

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | FRIDAY 4 | JUNE 2021

WEATHER



Max: 32°C
Min: 24°C
Rainfall: 4.7 mm

ASTROGUIDE

Pilava: Vaikasi 21
Tithi: Navami
Star: Uthrattathi
Rahukalam: 10.30 am to 12 noon
Yamagandam: 3 pm to 4.30 pm
PRAYERS
Fajar: 4.23 am
Luhar: 12.12 pm
Asar: 3.30 pm
Maghrib: 6.32 pm
Isha: 7.50 pm
SUNSET TODAY 6.42 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.58 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 1.48 AM
MOONSET TOMORROW 2.48 PM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+1,31,280)	(+2,705)
2,85,72,359	3,40,719

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+24,405)	460
TN: 21,72,751	25,665

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

17,26,70,917

DEATHS

37,11,672

219

worldometers.info

COVID-19: Milkha Singh admitted to ICU

Chandigarh: Track legend Milkha Singh, who had tested positive for COVID-19 two weeks ago, was on Thursday admitted to the ICU in COVID hospital of Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education & Research, Chandigarh. “He was admitted to the ICU due to dipping levels of oxygen. He has been kept under observation and is stable now,” said Prof Ashok Kumar, spokesperson, PGIMER, Chandigarh.

Alapan Bandyopadhyay responds to Centre’s notice

Kolkata: West Bengals former chief secretary Alapan Bandyopadhyay has responded to the Union home ministries show-cause notice sent to him for missing Prime Minister Narendra Modis meeting on May 28.

More states cancel board exams in view of Covid

New Delhi: Following the Centre’s decision to cancel class 12 CBSE board exams in view of the Covid pandemic, several states including Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand and Goa called off their board exams on Wednesday.

COUNTER

POINT



These economists are anti-nationals, they are showing negativity!

TN ranks second in SDG; Kerala tops

DC CORRESPONDENT
WITH AGENCY INPUTS
NEW DELHI, JUNE 3

Tamil Nadu shared the second rank along with Himachal Pradesh while Kerala retained the top rank in NITI Aayog’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) India Index 2020-21. The Index for Sustainable

Development Goals (SDGs) evaluates progress of states and Union territories on social, economic and environmental parameters.

While Kerala got a score of 75, Tamil Nadu and Himachal Pradesh scored 74 points each, a report released on Thursday said. Bihar, Jharkhand and Assam were the worst per-

forming states. Chandigarh was the top performer among the Union territories with a score of 79, followed by Delhi (68).

Uttarakhand, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Mizoram, Punjab, Haryana, Tripura, Delhi, Lakshadweep, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh gradu-

ated to the category of front-runners scoring between 65 and 99. Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh at a score of 60. The country’s overall SDG score improved by 66 points - from 60 in 2019 to 66 in 2020-21 with improvement in clean water and sanitation and affordable and clean energy.



CITY | 2

Mettur dam to be opened for irrigation on June 12



WORLD | 5

Bibi rivals reach deal to oust him

SPORT | 8

TNCA president Rupa in conflict of interest



Centre to buy 30 crore doses of Bio.E vaccine

■ Makes advance payment of ₹1500 cr. ■ Clearance by Aug

DC CORRESPONDENT
WITH AGENCY INPUTS
NEW DELHI, JUNE 3

In a move that will help augment India’s vaccine preparedness ahead of the arrival of the predicted third wave of pandemic Covid-19, the Union health ministry has finalised arrangements for purchasing 30 crore doses of the vaccine being developed by Hyderabad-based vaccine manufacturer Biological-E.

The government will make an advance payment of Rs 1500 crore, the ministry said on Thursday. The vaccine doses are expected to be made available from August to December this year.

The Covid-19 vaccine of the company is currently undergoing phase-3 clinical trial after showing promising results in phase 1 and 2 trials.

The vaccine being developed by Biological-E is a RBD protein sub-unit vaccine and is likely to be available in the next few months.

The proposal of Biological-E was examined and recommended for approval after due diligence by the National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration for Covid-19 (NEGVAC), the ministry said in a statement.

The arrangement with Biological-E is part of the wider endeavour of the Centre to encourage

Modi thanks Harris for offer of vaccine

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 3

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday spoke to US Vice-President Kamala Harris who told him about the “US plans to make vaccines against Covid-19 available to other countries, including India, under its ‘Strategy for Global Vaccine Sharing’.”

Mr Modi thanked Ms. Harris for the help and solidarity extended by the US to India in battling the second wave of Covid that has battered the country. Mr Modi invited Ms. Harris, who is partly of Indian origin, to invite India once the situation normalises after the pandemic.

In a statement, New Delhi said, “Prime

indigenous vaccine manufacturers by providing them support in research and development and also financial support, it said.

The Biological-E Covid vaccine candidate has been supported by the Centre from preclinical stage to phase-3 studies. The department of biotechnology has not only provided financial assistance in terms of grant-in-aid of over Rs 100

Minister Narendra Modi spoke on phone today with Her Excellency Kamala Harris, Vice-President of the United States of America.

Vice-President Harris informed Prime Minister about US plans to make vaccines against Covid-19 available to other countries, including India, under its ‘Strategy for Global Vaccine Sharing’. The Prime Minister expressed his appreciation to Vice President Harris for the US decision, as well as for all other forms of support and solidarity that India has received in recent days from the US Government, businesses and the Indian expatriate community in the US.”

crore but has also partnered with Biological-E to conduct all animal challenge and assay studies through its Research Institute Translational Science Technology Institute (THSTI), Faridabad.

This has been undertaken as part of the government’s ‘Mission Covid Suraksha the Indian Covid-19 Vaccine Development Mission.’ ■ P4

GAMBHIR CHARITY ERRED IN STOCKING DRUGS, SAYS HC

New Delhi, June 3: The Gautam Gambhir Foundation has been found guilty of unauthorised stocking, procuring and distributing Fabiflu medicine to Covid-19 patients, the Delhi government’s drug controller informed the Delhi High Court on Thursday which said the BJP MP did a lot of charity but caused a lot of shortage of drug and inconvenience to society.

The high court deprecated the manner in which a huge quantity of the drug was procured and said genuine patients who needed the medicine could not get it as the bulk stock was taken away by the cricketer-turned-politician Mr Gambhir.

“This was certainly not the way. In this pandemic, it should not be done just because people have means to do it. It should not be that I will do it for one class or for my constituency people and it should not be for popularity. “Firstly, you do charity for some other reason is no charity. We want to curb this practice and for this, we want you (drug controller) to take action,” the court said.

State announces granary, hospital in MK’s memory

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 3

The 97th birth anniversary of five-time chief minister M. Karunanidhi was celebrated all over Tamil Nadu with the state government announcing six special projects, including a ₹250 crore multi-specialty hospital in south Chennai and a ₹70 crore modern library in Madurai.

Among the newly-announced projects are a ₹30 crore granary in Thiruvavur district to store grains and pulses besides facilities for drying them and a 500-bed multispecialty hospital in memory of Karunanidhi on the premises of the King Institute for providing advanced health care to the poor.

Since Karunanidhi loved books he constructed the ultra-modern Anna Centenary Library at Kottupuram that serves the intellectual needs of a wide range of people from scholars to school students. On the same line, the library in Madurai would have a wide collection of books and other reading material spread out in a building with a 2

6 PROJECTS IN MK’S MEMORY

₹30 crore granary to store grains and pulses besides facilities for drying them at in Thiruvavur

500-bed multi-specialty hospital in Guindy providing advanced health care to the poor.



A 2-lakh sq ft library in Madurai

Dream houses for two award-winning authors

Free travel for transgender people.

Annual award, christened ‘Ilakiya Mamani’ to artistes excelling in the performing arts, will carry a certificate of appreciation and a cash prize of ₹5 lakh.

lakh square feet floor space.

The government also announced two schemes to encourage authors in memory of the DMK patriarch, who was a writer in his own right. A literary award, christened ‘Ilakiya Mamani’ would be given to top three writers in Tamil every year. ‘Ilakiya Mamani’, which would be on the lines of the state government’s ‘Kalaimamani’ award which is now being given away every year to artistes excelling in the performing arts, will carry a certificate of appreciation and a cash prize of ₹5 lakh.

In a novel scheme, two authors who won international awards, national awards like Jananapith, Sahitya Academy awards or state awards would be presented with a dream house in the writer’s district on a place of their choice.

The granary and facilities to dry agricultural produce would help farmers protect their grains and pulses from rains and floods and also dry them properly before storing. The driers to be set up in 54 places and go a long way in enabling farmers overcome many of their present day problems. ■ P3



Chief Minister M.K. Stalin handed over Corona cash relief and essential commodities to non-salaried temple workers at a function in the secretariat on Thursday, which also marked the 97th birthday of former Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi.

MONSOON IS HERE

Southwest Monsoon makes onset over Kerala: IMD

The Southwest Monsoon made an onset over Kerala on Thursday after a delay of two days, the India Meteorological Department said. The monsoon onset over Kerala marks the commencement of the four-month rainfall season in the country. The Southwest Monsoon has made an onset over southern parts of Kerala.

■ REPORT ON PAGE 4

Centre, WhatsApp spar at Delhi HC

New Delhi, June 3: WhatsApp on Thursday said it will not limit the functionality of the messaging app for users not agreeing to its new privacy policy, but will continue to send reminders about the update.

WhatsApp said its recent policy update does not change the privacy of people’s personal messages, and it has already written to the government seeking to assure them that the privacy of users remains its highest priority.

On Thursday, the Centre told the Delhi High Court that the messaging platform was trying to “force” its users to consent to the

new privacy policy before the Personal Data Protection Bill becomes the law by bombarding them with notifications daily to obtain their consent.

“We reiterate that we have already responded to the Government of India and assured them that the privacy of users remains our highest priority,” a WhatsApp spokesperson said. A debate had ensued earlier this year after WhatsApp said it will update its terms of service and privacy policy around how it processes user data and partners with Facebook to offer integrations across services. — PTI

Onus of LoC peace on Pak: General

AIR FORCE GETS NEW VICE-CHIEF AMID TENSION ON CHINA BORDER

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 3

Indian Air Force (IAF) which is at a high alert due to ongoing tensions with China, is going to see changes in top commanders. Air Marshal Vivek Ram Chaudhari will be the next Vice-Chief of Air Staff. He will take charge on June 30.

The current Vice-Chief Air Marshal HS Arora

on Pakistan.” Gen. Naravane, speaking to a handpicked group of reporters here before winding up his two-day visit to Kashmir, when he reviewed the security situation in the hinterland

will superannuate on June 30.

In Air Force, Vice Chief is in-charge of the operations and therefore is a critical position. Currently, Air Marshal Chaudhari is heading the Western Air Command in Delhi, which looks after both the crucial borders, with China in Ladakh and all along Pakistan from Ladakh up to Bikaner in Rajasthan.

and also along the LoC, coinciding with the completion of the renewal of ceasefire pledge between the two armies, asserted that the situation on the de facto border and in the hinterland had greatly

improved, yet he urged people of the Valley to shun the path of violence as “it will not take you anywhere”.

He said, “After being briefed by the (Army) commanders here on the prevailing situation, both along the LoC and hinterland, I’m glad to say that all parameters we judge normalcy by have seen great improvement. There have been few (militant) initiated incidents.”

Gen Naravane said there have been hardly any cases of stone pelting, any cases or nil cases of IEDs (blasts) in the recent past and all these are indicators of return of the sense of normalcy. “These are all indicators that awaam (people) also want the same. It’s a very good thing that is happening,” he said.

OTHER STORY

Banned gutka products seized

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 3

The police on Thursday morning intercepted a van and a car at Anakaputhur service road under Shankar Nagar police limits during a vehicle check-up and seized banned gutka products smuggled into Chennai from Karnataka.

A team of cops from Shankar Nagar police station was conducting a vehicle check-up at the Ananakaputhur service road in the morning. They noticed a car followed by a van moving towards the city. Growing suspicious, the cops intercepted both the vehicles and questioned the van driver who claimed they were ferrying vegetables to Pammal residents.

However, when police asked them to open the parcels in the van, they found banned gutka and tobacco products concealed under vegetables. Police said that the banned gutka and tobacco products weighed one tonne. The police also searched the car and found 100 liquor bottles.

The accused, Arutselvam (36), Rangan (21), Suresh (33), Rajesh (34), Babu (20), Shanmugan (35) and Murugesh (33), were arrested. The vehicles were seized by the police and taken to Shankar Nagar police station.

The arrested men revealed that the banned products were purchased from Karnataka and would be stocked at a place in Pammal in Pallavaram, from where they would be sold to clients. All the seven were produced before a local court and subsequently remanded to judicial custody.

Sterlite commissions plant to store oxygen gas

M. ARULOLI | DC
THOOTHUKUDI, JUNE 3

The Sterlite Copper in Thoothukudi, which supplies liquid medical oxygen (LMO) for the treatment of Covid-19 patients, on Thursday commissioned an oxygen bottling plant to capture the gaseous form of oxygen so far wasted in the atmosphere.

The unit, under lockout since 2018, was permitted to produce oxygen needed for Corona patients by the state government on April 26 on the direction of the Supreme Court. It has been

supplying LMO to the government medical college hospitals in the southern districts since May 12.

The company has reportedly supplied around 450 MT of LMO since May 12. In an attempt to increase the oxygen supply, the company on the permission of the state government also set up a new oxygen bottling plant to capture oxygen in gaseous state in cylinders to be supplied to hospitals.

The gaseous form of oxygen could henceforth be utilised by capturing it in cylinders. "For this we have set up an oxygen bot-

tlng plant that can produce 400 cylinders per day," said a company official.

The bottling plant, set up at a cost of ₹11 crore with the help of overseas technology, was formally commissioned on Thursday, according to a statement issued by the copper major.

The company, given permission by the state government to commence production in its second oxygen unit, has the capacity to produce 70 MT of liquid oxygen per day and supply 100 MT of oxygen in gaseous form by filling it in cylinders.



Tambaram municipality sprays disinfectant in containment zones using a drone in East Tambaram area on Thursday.

DRONE IN ACTION

—DC

Stalin inaugurates 300 oxygen beds in Thanjai

DC CORRESPONDENT
THANJAVUR, JUNE 3

A 300 oxygen-bed facility for treating Corona patients was inaugurated on Thursday by Chief Minister M.K. Stalin through video conferencing at Thanjavur medical college complex.

M. Govinda Rao, Thanjavur district collector, told the chief minister that the positivity rate (corona) has come down in the district. More than two lakh people have so far been vaccinated and 100 camps are held every day in the district, he explained.

When the chief minister asked about awareness among people on vaccination and their co-operation, the collector said that though there was some hesitation initially, now people are coming voluntarily to get vaccinated. He also said that lockdown regulations are



Chief Minister MK Stalin pays floral tributes to his father and former Chief Minister late M. Karunanidhi on his 97th birth anniversary on Thursday.

enforced by the police properly and people are co-operating.

When the chief minister asked about desilting

works, the collector said that they are going on as per the orders of the government and will be completed in time.

Administer vaccine to inmates, staff at correctional homes: HC

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 3

The Madras high court has asked the state government to ensure that the inmates at the correctional homes and the staff there at are considered as front-line personnel and administered vaccine on a priority basis.

The first bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy made the above request after amicus curiae Senior Counsel R.Vaigai pointed out that a large number of the staff were infected and vaccination for both the inmates and the staff at the correctional homes should be taken up on a priority basis.

The bench was passing further interim orders on a batch of petitions including the suo motu proceedings initiated by it in the year 2017.

The bench said a report dated June 1, 2021 has been filed detailing the action taken in correctional homes all over the State to deal with the pandemic and prevent the further spread of the disease. The report reveals that in



view of the measures taken by the State Legal Services Authorities with the High Powered Committees, the occupation at the correctional homes stands at 58.72 per cent as far as this State was concerned with 13,854 inmates out of a total capacity of 23,592. An earlier report relating to Puducherry also indicated that there was not much overcrowding and the correctional home in Karaikal was not functional, while the correctional homes at Yanam and Mahe were functional, but there were no inmates, the bench added.

The bench said the present report refers to the vaccination drive undertaken. Amicus pointed out that a large number of the staff were infected and vaccination for both the inmates and the staff at the correctional homes should be taken up on a

priority basis."The State is requested to ensure that the inmates at the correctional homes and the staff there at are considered as front-line personnel and administered vaccine on a priority basis", the bench added.

The bench said other measures pertaining to Covid protocol, hygiene and the like appear to have been taken. The report also speaks of distancing norms being maintained, particularly in the light of occupancy rate having fallen to below 60 percent of the capacity. "It is hoped that in the event there is any further surge, the High Powered Committee under the aegis of the Legal Services Authorities would immediately take urgent measures without waiting for further directions from the Court so that the matter is dealt with at the earliest. This is imperative since there is always a lag behind a policy decision being taken and the same being implemented after obtaining a judicial order", the bench added and posted to July 1, 2021, further hearing of the case.

Kids of lesser god making a livelihood on streets

T. SUDHEESH | DC
CHENNAI, JUNE 3

The second wave of Covid-19 and subsequent lockdowns, like last year's, have forced many children in the city to get out of their houses to earn a livelihood.

The DC on Thursday caught up with a couple of children who were selling vegetables in a bicycle for last few days of Rayala Nagar, G.R Nagar, K.P Nagar and Thiruvallur Salai near Ramapuram. Raja, 13, along with his younger brother Senthil, 11, hailing from Ramapuram, leave their home early morning with bundles of vegetable items tied to the back-seat carrier of their old bicycles.

For the last one week, they have been shouting at doorsteps of residents looking for potential customers.

Today the households, who buy items from them, consider them only as vegetable vendors, not as school children.

Due to continuing lockdowns, resources of their parents exhausted after they lost their jobs. "Our parents provided us with these vegetable items from a retailer as they believe we will not be caught by police for violation of Covid-19 protocol. We will sell it to residents in the daytime. The unsold items will be returned to the parents", they say.

These underprivileged brothers are representatives

of hundreds of children forced by the pandemic to become street vendors due to the rising hunger level in their families.

A recent study, titled 'Covid-19 reversing the situation of child labour in Tamil Nadu' published by the city-based Campaign Against Child Labour (CACAL), says the pandemic had wreaked havoc among children as their families had borrowed money at high rates of interest due to unemployment. The problem is that the heavy borrowings would push them into a debt trap, followed by poverty', the study says.

The study surveyed at least 364 girls and 454 boys in the 6-18 age group, who were interviewed independently, apart

from vulnerable families, in 24 districts from north, east, central, west and south zones of Tamil Nadu.

Andrew Sesuraj, state convener, Tamil Nadu Child Rights Watch, agrees that the number of children out on the streets, indulging in various labour including vegetable sales, increased in the post-pandemic period.

"I have come across several such cases in the city since the pandemic hit. It's evident that they are forced to do this as they are left with no option to deal with hunger. Feeding these children has become an added liability for their parents who have already lost their livelihood. So they send the kids to the streets to earn income," he said.

CANCEL PLUS-2 EXAMS

Form panel to help devise fair assessment criteria



B. Vijayalakshmi

Viewpoint

Will plus-2 exams be cancelled this year? Academicians, teachers' associations and parents have been sending their views to the TN government in the last two days. The government has promised to take a decision this week on conducting the exams for over 8 lakh students based on stakeholders' inputs.

Meanwhile, there was unanim-

ity in welcoming the Centre's decision to cancel the CBSE and ISC class 12 board examinations two days go.

Stating that the health of children is a priority amid the pandemic, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Uttarakhand have cancelled their class 12 board exams.

It may be recalled that schools in Tamil Nadu reopened for stu-

dents of classes 10 and 12 alone in January 2021. State board schools had conducted the practical exams for their students even while the board exams were put off.

With most of the parents and academicians expecting cancellation of plus-2 exams, questions are raised over the evaluation process. While some suggest internal assessment, half early exam and other test marks as basis for final assessment, there are a few who are unsure if this will work out with schools in rural areas where there may not have been regular classes or exams for students this year.

Plus-2 remains a crucial exam in a student's life. However, exams cannot be held now, since

the safety of students is of utmost importance.

But finding an alternative criteria to determine Plus-2 score for students is going to be a challenge for the school education department. A special committee comprising teachers, academicians and experts can be formed to come up with a well-defined evaluation criteria in a time-bound manner. The assessment guidelines for the school final exam should be just and objective. Similarly, universities and higher education institutions should come out with an alternative for admissions. With meticulous thinking, they should modify their admission criteria and ensure fairness and meritocracy are not compromised.



The US Consulate General Chennai hoisted the rainbow Pride flag over the Consulate building to commemorate (LGBTQI+) Pride month.

—DC

Mettur dam to be opened on June 12

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR
& D. SEKAR/DC
CHENNAI, JUNE 3

To ensure that agricultural activities are taken up in a full-fledged manner in the rice bowl of Tamil Nadu this year, Chief Minister M. K. Stalin announced the release of Cauvery water from the Mettur reservoir on the customary date of June 12, besides ensuring that the delta farmers were ready for the kuruvai cultivation.

The announcement on the date of opening the dam was made on Thursday after consultation with the ministers in charge of water resources and agriculture and also the agriculture secretary, during which the water level in Mettur and the requirements of the Cauvery delta farmers were taken into consideration.

Since the water level stood at

97.13 feet as against the maximum level of 120 feet with a storage of 61.43 TMC feet and copious rains were expected to be brought by the south-west monsoon this time, the decision to open the dam was taken.

Though Mettur dam was opened on June 12 last year, the date could not be kept for eight years prior to that due to scarcity of water in the reservoir repeatedly, leading to the farmers missing out on kuruvai (short term) paddy cultivation.

Opening the reservoir on June 12 would now lead to a continuous flow of water in river Cauvery, which, besides being the lifeline of farmers in the delta, is also celebrated by the agrarian communities through a plethora of festivals.

Aadi Peruku is one such festival that comes in August and

brings the people in droves to the river bank. Since the celebrations gain real significance only if the river is on spate at that time, the government would open the Mettur dam a few days ahead of the festival if the customary date could not be kept.

While it is not known if the coronavirus crisis would enable the people to celebrate the festival with the usual gusto this August, Cauvery in spate at that time would be appreciated by the agrarian community as it would be a precursor to a good samba (long term) crop later in the year.

As of now, the government had started desilting work at 647 places to clear the canals and ensure that the water reached the tail ends of the delta region, which is spread over 5.21 lakh acres (2.11 hectares), in the districts of

Trichy, Thanjavur, Thiruvavur, Ariyalur, Pudukkottai and Cuddalore. The desilting work has been launched in consultation with the farmers and is being carried out at a cost of Rs 65.11 crore to facilitate the use of Cauvery water for agricultural operations all over the delta region, an official press release said.

PWD secretary Sandip Saxena also visited the delta regions to oversee the desilting operations and also interact with the farmers to find out their needs regarding irrigation of paddy crop.

The Agricultural department has ensured that seeds, fertilisers, pesticides and other requirements for farming were kept ready by the ryots to start their operations immediately once the water reached their lands.

G. SRINIVASAN | DC
THANJAVUR, JUNE 3

The farmers of composite Thanjavur district have welcomed the opening of Mettur dam on June 12 for Kuruvai cultivation (short-term crop).

Reacting to the statement made by Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Thursday that water will be released from Mettur dam on June 12, farmers said the announcement gives hopes to farmers for raising Kuruvai.

P.R. Pandian, co-ordinator of Thamizhaga Anaithu Vivasaya Sangangalin Orunginaippu Kuzhavu, thanked the chief minister for opening the dam on the traditional date of June 12. He said it augurs well for the paddy cultivation in the Cauvery delta and gives hopes to farmers. He said

that Kuruvai seeds should be made available to farmers. Besides ensuring enough fertilisers, the government should monitor the private parties who sell fertilisers above the prices fixed by the government.

Sundara Vimalanathan, secretary of Thanjai District Cauvery Farmers Protection Association, said the announcement brought cheers to the farmers of delta districts. At the same time, desilting works, now underway in rivers and canals, should be completed before June 12 so that water may reach tailend areas. The government should also ensure availability of agricultural inputs and loans to farmers, he said.

V. Jeevakumar, vice-president of All-India Kisan Sabha (AIKS), said the construction work in bridges on

the upper reaches of Vennar and Grand anicut canal should be completed before the release of water.

V. Kannan, Thanjavur district secretary of Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam, affiliated to the CPI(M), said that water management should be done efficiently by the PWD combining availability of both Mettur dam water and south-west monsoon. "The Tamil Nadu government should get the due share of Cauvery water from Karnataka as per the final order of the Supreme Court for the months of June, July and August to sustain Kuruvai and take up Samba preparatory works", said Kannan.

The farmers of Ganapathi aghraharam area said that three-phase electricity supply should be given to agriculture pumpsets for 24

hours in areas where farmers use agriculture pumpsets for raising Kuruvai.

Meanwhile, Stalin stated that based on views given by the farmers at a meeting held at Thanjavur, presided over by water resources minister Durai Murugan, and considering storage at Mettur dam and south-west monsoon prospects, Mettur dam will be opened on June 12.

The water level in the dam stood at 97.13 ft on Thursday and the storage is 61.43 tmc ft. The Kuruvai cultivation will be taken up on 5.23 lakh acres in Thanjavur, Tiruvavur, Nagapattinam, Ariyalur, Perambalur and Pudukkottai districts. Desilting works to the tune of Rs 65.11 crores have been taken up in the delta districts. A total of 647 works will be completed.

SHORT TAKES

Superstition draws crowd in MP village to seek protection against Covid-19

Rajgarh, June 3: Defying Covid-19 norms, a large number of people gathered at a village here in Madhya Pradesh under the belief that a woman, supposedly blessed by a Goddess, can protect them from the viral infection, police said on Thursday.

Following the gathering of over 150 people on Tuesday at Chatukheda village in Rajgarh, police registered a case against the woman and three other persons under the IPC and the Disaster Management Act, Khujner police station in-charge Umesh Yadav said.

A video of the incident went viral on social media in which a temple priest was purportedly heard saying the woman was under the spell of "Pari Mata", a local deity, and the water offered by her would help them keep the coronavirus at bay, the official said.

In the video, a large number of people, mostly women, were seen standing at a place in the village and most of them were neither wearing masks nor following the social distancing norms, he said.

The district administration has banned all social and religious gatherings in the wake of Covid-19, he said.

However, over 150 people gathered at the event on Tuesday, in violation of the collector's orders, the police official said.

Khujner tehsildar Shambhu Singh Meena said on getting information about the gathering, he went to the village and persuaded people to return to their homes following which the crowd dispersed. — PTI

VALIDITY OF TET CERTIFICATES EXTENDED

New Delhi, June 3: The validity of the Teachers Eligibility Test (TET) qualifying certificates has been extended from seven years to lifetime, Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal "Nishank" announced on Thursday.

"The government has decided to extend the validity period of the Teachers Eligibility Test qualifying certificates from seven years to lifetime with a retrospective effect from 2011," the minister said in a statement.

"The respective state governments and UTs will take necessary action to revalidate and issue fresh TET certificates to those candidates whose period of seven years has already lapsed," he added.

Pokhriyal said this will be a positive step to boost employment opportunities for the candidates aspiring to make a career in the field of teaching.

Possessing the TET qualifying certificate is one of the essential qualifications for a person to be eligible for appointment as a school teacher.

The guidelines dated February 11, 2011 of the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) laid down that TET would be conducted by the state governments and the validity of the TET certificates was seven years from the date of passing TET.

ED ARRESTS RJD MP IN MONEY LAUNDERING CASE

New Delhi, June 3: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has arrested RJD MP Amarendra Dhari Singh in connection with a money laundering case linked to an alleged fertiliser scam and payment of kickbacks to the tune of ₹685 crore, officials said on Thursday.

The 61-year-old Rajya Sabha member and businessman was arrested under sections of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) from his residence in Defence Colony here, the officials said. They did not specify when he was taken into custody.

The case relates to illegal commissions worth over ₹685 crore allegedly given to the NRI sons of IFFCO Managing Director and CEO U S Awasthi and Indian Potash Ltd (IPL) Managing Director P.S. Gahlaut as well as others by overseas suppliers from 2007-14. This was done through transactions facilitated by AgustaWestland case VVIP choppers deal case accused Rajiv Saxena, officials said.

Dhari, who was sent to the Rajya Sabha by the Bihar-based party in March last year, is stated to be the senior vice president of a Dubai-based firm, Jyoti Trading Corporation, involved in the case, officials said.



Beneficiaries wait to receive the second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine at a vaccination centre in New Delhi, Thursday.

— PTI

Restrictions on Covid-19 not lifted anywhere: Maha

Relaxation under consideration and no decision has been taken: CMO

Mumbai, June 3: The Maharashtra government on Thursday evening clarified that the existing restrictions on account of Covid-19 have not been lifted anywhere, contrary to the announcement made by minister Vijay Wadettiwar.

Relaxation of restrictions as per the situation in different areas is only under consideration and no decision has been taken, a statement from the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) said. Wadettiwar, minister for Disaster Management, later said only "in principle" approval to phasing out of restrictions was given, but no decision has been taken.

He had told reporters in the afternoon that restrictions would be lifted in 18 out of 36 districts in the state where the positivity rate is five per cent or less and the occupancy of oxygen beds in hospitals is less than 25 percent from Friday. He had held a press conference after a meeting of the State Disaster Management Authority here. The CMO statement that followed said the government has not lifted lockdown-like curbs as Covid-19 has not been controlled completely yet. "The coronavirus spread is serious in some rural areas....The curbs have not been completely lifted in the state," the statement added. Last week the government had announced that the restrictions, imposed in April this year, would continue till June 15. The CMO statement said that the Disaster Management department has decided five levels of severity of the pandemic

Lockdown in Karnataka extended till June 14

Bengaluru, June 3: The lockdown slated to end on June 7 was extended till June 14 in Karnataka as Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa on Thursday announced a Rs 500 crore second relief package. The relief was meant for sections, which were left out in the previous package of Rs 1,250 crore.

"We had earlier announced stringent restrictions from May 24 to June 7 to contain the spread of Coronavirus. Though the infections have reduced, the spread of the disease is still on," Yediyurappa said. The decision to extend the restrictions by a week was taken following the recommendation of experts, he said. The lockdown-like restrictions have been in effect since April 27. From May 10, the Chief Minister announced a lockdown till May 24 morning. However, it was further extended till June 7. The second COVID relief package of Rs 500 crore would encompass teachers, 'ASHA' and

based on the positivity rate and availability of oxygen beds. The degree of relaxation will be decided as per the level of severity and guidelines on whether to relax the curbs or further strengthen them will be announced soon, the CMO said. After the CMO issued the clarification,

Wadettiwar told reporters that "in principle approval was given to phased lifting of lockdown curbs on the basis of positivity rate and availability of oxygen beds", but no final decision was taken.

Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray and Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar were present at the meet-

CHIEF MINISTER Yediyurappa on Thursday announced a ₹500 crore second relief package

Anganwadi workers, fishermen, workers in film industry, temple priests, Muezzins in mosques and powerloom workers. The relief package would benefit over 62.50 lakh people, the Chief Minister said. According to Yediyurappa, ₹100 crore has been earmarked for purchasing milk to sustain those who are in the dairy business and have been hit by decrease in the demand.

The milk would be processed into milk powder and half kilogram of it would be supplied to each school child along with their regular foodkit in June and July. Teachers working in unaided private schools would get Rs 5,000 each, which would cost the state exchequer Rs 100 crore. A sum of Rs 35 crore has been reserved for 59,000 powerloom workers who would get Rs

3,000 each, the Chief Minister said. He added that each of the 22,000 unorganised workers in film industry and television medium would get Rs 3,000 for whom Rs 6.6 crore has been earmarked. Temple priests serving in the 'C' category of temples under the Muzrai department, Imams and Muezzins in mosques and ASHA workers would also get Rs 3,000 each, Yediyurappa said. He said Rs 24.7 crore has been earmarked for Anganwadi workers who would get Rs 2,000 each. The government also exempted the medium, small and micro enterprises from the fixed electricity charge which would cost Rs 114.7 crore to the government. BJP Karnataka unit chief and Dakshina Kannada MP, Nalin Kumar Kateel welcomed the second package announced by the Chief Minister. To a query, the Chief Minister said already the disbursement of relief packages to various sections, as announced earlier, is on.

— PTI

ing, he added. "No 'unlock' is happening in the state. Even though in principle approval has been given, final decision will be taken by the chief minister," the Congress leader said. Maharashtra had on Wednesday recorded 15,169 new COVID-19 cases and 285 deaths.

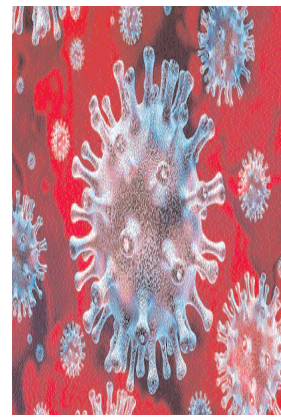
— PTI

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— PTI



Mumbai's Dharavi reports one new Covid-19 case

Mumbai, June 3: For the first time in four months, Mumbai's Dharavi area reported just one new coronavirus case on Thursday, a senior official of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) said.

The slum-dominated area had not detected a single case on Wednesday, he said. The tally of infections in Dharavi stands at 6,829, of which 6,451 patients have recovered from the disease and 19 are undergoing treatment, the official said.

Dharavi became a hotspot of coronavirus infection at the start of April, with 99 cases reported on April 8 alone. Spread over 2.5 sq km, Dharavi is considered to be Asia's largest slum, with a population of over 6.5 lakh.

— PTI

Centre to buy 30 crore doses of Bio.E vaccine

FROM PG1

Which was launched to reinforce and accelerate Covid-19 vaccine development efforts as part of the third stimulus package, Atmanirbhar 3.0, the statement said.

The mission aims to bring to the citizens a

safe, efficacious, affordable and accessible vaccine.

The mission is supporting development of 5-6 COVID-19 vaccine candidates and some of these are now closer to licensure and introduction in public health systems, the ministry said.

SC quashes sedition charge against Dua

FROM PG1

Petitioner was well "within the permissible limits laid down in the decision of this court in Kedar Nath Singh."

Noting certain factual discrepancies in the date of things that had happened prior and after the lockdown was declared in March 2020, the court concluded that Mr Dua's programme was not intended to incite people or create disharmony and was within the professional limits. "We are, therefore, of the firm view that the prosecution of the petitioner for the offences punishable under Secti-

ons 124A and 505 (1) (b) of the IPC would be unjust," the court said.

"Those offences, going by the allegations in the FIR and other attending circumstances, are not made out at all and any prosecution in respect thereof would be violative of the rights of the petitioner guaranteed under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution," the court said in its order. However, the court declined Mr Dua's plea that before registering a case against a journalist with 10 years of professional standing, the complaint should be examined by a high-powered committee.

Monsoon makes its footfall in Kerala

Thiruvananthapuram, June 3: As the South West monsoon made its footfall in Kerala, many places in the state and most places in neighbouring Lakshadweep received rainfall on Thursday.

Heavy (7-11 cm in 24 hours) rainfall is very likely to occur at one or two places in Kerala from Thursday to Saturday, a weather bulletin said here.

Though the normal onset date for the monsoon in the state, which marks the commencement of the four-month rainfall season in the country, is June 1, it arrived two days late this time.

"The Southwest Monsoon has made an onset over southern parts of Kerala," IMD director-general Mrutunjay Mohapatra said.

More than 60 per cent of the 14 rainfall monitoring stations reported rainfall 2.5 mm or more on past 2 days consecutively, the IMD said detailing the criteria fulfilled to declare the onset of the monsoon.

Also the spatial distribution of rainfall over Kerala remained to be fairly widespread during past two days, it added.

The South West Monsoon is likely to advance into remaining parts of south Arabian Sea, some parts of central Arabian Sea, remaining parts of Kerala and Lakshadweep, some more parts of Tamil Nadu and Puducherry, some parts of coastal and south interior Karnataka, Rayalaseema and some more parts of south and central Bay of Bengal during next 2 days.

TN CM seeks drugs to treat black fungus

New Delhi, June 3: The Tamil Nadu government on Thursday urged the Centre to allocate adequate number of Amphotericin B drug, used for treating black fungus disease, as the state detected 673 cases so far and the demand for the medication has 'increased manifold'.

In a letter to Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan, Chief Minister M K Stalin said, "... the emergence of mucormycosis among the patients and sufficient supply of liposomal Amphotericin B, which is being allotted by the Government of India, are increasingly becoming critical issues which need urgent intervention."

With the state government declaring 'mucormycosis' as a 'notified disease', Stalin said Tamil Nadu has initiated large scale prevention efforts by creating greater awareness about its likely causes.

The state government has also set up mucormycosis clinics and dedicated wards in government hospitals. So far, 673 cases of mucormycosis or black fungus have been detected in the state and hence the demand for

"liposomal Amphotericin B has increased manifold", he said in the letter.

Noting that his government already placed orders for 35,000 vials of the anti-fungal drug, he said the supply was according to the allocation made by the Centre.

"... the state has received only 1,790 vials, which is woefully inadequate to treat the growing numbers of mucormycosis patients. I would request you to kindly instruct the concerned officials to immediately allocate at least 30,000 vials to Tamil Nadu," the CM added.

PTIIn an order, it also said that all government organisations should mandatorily take vigilance clearance before offering post-retirement jobs to babus. "It has been observed that on some occasions, immediately after their retirement from government organisations, retired officials are taking up full-time job/contractual assignments in private sector organisations," the CVC said in the order issued to secretaries of all central government departments and chiefs of public sector banks among others.

— PTI

CVC: Cooling off period for babus must

New Delhi, June 3: The Central Vigilance Commission on Thursday said retired officials accepting jobs in private sector organisations without the mandatory cooling off period constitutes "serious misconduct".

In an order, it also said that all government organisations should mandatorily take vigilance clearance before offering post-retirement jobs to babus.

"It has been observed that on some occasions, immediately after their retirement from government organisations, retired officials are taking up full-time job/contractual assignments in private sector organisations," the CVC said in the order issued to secretaries of all central government departments and chiefs of public sector banks among others.

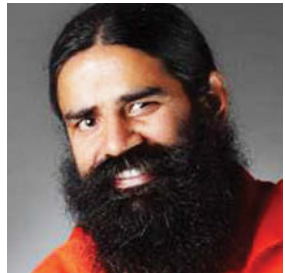
HC issues summons to Ramdev on DMA plea for making statement against allopathic medicine

New Delhi, June 3: The Delhi high court Thursday issued summons to yoga guru Ramdev on a plea accusing him of making statements against allopathic medicines and claiming Patanjali's Coronil kit is a cure for COVID-19 but refused to restrain him at this stage saying the allopathic profession was not so fragile.

The high court however orally asked Ramdev's counsel to tell him not to make any provocative statements. "Mr Rajiv Nayar is a very respectable senior (advocate). I am sure his client will listen to him," Justice C Hari Shankar said. The high court issued summons to Ramdev on the suit filed by Delhi Medical Association (DMA) and asked him to file response in three weeks and listed the matter for hearing on

July 13. "Considerable time has passed since passing of allegedly injurious statements. The counsel says defendant no. 1 (Ramdev) continues to make statement. No injunctive order can be given without giving an opportunity to the plaintiff, especially in view of the objections. Issue summons on the suit," Justice Shankar said. The court also issued summons to social media platforms Twitter and Facebook and Astha channel, who are made parties to the petition. DMA, on behalf of its doctor members, submitted before the court that Ramdev's statement affects as Coronil medicine does not cure coronavirus and this was a suit for civil rights of doctors. The court said it cannot say as to whether Coronil is a cure or not and that it was something to be decided by medical experts. The judge said he was "least concerned" with the association's argument that Ramdev was a powerful person having large num-

ber of followers. "Ramdev is a person who doesn't have faith is allopathy. He believes everything can be cured by Yoga and Ayurveda. He may be right or wrong," he said. He added that the court can understand it is argued his statements are affecting the public but here "you say oh my God Ramdev has done something. You people should be spending time to find cure for the pandemic instead of wasting the court's time". On the point of locus of DMA to file the suit, Dutta said it was affecting the public and also the members of the association as the statements made in open affects and that Ramdev was calling this science fake. To this, the judge said, "If I feel some science is fake. Tomorrow I will feel homeopathy is



statement affect the association, senior advocate Rajiv Dutta, representing DMA, said it affects because this medicine does not cure coronavirus and this was a suit for civil rights of doctors. The court said it cannot say as to whether Coronil is a cure or not and that it was something to be decided by medical experts. The judge said he was "least concerned" with the association's argument that Ramdev was a powerful person having large num-

ber of followers. "Ramdev is a person who doesn't have faith is allopathy. He believes everything can be cured by Yoga and Ayurveda. He may be right or wrong," he said. He added that the court can understand it is argued his statements are affecting the public but here "you say oh my God Ramdev has done something. You people should be spending time to find cure for the pandemic instead of wasting the court's time". On the point of locus of DMA to file the suit, Dutta said it was affecting the public and also the members of the association as the statements made in open affects and that Ramdev was calling this science fake. To this, the judge said, "If I feel some science is fake. Tomorrow I will feel homeopathy is

fake. Do you mean they will file a suit against me? I put in on twitter. You will say take down the Twitter account. It is a public opinion. I do not think your allopathic profession is so fragile", and added that it has to be tested on the touchstone of free speech. The court said someone has a view that it is because of inefficacy of allopathic medicines that so many people have died and it was of the view that it comes under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution. Senior advocate Rajiv Nayar, representing Ramdev, raised preliminary objection on the maintainability of the plea and argued that prima facie the suit was not maintainable as they are asking for an injunction and raising the ground of public good.

— PTI

SHORT TAKES

6.1-MAGNITUDE
QUAKE STRIKES
INDONESIA

Jakarta, June 3: A 6.1-magnitude earthquake struck off the coast of Indonesia's remote Maluku islands Thursday, the United States Geological Survey said, but no tsunami warning was issued.

The strong quake hit at a relatively shallow depth of 31 kilometres, about 127 kilometres southwest of the city of Ternate. Shallower quakes tend to cause more damage, but there were no immediate reports of casualties. "It was a decent shake, but people weren't panicking," said Ternate resident Nasarudin Amin. "There are warnings about potential aftershocks." Indonesia experiences frequent quakes due to its position on the Pacific "Ring of Fire".

4 KILLED AS BOMB
HITS MINIVAN
IN KABUL

Kabul, June 3: A bomb ripped through a minivan in the western part of the Afghan capital Kabul on Thursday, killing at least four people.

No one took responsibility for the attack in the neighbourhood, which is largely populated by the minority Hazara ethnic group who are mostly Shiite Muslims. The Islamic State has carried out similar bombings in the area, including an attack on two minivans on Tuesday that killed at least 10 people. Shiites are a minority in mostly Sunni Afghanistan, and the Islamic State affiliate has declared war against them. In a statement, IS said they had also bombed an electrical grid station on Tuesday, leaving much of Kabul in darkness.

TRUMP SHUTS
DOWN HIS SOCIAL
MEDIA SITE

Washington, June 3: Donald Trump has permanently closed his blog, a webpage where the former US president shared his fiery speeches and statements after being banned by social media giants, including Facebook and Twitter.

The page titled From the Desk of Donald J. Trump has been removed from Trump's website after going live less than a month earlier, his spokesperson Jason Miller told *CNBC* news on Wednesday.

It was just auxiliary to the broader efforts we have and are working on, Miller said, adding that the webpage will not be returning.

"Hoping to have more information on the broader efforts soon, but I do not have a precise awareness of timing," Miller said.

FRANCE'S DAVID
DIOP WINS INT'L
BOOKER PRIZE

London, June 3: French novelist David Diop on Wednesday won the prestigious International Booker Prize for books translated into English with his World War I-set novel, "At Night All Blood is Black".

The Paris-born writer became the first French winner of the prize, awarded for a book translated into English and published in the UK or Ireland, a ceremony broadcast online.

Lucy Hughes-Hallett, chair of the judges, said "this story of warfare and love and madness has a terrifying power".

"We judges agreed that its incantatory prose and dark, brilliant vision had jangled our emotions and blown our minds," she said, adding "it had cast a spell on us".

BLOOD MONEY
SAVES INDIAN
FROM DEATH ROW

Abu Dhabi, June 3: A 45-year-old Indian, who was on death row in the United Arab Emirates for killing a young Sudanese boy in a road accident in 2012, can't believe that he will be a free man and can return to the country to be with his family. Becks Krishnan was saved by prominent NRI businessman and philanthropist M.A. Yusuffali who helped to pay his "blood money" amounting nearly ₹one crore.

Krishnan, who hails from Kerala, was sentenced to death by UAE Supreme Court after he was found guilty of killing a young Sudanese boy when he recklessly drove and rammed his car into a group of children in September 2012. Ever since, his family and friends have been trying hard for Krishnan's release without any success, especially as the victim's family had already gone back and settled in Sudan, putting an end to any discussion or pardon. The Krishnan family then approached Yusuffali,

Tiananmen protest anniv eve



Visitors tour in front of Tiananmen Gate on the eve of Friday's anniversary in Beijing, on Thursday. Communist Party leaders have imprisoned or driven activists into exile and largely succeeded in ensuring young people know little about the June 4, 1989, deadly crackdown on the pro-democracy movement. — AP

Bill to remove per nation cap
on Green Card in US Congress

Washington, June 3: A bipartisan legislation has been introduced in the US House of Representatives to eliminate the per country cap on employment-based Green Card. The legislation was introduced by Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren and Congressman John Curtis and it is likely to benefit Indian IT professionals anguishing over decades of Green Card wait. The Equal Access to Green cards for Legal Employment (EAGLE) Act, 2021 needs to be passed by the Senate before it can be sent to the White House for the president to sign it into a law.

The bill phases out the seven per cent per-country limit on employment-based immigrant visas. The bill also raises the seven per cent per-country limit on family-sponsored visas to 15 per cent.

Its predecessor, the Fairness for High Skilled Immigrants Act, was passed in the House in the 116th Congress with a resounding bipartisan vote of 365 to 65.

"We all know that our immigration system is severely broken and it has been broken for decades," said Lofgren, Chair of the House Subcommittee on Immigration and Citizenship. The basic framework for allocating im-

migrant visas dates back to the middle of the 20th century and was last seriously updated in 1990, when the Congress established the worldwide numerical limits on visas and the seven per cent per-country cap that still exists today, she said.

Over time, these limitations have led to backlogs that were unimaginable in 1990. The effect has been that countries with relatively small populations are allocated the same number of visas as a relatively large population country.

"The result? A person from a large-population country with extraordinary qualifications who could contribute greatly to our economy and create jobs waits behind a person with lesser qualifications from a smaller country," she added.

"It makes no sense. Because of this, we are now seeing recruiters from outside America luring those with the highest skills away from the US. That hurts our economy."

The bipartisan EAGLE Act moves our country toward a system that de-emphasises birthplace and better serves America. Simply put, it will allow US companies to focus on what they do best — hiring smart people to create products and services, which creates jobs in our districts," Lofgren said. Congressman Curtis said the 2020 census showed that Utah has the fastest-growing state in the nation due to major growth and innovation in the technology sector, bringing thousands of new jobs to the state. — PTI

— PTI

S'PORE BEGINS
PROBE INTO
FIRE ON SHIP

Singapore, June 3: Singapore on Thursday started its own investigation into the massive fire on a chemical-laden cargo vessel, sailing under the country's flag, that sank in Sri Lankan waters and posed a grave threat to the environment and marine life.

The Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA) in a press statement said it also understands that the Sri Lankan authorities are investigating the incident.

"As the flag State, MPA has also commenced its own investigation on the incident," it said. The container ship MV X-Press Pearl, carrying a consignment of chemicals and raw materials for cosmetics from Hazira in Gujarat to Colombo Port, sank. — PTI

OVERLOOKED | NEIGHBOUR

Aim to understand how planet became an inferno

Nasa announces 2 new Venus missions

Cape Canaveral, June 3: Nasa is returning to sizzling Venus, our closest yet perhaps most overlooked neighbour, after decades of exploring other worlds.

The space agency's new administrator, Bill Nelson, announced two new robotic missions to the solar system's hottest planet, during his first major address to employees Wednesday. "These two sister missions both aim to understand how Venus became an inferno-like world capable of melting lead at the surface," Nelson said.

One mission named DaVinci Plus will analyse the thick, cloudy Venusian atmosphere in an attempt to determine whether the inferno planet ever had an ocean and was possibly habitable. A small craft will plunge through the atmosphere to measure the gases.

It will be the first US-led mission to the Venusian atmosphere since 1978. The other mission, called

EARLIER VOYAGES

1970: Nasa's Mariner 2 performed the first successful flyby in 1962, and the Soviets' Venera 7 made the first successful landing.

1989: Nasa used a space shuttle to send its Magellan spacecraft into orbit around Venus.

Veritas, will seek a geological history by mapping the rocky planet's surface. "It is astounding how little we know about Venus," but the new missions will give fresh views of the planet's atmosphere, made up mostly of carbon dioxide, down to the core, Nasa scientist Tom Wagner said in a statement. "It will be as if we have rediscovered the planet."

1978: The year when a US-led mission had last gone to the Venusian atmosphere.

2006: The European Space Agency put a spacecraft around Venus.

Nasa's top science official, Thomas Zurbuchen, calls it "a new decade of Venus". Each mission — launching sometime around 2028 to 2030 — will receive \$500 million for development under Nasa's Discovery programme. The missions beat out two other proposed projects, to Jupiter's moon Io and Neptune's icy moon Triton. The US and the former



In this photo provided by Nasa, Administrator Bill Nelson speaks during his first major address to employees, at the agency's headquarters in Washington on Wednesday. — NASA/Bill Ingalls

Soviet Union sent multiple spacecraft to Venus in the early days of space exploration.

Nasa's Mariner 2 performed the first successful flyby in 1962, and the Soviets' Venera 7 made the first successful landing in

Bibi rivals reach
deal to oust him

Lapid: 8-party coalition has been formed

Jerusalem, June 3: Israel's Opposition parties on Thursday set the wheels in motion for a potential national unity government after clinching a last-minute agreement to oust Benjamin Netanyahu, the longest-serving prime minister in the Jewish nation's history.

Yair Lapid, leader of the centrist Yesh Atid party, announced an eight-party coalition had been formed after tough political negotiations. Under a rotation arrangement, the head of the right-wing Yamina party, Naftali Bennett, 49, would serve as the prime minister first before handing over to Lapid.

Lapid, 57, officially informed President Reuven Rivlin and Knesset (Parliament) Speaker Yariv Levin about the deal late Wednesday night, barely half an hour before the Wednesday midnight deadline.

The announcement came after a series of back-to-back meetings with the leaders of the anti-Netanyahu camp in the 120-member Knesset.

"In accordance with Clause 13(b) of the Basic Law: The Government I am honoured to inform you

● **UNDER A rotation arrangement, the head of the right-wing Yamina party, Naftali Bennett, 49, would serve as the prime minister first before handing over to Lapid.**

that I have succeeded in forming a government... MK (Member of Knesset) Naftali Bennett will serve as a prime minister first, Lapid told Rivlin.

"I commit to you Mr President that this government will work to serve all the citizens of Israel including those who aren't members of it, will respect those who oppose it and do everything in its power to unite all parts of Israeli society," the Yesh Atid party leader said.

Lapid will serve as foreign minister until the two men swap roles halfway through the term.

There still needs to be a parliamentary vote before the government is sworn in.

The Israeli president thanked Lapid saying, "We expect the Knesset will convene as soon as possible to ratify the government, as required."

The development, seen by some as historic as it

includes an Arab party in the coalition, will break an ongoing political impasse that has seen Israel go through four polls yielding inconclusive results in less than two years.

Lapid's coalition is composed of Yesh Atid, Yamina, Kahol Lavan, New Hope, Labor, Yisrael Beiteinu, Meretz and United Arab List.

Netanyahu, 71, in his first reaction on Twitter said "all legislators elected by votes from the right must oppose this dangerous left-wing government."

The Opposition on Thursday moved quickly to push for a vote for the Knesset Speaker to be replaced as soon as possible.

The move to replace Likud's Yariv Levin is designed to deny the Speaker the chance to drag his feet on scheduling a confidence vote on the new government.

In the letter to the Knesset's secretary-general, the Opposition bloc asked that a vote to replace Levin with Yesh Atid MK Mickey Levy as Speaker be placed on the agenda at the next plenum session, which is set to take place on Monday. — PTI

UK SEEKS TO FLIP
GOVT'S FOREIGN
AID BUDGET CUT

London, June 3: Lawmakers from Britain's governing Conservative Party said Thursday they hope to force a vote in Parliament next week that could make the government reverse a contentious cut to the United Kingdom's foreign aid budget.

The British government dropped a long-standing commitment to spend 0.7% of the UK's gross domestic product on international aid, citing the Coronavirus pandemic's blow to the economy. It says the cut to 0.5 per cent is temporary.

United Nations agencies and other international organisations say the reduction will hurt programmes that help some of the world's poorest people.

Former International Development Secretary Andrew Mitchell says he has enough support to win a vote on Monday, just days before Prime Minister Boris Johnson hosts leaders of the Group of Seven wealthy nations for a June 11-13 summit in Cornwall, England.

The vote will only happen if the speaker of the House of Commons allows it, which is not guaranteed.

But the growing list of Conservative lawmakers supporting Mitchell nevertheless could pressure the government to change course. — AP

G7 health heads
talk vax sharing

Oxford, June 3: Health ministers from the G7 group of wealthy nations met Thursday in Britain to discuss sharing vaccines with poorer countries, as calls continue to ensure fairer global distribution of doses.

The meeting in Oxford comes ahead of next week's G7 summit, hosted by the United Kingdom, which is set to be dominated by discussion of the coronavirus pandemic and recovery plans.

"We'll be working together with G7 partners to try to meet the objective that a vaccine is made available right across the world," UK Health Secretary Matt Hancock told reporters.

"After all, this is a global pandemic and nobody is safe from it until everybody is safe," he added.

The G7 gathering was also set to focus on improving identification of animal-borne infections, given three-fifths of all infections jump from animals to humans.

The ministers from Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States vowed to "combat future health threats by working together to identify early warning signs from animals and the environ-

ment". "There will be more diseases that cross that boundary from animals to humans," Hancock added.

"We must be better prepared as a world in the future and that is something that is very much on the table in the discussions. — AFP

Vax refusal: Sindh
to stop staff pay

Islamabad, June 3: The chief minister of Pakistan's Sindh province on Thursday directed the authorities to stop the salaries of government officials from July if they fail to get vaccinated for Covid-19.

The order was passed during a meeting of the provincial task force on Covid-19 chaired by Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah. "Government employees who do not get themselves vaccinated will have their salaries stopped from July," Shah said. A directive on this has been issued to the finance ministry, officials said.

The Sindh government has already fixed June 5 as the deadline for all teachers in the province to get vaccinated. The step is because all educational institutions are to open from June 7.

According to the the Sindh Health Department, 1,550,553 people have been vaccinated in the province so far, while 1,121,000 people have received the first dose and 429,000 people have been fully vaccinated against the virus. — PTI

TAMIL NADU WATER SUPPLY AND DRAINAGE BOARD	
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER, TWAD BOARD, MADURAI	
ADDITIONAL CORRIGENDUM	
TENDER EXTENSION NOTICE No.1 /DATED. 31.05.2021	
Ref : Tender notice references.	
1. IFB.No.F. Outlived CWSS to Karumathur /SDO II/ CW /2021 /Dt. 12.05.2021	
2. IFB.No.F.Nagercoil UGSS - Compound wall /SDO 2/ CW /2021 /Dt.12.05.2021 (Third Call)	
The period of sale of tender documents and receipt & opening of tenders called for in the reference is extended as below	
Name of work :	1) Outlived Scheme 2019-20 - Combined Water Supply Scheme to Karumathur and 36 other habitations in Madurai District - (Period of completion 6 months)
Period of sale of bid documents	Upto 5.45 P.M on 14.06.2021
Last date for receipt of tenders	Upto 3.00 P.M on 16.06.2021
Opening of tenders	At 3.30 P.M on 16.06.2021
All other terms and conditions already published remain unaltered.	
DPR / 1681 / TENDER / 2021	SAVE WATER, CONSERVE WATER, EVERY DROP COUNTS
Chief Engineer, TWAD Board, Madurai	

DECCAN Chronicle

4 JUNE 2021

Vaccines for all: SC has put Centre squarely on the mat

The demand for a review of the Union government’s liberalised vaccine policy that handed over the responsibility of vaccinating people aged between 18 and 44 years to the state governments and private hospitals is gaining strength what with the Supreme Court questioning its very logic. In its interim order in a suo motu case on Tuesday, the apex court wondered why the Centre cannot procure the vaccines for the states as well if it gets the doses cheap because of the size of its order. The court pointed out that the Union Budget for 2021-22 has earmarked ₹35,000 crores to vaccinate people unlike the cash-strapped states, and asked the latter whether they have plans to vaccinate their people for free. After digging out data which said there are about 13,000 villages with no common service centres, the court flagged the issue of digital divide and reminded the government that accessibility barrier could have serious implications on the fundamental rights to equality and health of the marginalised sections of society as registering themselves on the

The government should take the court’s intervention as an opportunity to make a course correction and take charge. It should go in for a thorough review of the botched policy.

CoWin app is mandatory to get the jab. Some could find the court’s directive to produce the data of the purchases the Centre has made till now and the documents and file notings reflecting its thinking on the policy a bit of judicial overreach but the court, as the defender of fundamental rights including the right to life, has little option but to put its foot down and hold a delinquent government accountable. The same sense of duty could have driven it into asking the government to produce an outline for how and when it seeks to vaccinate the remaining population by the end of 2021.

The court’s views apart, the vaccine policy has come under criticism from several state governments, experts and epidemiologists as it refuses to address the challenges the pandemic poses to the nation. The latest to join the chorus is Odisha chief minister Navin Patnaik who wants the Centre to procure vaccines for all the states.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is on record saying vaccination is an important tool in the fight against the virus but the government he heads does not seem to understand its import, lest it should not have forced state government and private companies to fight with one another for a life-saving product in a market where the supply is limited. The Centre should have long ended the charade of the state governments floating global tenders for vaccines only to get poor response when it, as it stated the other day, had known that there is a global shortage of the doses and that manufacturers are unlikely to deal with state governments. It should have taken an early decision on making the Integrated Vaccine Complex at Chengalpatt in Tamil Nadu functional instead of sitting on the repeated reminders by chief minister M.K. Stalin.

The government should take the court’s intervention as an opportunity to make a course correction and take charge. It should go in for a thorough review of the botched policy and come out with a comprehensive one which will inoculate every citizen whether a third wave hits the nation or not. Better late than never.

Osaka’s prerogative

Sport mirrors the society it is played in but in the modern age that society has got unimaginably more complex. Take for instance the walkout from the French Open by one of the most talented players in women’s tennis — Naomi Osaka, four time Grand Slam winner. Facing mental health issues as in dealing with a psychosis over media conferences, which she thinks only induce doubts in players’ minds, she decided to abandon the Grand Slam rather than face up to her demons. But what did sport do but throw the book at her in pedantic action and which proved so unpopular, with public opinion swinging hugely in sympathy with her condition, that the sports administrators were running for cover.

Professional sport can no longer be run like a circus ring into which athletes are corralled to perform while taking home fat pay and endorsement cheques. The finest athletes are subjected to extreme anxieties, which their skills help tame sometimes. But they all suffer the same human frailties as John Doe and that calls for empathy rather than stentorian diktats from the keepers of the codes of behaviour. Ironically, the men running the most from the press and media were the admin men of the Grand Slams just when they were required to come clean and act in the interest of inclusivity in sport by explaining themselves.

The mental well-being of sportspeople is also important for the entertainment they offer through their artistic skills that please the aesthete and the aficionado as well as the common man. The complexities of individual behaviour under competitive pressures in young people may seem administratively difficult to handle. But sport must endure all that besides taking a stand against so much else that is wrong with the world, such as racism, sexism and jingoism. They made the debutant England Test cricketer Ollie Robinson apologise cringingly and in public for tweets of 2012 and 2013 that were racist and sexist. It is in addressing sympathetically the issue of his career that sport can show it has the equanimity and the empathy when it comes to dealing with sportspeople.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

KAUSHIK MITTER
Editor

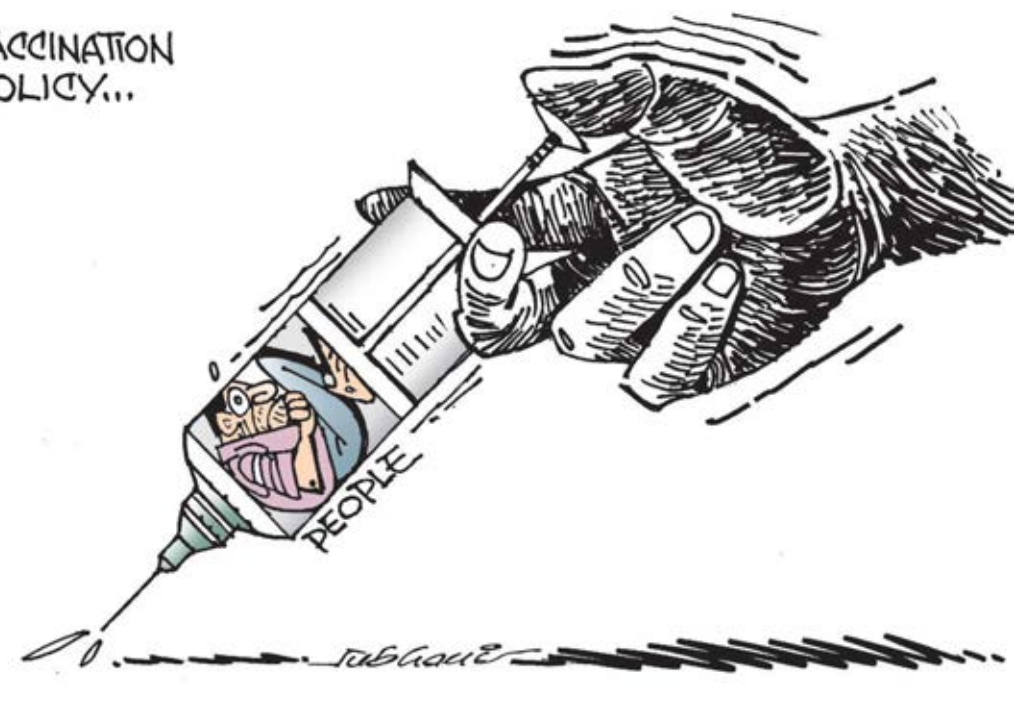
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Subhani

VACCINATION POLICY...



Why China needs to pay reparations to the world



Abhijit Bhattacharya

In an article in August last year, I had argued that the “world needs to seek reparations from China” for the all-round harm it had caused. “Covid-19 has done more damage to the global economy in six months than the two world wars did in 10 years. The Chinese origin virus has already claimed over six lakh lives, while more than 1.6 crore cases have been recorded. There is debt world billions, perhaps trillions, of dollars and over 200 countries are on the road to ruin”, I had written.

Today, in June 2021, the casualty figures have not only multiplied several hundred times in just 10 months, but skyrocketed to astronomical levels, battering all 223 countries, minus China. Therefore, I reiterate that the world, including India, must compel the Communist Party of China’s government in Beijing to pay suitable reparations or damages to all nations that have been left devastated by the China-conceived Third World War, which is still raging. No one has been left untouched. The effects are starkly visible all over: with India’s economics, society, industry, public health, trade, commerce, security, territorial integrity and 1.3 billion people’s lives turned upside down.

No one is quite sure what lies in store for the world’s second most populous country six months from now, except to helplessly stare at the stark reality of New Delhi being in cusp of an unprecedented period of economic turbulence, caused wholly by the Chinese chemical and biological warfare germ, known to the world as Covid-19, which originated from Wuhan in 2019. The WHO and international bodies have now, belatedly, started an investigation into the origins of the virus, but its credibility has already hit

rock bottom in the eyes of most people in the affected nations, which certainly includes Indians.

Thus, New Delhi continues to pay dearly for the blind trust it reposed in the congenitally deceptive “goodwill” and false “promises” of the CPC’s deceitful and duplicitous leaders and has rarely learnt any lessons.

Just consider some of the facts and figures compiled by Prof. Kaushik Basu, a world-renowned economist, currently a professor at Cornell University and a former chief economic adviser to the Government of India and former World Bank chief economist. Of 14 Asian nations (Bangladesh, Myanmar, China, Vietnam, Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan, Indonesia, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, India), the minus eight per cent annual GDP growth of 2020 positions India last but one (above Philippines’ minus 8.3 per cent). In contrast, Bangladesh, with 3.8 per cent annual GDP growth in 2020 tops the list of 14 Asians, with China’s 1.9 per cent growth putting it in third spot, below second-placed Myanmar’s two per cent GDP growth.

In Covid-19 deaths per million population too (as of May 21, 2021), India hit nadir in descending order of 14 Asian states. Bhutan’s one, to India’s 212, and China’s three deaths per million, that clearly shows the scale of beating India has taken at the hands of the CPC-ruled dragon.

The story doesn’t end here. The quantity and quality of universal damage, maliciously inflicted by the CPC since 2019, indisputably qualifies China as the principal destroyer which must be compelled to pay reparations to the world at large, and India in particular.

Just as vanquished Germany was compelled, by 40-odd nations by the Treaty

of Versailles (June 28, 1919) to pay reparations, especially to France, for starting the First World War and ravaging its neighbours. In comparison to the universally destructive 2021, 1919 appears miniscule, as China has set the whole world on fire with its lab created CBW airborne germs; killing, maiming, numbing, crippling soldiers to factory workers; farmers to college students; doctors and nurses on duty to a host of service industry personnel.

Beijing’s single-point agenda is to monopolise the world economy. In India-China bilateral trade alone, Beijing has so far profited by over \$483 billion in 20 years, starting 1999-2000. In other areas too, like Chinese banks operating in India, and sub-standard Chinese automaker MG, is on a profiteering spree through high prices and poor service. India’s roads, railways, telecoms, tech are all being targeted, and the aim is to bolster China and destroy India.

Let’s translate \$483 billion to India’s annual defence expenditure. Military Balance 2021, published by the International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, shows India’s 2020 defence budget of \$64.1 billion standing third behind America’s \$738 billion and China’s \$193.3 billion. The outcome of a one-way \$483 billion Chinese profit implies loss of the same amount to India — which is equivalent to seven and a half years of India’s defence budget! That’s just one segment, not to speak of several other sectoral losses worth millions/billions. One, therefore, fails to comprehend, why a battered India shouldn’t demand reparations from the CPC. After all, the world has already entered

The twenty-first century is, so far, a ‘war without gunshots’ (except in Ladakh), but its airborne destruction far outweighs the twentieth century firepower of the two world wars

the third year of the Third World War, which has put the lives of 1.3 billion Indians under grave threat.

Paradoxically, the Wuhan-origin “Third World War CBW virus”, despite looking surreal and bizarre, has turned the much-touted cliché “world is one” and “world is a global village” into reality. The world is indeed “really one”, as all sides, except China, are “sinking as one”. In unison, Beijing’s bragging now stands out. The CPC is claiming that China has hiked industrial production, exports to the US, EU and India, and this comes amid an assault on freedom of navigation through international waters and the “wolf warrior diplomacy” targeting everyone and anyone — from Canberra to London, Pacific islands to the Balkans, along with landlocked Tibet, Xinjiang and Taiwan. Plus of course the never-ending standoff in Ladakh and tensions across the Himalayas.

Today, therefore, is a time of reckoning. The world must collectively demand reparations, as done after the First World War by the Versailles Treaty. Two articles — 231 and 232 — made Germany capitulate and agree to pay for the wilful death, damage and destruction it caused to Europe.

The prefix “re” thus becomes the economic passport of battered countries: “Reconstruction, recovery, rebuild, reparations, retrenchment, repayment of war debts,” revaluation of currency and restoration of the gold standard. The twenty-first century is, so far, a “war without gunshots” (except in Ladakh), but its airborne destruction far outweighs the twentieth century firepower of the two world wars. The CPC must be forced to pay reparations, if the world is not to capitulate to the dictates of Emperor Xi Jinping. Incidentally, Xi will turn 68 on June 15, the day he killed 22 Indian soldiers in 2020 to mark his 67 years!

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

LETTERS

FOR PUBLICITY SAKE

The Delhi high court has given a rap on the knuckles of Bollywood actor-environmentalist Juhi Chawla who had filed a suit against setting up of 5G wireless networks in the country. She has raised concerns relating to radiation impact on humans, animals, flora and fauna due to 5G devices. The court has given the actor a dressing down for indulging in media publicity because she had rushed to the court without approaching the government first. The judge even went to the extent of saying that those who file false claims deserve to be prosecuted. In fact, while dismissing a PIL relating to the Central Vista project the other day, the Delhi high court slapped a fine of ₹1 lakh on the petitioner for seeking to stop the construction, as the PIL was termed a frivolous one.

P.G. Menon, Chennai

SCRAPPING EXAMS

MDMK general secretary Vaiko has cautioned Chief Minister M.K. Stalin that he sees a conspiracy in the Centre cancelling the class 12 exams of the CBSE and ICSE and the latter should not fall into the trap. It is ridiculous, to say the least. One wonders what conspiracy is there in that decision. The Centre has factored in spreading of the virus, vulnerability of children and education infrastructure, etc. into the decision. One doesn’t agree with it, but at the same time, one cannot see any conspiracy in it. Politicians in this part of the country have ruined the state when it comes to education. The nation is doing no better either.

S. Ranakrishnasayee, Chennai

The decision of the union government to scrap the class 12 board exam of CBSE in the middle of a cataclysmic second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic is a step in the right direction and deserves praise. Several state boards in all likelihood will follow suit. While the CBSE board has promised to devise objective criteria to evaluate class 12 students, it would be highly challenging to ensure it is free from bias. The question regarding neutrality and transparency of the assessment process should be addressed with the seriousness it truly deserves. Rather than meet the needs and constraints of the current moment, the time has come to revisit our entrenched myopic notions about board exams, which consider marks as the only touchstone for learning. Continuous and diversified assessment of class 12 students still remains an exception rather than the norm. It is time we fast-track one of the notable recommendations of the new National Education Policy that calls for continuous tracking of learning in schools to common university education.

M. Jeyaram, Sholavandan

Pranay Sinha,
Amita Sudhir,
Tania A. Thomas and
Scott K. Heysell

Why is medical care making Covid-hit sicker, poorer in India?

Jugaad” is a Hindi word which refers to using resources frugally yet creatively. From low-cost space flights to cost-efficient cardiac surgery, India has pioneered ways to maximise its limited resources. And yet, as front-line emergency physicians and infectious diseases physicians, we have seen a wasteful misuse of healthcare resources in India during the Covid-19 pandemic, which threatens the health and wealth of millions.

Emboldened by falling Covid-19 cases, the Indian government loosened restrictions by October 2020. By March 2021, there were signs that the virus was resurgent. According to the Johns Hopkins database, India has seen more than 2.8 crore cases of Covid-19 and more than 3.2 lakh deaths by May 31, 2021. More than 50 per cent of deaths have occurred during the second wave and models suggest that these numbers may be underestimates. Heroic Indian healthcare workers, many of them still unvaccinated, are persevering despite the unprecedented shortages of hospital beds, oxygen, and even fever-reducing acetaminophen. Unfortunately, clinicians are using government guidelines based on tenuous or even counterfactual medical evidence, that are resulting in systematic errors.

Anti-bacterial drugs like

azithromycin and doxycycline are commonly prescribed despite a lot of evidence that they have no plausible benefits for the viral infection of Covid-19. In addition to monetary costs, patients also face health risks from unnecessary antibiotics. For instance, azithromycin may promote dangerous and even fatal changes in the heartbeat pattern.

Antibiotic overuse also propagates anti-microbial resistance, already a major concern in India.

The latest Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) recommendations from May 18 still include repeatedly debunked drugs like ivermectin and hydroxychloroquine. These inclusions are entirely inconsistent with the current scientific consensus and should be removed promptly to avoid all confusion. We are heartened that nationally well-known medical leaders like Dr Randeep Guleria, the head of New Delhi’s All India Institute of Medical Sciences, have publicly opposed the use of these discredited Covid therapies. The ICMR guidelines should also be purged of these ineffective drugs to avoid confusion.

The ICMR guidelines also suggest use of remdesivir for in-patients. This drug has not been found to have any mortality benefit, and its benefit in shortening

hospitalisation is studied only in the background of adequate supportive care, which is currently available to most Indians. And yet, many Indians are paying \$65 (Rs 5,000) for a five-day course and even higher costs on the black market. Similarly, we are concerned about the recent premature emergency use authorisation given to 2-deoxy-D-glucose (2-DG.). Although the government cites success for this drug in clinical trials, these data have not been made available to the public.

Steroids, a cornerstone of Covid-19 therapy, are also being used improperly. The evidence on steroids is clear — they should be given to patients who need oxygen, at a specific dose, and for up to 10 days. In India, steroids are being given early in the disease — before oxygen needs are apparent, at higher doses, and for much longer periods. They can weaken the immune system, worsen diabetes, a disease one in eleven Indians have, and may be implicated in an alarming number of Indians developing a range of fungal infections, including deadly mucormycosis (which is being called black fungus). Fungal infections are not inevitable with steroid use — we did not observe such high rates of invasive fungal infections in the United States when using steroids as recommended

by clinical trials.

Indians with Covid-19 are advised to take a large assortment of minerals and vitamins that again have not been shown to be effective. As physicians who cared for patients in the early days of the pandemic in the US, we understand the impulse to “do something” in the midst of so much death, devastation, and desperation. However, having also seen our relatives confused by interminable lists of drugs, we know that seemingly harmless nutritional supplements have opportunity costs — they draw attention away from what is essential. Additionally, given that more than a billion Indians subsist on less than \$5.50 (₹440) daily per capita, each addition to their medication list must be evidence-based and serve a clear purpose.

We have the utmost empathy for the Indian healthcare workers who are stretched beyond belief and lack the time to research their recommendations and follow the rapidly growing Covid-19 literature. We exhort the Indian public health leadership to promptly take three specific steps to support Indian clinicians.

First, increase public awareness of what to do to care for loved ones at different stages of the disease and keep patients out of hospitals when possible.

NGOs like Swasth and volunteer groups like India COVIDSOS have already developed accessible protocols that can empower Indians to care for sick family members at home, and community organisations to care for patients in Covid-19 care centres, an essential option when hospitals are overwhelmed. Second, the ICMR guidelines must be purged of any therapies that do not stand up to hard-nosed scientific scrutiny. Lastly, the Indian leadership should ensure regular clinical updates to support beleaguered Indian healthcare workers. These updates should come as digestible recommendations straight to the healthcare providers’ phones. Clinicians should be made aware of the cost and the effectiveness of the drugs they prescribe so they can personalise care and share decision-making with patients struggling with the financial burden of Covid-19.

Adversity is the mother of frugal creativity, and it is hard to imagine a time more adverse. Though despondent, we nourish the hope that India can mitigate further misery with jugaad, delivered with clear communication, and backed by scientific rigour.

The writers are doctors working in different hospitals in the United States

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	52,232.43	0.74
Nifty 50	15,690.40	0.73
S&P 500*	4,199.05	-0.22
Dollar (₹)	72.90	0.25
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.44	-0.08
Euro (₹)	88.88	0.14
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,530▼339	0.69
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	70.99	-0.50
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.997	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.615	0.024

Services sector moves into contraction zone

Services sector activities slumped into contraction territory for the first time in eight months, amid renewed decline in new work intakes due to the escalation of the pandemic and the reintroduction of restrictions. The seasonally adjusted India Services Business Activity Index fell to 46.4 in May, down from 54.0 in April. In PMI parlance, a print above 50 means expansion while a score below 50 denotes contraction.

Guidelines for ₹12K-cr telecom PLI issued



The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) issued operational guidelines for the Rs 12,195-crore PLI scheme for the telecom sector. The registration process for the scheme will begin on Friday and remain open for 30 days till July 3, the DoT said. The scheme, which will be effective from April 1, 2021, will provide incentives to companies on their investments and incremental sale till 2025-26.

MFs' overseas exposure limit raised to \$1 bn

The Sebi enhanced the overseas investment limit for a mutual fund house to \$1 billion from the existing \$600 million. The overall mutual fund industry limit is capped at \$7 billion. The higher limit would allow MFs to allocate a higher share of their corpus for foreign securities. "Mutual funds can make overseas investments subject to a maximum of \$1 billion per mutual fund, within the overall industry limit of \$7 billion," the Sebi said.

VW drives in Polo automatic at ₹8.51 lakh

Volkswagen introduced the Comfortline variant of the Polo 1.0 TSI with an automatic transmission at a starting price of Rs 8.51 lakh at Delhi showroom. The new model is powered by a BS 6-compliant 1.0-litre turbocharged stratified injection (TSI) engine from the Volkswagen Group. The new Polo variant comes with an auto-climatronic air-conditioning feature, besides a 17.7 cm Blaupunkt music system, exclusive to this trim only.



Capa expects traffic to pick up in H2 Airlines stare at \$4.1 bn loss

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JUNE 3

Hit by the second wave, India's airline companies are likely to register a consolidated loss of about \$4.1 billion in FY22, similar to the losses clocked in FY21, provided there is no third wave of the pandemic this year. The companies will require \$5 billion of recapitalisation this financial year to survive.

"We expect that Indian airlines will lose a consolidated \$4.1-billion in FY22, similar to that in FY2021. This will take total losses over two years to around \$8 billion as a result of the two Covid-19 waves," aviation consultancy firm Capa India said in a report.

The report finds that the full-service carriers are expected to contribute as much as \$2.1 billion in the total losses this year, while the budget carriers would account for the remaining \$2 billion.

Full-service carrier Air India and no-frills player IndiGo together will account for around \$4.5 billion of the combined \$8 billion of losses in two years.

The projected losses could rise further if necessary recapitalisation comes in the form of debt, as the borrowing costs will have to be included.

Capa estimates that the airline companies will require close to \$5 billion of recapitalisation in FY22 just to survive. Out of this, around \$1.1 billion is in the pipeline in the form of Initial Public Offering,



Qualified Institutional Placement and other financial instruments. If these plans materialise, the incremental requirement could be reduced to \$3.5 billion.

The government had recently expanded Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) to include civil aviation in the scheme. The scheme has already sanctioned Rs 2.54 lakh crore of loans and will be valid up to September end or till the unutilised amount in the Rs 3 lakh crore under the scheme is exhausted.

Capa also expects domestic airline traffic to pick up to 80-95 million during FY22, far higher than 52.5 million traffic recorded in FY21, but well below the 140 million registered during FY20. Capa estimates a moderate recovery in June after the second wave subsides. However, its projections did not take a possible third wave into consideration.

"After a massive slump

in April and May, we expect to see a moderate recovery in June as activity returns, with an acceleration in traffic from the second quarter.

"As was the case in the second half of FY2021, we expect to see rising confidence and continued traffic recovery in the second half of this financial year," Capa said.

According to rating and research firm Icra, domestic air traffic nosedived to 19.20 lakh passengers in May from around 57.3 lakh in April, registering a sharp 65-67 per cent month-on-month contraction. Average daily departures were around 900 against 2,000 in April 2021 and average number of passengers per flight in May was 72, against 93 passengers in April 2021.

International passenger traffic stood at around 1.4 lakh in May, a sequential decline of around 96 per cent. The international traffic is projected to be in the range of 16-21 million passengers for the year.

Nifty hits record high as curbs ease

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, JUNE 3

The market gained more than half a per cent on Thursday, buoyed by the sharp decline in fresh Covid cases and several states partially lifting lockdown curbs.

The Nifty-50 closed at new all-time high of 15,690.35, gaining 114.15 points, or 0.73 per cent.

The Sensex gained 382.95 points, or 0.74 per cent, closing at a new high this year at 52,232.43, surpassing the earlier closing high of 52,154.13 on February 15, 2021. The index is now near its all-time high of 52,516.76.

The broader market outperformed with BSE Mid-cap and Small-cap indices gaining 1.04 per cent each.

The market capitalisation of all BSE-listed companies close stood at a new all-time high of Rs 226.51 lakh crore.

Foreign portfolio investors were net buyers of equities worth Rs 1,079.20 while domestic institutions booked profit worth Rs 278.97 crore.

As several states have started lifting restrictions with the second wave receding, consumer focused sectors gained on Thursday.

BSE Consumer Durable index topped sectoral gainers list with a 4.44 per cent gain. The other sectors that gained included BSE Realty (3.95 per cent), Capital Goods (1.46 per cent), Oil Gas (1.25 per cent) and Bankex (0.90 per cent).

Saudi raises oil prices for Asia customers as market tightens

JAVIER BLAS, SALMA EL WARDANY & ANTHONY DI PAOLA JUNE 3



Saudi Arabia increased oil prices for customers in its main market of Asia by more than expected after crude surged above \$70 a barrel and the Opec forecast that global demand would heavily outstrip supply over the rest of the year.

State energy firm Saudi Aramco hiked its key Arab Light grade for July shipments to Asia by 20 cents to \$1.90 a barrel above a benchmark. Analysts surveyed by Bloomberg were expecting a raise of just 10 cents.

The kingdom sends more than 60 per cent of its exports to Asia, with China, India, South Korea and Japan, being the biggest buyers. Last month, it shipped 6.1 million barrels a day, according

ing to preliminary data compiled by Bloomberg.

Prices for four of Aramco's five Asian grades were increased, with the only drop coming for heavy crude. All grades for Europe were raised, while those for the US were kept the same as for June.

The move is a reverse of Aramco's cut for Asian customers in June, a decision made in early May as new coronavirus cases hammered fuel demand in India.

The Asian country and others such as Japan and

Malaysia are still struggling to slow the pandemic. Still, the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries this week predicted that oil stockpiles will decline rapidly from August as lockdowns ease across major economies and travel picks up.

The Opec and its partners—a 23-nation grouping led by Saudi Arabia and Russia—stuck to a plan to increase production this month and in July. But they refused to say what their plans were beyond those dates.

Brent crude has climbed 38 per cent in 2021 to a two-year high of about \$71.20 a barrel. It extended gains this week on Opec's new outlook and because nuclear talks between Iran and world powers stalled. Should the sides reach a deal, the US will probably ease sanctions on Tehran's oil exports.

—Bloomberg

Rural net users to beat urban by '25

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JUNE 3

Active internet users in India will touch 900 million in five years, finds a study. By 2025, rural India will have more internet users than urban India.

There are around 622 million active internet users as of 2020 and in five years the number of active users will grow by 45 per cent, as per IAMAI Kantar-ICUBE 2020 Report. The report finds that there is a lot of

headroom for growth in rural India and this would help in bridging the urban-rural digital divide.

"By 2025, there would be a greater number of internet users in rural India than in urban India. Given this, the digital ecosystem will need to evolve to address the specific needs of this emerging demography. Vernacular, voice and video will emerge as the gamechangers for the digital ecosystem over the next few years," said

Biswapriya Bhattacharjee, executive vice president, insights division, Kantar.

Though internet penetration in urban areas is higher than rural now, usership in rural areas has been growing at a faster rate on a year-on-year basis. Internet users grew by 4 per cent in urban India reaching 323 million users or 67 per cent of urban population in 2020.

Small towns account for almost two out of five active internet users.

Orchid's 7700% stock surge to face reality check

ASHUTOSH JOSHI JUNE 3

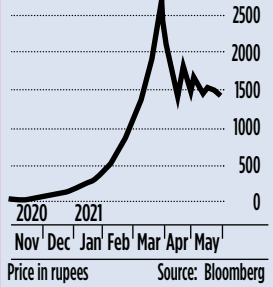
A shortage of shares has helped drive a surge of almost 7,700 per cent in Orchid Pharma Ltd over the past seven months. Now it looks poised to end.

New owners have to divest part of their stake of about 98 per cent in the firm, which re-listed in early November after emerging from bankruptcy. That's to comply with a regulation that requires the new owners—n this case Dhanuka Laboratories Ltd—to boost the minimum public float to 10 per cent over the next few months.

Orchid is among a handful of companies to post meteoric gains after exiting bankruptcy proceedings. Such rallies could pose considerable risks for investors, as those firms typically don't have good fundamentals, according to some market watchers.

In a bid to limit such occurrences in future, the

Exponential gains



valuation to likely become more realistic, he said.

Dhanuka won the Orchid stake after a three-year legal tussle. Creditors got 1 per cent in the restructuring, with another 1 per cent going to existing shareholders. Apart from working to boost the public holding, Orchid's board is also evaluating a proposal to merge the unlisted Dhanuka Laboratories with the company, according to an earnings statement released on May 22.

With about 99 per cent locked in with founders and lenders, barely about 2,000 Orchid shares have been traded on an average per day. But those precious few had, until recently, always found willing investors—with the stock rising to the daily limit about 100 times since November.

Orchid's shares ended at Rs 1,411.70 on Thursday. They had surged to as high as Rs 2,680 in early April from Rs 18 on Nov. 3.

—Bloomberg

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Very little room for any production shock: FAO economist

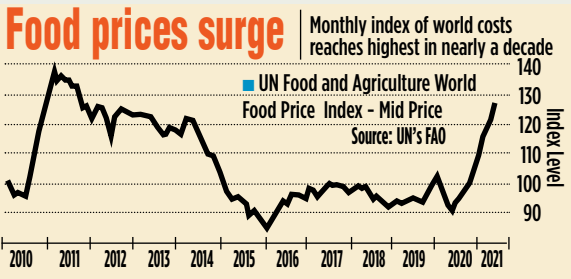
Global food prices surge to near decade high

MEGAN DURISIN JUNE 3

Global food prices extended their rally to the highest in almost a decade, heightening concerns over bulging grocery bills as economies struggle to exit the Covid-19 crisis.

A United Nation's gauge of world food costs climbed for a 12th straight month in May, its longest stretch in a decade. The continued advance risks accelerating broader inflation, complicating central banks efforts to provide more stimulus.

Drought in key Brazilian growing regions is crippling crops from corn to coffee, and vegetable oil production growth has slowed in Southeast Asia. That's boosting costs for livestock producers and



risks further straining global grain stockpiles that have been depleted by soaring Chinese demand. The surge has stirred memories of 2008 and 2011, when price spikes led to food riots in more than 30 nations.

"We have very little room for any production shock. We have very little room for any unexpected surge in demand in any country," Abdolreza Abbassian,

senior economist at the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization, said by phone. "Any of those things could push prices up further than they are now, and then we could start getting worried."

The prolonged gains across the staple commodities are trickling through to store shelves, with countries from Kenya to Mexico reporting higher food costs. The pain

Across the board	All food categories tracked by FAO climbed in past 12 months
Overall food index (%)	40
Cereals	37
Vegetable oil	124
Dairy	28
Meat	10
Sugar	57

could be particularly pronounced in some of the poorest import-dependent nations, which have limited purchasing power and social safety nets.

The UN's index is trending at its highest since September 2011, with last month's gain of 4.8 per cent being the biggest in more than 10 years. All five components of the index rose during the month, with the advance

led by pricier vegetable oils, grain and sugar.

The world's hunger problem has already reached its worst in years as the pandemic exacerbates food inequalities, compounding extreme weather and political conflicts.

There were other elements that exacerbated skyrocketing food costs a decade ago. For example, oil prices neared \$150 a barrel—double current levels—and there was a wave of trade restrictions by major grain shippers. Costs for rice, one of the world's food staples, have remained relatively subdued during the current agricultural price surge.

Gains in the past year have been fuelled by China's "unpredictably huge" purchases of foreign grain.

—Bloomberg

STATES TOLD TO ISSUE RATION CARDS TO POOR

New Delhi, June 3: The Centre has issued an advisory to all states and UTs to identify and issue ration cards to the most vulnerable and economically weaker sections to ensure their coverage under the National Food Security Act (NFSA).

Addressing a virtual press conference, food secretary Sudhanshu Pandey said states and Union territories have scope to add coverage of 1.97 crore under the NFSA. Fourteen states have completed 100 per cent coverage quota.

On Wednesday, the food ministry has issued an advisory to all states and UTs to launch a special drive to reach out to vulnerable and weakest sections of the society, such as street dwellers, rag pickers, hawkers and rickshaw pullers.

—PTI

SHORT TAKES

Hockey team all set for Olympics

Jalpur: Seasoned striker Yuvraj Walmiki has a “gut feeling” that the Indian men’s hockey team will win a medal if the Tokyo Olympics goes ahead as per schedule. Among other things, the 31-year-old Walmiki, spoke about the national team’s prospects in Tokyo, his life’s struggles and how they helped him become a better human being on the latest episode of “SportTiger Talks”. “One thing I will definitely say is that Indian hockey right now is doing wonderfully well under (leadership of) (PR) Sreejesh and Manpreet (Singh),” Walmiki said. “I still have this gut feeling... In case, Tokyo Olympics takes place, the Indian hockey team will bag a medal this time. I have this strong belief in my heart,” he added. — *PTI*

India hoopster in US varsity side

New Delhi: NBA Academy India graduate Lalnehpuia Chhakchhuak has enrolled at North Park University in Chicago, Illinois, becoming the sixth male student-athlete from the academy to commit to a high school or college basketball programme in the US. Chhakchhuak first participated in the 2017-18 Reliance Foundation Jr. NBA program before joining NBA Academy India in 2018 as a part of the academy’s second class of student-athletes identified through the ACG-NBA Jump program. The 6-1 guard represented NBA Academy India at the 2018 and 2019 NBA Academy Games in Australia and the US, respectively, as well as the Point Loma Nazarene Team Camp in San Diego in 2019. — *PTI*

Vidit qualifies for chess World Cup

Chennai: India No.3 Vidit Gujrathi has qualified for the FIDE chess World Cup 2021, to be held in Sochi, Russia from July 10 on the basis of his rating. With this, Grandmaster Gujrathi becomes the fourth Indian man to qualify for the upcoming World Cup, a press release said on Thursday. The Nashik-based player joins Grandmasters P. Harikrishna, Aravindh Chidambaram and P. N. Sriharsha as the Indian men to have qualified for the World Cup. Meanwhile, Koneru Humpy, D. Harika, Bhakti Kulkarni, R. Vaishali and Padmini Rout have qualified for the women’s event at the World Cup. This will be Gujrathi’s third World Cup appearance, having previously featured in 2017 and 2019. — *PTI*

Indian teams arrive in England

London: The Indian men’s cricket team arrived here on Thursday for the upcoming World Test Championship final against New Zealand and the subsequent Test series versus hosts England. The men’s team was accompanied by the women’s side which is touring England for three ODIs and as many T20s besides the one-off Test, starting in Bristol on June 16. “Touchdown,” top-order batsman K. L. Rahul tweeted with a picture of the chartered flight in the background, confirming their safe arrival in London. Both the teams will now travel to Southampton, where they will complete their mandatory quarantine. — *PTI*

76ers, Hawks in NBA playoffs

Los Angeles: The Philadelphia 76ers and Atlanta Hawks advanced to an Eastern Conference semifinal showdown on Wednesday, wrapping up emphatic series victories over the Washington Wizards and New York Knicks. Seth Curry’s 30-point display helped the Sixers shrug off the injury absence of Joel Embiid as the top seeds completed a 4-1 playoff series win with a 129-112 defeat of the Wizards in Philadelphia. In New York, the fifth-seeded Hawks brought the Knicks’ season to an end with a 103-89 victory at Madison Square Garden to clinch the best-of-seven series 4-1 after a bruising contest. — *AFP*

SERENA ON SONG

Federer blows hot, Djokovic cool as stars advance in France

Paris, June 3: Serena Williams survived a French Open scare to extend her latest bid for an elusive 24th Grand Slam singles title with a three-set victory over Mihaela Buzarnescu on Wednesday, while men’s fifth seed Stefanos Tsitsipas and World No.2 Daniil Medvedev also reached the third round. The 39-year-old Williams, who has been one short of Margaret Court’s all-time record of most major trophies since 2017, brushed off a second-set blip to win 6-3, 5-7, 6-1.

Meanwhile, Roger Federer became entangled in a rare running dispute with a chair umpire on Thursday before safely securing his place in the Last 32.

Federer saw off Marin Cilic for the 10th time in 11 meetings, winning 6-2, 2-6, 7-6 (7/4), 6-2 but only after a second set bust-up with umpire Emmanuel Joseph.

The 20-time Grand Slam title winner was handed a time violation at 1-3 down in the for taking too long between points. “I don’t even dare to go my towel anymore,” he said to Joseph.

Federer, the oldest man in the draw at 39, lost his cool and the set before recovering to defeat former world number three Cilic.

World number one Novak Djokovic continued his bid for a 19th Grand Slam title with a straight-sets win over Uruguay’s Pablo Cuevas to reach the third round. The 34-year-old, who is looking to become the first man in more than 50 years to win all four Slams multiple times, won 6-3, 6-2, 6-4 on Court Suzanne Lenglen.

Tsitsipas put in a strong display to dispose of Spaniard Pedro Martinez



Serena Williams of the United States serves to Romania’s Mihaela Buzarnescu during their second round match of the French Open tennis tournament at Roland Garros in Paris, France, on Wednesday.

6-3, 6-4, 6-3. The Greek next faces American John Isner.

Medvedev bounced back from losing the first set to American Tommy Paul in style by romping to a 3-6, 6-1, 6-4, 6-3 victory.

INJURED BARTY IS OUT

Top seed Ashleigh Barty retired injured midway through the second set of her French Open second-round match against Poland’s Magda Linette on Thursday. She left the court for medical treat-

ment after losing the first set 6-1. She had struggled with a hip problem during her first-round win and called it quits at 2-2 in the second set on Court Philippe Chatrier.

MEN’S PAIR COVID +VE

French Open organisers say that both members of a men’s doubles team have tested positive for Covid-19 and have been dropped from the tournament.

The players were placed in quarantine. The tournament did not identify

them. The French tennis federation said these were the first two positives from the 2,446 Coronavirus tests that have been administered on players and their entourages since the start of qualifying rounds on May 24.

OTHER RESULTS

Men’s second round: Jannik Sinner (ITA x18) bt Gianluca Mager (ITA) 6-1, 7-5, 3-6, 6-3; Mikael Ymer (SWE) bt Gael Monfils (FRA x14) 6-0, 2-6, 6-4, 6-3; Diego Schwartzman (ARG x10) bt Aljaz Bedene (SLO) 6-4, 6-2, 6-4; Philipp Kohlschreiber

(GER) bt Aslan Karatsev (RUS x24) 6-3, 7-6 (7/4), 4-6, 6-1.

Women’s second round: Magda Linette (Poland) bt Ashleigh Barty (Australia x1) 6-1, 2-2 — retired; Ons Jabeur (Tunisia x25) bt Astra Sharma (Australia) 6-2, 6-4; Sloane Stephens (USA) bt Karolina Pliskova (CZE x9) 7-5, 6-1; Karolina Muchova (CZE x18) bt Varvara Lepchenko (USA) 6-3, 6-4; Elina Svitolina (UKR x5) bt Ann Li (USA) 6-0, 6-4; Sofia Kenin (USA x4) bt Hailey Baptiste (USA) 7-5, 6-3; Jessica Pegula (USA x28) bt Tereza Martincova (CZE) 6-3, 6-3; Maria Sakkari (GRE x17) bt Jasmine Paolini (ITA) 6-2, 6-3.

Srini’s daughter in conflict of interest

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 3

Tamil Nadu Cricket Association president Rupa Gurunath has been found guilty of conflict of interest. The BCCI’s Ethics Officer Justice D. K. Jain, in his order on Tuesday, upheld a complaint made by Sanjeev Gupta. Rupa is the daughter of former BCCI chief N. Srinivasan.

Gupta, a former life member of the Madhya Pradesh Cricket Association, had alleged that Rupa was occupying more than one position,

contrary to the Board rules. Rupa is the president of TNCA and also a whole-time director of India Cements Limited, the company which owns Chennai Super Kings Cricket Ltd (CSKCL).

According to Gupta, all seven directors of CSKCL sit as directors on the subsidiary companies of India Cements, thus “giving rise to an instance of conflict” against Rupa.

Justice Jain, in his order, said Rupa “has an indirect interest (if not direct) in CSKCL which has entered into a contract with BCCI.”



Rupa Gurunath

“All these facts go on to show that a circuitous web of entities, including CSKCL has been created under the umbrella of

ICL. The management and governance of all such entities directly or indirectly lies in the hands of the board of ICL, notwithstanding the defence pleaded that ICL has no stake in CSKCL.

“In the given factual scenario, it can be safely inferred that the respondent (Rupa), in her capacity as the whole time director and promoter of ICL, has close associations with the trustees of IC Shareholders Trust and the Directors of CSKCL, which has a franchise agreement with the BCCI. This is one of the recog-

nised forms of conflict of interest,” the order said.

“ICL, CSKCL, IC Shareholders Trust, subsidiary companies of ICL, IC Capital, all share the same official address and ICL has been one of the sponsors of CSKCL franchise Chennai Super Kings,” the order added.

The Ethics Officer also said the BCCI shall requisite steps in accordance with law to ensure due compliance. Thus, Rupa has to relinquish one of the posts. TNCA sources, however, said Rupa is likely to appeal against the order in a court of law.

Conway cracks double on debut

Devon seventh in Test history to score 200 in first knock

London, June 3: New Zealand opener Devon Conway made exactly 200 on Test debut before England slumped to 25-2 on the second day of the series opener at Lord’s on Thursday.

Conway was last man out in a first-innings total of 378 on the second day of this two-match series.

The South Africa-born left-hander was in sight of becoming the very first batsman in the 144-year history of Test cricket to carry their bat — bat throughout the entire innings — in their first knock in the format when he was run out to end a stay of more than nine-and-a-half hours.

Nevertheless, it needed a review of a close call before it was confirmed that England captain Joe Root had taken the bail off in time.

Even so, Conway was only the seventh batsman to make a double hundred on Test debut.

Conway has also broken former India captain Sourav Ganguly’s 25-year-old record of registering the highest Test score on debut at Lord’s when he went past the stylish southpaw’s 341.

He faced 137 balls, with 22 fours and went to 200 in style when he hooked fast bowler Mark Wood for the only six of his innings. New Zealand No. 11 Neil



New Zealand’s Devon Conway celebrates after reaching his double century during the second day of the first Test against England at Lord’s Cricket Ground in London on Thursday.

Wagner, also born in South Africa, made 25 not out off 21 balls that included a superb straight six off Stuart Broad during an entertaining last-wicket stand

of 40. Sussex paceman Ollie Robinson, like Conway making his Test debut, led England’s attack with four wickets for 75 runs in 28 overs. But New Zealand then

DOUBLE CENTURIANS ON TEST DEBUT

- 287 — Tip Foster (England) vs Australia in Sydney, 1903-04
- 222* — Jacques Rudolph (South Africa) vs Bangladesh at Chattogram, 2002-03
- 214 — Lawrence Rowe (West Indies) vs New Zealand at Kingston, 1971-72
- 214 — Mathew Sinclair (New Zealand) vs West Indies at Wellington, 1999-00
- 210* — Kyle Mayers (West Indies) vs Bangladesh at Chattogram, 2020-21
- 201* — Brendon Kuruppu (Sri Lanka) vs New Zealand in Colombo, 1986-87
- 200 — Devon Conway (New Zealand) vs England at Lord’s, London, 2021

— S. PERVEZ QAISER

struck twice with the ball themselves.

Kyle Jamieson had Dom Sibley lbw for a duck with a ball that straightened to hit the opener on the back pad, the decision upheld on ‘umpire’s call’ after a review. But there was no room for doubt when Zak Crawley was caught behind off Tim Southee for two.

BRIEF SCORES

Day 2, at Test: New Zealand 378 in 122.4 overs (Devon Conway 200; Ollie Robinson 4/75) vs England 25/2 in 10 overs.

10,000 Olympic volunteers quit

Tokyo, June 3: The Tokyo Olympics chief said the Games would only be cancelled in extreme circumstances on Thursday as organisers revealed 10,000 volunteers had quit over Coronavirus fears, a sexism row and scheduling problems.

Exactly 50 days before the opening ceremony, Tokyo 2020 president Seiko Hashimoto said the show would go on unless the pandemic stops a majority of teams from travelling.

“If various countries around the world experience very serious situations, and delegations from most countries can’t come, then we wouldn’t be able to hold it,” she told the *Nikkan Sports* daily.

“But conversely, unless such a situation emerges, the Games will not be cancelled,” she added.

The 2020 Games remain beset by doubts and low public support as Japan battles a fourth Coronavirus wave with much of the country, including Tokyo, under a state of emergency.

Late on Wednesday, Tokyo 2020 CEO Toshiro Muto said around 10,000 of the 80,000 volunteers — vital to the smooth running of the Games — had quit, largely over coronavirus concerns.

Others dropped out after the Games were postponed, or in protest at sexist remarks made by Hashimoto’s predecessor

If various countries around the world experience very serious situations, and delegations from most countries can’t come, then we wouldn’t be able to hold it. But conversely, unless such a situation emerges, the Games will not be cancelled.

— SEIKO
HASHIMOTO
Tokyo 2020 president

who was forced to resign, Muto told Japanese media.

However, Muto said the reduction in volunteers would not affect the Games because the event has been scaled back, so fewer people are needed.

Overseas fans have already been barred, and a decision on whether to allow domestic spectators is expected after the state of emergency in Tokyo ends on June 20.

The number of overseas officials and participants has been cut by about half, to around 78,000, with calls for further reductions.

Organisers will unveil details of the medal ceremonies later on Thursday — the latest attempt to generate positive momentum.

Polls show 80 per cent of Japanese oppose hosting the Games this year. But surveys among the population of Tokyo have found a more even split between those in favour and against.

— *AFP*



Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju (centre) poses with athletes after unveiling India’s kit for the Tokyo Olympics, in New Delhi on Thursday.

— D. KAMRAJ

INDIA’S OLYMPIC SQUAD
LIKELY TO BE 190-STRONG

New Delhi, June 3: The Indian contingent for the upcoming Tokyo Olympics is expected to be around 190, including over 100 athletes, IOA president Narinder Batra said on Thursday as Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju unveiled the official kits for the country’s participants. So far, 100 athletes have qualified for the Tokyo Games, including 56 men and 44 women. The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) expects another 25 to 35 to make the cut for the Games, which open on July 23.

I believe, I can do it: DK on white-ball comeback



C. SANTHOSH KUMAR
CHENNAI, JUNE 3

Dinesh Karthik who will be donning the hat of a commentator during the World Test Championship final insists that he hasn’t given up hopes of India comeback.

“I believe I can do it,” said Karthik who last played for India in the semifinal of the 2019 World Cup.

Karthik is currently under quarantine in Serbia, en route to England to join Sky Sports commentary panel for the WTC final between India and New Zealand.

The experienced middle-order batsman feels he has a realistic chance in the T20 format. “I know there is a slot available in T20 for a middle-order batsman, especially as a back-up. India are now heavily reliant on Hardik Pandya and Ravindra Jadeja in the middle-order,” he said.

Karthik said that the slot is a specialised position and not everyone can fit in. “A lot of guys who come in at 5, 6, 7 for India, don’t bat at that number for their respective franchises and states. It’s a specialised job. Only recently, Ricky Ponting said Aussies need players like Kieron Pollard and Pandya. It’s not a position where your regular No.3 or No.4 can slot in and

immediately show success, especially in a big ICC event. I have been doing this for over a period of time and my stats speak for itself,” said Karthik.

“At this point of time, we have two World Cups lined-up and I am confident that India will need that experience in the middle-order. If given the opportunity, I can do well,” added Karthik.

After the WTC final, Karthik will also be part of India-England and ‘The Hundred’ commentary panels. He is exploring opportunities to play with a local club during the break between series.

“I am trying, but it’s not that easy to play cricket in England. But I would definitely be training there with the IPL around the corner,” he added.

Karthik said he has always been fascinated by commentary.

“Richie Benaud, Tony Greig and Mark Nicholas; these are people I have enjoyed listening to over the years. I have always been fascinated with commentary because I keenly followed the language they used and the tonality. I am sure I would be enjoying this gig,” he said.

What will be DK’s style of commentary? “While analysing the performance, I would be sharing a cricketer’s feelings/experience by imagining what it would be like to be in his situation, rather than just telling the viewers that I just understand and care for him. When a commentator speaks tactically and technically, I know cricketers would listen and take it on board. As a commentator, I would be sharing the knowledge that I gained over a period of time,” he said.