


DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM | FRIDAY | 25 JUNE 2021

WEATHER

 **Max:** 32.0°C
Min: 26.0°C
RH: 73%
Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: Clear.
Max/Min temp.
32/26 °C

ASTROGUIDE

Plava: Uttarayana
Tithi: Jyeshtha Bahula Padyami till 9.02 pm
Star: Moola till 6.40 am;
Purvashada till 4.25 am
(Saturday)
Varjyam: 5.14 am to 6.40 am;
3.22 pm to 4.49 pm
Durmuhurtam: 8.24 am to
9.16 am; 12.45 pm to 1.37 pm
Rahukalam: 10.30 am to 12 noon
HJRI CALENDAR
Zeeqad 13,1442 AH
PRAYERS
(ROYAL MOSQUE)
Fajar: 5.10 am
Zohar: 1.30 pm
Asar: 5.15 pm
Maghrib: 6.47 pm
Isha: 8.30 pm
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.31 AM
SUNSET TODAY 6.39 PM
MOONRISE TODAY 7.29 PM
MOONSET TOMORROW 6.50 AM

COUNTER POINT



Crisis is over... no threat to my government for the next 48 hours!

SHORT TAKES

China caused border row: India

New Delhi: India on Thursday said China's amassing of a large number of troops close to the border last year and attempts to unilaterally alter the status quo seriously disturbed peace and tranquillity in the region. India's comments on the matter came a day after China said its military deployment in the region is a normal "defence arrangement" to respond to actions by the "relevant" country. India said these acts are in violation of its bilateral agreements with China.

India asks Opec to cut oil prices

New Delhi: With domestic retail fuel prices jumping to record high, India on Thursday pressed oil cartel OPEC for 'affordable' oil price within a 'reasonable band' and that the producers should phase out production cuts. Petroleum minister Dharmendra Pradhan in virtual dialogue with Opec secretary general Mohammad Sanusi Barkindo reiterated concerns over oil prices shooting above \$75 per barrel.

MEA: Will pursue Nirav Modi case

New Delhi: After fugitive diamond merchant Nirav Modi lost the first stage of his extradition appeal in the UK High Court, the external affairs ministry on Thursday said it has noted the decision and will continue its efforts to pursue his early extradition to India to face justice. MEA spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said, "We will continue efforts to pursue his early extradition."

S&P cuts India growth to 9.5%

New Delhi: S&P Global Ratings on Thursday cut India's growth forecast for the current fiscal to 9.5 per cent, from 11 per cent earlier, and warned of risk to the outlook from further waves of Covid pandemic. The agency lowered the growth outlook saying that a severe second Covid-19 outbreak led to lockdowns imposed by states.

WORLD | 5

McAfee antivirus founder dead

SPORTS | 8

Ronaldo equals record for most goals

TABLOID

Britney wants her life back



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State decides to cancel Class 10, inter exams

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 24

Ending a long anxious wait, the Andhra Pradesh government on Thursday announced cancellation of Class 10 and Intermediate second year (Class 12) examinations. The decision comes within hours of the Supreme Court bench expressing its dissatisfaction over the adamant stand of the state government in deciding to conduct the examinations in the last week of July, while many states had done away with the examinations.

At a high-level meeting, chaired by Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, minister for education Adimulapu Suresh and higher officials of the education department explained about the apex court directions and it was decided to cancel both exams.

Addressing a press meet later, Suresh said that the court had ordered that all the states should declare the examination results by July 31, which was impossible as Andhra Pradesh would take 45 days to evaluate the exam papers. He announced that the government would appoint a high-

Declare results by July 31: SC to states

New Delhi, June 24: The Supreme Court on Thursday directed all the state boards to declare results of internal assessment of Class 12 examination by July 31, making it clear that each board is free to formulate its own evaluation method for students and there can't be a "fit-all" scheme.

The apex court, which said it would not pass any direction for a uniform assessment scheme across the country for students whose board exams have

been cancelled amid the Covid-19 pandemic, directed the state boards to ensure that schemes are formulated and notified at the earliest and not later than 10 days from Thursday.

A bench of Justices A M Khanwilkar and Dinesh Maheshwari said, "We direct all the state boards to ensure that the schemes are formulated and notified at the earliest and not later than 10 days from today and also declare the results."

● **EDUCATION MINISTER Suresh said the Supreme Court had ordered that all the states should declare the examination results by July 31, which was impossible as the state needs 45 days to evaluate the exam papers.**

Meanwhile, Telugu Desam MLC Nara Lokesh termed the decision as a victory for students, parents and teachers after their relentless agitation demanding cancellation.

He said that it was after a two-month agitation that Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy had relented and cancelled the exams. CPI state secretary K. Ramakrishna also welcomed the government's decision.

Jagan to spend ₹34,000cr for housing infra

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 24

The Andhra Pradesh government will spend ₹34,000 crore on providing basic infrastructure in mega housing colonies in the 13 districts.

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Thursday said that the whole country is looking towards AP for its construction of 30 lakh houses under mega housing programme. He instructed officials to have a dedicated phone number to receive complaints and suggestions on the mega housing programme.

Reddy held a review meeting on the progress of construction of houses, action plan on developing infrastructure facilities in Jagananna colonies and TIDCO houses and directed officials to solve any problems in arranging water and electricity facilities. He said the works should be completed within a week in all layouts.

The Chief Minister instructed the officials to take appropriate measures to ensure that other rates, including transport

● **JAGAN SAID** there should be no scope for corruption and no compromise over quality.

● **He said** the goal was to provide the best living standards to the poor and colonies should not be turned into slums.

charges, do not rise abruptly in view of house constructions. He said it's his dream to spend ₹34,000 crore to develop infrastructure facilities in Jagananna colonies.

Reddy said there should be no scope for corruption and no compromise over quality. He said the goal was to provide the best living standards to the poor and colonies being set up by the housing scheme should not be turned into slums.

During a review on TIDCO houses, officials informed that 2,08,160 units would be completed in eighteen months and around ₹10,000 crore will be spent on it.

● **Page 2: Construction of 7 lakh houses to begin in July**

MONEY | MATTERS

PATHRI RAJASEKHAR | DC
NELLORE, JUNE 24

The sustained efforts of revenue authorities and APIIC have put an end to land compensation issues that had delayed the proposed aluminium alloy plant of Midhani in association with Nalco, spread over 110 acres in Bodduripalem near Nellore.

Incidentally, it is the first defence manufacturing facility of Mishra Dhatu Nigam (Midhani) outside of Hyderabad and the organisation is expected to invest ₹2,000 on the facili-

ty, which has vast employment potential.

While 57.14 acres is government land, the remaining belonged to Cooperative Joint Farming Society (CJFS). The CJFS land was assigned to the landless poor (one acre per beneficiary) free of cost for cultivation in the 1980s but the land was resumed in 2010 as none of the beneficiaries utilised the land.

However, the government assigned the lands once again after 2013 at the rate of 60 cents per head to the old beneficiaries and some more eligible per-

● **INDUSTRIES minister, officials of APIIC and Midhani negotiated with litigators and convinced them to accept a one-time settlement of ₹4 lakh**

sons. In 2017, in a bid to allot the land required for Midhani, APIIC paid ₹10 lakh compensation per acre of CJFS land, although the market value was only ₹4 lakh.

Meanwhile, the assignees collected ₹10 lakh per acre initially but started demanding ₹56 lakh per

PM: J&K polls after rejig of Assembly segments

Says he wants to end *Dilli Ki Duri* and *Dil Ki Duri*

RAJNISH SHARMA
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, JUNE 24

In a major initiative, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday reached out to the people of Jammu and Kashmir, saying that he was committed to remove "Dilli ki doori" as well as "Dil ki doori", and also reiterated that he was committed to restoring full statehood to J&K at an "appropriate time".

Mr Modi expressed his views at a marathon meeting of over three hours with 14 top J&K leaders from eight different parties, which included four former CMs — Ghulam Nabi Azad, Mehbooba Mufti, Farooq Abdullah and Omar Abdullah. Home minister Amit Shah and national security adviser Ajit Doval were among those present.

This is the first time top political leaders from J&K held detailed talks with Prime Minister Modi and other Central leaders like



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during an all-party meeting with various political leaders from Jammu and Kashmir, in Delhi on Thursday.

— PTI

Amit Shah since J&K's special status under Article 370 was abolished in August 2019 and the state was split up into two Union territories of J&K and Ladakh.

Talking to reporters after the meeting, former CM Omar Abdullah said both Mr Modi and Mr

Shah pledged they were committed to restoring Jammu and Kashmir's statehood.

The Centre wants to hold Assembly polls immediately after the delimitation commission submits its report, but senior Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad urged the Prime

● **HOME MINISTER** Amit Shah tweeted that the delimitation exercise and holding of peaceful elections in the Union Territory are key milestones in restoring statehood.

● **FAROOQ ABDULLAH** said his party National Conference would continue to challenge through legal and constitutional means the abrogation of special status of Jammu and Kashmir under Article 370 of the Constitution.

Minister to restore full statehood before conducting the polls, he said.

He said that his father, National Conference president Farooq Abdullah, said there was an urgent need to rebuild trust in J&K.

● **Page 2: Mehbooba wants revival of talks with Pak**

Power projector



Indigenous aircraft carrier *INS Vikrant* docked at Ernakulam Wharf ahead of defence minister Rajnath Singh and Navy chief Admiral Karambir Singh's visit to Southern Naval Command, in Kochi on Thursday. Singh said *INS Vikrant* will be completed soon and is likely to be commissioned as the country completes 75 years of Independence.

— PTI

AP opposes Centre's Maritime Bill

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 24

The Andhra Pradesh government has objected to certain provisions of the proposed Indian Ports Act, 2020, amendment bill mooted by the Union shipping ministry at a virtual meeting of the Maritime State Development Council held on Thursday.

Industries minister Mekapati Goutham Reddy, who attended the virtual meet chaired by shipping minister Mansukh L. Mandaviya, conveyed the AP government's objection to

the proposed port bill, saying its provisions went against the Constitution.

"We support the good deeds and decisions taken by the Centre. But we told them that they cannot take away our rights. The power of supervision and control over the ports is vested in the state governments. We have to study the draft bill and sought one month's time for this to present our views. A committee will be appointed to study the provisions," the minister said in a statement.

The minister made it

clear that the Indian Ports Bill, 2020, is welcome only if the Centre agreed to some changes. The AP judiciary department is reviewing the draft bill.

Goutham Reddy said the bill provides the setting up of a Maritime Port Regulatory Authority for 160 minor ports in India.

"As per the same law, 13 major ports have 13 regulatory authorities. This increased discrimination between minor and major ports. Hence, as in the case of major ports, each state should delegate the powers of Maritime Port

Regulatory Authority to the respective State Maritime Boards," he said.

He said the central government should not interfere in the regulatory responsibilities of minor ports. Instead, state governments should be empowered to control ports.

"In order to take the economy of the states forward, the role of ports within those states is crucial. This is because only states provide the key infrastructure and land allocation for minor ports," he said.

Twitter India MD spared from action

Bengaluru/Ghaziabad, June 24: In a relief to Twitter India head Manish Maheshwari, the Karnataka High Court on Thursday restrained the UP police, which has summoned him in connection with a pro-be related to the assault of an elderly Muslim man at Ghaziabad, from initiating coercive action against him.

The single bench of Justice G. Narendar said the police can examine Maheshwari through virtual mode. "If the police desire to examine the petitioner (Manish Mahesh-

wari), they may do so through virtual mode."

"If the matter requires consideration, we list it on June 29. Meanwhile, restraining the respondents from initiating any coercive action against the petitioner," the court maintained.

Appearing on behalf of Maheshwari, advocate C.V. Nagesh said someone had posted a video on the Twitter alleging that a Muslim was forced to chant 'Jai Sri Ram' and 'Vande Mataram'. When he refused, his beard was cut.

— PTI

SHORT TAKES

NEW POSTINGS
FOR 22 DSPs
IN STATEDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 24

Twenty-two Deputy Superintendents of police were transferred on Thursday, following the recommendations of the Police Establishment Board. The transfer orders were signed by Director-General of police Gautam Sawang. The DSPs were directed to report in their new place of posting immediately.

N. Ramya, SDPO, Kalyandurg is posted as SDPO, (Prob.DSP) Penukonda, in the existing vacancy.

V. Narayanaswamy Reddy, DSP, SB, Guntur Rural, is posted as SDPO, Darsi, in place of K. Prakash Rao, who was asked to report at the police headquarters, Mangalagiri.

D. Viswanath SDPO, Srikalahasti was posted as SDPO, (Prob.DSP) Guntakal, in place of S. Sharfuddin who was transferred to the police headquarters, Mangalagiri.

V. Srinivasa Reddy, DSP, Traffic, Kadapa was posted as DSP, SB, Chittoor.

G. Rajeev Kumar DSP, RSTF, Kurnool, was posted as DSP, DISHA, Krishna, in place of Abdul Azeez, transferred to the police headquarters, Mangalagiri.

Y. Srinivasa Rao, DSP, posted as DSP, SC/ST Cell, Nellore in place of M. Veera Kumar who was transferred as DSP, SB, Srikakulam.

Ch. Srinivasa Rao, DSP, SB, Srikakulam, was posted as ACP North, Visakhapatnam.

B. Venugopal, DSP, was posted as DSP Traffic, Tirumala.

S. Venkateswara Rao, DSP, ACB, was posted to Vigilance and Enforcement.

P. Bharatnathaji, DSP, CID, was transferred to Traffic, Machilipatnam.

Sk. Masum Basha, DSP, Traffic, Machilipatnam, was posted as to CCS, Rajamahendravaram.

B. Rama Krishna, DSP, posted as DSP, CID.

M.J.V. Bhaskara Rao, DSP, posted to CCS, Rajamahendravaram.

Md. Abdul Subhan, DSP, posted to Traffic, Nellore.

P. Mallikarjuna Rao, DSP, Traffic, Nellore, transferred as DSP, Traffic, Ongole.

B. Nagabhushana Rao, DSP, posted as DSP/AC, 2 Bn. APSP Kurnool.

Dr V. B. Raj Kamal, SDPO, Paderu, posted as ACP South Visakhapatnam.

S. Khader Basha, SDPO, Chintoor, posted as ACP Central, Vijayawada.

Y. Srinivasa Reddy, ACP, Central, Vijayawada City, posted as SDPO Dhone.

S.R. Vamsidhar Goud, DSP, posted as DSP intelligence.

APPSC TO CLEAR
DOUBTS OF GROUP-1
EXAM ASPIRANTSDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 24

The AP Public Service Commission (APPSC) refuted allegations about illegalities in the selection of candidates for Group-1 posts under the sports quota. APPSC member S. K. Salaam Babu said that the allegations levelled by a few people were “baseless and totally false”. He said that APPSC was ready to clear all doubts of the candidates regarding the selection.

Speaking with the media here on Thursday, Salaam Babu said it was untrue that 70 candidates had been selected for Group-1 posts under the sports quota. On the allegations of change of Group-1 booklets in Kakinada and Srikakulam exam centres, he said that the APPSC replaces damaged booklets from the buffer stocks; hence the booklets were provided according to norms and there was no chance for any illegality.

Salaam Babu said that there are no anomalies in the digital valuation of Group-1 exam papers as the APPSC had intimated aspirants about the digital valuation a year ago. He said that the APPSC had studied the digital valuation processes in several states for two months and approved its implementation in the state. He said that there was a separate wing to look after the question paper setting and answer paper valuation, and there is no involvement of others.

The official said the APPSC is ready to clear the doubts of Group-1 aspirants.

Salaam Babu said that unemployed persons had asked the APPSC to increase the number of posts in the job calendar, and the commission had forwarded them to the government and was awaiting a decision.

Kshatriya Corporation launched



Minister Ch Sriranganatha Raju (right), Kshatriya community MLAs, and MLC thank Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy for launching the Kshatriya Corporation, at the camp office in Vijayawada on Thursday.

State against changes in
Airport Amendments bill

If GOI stakes are sold, there will not be any control on airports

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, JUNE 24

The state government has strongly opposed some amendments in the Airports Economic Regulatory Authority of India (Amendment) Bill 2021 as they would lead to monopolisation in the civil aviation sector.

Margani Bharat, YSRC Parliamentary Party Chief Whip, who is on the civil aviation parliamentary standing committee, opposed the Bill in the Airport Economic Regulatory Committee meeting at New Delhi on Thursday and raised several issues that he said would prove harmful to

airports and passengers. He clarified that the state was not opposing privatization, but would oppose monopoly in privatization. He said that the amendment of Section 2(i) of the parent Act has a very deep meaning and the repercussions would be terrible.

He said that the intention behind the proposed amendment was to privatise airports under AAI and the Centre would bundle or pair some airports and impose development charges and other tariffs on passengers to benefit the concessionaire. He said that the foundation for the bill was in 2019 as the then AAI chairman

made a statement in 2019 that Vijayawada and Tirupati airports would be privatised. Bharat said that he had opposed the statement at that time. The MP said that ₹750 crore was allocated for expansion and modernisation of Vijayawada and ₹200 crore for the Tirupati airport. He questioned how AAI and Ministry of Civil Aviation were justifying the move for privatisation after investing nearly ₹1,000 crore for their expansion. He said that there are six airports in Andhra Pradesh and three of them are international airports. Kurnool airport started its operations in March and can't

assess its viability while Rajama-hendravaram airport is incurring losses ₹32.84 crore. Now once this Bill becomes an Act, the ministry will hand over all these airports to private players either through bunching or pairing and the private players would fleece passengers.

Bharat said that the Civil Aviation Ministry has decided to sell its residential stake in Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru and Hyderabad airports and the government has given these airports on PPP mode and concessioners are allowed to operate for 25 to 30 years. If GOI stakes are sold, there will not be any control.

Mehbooba wants revival
of talks with Pakistan

From Page 1

“The trust deficit among the people of Jammu and Kashmir needs to be addressed to immediately by the Centre, and for that the process of restoration of complete statehood is necessary,” he said.

On the delimitation commission, Mr Abdullah said the central leadership was told that the exercise in itself was defeating the very purpose with which the BJP-led government had carried out the exercise of abrogation of special status on August 5, 2019.

“On one hand the central leadership claimed the decision in August 2019 was taken for a complete merger of Jammu and Kashmir with the Union of India, and on the other Jammu and Kashmir is treated differently by bringing in separate delimitation commissions for Assam and us.

“If the delimitation commission for Assam was withheld and Assembly elections held there, then why not for Jammu and Kashmir? Isn't this defeating the very purpose of the central leadership?” he asked.

The former CM said even the Central leadership was of the view that the government could not be run by bureaucrats and a political government needed to take charge.

Said Mr Abdullah: “Our party president has made it clear that as and when an invite for the (delimitation) commission meeting

will come, we will take consider it.”

Senior Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad told reporters he put forward various points on behalf of his party at the meeting, including restoration of complete statehood, followed by elections. “I have also asked for a rehabilitation process for Kashmir Pandits, release of political prisoners, and domicile rules whereby the Centre guarantees jobs for the people of Jammu and Kashmir,” Mr Azad told reporters.

PDP president Mehbooba Mufti told reporters the meeting went off well and she complimented the Prime Minister for initiating back-channel talks with Pakistan that led to the ceasefire agreement at the Line of Control and decrease in infiltration levels.

“I have requested the Prime Minister that, if need be, we could talk to Pakistan once again for further boosting the peace process,” she said.

On the abrogation of Article 370, Ms Mufti said her party would continue to fight for its restoration. “After all, the special status has not been given to us by Pakistan. It was given to us by late Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar (Vallabhbhai) Patel. We will continue to fight for restoration of the special status through legal and constitutional means,” she said.

While stressing on his

commitment to granting full statehood once again to J&K PM Modi sought “co-operation and assistance” from the senior State leaders urging them to help in the delimitation process which will help in redrawing new Assembly constituencies to hold elections. Assembly elections in J&K will be held only after the delimitation exercise can be completed. Sources said most J&K leaders at the meeting expressed their willingness in assisting the Election Commission and local administration to help complete the delimitation process at the earliest.

Top government sources said most participants at the meeting agreed on the need to further strengthen the democratic process, and the holding of the District Development Council elections was just the beginning. “Our priority is to strengthen grassroots democracy in J&K. Delimitation has to happen at a quick pace so that polls can happen and J&K gets an elected government that gives strength to J&K's development trajectory,” Mr Modi said in a tweet after the meeting.

Sources said the Centre also agreed to setting up a committee to review the cases of all political prisoners irrespective of whether they have been released or were still in detention.

The committee is likely to be headed by lieutenant-governor Manoj Sinha.

Vizag to be South India's
hub for fitness equipmentV. KAMALAKARA RAO |
DC
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 24

Vizag would become the southern India hub for manufacture of fitness equipment if the present plans of the Andhra Pradesh industries department for a tie-up with the Bangalore-based Stayfit Health and Fitness World Pvt. Ltd materialised.

At present, there is no fitness manufacturing unit in south India. The existing units at Jalandhar in Punjab are not able to fully meet the country's requirements. India imports \$5 billion worth of fitness equipment like treadmills from Taiwan, the US, and China.

The Stayfit management met state industries Minister Mekapati Goutham Reddy, who, in principle, extended the state's support to the project and advised them to come with a detailed project report.

● KEY POINTS:

- Vizag likely to be a hub for fitness manufacturing plant in south India
- The estimated project cost is ₹700 crore
- 5000 odd employment opportunities assured
- India currently imports \$5 billion worth of fitness equipment from the US, China, and Taiwan
- Bangalore-based fitness company eyes Vizag to establish the project
- AP industries department gives in-principle approval for the project
- Nearly 100 acres of land is required

The firm is eyeing on Visakhapatnam since it would be easy for export of the products across the globe due to the presence of air and sea links.

Stayfit managing director G. K. Ganapathy Reddy said company representatives would come to Vizag next week to identify a location for the project. It

requires 100 acres of land. The estimated cost of the project would be around ₹700 crore with assured direct and indirect employment to nearly 5,000 people.

“India currently imposes an import tax of 31 per cent including GST on every imported fitness product from countries like China, the US, and Taiwan. This apart, it takes nearly 60 days to get the product from foreign countries. If we start our project here, we will start supply from the plant fast and the price would be affordable,” Ganapathy Reddy said.

Ganapathy Reddy, who hails from Puttaparthi in Anantapur district, said they also kept Chennai as an alternative option.

“We are currently preparing a detailed project report and studying locations in Vizag. We will submit our report to the government shortly. I personally hope for our project being set up in Andhra,” he said.

‘Chalo Rajoli’ bid foiled,
Cong workers detainedDC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL, JUNE 24

The ‘Chalo Rajoli Banda’ call given by All India Congress Committee

(AICC) Secretary and Former MLA Sampath Kumar created tense moments at Rajolibanda Diversion Scheme (RDS) near Kosigi in Kurnool district. About 500 cars and motorbikes were taken out by Congress party sympathizers from Alampur to register their protest at the RDS for what they feared was “illegal diversion of Tungabhadra water” for use by Kurnool farmers. However, the procession was stopped at a village near Baligere in

Karnataka on the TS-Karnataka border. The workers, including Sampath Kumar, were detained and released later.

Alleging that Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao was not protecting interests of farmers, particularly in Gadwal and Alampur constituencies, which have maximum ayacut benefits from RDS waters, he said if AP draws four tmc of water from RDS farmers will suffer heavy losses, he said.

Adoni DSP Vinod Kumar had deployed about 50 policemen at the RDS site to address any untoward incident.

CPI SECRETARY SAYS NO ONE IN AP WILL
THINK OF TELANGANA'S WELFAREDC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, JUNE 24

CPI national secretary Dr K. Narayana strongly condemned the comments of Telangana State Minister Vemula Prashant Reddy, who said that everyone in Lanka is a demon, and that no one in Andhra Pradesh will think of Telangana's welfare.

Addressing a press conference here on Thursday, Dr Narayana said that the tongues of those who make provocative comments like Minister Prashant Reddy should be cut. He said the Minister's comments cannot give provide any solution to water disputes between the two states.

The CPI leader also wondered how CM K. Chandrashekar Rao was

retaining Prashant Reddy in his Cabinet after he made such objectionable remarks against the people of a neighbouring state. He said Rao was in big trouble now, as a by-election was approaching with Eatla Rajendar quitting the TRS and the Assembly.

He said that AP had the right to use surplus waters in the Krishna, and that the CMs of the Telugu states should hold discussions on the matter. If the two CMs intend to discuss the matter, the Centre should mediate to find out a solution.

Shifting his focus to the Centre, Dr Narayana said the recent meeting at Nationalist Congress Party Chief Sharad Pawar's house was a preliminary attempt to set up a third front.

TTD SPECIFIED AUTHORITY
CHAIRMAN, CONVENER TAKE OATHDC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, JUNE 24

TTD EO Dr K.S. Jawahar Reddy and Additional EO A. V. Dharma Reddy on Thursday took oath as Chairman and Convener of Specified Authority respectively on in front of the presiding deity of Lord Venkateswara at Tirumala temple.

The Additional EO first administered the oath to EO as Specified Authority

Chairman at Bangaru Vakili in front of Srivaru and later he took oath as Convener. After taking oath, they both participated in the Jyestabhishekam programme took place at Sampangi Prakaram.

Speaking to media persons outside the temple, Dr Jawahar Reddy said, with the blessings of Swamyvaru he was appointed as TTD EO last year.

PROPERTY | ISSUE

Venkateswara temple officials ran bulldozers forcibly

Building razed, owners to file case

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 24

Owners of a building located in a prime locality on Station Road here which was demolished by the Venkateswara Swamy temple authorities said they would file a contempt of court petition in the High Court. They said the High Court had given a decree in favour of the building owners.

A member of the family,

B. Suresh Kumar, told *Deccan Chronicle* on Thursday said that the building having three shops in the front and the residence in the rear was constructed on 649 square yards, and costs ₹12 crore as per the market value. The family said they had been living in the house for six decades.

He said that on June 22, the temple authorities headed by assistant commissioner of endowments

K. Shanti came with police and JCBs and demolished the entire structure without giving advance notice.

“The officials showed no mercy and the shopkeepers lost their livelihood and we lost our shelter,” Suresh Kumar said.

He said the land was registered in the name of his grandfather Kumili Suryanarayana Murthy in 1969 and the family had link documents dating

back to 1933. Murthy, an active Congress member, subsequently became a corporator.

Murthy obtained plan approval for constructing shops in 1970 and another plan for construction of the house in 1989. The endowments department went to a lower court challenging the ownership and later to an appellate court. The department lost on both the occasions, Suresh Kumar said.

“To avoid frequent harassment, we went to the High Court and got a decree in our favour in 2018. Yet the officials, despite production of these court orders, went ahead and demolished the structure,” Suresh Kumar said.

He said he lodged a formal complaint in the police station and would file a contempt petition in the High Court in a day or two.

Andhra Pradesh Governor Biswa Bhusan Harichandan congratulated Karnam Malleswari, the only Indian woman weightlifter to win an Olympic medal, on her appointment as Vice Chancellor of the first Sports University by the Delhi government.

Governor Harichandan said Malleswari had become a household name in the country after she won the bronze medal in weightlifting at the 2000 Sydney Olympics. The Governor said Karnam Malleswari is an inspiration to sportspersons in the country, having won 29 international medals including 11 gold medals in the World Championships, Asian Weightlifting Championships etc. and has been conferred the Arjuna Award, Padma Shri and Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna Award.

Governor Harichandan said it is a proud moment for the people of the state that Malleswari, who hails from Srikakulam district in Andhra Pradesh, has been appointed as Vice-Chancellor of the Sports University.

SHORT TAKES

R. KRISHNAIAH MEETS CM AT CAMP OFFICE

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 24

National BC Welfare Association president Krishnaiah has called on the CM at the camp office on Thursday and requested him to put pressure on the Centre as regards the demands related to BC communities.

Krishnaiah lauded the CM for his "transparent, corruption-free and efficient governance" and said the credit for introducing the historic BC Bill in Rajya Sabha goes to the CM. He said Jagan implemented BC welfare steps like the setting up of 56 BC corporations and allotting 50 per cent quota for BC, SC, ST and Minorities in nominated posts and contract works.

EAST GODAVARI TOPS IN FRESH COVID-19 CASES

From Page 1

Ten Covid-19 deaths were registered in Chittoor district, five each in East Godavari and Krishna districts, four each in Guntur and Nellore, three each in Srikakulam and West Godavari, and one death each in Anantapur, Kadapa, Visakhapatnam and Vizianagaram districts.

East Godavari is on top in total Covid-19 cases with a total of 2,58,543 infections followed by Chittoor 2,16,538, Guntur 1,60,649, West Godavari 1,58,799, Anantapur 1,52,944, Visakhapatnam 1,47,554, Nellore 1,26,171 and Kurnool with 1,21,287.

Gang of 5 held for robbing and killing

Gang used to murder elderly people to rob cash

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 24

The police here have arrested a gang that used to murder elderly people to rob cash and gold ornaments, in actions resembling the Dandupalyam movie. The gang comprised five youths.

They targeted old people living alone by conducting recce first and then robbed them of gold ornaments and cash after murdering them.

Vijayawada police commissioner Battina Srinivasulu told the media on Thursday that the five were arrested after they made an attempt to rob an ATM booth at Penamaluru. During investigation, the inhuman killings of the past came to light.

The Penamaluru police registered the bank ATM robbery attempt case, collected CCTV footage and interrogated old criminals and auto-rickshaw drivers. After this, the police arrested five persons on Thursday.

The commissioner said the arrested were Velpuri Prabhu Kumar (22) of Poranki village, vegetable seller on auto rickshaw Sunkara Gopi Raju (22) of Poranki village, auto rickshaw driver Ponamala Chakravarti alias Chakri (21) of Tadigadapa, auto rickshaw driver Moram Naga Durga Rao alias Chanti (21) of Karmikanagar embankment area of Tadigadapa and painter Maddi Phanindra Kumar (20) from Komayathoppu.

Explaining the modus operandi, the commissioner said the five were living in the vicinity and became friends. Addicted to bad habits, they decided to make easy money by committing crimes.

The gang had murdered Nalini (58), a woman living alone in Vishnupuram Colony, Poranki Village; Sita Mahalakshmi (68), Tumula centre, Poranki village; and Talluri

Dhanalakshmi (58) Tadigapa and Papamma (85), of Poranki village.

The family members of the deceased did not lodge a complaint with the police as there were no injuries on the bodies and they were considered as natural deaths.

The gang also murdered Nageswara Rao (80) and Pramilarani (75), in Kanchikacherla, and Malleswara Rao, a resident of Karmikanagar, Tadigadapa, and stole gold ornaments.

The police commissioner said the gang killed six persons and looted 40 sovereigns of gold ornaments. Some of the stolen ornaments were mortgaged and others sold. The gang conducted recce in Kankipadu, Vuyyuru, Penamaluru, Tenali and Mangalagiri areas to commit crimes. Police have advised people living alone to take appropriate security measures including installation of CCTV cameras for security purpose.

Protecting individual liberty is vital: CID chief

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 24

Protecting individual liberty is the most vital of laws, said CID chief P.V. Sunil Kumar while addressing his officials across the state in a zoom conference on better understanding of law in view of the recent judgments.

He said arresting a person meant suspending his individual liberty for a brief period of time. The freedom to move around freely is a right assured to every citizen by the Constitution. Hence, arrest should not be a matter of routine but a result of application of mind and judgment, the CID chief said.

"Don't apply law as you understand and interpret. Apply it as interpreted by Supreme Court and High Courts" he said.

Sunil Kumar said Article 22 (2) of the Constitution prescribed that every person, who was arrested and detained in custody, shall be produced before the nearest magistrate within

24 hours of such arrest excluding the time necessary for the journey and no such person shall be detained in custody beyond the stipulated period without the authority of the magistrate, he explained.

He explained about the position of law under Section 167 Criminal Procedure code, which laid provisions for interstate arrests and transit warrants. He also narrated the recent discussion about Disha Ravi's arrest from Bangalore by Delhi police in the toolkit case.

He released an arrest checklist, comprising all rights of the person arrested which are enlisted by D.K. Basu judgement, Sections 41, 50, 51, 100, 56 and 57 of criminal procedure code. DIGs of CID Nayak and S. Harikrishna, SPs and several officers from all parts of the state attended.

● **"DON'T APPLY law as you understand and interpret. Apply it as interpreted by Supreme Court and High Courts,"** said CID chief.

SHRADHANJALI



K. ANAND RAO
Ex. General Secretary, 25 Years Deccan Chronicle Employees' Union
DOB: 10.09.1951 DOD: 16.06.2021
May his soul rest in peace
Deeply mourned by:
KUTHADI FAMILY
Mob: 9703216253

PUBLIC NOTICE

Under the instructions of My Client Sri. Beemireddy Ranga Reddy, S/o. Venkata Reddy, R/o. Door No. 4-94, Nutakki Village, Mangalagiri Mandal, Guntur District. I give the following Public Notice to all the Public.

My client has purchased the schedule mentioned property from Sri. Murikupudi Venkatappaiah, vide Sale deed document No.4133/1991, dated 18-10-1991, at SRO., Mangalagiri, and its link document was Sale Deed Doc.No.3732/1988 at SRO., Mangalagiri.

On 03-06-2021, at about 11.00 A.M., he was travelling from A.P. Sachivalayam, Velagapudi Village to Mandadam Village in an Auto he lost original link document, vide Sale deed document No.3732/1988, at SRO., Mangalagiri, after knowing the same he was searched for the said link document, but in vain. My client also lodged the complaint before Thulluru Police Station on 03-06-2021. There is no chance to trace out near future, hence police issued certificate on 10-06-2021 to obtain duplicate from concerned authorities.

Further my client intends to take loan from the Nationalized Banks, Private Banks, Financial Institutions/ persons. If anybody has got objections, on the above loan/mortgage or any alienable rights of my client please inform the same to me within ONE WEEK from this public notice date, in writing, failing which other claims will not bind my client or said creditors.

Schedule:- Guntur District, Mangalagiri Sub-District, Nutakki Gram Panchayat Area, Nutakki Village, D.No.405, Ward No.4, Side Door No.101, an extent of 241.4 Sq. yds or 202.77 Sq. mts of Vacant House Site, bounded by:

East:- Site of Eves Water belongs to Vajrala Venkata Rami Reddy, 26.5 Feet **South:-** Property of Beemireddy Ranga Reddy, 82 Feet **West:-** Bazaar, 26.5 Feet **North:-** Site of Eves Water belongs to Beemireddy Rami Reddy, 82 Feet.

V.RAMA GOPAL GOUD
Advocate
Place : MANGALAGIRI
Dated : 25.06.2021

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LEGAL | TANGLE

NRIAS approach police, court to sort out their issues

Infighting in NRIAS emerges

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 24

The saga of one-upmanship is continuing in the NRI Academy of Sciences (NRIAS) Society in Mangalagiri with friends-turned-foes engaged in a bitter war and approaching the police and court to fight their issues out.

The majority of the society's executive council removed Makkamala Appa Rao from the post

of secretary, accusing him of "fraudulent" activities. They say Appa Rao is involved in serious cases in the US and hence is spending more time here.

Meanwhile, in order to defeat the rivals, Appa Rao encouraged an assistant at the NRIAS to register a police complaint.

NRIAS directors Dr Nimmagadda Upendranath, Dr Mani Akkineni and Dr Rahava

Rao filed a house motion petition in the high court on Wednesday against the police complaint.

The High Court issued an order to Mangalagiri Rural police against the arrest or any other coercive step against Nimmagadda Upendranath, Dr Mani Akkineni and Dr Raghava Rao following the complaint filed at the behest of Appa Rao.

The house motion petition was moved by

advocate Ashwani Kumar for Upendranath, Dr Akkineni and Dr Rao on June 23. The high court granted the house motion permission at 6.30 am on Thursday.

After hearing advocate Ashwani Kumar representing members of NRIAS and government pleader for home Maheswara Reddy, the high court ordered against the arrest of the three members.

UNICEF DONATES O2 CONCENTRATORS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 24

A UNICEF delegation has called on Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy at the camp officer here on Thursday and handed over a set of oxygen concentrators for Covid patients. The delegation handed over 240 oxygen concentrators on behalf of United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef) as also 25 concentrators and N95 masks worth ₹50 lakh on behalf of the foundation for Covid-19 treatment.

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IN BRIEF

Noted filmmaker Sivan dies at 89

Thiruvananthapuram: Veteran still photographer and film-maker Sivan died on Thursday, family sources said. He was 89. Noted filmmakers Sangeeth Sivan, Santhosh Sivan and Sanjeev Sivan are his sons. "It's with great sadness that I share with you all d tragic news that my father, Sivan, breathed his last today," Sangeeth Sivan, his son and noted film director, posted on Facebook. Sivan was the first press photographer in Kerala. He was also the still photographer of the classic Malayalam movie *Chemmeen* which was released in 1965.

Adivasi minor girl raped in UP; 1 held

Bhadohi (UP): A four-year-old tribal girl was allegedly raped in a village under Suryawa police station area here, police said on Thursday. The accused, Naresh Saroj (42), has been arrested, they said. The victim's family belonging to Musahar Basti was sleeping under the shed of a house to avoid rain when the accused picked up the girl and took her to an agriculture field where he raped her, station in-charge Pradeep Kumar said. The family found the girl in an unconscious state from the field Thursday morning, he said. A case under various sections of law was lodged against the accused on the complaint of the girl's father. The girl will be sent for medical examination, police added.

UNNAO RAPE VICTIM WRITES TO PRESIDENT, PM

Unnao (UP), June 24: The BJP on Thursday changed its candidate for the post of the district panchayat chief here after the Unnao rape victim objected to the party's choice, alleging that he is "very close" to former MLA Kuldeep Singh Sengar, who was convicted for the crime.

Sengar, a former BJP MLA from Unnao's Bangarmanu seat, was accused of rape by the victim in 2017. A Delhi court had sentenced Sengar to life imprisonment in the case in December 2019.

The party's decision came after the rape victim wrote to President Ram Nath Kovind, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister in this regard.

The rape victim also claimed danger to her life if the BJP gives ticket to Arun Singh, who held the post of the Nawabganj block panchayat chief. The elections for the post of the zila panchayat chairman are scheduled for July 3.

The BJP had earlier denied the charge, with its district president Raj Kishore Rawat terming it "baseless" and suggesting that the allegations may be a part of a "conspiracy" by the Opposition.

MAHA: 24-YR-OLD DIES AFTER RAT BITE IN HOSPITAL

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC MUMBAI, JUNE 24

A 24-year-old patient, who was bitten by a rat near his eye at a civic hospital in Mumbai, died on Wednesday night. Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) officials said that the patient was suffering from alcohol-related liver disease and was in a very critical condition since the day of his admission in the hospital.

The incident of rat nibbling on a patient came to light when a relative of the patient on Tuesday alleged that a rat had bitten near his eye, when he was admitted to the ICU of the hospital.

This prompted Mumbai Mayor Kishori Pednekar to order a probe into the matter.

The hospital management had confirmed the rat bite incident, but said injuries were "superficial" and the patient's eye was not affected.

According to the officials, the patient — Shrinivas Nagesh Yallapa — was brought to the hospital in an unconscious state. He was admitted in the hospital on Sunday and was on ventilator support.

After the incident the hospital's Dean Dr Vidya Thakur had said they have taken some rodent repellent measures and will take utmost care to avoid such incidents. According to the hospital officials, the patient was suffering from alcohol-related liver disease and was in a very critical condition.

Snana yatra

Devotees, blatantly avoiding Covid-19 guidelines, carry the idols of Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra on a boat to celebrate Snana Yatra festival in Balurghat on Thursday. The Snana Yatra or bathing ceremony of Lord Jagannath at Puri in Odisha, which is normally witnessed by over five lakh devotees every year, was performed without the presence of any outside worshippers other than the temple priests.

— PTI

ASSAM: OVER 1,100 DRUG PEDDLERS HELD

MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, JUNE 24

In a major drive launched at the behest of Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma against multi-crore rupees drugs racket, Assam police has arrested more than 1,100 drug peddlers and registered over 650 cases since the formation of new government in May this year. The Police, which is describing it a "war against drugs" said that 1142 persons have been arrested and 659 cases were registered so far.

The CM has taken a stern stand against drug peddling and is adamant on making Assam free from illegal drugs that was destroying the society as a whole.

Police claimed that the drug network in the state has weakened with huge seizures being made and multiple arrests during the campaign.

Police have seized and destroyed 16.29 kg of Heroin, 6,687.253 kg of Ganja, 6,42,447 Yaba tablets among other drugs since May 10 across the state. In the ongoing drive police have also recovered ₹79,91,060 in cash from peddlers.

Rahul fighting Modi only on Twitter, charges Shiv Sena

Sena praises Sharad Pawar for his attempts to bring the Opposition together

SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC MUMBAI, JUNE 24

The Shiv Sena on Thursday took a jibe at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi claiming that he criticises Prime Minister Narendra Modi only virtually, on Twitter, and not on the ground.

The Uddhav Thackeray-led party also praised the NCP chief Sharad Pawar's efforts for holding a meeting in Delhi to bring the Opposition together and said that the meeting should have been organised by Gandhi.

The Rashtramanch meeting, hosted by Pawar in the Capital at his residence on Tuesday, was attended by leaders of eight Opposition parties, including the Trinamul Congress (TMC), the Samajwadi Party, the Aam Aadmi Party, the Rashtriya Lok Dal and the Left amid heightened speculation about the possibility of a third front against the BJP.

The Sena in an editorial in its party mouthpiece

Congress slighting country to target Modi, says Nadda

DC CORRESPONDENT BHOPAL, JUNE 24

BJP national president J.P. Nadda on Thursday took a dig at Congress leaders for slighting the image of the country in their zeal to target BJP and Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Addressing the newly constituted executive committee of state unit of BJP online, Nadda cited how Congress veteran and former chief minister Kamal Nath did not hesitate to tarnish the image of the country by saying that

India has earned a bad name in the world for the worsening pandemic situation in the country.

Nadda said Congress leaders had overlooked the fact that in their zeal to attack BJP and Modi, they were tarnishing the image of the country.

The BJP leader took a jibe at Nath reminding him that he was leading a government in Madhya Pradesh that did nothing but making money from transfer and posting of government employees during its 15-month tenure that ended in March, 2020.

Saamana on Thursday said that the Opposition parties should come together as it is the need of parliamentary democracy. But in the last seven years,

the existence of Opposition at the national level has not been seen at all. "Regional parties and their leaders in many major states have opposed

The executive committee of state BJP met for the first time after three years. Nadda said Congress leaders have disappeared from the scene during the corona period whereas BJP leaders and workers have extended their helping hands to the people at this hour of crisis risking their lives.

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan slammed Congress for making baseless charges against the Centre as well as the state government on the issue of handling the pandemic and vaccination.

the BJP or Modi-Shah with full strength and even defeated them in the Assembly elections," the editorial pointed out. The Sena said that the

Doval proposes anti-JeM 'plan'

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC NEW DELHI, JUNE 24

National Security Advisor Ajit Doval has proposed an "action plan" against Pakistan-based terror groups Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed under the framework of eight-nation grouping SCO and called for expeditiously bringing the perpetrators of terror attacks to justice.

At an in-person meeting of top security officials of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in Tajikistan's capital Dushanbe on Wednesday, he also called for the "full implementation of UN resolutions and targeted sanctions against UN-designated terrorist individuals and entities".

The predominantly-Central Asian eight-nation SCO comprises Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan besides India and Pakistan.

Sources said that Doval also "emphasised adoption of international

standards to counter terror financing, including an MoU between the SCO and (global anti-terror watchdog) Financial Action Task Force (FATF)".

Incidentally, Pakistan which is also an SCO member continues to be on the FATF's "grey list" for its failure to adequately combat terror-financing on its soil.

Sources said Doval also "strongly condemned terrorism in all forms and manifestations" and emphasised that "perpetrators of terrorism including cross-border terror attacks should be expeditiously brought to justice".

He also conveyed the "need to monitor new technologies used by terrorists, including drones for smuggling of weapons and misuse of dark web, artificial intelligence, blockchain and social media," sources said.

On Afghanistan, Doval reiterated India's position on the "need to preserve gains made in the last two decades in Afghanistan and give top priority to the welfare of its people".



Amit Shah

DELIMITATION, J&K ELECTIONS IMPORTANT, SAYS SHAH

New Delhi, June 24: Union home minister Amit Shah on Thursday said the delimitation exercise and holding of peaceful elections in Jammu and Kashmir are important milestones in restoring statehood as promised in Parliament.

The home minister's comments came after a three-and-half-hour-long meeting held by Prime Minister Narendra Modi with 14 political leaders from Jammu and Kashmir, including four former chief ministers.

"We are committed to ensure all round development of J&K. The future of Jammu and Kashmir was discussed and the delimitation exercise and peaceful elections are important milestones in restoring statehood as promised in Parliament," Shah said in a tweet.

He said Thursday's meeting on Jammu and Kashmir was held in a very cordial environment.

"Everyone expressed their commitment to democracy and the Constitution. It was stressed to strengthen the democratic process in Jammu and Kashmir," Shah said in another tweet.

The four former chief ministers of the erstwhile state who participated in the discussions were Farooq Abdullah and his son Omar Abdullah of the National Conference, Congress' Ghulam Nabi Azad and PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti.

Four former deputy chief ministers were in attendance too — Congress' Tara Chand, People's Conference leader Muzaffar Hussain Baig and BJP's Nirmal Singh and Kavinder Gupta.

CPI-M leader Mohammed Yusuf Tarigami, Jammu and Kashmir Apni Party (JKAP) chief Altaf Bukhari, Sajjad Lone of the People's Conference, J&K Congress head G.A. Mir, BJP's Ravinder Raina and Panthers Party leader Bhim Singh also formed part of the delegation.

This is the first interaction between the central leadership and mainstream parties since August 5, 2019, when the Centre revoked Jammu and Kashmir's special status under Article 370 and bifurcated it into union territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh.

— PTI

Small rise in cases in Delhi, Maha

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JUNE 24

After a steady decline for over a week, fresh Covid-19 cases have started picking up again, raising the fear that a fresh wave may be on its way. On Thursday 54,069 new cases were detected in the past 24 hours, which is 6.3 per cent higher than the previous day. In the last 24 hours, 1,321 deaths were reported. However, the Union health ministry said the daily positivity rate was at 2.91 per cent in India at present.

Delhi and Mumbai, which showed a considerable decline in fresh cases, are also slowly showing rising numbers. Delhi reported 109 new cases while Mumbai had 789

fresh cases. Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray has instructed the state health authorities to prepare for a possible third wave as the state is seeing a rise in new cases. Maharashtra also has the highest number of the "Delta Plus" variant of SARS-CoV2 being detected in Rajnagiri, Sindhudurg, Jalgaon, Thane and Mumbai. To increase the vaccination coverage, the Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation started inoculating homeless people and beggars.

An ICMR study has shown only 9.99 per cent of fully vaccinated people needed hospital admission in Odisha. The sample size was 361. Out of these, 274 samples with confirmed breakthrough infection.

Five cases of Delta plus in MP; 1 dead

Bhopal, June 24: Five persons have so far been found infected with the 'Delta Plus' variant of Coronavirus in Madhya Pradesh and one of them has died, state medical education minister Vishwas Sarang said on Thursday.

The other four persons, who were vaccinated against Covid-19, are fine, he said. "One person from Ujjain, who died, was not inoculated, he said.

'Delta Plus' has been declared a variant of concern by the Centre. So far,

three persons from Bhopal and two from Ujjain have been found infected with the 'Delta Plus' variant in MP, the minister said.

A genome sequencing machine will soon be installed in Bhopal and the state would then not have to send samples to Delhi, he added.

Ujjain collector Ashish Singh confirmed that a 59-year-old woman, who died of Covid on May 23, was infected with the 'Delta Plus' variant. She tested positive on May 17.

— PTI

Maoist Hidma tests +ve for Covid: Cops

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, JUNE 24

Commander of Maoists' battalion number one Hidma, who was allegedly involved in major Naxal attacks on security forces in insurgency-hit Bastar in Chhattisgarh in the last one decade, has been infected with Coronavirus, police quoting two Naxal couriers arrested recently said on Thursday.

According to a senior police officer posted in Bastar, two members of Maoists' supply network were arrested in south Bastar district of Bijapur last week.

Medicines used for treatment of Covid-19 along with masks and sanitisers were seized from them.

"The two Maoist couriers were going to deliver the medicines to Punem, another ultra, in the jungles of Pamed in Bijapur for delivery to Hidma. Interrogation of the two arrested ultras led to disclosure that Hidma has been suffering from Coronavirus since the last few days and was in dire need of medicines for his treatment", a senior Bijapur district police officer told this newspaper requesting not to be quoted.

SEDITION | CASE

Filmmaker emerges from 3-hour interrogation in case filed by BJP leader

Lakshadweep police question Ayesha Sulthana

Kochi, June 24: Filmmaker Ayesha Sulthana, facing allegations of sedition in Lakshadweep, was let off by the Lakshadweep police on Thursday after interrogation.

Sulthana was interrogated by the Kavaratti police on Sunday, Wednesday and Thursday in connection with the case registered on the basis of a complaint filed by a BJP leader in the Islands.

Emerging from the

police station, Kavaratti, after nearly a three-hour long interrogation, Sulthana said, "Everything is over. I am told that I can go back to Kochi. I will reach Kochi tomorrow or a day after."

The allegation is that the filmmaker, while participating in a debate telecast by a Malayalam news channel on June 7, had said the Centre used biological weapons against the people of Lakshadweep.

Ahead of appearing for Thursday's probe, Sulthana said during the nearly eight-hour long questioning on Wednesday, the police had asked whether she had any contacts abroad.

"They checked my WhatsApp, Instagram and Facebook accounts. They were searching whether I have any links with foreign countries," she said in a video circulated to the media.

Earlier on Sunday, she was questioned for three hours. She appeared before the police after the Kerala High Court granted her interim anticipatory bail for a week, while reserving orders on her advance bail plea.

It had directed her to comply with the notice issued by the Kavaratti police to appear before them for interrogation on June 20 in connection with the sedition case.

— PTI

SCIENTISTS SEEK PREZ'S INTERVENTION TO WITHDRAW PROPOSED LDAR

Kochi, June 24: The proposed Lakshadweep Development Authority Regulation of 2021 (LDAR) is highly problematic and will work against existing legal provisions that safeguard the resilience of Lakshadweep's ecology, livelihood and culture, say a group of scientists from different institutions. In a statement, the Lakshadweep Research Collective said it along with 60 other signatories from the scientific community have written to President Ram Nath Kovind seeking his intervention to withdraw the "incautious draft" LDAR of 2021.

— PTI

SHORT TAKES

NO CONFIDENCE: TRUDEAU SURVIVES VOTE

Ottawa, June 24: The minority government of Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau survived a parliamentary vote of no confidence Wednesday in a face-off over the proposed budget, eliminating the possibility of early elections this summer.

The House of Commons voted 211 to 121 in favor of approving the budget, which was proposed in April and contains a plan to spend CAN\$101.4 billion (69 billion euros) over three years. The conservative opposition voted together against Trudeau, who was able to hang on thanks to the support of three other smaller blocs in the lower chamber.

LANKA RELEASES 16 LTTE TERROR SUSPECTS

Colombo, June 24: Sri Lanka on Thursday released 93 prisoners, including 16 LTTE terror suspects held without charges, after they were pardoned by President Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

The prisoners were released on the presidential pardon on the occasion of Poson Poya, an annual festival celebrated by Sri Lanka's Buddhist majority to mark the arrival of Buddhism in the country. Prison spokesman Thushara Upuldeniya said the suspects belonging to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) were among the 93 who had received the presidential pardon.

U.S. EXTENDS EVICTION MORATORIUM

Washington, June 24: The Biden administration has extended the nationwide ban on evictions for a month to help tenants who are unable to make rent payments during the Coronavirus pandemic, but it said this is expected to be the last time it does so.

Dr Rochelle Walensky, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, extended the evictions moratorium until July 31. It had been scheduled to end June 30. The CDC said Thursday that "this is intended to be the final extension of the moratorium."

The White House had acknowledged Wednesday that the emergency pandemic protection will have to end at some point.

NAWAZ LOSES PLEAS AGAINST CONVICTION

Islamabad, June 24: A top Pakistani court on Thursday dismissed appeals by former prime minister Nawaz Sharif against his conviction in corruption cases by an accountability court.

A bench of the Islamabad High Court (IHC), in its nine-page judgement, said Sharif was a "fugitive from law hence has lost his right of audience before this court and we are left with no choice except to dismiss his appeal". The three-time former prime minister was convicted in two corruption cases — Avenfield properties and Al-Azizia Steel Mills — was declared a proclaimed offender in December 2019.

NEPAL LAWYERS QUESTION PREZ'S IMPARTIALITY

Kathmandu, June 24: Questioning the impartiality of President Bidya Devi Bhandari in the May 22 dissolution of the House of Representatives, lawyers representing petitioners against the move have argued that her actions make it clear that she didn't want anybody except K.P. Sharma Oli as prime minister.

A five-member Constitutional Bench of the Supreme Court led by Chief Justice Chandra Shumsher Rana on Wednesday began the hearing process, starting with the writ jointly filed by 146 lawmakers backing Nepali Congress President Sher Bahadur Deuba's claim to Prime Ministership. At the recommendation of Prime Minister Oli, President Bhandari dissolved the lower house for the second time in five months on May 22 and announced snap elections on November 12 and November 19.

Prime Minister Oli is currently heading a minority government after losing a trust vote in the 275-member House. "Bhandari's rejection of Deuba's claim makes it clear that she didn't want anybody except K.P. Sharma Oli as prime minister."

The *Kathmandu Post* quoted advocate Govinda Bandi as saying while arguing on behalf of the petitioners against the House dissolution.

Some H-1B seekers can resubmit form

USCIS will consider plea to have been filed on the original receipt date if properly resubmitted

Washington, June 24: Some foreign guest workers in the US will be able to re-submit their applications for the H-1B visa, the most sought-after non-immigrant visa among Indian IT professionals, if their petition was solely rejected because it was based on the initial registration period, according to a federal agency.

According to the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), such resubmission of applications is for those whose applications have been rejected

or administratively closed solely because the requested start date was after October 1, 2020.

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

"If your FY 2021 petition was rejected or administratively closed solely because your petition was based on a registration sub-

mitted during the initial registration period, but you requested a start date after Oct. 1, 2020, you may re-submit that previously filed petition, with all applicable fees," USCIS said.

"Such petitions must be re-submitted before October 1, 2021. If properly resubmitted, we will consider the petition to have been filed on the original receipt date," the USCIS said. In 2020, USCIS implemented an electronic registration process for the H-1B cap.

Prospective petitioners seeking to file H-1B cap-sub-

● PROSPECTIVE PETITIONERS seeking to file H-1B cap-subject petitions, including for beneficiaries eligible for the advanced degree exemption, must first electronically register and pay the \$10 H-1B registration fee for each beneficiary.

ject petitions, including for beneficiaries eligible for the advanced degree exemption, must first electronically register and pay the \$10 H-1B registration

fee for each beneficiary.

"The electronic registration process has streamlined processing by reducing paperwork and data exchange and provided overall cost savings to employers seeking to file H-1B cap-subject petitions," it said. According to USCIS, for fiscal 2021, the number of petitions filed during the initial filing period was below the number projected as needed to reach the numerical allocations.

This discrepancy was likely related to multiple factors, including the eco-

nomie, political, and public health uncertainty created by the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the fact that FY 2021 was the first year that we implemented the electronic registration process. "Therefore, in August 2020, we selected additional registrations that were held in reserve. The filing period for registrations selected in August ended on November 16, 2020," it said.

"Some petitioners indicated a start date after October 1, 2020. We rejected or administratively closed th-

ose petitions because they were based on registrations submitted during the initial registration period but indicated a start date after October 1, 2020. Upon reconsideration, we no longer believe that the regulations required us to reject or administratively close those petitions," the USCIS said.

The move comes days after the US Chambers of Commerce launched a campaign to address the acute shortage of skilled and professional workforce in America. —PTI

Thai democracy protesters rally against govt despite virus warnings

Bangkok, June 24: Hundreds of pro-democracy protesters rallied in Bangkok Thursday to call for the government's resignation, defying warnings from authorities about the kingdom's soaring Coronavirus cases.

The marches came on the 89th anniversary of the Siamese Revolution — the uprising that transformed Thailand from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy.

Bangkok was rocked by near-daily protests against Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha's government in the second half of 2020, but the pro-democracy movement has lost steam after virus outbreaks and the jailing of student leaders. Authorities have clamped down on public gatherings as the kingdom grapples with a third wave of infections, with its daily case toll hovering around the 3,000 mark.

Despite police warnings, hundreds gathered at Democracy Monument, a major intersection in Bangkok, and marched in the direction of Parliament House to protest against the rule of Prayut, the former military chief who came to power in a 2014 coup. Early-bird protesters gathered at the intersection before dawn for a candlelight ceremony.

Som, a 16-year-old student protester, said she wasn't worried about the Coronavirus risk. "We have never had any real democracy," Som said. "The country is not going anywhere." Student leader Parit "Penguin" Chiwarak — who is facing royal defamation charges and was released on bail last month — marched to a drum beat wearing a plastic golden crown and carrying a flag.

One protester was dressed like the US Statue of Liberty and demonstrators burned a fake constitution — the same week the Thai parliament debated changes to the country's charter. "Our demands won't be lowered... The constitution must come from the people," Jatupat "Pai" Boonpattarakas said over a loudspeaker.

Some demonstrators carried signs that read "abolish 112," a reference to the kingdom's harsh royal defamation laws that carry a 15-year jail term for those convicted of insulting the monarchy. There are also demonstrations planned across the country, from the tourist city of Chiang Mai in the north to the southern province of Nakhon Si Thammarat. —AFP



A pro-democracy protester holds a large replica of the 1932 Siamese Revolution plaque as he walks with others in an anti-government march as they commemorate the anniversary of the revolution in Bangkok on Thursday. —AFP

Europe 'on thin ice', says Merkel

Berlin, June 24: German Chancellor Angela Merkel said Thursday that Europe is on thin ice in its battle against the Coronavirus, as the highly contagious Delta variant threatens to undo progress made in reducing infections.

In what may be her last government declaration to the German parliament, Merkel said the further response to the pandemic would be a main topic of discussion among European Union leaders at a meeting in Brussels on Thursday.

She noted that the number of Covid-19 cases in the 27-nation bloc continue to decline, while vacci-

nation rates climb.

But even though there is reason to be hopeful, the pandemic isn't over, in particular in the world's poor countries, she said. But in Germany and Europe we're also still moving on thin ice.

We need to remain vigilant, Merkel added. In particular the newly arising variants, especially now the Delta variant, are a warning for us to continue to be careful.

EU health officials predicted Wednesday that the Delta variant will make up 90% of all cases across the bloc by the end of August. —AP

Infections, deaths surge in Russia

Moscow, June 24: Coronavirus infections continue to soar in Russia, with the authorities reporting 20,182 new cases on Thursday and 568 further deaths. Both tallies are the highest since late January. A surge in infections that hit Russia earlier this month comes as the authorities struggle to overcome widespread vaccine hesitancy and immunise its 146 million people.

As of Wednesday, only 20.7 million — or just 14 per cent of the population — have received at least one shot of the vaccine, while 16.7 million — 11 per cent — have been fully immunised. In

response to the soaring contagions, authorities in 14 Russian regions have made vaccinations mandatory for certain groups of people, such as state officials, those employed in retail, health-care, education, restaurants and other service-providing businesses.

In most of those regions, eligible companies are required to ensure vaccination of at least 60% of their staff in the coming months. Deputy Prime Minister Tatyana Golikova said Wednesday that over the past week, vaccination rates have increased nearly two-fold. —AP

Phone swab can detect Covid-19

London, June 24: Researchers have developed a non-invasive and low-cost method that can accurately and rapidly detect Covid-19 using samples taken from the screens of smartphones. The researchers from University College London (UCL) in the UK analysed swabs from mobile screens rather than directly from people using the method known as Phone Screen Testing (PoST).

They found that people

who tested positive by the regular nasal swabbing PCR test were also positive when samples were taken from smartphone screens. The new method, described in the journal *eLife* on Tuesday, detected the Covid-19 virus on the phones of 81 to 100 per cent of contagious people with a high viral load, suggesting it is as accurate as antigen tests.

The researchers noted that globally active screen-

ing for Covid-19 is still a priority as new variants keep emerging and the vaccination rollout is not guaranteed in many countries. However, testing is expensive and can be physically unpleasant, both of which are significant hurdles on the road to an effective test and trace system, they said.

As PoST is an environmental test, rather than a clinical test, it is both non-invasive and less expen-

sive than a traditional nasal swabbing PCR, according to the researchers.

This means not only is it suitable for rollout in lower-income countries, but it also removes the discomfort of current Covid-19 testing options, potentially increasing take-up of regular testing among the general population, they explained.

The team noted that PoST sampling takes less than a minute. —PTI

2 nabbed for blast near Saeed house

Lahore, June 24: Pakistani security agencies on Thursday arrested two suspects involved in the car bomb blast outside the house of the 2008 Mumbai terror attack mastermind and chief of the banned Jamat-ud-Dawa (JuD) Hafiz Saeed, an official said.

The Crime Investigation Department (CTD) has arrested two suspects, one of them a Christian, who had a connection with the sale and purchase of the car used for the blast, a CTD official said.

The official did not disclose the identity of the suspects. However, the *Asso-*

ciated Press named one of the arrested as David Peter. Intelligence agencies have arrested a man from the Lahore airport on the suspicion of his involvement in the blast, *Geo News* reported.

Quoting police sources, the report said the man was asked to get off a Karachi-bound flight a few minutes before departure. He was taken to an undisclosed location for further investigation, the report said.

"We are getting a lead from the arrested persons to the main culprits," the CTD official said. —PTI

LUXURY | IN CLOUDS

Shanghai Tower is 2nd tallest after Dubai's Burj Khalifa

Shanghai opens world's highest hotel

Shanghai, June 24: The world's highest luxury hotel, boasting a restaurant on the 120th floor and 24-hour personal butler service, has opened in Shanghai to guests with deep pockets and a head for heights.

Elevators whizz guests up the intimidating spiral-like skyscraper at ear-popping speeds of 18 metres per second to the J Hotel's 165 opulent rooms.

The hotel occupies the top floors of the 632-metre (more than 2,000 feet) Shanghai Tower in the city's financial district, the second-tallest building in the world after Dubai's

Burj Khalifa.

Its opening was delayed partly by the Coronavirus pandemic but the hotel has now started receiving well-heeled guests who can call on the services of a dedicated butler at any hour, day or night.

Patrons can also enjoy one of the hotel's seven restaurants, bars, spa, 84th-floor swimming pool, and all the other usual trappings of a top-notch hotel.

It does not come cheap. To celebrate its opening J Hotel is offering a "special experience rate" of 3,088 yuan (\$450) a night, but prices for its 34 suites sky-

rocket. A night in a "J Suite", complete with crystal chandeliers and sauna, this Saturday costs over 67,000 yuan.

The hotel is part of Jin Jiang International Hotels, a major Chinese state-owned group, and officially opened on Saturday.

"On the day of our opening even the web page was overloaded with so many visitors with strong interest and they have such (a) strong will to come and experience our hotel," said Renee Wu, sales and marketing director.

"Of course this is very encouraging to all of us, but at the same time, we



View of the J Hotel, the world's highest luxury hotel, boasting a restaurant on the 120th floor and 24-hour personal butler service, located in the Shanghai Tower, in Shanghai. —AFP

are committed to making sure that all our guests are

well taken care of." —AFP

DECCAN Chronicle

25 JUNE 2021

Lessons for Team India as Kiwis lead the world

The New Zealanders, thought of as eternal bridesmaids, served up object lessons in performing in a team game like cricket. It was their collective talent in a concerted effort that helped the Kiwis prevail in difficult conditions of a distractingly weather-hit Test championship final, the first ever in 144 years. The will to excel was demonstrated in clinical fashion as two most senior batsmen, Kane Williamson and Ross Taylor, absorbed the pressures of the sixth day like sponges to steer the team home.

The New Zealand Test cricketers, who come from a nation of just five million, were not the Davids who downed the Goliaths in this final played in a remote corner of England. In fact, they were the first to qualify and were the world's top rated Test team going into the contest. Team India, for all their vaunted qualities and stirring performances in Australia and at home bringing them to the summit, were the ones found wanting when it came to forcing at least a draw to take the podium as joint winners.

India's celebrated top order batsmen had started impressively enough on being asked to bat first in English conditions that are most alien to them with the Dukes ball eternally swinging and seaming. The collapse of Indian spirit was brought about by the 6 foot 8 inch fast bowler Kyle Jamieson who twice outfoxed Virat Kohli with length and steeping bounce. The Indians, with their hubris, had picked two spinners long before the toss was made on the second day and India's last four wickets mustered just 12 and 14 runs in the two innings. That was the sting in the tail which swung the balance.

Why blame the tail when the specialists of the top order, most of all Rishabh Pant, who batted as if a death wish had consumed them, that too on the sunniest day of six when batting was not as difficult as a total of 170 would suggest. What told in the end was lack of preparation against the Dukes ball, which does so much more than the Kookaburra and represents the stiffest test of technique and temperament in English conditions. In 50 years since the famous breakthrough victory in 1971, India has won only two Test series in the Old Blighty.

The lack of preparation for a Test championship final was revealing of the Indian cricket mindset, obsessed as it is with the commercial aspects of T20 amid a welter of pricey endorsements. The addition of levels of adulation that equal the Brazilians' passion for national team's football may have led to greater emphasis being placed on the charisma of star power over performance.

Not an ICC trophy in eight years and none at all under Virat Kohli is illustrative of a need for fundamental changes that will uphold the primacy of sporting performances under pressure.

Meanwhile, it should be back to the drawing board for a clinical dissection of Test batting skills that alone should guide the selection of those who can deliver when the chips are down. The biggest lesson from Williamson's band of players is that good guys can also finish first in competition. Much has to change then, beginning with Kohli's attitude, which could do with a sprinkling of modesty and gumption.

Cutting Kabul's Gordian knot

A senior official figure of Qatar, which hosts the political office of the Taliban, has recently observed that Indian officials have visited that country to talk to Taliban representatives. There is nothing particularly revealing about this statement since Indian officials have been in informal touch with the Taliban for a fairly long period of time.

After the ouster of the Taliban government in 2001 and the emergence of an elected government in Kabul, India has enjoyed considerable goodwill in Afghanistan on account of its strong contribution to development in that country and its strongly pro-democracy and anti-extremists stand. In this period it has been in regular touch with all non-extremist political constituencies in the country as a friend, and has consistently backed the elected government in Kabul. In this period it did not forge a relationship with the Taliban, a group that's widely seen in Afghanistan as a proxy for Pakistan.

With the Americans exiting Afghanistan under the February 2020 agreement with the Taliban, it is clear that the militant group is in focus. No country wishing to deal with Kabul persuasively after the US departs can hope to do so without establishing a working relationship with the Taliban. No matter its violent ways, the Taliban look to emerge as the most powerful and the most influential grouping in Afghanistan in the post-US phase. The question is on what terms are the Indians seeking to engage the Taliban.

This is the most significant issue to address. India has its record to show and can assure Taliban that its deep-going friendship with the people of Afghanistan is at no risk of being in jeopardy if the Taliban abandon its violent approach in matters of governance, and plays it neutral between its traditional patron and provider, Pakistan, and India. Discussion and negotiations on a theme of this nature and to reach working steps to achieve the objective cannot but test New Delhi. Equally, however, Islamabad will also be on test in remaining Taliban's friend in a wholly new setting. India's objective is peace in Afghanistan and no anti-India tilt by the next post-US government there. This cannot be ensured without a meaningful engagement with the Taliban. Only if that fails will New Delhi need to look at the Afghan question anew.

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Subhani



Mind the gap: Covishield's 2nd jab sets off controversy



Karan Thapar

As I See It

It would benefit us to better understand the controversy surrounding the length of the gap between two AstraZeneca injections — our Covishield. After all, there's no one over 18 who's not affected. So let me lay out the key facts and explain the complications inherent in them.

When the vaccinations started on January 16, the Covishield gap was set at four weeks, which is what the manufacturers recommended and what was followed in the incomplete bridging trials. However, earlier in December, Britain, on the basis of its own analysis of AstraZeneca's (AZ) trial results and additional information from the company, had unilaterally increased the gap to 8-12 weeks. Then, in February, WHO advised a similar gap. So, unsurprisingly, questions were asked in India. In response, the government first expanded the gap to 6-8 weeks in March and then to 12-16 weeks in May. Paradoxically, three days after India's May decision, and because of the threat of the Delta variant, the UK reduced the gap to eight weeks.

Now the Indian government's press release says the gap was extended to 16 weeks on the basis of "real-life evidence, particularly from the UK". This created the first controversy. The original UK policy limited the gap to 12 weeks. It doesn't have real world data to cover the additional four weeks. When I questioned Gagandeep Kang, a member of the Covid Working Group which had suggested the 12-16-week gap, she said the additional four weeks was based on AZ's trial results and modelling. Now there's nothing wrong with that except it's not "real-life evidence" from the UK.

Last week, Prof.

Andrew Pollard, the chief investigator of AstraZeneca and director of the Oxford Vaccine Group, rationalised the 12-16-week gap differently. He said protection from one dose is extremely good till 12 weeks but doesn't fall off a cliff thereafter. It's reasonable to assume a longer extension and, therefore, extending the gap to 16 weeks is not problematic.

However, this is the lesser controversy. The bigger one has to do with studies suggesting that AZ does not provide adequate protection against the Delta variant. This is of particular concern because AZ constitutes 88 per cent of all vaccinations in India while Delta is the dominant variant. There are probably more cases in India than the rest of the world put together. So, the efficacy of AZ against Delta is critical.

First, Public Health England has said that AZ only provides 30 per cent protection against symptomatic illness caused by Delta. Then, France's Louis Pasteur Institute published a laboratory-based study stating that "a single dose of AstraZeneca will not display an optimal protection against B.1.617.2 (the Delta variant)". Finally, our own National Centre for Disease Control in association with the Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology published a study of the Delta variant concluding that "partial vaccination is an insufficient impediment to its spread".

Now, do these studies suggest that India's 12-16-week gap leaves people inadequately protected against Delta and we should reduce the gap to eight weeks, as Britain has done? Several experts say yes. They include Srinath Reddy, president of the Public Health Foundation of India, and Arvinder Singh Soim,

chairman of Medanta's Institute of Liver Transplantation and Regenerative Medicine. A few newspaper op-eds and editorials echoed this view.

However, this is where we need to pause and understand what precisely the studies are telling us. No doubt one dose of AstraZeneca provides inadequate protection against symptomatic infection, but it provides very credible protection against serious illness and hospitalisation. Public Health England has established — and, by the way, most of the good research on AZ and Delta comes from Britain, it's only just starting in India — one dose provides 71 per cent protection, going up to 92 per cent after the second. And that's what really counts.

To explain further, let me rely on what Prof. Pollard said last week. We should not be deterred or deflected by the fact that one dose of AZ gives only 30 per cent protection against symptomatic illness. That usually means nothing more than a cold, cough and fever, which most people can handle. What's important is protection against serious illness, hospitalisation and death.

His second point is more important. The preponderant majority of the Indian population is unvaccinated and, therefore, unprotected at a time when the Delta variant is spreading widely and increasing in threat. In these circumstances, a vaccination policy that covers the largest number, in the quickest possible time, with at least one dose makes sense. This means a gap up to 16 weeks is arguably the right response.

Prof. Pollard also

The Delta variant is spreading widely. In these circumstances, a vaccination policy that covers the largest number, in the quickest possible time, with at least one dose makes sense.

warned against comparing vaccination policies in Britain and India. The circumstances in the two countries are very different. Britain reduced the gap after a substantial proportion of its population was vaccinated. India extended the gap to reach more people. Additionally, there's a shortage of vaccines. We need to make the most of the little we have. We're not in Britain's position of abundant supply.

So now you have the two poles of the debate. Which should we focus on? Inadequate protection conferred by a single dose of AZ against symptomatic illness or the 71 per cent protection against serious illness and hospitalisation? In the last week, the balance has tilted in favour of the government's strategy, which prioritises protection against serious illness and hospitalisation. No doubt, Prof. Pollard's endorsement has hugely helped, but so too has a recent study by the Christian Medical College in Vellore which shows 70 per cent protection against hospitalisation, 94 per cent against need for oxygen and 95 per cent against the need for intensive care after one dose.

Yet two issues remain and they're also undressed. Is it wise to leave the elderly and vulnerable inadequately protected for 16 weeks or should the gap be narrowed to eight weeks for them? Second, people who develop symptomatic illness are also carriers and can pass it on. A 12-16-week gap means there could be more such people than if it was just eight weeks.

To the best of my knowledge, this is where the controversy stands today. N.K. Arora, head of the Covid Working Group, has said that any change "will be taken scientifically ... on the basis of merit". However, he also added that "if it turns out the current decision is fine, we will continue with it". I guess we'll have to wait and see what happens.

The writer is a television commentator and anchor

LETTERS

J&K STATEHOOD

The Central government must restore statehood for J&K (*J&K leaders will meet Modi today, DC, June 24*). What was made under the Constitution cannot be unmade by an Act of Parliament, misinterpreting and misusing the provisions of Constitution. Centre should call for joint Parliamentary Session to pass the Bill giving statehood to J&K. The political agenda of the Centre cannot take away their rights.

Anjani Durga Akurathi

Eluru

IT IN VIZAG

It is highly encouraging and promising to read that the AP government is working to transform Visakhapatnam into a major hub for employment generation and a premier IT centre (*CM aims to transform Vizag into a key IT hub, DC, June 24*). However, the city was waterlogged and traffic was hit after receiving a heavy downpour. It exposed its incapacitated drainage system and pitfalls.

Dr C. Ghanshyam

Visakhapatnam

TOURIST CENTRES

It is good that normalcy is returning to AP. The second Covid wave, however, is not relenting as positive cases are being reported in thousands amidst reports that Delta plus variant has already made its entry. The government must strictly implement the pandemic protocol at all public places. Any leniency would only go against the administration.

Govardhana Myneedu

Vijayawada

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

State to run its own lotteries

HYDERABAD, June. 24
The Andhra Pradesh Government is contemplating to run lotteries, on its own, for specific items of development of the weaker sections, eradication of beggary etc.

The Chief Minister Mr. K. Brahmamanda Reddi told reporters today that as and when a final decision was taken in the matter, it would be the endeavour of the Government to ensure that the amount collected from a district was expended in that district only, after the actual expenditure incurred was deducted.

Paul Wood



Taliban's time: How a disaster looms ahead in Afghanistan

There's an apocryphal story, told and retold by journalists many times over the course of America's longest war. A Taliban prisoner is sitting, relaxed, across the table from an American interrogator: "You may have all the watches," the prisoner says, "but we have all the time". Now, the Taliban's patience is finally paying off. President Joe Biden has promised that the last American soldier will be out of Afghanistan by the heavily freighted date of September 11, 2021. In fact, all the troops may be back on American soil by the even more symbolic date of July 4. Other Nato soldiers are hastily lowering their flags and scuttling out. They leave in their wake an unfolding disaster.

After 19 years, the Islamic Emirate — as the Taliban call themselves — are not waiting any longer. There is fighting across Afghanistan: not just in the south where the Taliban are traditionally strong, but in 28 out of 34 provinces. Only the ineffective Afghan security forces are left to stop the Taliban, who are surging for-

ward everywhere. The United States lost some 2,300 people in almost two decades of the Afghan war. The Afghan Army loses that many every few months. The government tries to stop the true, terrible casualty figures from getting out, but the news agencies cobble together estimates. In the past week, some 200 Afghan police and troops were killed; the week before, 150 died in a single day.

The government and its supporters were dismayed by the death last week of a famous and charismatic special forces commander, Col. Sohrab Azimi, who was killed along with all his men. They were overrun by the Taliban while defending an isolated base in the far north of the country. According to one account, it took less than an hour. The Americans were no longer around to save them with aerial bombing; the Afghan government proved incapable of sending reinforcements, leaving them to their fate.

In some places, the Taliban are carrying out what one observer told me was a "burned earth policy": destroying infrastructure, using car bombs

and suicide bombers, killing any high-ranking government loyalists they capture. The head of the national intelligence agency in one district of Takhar province in the north was executed last week, although, interestingly, more than 70 soldiers taken prisoner alongside him were allowed to leave. The Taliban have wisely decided to treat ordinary troops and police officers well if they give up without a fight. Many of the security forces have drawn the appropriate lesson and there are reports of whole units surrendering to the Taliban, passively handing over weapons and equipment.

Twitter is full of triumphant Taliban videos showing this. In one, Taliban fighters swarm around a column of abandoned armoured vehicles. "Thanks be to God", says one, grinning as he hops into a Humvee and gets behind the wheel. The Humvee was made in Indiana. He might also have said: "Thanks be to the American taxpayer". This is an echo of what happened in Iraq when ISIS terrified the Iraqi Army into literally throwing down their arms.

The Afghan troops seem relieved to give themselves up to the Taliban, who feed them and give them money so they can go home.

That last fact gives a clue as to why an army of 260,000, which has cost the US taxpayer \$89 billion to train and equip, is so useless. Ten years ago, I was at a sprawling base in southern Afghanistan shared by US forces and the Afghan Army. I asked the American troops hosting me if I could visit the Afghans. That was not a good idea, they said — they wouldn't even risk going near the Afghan tents. This, I was told, was because the Afghan soldiers were stoned on hash or opium half the time. That was certainly true — but when I did meet some of them, I found they were furious and desperate, because they hadn't been paid in months. This was Afghanistan's legendary corruption at work. Nothing has changed.

The Afghan security forces have been deeply demoralised for a long time. They were made more miserable by the US withdrawal deal with the Taliban. Many are losing the will to fight altogether as the Taliban

advance. The Afghan government itself is showing signs of panic. Last weekend, President Ashraf Ghani, who will meet President Biden at the White House on June 25, hastily sacked both his interior and defence ministers and the Army chief. Troops have been seen digging in on the outskirts of Kabul.

But while a complete collapse is possible, it is not inevitable. Afghanistan's future might be an unending civil war, the government in the cities, the Taliban in the countryside. Even Al Qaeda is back, apparently once again under Taliban protection. As the Taliban spokesman, Zabiullah Mujahid, told me earlier this year: "The Americans have to accept that they have lost."

It's another way of saying that the US never had the Taliban's strategic patience. If the Taliban are on the point of victory, it is because they have simply outlasted the United States.

By arrangement with the Spectator

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	52,699.00	0.75
Nifty 50	15,790.50	0.66
S&P 500*	4,264.07	0.52
Dollar (₹)	73.87	0.28
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.18	0.31
Euro (₹)	88.36	0.19
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	46,283.93	0.20
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	75.37	0.24
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.012	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.480	0.007

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Officers asked to track prices of Covid essentials

Within a fortnight of GST rate cut on Covid-19 essentials, including medicines and oxygen, the National Anti-Profitteering Authority has urged field tax officers to collect evidence against suppliers who have not reduced prices. In an office memo, the NAA said the suppliers are required to commensurately reduce the prices of each of the supplies of goods made and services provided by them.

SBI launches Aarogyam business loan



To support the healthcare sector, State Bank of India has launched the Aarogyam healthcare business loan. Under this new product, the entire healthcare ecosystem such as hospitals, nursing homes, diagnostic centres, pathology labs, manufacturers, suppliers, importers, logistic firms engaged in critical healthcare supply can avail of loans up to Rs 100 crore (as per the geographic location) repayable in 10 years, SBI said.

States' revenues set to cross pre-Covid level

High tax buoyancy, led primarily by fuel taxes, and increase in grants from the Centre under the Finance Commission package, will help revenue growth of states cross the pre-pandemic level in the current fiscal, provided there is no third Covid wave, Crisil said. Given the higher prices of fuels, revenue from this segment is set to grow 50 to 30 per cent in the current financial year from 20 per cent last fiscal, it said.

Google India MD Sanjay Gupta is IMAI chairman

Industry body IMAI said Google India vice president and MD Sanjay Gupta has been elected as its chairman for the period 2021-23. He succeeds Amazon senior VP and India country manager Amit Agarwal. The Internet and Mobile Association of India has also named Facebook India VP and MD Ajit Mohan as vice chairman of the association, succeeding Yatra.com co-founder and CEO Dhruv Shringi.



Saudi Aramco chairman to join board RIL to invest ₹75K cr in clean energy projects

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, JUNE 24

Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) plans to invest Rs 75,000 crore, or over \$10 billion, in clean energy over three years while it looks forward to conclude the \$15-billion deal with Saudi Aramco this year. The company also unveiled the low-priced smartphone co-developed with Google, called JioPhone Next.

Unveiling the growth agenda for the company at its 44th annual general meeting in a virtual address, RIL chairman Mukesh Ambani said the conglomerate will create four "giga factories" in Gujarat, investing over Rs 60,000 crore and another Rs 15,000 crore in value chain and other partnership.

"Reliance will establish and enable at least 100GW of solar energy by 2030. A significant part of this will come from rooftop solar and decentralised solar installations in villages," Ambani said.

Ambani said Saudi Aramco chairman and head of the Kingdom's wealth fund Public Investment Fund, Yasir Othman Al-Rumayyan, 51, will join the board of RIL as an independent director. This is a precursor to a deal to sell a 20 per cent stake in the company's oil-to-chemical (O2C) unit—which houses the group's oil refineries, petrochemical plants and fuel retailing business—to Saudi Aramco.

In the exploration & production business, BP and

JIOPHONE NEXT TO BE MOST AFFORDABLE

Mumbai, June 24: RIL chairman Mukesh Ambani said JioPhone Next, jointly developed by Jio and Google, will be available from September 10. Ambani said JioPhone Next will be the most-affordable smartphone, not just in India but globally.

The companies have also expanded their partnership, wherein Jio and Google Cloud will collaborate on 5G technology.

Ambani said an ultra-affordable 4G smartphone is essential



to make India '2G-mukt' (free of 2G). India still has nearly 300 million mobile users who are unable to escape from inefficient and exorbitant 2G services since most basic 4G smartphones remain unaffordable, he said.

"I am pleased to announce that Google and Jio teams have jointly developed a truly breakthrough smartphone that we are calling JioPhone Next that has been jointly developed by Jio and Google especially for the Indian market," he said.

—FC Bureau

Reliance are on course to bring the third deepwater field onstream in the last quarter of 2022, which will again make RIL one of the largest producers of gas in India, meeting 20 per cent of gas demand, he said.

Ambani also said the jointly developed Google-Jio smartphones, JioPhone Next, will be available from September 10.

JioPhone Next is a fully featured smartphone, supporting the entire suite of applications from both Google and Jio, as well as the Android Play Store through which users will have access to the entire universe of Android Apps.

Also Jio and Google Cloud will collaborate on

5G Technology.

Updating shareholders On 5G telecom services rollout, Ambani said, "the entire 5G Standalone Network has been installed in our data centres across the nation and also at our trial sites in Navi Mumbai. We are confident of being the first to launch full-fledged 5G services."

In retail business RIL aims to create jobs for over 10 lakh people in the next three years and expand retail footprint as the company created 65,000 jobs even during the pandemic with over 2 lakh employed in Reliance Retail.

RIL shares were volatile during the AGM and finally closed at Rs 2153.35 on BSE, down 2.35 per cent.

INDIA PRESSES OPEC FOR AFFORDABLE OIL PRICE

GRANT SMITH & SALMA EL WARDANY JUNE 24

India has once again urged Opec and its allies to revive halted oil production as the world's third-biggest consumer expressed "deep concern" over spiralling energy prices.

"High crude prices are adding significant inflationary pressure on India," oil minister Dharmendra Pradhan told Opec's top official during a video-conference on Thursday, according to a statement on Twitter. He called for "affordable" supplies, with prices in a "reasonable band," and repeated a request for Opec+ to boost production.

International oil prices have soared to a two-year high above \$75 a barrel as demand bounces back from the pandemic slump. Still, Saudi Arabia has signalled that the producer group will only cautiously restore shuttered output when it meets next week because the market remains fragile.

For India, the current pressures are particularly acute. As the local currency has depreciated steadily against the US dollar in recent years, the cost of oil is fast approaching Rs 5,550 per barrel – just 10 per cent less than during the market frenzy of 2007-08.

It's not the first time this year that India has voiced concern over Opec's output policy. In January, there was a visible rift when Pradhan told Opec secretary-general Mohammad Barkindo at a public conference that the group's policy was "creating confusion for the consuming countries."

—Bloomberg

Bullion bank on anvil, as RBI lets jewellers pay back loan in gold

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JUNE 24

Taking a step towards establishment of bullion banks, the Reserve Bank of India has allowed jewellers to pay back their gold metal loans in the form of physical gold sourced locally or through the Gold Monetisation Scheme (GMS). This move will also promote GMS while curbing gold imports.

"Banks shall provide an option to the borrower to repay a part of the GML in physical gold in lots of one kg or more, provided the GML has been extended out of locally sourced or GMS-linked gold," the RBI said in a notification on Wednesday.

Hitherto, jewellers who take gold metal loans from select banks that import gold or participate in GMS were allowed to repay the loan only in rupee. Now, it can be paid back in gold itself.

"This was a long standing recommendation of the jewellers. Jewellers had to borrow physical gold and repay in rupee till now. Borrowing in an asset class and repaying in another is never a perfect hedge. Jewellers tend to lose or gain due to gold tariff and duty changes as well as differences between over-the-counter market and RBI reference rates," said P. R. Somasundaram, managing director India, World Gold Council.

According to him, this is a step towards the establishment of full-fledged bullion banks in India. A bullion bank



Jewellers had to borrow physical gold and repay in rupee till now. Borrowing in an asset class and repaying in another is never a perfect hedge

— P. R. Somasundaram, MD India, World Gold Council

enables banking in precious metal values rather than in currency values. Bullion banks undertake transactions like clearing, hedging, trading and vaulting of gold and precious metals. Global banks which engage in bullion banking include JPMorgan Chase & Co and HSBC Holdings.

The RBI has put forward a few other conditions as well. The repayment has to be made using locally sourced India Good Delivery Standard or LBMA's Good Delivery Standards gold. LBMA (earlier known as London Bullion Market Association) is

the international trade association governing the global over-the-counter bullion market.

The RBI further said the gold will be delivered on behalf of the borrower to the bank directly by the refiner or a central agency, acceptable to the bank, without the borrower's involvement.

Further, the loan agreement will contain details of the option to be exercised by the borrower, acceptable standards and manner of delivery of gold for repayment.

"By allowing banks to source locally available recycled gold and gold procured through GMS, imports can be curbed while promoting the monetisation scheme. The government in principle had allowed BIS-accredited jewellers to act as collection centres for GMS. With the RBI allowing repayment of GML in the form of gold, banks may collaborate with jewellers for the scheme in the future," said Soma-sundaram.

Around 120 tonnes of recycled gold came into the market in 2019 and despite the pandemic 95 tonnes were collected in 2020.

RUSSIA PLANS EXPORT TAX ON ALUMINIUM, NICKEL

YULIYA FEDORINOVA JUNE 24

Russia plans to impose temporary export taxes on steel, nickel, aluminum and copper as part of efforts to target domestic inflation after metal prices surged as part of a broad-based commodities rally.

The government is proposing that a duty of at least 15 per cent will be effective from August 1 and run through the end of the year, economy minister Maxim Reshetnikov said at a televised government meeting. Each metal

will be taxed at a certain level above the base duty, he said.

The taxes could have far-reaching implications for global metals markets at a time of tight supply for products such as aluminum. United Company Rusal controls about 10 per cent of the global aluminum market while MMC Norilsk Nickel PJSC produces about 20 per cent of the world's nickel. Shares in both companies dropped on the news, although metals prices showed little reaction.

Russia's move is the lat-

est in a series of steps by governments around the world to tackle surging prices for raw materials and other key goods. The country has already introduced export taxes on wheat, while China has rolled out a swathe of measures this year in a sweeping effort to stem inflation by cooling run-away commodities.

Russia expects to reap as much as 110 billion roubles (\$1.5 billion) of duties from steelmakers and 50 billion roubles from base-metals producers, Reshetnikov said.

—Bloomberg



Malabar Gold & Diamonds has launched its store in Kompally on Thursday, taking the total number of stores in Hyderabad to 10. Located near Suchitra circle, the store was inaugurated by Mr. K. P. Vivekananda, M.L.A., Quthbullapur constituency. Spread over 3500 sq ft, the aesthetically designed store offers superior shopping experience and exceptional design diversity.

Business NOTE

Microsoft launches Windows 11

STEPHEN NELLIS JUNE 24

Microsoft Corp on Thursday showed Windows 11, which will hit markets toward the end of this year and is the first major revamp of its Windows operating system since 2015.

The software that turned Microsoft into a household name and dominated personal computers for years has been overtaken in popularity by devices using Apple and Google software, but it is still core to Microsoft's strength in

the corporate market.

And the upgraded operating system may also appeal to individuals, who have helped drive sales of PCs sharply higher over the past year due to work-from-home practices adopted during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Microsoft said Windows 11 will include new features aimed at business users, specifically those who use it with an external monitor. One new feature, for example, will automatically adjust apps to a single screen when users undock a machine to take a call in a quieter

room and then readjust them when the user docks the machine. Other features include ways to show recent files even when they have been viewed on a different device such as a phone.

Microsoft may also give more details at Thursday's online launch event on its plans for a revamped Windows Store.

The company recently cut commissions on games sold through the store to 12 per cent, lower than the 15 per cent takes on regular apps.

—Reuters

Majority of MSEs deprived of stimulus benefits



SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JUNE 24

Around 88 per cent of micro and small businesses as well as self-employed persons have not availed of benefits of any stimulus packages meant for the pandemic-affected, says a survey by the Consortium of Indian Associations, which represents 40 MSME associations.

The Centre had come out with three stimulus packages in the past 13 months for the micro, small and medium enterprises. The survey, which covered over 81,000 self-employed and micro and small businesses across India, found that 88 per cent respondents have not availed of any benefits of the stimulus packages so far. This could be due to ineligibility or inability to fulfill strict conditions.

According to industry insiders, mostly medium enterprises, which have been getting bank loans, are able to meet the eligibility criteria for the stimulus packages.

Around 80 per cent felt the central and state governments were not taking care of their interests.

Further, 80 per cent entrepreneurs are insecure about their future while 59 per cent MSEs have sacked or reduced their staff.

Meanwhile, the All-India Council of Association of MSMEs (Aica), an umbrella body of 170 MSME associations, sought immediate intervention of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on rising prices of raw materials such as steel, iron ore, aluminum, copper, plastics and paper.

While the profits of base metal manufacturers have gone up 10-20 times, MSMEs are on the verge of extinction, the Aica said.

SKY IS | NO LIMIT No legal requirement for space tourists to have life cover

Bezos' space odyssey too risky for insurers

NOOR ZAINAB HUSSAIN & CAROLYN COHN JUNE 24

Launching one of the richest individuals on earth into orbit has proved a leap too far for insurers, who are not ready to price the risk of losing Jeff Bezos or his fellow space travellers.

Amazon CEO Bezos, a lifelong space enthusiast, has been vying with Elon Musk and Richard Branson to become the first billionaire to fly beyond the earth's atmosphere.

And while insurers are well known for offering cover for even the most outlandish of risks, at a price, potential accidents in space are not yet

among them.

"Space tourism involves significant risk, but is not an issue life insurers specifically ask about as yet because it is so rare for anyone to travel into space," Insurance Information Institute (III) spokes-person Michael Barry said.

There is a nearly \$500 million market to insure satellites, rockets and unmanned space flight, but no legal requirement for an operator such as Blue Origin, which Bezos founded, to insure passengers for injury or death or for space tourists to have life cover, brokers and insurers said.

"We're not aware of a case where anybody is



Jeff Bezos

insured against passenger liability," Neil Stevens, senior vice president, aviation and space at Marsh, the world's biggest insurance broker, told Reuters.

Assuming they lift-off as planned next month, Bezos and the other wannabe astronauts on Blue Origin's New Shepard spacecraft will not only spend several minutes 62 miles (100 km)

above the earth in a truck-sized capsule, they also have to get back.

The only group that has regularly flown humans sub-orbitally since the 1960s is Branson's Virgin Galactic. All have been tests, with one failure in 2014 resulting in a death. Blue Origin has flown 15 unmanned sub-orbital flights with no failures, Seradata SpaceTrak data showed on June 10.

Bezos, Blue Origin and Virgin Galactic did not respond to requests for comment from Reuters on their insurance plans and flight records.

Being uninsured in space is nothing new.

NASA and the US, in general, do not buy liability

cover, with government launches basically insured by taxpayers, Richard Parker of Assure Space, a unit of AmTrust Financial that provides space insurance, said.

Charles Wetton, underwriting manager for space policies at insurer Global Aerospace, said astronauts on government-funded missions are carefully selected for their knowledge, skills and fitness and train for several years before blast off.

"They and their families understand the risks of the work they do, Wetton said. But commercial space cadets may only get a few days of training for a sub-orbital flight.

—Reuters

SHORT TAKES

Atanu-Deepika enter mixed final

Paris: Star archery couple Atanu Das and Deepika Kumari assured India its first medal from the ongoing World Cup Stage 3 by entering the final of the mixed pair event with a comeback 5-3 win over Spain here on Thursday. Atanu and Deepika, who are India's best medal hope in the upcoming Tokyo Olympics, were at their best to make their first final together here they will face the Netherlands in the summit clash on Sunday. This will be their first mixed pair final together as they gear up for the Tokyo Olympics in less than a month's time. World number three Deepika is also in the hunt for a second medal, having advanced to the individual semi-final for the second successive time this year. — PTI

Shooter Pratap finishes 7th in WC

Osijek (Croatia): India's Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar finished seventh in the men's final, while the country's women shooters failed to get past the qualifying round in the 10m air rifle event of the ISSF World Cup here on Thursday. The 20-year-old Aishwary, who finished with a score of 628 in the qualification round, shot a total of 143.9 before being eliminated from the final of the men's 10m air rifle event. Deepak Kumar (626) and Divyansh Singh Panwar (624.7) failed to make the final ending 14th and 25th respectively in the qualifying round. In another disappointing show, the trio of Anjum Moudgil, Apurvi Chandela and Elavenil Valarivan failed to enter the finals of the women's 10m air rifle. — PTI

RedBird acquires 15% stake in RR

New Delhi: Investment firm RedBird Capital Partners, which has invested in the parent company owning iconic football club Liverpool and baseball team Boston Red Sox, has acquired a 15 per cent stake in the IPL franchise Rajasthan Royals. However, the deal amount has not been disclosed. Manoj Badale-owned Emerging Media owns majority stake in the IPL team which won the inaugural edition in 2008. "Following the transaction, RedBird will hold 15 per cent stake in the Royals and Emerging Media will increase its ownership from 51 per cent to 65 per cent," a release on the Royals website stated. Badale said the deal is a testament to the global standing of the IPL. — PTI

Sania-Bethanie crash out of Viking

Eastbourne (UK): Indian tennis star Sania Mirza and her doubles partner Bethanie Mattek-Sands lost their first round match in straight sets at the Viking International Eastbourne here. The unseeded Indo-American pair lost 3-6 4-6 to the Christina Mchale and Sabrina Santamaria of USA in a match that lasted one hour 18 minutes late on Wednesday night. The 34-year-old winner of six Grand Slams in doubles will pair up with Mattek-Sands in the women's doubles event of Wimbledon, starting on June 28. — PTI

Dutee, Hima eye Olympic berth

Patiala: A host of top Indian track and field athletes, including the likes of star sprinters Dutee Chand and Hima Das, will make one last attempt to book their Olympic berths in the National Inter-State Championships beginning here on Friday. Graded as 'B' category event by World Athletics, the five-day event offers some of the top athletes the chance to either breach qualifying standards for an automatic Olympic berth or garner valuable ranking points to make it to the Games. Dutee missed the automatic qualification mark of 11.15 seconds by two-hundredths of a second during the Indian Grand Prix 4 here on Monday, though she broke her own national record. She will be looking to do better and book an automatic berth. — PTI

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Time for overhaul

Skipper Kohli hints at changes in India Test side

Southampton, June 24: India skipper Virat Kohli has indicated an overhaul of his Test team after the stunning loss to New Zealand in the World Test Championship final here, saying that "right people who have the right mindset to perform" will be brought in following a reassessment.

Senior batsman Cheteshwar Pujara managed 8 off 54 balls in the first innings and consumed 35 balls for his first run. He then scored just 15 runs off 80 balls in the second essay. In the end, New Zealand chased down a 139-run target without much trouble.

"We will continue to reassess and continue to have conversations around what are the things required to strengthen our side and not follow or fall prey to certain patterns," Kohli said.

It can be safely assumed that some of the seniors will be on borrowed time and only a stellar performance in the five-Test series against England in August can secure their futures.

"We will not wait for a year or so and have to plan ahead. If you see our white ball team now, we have great depth and guys are ready and confident. Same thing needs to be done with Test cricket."

"You have to reassess and replan and understand what dynamics work for the team and how we can be fearless. Bring in right people who have right mindset to perform," the skipper added.

For the current management, a 50 off 80 balls is of more value than a 15 off 80 which can put unneces-



India captain Virat Kohli looks disappointed after losing to New Zealand in the World Test Championship final. — AP

sary pressure on batsmen coming after someone with an ultra-defensive mindset.

KOHLI RUES LACK OF BUILD-UP GAMES

Kohli said his team wanted to play first-class games to build up for the five-Test series against England in August but their request was turned down for reasons not known to him.

The Indian team on Thursday will disperse for a three-week break from

the bio-bubble and reassemble in Nottingham on July 14 for the preparations of the Test series starting August 4.

Asked if a few first-class games would have been better, the skipper said that it depended on people who created the itinerary. "That doesn't depend on us," he said.

"We obviously wanted first-class games which I believe has not been given to us. I don't know what the reasons for that are,"

the straight-talking Indian captain said.

This would mean that there will be intra-squad simulation games once again but the Indian captain feels that three weeks of preparation will be good enough for the series.

BETTER TEAM WON, SAYS SHASTRI

Big things don't come easy, said India coach Ravi Shastri on Thursday as he acknowledged that New Zealand were the better

VIRAT WANTS BEST-OF-THREE FOR WTC FINAL

Southampton, June 24: Echoing the views of head coach Ravi Shastri, India skipper Virat Kohli has said that the best Test team in the world should be decided by a best-of-three final and not a one-off game like it was in the inaugural edition.

"Well, look, firstly, I'm not in absolute agreement of deciding the best Test side in the world over the course of one game, to be very honest," Kohli said in the post-match press conference.

"If it is a Test series, it has to be a test of character over three Tests, which team has the ability to come back into the series or totally blow away the other team."

"It can't just be a pressure applied over two days of good cricket and then you suddenly are not a good Test side anymore. I don't believe in that."

— PTI

team in the World Test Championship final that his side lost after an especially poor batting performance.

"Better team won in the conditions. Deserved winners after the longest wait for a World Title. Classic example of Big things don't come easy. Well played, New Zealand. Respect," wrote Shastri on Twitter.

Prior to Wednesday, New Zealand's only ICC title came way back in 2000.

— PTI

Hadlee hails Black Caps as 'best ever'

Wellington, June 24: Sir Richard Hadlee has hailed Kane Williamson's world Test champion side as the best in New Zealand's cricketing history, describing its performances in the past two years as simply "outstanding."

"This is a special day in the history of NZ cricket, a day to celebrate the magnificent achievement of winning the inaugural World Test Championship," Hadlee said in a statement.

"It was a thrilling Test match, with twists and turns throughout...it was



(From left) Kiwi pacers Kyle Jamieson, Tim Southee, Trent Boult and Neil Wagner. — Twitter

a dominant BLACKCAPS performance over a very good Indian team. Over the years NZC have built a significant depth of play-

ers, which makes us one of the most competitive teams in world cricket.

"It's fair to say that this current group of players

is the best in our history," he added.

BAZ FEARED TITLE WOULD ELUDE AGAIN

Watching the WTC Final with a nervous trepidation, former skipper Brendon McCullum feared that the Blackcaps may yet again come close but would not win a world title.

However, McCullum's joy knew no bounds when Kane Williamson and Ross Taylor took New Zealand past the finish line to be crowned the first ever World Test Champions.

"They've been on a pretty amazing journey for the last few years and they've been so close to tasting the ultimate success," McCullum told 'SEN Radio'.

"To do it in the purist form of the game is just something quite magnificent. I'm not sure it's really sunk in just yet, to be honest."

"Overnight the game was on a bit of a knife's edge, but it almost had the feeling of the previous two World Cups that we'll get close but we won't quite get across the line," he added. — PTI

DRAWMATIC END

Ronaldo equals scoring record as Portugal hold France to advance

Budapest, June 24: Cristiano Ronaldo scored two penalties to equal the all-time international goalscoring record and help holders Portugal edge into the last 16 of Euro 2020 with a 2-2 draw against France in Budapest on Wednesday.

Portugal will face the world's top-ranked side Belgium in the first knockout round in Seville on Sunday.

Fernando Santos' men moved through as one of the four best third-placed sides, for the second straight Euro, from Group F behind France and Germany, who only just qualified after a dramatic 2-2 draw with Hungary in Munich.

"We did everything I wanted us to do (in the 4-2 defeat) against Germany," Portuguese coach Santos told RTP. "The result was clearly fair."

Ronaldo gave his side the lead just after the half-hour mark with his first spot-kick, before Karim Benzema's two goals either side of half-time.

But, with Portugal heading out as it stood with Hungary leading Germany, Ronaldo helped win and then scored their second penalty with half an hour remaining.

The 36-year-old's fifth goal of the group stage extended his record tally of Euro goals to 14 and drew him level with for-



Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo celebrates after scoring a goal against France in the Euro 2020 at Budapest on Wednesday. — AP

mer Iran striker Ali Daei, in his 178th international match.

World champions France will next take on Switzerland in Bucharest on Monday.

"It was a fight, it wasn't easy," France coach Didier Deschamps told TF1. "We tried to win and at the end of the match, obviously, knowing the result of Germany, that allowed us to be first, which is the best place."

"I know very well that a new competition will be

starting from the last 16." The first real chance of the game fell to France forward Kylian Mbappe after quarter of an hour, but the 22-year-old's wait for a Euro goal was extended by Rui Patricio's parried save.

GOAL NO. 109 FOR RONALDO

Ronaldo scored his 109th goal for Portugal in Wednesday's Euro game against France to equal former Iran striker Ali Daei's all-time interna-

EURO RESULTS

Portugal	2
(Cristiano Ronaldo (31-p, 60-p)	
France	2
K Benzema (45+2-p, 47)	
Germany	2
(Kai Havertz 66, Leon Goretzka 84)	
Hungary	2
(Adam Szalai 11, Andras Schafer 68)	
Spain	5
(Martin Dubravka 30-og, Aymeric Laporte 48, Pablo Sarabia 56, Ferran Torres 67, Juraj Kucka 71-og)	
Slovakia	0
Sweden	3
(Viktor Claesson 93, Emil Forsberg 2, 59)	
Poland	2
(R Lewandowski 61, 84)	

LEON-HEARTED GERMANY ROAR INTO LAST 16

Munich (Germany), June 24: Leon Goretzka came off the bench to rescue Germany's Euro 2020 campaign with a late equaliser as a nerve-shredding 2-2 draw against Hungary in Munich on Wednesday set up a last-16 high-octane showdown with giants England.

Adam Szalai gave Hungary a shock early lead and although Germany drew level through Kai Havertz in the second half, the Hungarians went back in front almost immediately through Andras Schaefer.

With six minutes left, Goretzka fired home a crucial equaliser to set up a blockbuster tie against England at Wembley on Tuesday, eliminating Hungary who finished bottom of Group F.

"I am absolutely delighted — we have no doubts now and are full of confidence," said Goretzka amid.

Germany only narrowly avoided a repeat of their shock group-stage exit, as defending champions, at the 2018 World Cup in Russia.

"We made mistakes but fought and showed superb morale," said Germany coach Joachim Loew, who was 30 minutes from ending his 15 years in charge with an embarrassing defeat.

"Now it will be a real highlight to play against England at Wembley."

— AFP



New Zealand skipper Kane Williamson poses with the WTC Mace at the historic Hambledon Cricket Club, also known as the cradle of cricket. — ICC

Kane salutes his affable Kiwi stars

Southampton, June 24: New Zealand captain Kane Williamson saluted the commitment of his star-shorn side as he savoured the "special feeling" of winning the inaugural World Test Championship mace by beating India, relying on "bits and pieces to stay in games and be competitive."

With the World Test Championships triumph, the "nice guys" of world cricket showed that they don't always finish last. The win over mighty India has also made up for the heartbreak of successive ODI World Cup final losses in 2015 and 2019.

Williamson termed their final win over India as the "pinnacle" but stopped short of calling it the country's biggest achievement in the game.

"I've been part of (New Zealand cricket) for a short while, it's a very special feeling, the first time in our history we've come

away with a world title," Williamson said in post-match press conference on Wednesday.

"We've had 22 players over the last two years, and they've all played their part and the support staff and the guys who played this match, it's a special achievement to be savoured."

"I think for us, we know we don't always have the stars, and we use our bits and pieces to stay in games and be competitive," added the likeable captain in the post-match presentation.

He said it is nice to be finally end up on the right side of the result.

"Well, obviously it's the pinnacle, isn't it, really, being involved in the final. Like I said, a formidable side in India. 2019 was a great occasion and a brilliant game of cricket, as well. But obviously a slightly different feeling being on the right side of the result for us." — PTI

ASHWIN ENDS WTC AS LEADING WICKET-TAKER

Southampton, June 24: Premier India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin finished the 2019-21 World Test Championship cycle as the leading wicket-taker with 71 scalps to his credit.

The 34-year-old Tamil Nadu off-spinner achieved the feat during the World Test Championship final against New Zealand, which was his 14th Test in this cycle of WTC. His 71st victim was New Zealand opener Devon Conway. Ashwin picked up two wickets each in the first (2/28) and second innings (2/17) in the final. The Kane Williamson-led New Zealand won the first WTC after defeating India. Ashwin ended up with four five-wicket hauls in the WTC with seven for 145 being his best in an innings. He also scored 324 runs with a century to boot. Australian pacer Pat Cummins with 70 wickets to his name from 14 Tests finished second on the list, while English speedster Stuart Broad finished third with 69 scalps from 17 Tests. — PTI

EURO ROUND OF 16		
June 26	Wales vs Denmark in Amsterdam	9.30 pm
June 27	Italy vs Austria in London	12.30 am
	Netherlands vs Czech Republic in Bucharest	9.30 pm
June 28	Belgium vs Portugal in Seville	12.30 am
	Croatia vs Spain in Copenhagen	9.30 pm
June 29	France vs Switzerland in Bucharest	12.30 am
	England vs Germany in London	9.30 pm
June 30	Sweden vs Ukraine in Glasgow	12.30 am

COPA | AMERICA

Referee's 'pass' gives Brazil win

Rio de Janeiro, June 24: Brazil continued their winning romp through the Copa America on Wednesday, eking out a controversial 2-1 victory against Colombia after struggling most of the match to answer a magnificent bicycle-kick goal by Luis Diaz.

The 11th-hour win gave the "Selecao" a perfect nine points from three matches in the South American championships, and extended their current winning streak to 11 matches.

However, the victory was steeped in controversy: Brazil's second-half equalizer, a Roberto Firmino header, was preceded by a Neymar pass that glanced off Argentine referee Nestor Pitana.

Colombia heatedly argued afterward that play should have been stopped, but Pitana ruled neither side was hindered and allowed the match to continue.

COPA RESULTS

Brazil	2
(Roberto Firmino 78, Casemiro 90+10)	
Colombia	1
(Luis Diaz 10)	
Ecuador	2
(Renato Tapia 23-og, Ayrton Preciado 48)	
Peru	2
(Gianluca Lapadula 49, Andre Carrillo 54)	

PERU HOLD ECUADOR

In the early match, Ecuador and Peru failed to settle who advances to the quarter-finals, drawing 2-2 in Goiania.

Ecuador took the early lead from an own goal, the ball going in off the foot of Peru's Renato Tapia in a jostle in front of the goal in the 23rd minute.

Ayrton Preciado scored in stoppage time to close the first half with Ecuador ahead of Peru 2-0. — AFP