

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | FRIDAY 11 | JUNE 2021

WEATHER



Max: 34°C
Min: 21°C
Rainfall: Nil

ASTROGUIDE

Pilava: Vaikasi 28
Tithi: Pradhamai
Star: Mirugasirisham
Rahukalam: 10.30 am to 12 noon
Yamagandam: 3 pm to 4.30 pm

PRAYERS

Fajar: 4.23 am
Luhar: 12.13 pm
Asar: 3.33 pm
Maghrib: 6.34 pm
Isha: 7.52 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.44 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.59 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 6.29 AM
MOONSET TOMORROW 8.28 PM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+85,883)	(+3,326)
2,92,68,010	3,63,022

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+16,813)	358
TN: 23,08,838	28,528

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

17,53,56,048

DEATHS

37,82,452

COUNTRIES
AREAS WITH
CASES 219

worldometers.info

China suspends seafood imports from 6 Indian cos

Beijing: China on Thursday suspended the import of frozen seafood products from six Indian marine export companies for a week after Chinese customs claimed they found traces of coronavirus were detected on the packaging. Since early last year, China has been testing imported frozen food products from all over the world. It has periodically suspended imports from companies after finding traces of the virus on the packaging.

Ramdev changes mind on Covid jab; praises docs

Haridwar: Yoga guru Ramdev, who had said he does not need the Covid vaccine as he has protection of yoga and ayurveda, on Thursday did a summersault, saying he will soon get the jab and described doctors as 'God's envoys on earth'. Ramdev had earlier stirred a controversy with his comments on the efficacy of modern drugs against COVID-19, drawing the ire of the medical fraternity.

COUNTER

POINT



Only 2 seasons in metro cities... Covid season and flood season!

STATE | 3

No govt scheme will harm environment, says minister



G. BABU JAYAKUMAR,
D. SEKAR | DC
CHENNAI, JUNE 10

More relaxations in the lockdown now in force are expected in Chennai and areas outside the 11 districts, where Covid-19 cases had gone up considerably in the second wave of the pandemic, as a plethora of suggestions were made at the meeting chaired by Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Thursday.

While the continuation of the strict lockdown measures was recommended for the districts of Coimbatore, The Nilgiris, Tiruppur, Erode, Salem, Karur, Namakkal, Thanjavur, Tiruvavur, Naga-



Chief Minister M.K. Stalin inspects the site at Perambur in Chennai where the Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board is about to construct houses on Thursday.

pattinam and Mayiladuthurai, the rest of the state may see the opening of more commercial and business establishments from Monday.

The officers who took part in the discussions found the e-registration process, currently mandated for those coming out of their homes, not serving

WORLD | 5

India to get a share of 80 mn US vaccines



any purpose and recommended its cancellation though the decision of the government would be known only on Friday or Saturday when the Chief Minister makes the announcement.

However, the officials opposed the opening up of public transport immediately and said that the government could wait for some more time for the spread of the virus to come down.

A suggestion was made to let the faithful visit their places of worship by strictly adhering to the Covid-19 protocols and also let fitness freaks to use the parks for morning walks, jogging and exercise.

PANEL ON NEET TO SUBMIT REPORT IN A MONTH

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 10

The state government on Thursday nominated educationists Dr G.R. Ravindranath and Dr L. Jawahar Nesan and a host of top level government officials as members of the Justice A.K. Rajan Committee, formed to look into the adverse impact of the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) on the prospects of students from socio-economically backward communities realising their aspirations to join medical colleges in the last few years and recommend ways to set them right. Additional director of medical education will be the secretary and coordinator of the committee, which is expected to finalise its report in a month. The government will take the next course of action on NEET based on the report, Chief Minister M.K. Stalin said.

Secretaries of health, school education, law, secretary for special service in the health department and director of medical education are also the members of the panel.

India reports 6,148 deaths as Bihar revises Covid toll

DC CORRESPONDENT
WITH AGENCY INPUTS
NEW DELHI, JUNE 10

With Bihar revising its figures and putting the total number of fatalities caused by Covid-19 at 9,429, India reported its highest single-day spike of 6,148 deaths, pushing the toll to 3,59,676. This is even as daily infections have been steadily showing a downward trend -- with 94,052 fresh Covid infections reported in a day -- less than one lakh for the third straight day.

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

The total number of Covid cases in India till now stand at 2,91,83,121 out of which 2,76,55,493 people have recuperated till date, according to the Union health ministry's data updated on Thursday.

Active cases have

1st phase vaccination off target, says Centre

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 10

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

In the meeting, chaired by Union health secretary Rajesh Bhushan and called to review the progress of vaccination, it was highlighted that while the national average for the first dose administration

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

among healthcare workers (HCWs) is 82 per cent, for the second dose it is only 56 per cent. The coverage in 18 states and Union territories, including Punjab, Maharashtra, Haryana, Tamil Nadu, Delhi and Assam is below the national average in this aspect.

For frontline workers, the national average of first-dose coverage is 85 per cent but for the second dose it is only 47 per cent. Nineteen states and Union territories, including Bihar, Haryana, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Puducherry, Telangana, Karnataka and Punjab have reported a second-dose coverage below the national average.

A net decline of 63,463 cases has been recorded in the total number of Covid-19 cases in a span of 24 hours, the data updated at 8 am showed. ■ **See P4**

MODI TO ATTEND G-7 MEET IN VIRTUAL MODE

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC
NEW DELHI, JUNE 10

India on Thursday announced that Prime Minister Narendra Modi would participate in virtual format in the outreach sessions of the G7-summit that will be held at Cornwall, Britain, this Saturday and Sunday in a "hybrid mode".

New Delhi had announced last month itself that Mr Modi would not attend the G-7 summit in-person due to the Covid situation in India.

Mr Modi had been invited by his British counterpart Boris Johnson in January this year to attend the summit as a special invitee. The theme for the G-7 summit is 'Build Back Better' and the four priority areas decided by the host Britain pertain to the Covid pandemic, free and fair trade, tackling climate change and championing shared values and open societies. India is not a member of the G-7 grouping comprises seven nations—Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

SPORT | 8

Boxer Dingko dies after battle with cancer



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UP CM Yogi in Delhi amid talk of cabinet reshuffle

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 10

Amid speculations of a possible shuffle in the Uttar Pradesh cabinet, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Thursday met Union home minister Amit Shah and is expected to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP president J.P. Nadda on Friday.

The chief minister's visit to the national capital has come after the BJP faced a major setback in the recent panchayat polls, and with crucial Assembly polls in the state are lined up for early next year. The BJP state unit is also abuzz with rumours about the growing rift between the chief minister and a section of party leaders on his way of functioning and growing disenchantment among Brahmin voters with the BJP under Yogi Adityanath's rule. Former Congress leader Jitin Prasad's entry into the BJP earlier this week is being seen as the BJP's attempt to placate the Brahmin votebank.



Sources said the chief minister sought an appointment with the prime minister last month to discuss some state-related issues, including Covid-19 relief measures. The UP government had faced severe criticism over its handling of the second wave of the global pandemic, and the BJP leadership was said to be unhappy about it. The chief minister is likely to present a report card to Mr Modi on his government's initiatives to battle the pandemic.

Sources said the impact of the farmers' agitation, especially in the Jat-dominated areas in the NCR region, preparedness for

the assembly polls and the state government's efforts against Covid-19, especially during the second wave, will be part of the discussion in the chief minister's meetings with Mr Modi, Mr Shah and Mr Nadda.

While the UP CM met Mr Shah for more than an hour on Thursday, the latter also held a meeting with Apna Dal chief Anurpriya Patel after his meeting with Yogi Adityanath. The BJP and its ally Apna Dal had fielded separate candidates in the recent panchayat polls, and the latter's performance, especially in and around Mr Modi's parliamentary constituency Varanasi, was better than that of the BJP.

Amid reports of dissension, BJP general secretary (organisation) B.L. Santhosh had visited UP recently and had met ministers, MLAs, MPs and the chief minister, apparently to gauge the situation in the government and also the organisation. He had also reviewed the party's preparedness for the coming assembly elections.

Delhi police step up border security fearing farmer push

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 10

The Delhi police on Thursday stepped up its security deployment at all the border points connecting the national capital with the neighbouring states of Haryana and Uttar Pradesh after they got "intelligence inputs" that around 50,000 farmers were planning to enter Delhi. The farmers' organisations, however, said

there were no such plans for a march.

A senior police officer said they received inputs that one of the farmers' unions had issued a call for farmers to come from the Panipat toll plaza to the Singhu border, but their posters also mentioned going to Delhi. "Our staff at all the border points, including the protest sites of Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur, are performing their duties

round the clock, but we have just strengthened our presence at various border points in the wake of the call. All internal and outside forces have been mobilised to the maximum," an officer said.

Farmers have been protesting at the Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur border points of the national capital for over six months against the three newly-enacted farm laws.

Dominica shuts door on Choksi

DC CORRESPONDENT
WITH INPUTS FROM AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, JUNE 10

Indian fugitive businessman Mehul Choksi who fights a legal battle to stop his extradition to India received a jolt on Thursday when Dominica, where he was apprehended recently, declared him a "prohibited immigrant". It is, however, unclear if the step will lead to his deportation to India.

A notice issued by Dominica's ministry of



national security and home affairs on May 25 reportedly asked the police to remove

Mr Choksi from the island nation as he had received no permission to enter it as per the Immigration and Passport Act of the country.

Choksi had fled India in 2018 after allegedly defrauding Punjab National Bank in a 13,500-crore scam. He later took citizenship in Antigua and Barbuda, which could come handy for him to continue with the legal fight even if he is expelled from Dominica. Antiguan Prime Minister Gaston Browne is on record

saying if Dominica deported him to Antigua, "then as a citizen, and even though his citizenships is unsettled, the reality is he still enjoys constitutional and legal protections as a citizen."

"We have no doubt that his citizenship undoubtedly will be revoked as he may not have disclosed certain material and information. Even though our act states that automatically the citizenship will be revoked, there is a process," the Prime Minister had said.



President Joe Biden and first lady Jill Biden are greeted by British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and his wife Carrie Johnson, ahead of the G-7 summit, Thursday. — AP

SBI

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SHORT TAKES

Customs seize 1.25 kg of gold

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 10

Chennai air customs seized 1.25 kg of gold from a passenger who arrived here at the city airport from Dubai. The passenger has been arrested, the customs said. Based on intelligence, the customs officials at the Chennai airport intercepted a passenger identified as Kabari Samino Jesaiah (26) of Kanyakumari who arrived from Dubai by FlyDubai flight FZ-8517 on suspicion of carrying gold.

During a personal search, nine packets of gold paste weighing 1.42 kg were found stitched inside the waist belt and ankle portion of his jeans. On extraction 1.25 kg of 24 K purity gold valued at ₹63.20 lakhs was recovered and seized under Customs Act. Kabari was arrested. Further investigation is in progress.

CPWD engineer arrested by CBI on graft charges

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 10

The Central Bureau of Investigation arrested an executive engineer, the Central Public Works Department of India, zonal office, Madurai and two private contractors in connection with a graft charge on Thursday. The CBI has registered a case against them and remanded them to judicial custody.

According to sources, the executive engineer conspired with the contractors for receipt of illegal gratification of Rs.50,000 for clearing the bills of private company and another Rs.1 lakh for the purpose of refunding the GST. A trap was laid and during the proceedings, an amount of Rs.70,000 was recovered from the senior official. He reportedly had demanded the bribe from contractors. Searches were conducted at the premises of the executive engineer at Madurai, which led to recovery of cash of Rs.1,85,000, kept in different covers and allegedly received by him from various other contractors. The accused were produced before the Special Judge for CBI Cases, Madurai. The court remanded them to judicial custody for 14 days.

Iskcon conducts Gita Made Easy

Chennai: Iskcon Chennai and Studygita.com presents Gita Made Easy, a 18-day free course on Bhagavat Gita from June 18. The course summarizes the Bhagavat Gita and provides important life lessons, equips its participants with a better, peaceful life. The course will be facilitated on online platforms such as Facebook and YouTube. After completion of the course, participants will be awarded a certificate of completion. Gita Made Easy will commence on June 18 and will be facilitated in English and Tamil (separate batches) between 7-8pm every day.

The course is free and to Register go to www.studygita.com/register, Whats App 9840229226.

36 dts without single dose of Covid vaccine

T. SUDHEESH | DC
CHENNAI, JUNE 10

The shortage of vaccines has badly affected the inoculation drive in the state. Health minister Ma. Subramanian said that 36 districts did not have a single dose to start vaccination on Thursday morning. "We had only 1,050 doses left, that too in Chennai," he said.

However, the state was provided 85,000 doses of Covaxin by afternoon. "Steps have been taken to distribute doses to the districts right away. We were told there will be another consignment of 3 lakh doses on Friday. We are expecting that it will be delivered on time. The state still has to get 37 lakh doses of the May allocation," said the minister. Saying the government will be able to make inoculation fast if vaccines are provided without delay, the minister pointed out that 45,000 Covid beds were vacant across the state.

The state government

FACTS IN FIGURES

■ The state has till now received 1,01,63,000 vaccines and administered 97,62,957 vaccines. The state is expected to receive 37 lakh vaccines, in which 6.5 lakh will be delivered between June 10 and June 13, after which the vaccines will be distributed to districts.

has been reaching out to the Centre and vaccine manufacturers like Serum Institute of India and Bharat Biotech, requesting immediate supply of vaccines due to the acute shortage. On Tuesday, the minister had said the state had received a schedule of 6.6 lakh doses of vaccines by June 13 from the Centre. After a couple of days the schedule is received, state is provided only 85,000 doses. The number of vaccinations has gone down

Vaccines arrive in Chennai

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 10

Even as the Tamil Nadu medical department announced that 36 districts in the state had run out of vaccines, the Centre on Thursday dispatched 85,000 doses of Covaxin and 24,000 doses of Covishield for vaccinating people in the state.

According to sources, 85,000 doses of the

Covaxin vaccine arrived at the Chennai airport from Hyderabad airlifted by private airlines flights on Thursday morning. Similarly, 24,000 doses of Covidshield, dispatched from the Centre arrived here from Mumbai in the evening.

Health department officials received the vaccine and it was taken to the vaccine storage Centre at the DMS complex in the city.

minister.

According to senior epidemiologist Dr Jayaprakash Muliyl, the state especially in the urban areas has developed a significant amount of herd immunity since the first wave. "It's evident that the massive vaccination drives helped the developed world reduce the severity of Covid-19 in humans. Likewise, we too have to make vaccines available to the public at earliest."

Two arrested for assault, robbery

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 10

The police arrested two persons on the charge of attacking and robbing a man of his mobile and cash in Nandambakkam.

The arrested were identified as Akash (20) of Ashok Nagar and Avinash (21) of K.K. Nagar. The duo allegedly intercepted the complainant riding a motorbike and stole his mobile phone and cash.

According to the police, the victim, Mohammed Arsath (28), a resident of Agatheeswarar temple street in Nandambakkam, an employee of a private security agency was returning home on his two-wheeler late on Tuesday night. When he was near Nandambakkam Condonment school, two men on a motorbike intercepted him. They brandished a knife and asked him to give away his mobile phone. However, when he resisted, they allegedly attacked him and fled the scene with his phone and cash.

Arsath immediately alerted the police control room. A team from the Nandambakkam police station on routine rounds nabbed the accused near Manapakkam within four hours of the incident.

The victim who suffered injuries in the assault is undergoing treatment, the police said.

The Nandambakkam police seized a two-wheeler and a mobile phone from the arrested. Further investigations are underway.

Wait for your job



A 'no vaccination' board kept at Kodambakkam on Thursday.

—DC

Don't use stadiums, sports complexes as commercial places, MP urges rail min

OP ARULN | DC
CHENNAI, JUNE 10

Lok Sabha member S. Venkatesan has demanded the railway ministry not to convert stadiums and sports complexes as commercial places. In a letter sent to railway minister Piyush Goyal on Thursday, the CPI(M) MP from Madurai said, "I am shocked to note the move of railways to hand over 15 railway stadiums and sports complexes to the Rail Land Development Authority for commercial development".

The MP said even as

people are worried about privatisation of railway production units and privatisation of passenger services, the present move to hand over 15 railway stadiums and sports complexes to private players is anti-people and anti-national. The Railway Board in a letter dated May 18, 2021, stated that the Rail Land Development Authority be handed over all the documents related to the 15 stadiums and sports complexes to enable them develop the same for commercial purposes.

The Indian railway has

a sports promotion board, having 50 per cent international players and one-third of medal winners mostly drawn from employees of lower categories. Among others, cricket legend M S Dhoni, sprint queen P T Usha were drawn from ticket checking category and many employees in the lower categories have sprung up in sports due to accessibility of sports facilities and infrastructure in Indian railways to them. And of the 21 Olympic medals India had won, 13 were bagged by railway employees.

Tightening norms



Attendants of Covid patients were asked to give details and phone numbers to volunteers who in turn will deliver food to those admitted to GH. They were asked to wear a PPE kit if they insisted on entering the corona ward. A scene in front of the government general hospital in the city on Thursday.

—DC



Greater Chennai Corporation lines up portable readymade shops on R A Puram grounds as part of Smary City project on Thursday.

—DC

IIT-M to develop VTS for VOC port trust to monitor maritime traffic

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 10

Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IITM) researchers will develop an indigenous Vessel Traffic Software (VTS) to monitor maritime traffic. This will cater to the increasing maritime traffic and help keep pace with global technological developments in the maritime domain.

A memorandum of understanding was signed recently with VO Chidambaranar (VOC) Port Trust, Thoothukudi. A VTS is required under the international convention for the safety of life at sea.

This research project will be

led by National Technology Centre for Ports Waterways and Coasts (NTCPWC), a Centre of Excellence at IIT Madras that functions as the technology arm of the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, Government of India.

T.K. Ramachandran, Chairman, V.O. Chidambaranar Port Trust, Tuticorin, said that the VOC Port was the first Indian major port in the country to sign MoU with NTCPWC for development of Indigenous software for VTS System. The development of the indigenous system will be a game changer in Indian maritime industry, he said.

Book on Covid-19 released by doc

DC CORRESPONDENT,
CHENNAI, JUNE 10

A book on Covid 19 written by Dr. M. S. Kanwar, Senior Consultant, Department of Pulmonary, Critical Care and Sleep Medicine, Apollo Hospitals along with 79 other senior healthcare professionals was released on Thursday.

Dr Kanwar said that the book will also become a ready reckoner for patients and their families to get detailed information. The book has been put together with basic statistical insights, scientific data and plethora of new reports gathered from World

Health Organization and advisories issued by National Health Services of some of the most Covid 19 impacted countries across the globe. The book not only encapsulates the challenges faced in Covid care but also elaborates on vaccination and treatment.

Dr. Prathap Reddy, Chairman, Apollo Hospitals Group, said that the book was dedicated to thousands of health care workers who lost their lives in the line of duty. The content of the book is the distillation of the learnings and experience of the author from the pandemic, he said.

CAUTION, VACCINE KEY AS TN GEARS UP TO UNLOCK



B. Vijayalakshmi

Viewpoint

With Tamil Nadu leading in the number of Covid cases, followed by Kerala and Maharashtra, the state must 'unlock' gradually and cautiously. Yes, people can

heave a sigh of relief that the brutal second Covid wave is waning, but they cannot drop their guard by stepping out without a mask, overcrowding and not maintaining social dis-

tance in public places.

The second wave had left Tamil Nadu battered and bruised with the state recording almost 30,000 cases a day.

With fewer beds and inadequate oxygen supply, hospitals struggled to handle hundreds of cases lining up in ambulances every day. The deadly virus had caused loss of lives and livelihood, leaving families shattered. The second wave was a warning of what we may be up

against if we continue to recklessly violate Covid protocol.

The government must continue to be on high alert, ramp up testing and conduct sero surveys across cities and villages. These timely measures will rein in outbreaks and keep track of people's immunity. High genome sequencing will also aid in identifying new Covid variants and help fight against the probable third wave.

However, the revved-up vaccination drive in the

state hit a speed-breaker this week with districts looking for fresh supplies as vaccine stocks had run out. The surge in cases led to an increase in demand for vaccines and owing to depleting stocks, people who lined up to get their jabs have been turned away in the last two days.

As the Tamil Nadu government gears up to ease more lockdown curbs next week as cases have been falling, people should never let complacency set in. The

callous ones should not be spared. And it is imperative that the Central government ensures adequate supply of Covid vaccines to all states.

>>>>>>

Greater Chennai corporation health staff conduct door-to-door nasal swab test at Puduket on Thursday.

—DC



OTHER STORY

One dead, 2 ill after drinking sanitiser

DC CORRESPONDENT
ARIYALUR, JUNE 10

A 30-year-old auto-rickshaw driver died and two of his friends were hospitalized after allegedly consuming sanitiser as a substitute for alcohol at Ariyalur on Monday.

Police said the deceased was identified as Kuzanchi alias Elangovan of Ariyalur.

On Monday Elangovan and his friends Mohan and Saravanan consumed sanitiser and were admitted to government medical college hospital, Ariyalur.

Later, the deceased was referred to GMCH Thanjavur where he died on Wednesday night not responding to treatment. Ariyalur police are investigating.

SDPI protests against fuel price hike

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUCHY, JUNE 10

Members of the Tiruchy district unit of the Socialist Democratic Party of India (SDPI) led by their district president Imam Hassan staged a demonstration at Tiruchy on Thursday against the abnormal hike in the prices of petrol and diesel.

The demonstrators carried placards and demanded the union government to reduce its taxes on petroleum products and slash the price of petrol and diesel immediately.

Seven huts gutted in Tiruvavur

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUVAVUR, JUNE 10

Seven huts were destroyed in a fire mishap at Overkudi village near Thiruthuraipoondi in Tiruvavur district on Thursday.

Police said unidentified miscreants set fire on bamboo plants and a spark spread to the nearby huts, leading to the mishap.

The fire and rescue department personnel rushed to the spot and doused the fire.

Thiruthuraipoondi MLA K. Marimuthu visited the affected people and distributed relief materials.



Minister for food and civil supplies R. Sakkarapani and Coimbatore District Collector S. Nagarajan inspect ration shops in Coimbatore on Thursday. — DC

Take steps to drain sewage water: Pandian

G. SRINIVASAN | DC
THANJAVUR, JUNE 10

Thamizhaga Anaithu Vivasaya Sangangalin Orunginaippu Kuzhu coordinator P.R. Pandian has appealed to the state government to take steps to stop sewage water mingling in Vadavar at Karanthai near Thanjavur.

He visited the site where riverwater remained polluted. He told the media that Vadavar runs to a distance of 30 km from Thanjavur till Moovar-kottai in the name of Vadavar and from there it runs to a distance of 70 km above ground level as Vadavar extension canal. It enters Kannar through Thirumeniyar in Muthupetta.

It irrigates 72,000 acres of land in Thanjavur, Amaretti, Needamangalam, Mannargudi, Madukkur, and Kottu unions.

No govt scheme will harm environment, says minister

DC CORRESPONDENT
PUDUKKOTTAI, JUNE 10

Environment, sports and youth welfare minister Siva V. Meyyanathan said there is no place in Tamil Nadu for any scheme which affects the environment.

The minister took part in planting of saplings at GMCH Pudukkottai on behalf of Udhayanidhi Stalin Peravai on Thursday. He informed that Chief Minister M.K. Stalin will take a good decision shortly on the neutrino project.

He said small forests (kurungkadu) will be established without affecting the environment across Pudukkottai district and special staff will be appointed to maintain these small forests.

Is it a triangular contest in AIADMK?

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR & D. SEKAR | DC
CHENNAI, JUNE 10

The game of one-upmanship in the AIADMK assumed the contours of a triangular fight with all the three contestants, Edappadi K Palaniswami, O Panneerselvam and V K Sasikala, desperately vying with each other to gain control over the party in their own ways.

The day after wall posters appeared in Tirunelveli upholding the supremacy of Panneerselvam in the party, supporters of Palaniswami came up with their own posters thanking the MLAs for electing him as Leader of the Opposition and Sasikala's supporters released yet another audio clip of a conversation she had with a fawning cadre.

It was Sasikala's 23rd audio tape that had been made public by her supporters to drive home the point that the cadre of the AIADMK were keen on her holding the reins of the party. In all the tapes, Sasikala is heard saying that she would come and take control and in some of them she talks about her sacrifices for building the party.

While it may look like Sasikala's style of luring individual party cadre towards her by sending across the message that many of them are already in her side, legally the AIADMK, particularly the Legislative Party, is with Palaniswami and Panneerselvam with

Palaniswami having the upper hand at the moment.

Though Panneerselvam is overtly playing along with Palaniswami for obvious reasons – he is a signatory of the letter urging only MLAs to attend the meeting on Monday at the party headquarters with a clear instruction to cadre and functionaries not to go over there in view of Covid-19 norms – there is a doubt among some party leaders if he covertly supporting Sasikala.

Since the Palaniswami camp had made it very clear repeatedly that Sasikala has been dismissed from the party and that she or any of her relatives, which include the TMMK founder T T V Dhinakaran, can never dream of re-entering the AIADMK, Panneerselvam has maintained a discreet silence on the issue.

The dice, however, is loaded in favour of Palaniswami at the moment as he has the overwhelming support of the Legislative Party, of which he is the head. Also he is seen by many cadre as the only leader competent enough to take on the DMK.

Perhaps to dispel that myth, Panneerselvam issued two statements attacking the DMK government on Thursday. For, he was accused of kowtowing to the DMK through his earlier three statements praising the new DMK government.

One of the statements,

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC
OOTY, JUNE 10

As the political spectrum in the state is agog over EPS-OPS rift, in Nilgiris the AIADMK functionaries have started holding secret discussions to decide on changing sides to gain party posts and to create an impression that they are not averse to Sasikala's re-entry into the party.

While most of the plum party posts are being enjoyed by the EPS supporters in Nilgiris now, the EPS backers who could not get the party posts which they had aspired earlier have begun to hold discussions with the OPS supporters to shift

their allegiance to OPS, who is the coordinator of AIADMK and is in a better position to appoint cadres to the different party posts.

A senior AIADMK functionary, on condition of anonymity, said that like him quite a few party seniors and cadres in the Nilgiris were divested of their party posts because they had been branded as OPS supporters.

"In the Coimbatore region, which includes the Nilgiris, former minister S.P. Velumani, a strong supporter of EPS, still calls the shots and keeps the OPS supporters at bay. The OPS supporters are given step-motherly treatment in the party. Now, it is widely believed

that OPS will soon patch up with Sasikala to gain an upper hand in the party. The election results showed that a united AIADMK would have done well in the hustings. The AIADMK's prospects were spoiled by the break-away AMMK and other alliance parties like the DMDK. So, most of the AIADMK cadres have begun to believe that Sasikala's re-entry to AIADMK is the need of the hour. So, the OPS supporters as well as those in the EPS group who would like to change sides due to the changing political situation in the AIADMK are holding discussions to strengthen their group in Nilgiris to call the shots in future", he added.

however, turned out to be a damp squib as the government had already withdrawn its proposal to hold entrance examinations, if needed, for admitting students in Class XI in the event of too many students seeking for the same branch of study.

So Panneerselvam was late in asking for the withdrawal of the entrance examination. The other statement was against the alleged proposal of the government to shift the Multi-Specialty Hospital inside the Omandurar Government Estates to the King's Institute premises

in Guindy.

It is common knowledge that the building where the hospital now functions inside the Government Estates was constructed by M Karunanidhi during his last tenure as Chief Minister and it was designed and meant to accommodate the State Secretariat, along with the Assembly.

Now Panneerselvam fears that it would be repurposed to function as the State Secretariat or Assembly or a State Legislative Council (which could be formed by the new government). Though

the government as such had not made any announcements on such a move, Panneerselvam has made a bid to launch an attack on the government on some pretext.

Whatever is the purpose of Panneerselvam's sudden bravado, the bid to overthrow Palaniswami, who is now having an upper hand in the party, continues. What is not clear is if Panneerselvam is in league with Sasikala or if both of them are on their own fighting their independent battles to storm into the AIADMK bastion.

Exempt TN from Neet, allow admissions on HSE marks this year: AIADMK

Chennai, June 10: Insisting that admissions to various courses including medical in Tamil Nadu be allowed based on marks in the higher secondary examination for this year in view of Covid-19, the opposition AIADMK on Thursday again urged the Centre to exempt the state from common entrance examinations including Neet. The criteria for admissions to college

courses should be based on the marks to be awarded by a committee to be set up for this purpose, AIADMK's coordinator O Panneerselvam said. In a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a copy of which was made available to the media here, he said the performance grading index of states and union territories for 2019/20 fiscal, published by the school edu-

cation and literacy department of the union education ministry, stated that Tamil Nadu crossed the threshold of 90 percent i.e. A++ grade and stood first along with four other states. "This index was released after examining 70 indicators. This scheme is mainly focused on quality of education to catalyse transformational change in the field of school education," he said.

The index took into account various parameters and the standard of education in Tamil Nadu is extremely good. "Hence, I am of the view that there is no need to test the ability of the students by conducting entrance examination for admission to all professional and other courses including medical courses," the AIADMK leader said in the letter. —PTI

COFFEE-BREAK

Your day today By Dr C.V.B. Subrahmanyam



Aries: Today you will focus on dealing with family issues. You will not be the cause of the problem, but you could certainly bring about some valuable solutions.



Taurus: You will be able to impress others with your knowledge and enthusiasm. New partnerships done during this period will be favorable.



Gemini: You will be confident to accept any challenges today. Everything will look beautiful to you and your positive attitude will turn things in your favor.



Cancer: You will make new friends and experience new things today. Do not get emotionally involved with a person who is committed to someone else.



Leo: Sensitive issues might be touched at home which will play havoc with your mental peace. Call someone you haven't heard from for a long time.



Virgo: You are most likely to receive financial gains today. Job opportunities will arise for those who are unemployed. Make sure all your facts are correct before you speak anything.

You share your b'day with

Peter Dinklage is an American actor and producer. Hereceived acclaim for portraying Tyrion Lannister in the television series Game of Thrones for which he won the Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Drama Series.



Libra: You will get substantial time with your beloved but your relationship will suffer because of minor disagreements. Avoid new alliances today.



Scorpio: There could be a sensitive situation at work which might add a lot of pressure to your mind. Investment during this period will bring long-term gains.



Sagittarius: Unexpected expenses will put you in tension but don't worry as financial gains will arise soon. This week a disturbing news will cause worry.



Capricorn: If you must stay indoors, distract yourself from your thoughts with the help of a book or a movie. In the latter half of the day you will build up new associations and important contacts.

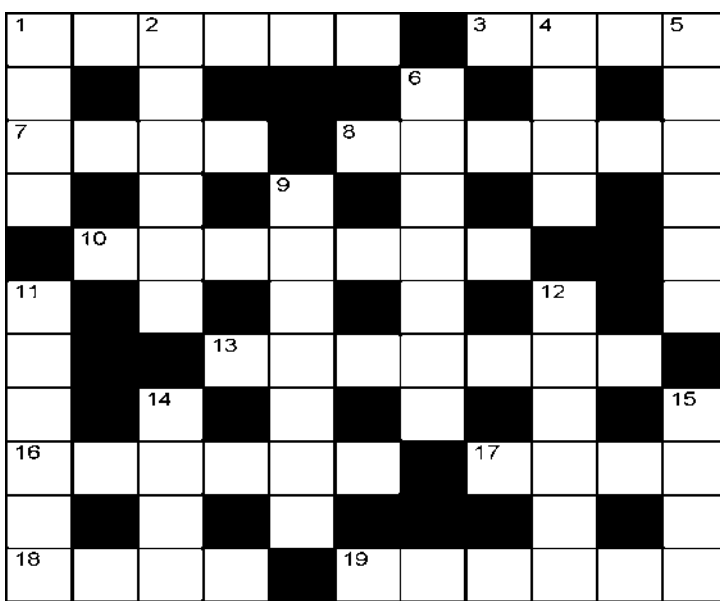


Aquarius: You will have an urge to learn new skills and techniques. You will gather knowledge through books, Internet and discussions with experienced people. Losses are likely today.



Pisces: Minor health problems could trouble you. Efforts made in the past will bring rewards today. Health needs special attention as you try to cope up with this stressful and tensed period.

QUICK CROSSWORD



Across

1. Portray (6)
3. Diet (4)
7. Passage money (4)
8. Furtive (6)
10. Germ (7)
13. Fir cone (anag) (7)
16. Heart (6)
17. Fair-minded (4)
18. Without feeling (4)
19. On the cards (6)

Down

1. Skilful (4)
2. Licence (6)
4. Space inside roof (4)
5. Chaos (6)
6. French wine (7)
9. Bent (7)
11. Out of order (6)
12. Drop in price (6)
14. Clip (4)
15. Brace (4)

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

Across: 1. Profusion, 6. Inert, 7. Lodge, 9. Oust, 10. Source, 12. Infirmary, 14. Sumo, 17. Spurn, 18. Amble, 19. Threatens.

Down: 2. Reeks, 3. Fate, 4. Sallow, 5. Order, 6. Ironies, 8. Eyesore, 11. Fringe, 13. Flush, 15. Urban, 16. Pact.

Word Mine

C
H
E
Y
N
I
C
R
A

TODAY'S RATINGS: 30 AVERAGE, 33 GOOD; 36 OUTSTANDING

How many words of four or more letters can you make from the letters shown in today's puzzle? In making a word, each letter may be used once only. Each word must contain the letter at the top of the pyramid. There should be at least one nine letter word. Plurals, foreign words and proper names are not allowed.

South: C, H, E, Y, N, I, C, R, A
West: C, H, E, Y, N, I, C, R, A
East: C, H, E, Y, N, I, C, R, A
North: C, H, E, Y, N, I, C, R, A
Center: C, H, E, Y, N, I, C, R, A
Diagonal: C, H, E, Y, N, I, C, R, A
Opening word: C, H, E, Y, N, I, C, R, A

jumble

VONEW
TIDOT
GJLGUE
ARNWRO
THE

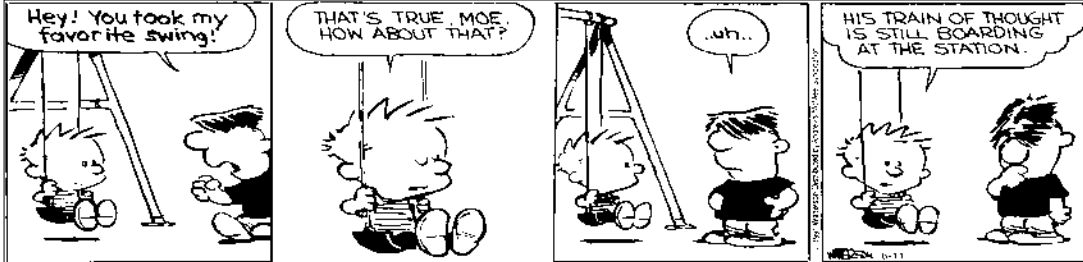


Yesterday's Jumbles: WIFER, GLADE, VENUSIS, NOBODY
Answer: The story about Peter Pan being forever young – NEVER GROWS OLD

the heart ace, establishing 10 tricks. "Why didn't you continue with the club king at trick three, partner?" asked East. "If declarer had three clubs, he was surely home as I was unlikely to have an entry." "But you told me you had only two clubs," replied West. "As your cards were irrelevant to the outcome of the club suit, you should have given me a count signal at trick one, playing the three,

not the eight. Then I would have known what to do. After you played the eight, my only chance seemed to be that you had the spade ace, instead of the king-jack, as an entry for a club return through declarer's remaining queen-ex." Third hand gives count at trick one when his highest card is below the nine.

CALVIN AND HOBBS | Bill Watterson



THE WIZARD OF ID | Parker and Hartsd



ARCHIE | Bill Henry Scarpelli & craig boldman



BLONDIE | Dean Young and John Marshall



ANDY CAPP | Reg Smythe



TARZAN | Edgar Rice Burroughs



bridge

TELL YOUR PARTNER ABOUT THE DECLARER

If you watch a World War II movie, you may hear someone say that they operate on a need-to-know basis. In particular, spies were told only the minimum to do their job in case they were captured. Then, under torture, they couldn't jeopardize the whole network.

When defending at the bridge table, it is similar. It doesn't matter which signaling method you use – the traditional high to encourage or

the more high-tech low to encourage. It is most important that you give partner the information he needs to know.

In today's deal, North-South bid aggressively to three no-trump. West led the club six: seven, eight, 10. Declarer continued with the diamond king. After winning with the ace, West switched to the spade nine. However, declarer won with his ace over East's king and drove out

the heart ace, establishing 10 tricks. "Why didn't you continue with the club king at trick three, partner?" asked East. "If declarer had three clubs, he was surely home as I was unlikely to have an entry." "But you told me you had only two clubs," replied West. "As your cards were irrelevant to the outcome of the club suit, you should have given me a count signal at trick one, playing the three,

SHORT TAKES

MP: CASES DIP BELOW 500-MARK, BHOPAL UNLOCKED

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, JUNE 10

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

While Bhopal reported 104 fresh cases, Indore reported 144 cases.

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

DELHI'S FIRST SMOG TOWER WILL BE READY BY AUGUST 15: RAI

New Delhi, Jun 10 (PTI) Environment Minister Gopal Rai on Thursday said Delhi's first smog tower at Connaught Place will be ready by August 15.

The Delhi cabinet had approved the project in October last year. The 25-metre-tall structure, being set up to improve air quality in a radius of around 1 km, was supposed to be ready by June 15. "The COVID-19 pandemic delayed the construction work of the smog tower, the first-of-its-kind in India, at Baba Kharak Singh Marg. The work is being expedited. The ambitious project will be ready by August 15," Rai told reporters here. "China also has such smog towers, but this one works on different technology. The ones in China suck the polluted air from the bottom and release the clear air from the top, whereas this smog tower works in the opposite direction," he said. The smog tower at Connaught Place will be able to purify 1000 cubic metres of air per second, the minister said. He also said many experts have different views about the efficacy of smog tower. "This is a pilot project. Experts will study its outcomes and thereafter, the government will take a call on building more such structures," he said. Tata Projects Limited (TPL) is implementing the Rs 20-crore project on the ground with technical support from IIT-Bombay. The National Building Construction Corporation India Ltd. has been appointed as project management consultant. — PTI

11, INCLUDING 8 KIDS, KILLED, 7 INJURED IN BUILDING COLLAPSE IN MUMBAI

Mumbai, Jun 10 (PTI) Eight children and three adults were killed and seven other people injured after two floors of a three-storey building collapsed on an adjoining single-storey house in Malwani area of Mumbai, officials said on Thursday.

The incident took place around 11.15 pm on Wednesday at the New Collector Compound on Abdul Hamid Road in the Malwani area, they said.

While earlier civic officials said a single-storey house had collapsed, they later said it was a three-storey building.

According to police, the building was constructed illegally and after the incident, its contractor was being questioned. The second and third floors of the three-storey building collapsed on the adjoining single-storey house, said Santosh Dhonde, acting ward officer of the city's P-North ward.



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

— PTI

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

State health dept revises recovery rate which comes down to 97.65%

NAYEAR AZAD | DC PATNA, JUNE 10

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

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

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

● **STATE HEALTH** minister said the state govt had been working on revising the figures for the past few weeks and released it on Tuesday.

Nalanda 463, Begusarai 454, East Champaran 425, Darbhanga 342 and Madhubani 317.

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

The move came after the Patna High Court flagged irregularities in the data

and directed the state government to conduct an audit.

According to officials from the state health department here, the audit was carried out in all 38 districts by a team of experts. The revised figures also include those who died due to post-Covid complications and who died on their way to the hospital. "Most of the deaths occurred during the second wave of the pandemic. The increase in the figure was due to deaths which occurred during home isolation, post-Covid complications

or at the private hospitals". Additional Secretary (Health) Pratyaya Amrit told reporters in Patna.

When asked whether the state health department was planning to initiate action against officials who failed to register figures related to Covid deaths, he said that "the government would take stern action against those who showed laxity in registering these figures".

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

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

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

Kerala youth facing death gets 'second life'

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JUNE 10

"It's second life for me" says 45 year old Malayali who was freed from death row in UAE after prominent NRI businessman M A Yusufali paid blood money to secure his release for a Abu Dhabi prison. The youth, Becks Krishnan, reunited with his family on Wednesday. Krishnan who returned to his home town Irinjalakuda in Thrissur district told media persons that he had lost all hope of surviving the death sentence after seven of his prison mates were executed in different offences.

Krishnan was sentenced to death in 2013 by UAE Supreme Court after he killed a Sudanese boy in a road accident in 2012 in Abu Dhabi. Earlier a lower court had given him 15 years rigorous imprisonment which was subsequently converted into death sentence by Supreme Court.

While serving the sen-

NRK businessman Yusufali pays a whopping amount as "blood money" to secure his release

tence, Krishnan worked as office assistant in a jail for seven years.

The youths's family ran from pillar to post for securing clemency. They approached Yusufali. The NRK industrialist intervened in the matter and held several rounds of talks with the parents of the Sudani boy who was killed in the accident. It was after a lot of persuasion and requests through negotiations held over several months that the family yielded to Yusufali's request and pardoned Krishnan.

Yusufali deposited 500,000 Dirhams (₹1 crore approximately) in Abu Dhabi court as blood money. Yusufali the founder of Lulu group which owns a series of hypermarkets and shopping malls, has offered a job to Krishnan in one of his establishments in the Middle East.

Kerala to set up vaccine production unit soon

DC CORRESPONDENT THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JUNE 10

Kerala Cabinet on Thursday decided to establish a Covid 19 vaccine production unit in state capital.

The Cabinet meeting presided over by chief minister Mr Pinarayi Vijayan decided to appoint an IAS officer, S. Chithra as the project director. The government also constituted a high level working group comprising experts and senior government officials. The members of the working group are expected to hold discussions with major vaccine manufacturing companies soon to explore the possibilities of starting vaccine production at the earliest.

The proposed unit is likely to be set up at the Life Science Park on the outskirts of Capital city.

Kerala government to provide Internet facilities to tribal kids for online classes.

The Cabinet meeting presided over by chief minister Mr Pinarayi Vijayan decided to appoint an IAS officer, S. Chithra as the project director

In another development the chief minister has asked officials to take steps to ensure online education for tribal kids living in hamlets who have no access to Internet facilities or gadgets like computers, smartphones and tablets.

In the absence of Internet facilities the tribal kids are not able to attend online classes.

The chief minister convened a high level meeting on Thursday which decided to establish digital learning centres in tribal hamlets. The government plans to rope in NGOs, Corporate sector and NRKs to collect gadgets for the kids.

The government would also seek the help of Internet service providers to arrange free connectivity for online classes.

The government decision comes in the wake of reports that a large number of tribal kids were not able to take online classes because of lack of gadgets and connectivity.

14,424 NEW COVID 19 CASES IN KERALA

Meanwhile Kerala on Thursday reported 14,424 new cases of Covid 19. During the last 24 hours 1,07,250 tests were carried out across the state and the test positivity rate came down to 13.45 per cent. The active cases too have come down to 1,35,298.

As of now 5.80 lakh people are under observation including 5.48 lakh under home/institutional quarantine.

Kerala man hides his lover in a room for 10 years

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JUNE 10

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

● **RAHMAN WAS 24** and Sajitha 18 when they decided to elope. Since the couple belonged to different religions, their families were totally opposed to the relationship.

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

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

"My husband took full care. He shared food mainly breakfast and dinner, stocked bread and biscuits. I never felt any difficulty. I used to watch TV using headphones and that's how I spent time in his absence," she said. Since there was no attached bathroom, the washroom was used mainly during night and early morning.

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

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

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

J'khand tops in vaccine wastage

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

— PTI

ANNUAL | EVENT

Festival will be held only in Puri with strict adherence to guidelines laid out by SC

Odisha bans Rath Yatra of Lord Jagannath

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, JUNE 10

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

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

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

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

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

In 2020, the Rath Yatra

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

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

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

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

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

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

Vehicular movement to

and from Puri will be restricted during Rath Yatra.

Direct live telecast of the festival will be facilitated to interested media outlets and broadcasters by the I&PR department of Odisha government. At all other Lord Jagannath shrines across Odisha, only rituals will be conducted within the premises of the temples and the public will not be allowed to participate, the DC informed.

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

children.

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

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

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

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

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

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

SHORT TAKES

POPE REJECTS
CARDINAL'S
RESIGNATION

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

PAK TO HOLD PoK
ASSEMBLY POLLS
ON JULY 25

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

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

PAK CLERIC HELD
FOR MALALA
KILL THREAT

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

MYANMAR
MILITARY PLANE
CRASH KILLS 12

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

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

JUNTA HITS
SUU KYI WITH
GRAFT CHARGES

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

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

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

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

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

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

A separate case is scheduled to start on June 15.

Ring of fire



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

— AFP PHOTO/NASA/BILL INGALLS

US to buy 500mn
Pfizer vaccines

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

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

INDIA TO GET A
SHARE OF 80 MN
US VACCINES

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

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

— PTI

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

— AP

Wastewater virus:
Sensor developed

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

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

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

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

— PTI

NAVALNY TEAM
TO FIGHT AFTER
EXTREMISM TAG

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

— AFP

Allies to look beyond
Covid at G-7 summit

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

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

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

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

Before the pandemic,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

— AP

stocks — though he didn't say when. Johnson also noted that the British government helped fund development at Oxford University of the AstraZeneca vaccine, which accounts for one in three doses around the world.

France said President Emmanuel Macron wanted to see "results and not just announcements" on vaccines. "We need a specific calendar — how many people worldwide and especially in Africa will be vaccinated" before a meeting of the G-20 in Rome in October.

— AP

OLI EXPANDS
CABINET SECOND
TIME IN A WEEK

Kathmandu, June 10: Nepal's embattled Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli on Thursday expanded his Cabinet for the second time in a week amid widespread criticism and the ongoing political crisis in the Himalayan nation.

Oli is heading a minority government after losing a trust vote in the House last month.

According to the Office of the President, the Cabinet now has a total of 25 members with the induction of seven new ministers and a minister of state. In the latest rejig, Khagraj Adhikari, a close confidante of Oli, has been given the portfolio of the Ministry of Home Affairs, *MyRepublica* news website reported. Adhikari had earlier served as the Health Minister in the Sushil Koirala-led Cabinet.

The home minister post was vacant after the Supreme Court on May 20 scrapped the appointment of seven ministers, including Ram Bahadur Thapa who was leading the Home Ministry, saying they were not lawmakers. Oli dissolved the House a day later. Thapa had joined the CPN-UML after the erstwhile Nepal Communist Party was dissolved.

— PTI

LANKA PROBES
OIL SLICK FROM
SINKING SHIP

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

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

— AFP

JBS settles Muslim bias
lawsuit for \$5.5 million

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

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

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

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

Cyberattack: JBS
paid \$11mn ransom

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

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

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

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

— AP

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

According to the lawsuit, JBS prevented Mus-

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

— AP

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

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

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

— AP



Emma Coronel Aispuro

FINAL | FRONTIER

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

China ready to send first crew to space station

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

The main section of the

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

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

tative launch date is next Wednesday.

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

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

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

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

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

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

down to students.

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

— AP

DECCAN Chronicle

11 JUNE 2021

FinMin signals need for urgency in vaccine drive

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

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

gramme considering the multiple factors that could play out while hitting the ground. The report says 92 lakh people must be vaccinated every day if we were to achieve the target. This is a formidable challenge given that the peak daily vaccination as of now is 42.65 lakh. However, this figure was attained by deploying people in shifts that spanned 8-9 hours a day; a 24 by 7 programme will take us to the target in time, the report argues.

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

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

Just good optics for BJP

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

The lineage principle operates conspicuously in Congress (and now increasingly in other parties) and this appears to be the reason why Mr Prasada came into the Lok Sabha twice on the Congress ticket and was even made minister. Seeing that his party was in a state of disrepair in UP, his home state, he had tried to switch to BJP before the 2019 Lok Sabha poll but evidently negotiations did not work out. He pulled so little weight.

This factor has not gone away. If anything, even in the Congress Mr Prasada had slipped from being lightweight to featherweight. And yet, the BJP has taken him in. This is because the party is embattled chiefly on account of very poor Covid management.

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

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

Subhani



Sedition: Time for SC to enforce its own rulings



Karan Thapar

As I See It

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

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

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

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

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

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

limits of sedition.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The writer is a television commentator and anchor

LETTERS

TEACH PREVIOUS SYLLABUS

With reference to the news, TN drops entrance plan for class 11, the government has dropped the idea of conducting entrance examination to admit students in class 11 and has ordered to admit them based on their class 9 marks. The decision has been taken to pacify those who oppose entrance examinations. Due to the closure of schools in the pandemic period, students from classes 1 to 12 could not attend classes and many are not even aware of what is in the syllabus. Admitting students to the next class when they don't have enough knowledge in the previous class is unfair, unethical and also would make them more difficult to understand the current year's subjects. To make up for the loss of studies it will be good if important portions and concepts of the previous class syllabus are taught for a few weeks.

P. Victor Selvaraj, Palayamkottai

WAKE UP CONGRESS

Apropos report BJP gets big boost as member of G-23 group Jitendra Prasada joins party. The BJP is the party that boasts it practices egalitarianism sans caste factor. But now wooing Mr Jitendra Prasada to garner the Brahmin vote bank goes against its avowed principle. Mr Jitendra Prasada's statement that 'he can serve the public by joining BJP is a hoax. Such self-supportive reasoning is quite common when politicians quit their parent party and join another. Had he really been interested in serving people he could have done so by remaining in Congress. The desertions from the Congress are due to its intransigent leadership with the mother and son duo despite their failures galore sitting like limpets at the top treating the party as a private limited company. While the BJP is strengthening itself the Congress is weakening day by day despite ruling in a few states courtesy of state leaders. The nation wants a strong opposition and hence the Congress leadership should sacrifice their posts.

A. Seshagiri Rao, Chennai

James Forsyth



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

By arrangement with the Spectator

quick
BITES

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

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Creditors to vote on Suraksha, NBCC final offers

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

Justice Sikri to head IMAI grievance board



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

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

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

Skoda drives in all-new Octavia at ₹26 lakh

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

■ ONGC, OIL set to lose large oil, gas blocks
Next auction is for major fields: GovtFC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, JUNE 10

In a bid to maximise the country's hydrocarbon production, the government will auction non-monetised large oil and gas fields of state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) and Oil India Ltd (OIL), petroleum minister Dharmendra Pradhan said on Thursday. The statement comes weeks after his ministry asked India's largest oil and gas producer ONGC to sell a stake in producing oil fields such as Ratna R-Series in western offshore to private firms and get foreign partners in KG basin gas fields.

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

This would be the third attempt by the ministry to

get ONGC to privatise its oil and gas fields.

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

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

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

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

Nigeria courts India's Koo to take on Twitter

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Tata Digital acquires majority stake in 1MG

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, JUNE 10

BHARATPE TO TAKE OVER PAYBACK INDIA

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

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

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

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

growth in the segment.

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

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

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

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

Tata Group has been fast expanding its digital business both organically and inorganically. While it already has a presence in the horizontal space with Tata Cliq, Tata Digital has been acquiring key players in some of the fast-growing verticals. It had recently acquired a controlling stake in BigBasket. Reliance too is betting big in this segment with its JioMart.

The segment already has biggies like Walmart and Amazon expanding their footprint. The online grocery market has grown 30 times in the last eight years to reach \$3 billion. It is now expected to grow at a 59 per cent compound annual growth rate to \$18 billion by 2024, RedSeer estimates.

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

Govt promotes exports of unique farm products

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, JUNE 10

The government is in the process of expanding its export basket of agricultural products by promoting products unique to India.

Organically certified moringa leaves powder and seven unique value added products of moringa have been exported in small quantities. Vacuum freeze dried ethnic village rice from Kumbakonam in Tamil Nadu has been shipped to multiple destinations of Australia, Vietnam and Ghana. The first consignment of 40 tonnes of iron-rich red rice from the Brahmaputra valley has been shipped to the US, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

Flavoured jaggery powder was exported to the US and the first consignment of millets grown in the Himalayas went to Denmark and Dahanu Gholvad sapota from Maharashtra to the UK. Fresh jackfruit from

Tripura was exported to London and value-added products of organically certified gluten-free jackfruit powder and retort packed jackfruit cubes were shipped to Germany.

According to the ministry, such shipments will improve the export of agricultural and allied products, which increased 17.34 per cent in FY21.

The export of agriculture and allied products, including marine and plantation products, in FY21 jumped to \$41.25 billion from \$35.16 billion in FY20. In rupee terms, the rise was 22.62 per cent to Rs 3.05 lakh crore. With imports of \$20.67 billion, India improved its trade surplus by 42.16 per cent to \$20.58 bn in FY21 from \$14.51 bn in FY20.

Export of cereals too saw growth with non-basmati rice growing by 136 per cent, wheat 774 per cent and other cereals 238 per cent. Oil meals grew 90 per cent, sugar 41.88 per cent, raw cotton 79.43 per cent and vegetable oils 254 per cent.

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

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, JUNE 10

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

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

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

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

Sona Autocomp Holding owns the remaining 33.72 per cent stake.

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

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

RBI hikes ATM interchange fee

FALAKNAAZ SYED
MUMBAI, JUNE 10

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

The charges were last revised in August 2012.

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

The interchange fee is a

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

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

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

Industry players wel-

Credit to textiles drops to 3-year low

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, JUNE 10

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CONCENTRATED POSITIONS

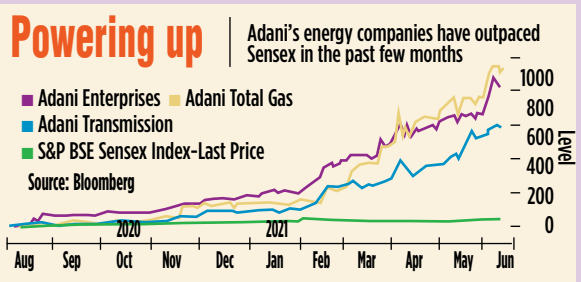
Asymmetric risk-reward as large investors avoid Adani

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

ANTO ANTONY
JUNE 10

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

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



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

"Among the biggest for-

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

Adani."

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

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

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

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

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

— Bloomberg

LPC framework can strengthen banks balance sheets: Experts

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO
NEW DELHI, JUNE 10

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

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

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

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

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

SHORT TAKES

Team India begin training in group

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

Harman to play for Manchester

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

Enable spinners to bowl doosra: Ash

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

Neymar to lead Brazil in Copa

Sao Paulo: The Copa America has been rocked by one surprise after another, but there were none Wednesday as Brazil coach Tite named his squad for the troubled tournament, led by superstar Neymar. The defending South American champions will keep a roster nearly identical to the one that beat both Ecuador and Paraguay 2-0 this month to extend the Selecao's win streak in World Cup qualifying to six matches. Paris Saint-Germain striker Neymar, who missed Brazil's 2019 Copa America win due to injury, will lead a squad with just one change: returning from injury, 36-year-old Chelsea defender Thiago Silva will replace Rodrigo Caio of Flamengo. — *AFP*

Axed Robinson to take short break

London: Pace bowler Ollie Robinson has decided to take a short break from cricket. The 27-year-old missed England's second Test against New Zealand after being suspended from all international cricket pending the outcome of a disciplinary investigation into historical racist and sexist tweets. Robinson issued an apology for the posts he sent in 2012 and 2013, when he was in his late teens, which were unearthed and shared online on the day he made his Test debut against the Black Caps earlier this week. — *PTI*

Continental gala

Heavyweights gear up for top kick as Euro football begins

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

France's fearsome forward line makes them favourites to win a third European crown at the pan-continental event, while top-ranked Belgium and a youthful England side will be a major threat. For the first time the tournament is taking place in 11 cities across Europe instead of one or two countries despite the lingering shadow cast by the Covid-19 crisis.

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

The action gets under way at Rome's Olympic Stadium on Friday, where Italy take on Turkey in front of 16,000 fans. Favourites France are not in action until Tuesday in the headline act of the first round of group matches when the world champions take on Germany in Munich.

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

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



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

— *Twitter*

HEAD-TO-HEAD

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

● EURO MEETINGS

1962: Italy beat Turkey 6-0 in Bologna.

1963: Italy beat Turkey 1-0 in Mithat Pasa

2000: Italy beat Turkey 2-1 in Arnheim.

— **S. PERVEZ KAISER**

CAN ENGLAND TRIUMPH AT HOME?

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

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

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

— *AFP*

Azzurri set sights on Turkey dinner

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Immobile won the European Golden Shoe in the 2019-2000 season for his 36 league goals, and scored 20 last campaign as Lazio finished sixth.

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

"I have a strong personality," he insists.

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

— *AFP*

Pellegrini joins Italy's injury list

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

Ukraine told to remove slogans

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

Pope blesses UEFA officials

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

DHAWAN TO LEAD INDIA ON SL TOUR

New Delhi, June 10: Shikhar Dhawan has been confirmed as captain, while pacer Bhuvneshwar Kumar will be his deputy as the BCCI named a 20-member squad to tour Sri Lanka in July. All matches will be played at the R Premadasa International Stadium in Colombo. Among the youngsters to get a look in are Devdutt Padikkal, Ruturaj Gaikwad and Chetan Sakariya, all of who impressed in the domestic circuit and Indian Premier League recently. The experienced Karnataka allrounder Krishnappa Gowtham also gets a call up, alongside experienced white-ball spinners Yuzvendra Chahal and Kuldeep Yadav. Tamil Nadu and Kolkata Knight Riders spinner Varun Chakravarthy gets another chance with the national squad after he missed out on the Australia tour due to injury after being originally named in the T20I squad. — *Agencies*

SQUAD

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

EURO FIXTURES

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

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

ROUND OF 16			
June 26	2A vs 2B	Match 37	9.30 pm
June 27	1A vs 2C 1C vs 3D/E/F	Match 38 Match 39	12.30 am 9.30 pm
June 28	1B vs 3A/D/E/F 2D vs 2E	Match 40 Match 41	12.30 am 9.30 pm
June 29	1F vs 3A/B/C 1D vs 2F	Match 42 Match 43	12.30 am 9.30 pm
June 30	1E vs 3A/B/C/D	Match 44	12.30 am

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

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

THE FINAL			
July 12	Winners of Semifinals		12.30 am

MATCHES LIVE ON SONY TEN 2, HD, SONY TEN 3, HD (HINDI), SONY SIX, HD (MALAYALAM & BENGALI), SONY TEN 4, HD (TAMIL & TELUGU)

Anastasia in dream final

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

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

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

"I am so tired and so happy, it is very emotional," said Pavlyuchenkova. "It was difficult, I tried to fight very hard and to work on the tactical side. It is important to stay focused and in the right zone for the final on Saturday."

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

SALISBURY-KRAWCZYK WIN MIXED DOUBLES

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

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



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

— *AP*

DJOKOVIC TO TAKE ON NADAL IN SEMIS

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

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

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

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

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

Djokovic.

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

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

Dingko dies after battle with cancer

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

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

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

Dingko's gold in the



Dingko Singh

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

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

RORY BURNS BRIGHT, BUT HOSTS COLLAPSE ON DAY 1

Birmingham, June 10: Matt Henry struck twice on his return to international cricket as a much-changed New Zealand reduced England to 152-4 at tea on the first day of the second Test at Edgbaston on Thursday. England, who had been 72-0, lost three wickets for 13 runs shortly after lunch as they slumped to 85-3, with captain Joe Root out for just four. But opener Rory Burns, fresh from his hundred in the drawn first Test at Lord's last week, was still there on 73 not out.

Henry, one of six changes to New Zealand's side, deserved his interval figures of 2-36 in 13 overs.

The paceman, in for the veteran Tim Southee — one of three New Zealand players rested ahead of next week's inaugural World Test Championship final against India at Southampton — started the slump.

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

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