

SHORT TAKES

ITDA OFFICIAL
RELIEVED OVER
ALLEGATIONSDC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, JUNE 12

West Godavari district collector Karthikeya Misra relieved KR Puram ITDA Project Officer R.V. Suryanarayana from duties following allegations against him by a tribal girl. According to sources, a tribal girl released a video on social media alleging that the officer sexually abused her by promising her to provide a warden job.

The collector said that an inquiry was ordered into the charges and till then, the official was being relieved of his duties. Jangareddygudem RDO Y.V. Prasanna Lakshmi was given full additional charge of the posts of Project Officer of ITDA and RDO to Kukunur till further orders.

Meanwhile, the same girl released another video in social media that she had levelled the charges under pressure from some persons.

BJP OPPOSES
MORTGAGE OF
STATE PROPERTIESDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 12

BJP Visakhapatnam Parliamentary Wing Mahila Morcha president Ummidi Sujatharaj on Saturday expressed concerns over the state government's alleged attempts to raise loan by mortgaging government properties like Visakhapatnam collectorate building to AP State Development Corporation (APSDC).

Their wing would be ready to stage protests against the government if the latter failed to withdraw its decision of mortgaging government properties at 15 locations in a total area of 213 acres in the city.

The locations include Visakhapatnam collectorate office, the government guest house, district training center at Chinagadili, tahsildar office at Maharanipeta, forest guest house, old DEO office, farmers' market at Gopalapatnam, government ITI college, polytechnic college in Kapparada, revenue quarters at Resapuvaniapalem, tahsildar office in Seethamadhara, sericulture office in Bakkavanipalem and disability training centre in the city.

SONU SOOD TO
SET UP OXYGEN
FACILITYDC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, JUNE 12

Film star Sonu Sood has decided to set up a rapid oxygen facility in Anantapur to provide oxygen to the needy at their doorsteps. Medical aid would also be provided to those who are unable to afford Covid treatment.

The Sonu Sood team member Amith Purohit said that the centre would meet the needs of Covid patients in Anantapur headquarters. Disha DSP A. Srinivasulu and Two Town Inspector Jakir Hussain appreciated the great services of Sonu Sood in saving lives across the country. They were all praise for the promptness and liberal aid with which he is responding to the pleas of patients and those orphaned by the pandemic.

NAIDU URGES ALL
TO HELP STOP
COVID 3RD WAVEDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 12

TD national president and former chief minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Saturday expressed concern over the extent of suffering and devastation that the first and the second waves of Covid-19 caused in the lives of people cutting across all sections of society.

Naidu stressed the need for government, voluntary organisations and individual front-line champions to make advance preparation to overcome the impending threat of the third wave of the pandemic. "People are in such a pathetic situation that they would not be able to face any further destruction after having undergone great pain and suffering in the first two waves," he said.

The TD chief participated in a webinar along with experts and Covid-19 frontline warriors on 'Ways to ensure overall wellbeing of society,' organised as part of the '#Wemusttalk' initiative of the NTR Memorial Trust.

Under lockdown



The seized two-wheelers are parked in front of Machavaram police station. Police seized them from the motorists who violated lockdown rules, in Vijayawada on Saturday.

— C. NARAYANA RAO

₹20 charged for tests,
vax in govt hospital

Pvt agency staff seeks money at UHC in Rajamahendravaram

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 12

If you want to take a Covid-19 test or a jab at a government urban health centre, be ready to pay ₹20 for either one. Surprised? But, it is true.

A private agency deputed at a government urban health centre at Sambhu Nagar in Rajamahendravaram in East Godavari has started collecting ₹20 per head for conducting a Covid test or administering a jab. They set up a paper carton box on the staircase of the urban centre and after registration, they are asking people to pay ₹20 on completion of the test or vaccination. In case anyone forgets to pay, they are being called back to pay up.

Irked at it, some people confronted the agency asking who authorised them to collect money when the state government was providing both the test and jab free of charge at government facilities. Their justification was that as the management of the private agency which employed them was not paying wages for the last five months, they were not having money to meet transportation charges of test kits and jab doses.

Urban health centre coordinator Suresh said, "We are not being paid our wages for five months. I have to transport test kits and jab doses and also deposit them, travelling a distance of 12 km to the government hospital several times in a day as transport facility is not being provided. As the cost of petrol shot up

Covid patient on ventilator
dies after delivery of babyDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 12

The 27-year-old Covid-19 patient Jayalakshmi, who delivered a baby boy on June 10 on a ventilator at KGH here after successful operation by a team of doctors, died on Saturday. The deceased was a resident of Daba Gardens in the city. She was admitted to the hospital on June 2.

Confirming this to this newspaper, KGH superintendent and Andhra Medical College principal Dr P.V. Sudhakar said, "The patient died on Saturday at around 2.30

pm. The baby, who weighed 2.6 kgs, has been under medical observation at the hospital. The baby tested Covid negative on Saturday."

Dr Sudhakar further said Tripathi Yerramilli, an assistant professor (anaesthesia), one of the doctors in the team, was shocked and even cried in the hospital after learning that the patient was no more.

This was a clear indication of the efforts the doctors put into saving her life. Dr Sudhakar said it was one of the critical cases in the history of

KGH.

On the other hand, the state deputy chief minister and health minister Alla Nani earlier congratulated the KGH medical team led by Dr Kavitha. The minister telephoned them on Saturday morning and said they brought laurels to the medical fraternity and the state government as well.

The medical team included Muralikrishna, Padmaleela, Kavitha, Neeraja, Amritha, Anila Kumari and Bharathi. The other technical staff included Santosh and staff nurse Navaneetha.

Dr K.V.S. Gowriswara Rao said, "When the state government is providing Covid-19 test and jab free of cost for the benefit of all people, it is illegal to collect money from the people at the urban health irrespective of their problems. We will conduct a probe and initiate necessary action against the culprits."

Meanwhile, state health authorities say that there are nearly 240 urban health centres in the state and as the contract period with two private agencies for providing health services is getting over very shortly, the state government will take over the centres. The number will up to nearly 563 and health personnel recruitment is in progress.

beyond ₹100 a litre, we are bearing the fuel cost from our pockets. Our management says that as they are yet to get funds from the state government for nearly five months, they are unable to pay wages. So, we have to mobilise funds in such a way as to serve the government even though it is not acceptable. I was even warned of trouble if asked for wages by our management."

The previous Telugu Desam regime roped in two private agencies to provide health services at all urban health centres in the state nearly four years ago, with one agency being entrusted with three districts – East Godavari, Visakhapatnam and Vizianagaram – while the remaining 10 districts are

under the control of another private agency which faces no issues of payment of wages even as they too are to get funds from the state government for nearly six months.

Though it is not known whether the health personnel working for a private agency in three districts are finding out other sources of unauthorised income, but the Rajamahendravaram urban health centre's episode seems a tip of the iceberg as the collusion of outsourced health personnel with middlemen was witnessed in several parts in the state for diversion of jobs to the black market and other lapses to make easy money.

East Godavari district medical and health officer

6,952 NEW
COVID CASES,
58 DEATHSDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 12

In continuation of the dip in both fresh Coronavirus infections and deaths for the last several days, Andhra Pradesh registered 6,952 new cases and 58 deaths in the last 24 hours.

The state health authorities reported here on Saturday that out of 1,08,616 samples tested, 6,952 persons were found infected with the virus. Out of a total number of 2,03,48,106 samples tested so far in the state, 18,03,074 persons were found infected with the virus and of them, 16,99,775 were recovered while 91,417 are still active with the virus.

Among the daily cases of Coronavirus infection, only two districts reported more than 1,000 cases.

Chittoor recorded the highest number of infections at 1,199, followed by 1,167 in East Godavari, 663 in West Godavari, 552 in Prakasam, 550 in Anantapur, 456 in Kadapa, 436 in Visakhapatnam, 426 in Guntur, 392 in Krishna, 383 in Srikakulam, 251 in Kurnool, 249 in Vizianagaram and 228 in Nellore.

With regard to daily cases of death of Coronavirus infected patients, Prakasam reported 11, followed by nine in Chittoor, six in East Godavari, five each in Anantapur and Visakhapatnam, four each in Srikakulam and West Godavari, three in Kurnool, two each in Guntur and Vizianagaram and one each in Kadapa and Nellore. With this, the death toll scaled up to 11,882.

Meet on temple lands on June 16

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 12

The government will hold a crucial meeting on June 16 to discuss the Simhachalam temple lands issue, as promised in the YSRC manifesto in the 2019 elections.

The minister for tourism

and culture, Muttamsetti Srinivas, who visited the temple on Saturday to offer pujas on the occasion of his birthday, told the reporters that the minister for rdowments, Vellampalli Srinivas, and Rajya Sabha member V. Vijay Sai Reddy and himself would discuss the

issues in the presence of senior revenue and endowment officials.

Successive governments did not keep their promise to solve the Panchagrama (Simhachalam temple) land issue which remained unsolved for the last 25 years. Local people blamed the TD.

LOST | CHILDHOOD

Cops to keep tabs on them; poverty termed main cause

Operation Muskan saves 34K kids

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 12

As many as 34,037 children were rescued in 13 districts in the state during the four phases of Operation Muskan. Of them 83.4 per cent are boys and 16.60 per cent girls. They were found working in shops, tea stalls, mechanic sheds, dhabas and as coolies. NGOs have urged the government for strict implementation of law to eradicate child labour.

According to reports, 4,035 children were rescued during Operation Muskan-I on January 4, 2020, 4,806 in the second phase on July 20, 2020,

16,457 in the third phase on November 3, 2020, and 8,739 in the fourth phase on May 19 this year. Among the rescued children 61.57 per cent studied Class X, 26.26 per cent had education between classes 1 and 5 and the remaining 12.33 per cent were illiterate.

A majority of 51.55 per cent children were found working as coolies, 33.71 per cent in chilli farmlands, 12.2 per cent were street children, 1.95 per cent rag-pickers and 0.6 per cent beggars. The children were working in shops, tea stalls, motor mechanic sheds, dhabas and hotels.

Poverty was the main

● Cops rescue 4,035 children in the 1st phase on January 4, 2020, 4,806 in the 2nd phase on July 20, 2020, 16,457 in the 3rd phase on November 3, 2020, and 8,739 in the 4th phase on May 19 this year

● The police department decided to develop a web application to monitor the welfare of rescued children and wean them away from labour.

reason which was forcing children to become coolies and workers. As many as 68.16 per cent children among the rescued had to

Travel operators
plead for bailoutDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 12

Battered by the Covid pandemonium, tours and travel operators in Andhra Pradesh have sought relief packages from the government to tide over the present crisis.

They want the government to sanction a grant of ₹5 lakh to each travel company and ₹50,000 to each employee or to work out a loan model of up to ₹20 lakh linkage with the State Financial Corporation.

It is estimated that the tours and travel industry of Andhra Pradesh has suffered losses worth over ₹425 crore till May 2021 due to the pandemic. The representatives of the Tours and Travels Associations of Andhra Pradesh submitted a memorandum to the Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy through Rajya Sabha member V. Vijay Sai Reddy seeking a relief package since the industry contributes 10 per cent to the GDP.

The pandemic has hit the tourism industry from March 2020. The travel agents in Andhra Pradesh have about 6,000 employees who are left with no income for over 17 months as the virus stalled all tourism activities. Many agencies ran out of capital and are unable to pay salaries to staff. Around 95 per cent of the employees would have lost their jobs by now, said the president of Tours and Travel Association of AP, K. Vijay Mohan.

The virus claimed lives of three travel agents in the state and 13 were hospitalised. Each travels operator lost around ₹25 crore revenue due to the Covid crisis.

Apart from financial assistance to stakeholders, the representatives are also urging the government for power bill waiver, exemption on renewal of trade licence fee, exemptions from advertisement tax, interstate road taxes and intra-city tax for tourist buses to save the industry.

Globally, 54% women
workforce vanishedDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 12

Globally, 54 per cent women lost their jobs during the Covid pandemic, said Columbia University Medical Centre Public Psychiatry Education Director and Clinical Psychiatry Associate Professor Dr Stephanie M. Le Melle on Saturday. She delivered a keynote address in a global workshop on 'Stress Coping: Strategies to de-stress' organised by GITAM Deemed to be University Women Empowerment Cell.

She said Covid is exposing women to greater health risks, threatening livelihoods, exacerbating gender-based violence and forcing women and children into extreme poverty, particularly those living in the most marginalised communities.

She mentioned that 10 per cent of working women missed work weekly because of child-care needs and added that the Covid pandemic inter-

national stressor indicated 75 to 90 per cent women labourers were unpaid globally which is leading to more financial stress on families and domestic violence. She suggested that equal access to education for girls, reproductive rights, digital inclusion and access to health care will reduce the stress on women.

Columbia University Psychiatric Integrative Services Director Dr Sasidhar Gunturu said that procrastination, overtly worried about the future and difficulty getting things done are called pandemic brain fog and 76 per cent of Americans are facing this problem.

Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) Centre for Excellence in Teacher Education Associate Professor Dr Gomathi Jatin advised that diary writing is a reflective space where teachers can reclaim their wellbeing and become the authors of their own personal and professional narratives.

MGNREGA works
must aid farmers

FROM PAGE 1

Panchayat raj minister Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy disclosed this during a review on implementation of Jagananna Pacha Thoranam scheme during 2021-22 at the RDO's office in Tirupati on Saturday.

The minister underlined the need to ensure that every work being taken up under NREGA remains useful to the farming community.

Ramachandra Reddy also told the officials to achieve the target of raising fruit crops in one lakh acres besides floriculture in 1,000 acres while advising them to identify lands affected by poor rainfall.

Referring to the suggestion of deputy chief minister M. Narayana Swamy, the minister urged officials to plant coconut trees in Jagananna colonies on the completion of construction works.

He instructed them to implement the action plan within the next 100 days in Chittoor district to set itself as a model for the entire state.

He appreciated retired officer Chandrasekhar Reddy for the project he devised to save every drop of water.

Chittoor district collector M. Harinarayanan and director of NREGA China Tataiah also spoke on the occasion.

SHORT TAKES

KURNOOL COPS SEIZE GOLD WORTH ₹1.08 CR

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL, JUNE 12

Kurnool special enforcement bureau (SEB) police on Saturday seized 1.818 kg of gold jewellery worth ₹1,08,61,474 on National Highway-44 near Panchalingala check post, a border area between Andhra Pradesh and Telangana under Kurnool taluka police station limits.

The SEB police took custody of one, K.G. Satyanarayana, resident of Chintalamuninagar in Kurnool city while he was transporting the said valuable gold ornaments through a hired vehicle, the SEB circle inspector N. Lakshmi Durgalah said. He said that the accused was known to be working in a Kurnool based shop named Sudheer Shetty Gold Shop in the city. He could not provide valid evidence to the gold products having with him.

The said 25 gold articles were carrying from various two gold jewellery shops in Hyderabad to Kurnool by a car, the CI said.

RTC ASKED TO RUN BUSES TO CHENNAI, HYD

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, JUNE 12

Education Minister Adimulapu Suresh has instructed the RTC officials to introduce super luxury and Indra bus services to Chennai, Visakhapatnam, Vijayawada and Kadapa from Yarragondapalem in Prakasam district after the lockdown is relaxed. He also told them to operate a bus service to Hyderabad at 5 am every day for the benefit of the local people traveling on daily basis to the neighbouring state.

The minister gave these instructions while laying the foundation stone for a RTC bus station being built at an estimated cost of ₹1 crore in Yarragondapalem on Saturday.

GVMC to use fish to check mosquito risk

Vizag is the only city in the state to adopt the eco-friendly drive

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM,
JUNE 12

Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation's (GVMC) public health department has started using Gambusia Affinis, a kind of freshwater fish to tackle mosquito menace in an eco-friendly manner in the city during the southwest monsoon season.

Nearly 1 lakh fish will be used for this drive, which has already begun in some areas at Pendurthi by releasing nearly 5,000 fish in open ponds. Dumping the fish, which feed on mosquito larvae, is the main process of the drive ending in August.

Confirming this to this newspaper, GVMC biologist V. Varahalu Dora said, "We are currently identifying vulnerable water stagnated areas, which attract mosquitoes to breed. A specially formed team will be sent to dump fish in ponds, water tanks and wells. This process is more effective than other processes like outdoor fogging with malathion and indoor spraying of pyrethrum."

Gambusia is a fish of up to 6 cm in length (female) and 3.5 – 4 cm (male). The fish can eat up to 100 mosquito larvae in a day. Each mosquito lays nearly 300 to 500 eggs three times. A mosquito bites animals and humans to acquire protein, which is required to lay eggs, said the biologist.



GVMC officials releasing fish in an open pond in Vizag on Saturday.

—DC

- 1 lakh Gambusia fish
- Each fish can eat up to 100 mosquito larvae
- Vizag is only city in AP using this fish for mosquito larvae control in an eco-friendly way
- GVMC owns special plants to rear this fish
- This operation takes place in the Southwest monsoon season

Dora further said the GVMC did not spend any additional money on procuring the fish as the corporation owned fish rearing plants on the city outskirts and areas surrounding Gajuwaka. Some of them are located at Town Kotha Road, Seethamadhara, Pendurthi and Murali Nagar Park.

"The other processes like spraying and fogging, which involve chemicals, pollute the atmosphere and ground-water. This is completely an eco-friendly process. Ours is the only city

in the state using fish for mosquito control operations, in addition to other operations when required," said a GVMC public health official. The city has nearly 20 vulnerable locations which are prone to mosquito menace. The areas are also categorised as low-lying by the engineering department of the corporation. They include Kobbarithota, MVP Colony Sector-10, Poorna Market, Chavulamadhur, Gosha Hospital, Buruju Peta, HB Colony, Railway New Colony and Pendurthi.

Proper medical services must be given to patients: Collector

DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, JUNE 12

Nagalakshmi Selvarajan, who has assumed charge as the new Collector of Anantapur district, has stated that her top priority is to ensure prompt steps for containment of the Covid-19 second wave and see that proper medical service is rendered to patients at government hospitals.

In the wake of reports of the impending third wave which is predicted to be far more infec-

tious, the Collector has directed officials to speed up vaccination for the mothers having children below 5 years.

The Collector called for effective coordination among the district medical and health department, super specialty hospital, government general hospital, cancer hospital and district area hospital at Hindupur, stating that this would largely control the second wave and even stall the third wave. She ordered medical officers of primary health centres to tour

villages thrice a week. They should ensure timely medication for the affected persons and attention to the newly infected. Nagalakshmi Selvarajan said observed that as the third wave was likely to affect children more, vaccinating mothers would help the latter take good care in case the children contract infections.

Joint Collectors Dr. A. Siri, Nishanth Kumar, Nishanthi and Gangadhar Gowd were present.

POWER | PLAY Many seers try to patch-up

B. Math dispute over heir

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, JUNE 12

The Kadapa Brahmangari Matham head controversy is taking a new turn. The dispute over who is the rightful heir of the two wives has eventually become a police case.

Veerabhoga Venkateswaraswamy's second wife Maruthi Lakshamma, and her two sons, lodged a complaint with the DGP against Shivaswamy who is trying to reconcile the earing family members. Shivaswami was accused of conspiring to make his son from the first wife as the head of B. Matham. She alleged that Shivaswami had deceived her by calling in the name of negotiations. She said her son Govindananda has to be the head as per the will written by Veerabhoga Venkateswaraswamy.

Maruthi Lakshamma asked the DGP to prevent Shivaswami from visiting the Math on Saturday. Some locals alleged that Venkatadri Swamy (Previous head and first wife's eldest son) was frequently attacking Math.

The endowment department deputy commissioner was criticized for not following even corona guidelines when he visited B. Matham. She said in her letter to the DGP that there was no need for Swami's mediation in the matter. She said the decision would be taken in accordance with the stipulations of the endowment Department. Therefore, Shivaswami and other seers were to be prevented from entering the Brahmangari Math. However, none of the Swamijis arrived till Saturday evening.

Many seers are trying for patch-up between the two families in Kandimallayapalle and submitted a report to the endowment department. However, the controversy took a new turn when the Vishwabrahmin Sangh found fault with the report of Shivaswami group. According to the will of late Venkateswaraswamy, Vishwabrahmanasangh am convener Girinadha Sharma wants to make his second wife as the head. The Vishwa Brahmin Sangh has warned that if the government approves the report given by the Shivaswami group, it will go into direct action. Brahmapatham president Krishnamacharya said that it will decide the next head of B. Matham in the presence of twenty seers under Shivaswami.



Sivaswamy and other seers reached Brahmangari matham on Saturday night.

BAN ON SALE OF MEAT AND FISH LIFTED

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM,
JUNE 12

The Veterinary wing of Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC) lifted the ban on sale of fish and meat on this Sunday, said chief veterinary officer Dr N. Kishore.

Speaking to Deccan Chronicle, Dr Kishore said that they carried out extensive drives to check the ban orders of stopping sale of fish and meat for the last three Sundays during the curfew period from May. After a declining number of Covid-19 cases, the department lifted the ban on this Sunday, he added.

During their previous drives, their wing registered 164 cases against the errant traders of fish and meat on the charges of disobeying the Covid-19 protocol rules. They collected a fine of ₹2.8 lakh from them, he added.

Nearly 600-odd numbers of GVMC staff joined the enforcement drive in every ward covering all eight zones in the GVMC limits, Dr Kishore said while adding that nearly 2300 kg of fish and meat products were seized and dumped. Eight squads were formed to take up the operation, he said.

While 700 kg of mutton was seized, 500 kg of chicken, 200 kg of prawn, 700 kg of fish and 150 kg of craw were seized during the drive in the previous Sundays from May, Dr Kishore said.

● AFTER A declining number of Covid-19 cases, the department lifted the ban on this Sunday, said Dr Kishore.



FIVE VOLUNTEERS SUSPENDED BY JC

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 12

Krishna district Joint Collector (Development) L. Siva Sankar warned of stern action against the volunteers discharging Coronavirus duties recklessly to contain the spread of the deadly virus. In all, five volunteers were suspended by the JC at various places in the district on Saturday for discharging Covid-19 duties carelessly.

As part of the Covid-19 control programme in Vijayawada rural Mandals and as per state government direction in conducting the 12th fever survey, a few volunteers who did not comply with government instruc-

tions were suspended.

The suspended five volunteers were discharging duties at Enikepadu Paritala, Kanchikacharla Mandal in Paritala secretariat, Penamaluru Mandal Yanamalakuduru, Poranki secretariat, Chandralapadu Mandal Muppala secretariat.

JC Siva Sankar said strict action would be taken against those who act negligently in the implementation of government programmes within the secretariats, as well as those who act against the government directions with the public welfare and public health as part of Covid-19 control measures.

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SHORT TAKES

U.P. COPS TOLD TO GIVE SECURITY TO INTERFAITH COUPLE

Allahabad, June 12: Directing the police to provide protection to an interfaith couple, the Allahabad High Court has clarified the woman's conversion to Islam would not be a relevant factor in ensuring that there is no interference in their liberty, unless there is any allegation by her regarding forcible conversion.

The court directed the Moradabad police to give protection to the interfaith couple who alleged that their family members were interfering in their marital life and liberty.

Yashi Devi, aged about 20, and Guchhan Khan, aged about 40, married on January 11, 2021 after she converted to Islam.

The couple, residents of Moradabad district in Uttar Pradesh, requested the High Court to issue necessary directions to the respondents not to interfere with their marital life and liberty.

COPS PROBE FAKE DOCTORS IN MP COVID HOSPITALS

DC CORRESPONDENT
BHOPAL, JUNE 12

The Special Task Force (STF) of the Madhya Pradesh police on Saturday launched a drive to identify imposters serving as doctors in private Covid-19 hospitals. The move comes in the wake of the arrest of two 'fake' doctors employed by two private Covid hospitals in Jabalpur.

The two imposters, identified as Neeraj Sahu, 26, and Jatindra Singh Thakur, 26, were arrested on charges of involvement in black marketing of remdesivir recently. They were serving as doctors in two private Covid hospitals, Life Medicity Hospital and Ashish Hospital, in Jabalpur.

"We have found that the two 'doctors' have no genuine medical degree certificates. We have ordered the district chief medical health officers to verify the medical degrees of doctors serving in private Covid hospitals following the development," STF superintendent of police Neeraj Soni said.

Investigation has led to disclosure that while Sahu was never a student of medical college, Thakur dropped out after the MBBS fourth year.

The two imposters along with a nurse of a private hospital in Jabalpur were allegedly involved in the racket of stealing the antiviral drug from the hospitals and selling them in the black market when the demand for the life saving drug was at its peak in April-May this year.

CHINESE MAN, HELD BY BSF, SENT TO POLICE REMAND

DC CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA, JUNE 12

Chinese national Han Junwe, arrested by the Border Security Force (BSF) for sneaking through the India-Bangladesh border in Malda of West Bengal on June 10, was remanded in six days' police custody by a district court on Saturday.

Han, 36, from Hubei in China was handed over to the district police on Friday following his marathon interrogation by central agencies. He was booked under the Foreigners Act, said superintendent of police (Malda) Alok Rajoria.

On Saturday when Han was produced at the Malda district court, the police sought a seven-day remand for him. Gyanendra Dewang, lawyer of the accused, opposed the plea and said that his client had failed to find the border between two countries in absence of fencing.

According to BSF, Han's business partner, Sun Jiang, was earlier arrested by Uttar Pradesh ATS on several charges. Since then, the process of issuance of a Blue Corner Notice against Han was initiated.

BSF South Bengal Frontier stated that Han is a "wanted criminal" has so far taken "around 1,300 Indian SIMs to China using fake documents from India."

It said, "Han, through his associates, used to hide the SIM in undergarments and send these to China. These SIMs were used to hack accounts and to do other kinds of financial frauds. Their purpose was to cheat people using SIM to get their money out of money transaction machines."

Livelihood up in flames



Firefighters attempt to douse a blaze in a showroom at Lajpat Nagar's Central Market area, in New Delhi on Saturday. Around 30 fire tenders deployed to control the fire.

— PTI

BJP SLAMS DIGVIJAY FOR REMARKS OVER ARTICLE 370

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, JUNE 12

The BJP took serious exception to the purported remarks of Congress veteran Digvijay Singh on the abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir, and demanded a probe by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) into his "activities" because of the stands taken by him on sensitive issues in the past.

State BJP president Vishnu Dutt Sharma, a Lok Sabha member, wrote to Union home minister Amit Shah demanding a probe into Singh's "activities" by the NIA "urgently." Sharma drew Shah's attention to the former Chief Minister's conversation on Clubhouse, a social media app, in which a Pakistan-based journalist was reportedly present, criticising abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir.

"Mr Singh's stand on several sensitive issues have not only proved detrimental to the interest of India, but also helped Pakistan strengthen its anti-India campaign. It is high time the Centre initiated a probe into all his activities by the NIA before it is too late," Sharma said in his letter.

He cited how Singh had made a shocking statement in the aftermath of 26/11 terror attack on Mumbai, seeking to portray it a conspiracy by the RSS and how he had defended the accused in the Batla encounter who were later convicted by the court.

2 DELHI COPS ASSAULTED AT SINGHU BORDER

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 12

Two Delhi Policemen on duty were allegedly assaulted by a group of people at Singhu Border where farmers have been protesting against the Centre's farm laws for over six months now, police said on Saturday.

The two policemen on duty in civil clothes are Assistant Sub Inspectors (ASI) posted with the Special Branch of Delhi Police, they said.

The incident took place on June 10, when the two policemen in civil clothes deployed at the Singhu Border to oversee the security arrangements were allegedly beaten up by the group of people present at the spot, police said.

It is alleged that the two policemen were allegedly found clicking pictures at the protest site when they were allegedly assaulted by the group.

Chances of 3rd wave quite real: Kejriwal

Says government preparing on "war footing" to fight virus

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA | DC
NEW DELHI, JUNE 12

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday cautioned that the chances of a third Covid wave were quite real, and asserted his government was preparing on a "war-footing" to combat it. He said that the indications of a third wave are coming from the UK where Coronavirus cases

are rising again despite "45 per cent of its population" being vaccinated.

"So, we cannot afford to sit idle," he told an online event to inaugurate 22 new PSA oxygen plants at nine hospitals across Delhi. He said these plants have a total production capacity of 17.3 metric tonnes (MT), and they will strengthen the preparations to fight Covid. As many as 17 more oxygen plants will be started by July, he said.

The Delhi government is also procuring oxygen tankers to aid the fight against a third wave, he said, adding that the previous wave, which in on the wane, was "very dangerous". Expressing gratitude towards industries for their help in fighting the second wave, he also said the people of Delhi came together to combat it with struggle and discipline, and have "succeeded in controlling it".

He prayed that a third wave of Covid doesn't arrive. However, he cautioned that the chances of a third wave are "quite real", and "if it happens, Delhi has to again fight together". "We cannot afford to sit idle and our government is preparing on a war-footing to combat it," he said.

He also underlined the need for expanding the vaccination drive to fight the pandemic.

SAD, BSP form alliance for 2022 Punjab Assembly polls

Chandigarh, June 12: The Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) and the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) formed an alliance on Saturday for the 2022 Punjab Assembly elections, coming together after a gap of 25 years.

Under the tie-up, the BSP will fight 20 of the 117 Assembly seats while the rest will be contested by the SAD, said Akali Dal chief Sukhbir Singh Badal here. The SAD earlier had a tie-up with the BJP and the Badal-led party walked out of the NDA over the farm laws issue last year.

BSP chief Mayawati dubbed the alliance as a "new political and social initiative" which will usher in progress and prosperity in Punjab. Former CM Parkash Singh Badal described it as "the beginning of a secular, federal democratic revolution for a total socio-economic and political revamp of polity".

Punjab has 31.94 per cent Dalit population, mainly concentrated in Jalandhar, Hoshiarpur, Nawanshahr and Kapurthala districts. The state has the highest percentage of Scheduled Castes population in the country.

The BSP has a considerable hold over Dalits in the

Doaba belt. Punjab is the birthplace of the party's founder Kashi Ram, who belonged to Rupnagar district. The BSP was demanding more seats but the SAD managed to convince it with 20 seats, sources said.

The SAD had announced that it would appoint a Dalit as deputy chief minister if voted to power.

At a joint press conference with BSP's general secretary Satish Chandra Mishra, Sukhbir Badal said, "Today is a new day in Punjab's politics, a historic day...a day of big turn in Punjab's politics."

The BSP will contest seven seats in Malwa, five in Majha and eight in Doaba regions of Punjab, said Badal, adding that the two parties will soon form a coordination committee to jointly chalk out various programmes ahead of the polls.

The seats which the BSP will contest are Kartarpur Sahib, Jalandhar-West, Jalandhar-North, Phagwara, Hoshiarpur, Tanda, Dasuya, Chamkaur Sahib, Bassi Pathana, Mehal, Kalan, Nawanshahr, Ludhiana North, Sujapur, Bhoja, Pathankot, Mohali, Amritsar North, Amritsar Central, Payal and

Anandpur Sahib.

Both leaders claimed that the alliance will "sweep" the 2022 polls and oust the "non-performing" Congress from power.

About the new alliance, Mishra said, "Today is a historic day. The BSP, which is a national party, has entered into an alliance with Punjab's strongest party SAD... This alliance will continue forever now."

This tie-up has been revived after two parties were together 25 years ago, said Badal and Mishra.

"Each BSP worker supports and welcomes this alliance. The SAD and the BSP are pro-farmer parties, who have worked for uplift of the Dalits, labourers and weaker sections," Mishra said.

Sukhbir Badal said he wants to thank Mayawati for playing "an instrumental role in stitching this alliance".

"The two parties share similar ideologies as both have always fought to uphold the rights of poor, Dalits and weaker sections," Badal said. Later, during an interaction with the media, the former Punjab deputy CM said the BJP will not be able to open its account in the Assembly elections. —PTI

SISODIA ALLEGES MODI, AMARINDER ARE 'SOLID' PALS

New Delhi, June 12: Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader and Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Saturday alleged a "solid" friendship between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Punjab CM Amarinder Singh ahead of the Punjab elections, after the state was ranked number one in the Performance Grading Index (PGI) 2019-20 by the Centre in terms of school education.

The AAP is in opposition in the Congress-governed Punjab where Assembly polls are slated for early next year.

"This report claims that government schools in Punjab have emerged to be the best, while pointing that government schools in Delhi are not up to the mark. This report is just another way to show the blessings Modiji has showered on Captain Amarinder Singh, extending a hand of friendship similar to the previous elections. Strangely this report has been released at a time when people have been raising questions regarding the performance and inadequacies of the Punjab government in education," Sisodia said. —PTI

Mukul begins poaching oppn leaders for TMC

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, JUNE 12

Within hours of returning to the Trinamul Congress, Mukul Roy is back in the business of poaching Opposition leaders. This has left the BJP worried about its future in West Bengal.

According to sources, at least 10 MLAs and a Lok Sabha MP of the BJP got calls from Roy, their party's former national vice-president, between Friday night and Saturday morning, inviting them politely to follow his footsteps.

Among the 10, three are from North Bengal—one each from Coochbehar, Jalpaiguri and South Dinajpur, BJP insiders revealed. The other seven are from South Bengal. Among them, two are from Purulia and one each is from Nadia, North 24 Parganas and Hooghly, sources added.

The Lok Sabha MP who got Roy's call is also from North Bengal. The state BJP leadership came to know of Roy's bid after two MLAs informed them. Surprisingly, the rest remained silent, which is being seen as an ominous sign for the BJP.

Flagging his concerns BJP veteran Tathagata Roy tweeted, "Clearly Mukul Roy was a Trojan Horse. After having been welcomed into the BJP, (he) gained access to its all-India leaders and hobbled with state BJP's gullible leaders... having learnt all about the party and its innermost detail, he went back and leaked everything to

● **BJP LEGISLATURE** party chief whip Manoj Tigga said that the leader of the opposition Suwendu Adhikari was apprised of the overnight development.

Mamata. But what's done is done. Now the big question is, did Mukul leave back Trojan Horses with in this Trojan Horse? (sic)"

BJP legislature party chief whip Manoj Tigga said that leader of the opposition Suwendu Adhikari was apprised of the overnight development. The party, which won 77 seats in the Assembly election, but was reduced to 74 in the House barely after a month, put up a brave face amid the threat of defection.

BJP state president Dilip Ghosh said, "Many are known to Mr Roy for a long time. In that sense, he can call them up. I am not bothered about who will stay or leave. Politicians are very clever. They make moves judging the wind. But BJP does not move on Ayaram-Gayaram. Time has come for the dust to go. We are now standing by those party workers who are facing attacks."

Meanwhile Roy and his son Shubhrangshu informed that they have given up the central forces security cover to them in writing to the Union home ministry. They have been provided the same level of security by the Mamata Banerjee government after their return to the TMC.



A commuter walks on the waterlogged railway tracks, after train services in the area were suspended due to heavy rain, at Kurla in Mumbai on Saturday.

— PTI

Mumbai rains hit train, bus services

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC
MUMBAI, JUNE 12

Mumbai and its surrounding districts are likely to get extremely heavy rainfall on June 13 and 14.

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has issued a high alert asking Mumbaiers not to move out from their homes on these days.

According to Mumbai's Regional Meteorological Centre, the metropolis will receive thunderstorm with lightning, gusty winds and extremely heavy rainfall at isolated places for the next couple of days. In addition to this, a 'red alert' has been issued for Raigad and Ratnagiri districts, whereas Thane, Palghar and Sindhudurg districts will also receive heavy to very heavy

rains. Mumbai mayor Kishori Pednekar has issued a high alert in the city appealing people to venture out only if it is absolutely necessary. The BMC has asked people not to visit the beaches and its nearby places.

Mumbai has been witnessing heavy rains since Wednesday. Heavy rains, coupled with thunderstorms and strong winds, continued to lash the city and its suburbs on Saturday too, leading to disruption of train and bus services as tracks and roads got waterlogged at several locations.

The train services between Dadar and Kurla stations on Central Railway were suspended in the afternoon after the water rose above the track level.

PLEA | REJECTED Choksi was a "flight risk", did not have any ties with Dominica, the court

Dominica HC denies bail to Mehul Choksi

New Delhi, June 12: The Dominica High Court has denied bail to fugitive diamondaire Mehul Choksi in the case of illegal entry into the island country after his mysterious disappearance from neighbouring Antigua and Barbuda where he is staying as a citizen since 2018, local Caribbean media reported.

The high court on Friday (local time) gave the ruling by concluding that Choksi was a "flight risk", did not have any ties with Dominica and the court could not impose any conditions which will stop

him from leaving the country, news outlet *AntiguaNewsroom* said. Choksi had approached the high court after the magistrate had rejected his bail petition. The 62-year old diamondaire, who has an Interpol Red Notice against him, had mysteriously gone missing on May 23 from Antigua and Barbuda where he has been staying since 2018 as a citizen. He was detained in the neighbouring island country of Dominica for illegal entry after a possible romantic escapade with his rumoured girlfriend.



Mehul Choksi

Choksi's lawyers had filed a habeas corpus petition calling his arrest illegal and alleging that he was abducted, tortured

● **THE CBI** and the External Affairs Ministry have sought to implead in the habeas corpus petition by filing two affidavits in the Dominica High Court, officials said here.

and handed over to Dominica authority to deny him rights available to him in Antigua and Barbuda as a citizen. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the External Affairs Ministry have sought to implead in the habeas corpus petition by filing two affidavits in the Dominica

High Court, officials said here. The central agency will focus on establishing criminal culpability of Choksi, fugitive status, pending warrants against him, Red Notice and charge sheets, while the External Affairs Ministry will argue that Choksi continues to be an Indian citizen, they said. The affidavits, if admitted, will pave way for noted lawyer Harish Salve to plead Indian case in Dominica, they said.

Choksi, promoter of Geetanjali Gems and other famous diamond brands in India, had fled the country

weeks before ₹13,500 crore fraud in Punjab National Bank (PNB) allegedly involving him and his nephew Nirav Modi surfaced. His lawyers alleged that he was kidnapped from Jolly Harbour in Antigua by policemen looking like Antiguan and Indian and brought to Dominica on a boat. Choksi was also brought before a Roseau magistrate, on the orders of High Court Judge Bernie Stephenson, hearing the habeas corpus matter, to answer charges of illegal entry where he pleaded not guilty but was denied bail. —PTI

SHORT TAKES

JAN. 6 CAPITOL ATTACK: CHICAGO COP CHARGED

Chicago, June 12: A Chicago police officer has been charged with breaching the US Capitol and entering a senator's office during the January 6 insurrection. Karol Chwiesniuk, 29, was arrested on Friday and faces five misdemeanour counts, including entering a restricted building, disrupting government business and disorderly conduct on Capitol grounds with the intent to impede a congressional proceeding.

Prosecutors allege in a criminal complaint that Chwiesniuk was among a mob of people who broke into and damaged the office of Sen. Jeff Merkley, an Oregon Democrat. They say that days before he travelled to Washington to attend a rally of ex-President Donald Trump.

BOMBS HIT 2 MINIVANS IN KABUL, 7 DEAD

Kabul, June 12: Separate bombs hit two minivans in a mostly Shiite neighbourhood in the Afghan capital Saturday, killing at least seven people and wounding six others, the Interior Ministry said.

The attacks targeted minivans on the same road about 2 kilometres apart in a neighbourhood in western Kabul, Interior Ministry deputy spokesman Ahmad Zia Zia, said.

It wasn't immediately clear what type of bombs were used and no one immediately claimed responsibility for the attacks. The Islamic State group has carried out similar bombings in the area, including four attacks on four minivans earlier this month that killed at least 18 people.

13 HURT IN DOWNTOWN AUSTIN SHOOTING

Austin (US), June 12: A shooting in a busy entertainment district in downtown Austin, Texas injured 13 people early Saturday, and police said the suspected shooter was not in custody.

Two of the injured people were in critical condition but as of the news conference at 4 am local time, no one had died, interim Austin Police Chief Joseph Chacon said. Gunfire erupted just before 1:30 am along 6th Street, a popular area filled with bars and restaurants. The street was barricaded to keep out vehicle traffic at the time of the shooting, Chacon said. Eleven of the injured people were taken to one local hospital, another person was taken to a different hospital, and the other person went to an urgent care facility with gunshot wounds.

SAUDI CAPS HAJ TO 60K, BARS FOREIGNERS

Riyadh, June 12: Saudi Arabia announced Saturday it will allow 60,000 residents vaccinated against Covid to perform this year's haj, but Muslims from abroad will be barred for a second straight year.

The haj — a must for able-bodied Muslims at least once in their lives — typically packs millions of pilgrims into congested religious sites and could be a major source of contagion amid the Coronavirus pandemic. This year it would be "open for nationals and residents of the kingdom, limited to 60,000 pilgrims", the haj ministry said, quoted by the official Saudi Press Agency.

The pilgrimage, scheduled to be held in July, would be limited to those who have been vaccinated and are aged 18-65 with no chronic illnesses, it said.

Only up to 10,000 Muslims took part in the haj in July last year, a far cry from the 2.5 million who participated in the five-day annual pilgrimage in 2019 before the pandemic.

"In light of what the whole world is witnessing with the Coronavirus pandemic... and the emergence of new variants, the relevant authorities have continued to monitor the global health situation," the health ministry said.

"Considering the large crowds that perform haj, spending long periods of time in multiple and specific places... requires the highest levels of health precautions." Saudi Arabia said those wishing to perform the haj would have to apply online, without specifying how many foreign residents would be among the 60,000 pilgrims.

In 2020, foreigners were 70 percent of the pilgrims, while Saudis made up the rest.

The kingdom said later that it had informed other countries of the decision not to allow pilgrims from abroad. "There was great understanding," its deputy hajj minister, Abdulfattah bin Sulaiman Mashat, said.



Activists from the climate change protest group Extinction Rebellion, dressed in red robes and known as the Red Brigade, demonstrate in Falmouth, Cornwall during the G7 summit on Saturday. — AFP

G7 adopts global infra plan in riposte to China

Beijing criticised for saddling small nations with heavy debt

Carbis Bay, June 12: G7 leaders on Saturday adopted a rival plan to oppose China's Belt and Road Initiative by helping build infrastructure in poorer nations in a "values-driven, high-standard and transparent" partnership.

The adoption of the US-inspired "Build Back Better World" (B3W) project came after President Joe Biden and leaders met to address "strategic competition with China and commit to concrete actions to help meet the tremendous infrastructure need in low- and middle-income countries", the White House said.

China has been widely criticised for saddling small countries with unmanageable debt as part of its trillion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative, which has seen money lent for projects stretching across Asia, Africa, Latin America and even Europe.

President Xi Jinping launched the BRI in 2013 to significantly expand China's economic and political influence, with many of the infrastructure plans seen as helping deliver its goods globally. China denies any ulterior motives to the vast investment project. But critics argue it uses the financial leverage arising from the scheme to boost its clout, in what they

London, June 12: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson held meetings with German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron on Saturday on the sidelines of a G-7 summit, as post-Brexit turbulence strains relations between Britain and the EU.

After Britain's top diplomat accused the EU of taking a bloody-minded approach to relations, Johnson also met the bloc's leaders, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and European Council President Charles Michel, at the Carbis Bay resort where G-7 leaders are gathering.

The two sides are locked

in an escalating diplomatic feud over Northern Ireland, the only part of the UK that has a land border with the bloc.

The EU is angry at British delay in implementing new checks on some goods coming into Northern Ireland from the rest of the UK required under the terms of Britain's divorce from the bloc.

Britain says the checks are imposing a big burden on businesses and destabilising Northern Ireland's hard-won peace.

The spat has drawn in US President Joe Biden, who is concerned about the potential threat to Northern Ireland's peace accord. Von der Leyen tweet-

ed after meeting Johnson that Northern Ireland peace was paramount, and the binding Brexit agreement protected it.

We want the best possible relations with the UK. Both sides must implement what we agreed on. There is complete EU unity on this, she said.

The EU is threatening legal action if the UK does not fully bring in the checks, which include a ban on chilled meats such as sausages from England, Scotland and Wales going to Northern Ireland starting next month.

It says Britain must fully implement the agreement, known as the Northern Ireland Protocol. — AFP

Further details would come in the G7 summit's final communique on Sunday, the White House added.

The issue is close to home for the elite club of wealthy democracies.

Italy was the first member nation to sign on to the BRI. — AFP

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Italy was the first member nation to sign on to the BRI. — AFP

Delta variant may delay Britain's unlock process

Italy limits AZ vax to over-60s

London, June 12: The UK government is considering a delay of up to four weeks from the scheduled June 21 end to all lockdown restrictions amid a continuing rise in cases of the Delta variant of Covid-19, according to a media report on Saturday. It comes as the country reported 8,125 new Covid-19 cases in a 24-hour period, another record daily high since the end of February, and Public Health England (PHE) found that infections from the Delta variant — the B.1.617.2 variant of concern (VOC) first identified in India — rose by nearly 30,000 in a week to hit 42,323.

Downing Street sources said that no final decision has been made yet and that several options are being evaluated as the latest data is studied before UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson makes a scheduled announcement regarding lockdown on Monday. The British Medical Association (BMA) is among some of the leading public healthcare groups and officials calling for a delay to the planned easing of all lockdown restrictions on June 21, dubbed "Freedom Day" as it would see all legal limits on social contact removed. Pushing the date back by a few weeks is intended to allow the country's vaccination programme to take greater effect, as the rollout moves through to younger age groups and the older age groups get covered with their

Rome, June 12: Italy said Saturday it would restrict the AstraZeneca vaccine to the over-60s, with younger people who have already received one dose to complete the cycle with an mRNA jab.

The change follows an improvement in Coronavirus infection rates in Italy, which has been devastated by the pandemic but will next week lift restrictions in much of the country following a sharp decline in cases.

The EU's medicine agency in April drew a link between rare blood clots and AstraZeneca jabs but stressed that the benefits of the vaccines outweighed the risks.

"The changed epidemiological situation has led to a reassessment of the risk-benefit ratio for age groups less at risk of severe forms of Covid-19," the Italian government's Technical and Scientific Committee (CTS) said. — AFP

Pandemic origin: China, US clash

Beijing, June 12: Top US and Chinese diplomats appear to have had another sharply worded exchange, with Beijing saying it told the US to cease interfering in its internal affairs and accusing Washington of politicising the search for the origin of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Senior Chinese foreign policy adviser Yang Jiechi and Secretary of State Antony Blinken held a phone call Friday that revealed wide divisions in a num-

ber of contentious areas, including the curtailing of freedoms in Hong Kong and the mass detention of Muslims in the northwestern Xinjiang region.

Calls for a more thorough investigation into the origin of the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes Covid-19 are particularly sensitive for China because of suggestions that it might have escaped from a laboratory in the central city of Wuhan. — AP

In Russia, 47% spike in a week

Moscow, June 12: Russia's national Coronavirus taskforce on Saturday reported that the country's tally of daily new infections has risen by nearly 50 per cent over the past week and more than doubled in Moscow.

It said there were 13,510 infections recorded in the previous day, sharply higher than the 9,163 reported on June 6. Nearly half the new cases were in Moscow — 6,701 compared with 2,936 a week ago.

Faced with the spiking figures, Moscow authorities said enforcement of mask- and glove-wearing on mass transit, in stores and in other public places would be strengthened and that violators could face fines of up to 5,000 rubles (\$70).

For the entire pandemic period, the task force has reported nearly 5.2 million infections in the coun-

try of about 146 million people, and 126,000 deaths.

However, a report from the state statistics agency Rosstat on Friday found more than 144,000 virus-related deaths last year alone.

The statistics agency, unlike the taskforce, counts fatalities in which Coronavirus infection was present or suspected but is not the main cause of death.

The agency's report found about 340,000 more people died in 2020 than in 2019; it did not give details of the causes of the higher year-on-year death toll.

The higher death toll and a lower number of births combined to make an overall population decline of 702,000, about twice the decline in 2019, Rosstat said. — AP

UN CHIEF BACKS INDIA OVER WAIVING TRIPS

United Nations, June 12: UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres has extended support to India and South Africa's initiative at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to waive intellectual property protection for Covid-19 vaccines and products, though he cautioned that "technology transfer" must be backed up by "technical support". India has worked with South Africa and other partners at the WTO to seek a relaxation in the norms of the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) agreement to ensure quick and affordable access to vaccines and medicines for developing countries during the Covid-19 pandemic. "I support the initiative that was taken by South Africa and by India in relation to TRIPS, waiving TRIPS regulations," he said. — PTI

INDIA SAYS IT WANTS NORMAL TIES WITH PAK

United Nations, June 12: India has said it desires "normal" neighbourly relations with all countries, including Pakistan, and asserted that the onus is on Islamabad to create a "conductive atmosphere" and not allow its territory to be used for cross-border terrorism against India in any manner.

The remarks by Counsellor in India's Permanent Mission to the United Nations, R. Madhu Sudan came at the United Nations General Assembly meeting on 'Report of the Security Council for 2020' on Friday.

"India desires normal neighbourly relations with all countries, including Pakistan. Our consistent position is that issues, if any, between India and Pakistan should be resolved bilaterally and peacefully, in an atmosphere free of terror, hostility and violence," Sudan said in the General Assembly.

"The onus is on Pakistan to create such a conducive atmosphere, including by taking credible, verifiable action to not allow any territory under its control to be used for cross-border terrorism against India in any manner," he added. — PTI

PIO wins Pulitzer for exposing Muslims' detention in China

New York, June 12: Megha Rajagopalan, an Indian-origin journalist, along with two contributors has won the Pulitzer Prize for innovative investigative reports that exposed a vast infrastructure of prisons and mass internment camps secretly built by China for detaining hundreds of thousands of Muslims in its restive Xinjiang region.

Rajagopalan from *BuzzFeed News* is among two Indian-origin journalists who won the US' top journalism award on Friday. *Tampa Bay Times*' Neil Bedi won for local report-

ing. Bedi along with Kathleen McGrory has been awarded the prize for the series exposing a Sheriff's Office initiative that used computer modelling to identify people believed to be future crime suspects.

About 1,000 people were monitored under the programme, including children. Bedi is an investigative reporter for the *Tampa Bay Times*.

"What Kathleen and Neil unearthed in Pasco County has had a profound impact on the community," said Mark Katches, *Times* executive editor. "This is what the best investigative



Megha Rajagopalan

journalism can do and why it is so essential."

Rajagopalan's Xinjiang series won the Pulitzer Prize in the International Reporting category. In 2017, not long after China

began to detain thousands of Muslims in Xinjiang, Rajagopalan was the first to visit an internment camp — at a time when China denied that such places existed, *BuzzFeed News* said.

"In response, the government tried to silence her, revoking her visa and ejecting her from the country," *BuzzFeed News* wrote in its entry for the prize. "It would go on to cut off access to the entire region for most Westerners and stymie journalists. The release of basic facts about detainees slowed to a trickle." — PTI

SPACE | PUPS

Researchers wanted to know if radiation damages reproductive cell DNA

Mouse sperm on ISS produces 168 offspring

Washington, June 12: Turns out the comic books were wrong.

Japanese researchers found mouse sperm exposed to high levels of cosmic radiation for nearly six years produced a large brood of healthy, unremarkable "space pups." Their study was published Friday in *Science Advances* — which noted no signs so far of Mousezillas or rodent Hulks.

The sperm was stored in the International Space Station in freeze-dried

form. Once brought back to Earth and rehydrated, it resulted in the birth of 168 young, free of genetic defects. Developmental biologist and lead author Teruhiko Wakayama said on Thursday that there was little difference between mice fertilised in space sperm and sperm that had remained confined to our planet.

"All pups had normal appearance," he said, and when researchers examined their genes "no abnormalities were found." In

2013, Wakayama and colleagues at the University of Yamanashi in Japan launched three boxes, each containing 48 ampoules of freeze-dried sperm, to the ISS for the long-term study. They wanted to determine whether long term exposure to radiation in space would damage DNA in reproductive cells or pass mutations along to offspring.

That could be a problem for our own species in future space exploration and colonization missions.

Batches were returned to Earth for fertilisation after the first nine months, then after two years, and finally after six years, leading to hundreds of births. Freeze-dried sperm was selected for the experiment because it can be preserved at room temperature, rather than needing a freezer.

The ampoules were also small and very light, about the size of a small pencil, further cutting launch costs. When the space mice reached adulthood,

they were randomly mated and the next generation appeared normal as well.

Wakayama, now director for Advanced Biotechnology Center at the University of Yamanashi, said he had been inspired by the science fiction of Heinlein and Asimov and once wanted to be an astronaut.

Though he settled on becoming a scientist, the sense of wonder and whimsy about space exploration never left him.

"In the future, when the time comes to migrate to

other planets, we will need to maintain the diversity of genetic resources, not only for humans but also for pets and domestic animals," Wakayama and colleagues wrote in their paper.

"For cost and safety reasons, it is likely that stored germ cells will be transported by spaceships rather than by living animals." Getting to other planets means leaving the safety of Earth's protective atmosphere and magnetic field — which also extends to the ISS. — AFP

DECCAN Chronicle

13 JUNE 2021



Sanjeev Ahluwalia

Off the beaten track

The morality of stock markets

Indian stock markets look like “mushroom rocks”, top-heavy and delicately balanced, just waiting to be tipped over by bad news, of which there is plenty. Investors, whose stocks are part of the on-going bull-run starting February 2021, could not care less having gained ₹11 trillion, since May 24.

This bonanza of wealth accretion, for the less than 15 per cent of households who own stocks, contrasts with increasing penury for most others from the economic and health depredations of the second wave of Covid-19 and its mutants.

It is hypocritical, however, to wring our hands in anguish because a few have become richer whilst the majority, particularly those in the bottom three quintiles are struggling. Gunnar Myrdal “hash tagged” India as a “dual economy” in 1968, in his seminal work *Asian Drama*.

Admittedly, much has changed since then. The urban, modern part of the economy has expanded significantly but so has inequity. Rapid wealth accretion at the pinnacle — an outcome of the 1992 liberalisation which unleashed entrepreneurship and economic growth — remains unmatched by enhanced living standards for the middle class, though, till the pandemic struck, poverty in the bottom two quintile had reduced significantly.

The stock market is not a useful proxy for economic welfare. It tracks the well-being of an elitist minority in the formal sector, albeit with trickle down benefits. But it is a real-time, high visibility metric of government's performance in partially liberalised economies like India, where government continues to be an intrusive economic agent via state owned companies and financial institutions, administered pricing and capital allocation regimes.

India's exchange rate regulator — the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) — strives to keep the exchange rate stable, except for adjustments reflecting the difference across currencies in the rate of inflation, which, RBI is mandated to keep within a float of two percentage points below or above the norm of four per cent per year. Presently we are scraping the underside of the upper bound.

Sound inflation management and economic growth attracts foreign investors, who have invested ₹Rs 25 trillion in India or 13 per cent of the market capitalisation. These funds are important. They help us plug the foreign exchange gap because we chronically export less than we import.

The eco-system within which stocks are traded and fortunes won or lost, is regulated by the Securities Exchange Board of India (SEBI) since April 1992. On the demand side are 41 million registered investors — individuals and entities — of which 9,823 are foreign portfolio investors and 45,000 domestic companies. On the supply side 5,600 companies supply the bonds and equity traded publicly through 1,343 stockbrokers. Over 400 portfolio management entities and mutual funds, intermediate the flows.

The market capitalisation of ₹212 trillion was 107 per cent of the GDP in 2019-20 at current prices and around 2.4 per cent of the global market capitalisation (SEBI 2019-20).

The Bombay Stock Exchange was the first. It has operated from 1875. Since then, 20 other exchanges were established but have shut shop voluntarily or like the Calcutta Stock Exchange are under litigation to do so. Back then primary goods like opium, indigo and cotton were traded.

Today, Bombay is Mumbai, and the renamed BSE, no longer deals with commodities, for which there are specialised exchanges. 84 per cent of the capital raised in 2019-20, was by telecom, finance and electronics related firms. In 1992 the National Stock Exchange (NSE) became a competitor exchange for domestic trading.

Stock markets however remains a fairly “clubby” business. Of the ₹0.8 trillion of equity raised in 2019-20, just 12 companies accounted for 95.7 per cent while 64 others accounted for the residual 4.3 per cent.

Consider also, the constricted geographic spread from where the funds are sourced. BSE raises 51 per cent of funds from Mumbai, 17 per cent from the National Capital Region, 15 per cent from 18 other cities and the residual 17 per cent from the rest of the country. The newer National Stock Exchange is even more exclusive, relying on the twenty largest cities for 87 per cent of the funds.

Stock trading as an urban phenomenon is not unique to India. Happily, digital trading, allows anyone in remote areas with a smart phone, to link into licensed trading platforms. It already accounts for 12 per cent of the transactions and is the hope for democratising market access.

But democratising capital gains is tougher than democratising access. Capital intensive competitive “games” have a funneling effect where the biggest players benefit disproportionately. Savvy youngsters, with cash to spare, know this. They try and build capital through the volatile cryptocurrency exchanges worth \$750 million — an extra-legal play. Retail “crypto mining” requires spending ₹0.4 million. One computer — a tireless digital slave — can meet household expenses, in a throwback to the leisurely late 19th century, prior to slavery abolition.

Stock markets are as amoral as shopping malls. They make affordable money available for implementing business plans, make companies accountable and spread business gains widely, though transparency should be enhanced, and indiscretions sanctioned better. The trick is to keep regulation light-handed to attract more companies to the exchanges. The compulsory spend from profits on corporate social responsibility is bad regulation whilst taxing capital gains, to fund income redistribution to the have-nots, is good.

The writer is adviser, Observer Research Foundation

Subhani



Curb your enthusiasm, someone tell Dhankhar



Pavan K. Varma

Chanakya's View

Will somebody please tell His Excellency, Mahamahim, the governor of West Bengal, Shri Jagdeep Dhankhar, that he is crossing all the lines of Constitutional propriety? Dhankhar Saheb is under the mistaken impression, it would seem, that he is ensconced in the palatial Raj Bhavan as a representative of the BJP to which he belonged prior to being plucked out and made the Mahamahim. It is a lethal misapprehension, although to be fair to him, it has possessed other governors too in the past cutting across party lines. But, the degree to which Dhankharji appears to have become partisan, and the blatancy of his partisanship, sets a new benchmark of gubernatorial indiscretion.

Articles 155 and 156 of the Constitution lay down clearly where the loyalties of a governor should lie. Article 155 says: “The governor of a state shall be appointed by the President by warrant under his hand and seal.” Article 156 declares: “The governor shall hold office during the pleasure of the President.” The position is, therefore, crystal clear. A governor is the representative of the President of India. He has to then be, like the President, above all party politics, and independent of any political loyalties that may have guided him in the past. Dhankhar was an active member of the BJP for decades, and had represented the party both in the Rajasthan legislature

and the Lok Sabha. It is understandable then that his fidelity to his political alma mater is deep and abiding. However, once he assumed the office of the governor, he is bound, under the express provisions of the Constitution, to transcend such old loyalties and play his role with impartiality and dignity.

I have worked in Rashtrapati Bhavan as the press secretary to two Presidents of India, Shri R. Venkataraman and Shankar Dayal Sharma. I still remember that in very first meeting with President Venkataraman, his first instruction to me was that the President of India does not comment on the day-to-day functioning of government. “I do not want publicity,” he said to me, “especially that which brings into question my political impartiality.” Shankar Dayal Sharma also did not give — with one exception perhaps — a single interview to the media. These were stellar precedents. They reinforced the fact that the President remained resolutely above the political fray, and intervened only during a genuine Constitutional crisis, when — as Venkataraman used to say — the power of the presidency comes alive but only like an emergency lamp.

Governors, appointed by the President, and holding office only at his pleasure, must model themselves on this kind of principled restraint. However, Mr Dhankhar has almost become a continuous voice in the political discourse. He tweets much too frequently. He gives media interviews. And, he is

forever ready to go public on every issue, instead of resorting to the discreet back channel ways in which a Constitutional head should communicate with a duly elected democratic government. As per the conventions of the high office he holds, his actions border on the adventurous. In an unprecedented manner, at the time of the swearing in of Mamata Banerjee, the newly elected chief minister of the state, he launched into a speech, delivering a public homily — bordering on a reprimand — on the need for her to control law and order. This very message could have been conveyed — if he was so keen that it should — to the chief minister in a private conversation. Similarly, in spite of the express advice to the contrary of the elected government, he broke convention by going off on a tour of the areas where alleged violence had taken place against BJP workers. Dhankharji has also made it a habit to summon senior officers of the state government to brief him. Technically, he may be within his rights to do so, but doing so on every occasion, and then publicly berating the officers and the state government if they don't satisfy his exacting and peremptory fiats, hardly appears to be becoming for the Raj Bhavan.

True, violence and lawlessness of any kind, including against BJP workers, needs to be unequivocally con-

Dhankharji's actions, to my mind, constitute a fit case for President Kovind to take suo motu initiative to counsel his state-level counterpart. The endeavour should always be to learn from the past...

demned. It is true also that the governor can legitimately be concerned about a deterioration in the law and order situation. But there is a sustainable perception that Governors^{saheb} is only exercised on those issues which fit into the BJP agenda. His interventions, therefore, become a kind of partisan hectoring where it almost seems that he is battling for the BJP rather than following the impartiality code befitting his position.

Frankly, I am a little surprised that the President of India has not as yet taken cognisance of the unconventional, undesirable and unprecedented behaviour of his appointee. Dhankharji's actions, to my mind, constitute a fit case for President Kovind to take suo motu initiative to counsel his state-level counterpart. It is not as if governors in the past have not acted in a partial manner. But the endeavour should be to learn from the past, and ensure that in our maturing democracy such mistakes are not repeated in the future.

The BJP, on its part, has already done great damage to several of our institutions. It should seriously ponder on the advisability of justifying the behaviour of Mr Dhankhar. What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. Tomorrow, if they are on the other side of the fence, would they like a governor who in terms of both optics and substance has thrown all constitutional reticence to the winds, and is openly partial to those who rule at Delhi? The fire of wrong precedents must be doused. Otherwise, in the future, it can burn your house and mine, and the Constitution of India.

The writer, an author and a former diplomat, is in politics

LETTERS

CM'S APPEAL

AP Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy's appeal seems to have gone over the head of Pradhan, the concerned minister because he reacted positively for the Petrochemical Complex in Kakinada SEZ but remained non-committal about VSP (*Spare VSP, Jagan asks Centre again, DC, June 12*). Jagan should talk to Prime Minister Narendra Modi who alone can make or mar any proposal from the CMs in general. Jagan's conciliatory approach shall certainly yield positive results in the long run.

K. Nehru Patnaik
Visakhapatnam

CM visited Delhi and appealed to Union ministers to release pending arrears for different projects. He went to Delhi as a representative AP people. Whenever the CM comes back with assurances from Union ministers, after some days they are forgotten. The situation repeats every now and then. The Centre must not show partiality to BJP ruled states and release funds to all states as per norms.

D. Ravikumar
Visakhapatnam

DELAYED JOBS

It is certainly surprising that jobs will be given to 2,193 candidates (*DSC 2008 aspirants to get jobs soon, DC, June 12*). The education minister accepting their delay in recruitment indirectly by saying the 2008 DSC aspirants were fighting for justice for the last 12 years. Even though It is not a big government recruitment, but it still makes a lot of difference to unemployed youth as they lost all their hopes.

P. Govardhana Rao
Kankipadu, Krishna district

FDA'S PREJUDICE

The US or for that matter many Western countries are prejudiced against India and Indian products. The US in particular is always employing double standards when India is considered. It is encouraging brain drain from India to its shores but not important/vital products from India. When it comes to Covaxin is concerned, it had already proved its worth in India and 14 other countries in the world. Yet the US and WHO are deliberately discriminating against Covaxin for reasons better known to them. Perhaps it is a tit-for-tat action as India had initially refused permission for Pfizer in India when the former offered. In.

Govardhana Myneedu
Vijayawada

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

TWA jet hijacked

NEW YORK, JUNE 12. A young Negro wounded by the police gunfire was taken into custody here early this morning shortly after a plane he hijacked from Chicago touched down at Kennedy international airport.

The man, not yet identified, seized the Tans World Airlines Boeing 727 in Chicago late last night, killing a passenger who, according to police there, apparently struggled with him.

He ordered all the passengers off and the plane then took off for New York with only the crew and hijacker abroad.

that those perceived to be in the anti-Captain camp were not ignored during ticket distribution in next year's Assembly polls.

Unable to travel due to the coronavirus pandemic, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra has stepped up her presence on social media. She has, however, changed trajectory in recent months. Instead of focussing on issues pertaining to Uttar Pradesh, she has also started attacking Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the Centre's vaccine policy, the shortage of oxygen and general handling of the coronavirus pandemic. But her numerous tweets, video messages and Facebook posts taking on Mr Modi have been ignored by the BJP which is usually quick to respond sharply to Rahul Gandhi's tweets. The BJP obviously does not wish to take the focus away from Rahul Gandhi considering its campaign to project the Nehru-Gandhi scion as an immature leader has met with resounding success.

Anita Katyal is a Delhi-based journalist

Anita Katyal Political Gup-Shup



UP rumblings: Yogi's men bank on Modi to allay 2022 ticket fears

When the BJP dispatched senior leaders B.L. Santosh and Radha Mohan Singh to Lucknow earlier this month to get feedback about the handling of the coronavirus pandemic by the Yogi Adityanath government, it was expected that they would meet with all legislators. But Mr Santosh and Mr Singh met only a section of ministers and state party leaders after which CM Yogi Adityanath was given a clean chit for successfully tackling the second wave of Covid infections. Already upset with Yogi Adityanath's style of functioning, this led to further resentment among the BJP legislators who hoped to get an audience with the leaders so that they could apprise them of their grievances. The party's MLAs are unhappy as they feel neglected by the chief minister who, they maintain, depends solely on the bureaucracy. The MLAs have reason to worry as many of them were imported from other political parties before the last Assembly polls and with the next election coming up in early 2022, they are not sure if they will have to make way for fresh entrants. They were,

therefore, keen to apprise the BJP leadership about the hurdles they face in addressing the demands of their constituents, before they are axed for their non-performance. They are hoping Yogi's meetings with the Prime Minister and home minister Amit Shah will yield positive results.

Image management has been on top of the Modi government's agenda. The Centre first came in for severe criticism from the domestic and international media for not anticipating the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic. Even as the government's spin doctors were in the midst of handling this negative commentary, the government was pulled up by the Supreme Court which described its vaccine policy as “arbitrary and irrational”. Going into damage control mode, Prime Minister Modi announced a centralised procurement of vaccines and free doses to all in his address to the nation on June 7. Following this announcement, the government's spin doctors were again on the job. “Friendly” media-persons were informally told that the Prime Minister

had actually given in-principle approval for centralised free vaccine on June 1, two days before the Supreme Court's observations. Subsequently, the chosen journalists put out identical tweets giving the official version.

It is no secret that Gandhi loyalist Jitin Prasada was set to join the BJP two years ago but was dissuaded from leaving the Congress by Rahul Gandhi and other senior party leaders. According to the political grapevine, Mr Prasada decided to switch sides now as he had fallen out with Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Congress general secretary in charge of Uttar Pradesh, who did not include him in the state unit's activities. With Assembly elections coming up early next year, Mr Prasada apparently thought this was the most opportune moment to leave. When the young leader was given charge of poll-bound West Bengal earlier this year, everyone believed Mr Prasada was back in favour even though he was among the signatories to the letter seeking radical changes in the Congress organisation. But, it appe-

ars this appointment was meant to ensure Mr Prasada's absence from UP. Plus, he was deliberately given this “punishment” assignment in which he was bound to fail.

As Punjab chief minister Amarinder Singh looks set to emerge victorious in the ongoing battle with his bete noire Navjot Singh Sidhu, he will have to thank his wife and Patiala MP Preneet Kaur for the final outcome. The chief minister or Captain, as he is called, deputed Preneet Kaur to speak with the dissident leaders. Unlike the Captain, Preneet Kaur is considered more approachable and consequently it was easier for her to talk to the rebels. If reports are to be believed, her efforts have paid off as the majority of state leaders who were summoned by the three-member panel set up by Congress president Sonia Gandhi to resolve the Punjab imbroglio, were not in favour of replacing Amarinder Singh. The rebels basically want their concerns to be addressed. The truth is that this rebellion was never about a change in leadership but it was to ensure

SHORT TAKES

British Medal for RKFC coach

New Delhi: David Alexander Robertson, coach of Kashmir's famous football club Real Kashmir FC, has been honoured with British Empire Medal (BEM) for his services to the community in the valley and strengthening UK-India relations, a feat he dedicated to the people of Kashmir and the team he has been engaged with.

According to the list released on the occasion of Queen Elizabeth II's birthday on Friday evening, "Manager, Real Kashmir Football Club, India, receives a British Empire Medal (BEM) for services to the community in Kashmir and UK-India relations."

The awards were announced on Saturday by the British government to mark the monarch's official birthday. — *PTI*

Sterling in Queen's B'day Honours list

London: Manchester City and England forward Raheem Sterling was on Friday named in Queen Elizabeth II's Birthday Honours list in recognition of his work to promote racial equality in sport.

The 26-year-old, who has been heavily involved in anti-racism and anti-discrimination campaigns, has been made an MBE (Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire). Sterling, a Premier League and League Cup winner with City this season, has been subjected to racial slurs in stadiums and online during his career.

In 2019, he took part in an anti-racism campaign, "No Room For Racism" and spoke out last year as the Black Lives Matter movement gained traction following the murder of George Floyd in the United States.

 — *AFP*

Ace marathoner Mathur no more

New Delhi: India's 1951 Asian Games marathon bronze medal winner and 1952 Olympian Surat Singh Mathur has died of Covid-19 here. He was 90.

"My uncle passed away on Friday due to Covid-19. He was an Olympian and also a medal winner in the first Asian Games," his nephew Anil Mathur said.

"He is our Hall of Fame athlete. Rest in peace sir. Thank you for making #India proud," the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) said in a tweet.

Mathur is the first athlete from independent India to complete an Olympic marathon race, at the 1952 Helsinki Games. Though Chhota Singh was the first runner from independent India to take part in an Olympic marathon event in the 1948 London Games, he could not finish the race. — *PTI*

Lahiri makes cut at Palmetto golf

Ridgeland, US: Indian golfer Anirban Lahiri managed to make the cut despite carding a disappointing 2-over 73 in the second round of the Palmetto Championship here.

Lahiri, who shot 69 in the opening round, had three bogeys in the last four holes on day two to total an even par 142 and make the cut, which fell at 1-over.

The Indian, who was tied-31st after the first round, dropped to tied-44th.

Lahiri despite his erratic form has missed more cuts than he deserves to, but this time around, he would heaved a sigh of relief after being inside Top-20 at one point.

Chesson Hadley shot 5-under 66 to take a two-stroke lead over World No. 1 Dustin Johnson. — *PTI*

Embiid scores as Sixers pin Hawks

Los Angeles: Joel Embiid finished with 27 points, nine rebounds and eight assists as the Philadelphia 76ers snapped the Atlanta Hawks' run of good fortune at home with a 127-111 win in game three of their NBA Eastern Conference playoff series. The teams split the first two games in Philadelphia, but the Sixers dominated Friday to grab a 2-1 series lead and halt the Hawks' 13-game winning streak at home.

Tobias Harris scored 22 points, Ben Simmons tallied 18 points and seven assists, and Furkan Korkmaz drained three of six from beyond the arc for the 76ers in front of a crowd of 16,400 at State Farm Arena in Atlanta. Embiid had a couple of hard falls during the contest but nothing serious. "I'm OK," said Embiid, who is playing with a cartilage tear in his right knee. — *AFP*

NO DJOKE!

Djokovic stuns 13-time champ Nadal in French Open epic

Paris, June 12: Novak Djokovic handed 13-time champion Rafael Nadal only his third defeat in 16 years and 108 matches at the French Open on Friday to reach his sixth Roland Garros final after an epic showdown which even beat the country's Covid-19 curfew.

In their 58th career clash, Djokovic triumphed 3-6, 6-3, 7-6 (7/4), 6-2 and stays on course to capture a 19th major and become the first man in over 50 years to win all four Slams twice.

Djokovic, the 2016 champion in Paris who had also beaten Nadal at the 2015 tournament, will face Stefanos Tsitsipas in Sunday's final in what will be his 29th championship match at the Slams.

Tsitsipas had earlier become the first Greek to reach a Grand Slam final with a 6-3, 6-3, 4-6, 4-6, 6-3 victory over Germany's Alexander Zverev.

Nadal, 35, remains tied on 20 majors with Roger Federer.

"It was a privilege to face Rafa in such an incredible match," said Djokovic after four hours and 11 minutes of intense action.

He now leads Nadal 30-28 in their career rivalry.

"It's hard to find words for Rafa's achievements at Roland Garros. The amount of wins on this court is incredible," he added.

"You have to climb Mount Everest when you meet him here."

It was Djokovic's second win in eight meetings in Paris with Nadal, a sequence which also included three losses in finals.

It was Nadal's first defeat in 14 semi-finals in the French capital.

"Probably it was not my best day today, even if I fought," said Nadal.

"Sometimes you win, sometimes you lose. I had a big chance. There were some crazy points but there was fatigue there."

Djokovic finished with 50 winners; Nadal committed 55 unforced errors under the relentless assault.

Djokovic had two break points in the opening game of the first set which stretched to 10 minutes but was unable to convert. Nadal made him pay, sprinting away for a 5-0 lead before the top seed got on the board.

Djokovic clung on, retrieving one break to get to 2-5 but Nadal eventually prevailed after one hour on court even if he required seven set points to edge ahead. — *AFP*



Novak Djokovic of Serbia celebrates his victory over Rafael Nadal of Spain in the French Open semifinal at Roland Garros in Paris on Friday. — *AP*

One of my greatest wins: Novak

IT'S JUST ANOTHER DEFEAT FOR NADAL

Paris, June 12: Rafael Nadal shrugged off his epic loss to Novak Djokovic at the French Open insisting "life goes on" as the 13-time champion suffered just his third ever defeat in 108 matches in Paris over 16 years.

Nadal, the defending champion and chasing a record-setting 21st Grand Slam title, refused to dwell on the consequences of his 4-hour 11-minute loss.

"I am sad to have lost in the most important tournament of the year for me, but life goes on, it is nothing more than a defeat on a tennis court," said 35-year-old Nadal.

"If everything goes well, tomorrow I will be at home with my family and friends, and then we will see what is next." — *AFP*

career," said Djokovic.

"Considering the quality of tennis, playing my biggest rival on the court where he has had so much success and has been the dominant force

in the last 15-plus years, and the atmosphere which was completely electric. Just amazing.

"It's hard to find words bigger than all the superlatives you can

KREJCIKOVA LIFTS MAIDEN SLAM CROWN

Paris, June 12: Barbora Krejckikova won her maiden Grand Slam singles title at the French Open on Saturday, beating Russia's Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova to become the first Czech woman in 40 years to conquer Roland Garros.

Krejckikova, ranked 33 in the world and playing just her fifth main draw in a Slams singles event, triumphed 6-1, 2-6, 6-4 for a second career title.

The 25-year-old emulates compatriot Hana Mandlikova who claimed the trophy in Paris in 1981.

The 25-year-old Krejckikova dedicated her victory to her mentor, the former Wimbledon champion Jana Novotna who died of cancer at the age of 49 in 2017.

"It's hard to put into words. I cannot believe I have just won a Grand Slam," said Krejckikova who was still outside the top 100 when the 2020 French Open took place last October.

"I spent a lot of time with Jana before she died. Her last words to me were 'enjoy tennis and try and win a Grand Slam'.

"I know she's looking after me. All this is pretty much because she is looking after me.

"It was amazing that I got the chance to meet her. She was such an inspiration. I miss her and I hope she's really happy."

In a nervy start to the final, Krejckikova was broken in the first game, serving up two double faults. — *AFP*

think of for Rafa's achievements in Roland Garros," added 34-year-old Djokovic who now leads their series 30-28.

"Each time you step on the court with him, you know that you have to kind of climb Mount Everest to win against this guy here."

Nadal bemoaned the humid conditions which became heavier and slower as the evening progressed.

"We had been playing with very warm and high bounces. During the night the situation goes a little bit the other way," he said.

"So the bounce is a little less. The ball gets less top-spin. That's more favourable for him."

Djokovic had two break points in the opening game of the first set which stretched to 10 minutes but was unable to convert. — *AFP*

NATIONAL | FOOTBALL

Brazil women team protest harassment

Sao Paulo, June 12: Players from Brazil's women's team protested against sexual harassment on Friday, days after the president of the national federation was suspended for allegations of the same thing.

Rogério Caboclo was formally accused a week ago before the ethics committee of the Brazilian Football Confederation. A former staffer provided recordings of conversations and text messages. Caboclo denies any wrongdoing. Brazil players including superstar Marta used their social media channels to protest, but didn't name Caboclo, who is not expected to return to his position after the 30-day suspension.

"Every day thousands of people are affected and disrespected by moral and sexual harassment, especially us women," the text says.

"Saying no to harassment goes beyond words, it is about action. We stimulate women and men to call it out!"

The women carried a banner reading "No to harassment" before their friendly against Russia on Friday. Brazil won 3-0.

Marta said after the friendly in Spain that all players and members of the coaching staff made the decision to speak out.

"We are not prejudging (Caboclo), but the facts are there to be investigated,"

● **Rogério Caboclo was formally accused a week ago before the ethics committee of the Brazilian Football Confederation. A former staffer provided recordings of conversations and text messages.**

35-year-old said.

"We needed to show our position."

Their coach Pia Sundhage described the accusation against Caboclo as very serious. She spoke on Thursday amid the Brazil women's team's preparations in Spain for the Tokyo Olympics.

"We spoke with the athletes, informed them of what was going on, and all had the opportunity to speak about it. Each one of us must have responsibility in what we answer," Sundhage said.

"We were a bit overwhelmed by all of that situation, but now it is important to turn our focus to the pitch again."

Brazil's men's national team players did not talk about Caboclo's suspension. Coach Tite said Tuesday it is not for him to discuss what happened to the soccer executive. He spoke after the team's 2-0 win at Paraguay in a match of World Cup qualifiers.

 — *AP*

IWF CONFIRMS CHANU'S OLYMPIC QUALIFICATION

New Delhi, June 12: The International Weightlifting Federation (IWF) on Saturday conformed that star Indian lifter Mirabai Chanu has qualified for the upcoming Tokyo Olympics in the women's 49kg category.

Chanu, the 2017 world champion in weightlifting, had secured her place in Tokyo by winning a bronze medal in the Asian Championship in Tashkent in April with a world record in clean and jerk.

The 26-year-old from Manipur has qualified on the basis of her standings on IWF's Absolute Ranking list. The Indian lifter is ranked second in the 49kg category with 4133,6172 points in her kitty.

"Many congratulations to #TOPSAthlete weightlifter @mirabai_chanu who has qualified for #Tokyo2020 after @iwnet published its Absolute Ranking list

where she is placed 2nd in the women's 49 kg," Sports Authority of India (SAI) tweeted.

Chanu was earlier ranked fourth but North Korea's withdrawal from the Olympics lifted the Indian to the second place. This will be Chanu's second appearance in the Olympics, five years after a disappointing outing in Rio, where she failed to lift any of the weights in clean and jerk to bow out of the event.

In the men's 67 kg category, India's Jeremy Lalrinnunga is ranked 12th and lost the continental quota to Korea's Hak Myeongmok, but the 18-year-old still has a chance to qualify.

The final list will be released on June 25.

As per IWF rules, the top eight lifters in each of the 14 weight categories, including seven in the women's group, are eligible to compete in the Games. — *PTI*

ODI SERIES | vs LANKA

Indian team to isolate, train

New Delhi, June 12: India's white ball squad, led by Shikhar Dhawan, will quarantine in Mumbai from June 14 to 28 and undergo six RT-PCR tests on alternate days before flying off to Colombo for the six-match series against Sri Lanka, starting on July 13.

It is understood that all the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) that will be followed by the Lanka-bound squad will be same as those of the first team currently in the United Kingdom for the World Test Championship final and five-match series against England.

"All the rules will be same like we followed in England. The outstanding players will come by charter flight and some fly business class of commercial airline," a BCCI source privy to development said.

"They will do seven days of room quarantine and then can meet in common areas inside the bio-bubble. The players will do gym sessions in staggered manner."

● **While the three-match ODI series starts on July 13, it is expected that Indian team will have match simulation practice (situational training) after individual sessions.**

While the three-match ODI series starts on July 13, the Indian team will have match simulation practice after individual sessions, following three days of room quarantine at the team hotel in Colombo.

"It will be just like what's happening in England. Match situations will be created and that's how the intra-squad training will be held.

"You can't have your main players get out off the first ball and not bat again or bat for the whole innings.

Everyone needs training so it won't be practice games as such."

The Indian teams over the years have always stayed at the Taj Samudra Hotel in Colombo. — *PTI*

Henry strikes to boost Kiwis

Birmingham, June 12: Matt Henry removed both England openers before tea on the third day to leave New Zealand in command of the second and final Test at Edgbaston on Saturday.

England had slumped to 18-2 in off just six overs in their second innings at theinterval, still 67 runs behind New Zealand's first innings 388.

Henry, one of an exceptional six New Zealand changes to the side that drew the first Test at Lord's, had superb interval figures of 2-7 in three overs.

He struck with just the second ball of England's innings when he had informed opener Rory Burns well caught in the slips by stand-in skipper Tom Latham for a duck.

New Zealand's close-catching, far superior to that of England this series, also accounted for Dom Sibley, who fell to Henry for 10 after being well-taken in the cordon by Daryl Mitchell.

England have not lost a home Test series in seven years. Earlier, Stuart Broad took an impressive 4-48 in 23.1 overs but New Zealand still led by 85 runs on first innings.

 — *AFP*

Brief scores (Day 3, at Tea): England 303 & 18/2 (Crawley 10 batting; Henry 2/7) vs New Zealand 388 (Conway 80, Young 82, Taylor 80; Broad 4/48).



New Zealand's Matt Henry (third from right) celebrates with teammates the dismissal of Dom Sibley of England on the third day of their second Test on Saturday. — *AP*

HOLDING SLAMS ENGLAND'S 'MOMENT OF UNITY' GESTURE

Birmingham, June 12: West Indies great Michael Holding has criticised England cricket team's "moment of unity" gesture in the ongoing Test series against New Zealand, saying it was not supporting Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement but giving subtle meaning of "all lives matter".

England players wore T-

shirts sporting messages against any racism, religious intolerance, sexism and other anti-discrimination slogans, having decided to not take the knee after the series against West Indies last year.

Holding, who is a passionate advocate for equality in cricket and the wider community, feels the gesture is akin to saying "all lives

matter" rather than supporting BLM movement.

"What this England (cricket) team are doing now with this 'moment of unity', that is not supporting Black Lives Matter," Holding told 'Sky Sports'.

"What you are doing there is, when I say 'black lives matter', you are telling me 'all lives matter', the 67-year-old added. — *PTI*

PROTEAS PACE ATTACK TOO HOT FOR WINDIES

Gros-Islet (Saint Lucia), June 12: South Africa's relentless pace attack left the West Indies facing the prospect of an innings defeat inside three days as they limped to 82 for four, still needing 143 runs to make the tourists bat again, at stumps on the second day of the first Test in St Lucia on Friday.

The West Indies were routed for 97 — their lowest-ever total in a Test innings against the Proteas — after choosing to bat first on day one.

In their second innings on Friday, the home side again laboured to come to terms with the consistent quality and intensity of the visitors' pacers and seamers.

Earlier, Quinton de Kock had flailed a flagging West Indies bowling attack on the way to an unbeaten 141 to lift South Africa to a first-innings total of 322 and a commanding first-innings lead of 225 runs.

He reached the century landmark with a six, one of seven in an innings embellished further with 12 fours off 170 deliveries.

● **Brief scores (Day 2):** West Indies 97 & 82/4 (Chase 21 batting, Blackwood 10 batting) vs South Africa 322 (de Kock 141 n.o., Holder 4/75).

With Moore bandaged, the momentum swung towards Wales and they dominated the remainder of the half.