo's career-best T20I figures of four for 19 led the West Indies to a successful defence of a modest total as the home side pulled off a series-levelling 21-run victory over South Africa in the fourth match of the five-game series on Thursday. Set a target of 168 after captain Kieron Pollard belted an unbeaten 51 off 25 balls with five sixes and two fours to lift the West Indies to 167 for six, the Proteas relied heavily on the consistent Quinton de Kock in their quest to clinch the contest ahead of the final match on Saturday.

Brief scores: West Indies 167/6 (Lendl Simmons 47, Kieron Pollard 51 (not out); Tabraiz Shamsi 2/13, George Linde 2/16) bt South Africa 146/9 (Quinton de Kock 60; Dwayne Bravo 4/19, Andre Russell 2/30).

Hamilton fastest at Austria F1 practice

Spielberg: Mercedes found welcome speed as rain fell at the Austrian Grand Prix on Friday, with Formula One champion Lewis Hamilton leading a damp second practice ahead of teammate Valtteri Bottas. The conditions proved less to the liking of championship leader Max Verstappen. The Red Bull driver topped the leaderboard early on but then drifted down to third place as the track became wetter. Hamilton was 189 ahead of Bottas and .217 clear of Verstappen on Red Bull's home track. It was a positive sign for Mercedes that the drivers in fourth and fifth — Aston Martin pair Lance Stroll and Sebastian Vettel — were using Mercedes engines. — AP

Arjuna slams SL over 'India B' tour

Colombo: Sri Lanka's World Cup-winning skipper Arjuna Ranatunga on Friday slammed the island's sports leaders for agreeing to a tour by a "second level" India side. Ranatunga, 57, said the tour undermined the country's "dignity" as he attacked Sports Minister Namal Rajapaksa and Sri Lanka Cricket. "The Indian squad that came to Sri Lanka is not their best, it is a second level team," Ranatunga said. "Sri Lanka may have gone down (in the rankings), but as a cricketing nation we have an identity, we should not be sending our best to play an Indian B team," added the former captain. — AFP

Bucks a win away from NBA finals

Los Angeles: The Milwaukee Bucks showed they are more than a one-man show, using a balanced attack to dominate the Atlanta Hawks 123-112 in game five of the Eastern Conference finals. Brook Lopez had 33 points, Jrue Holiday 25 and Khris Middleton garnered 26 points. — AFP

Live on TV

EURO
Quarterfinals: Czech Republic vs Denmark from 9.30 pm; England vs Ukraine from 12.30 am (Sunday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

COPA AMERICA
Quarterfinals: Uruguay vs Colombia from 3.30 am (Sunday); Argentina vs Ecuador from 6.30 am (Sunday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

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Lions on the move

Roaring England off to Rome to take on Ukraine in quarters

London, July 2: England have Raheem Sterling to thank for their trip to Rome on Saturday for their Euro 2020 quarter-final against Ukraine, and they are now favourites to go on and reach a European Championship final for the first time.

The Manchester City star is already playing in his fourth major tournament but his talent, until now, had not been fully appreciated by the England support.

A precocious young player when England crashed out at the group stage of the 2014 World Cup, Sterling was one of the fall guys two years later as Roy Hodgson's side exited Euro 2016 against Iceland.

On social media, Sterling branded himself "The Hated One" during that tournament and he had to deal with negative stories in the press about his perceived lavish lifestyle and other issues.

He did not forget that treatment. In 2018, months after helping England reach the semi-finals of the World Cup despite failing to score, Sterling was racially abused while playing for Manchester City away to Chelsea.

Sterling took to Instagram to challenge media organisations for their portrayal of young black players, claiming it was fuelling "racism and aggressive behaviour".

At just 26, he is a senior figure in a youthful England squad with 65 caps already to his name and represents a fearlessness and social conscience that have made Gareth Southgate's side respected on and off the field.

In the face of booing from some of their own support, England's players have continued to take the knee before each match. — AFP



England players during a training session ahead of the Euro quarterfinal against Ukraine.

— Twitter

Denmark dream of '92 repeat

Baku, July 2: Denmark will be dreaming of following in the footsteps of the side who claimed a shock European title in 1992, but standing in their way of a semi-final place at Euro 2020 on Saturday are the Czech Republic, who have sent them packing before.

The Danes were in danger of an early exit after group-stage losses to Finland and Belgium, the first of which was overshadowed by star player Christian Eriksen suffering a cardiac arrest on the pitch.

But, roared on by a raucous Copenhagen crowd, they thrashed Russia 4-1 to finish second in Group

B, before travelling to Amsterdam to thump Wales 4-0 in the last 16.

Denmark have not reached a major tournament semi-final since lifting the trophy 29 years ago, when they initially failed to qualify but were late replacements for Yugoslavia.

"It's a chance that we might never have again," coach Kasper Hjulmand said ahead of Saturday's last-eight match against the Czechs in Baku. "It's many years' work for lots of people. We want to make the most of this chance."

The Scandinavians have gone from strength to strength in the tournament and know victory in Azerbaijan would set up a last-four meeting with either England or Ukraine at Wembley.

Youngster Damsgaard has shone since taking the place of Eriksen in the second group match, scoring a wonderful opening goal against Russia.

"The match against Wales was the biggest of my career," he said. "The next match will be the biggest match I have ever played, so it's getting even crazier all the time for me."

Hjulmand is expected to have a full squad to choose from, with the exception of Eriksen, although RB

Leipzig forward Yussuf Poulsen may only be fit enough to play for an hour.

The last time Denmark reached a major quarter-final was at Euro 2004, where they were beaten 3-0 by a Czech Republic side inspired by Pavel Nedved and two goals for Milan Baros.

"I had a really bad experience watching the match at Copenhagen Town Hall Square," Danish defender Mathias Jorgensen told uefa.com.

"At the time, we all believed we would easily get past them. And that turned into an awful and, as I remember, rainy day in Copenhagen." — AFP

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ASHWIN DEFENDS KOHLI ON WTC FORMAT OPINION

London, July 2: Coming to the defence of Virat Kohli, ace Indian off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin said the skipper only expressed his opinion that the WTC final should be a best of three series rather than a one-off Test but never demanded the format to be changed.

India were handed an eight-wicket defeat in the inaugural World Test Championship (WTC) final by New Zealand in Southampton earlier this month.

After the loss, Kohli had said that the best Test team in the world should be decided by a best-of-three final and not a one-off game like it was in the inaugural edition.

"I happened to hear people saying that Virat Kohli asked for three Tests to be played for the WTC final but it is ridiculous. After the match got

over, (former England player and renowned cricket writer) Michael Atherton had asked what he could have done differently in the WTC.

"Virat replied in a particular context that if three matches are played, then adaptability and comeback for a team are possible. But he never demanded something," Ashwin said on his YouTube channel.

The Indian players, who were part of the WTC squad, are currently on a three-week break before they reassemble in the UK on July 14 for the five Tests against England beginning in Nottingham from August 4.

Ashwin feels this break is very important for the players.

"We were in the bubble throughout. So, after a long time, we are able to get some fresh air and step out." — PTI

India hit the ground running in Colombo

Colombo, July 2: The Indian cricket team on Friday underwent their first training session ahead of the limited series against hosts Sri Lanka from July 13.

India, who have picked a second-string squad for the series with the Test team currently in the UK, had arrived in Sri Lanka on Monday following which they the players quarantined in their room for three days.

The side is being led by senior batsman Shikhar Dhawan and coached by NCA head Rahul Dravid.

The series is India's last before the T20 World Cup in October-November. The squad has as many as six uncapped players including Chetan Sakariya, K Gowtham, Nitish Rana,



Rahul Dravid (left) and Shikhar Dhawan during a training session in Colombo.

— Twitter

Devdutt Padikkal, Varun Chakaravarth and Ruturaj Gaekwad.

It is also an important assignment for the likes of Prithvi Shaw, Ishan Kishan, Sanju Samson

and Suryakumar Yadav who are looking to secure their place in the World Cup squad.

India play three ODIs and as many T20Is. — PTI

Sweet sixteen for Sabalenka

London, July 2: No. 2-seeded Aryna Sabalenka is into the second week at Wimbledon and on the verge of a career breakthrough.

The hard-hitting Belarusian beat qualifier Maria Camila Osorio Serrano 6-0, 6-3 on Friday to reach the fourth round, and she might be overdue for a deep run in a Grand Slam. Sabalenka is the only woman among the top 20 seeds who are yet to reach a major quarterfinal. The time seems right for that to change: Sabalenka leads the tour with 32 match wins this year, her seeding is a career high in a major, and she's navigating a draw without eight of the 11 highest-ranked women.

Sabalenka next faces No. 18 Elena Rybakina, who eliminated American Shelby Rogers 6-1, 6-4.

Defending champion Novak Djokovic survived a rocky third set to defeat American qualifier Denis Kudla to reach the last 16 at Wimbledon for the 13th time on Friday. The world



Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus plays a shot against Colombia's Maria Camila Osorio Serrano during their third round match in the Wimbledon on Friday.

— AP

number one triumphed over 114-ranked Kudla 6-4, 6-3, 7-6 (9/7) to book a place in the fourth round of a Grand Slam for the 55th time. Djokovic is chasing a record-equalling 20th major

BOPANNA-MIRZA WIN ALL-INDIA CLASH

The experienced pair of Rohan Bopanna and Sania Mirza defeated the brand new combination of Ramkaumar Ramanathan and Ankita Raina 6-2 7-6

(5) in the historic all-Indian mixed doubles first round match at the Wimbledon here on Friday. It was the first time in open era that two Indian teams competed against each other at a

Grand Slam tournament.

The contest finally brought a Grand Slam debut for Ramkumar, who has made 21 attempts to qualify for the singles main draw of a tennis major. — Agencies

Spaniards down Swiss, in semis

Saint Petersburg, July 2: Goalkeeper Unai Simon was the hero as Spain edged past 10-man Switzerland 3-1 on penalties on Friday to set up a Euro semifinal against either Belgium or Italy.

After a 1-1 draw which saw the Swiss play for 43 minutes a man down, Simon made two saves in the shootout to help keep Spain's bid for a record fourth European crown alive.

It was heartbreak for Switzerland, who were bidding for reach the semi-finals of a major tournament for the first time in their history.

Spain forged ahead early on when Denis Zakaria put through his own net, but Switzerland were the better side for long periods and Xherdan Shaqiri, standing in for the suspended Granit Xhaka as captain, equalised in the 68th minute.

The Swiss were reduced to 10 men with 13 minutes remaining, though, when midfielder Remo Freuler was controversially dismissed for a tackle on Gerard Moreno.

Switzerland goalkeeper Yann Sommer, the hero of the penalty shootout win over world champions France in the Last 16, made a string of fine saves in extra time.

But Simon saved from

Fabian Schaer and Manuel Akanji, while Ruben Vargas blazed over in a tense finale as Spain snuck through, with Mikel Oyarzabal smashing home the winning spot-kick.

After scoring 10 goals in their previous two matches, this was a return to the type of profligate performances which saw Spain draw their first two group games against Sweden and Poland. But the 2008 and 2012 winners had made a dream start to this quarter-final, taking the lead in fortunate circumstances in only the eighth minute.

A corner was cleared only as far as Jordi Alba, whose left-footed volley was diverted past Sommer by Switzerland midfielder Zakaria, only playing in place of Khaka.

Switzerland had an even better chance for a leveller in the 64th minute, as Shaqiri sparked a quick counter-attack which ended with Spain goalkeeper Unai Simon reacting well to keep out Zuber's stabbed effort at his near post. But the underdogs found the equaliser they deserved four minutes later, as Freuler latched onto a loose ball after a mix-up in the Spanish defence and squared for Shaqiri to slot into the far corner and score his third goal of the tournament. — AFP

Olympic briefs

Maana gets quota place

Indian woman swimmer Maana Patel's participation in the Tokyo Olympics has been confirmed through 'Universality quota', the Swimming Federation of India (SFI) said. Maana will take part in the 100m backstroke at the Tokyo Games and is the third Indian swimmer to have qualified after both Srihari Nataraj and Sajjan Prakash achieved Olympic Qualification Timing (OQT) 'A' level recently. The Universality quota allows one male and one female competitor from a country to participate in the Olympics, provided no other swimmer from the same gender qualifies for the Games or receives a FINA invite based on his or her Olympic Selection time (B time).

Mariyappan to carry flag

Top para high-jumper Mariyappan Thangavelu was on Friday named the flag-bearer of the Indian contingent in the Tokyo Paralympics, which begins on August 24. Thangavelu, who is defending the T-42 gold he had won in 2016 Rio Paralympics during the August 24 to September 5 showpiece in Tokyo, was picked for the honour. "Mariyappan will be the flag-bearer of the Indian contingent at the Tokyo Paralympics. The decision was taken at the executive committee meeting of the Paralympic Committee of India (PCI)," Parathletics chairman R. Satyanarayana said.

Sindhu to get recovery system

Acting on world champion P.V. Sindhu's request, the government on Friday sanctioned the purchase of an advanced recovery equipment, which will help her remain in best physical shape ahead of the upcoming Tokyo Olympics. The approval came within 24 hours of the 2016 Olympic silver-medallist Indian shuttler's request, the Sports Authority of India (SAI) said. One of India's biggest medal hopes in Tokyo, Sindhu was thrilled. "I am happy that it did not take even a day for the Sports Authority of India to approve my request for the recovery system," Sindhu said upon receiving the administrative sanction to procure the game ready recovery system.

Malik's Tokyo hopes dashed

New Delhi, July 2: His hopes of competing in the Olympics over, Indian wrestler Sumit Malik was on Friday banned for two years by the sport's world governing body UWW after his B sample also returned positive for a prohibited stimulant.

The 28-year-old has one week to decide if he would accept the sanction or challenge it.

Malik was handed a provisional suspension last month for failing a dope test during the World Olympic Qualifier event in Sofia, where he had qualified for the Tokyo Games in the 125kg category.

His 'B' sample was opened on June 30 and expectedly that also provided the same result.

A specified substance was found in Malik's sample, though, the 2018 Commonwealth Games gold-medallist had said that he only took painkillers to manage right knee niggle.

"Sumit Malik's B sample has given the same result and the UWW has banned him for two years from June 3. He has a week to



Sumit Malik

respond. He can call for a hearing or accept the sanction," a source in the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) said.

Sources close to Rohtak-based Malik said they will soon take a decision.

"We are discussing the matter with our lawyer," said the person who is interacting with Malik on the matter.

The general opinion in WFI is that Malik should challenge the sanction since it was not a steroid but a stimulant that was taken inadvertently. Malik has been nursing a knee injury that he suffered during the national camp before the Olympic Qualifiers began at different venues. — PTI