

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

ANANTAPUR | WEDNESDAY | 2 JUNE 2021

WEATHER

 Max: 38.0°C
Min: 21°C
RH: 43%
Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: Cloudy sky. Misty morning. Max/Min temp. 38/21 9C

ASTROGUIDE

Plava: Uttarayana
Tithi: Vaishakha Bahula Asthami till 1.15 am (Thursday)
Star: Satabhisham till 5.30 pm
Varjyam: 11.52 pm to 1.35 am (Thursday)
Durmuhurtam: 11.48 am to 12.39 pm
Rahukalam: 12 noon to 1.30 pm
HJRI CALENDAR
Shawwal 20, 1442 AH
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.08 am
Zohar: 12.05 pm
Asar: 4.11 pm
Maghrib: 5.47 pm
Isha: 7.02 pm
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.08 AM
SUNSET TODAY 6.33 PM
MOONSET 10.23 AM
MOONRISE 11.58 PM

COUNTER POINT



He recovered from Covid, but got a heart attack after seeing the hospital bill!

SHORT TAKES

PRASAD, EX-CS OF UNITED AP, PASSES AWAY

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JUNE 1

S.V. Prasad, former chief secretary to erstwhile combined Andhra Pradesh, died of Covid at a private hospital here on Tuesday. He was 70.

Prasad's wife Lakshmi and his two sons, Vardhan and Sailesh, were also admitted to the hospital after they were tested positive. While the family recovered from the virus and was initially in home isolation, they developed post-Covid symptoms and were hospitalised.

According to close relatives, doctors performed a brain surgery on the ex-official and his wife a few days ago to remove clots. While Prasad breathed his last in the morning, doctors said his wife was in a critical condition. Both sons are stable.

■ Full report on page 2

Human case of bird flu in China

Beijing: China has reported the first case of human infection with the H10N3 strain of bird flu from the country's eastern Jiangsu province, China's National Health Commission said on Tuesday. The patient, a 41-year-old man from Zhenjiang city, is currently in a stable condition and meets discharge standards, the state-run CGTN TV reported. Officials said the risk of causing a pandemic was extremely low.

■ Full report on page 5

Brics resolves against terrorism

New Delhi: Five-nation grouping Brics on Tuesday resolved to combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including the cross-border movement of terrorists, and vowed to step up joint efforts in building support for an India-backed global framework to deal with the menace. At an India-hosted virtual meeting, the foreign ministers of Brics countries vowed to finalise a "result-oriented action plan" by the bloc's counter-terrorism working group in 2021.

WORLD | 5

New Vatican law criminalises abuse

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SPORTS | 8

Osaka pulls out of French Open

TABLOID

An ode to nature



Vol. 22 No. 282 Established 1938 | 16 PAGES | ₹6.00

End of season sale



People buying mangoes on Eluru road in Vijayawada on Tuesday as the season would come to close shortly.

— C. NARAYANA RAO

Junior doctors to boycott duties for higher stipend

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 1

Andhra Pradesh seems to be heading for a health crisis with nearly 5,000 medical students gearing up to boycott all duties including Covid care in protest against an inordinate delay in stipend hike.

Already 300 senior residents along with over 800 final year PG have served a strike notice on the government and others are expected to join them.

Their list of demands include: hike in stipend to senior residents to ₹80,000 with retrospective effect from January, 2020; TDS waiver on stipend; and, incentives for Covid duty, especially for ground-level medics like interns, post-graduates and senior resi-

CORONAVIRUS CASES IN STATE RISE TO 11,303

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 1

The state has witnessed a rise in new Coronavirus infections with 11,303 cases recorded in the last 24 hours, compared to 7,943 cases registered on Monday. The state had been recording a gradual decline in daily cases in the last few days.

■ Full report on Page 3

dents. The contention of senior residents is that they are getting just a monthly stipend of

₹45,000. Even though it is mandatory to hike it every two years, the hike has been kept pending since January 2020. They say this is resulting in getting less stipend than their junior postgraduates.

They claim the neighbouring Telangana state is paying ₹80,500 as stipend to the senior residents and other states like Tamil Nadu and Karnataka are providing Covid incentives, while AIIMS is offering ₹1.05 lakh as stipend to the senior residents.

Though they submitted several representations to the health authorities since November 2019 for hike in their stipend and other incentives, they say there was no response.

■ Page 3: Doctors say officials turned deaf ear

Bengal's ex-CS gets Centre's notice for violation of DMA

DC CORRESPONDENTS
KOLKATA/NEW DELHI, JUNE 1

In a move that may further escalate tensions between the Centre and the Mamata Banerjee-led West Bengal government, the Union home ministry late on Monday evening slapped a showcase notice on 1987-batch IAS officer Alapan Bandyopadhyay hours before he retired as the state's chief secretary after rejecting a three-month extension.

The notice, under Section 51 of the Disaster Management Act 2005, which is punishable by a prison term of up to two years or a fine, or both, was served to the state's former top bureaucrat as he skipped a review meeting chaired by Prime

Minister Narendra Modi on May 28 on the devastation by Cyclone Yaas in the state.

Mr Bandyopadhyay, who has been appointed by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee as her chief adviser for three years after he retired from service, was directed to "explain in writing" to the ministry within three days on "why action should not be taken against him" under Section 51 of the DM Act. This particular section relates to "punishment for obstruction" for refusal to comply with a direction given by the Central government.

The notice states: "The officer, by abstaining himself from the review meeting taken by Prime Minister Narendra Modi

at cyclone-affected Kalakunda in West Bengal on May 28, has acted in a manner tantamount to refusing to comply with the lawful directions of the Central government and is thus violative of Section 51(b) of the Disaster Management Act 2005."

"After the Prime Minister arrived at Kalakunda for a scheduled review meeting with the chief minister and chief secretary of West Bengal, the Prime Minister and other members of his entourage waited for nearly 15 minutes for the officers of the state to arrive."

Sources at Nabanna, the state secretariat, claimed on Tuesday evening that Mr Bandyopadhyay would reply to the MHA's notice, citing proper grounds.

Jagan plans to develop fishing harbours in AP

Orders officials to complete ₹15,743-crore Agri Infra projects

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 1

The state government will accord priority to the development of Visakhapatnam fishing harbour and prepare an action plan for development of Kakinada fishing harbour and Kothapatnam fishing landing centre.

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy instructed officials to initiate measures for the completion of ₹15,743 crore Agri Infra Fund projects in the stipulated period. The government has recently allocated ₹31,256 crore in the budget for various agri-related schemes.

Jagan Mohan Reddy said coordination between village secretariats and RBKs (Rythu Bharosa Kendras) should be effective and National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) works should be expedited. He directed the officials to monitor the progress of projects regularly and conduct review meetings every 15 days.

He directed the officials to prepare an action plan

SEVEN YEARS ON, TELUGU STATES WAIT FOR BIFURCATION PROMISES

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JUNE 1

Seven years after Andhra Pradesh was bifurcated on June 2, 2014, both Telangana and the residuary state of Andhra Pradesh continue to suffer bifurcation blues as most of the promises made by the Centre to both the states in the AP Reorganisation Act, 2014, remaining unfulfilled.

Distribution of assets and liabilities of common institutions listed under Schedule 9 and 10 of the Act, mostly located in Hyderabad are still pending with both states fight-

ing cases in courts.

There are 107 institutions listed under Schedule 10, of which 97 are located in TS, mostly in Hyderabad, it being the capital of undivided Andhra Pradesh for nearly six decades. There are another 89 institutions listed under Schedule 9 of AP Reorganisation Act.

All these institutions together have assets worth thousands of crores of rupees in the form of assets and bank deposits, on which both the governments are staking claim.

■ Page 2: Water disputes affect AP-TS ties

for setting up a fish landing center at Kothapatnam in Prakasam district and development of a fishing harbour in Kakinada. He instructed the officials to focus on developing the fishing harbour in Visakhapatnam in all aspects.

He said it was targeted to complete four fishing harbours Uppada (East Godavari), Nizampatnam (Guntur), Machilipatnam (Krishna) and Juvvala Dinne (Nellore) in first phase by December 2022.

The officials informed

SC brings back IGST on imported oxygen gadgets

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 1

The levy of 12 per cent Integrated Goods and Services Tax (IGST) on oxygen concentrators imported or gifted for personal use is back.

The Supreme Court on Tuesday stayed an order of the Delhi High Court that had held that May 1, 2021, finance ministry notification imposing 12 per cent IGST was unconstitutional.

The top court bench comprising Justice D.Y. Chandrachud and Justice M.R. Shah stayed the HC order which held that, during the Covid pandemic, the oxygen concentrators constitute a life-saving device and, therefore, should be treated on par

The HC order was stayed by the apex court after A-G said the GST Council will discuss this issue on June 8

with life-saving drugs.

"We are staying the operation of the High Court order till further orders," the court said in its order.

The HC order was stayed by the Supreme Court after Attorney-General K.K. Venugopal told the court that the GST Council is meeting on June 8 to deliberate on granting an exemption to essential commodities related to Covid-19, including oxygen concentrators.

The Attorney-General also informed the court that the IGST exemption to state and its agencies

for import of O2 concentrators was given as these were to be given free to poor and needy.

The High Court order holding the finance ministry notification as unconstitutional had come on a petition filed by a senior citizen Gurcharan Singh who had challenged the vires of the notification invoking Article 21C guaranteeing the right to life that also includes the right to health.

By May 1, 2021, notification, the GST on oxygen concentrators was reduced from earlier 28 per cent to 12 per cent. The petitioner had knocked on the doors of the Delhi High Court after he was asked to pay IGST on the oxygen concentrators sent to him as a gift by his nephew.

CBSE, ISC class 12 exams cancelled

VINEETA PANDEY | DC
NEW DELHI, JUNE 1

Putting an end to the suspense on holding of the CBSE Class 12 exams, the Centre on Tuesday announced its cancellation, in both online and offline modes. The CBSE will now compile Class 12 results as per a "well defined objective criteria" in a "time-bound manner", the gov-

ernment said after a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Those students who still want to take the exams for evaluation will have that option when the Covid-19 situation improves. The Prime Minister said the decision on the CBSE Class 12 was taken in the interest of the students as the pandemic had affected the academic calendar and

the board exams issue was causing immense anxiety among students, their parents and teachers, "which must be put to an end".

Soon after the Centre announced this decision, the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE) said its Indian School Certificate (ISC) Class 12 board examination would also be cancelled in view of the Covid-

19 situation. "The exams have been cancelled. The alternative assessment criteria will be announced soon," CISCE secretary Gerry Arathoon said.

"Health and safety of our students is of utmost importance. In today's time, such exams cannot be the reason to put our youth at risk... All stakeholders need to show sensitivity for students," the PM said.

SAD | END

His mother Aruna sought mercy killing for his son after doctors found no cure for his son's ordeal

Boy whose mom sought his mercy killing dies

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, JUNE 1

A nine-year-old boy died in the lap of his mother, who was desperately seeking a permission from a local court in Punganur, Chittoor district, to end his painful ordeal by mercy killing. Doctors had said that there was no cure for the rare blood disorder that the boy, Harshavardhan, was suffering from.

The parents were too poor to pay for his medical expenses. G. Aruna, the mother of

Harshavardhan, hailing from Beerjepalli village in Chowdepalli mandal, was going to the Punganur court for the last two days to seek the approval of a designated judge to grant mercy killing of the boy.

According to her, Harshavardhan became bedridden after he met with an accident at his school about five years ago. At that time, the doctors found that he had a very rare medical condition that caused him to ooze out sweat blood from his skin, nose and mouth.

● When the boy, Harshavardhan, had met with an accident near his school about five years ago, doctors found that he had a very rare medical condition that caused him to ooze out sweat blood from his skin, nose and mouth.

● His parents tried spent all that they had to save him but in vain. Subsequently, his mother sought the court's permission for the mercy killing of his son. While returning home in an autorickshaw, the boy suddenly began to bleed and died in the arms of his mother.

Initially, Aruna and her husband Mani approached several doctors and did everything they could do to save their child. Even as

they ran up huge debts, they learnt that there was no cure for Harshavardhan's condition. "Being from a very poor

family, we sold everything we had and even borrowed money from many to save our child. But all our efforts went in vain as the doctors declared that the boy was suffering from a rare disorder which had no cure," Aruna, speaking through her tears, told mediapersons.

In the last few years, Aruna approached several hospitals in AP and Tamil Nadu to save her only son. "She did everything she could do and spent every penny she had or borrowed from others to get him

cured, but nothing could help her save her child. She ran out of money and reached a point where she was unable to bear the medical expenses any further and could no longer see the agony of her child. As suggested by our relatives, she tried to move the court to seek help for the treatment of the boy or grant mercy killing for him," a relative of Aruna said.

In this regard, Aruna was coming to Punganur court along with her son to file a mercy killing petition for

the last two days. As the court remained closed due to holidays, Aruna, carrying her son in her arms, was returning home in an auto rickshaw on Tuesday when he suddenly began bleeding and died in her arms.

With the help of locals, the mother carried Harshavardhan to her home in the same autorickshaw. A pall of gloom descended on Beerjepalli. Villagers and relatives gathered in large numbers at Harshavardhan's house to console his mother.

SHORT TAKES

GOVT EXTENDS
TENURE OF
4 ADVISERSDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 1

The AP government on Tuesday issued orders extending the tenure of its four advisors by a year. They are G.V.D. Krishna Mohan, Thalasila Raghuram, Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy and Ajeya Kallam.

Krishna Mohan is working as adviser (communication) to the government, while Raghuram is adviser (coordinating programmes). Kallam is principal adviser to Chief Minister and Ramakrishna Reddy is adviser (public affairs).

Chief Secretary Aditya Nath Das issued the orders related to extension of these officers.

Ajeya Kallam has also been given additional responsibility as chairman of Steering and Implementation Committee for YSR Jagananna Saswatha Bhu Hakku Mariu Bhu Raksha Padhakam.

TIRUMALA RAO
TAKES CHARGE
AS RTC MDDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 1

Senior IPS officer Dwaraka Tirumala Rao assumed charge as vice-chairman and managing director of APSRTC on Tuesday. Soon after assuming charge, he enquired about the operation of buses, safety norms being adopted, conversion of high end buses providing beds with oxygen supply for Covid-19 patients and issues of priority.

CM TO CONDUCT
REVIEW MEET ON
LAND RESURVEYDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 1

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy will preside over a high-level review meeting on land resurvey project on Wednesday. AP is the first state to undertake a land resurvey in the country after about a 100 years.

Survey, Settlement and Land Records commissioner Siddhartha Jain said the survey process had started in 51 villages involving 63,433 acres as a pilot project on December 21, 2020.

This will lead to ownership of plots being granted people in 17,500 villages and 110 urban centres under the YSR Jagananna Bhuraksha Saswatha Bhu Hakku programme.

JAGAN SAYS
RAJU'S CHARGES
ARE MOTIVATEDDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JUNE 1

Refuting the allegations made against him in the bail cancellation petition filed by YSRC Narsapur MP Raghu Ramakrishna Raju, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy filed a counter before the CBI court on Tuesday stating that Raju had filed the petition with an ulterior motive.

"The petitioner wants to garner publicity through sensationalism and hence using the judicial system for this purpose," alleged Jagan Mohan Reddy in his 98-page counter to the plea by Raju who urged the court to cancel the bail granted in the disproportionate assets and the quid pro quo related cases.

The AP CM took to the notice of the court the cases registered against the petitioner for cheating banks and other criminal cases. "Total nine cases are pending against the petitioner: Ramakrishna Raju is accused of having siphoned off public money from the banks to the tune of over ₹900 crore.

The cases were registered by the CBI in relation to fraudulent dealings with the banks. All the facts have been suppressed and he is mud-slinging on others," he said.

The counter petition also stated that the AP CM had nowhere violated the bail conditions.

He also said the petitioner's contention that he was influencing the decision in this petition to the court. The court adjourned the case to June 14.



People in large numbers wait in queue without maintaining physical distance outside the Indian Naval Canteen at Coastal Battery Junction on the beach road in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday.
— K. MURALI KRISHNA

Aqua sector in state set
to get ₹646 crore boost

CM holds review on aqua, fisheries and food processing

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 1

The state government will set up 10 processing units, 23 pre-processing units and 100 aqua hubs for the welfare and development of aqua farmers and fishermen.

The officials during a review meeting on Agri Infra Fund projects at the camp office here on Tuesday conducted by Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy explained the projects in detail. They stated that the state government had already sanctioned 25 aqua hubs out of 100 and works would start in this month. It is estimated that cost of 133 processing, pre-processing units and aqua hubs would be around ₹646.9 crore.

TD LEFT BEHIND
₹1.5 LAKH CRORE
DEBT: KANNABABUDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 1

Minister for agriculture Kurasala Kannababu has clarified that the state government went in for borrowing to keep its promises of welfare benefits to the public despite the Covid-19 which is crippling state finances, unlike the previous government which left behind a debt burden of ₹1,50,000 crore by squandering it for personal needs in the name of public welfare.

Speaking to the media here on Tuesday, the minister mentioned that the government gave priority to welfare over development and pumped money to revive the sagging economy and stood by the weaker sections during the pandemic crisis. He asserted that the government did not hold back any welfare schemes despite a decline in revenue, as Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy clearly wanted the government to stand by the people in such tough times. He said that the government had spent ₹1,30,000 crore through various schemes for the public welfare in the last two years, where the financial aid reached people directly through DBT, without any brokerage system.

Kannababu said the state was in revenue deficit after bifurcation and criticised Naidu for pushing the state into further debt.

He stated that the TD leaders misused over ₹68,000 crore in the name of capital expenditure for all those incomplete projects.

He slammed TD leaders Yanamala Ramakrishnu and Nara Lokesh for their false propaganda against the government alleging that the state finances were running into debts and stated that the entire propaganda was to divert people's attention. He said the entire state had witnessed how the previous government managed the finances in their five-year term.

He challenged them to reveal the welfare schemes on which they spent ₹1,50,000 crore.

REGARDING THE food processing sector, the officials informed that a total of 10,111 food processing units would be set up in the state and seed and millets processing units would be set up at panchayat level.

Explaining about the custom hiring centres, the officials stated that a total of 10,750 centres were being set up at Rythu Bharosa Kendra (RBKs) level in the state and each unit would cost ₹15 lakh.

Hi-tech and high-value farm mechanisation hubs would come up at 175 locations at Assembly constituency level and the cost of each hub would be around ₹1.5 crore. Special clusters were identified in four districts where paddy production is high and five Custom hiring centres will be set up at Cluster level for a mandal in those districts. A total of 1,035 cluster level Custom hiring Centres with an estimated cost of ₹25 lakh each will be set up.

Agriculture minister Kurasala Kannababu, agriculture special chief secretary Poonam Malakondaiah, industries special chief secretary Karikal Valaven, finance principal secretary S.S. Rawath, marketing principal secretary Y. Madhusudan Reddy, marketing commissioner Pradhyumna, APDDCF director Ahmed Babu, agriculture commissioner H. Arun Kumar, fisheries commissioner K. Kannababu, horticulture commissioner S.F. Sridhar and other officials were present.

Fear of infections in closed
spaces hits liquor biz in APAVINASH P.
SUBRAMANYAM | DC
TIRUPATI, JUNE 1

Liquor sales during May in the state slid following a reduction in business hours for the outlets in the wake of partial lockdown imposed to curb the spread of Covid-19.

There was a 9.74 per cent fall in the overall sales of liquor in May when compared to the sales in April. Though business hours for liquor shops and bars and restaurants were the same (six hours a day), the latter suffered a sharp decline in sales when compared to the state-run outlets, where the business was the same as in pre-Covid days.

Officials attribute the fall in revenue to the shrinking business at bars and restaurants. They say boozers, in large numbers, are lining up at the state-run liquor shops

during the curfew relaxation from 6 am to 12 noon. They are worried about the spread of Covid-19 in closed places and thus are keeping away from bar and restaurants.

"In the wake of partial lockdown, we expected a decline in sales because a majority of customers used to go to the bar and restaurants only in the evening. Only a few customers are coming during

daytime. So, naturally there is a massive decline in business," said a bar owner in Tirupati city.

As per the sales report, the sale of liquor both at state-run liquor shops and bars and restaurants was around ₹1,686.32 crore in May, whereas in April it was ₹1,868.35 crore. A total of 17,28,533 and 18,95,393 IML cases were sold out in May and April months, respectively, and the revenue generated from their sales was pegged at ₹1582.24 crore and ₹1,665.06 crore.

The sales of beer significantly fell last month compared to April, from 8,59,462 lakh cases in April to 4,13,681 cases in May. The revenue fell from ₹203.24 crore to ₹104.09 crore. The average sale of both IML and beer was around ₹62.27 crore per day in the month of April and it declined to ₹54.39 crore per day now.

Water disputes affect ties of both Telugu states

From Page 1

About ₹1,51,349 crore under capital heads, ₹28,099 crore under loans and advances, ₹4,474 crore under deposits and advances, ₹238 crore under suspense and miscellaneous, and ₹310 crore under remittances are yet to be apportioned even after seven years of bifurcation.

While the 'political rivalry' between Chief Ministers of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, K. Chandrashekar Rao and, at that time, N. Chandrababu Naidu, respectively was attributed to delay in resolution of bifurcation issues between 2014 and 2019, the situation did not improve much even after the change of guard in AP after the YSRC government headed by Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy stormed to power in 2019.

Jagan Mohan Reddy extended a 'friendly hand' to Chandrashekar Rao within days of becoming the Chief Minister by handing over all government buildings in Hyderabad including Secretariat and Legislative Assembly buildings to the Telangana state government which Naidu had refused to do till 2019 even after shifting the AP administration to Amaravati in 2016.

Though Chandrashekar Rao and Jagan Mohan Reddy initially displayed

bonhomie by meeting over half a dozen times to resolve bifurcation issues, the situation is back to square one after the AP CM launched Rayalaseema lift irrigation scheme in May 2019 to divert Srishailam water, which fuelled 'water disputes' between both the states again after which both the Chief Ministers never met.

Even the Chief Secretary-level talks

between the states to resolve bifurcation issues came to a halt in January 2019. The Centre, which is supposed to hold regular meetings with Andhra Pradesh and Telangana state governments to resolve bifurcation issues, did not conduct a meeting for nearly two years after August 2019 and recently held a meeting in April which ended abruptly with no consensus reached on any issue.

Prasad had privilege to run
administration for 2 decadesN. VAMSI SRINIVAS | DC
HYDERABAD, JUNE 1

S.V. Prasad, former chief secretary of undivided Andhra Pradesh, who passed away on Tuesday, will go into the annals of history as the only bureaucrat who had the privilege to run the state administration for about two decades.

Yet, he remained "ajata satru" so much so that none of the dozen-odd senior officials, who were overlooked by the then Chief Minister K. Rosaliah to make this ever smiling and friendly bureaucrat the Chief Secretary, murmured, leave alone questioning the decision in 2010.

Everyone in the administration felt that Prasad was destined to become Chief Secretary and that it was only a continuation of what he had been doing earlier, running the state administration, after a short break during the Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy regime.

The 1975 batch officer began his career as a sub collector like any other pass-out from the Mussorie-based Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration, but soon made his mark with his administrative skills and positive approach in resolving issues. He entered the power corridors when N. Janardhan Reddy was Chief Minister in the early 1990s and gained enormous confidence of two more Chief Ministers down the line — Kotla Vijayabhaskar Reddy and N. Chandrababu Naidu. Like the longest serving Chief Minister record of Naidu, he too served as principal secretary to the Chief Minister for a record nine consecutive years.

"His success lay in his ability to grasp the issues concerning the state, guess the positive and negative impacts of a decision and communicate the same to the political bosses in an unbiased manner," says retired IAS official Balasubrahmanyam, who was part of Naidu's CMO and a close associate of Prasad.

There is no surprise that Prasad, who always wished to keep a low profile, may never get the credit for giving the country one of the finest and impactful President — Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam. As revealed by Balasubrahmanyam to this correspondent, while mourning the death, it was Prasad, who suggested Kalam's candidature to Naidu who in turn took it up with the then powerful BJP duo of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and home minister L.K. Advani. The rest of course is chronicled history.

Known for not losing his wit despite being in the thick of tense moments, Prasad, tongue in cheek, told Naidu that he would end up as the youngest Prime Minister of India. This was when his view



S.V. Prasad with his wife

Former CS, Prasad,
succumbs to CovidDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD JUNE 1

S.V. Prasad, former chief secretary to erstwhile combined Andhra Pradesh, died of Covid at a private hospital here on Tuesday. He was 70.

Prasad's wife Lakshmi and his two sons, Vardhan and Sailesh, were also admitted to the hospital after they were tested positive. While the family recovered from the virus and was initially in home isolation, they developed post-Covid symptoms and were hospitalised.

According to close relatives, doctors performed a brain surgery on the ex-official and his wife a few days ago to remove clots. While Prasad breathed his last in the morning, doctors said his wife was in a critical condition. Both sons are stable.

Prasad was widely acclaimed as an efficient officer and a kind individual. The 1975 batch officer, a native of Vadisileru village in East Godavari, did

his engineering from JNTU at Kakinada and joined IAS while doing Masters in Business from IIM, Ahmedabad.

He served in different posts including as collector of Visakhapatnam and Kadapa districts, Information and Public Relations Commissioner, principal secretary to the CM, APSRTC managing director and revenue principal secretary before becoming chief secretary in 2010.

He also held the post of vigilance commissioner after his retirement in September 2011.

Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu, Andhra Pradesh Governor Biswa Bhushan Harichandan, Himachal Pradesh Governor Bandaru Dattatreya, Chief Ministers of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana Jagan Mohan Reddy and Chandrashekar Rao respectively and Telugu Desam president Chandrababu Naidu condoled the death of the retired bureaucrat.

was solicited by his boss at about 3 am at AP Bhavan, New Delhi, on the day the exit of H.D. Deve Gowda as PM became certain and Naidu was under pressure to accept the crown of thorns.

Insiders say he did not mince words, again in his own witty style, in opposing Naidu's decision to advance Assembly elections post Naxal attack on him at Alipiri en route to Tirumala. When Naidu was jubilant over school children thronging his residence with roses in their hands to express solidarity, his principal secretary was said to have reminded him that the visitors, unfortunately, can't vote.

Prasad was always there for officials or politicians to share their joy, fears, anguish or anger. Even ruling Congress leaders felt suffocated over the YSR's CMO not being as friendly as Prasad-headed CMO during the TD rule towards them. He stood by juniors when they looked at him. "Sir backed my

decisions as Warangal collector despite political pressure," pointed out Adityanath Das, Chief Secretary of Andhra Pradesh. As Vigilance Commissioner, Prasad was liberal in punishing the lower rung officials particularly when they don't have mala fide intentions.

This correspondent had opportunity to interact with him on numerous occasions for more than a decade and developed an insight into various administrative decisions. But, the disappointment over Prasad not heeding to the repeated suggestion to pen an autobiography that would have a potential to become a text book to the civil servants of his next generations will remain forever. "Rayalandi (I have to write one day)," was his reply every time with the trade mark disarming smile largely writ on his face, perhaps unmindful of extraordinary situation in the form of Covid and losing battle to the fatal virus.

Progress report a
bundle of lies: TD

Vijayawada: Senior TD leader Yanamala Ramakrishnu has termed Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy's book on development during the past two years as a bundle of lies. He demanded that Jagan explain why poverty levels, per capita debt and infrastructure gaps increased if his rule was focussed keenly on welfare and development.

COVID | SCARE

While 20 people allowed for funeral, not a single family member present in many cases

Relatives abandon traditions, customs in burial

VADREVA SRINIVAS | DC
KAKINADA, JUNE 1

The scare of Coronavirus has made kith and kin of persons succumbing to virus abandon all traditions and customs, whichever their religion. Most are not coming forward to follow the rituals for the dead, which are believed to provide them a better afterlife.

It is said a person must maintain good relations with at least four persons

who can carry him or her to the funeral ground. In these calamitous times, there are only two people available, one the ambulance driver and the other the "katikapari" who places the body on the pyre before it is lit up.

There have been numerous cases when voluntary organisations have come to perform the last rites, as family members are unwilling to even accompany the body. As a result, the dead are being denied

the traditional final rituals, which differ from caste to caste and religion to religion. Among certain groups, rituals are such that they go on for about three hours before the body is consigned to flames or buried.

Ironically, while the government allows 20 members to attend a funeral, not a single family member is present in many cases. That is the level of scare that Coronavirus had induced among cer-

tain people.

Many families prefer to hand over the body to service organisations. When a prominent caste Hindu died in East Godavari district, his funeral was performed by two Muslims who never knew him. "We appealed to family members they come along. But none cared or dared due to Covid scare," said one of the two — Ameer Pasha.

Pasha and his team have been performing funeral rites for the past one year

in East Godavari district. Pasha says in one instance, at Ryali village in Atreyapuram mandal, nobody, including family members, came forward to carry the body. People with vehicles in the village were not willing to take the body to the funeral ground.

"Our team finally took the body in the village garbage rickshaw and performed the last rites," Pasha said. The situation was similar in case of

another death at Ravulapalem.

Says Vedic pundit G.Ramakrishna Sarma: "There is a famous adage, which states that a son will protect or save parents from pangs of Punnam Narakam (hell). But in the present Covid-19 situation, no son is willing to save parents from throes of hell. Family members have become insensitive to tradition because they want to save their own lives."

IN BRIEF



Vice-Admiral Sreekumar Nair

NAIR TAKES CHARGE AS DG OF NAVAL PROJECTS IN VIZAG

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 1

Vice-admiral Sreekumar Nair has assumed charge as director general naval projects here on Tuesday.

The vice admiral Nair took charge from vice admiral Kiran Deshmukh, AVSM, VSM Nair served as admiral superintendent, Naval Dockyard in Visakhapatnam and also as an assistant chief of material (information technology and systems) at Integrated Headquarters, Union ministry of defence (Navy). The flag officer was commissioned as electrical officer into the Indian Navy on 17 August 1987 and is an alumnus of erstwhile Regional Engineering College, Tiruchirappalli and IIT Delhi.

The admiral received the Nano Sena Medal (NM) in 2010 and Ati Vishesh Seva Medal (AVSM) in 2021 for his meritorious service.

AP GRAMEENA BANK CELEBRATES FORMATION DAY

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, JUNE 1

Andhra Pragathi Grameena Bank (APGB) celebrated its 15th Anniversary on Tuesday with bank chairman Rakesh Kashyap asking customers to utilise mobile banking, internet banking, and other IT-enabled services in a large way while undertaking financial transactions. He pointed out that this would minimise the risk of Coronavirus for them.

APGH was formed on June 1, 2006 by amalgamating Sree Anantha Grameena Bank, Anantapur; Rayalaseema Grameena Bank, Kadapa; and Pinakini Grameena Bank, Nellore.

Speaking on the occasion, Rakesh Kashyap disclosed that APGB has a business of ₹36,639 crore and is sponsored by Canara Bank. It has a vast network of 552 branches and eight regional offices in five districts of Ananthapur, YSR Kadapa, Kurnool, SPSR Nellore and Prakasam. He asserted that the grameena bank has always been in the forefront of providing financial support to farmers, self-help groups and other down-trodden sections within the society.

DRDO ISSUES GUIDELINES ON USE OF ANTI-COVID DRUG

PATHRI RAJASEKHAR | DC
NELLORE, JUNE 1

DRDO has advised the public to use their 2-DG medicine for Covid-19 treatment only under the care and prescription of doctors.

It may be recalled that the Institute of Nuclear Medicine and Allied Sciences (INMAS), a lab of DRDO, in collaboration with Dr Reddy's, Hyderabad, has developed an anti-Covid-19 therapeutic application of the drug called 2-deoxy-D-glucose (2-DG).

Clinical trial results have shown that this molecule helps in the faster recovery of hospitalised patients and reduces supplemental oxygen dependence. DRDO had claimed that higher proportion of patients treated with 2-DG showed RT-PCR negative conversion in Covid patients.

Against this backdrop, DRDO on Tuesday issued directions for the use of 2-DG in Covid patients. It is to be used for emergency use as an adjunct therapy to the standard of care in the treatment of Covid patients in hospital settings. Ideally, 2-DG should be prescribed as early as possible by doctors for moderate to severe Covid patients for a maximum duration of up to 10 days.

Uncontrolled diabetes, severe cardiac problem, ARDS, severe hepatic and renal impairment patients have not been studied yet with 2-DG and, hence, caution should be exercised.

2-DG should not be given to pregnant and lactating women and patients below 18 years. Patients/attendants are advised to request their hospital to contact Dr Reddy's, Hyderabad, for medicine supply at email: 2DG@drreddys.com.

Covid emergency



Relatives shift a Covid patient to CSR Block for treatment inside King George Hospital in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday.

—P. NARASIMHA MURTHY

App, call centre for Anandaiah potion

Do not rush to Krishnapatnam, order it online, says officials

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, JUNE 1

As the state government has given its nod for the distribution of the popular concoction of Bonigi Anandaiah of Krishnapatnam, officials are bracing to manage a huge rush of Covid patients or their attendants to the village.

District Collector K.V.N. Chakradhar Babu, SP Bhaskar Bhushan and ruling party legislator Kakani Govardhan Reddy on Tuesday held talks with Anandaiah on the modalities to be followed to prevent the crowds from turning into super spreaders, duly following a High Court order.

Speaking on the occasion, Collector said they have been planning to decentralise the distribution. The Collector said they would develop a mobile app besides setting up a call center for the benefit of people to book herbal medicine online. He appealed to the people from other parts of the state as well as other parts of the country not to come to Krishnapatnam for the medicine and assured to supply the preparation to the needy.

Hinting that the preparation would be ready by next Monday, Govardhan Reddy said priority would be given to treating infected patients, and preventive medicine

would be prepared later. He said they would supply the mixture by post and courier services for those booking it online.

Anandaiah said he was gearing up to start production in a couple of days and priority would be given to the infected people belonging to Sarvepalli segment, followed by the people of the district. He said he plans to supply the preparation for 5,000 people in each district later.

When asked about financial implications since he is supplying the medicine free of cost, he said many people are ready to sponsor it.

Pointing to the advice of Govardhan Reddy, he said the legislators concerned

and philanthropists would bear the cost of raw material to distribute the medicine in their respective areas.

He said he would take the cooperation of the government whenever necessary. To a query, he said the TTD offered to supply raw material, i.e. herbs.

On the production in different locations, he said it is a sentiment to produce the medicine only at Krishnapatnam but he would look at other options if necessary. "We have some power supply problems in the village and Collector assured us to solve it," he said, hinting that he would start production from the coming Monday.

POSITIVE CASES DROP TO 7.4 PER CENT IN NELLORE

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, JUNE 1

Much to the relief of medical professionals and district authorities, percentage of Covid positive cases dropped to a single digit — 7.4 per cent — on Monday for the first time in the last two months.

Some 378 persons out of 5,058 samples tested during the last 24 hours ending at 9 am on Monday tested positive.

The percentage of positive cases, or TPR, was hovering between 1.55 per cent and 7.73 from March 22 to April 12. It started increasing abnormally thereafter, causing tension to the authorities. The positive rate touched a high of 40.51 per cent (1,347 positive cases) on April 19 when the samples tested were 3,325.

The decline in the positive cases for the first times in the second phase of Covid on Monday was a matter of relief to doctors and other medi-care professionals. Officials were meanwhile happy over the drop in the daily consumption of oxygen by 9 tonnes. As against the daily consumption of 47 tonnes, the utility of oxygen came down to 38 tonnes during the last three days, district collector K.V.N. Chakradhar Babu said.

HEALTHY | MOVE

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, JUNE 1

To ensure nutritious diet for pregnant women and children, the government has started providing fortified rice, as per the directions of the Central government under the mid-day meals programme. Fortified rice contains iron, folic acid and Vitamin B12. It helps set right malnutrition and

300-bed hospital opens close to super speciality hospital

DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, JUNE 1

A 300-bed Covid care hospital erected with German hanger structure by way of an extension to the super speciality hospital here was inaugurated on Tuesday.

In the view of the huge number of Covid patients being unable to get oxygen beds at various hospitals, collector Gandham Chandrudu initiated the plan for a Covid care hospital closer to the super speciality hospital. This facility will be of help to patients arriving here

from various parts of the district.

Medical services was launched at the facility via virtual mode by district incharge minister Botsa Satyanarayana.

Roads and bridges minister Shankar Narayana, MPs T. Rangaiah and Gorantla Madhav and MLA Ananta Venkatarami Reddy took part. The new facility was set up on an acre of land with 300 beds, oxygen concentrators and a provision for oxygen through pipeline. About 158 staff members including 38 doctors will serve at the hospital

with a set of nursing and other staff. More than 50 toilets are provided as also a 125kva generator for use in case of power failure.

Botsa appreciated the efforts by the district administration to erect the hospital in 20 days. "Our intention is that government hospitals should be the ultimate service providers rather than private hospitals," the minister said.

Collector Gandham Chandrudu said the work on the hospital was completed within two weeks by a team of officials.

AP GIVES COVID JAB TO OVER ONE CRORE PEOPLE

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 1

The Andhra Pradesh government has successfully completed administration of Covid-19 vaccine to 1.04 crore people since it began the drive on January 16. The health department administered 74.92 lakh first doses and 25.24 lakh second doses.

The officials maintain that AP has received 98 lakh doses of both Covishield and Covaxin varieties from the Centre so far, while it procured some doses on its own. The officials point out that states like Gujarat and Maharashtra are getting nearly 25% of vaccine doses based on their population, while AP is getting only 18%.

AP is facing a severe shortage of vaccine doses to administer to all targeted beneficiaries including healthcare workers, frontline workers, people aged above 45 years, those aged between 18-44 years and those aged above 60 years. There is a need to ramp up the supplies many times, say he officials. Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy himself addressed letters to Prime Minister Narendra Modi underlining the need to allocate more doses to AP and extend other support in terms of medical oxygen and medical infrastructure.

The state health authorities maintain that as AP has established a good network of ward/village volunteers, ANMs, Asha workers and health centres with medical officers and paramedics, they are taking up fever survey door-to-door to identify people showing symptoms of Covid.

With such a vast network, they are able to provide good care and can take up vaccination too in a big way if enough doses are provided. AP already achieved a distinct record of vaccinating nearly 6.2 lakh people on a single day, the pointed out.

AP Covid Helping Hands nodal officer Dr Arja Srikanth said, "We have completed administration of over one crore doses of Covid vaccine to our people in the state so far and one in seven people got the jab with at least one dose in the state."

TTD WON'T PRODUCE ANANDAIAH POTION, SAYS SUBBA REDDY

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 1

TTD trust board chairman Y.V. Subba Reddy clarified that TTD is not going to prepare or distribute the concoction formulated by Bonigi Anandaiah of Nellore's Krishnapatnam village, as the drug lacks recognition from the Central and State Ayush departments.

Speaking to media persons at Tadepalligudem on Tuesday, he said, "It was a matter of fact that we wanted to prepare and distribute Anandaiah's concoction on behalf of TTD. But it lacks recognition from the certified department and hence we have decided to drop the plans of preparation and distribution", he added.

After five-day dip, Covid cases rise to 11,303 in AP

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 1

Andhra Pradesh has witnessed a rise in new Coronavirus infections with 11,303 cases recorded in the last 24 hours, compared to 7,943 instances registered on Monday.

The state had been recording a gradual decline in daily Covid-19 cases in the last few days. While it reported 18,285 infections on May 26, the numbers had been 16,167 on May 27; 14,429 on May 28; 13,756 on May 29 and 13,400 on May 30. The cases fell steeply to 7,943 on May 31, when 83,461 samples were tested.

AP health authorities reported on Tuesday that out of 93,704 samples tested during the last 24 hours, 11,303 persons have been found infected with the virus. Of them, 15,46,617 have recovered while 1,46,737 are under treatment.

On the day, East Godavari reported the highest of 2,477 Covid-19 cases, followed by 1,536 in Chittoor, 1,116 in West Godavari, 985 in Visakhapatnam, 953 in

Anantapur, 935 in Prakasam, 693 in Srikakulam, 686 in Guntur, 647 in Krishna, 444 in Nellore, 323 in Kadapa, 286 in Kurnool and 222 in Visakhapatnam.

East Godavari continues to be the worst-hit with highest number of 30,267 total active cases, followed by 19,184 in Prakasam, 17,459 in Chittoor, 12,197 in Nellore, 12,134 in Visakhapatnam, 11,481 in West Godavari, 9,981 in Krishna, 8,874 in Guntur, 8,014 in Srikakulam, 4,873 in Vizianagaram, 4,316 in Kadapa, 4,244 in Kurnool and 3,713 in Anantapur.

With regard to daily deaths, West Godavari reported 20, followed by 14 in Chittoor, nine each in Anantapur and Guntur, eight in East Godavari, seven in Visakhapatnam, six each in Krishna, Kurnool, Srikakulam and Vizianagaram; five in Kadapa, four each in Nellore and Prakasam, with total deaths being 104 during the last 24 hours. With this, the death toll has scaled up to 11,034.

State health authorities have on Tuesday discharged 18,257 persons after recovery from various hospitals in the state.

Parents attack hosp. after their kid dies

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL, JUNE 1

Enraged with the death of a two-year-old baby, the parents of the boy attacked Rafah hospital at Nandyal. The parents allege that it was due to the negligence of the doctor they lost their child. Hospital authorities also lodged a counter-complaint against them at the police station. But later both parties withdrew complaints, said DSP Chidananda Reddy.

Reshma and Sheik Ma Basha, residents of Boggu

line in the Bommalasatram area of Nandyal town got their two-year-old son admitted in the Rafah hospital.

The boy was taken in a condition as some inconvenience found in the esophagus tract. The boy subsequently died in the hospital, said the DSP.

Unable to come to terms, the parents and their relatives shouted against doctors alleging the boy could not be salvaged due to doctors' negligence.

The DSP said that no case has been registered.

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SHORT TAKES

ODISHA: CYBER THIEVES SWINDLE 1.49 CRORE

AKSHAYA KUMAR
SAHOO | DC
BHUBANESWAR, JUNE 1

Incidents of cyber theft increased during the lockdown period in Odisha in the last one month.

According to a statement issued by the police on Tuesday, the looters took advantage of the pandemic restrictions which prompted people to prefer online transactions for shopping and other financial activities.

The police said that fraudsters duped unsuspecting people to the tune of ₹1.49 crore during the lockdown out of which ₹70,78,714 was duped in the state capital Bhubaneswar alone during the period.

According to the data shared by the police, the Cyber help desk had received 529 calls regarding cyber frauds out of which the cyber cell in Bhubaneswar had received a maximum 256 calls.

As many as 160 calls were related to UPI fraud while 100 other calls related to frauds regarding credit and debit cards.

Based on the data of Bhubaneswar cyber cell, 17 cases had been registered at different police stations.

Similarly, 56 dubious mobile numbers have been blocked by the police during the period.

Police have refunded/blocked ₹12,05,306 during the month of May, the statement added.

UNPARALLELED HANDLING OF COVID IN UP: BJP

Lucknow, June 1: BJP vice president Radha Mohan Singh on Tuesday dismissed speculation over any change of leadership in Uttar Pradesh and called the state government's handling of the Covid pandemic "unparalleled".

Singh and BJP's national general secretary (organisation) B.L. Santhosh are on a three-day visit here, meeting party leaders on "preparations to fight Covid" and what participants called "organisational" issues.

The party vice president met Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and deputy chief ministers Dinesh Sharma and Keshav Maurya on Monday. On Tuesday, the two deputy chief ministers met Santhosh. When asked about speculation over "leadership change" in the state, Singh dismissed it as a figment of someone's imagination.

"Generally, the BJP review meetings take place twice a month, but this time there was a gap due to Covid-19. At the meeting, the 'sewa' (service) done by us was reviewed. Apart from this, the party's preparations for a possible third wave of Covid were also discussed," he said.

DELHI ALLOWS HOME DELIVERY OF LIQUOR ONLINE

New Delhi, June 1: Delhiites may soon order liquor through a mobile app or website for home delivery, with the Delhi government amending the excise rules through a notification that also allows take-away of draught beer in bottles or growlers from micro-breweries.

An official said that the amended rules were implemented with the issuance of notification, but the new facilities will take some time as the government will have to decide dates for implementing different provisions by notifying the new excise policy or separate term and conditions.

The Delhi Excise (Amendment) Rules, 2021, published in a gazette notification on Monday, permit the holders of the necessary licences to serve liquor in open spaces such as terraces, the courtyards of clubs, bars attached to hotels and independent restaurants where customers will also have choice of getting alcohol in bottles. However, it will be the sole responsibility of such establishments to ensure that no customer takes the served bottles out of the licensed premises.

The move will boost the government's revenue at a time when Delhi's economy is struggling due to ongoing lockdown that was implemented on April 19.

According to the notification, the licensee will make delivery of liquor at the residences only if order is received through an app or a web portal. Such deliveries will not be allowed at offices, institutions and hostels.

Only people can break the chain of virus to end lockdown: Stalin

Says unless the state recovers from Covid, govt's plans for other dept's cannot be looked into

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR
& D. SEKAR | DC
CHENNAI, JUNE 1

Entrusting the responsibility of putting a full stop to the spread of Coronavirus with the people, Chief Minister M.K. Stalin said only they could break the chain of the infection that spread from individual to individual as the lockdown could not be imposed always.

Urging the people to adhere to the restrictions and the norms imposed by the government, Stalin, in a video message to the public on Tuesday, said since Coronavirus spreads from person to person, everyone should play safe and also ensure that they did not spread it to others.

He pointed to the drastic reduction in the number of infections after a total lockdown was imposed on May 24 and said that though the government extended the lockdown by another week and the numbers came down further, it cannot be extended forever.

There was an urgent need to come out of the present day tragedies and step into a bright future with renewed hopes, he said, adding that the failure to put a full stop to the pandemic in its first wave had led to the second surge, which was throwing up a challenge to medical infrastructure and the state's finances.

Referring to his visit to the Covid ward at the ESI

Hospital in Coimbatore to extend moral support to the patients, the families and the frontline workers of the medical community, he said there were several people who had affectionately warned him not to repeat such an act.

The same alarm raised by the well-wishers should be a common caution guiding the general behaviour of the people since a violation of the precautions even by one person can jeopardise the collective efforts to put an end to the spread of virus.

Unless the state recovered from the present ravages of the pandemic, the government's plans for the other departments cannot be looked into and executed, he said.

As of now, the three-week-old government had developed adequate infrastructure to face the threat of Coronavirus, leading to a situation in which there was no shortage of beds or oxygen, Stalin said.

In fact, beds were empty in hospitals, he said. Besides, three lakh persons were being vaccinated every day and 1.70 lakh RT-PCR tests were being taken daily — both the figures are the highest among all states in the country — he said.

He also elaborated on the relief provided by the government to bring succour to the affected persons mentioning the payment of ₹2,000 to each of the families, a move that had won accolades from Nobel

laureate Abhijit Banerjee.

Other special measures taken by the government to offset the ill-effects of the lockdown include the arranging for supply of groceries and vegetables at the doorsteps and opening ration shops and also issues a list of 13 provisions to cardholders, he said.

Meanwhile, examinations for the State Board Plus Two examinations may also be cancelled in the wake of the Centre doing away with the final examinations for CBSE students, citing the safety of students in the context of the Covid-19 crisis.

State school education minister Anbil Mahesh Poyamozhi said that he would discuss the matter

with the Chief Minister and officials of the education department on Wednesday before arriving at a decision.

On Tuesday Poyamozhi had a rethink on his earlier decision to hold the examinations for the State Board students in the schools and said he was waiting for the CBSE's decision. The Minister had a review meeting with the Chief Minister at the Secretariat earlier in the day.

Now that the Centre has made it clear that Prime Minister Narendra Modi was not in favour of holding the examinations for the CBSE board, the state government might also take a similar line and cancel the examinations.



Adar Poonawalla

HC DIRECTS MAHA TO ENSURE POONAWALLA'S SECURITY

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC
MUMBAI, JUNE 1

The Bombay High Court on Tuesday said that the Maharashtra government must assure Adar Poonawalla, the CEO of Serum Institute of India, of adequate security in the wake of alleged threats to him over the supply of the 'Covishield' vaccine manufactured by his company.

A vacation bench of Justices S.S. Shinde and Abhay Ahuja was hearing a petition filed by city based lawyer Datta Mane seeking Z+ security for Poonawalla, claiming that the news reports showed that he left the country due to fear.

Even though the Union government has already granted 'Y' category security to the Pune-based industrialist, the petitioner through his lawyer Pradip Havnur, told the court that as per news reports, Poonawalla had been living in fear due to constant pressure from politicians and some others demanding that he provide more supply of the Covishield vaccine to their states.

Mane in his petition further said that Poonawalla had left for London due to such threats.

Notably, the SII CEO in an interview had revealed that he has been receiving threats and pressure from 'powerful people' seeking vaccine doses on priority.

The bench said the state must not consider the petition as an adversarial litigation and the state's top officials must personally speak to Poonawalla and assure him of his safety upon his return to India.

The bench directed state's counsel Deepak Thakare to speak to the government officials and convey the court's concerns. "Please speak to the highest state functionaries, maybe the state home minister, and assurance must be given to him (Poonawalla) from the top. They should talk to him personally" the HC said.

'Unlock' in full swing



Rag-pickers collect recyclable plastic from the Dhaka waste dumping site after ease in lockdown restrictions in Kolkata on Tuesday. — PTI



Shopkeepers open their shops at a market after the unlock process of lockdown began in Bhopal on Tuesday. — PTI



Vehicles ply on a road during relaxation hours in the ongoing lockdown in Guwahati on Tuesday. — PTI

Maha: 3 new cases found in Dharavi

Mumbai, June 1: The slum-dominated Dharavi area of Mumbai reported only three new Coronavirus infections on Tuesday, the civic body said.

The congested area with a population of over six lakh thus reported a single-digit rise in cases on the eighth day in a row, the civic body said. Dharavi had witnessed an alarming rise in cases in the beginning of April 2021.

It had reported 99 cases — the highest daily spike so far — on April 8, 2021. On May 23, the area

recorded 16 Covid-19 cases, after which the cases dipped to single digit.

The caseload in the area on Tuesday stood at 6,825, said an official of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC).

There are 17 active Covid-19 cases in Dharavi while 6,449 patients have recovered, he said. The BMC does not publish death figures from Dharavi. The day before the area had reported only two Covid-19 cases, the lowest spike in several months. — PTI

MP begins 'unlock', relaxes norms

RABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, JUNE 1

Madhya Pradesh was on Tuesday unlocked partially to start economic and business activities in the state.

The state government has, however, extended the 'corona curfew' in Madhya Pradesh till June 15. Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan also announced relaxation in curbs.

The lockdown was imposed on April 24 in the state to contain the Coronavirus pandemic, in the wake of 47 out of total 52 districts reporting a positivity rate below five

per cent. In a series of tweets, the Chief Minister's office has issued detailed guidelines regarding the relaxations that will be provided during the period of 'corona curfew' in the state.

According to the guidelines, the 'corona curfew' will remain in force from 10 pm every Saturday to 6 am on Monday. There will be night curfew in the state from 10 pm to 6 am.

Grocery shops and other small business establishments have been allowed to open. But, shopping malls, cinema halls, gym, swimming pools, picnic spots, auditorium and community centres will remain closed during the

curfew. Similarly, religious activities, political and social gatherings will remain prohibited till June 15. Schools, colleges and coaching institutions will also remain closed during the period.

On Monday, Madhya Pradesh reported 1,205 fresh Coronavirus cases taking the tally of cases to 7,80,030. The state has recorded 48 deaths in the last 24 hours taking the death toll to 5,023.

Meanwhile, neighbouring Chhattisgarh government also relaxed some curbs in the state, but decided to extend the lockdown to different periods in different districts considering the gravity of sit-

uation in these areas.

Those districts with a positive rate above five per cent shall continue with restrictions on opening of shops and other commercial establishments, as was instructed in the earlier instructions on May 24, a press release by the Chhattisgarh government said.

Shops and commercial establishments in all other districts reporting less than five per cent positivity rate will be opened.

However, restrictions on opening of cinema halls, swimming pools, water parks and other group gathering places will remain in force in these districts.

FRESH | POLLS Term of five state Assemblies including Punjab, UP end next year

EC confident of holding polls in 2022

New Delhi, June 1: The Election Commission is confident of holding the five Assembly polls due early next year, including in Uttar Pradesh and Punjab, on time as the poll panel has gained a lot of experience from the electoral exercise in Bihar, West Bengal and four other Assemblies amid the Coronavirus pandemic, Chief Election Commissioner Sushil Chandra has asserted.

The terms of the legislative Assemblies of Goa, Manipur, Punjab and

Uttarakhand are coming to an end in March 2022, while the term of the Uttar Pradesh legislative Assembly is scheduled to end in May.

"That is the foremost duty of the Election Commission that we should hold the elections and submit the list of the winning candidates (to the Governor) before the term of the Assembly expires," Chandra said.

He was asked whether the poll panel will be able to hold the Assembly polls due in five states on time

due to Covid-19 as recently it has deferred some Lok Sabha and Assembly bypolls due to the second wave of Covid-19.

Some Rajya Sabha bypolls and biennial legislative council elections were also deferred due to the second wave of the pandemic.

"As you are aware that the second wave of Covid-19 is also receding and the numbers (of infections) are quite less. We have done elections in Bihar during the pandemic, we have done elections in four

states and one UT. We have experience... We have learned various experiences on how to hold polls during the pandemic also," he said.

"I am very much sure that with the receding pandemic now, and I wish the pandemic is over soon, we will absolutely be in a position to hold elections next year which are scheduled in five states on time, as per the schedule," Chandra said.

While Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Goa and Manipur have BJP-led

governments, Punjab has a Congress government.

Uttar Pradesh, the country's most populous state, has approximately 14.66 crore voters, while Punjab has over 2 crore electors, according to January 1, 2021 data of the Election Commission.

Uttarakhand has 78.15 lakh voters while Manipur has 19.58 lakh and Goa has 11.45 lakh electors.

The five states together have an estimated 17.84 crore voters. — PTI



People not adhering to Covid-19 norms walk at Heritage Street near Golden Temple in Amritsar on Tuesday. Punjab, which has the highest case fatality rate of 2.4 per cent in the country, registered more than 100 deaths due to Covid-19 every single day in May. — PTI

SHORT TAKES

NEW VATICAN LAW CRIMINALISES ABUSE OF ADULTS

Vatican City: Pope Francis has changed church law to explicitly criminalise the sexual abuse of adults by priests who abuse their authority and to say that laypeople who hold church office can be sanctioned for similar sex crimes.

The new provisions, released Tuesday after 14 years of study, were contained in the revised criminal law section of the Vatican's Code of Canon Law, the in-house legal system that covers the 1.3-billion strong Catholic Church.

The most significant changes are contained in two articles, 1395 and 1398, which aim to address major problems and shortcomings in the church's handling of sexual abuse.

TECH PROBLEM ON IRAN FIGHTER JET KILLS TWO PILOTS

Tehran: An Iranian fighter jet on Tuesday developed a technical problem that killed both of the aircraft's pilots, state TV reported.

The report said the incident happened in the country's southwest, in the city of Dezful, 444 kilometres (270 miles) from the capital, Tehran and near the border with Iraq.

The report said an investigation was underway as to what had caused the malfunction of the Iranian air force's F-5 fighter jet. The TV said it happened before takeoff. It did not elaborate. The report, citing an informed source, identified the pilots as Kianoush Basati and Hossein Nami, without providing their rank. Authorities were investigating, it said.

MYANMAR SCRIBE TO SEEK ASYLUM IN SPAIN

Madrid: Myanmar correspondent Mratt Kyaw Thu will arrive in Madrid on Tuesday to ask for asylum after fleeing the military junta in Yangon, said the Spanish news agency EFE, which he worked for.

The 30-year-old correspondent, who will travel to Spain after failing to obtain asylum in Germany, won Kate Webb award in 2017 for his outstanding coverage of the ethnic and religious conflicts in Myanmar.

"Tomorrow he will fly from Frankfurt to Madrid to ask for asylum in Spain," *EFE* southeast Asia director Ramon Abarca said. "He has spent four weeks in a detention centre," he said. A spokesman for Spain's interior ministry said Mratt's arrival had not been officially registered but would be treated according to international law.

2 THAI PROTEST LEADERS GRANTED BAIL

Bangkok: Two prominent Thai pro-democracy protest leaders were granted bail on Tuesday, weeks after contracting Coronavirus in the kingdom's overcrowded prison system. Activist Panupong "Mike" Jadnok and human rights lawyer Anon Numpu are both facing multiple charges under royal defamation laws.

A Thai criminal court on Tuesday granted them bail, Thai Lawyers for Human Rights said.

They had to post a 2,00,000 baht (\$6,500) bail bond each and are banned from leaving Thailand or becoming involved with further activities that defame the monarchy.

Anon has been in custody for more than 100 days and Panupong for 85.

They are expected to be released from Thammasat University Hospital later on Tuesday.

FLOOD RECEDES IN NEW ZEALAND, LEAVING DEBRIS

Wellington: Floodwaters in New Zealand receded on Tuesday, leaving behind a big mess on many farms in the Canterbury region and damage to a major bridge.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern told reporters the top priority was getting transport links working again, although it was unclear how long it would take to fix the bridge that connects the town of Ashburton to the main highway south. Crews hoped to have an alternate route to the town ready by the end of the day.

Ardern said farmers had been particularly hard hit with lost feed, broken fences and debris spread across their fields. She said that seeing the damage from the air had shown her the scale of what had happened.

Four Pak soldiers killed in terror attacks

In the exchange of fire, four to five terrorists were killed while around eight ultras were also injured

Ugandan minister injured in assassination bid: Govt

Kampala, June 1: Uganda's transport minister, who used to lead the armed forces, was shot Tuesday in an attack which left his daughter and bodyguard dead, a government spokesman said.

The minister, General Edward Katumba Wamala, who was chief of the defece forces between 2013 and 2017, came under fire while driving in Kampala, said government spokesman Chris Baryomunsi.

"There was an attempt on his (Wamala's) life this morning ... His daughter and bodyguard were shot and they died at the scene," Baryomunsi said.

"General Katumba has been rushed to hospital with bullet wounds and he is receiving treatment, the crime scene has been taken over by the investigators," he added.

"This could be a case of assassination by criminal elements but the investigations will establish the motive and those behind" the attack.

Witnesses to the attack told local television stations that four masked men riding two motorbikes fired scores of bullets at Wamala's vehicle.

Images from the scene showed Wamala's car — an official army vehicle

easily identified by its distinctive military green number plates — riddled with about a dozen bullet holes in the rear and driver side of the vehicle.

Tuesday's shooting is the latest in a series of attempted killings of high-profile targets by motorcycle-riding assassins in Uganda's capital.

In June 2018 Ibrahim Abiriga, a leading politician from the ruling National Resistance Movement party, led by President Yoweri Museveni, was gunned down alongside his bodyguard in similar circumstances.

— AP

FRANCE SUBMITS BEIRUT PORT BLAST REPORT

Beirut, June 1: Lebanon on Monday received a preliminary report from France regarding last year's massive port blast in Beirut that killed and wounded thousands, judicial officials said.

The officials said the French report is useful for the ongoing investigation in Beirut over the August blast, which decimated the country's main port and caused severe damage to surrounding areas. The officials declined to give details about the report.

— AP

11 suspected ultras nabbed in Indonesia

Jakarta, June 1: Indonesian police said Monday they have arrested 11 suspected Islamic militants accused of plotting attacks at several Christian churches in easternmost Papua province.

On Friday, the elite counterterrorism squad arrested 10 suspects in several raids in Papua's Merauke district after receiving information about planned attacks in the province, a predominantly Christian region in Muslim-majority Indonesia, Merauke police chief Untung Sangaji said.

The arrests led police to another suspect who was

detained Sunday, and led them to seize items from various locations including chemicals for explosives, modified air guns able to fire real bullets, jihadist books and documents on planned attacks, he said.

Sangaji said those arrested are suspected of being members of Jemaah Anshorut Daulah, which has pledged allegiance to the Islamic State group and carried out a series of suicide bombings in Indonesia. "They allegedly planned to attack churches in several places in Merauke," Sangaji said.

— AP

8 jihadists ‘neutralised’ in Burkina army operation

Ouagadougou, June 1: Burkinabe soldiers have "neutralised" eight jihadists and captured three in an ongoing operation in the north and east of the poor West African state, the army said Tuesday.

Five were "neutralised" — the usual term for killed — by national soldiers and troops of the Burkinabe battalion of the G5 Sahel force on Friday near the

northern town of Tasmaka, the army chief of staff said in a statement, describing the operation as an "offensive reconnaissance mission".

"Three suspects were apprehended and taken to the gendarmerie for questioning," the statement said, adding that weapons and materiel were seized.

On Thursday, following an attack on civilians in

eastern Tialbonga, two assailants were killed during a search and sweep operation, it said. The unit killed another jihadist following an attack on army reservists in northern Gashole, the statement said.

The Burkina Faso army launched an operation in the north on May 5 named Houme which is expected to last more than a month.

— AFP

Nato meets to prepare Afghan withdrawal

Brussels, June 1: Nato's foreign and defence ministers were meeting Tuesday to lay the groundwork for the military alliance's first summit with United States President Joe Biden, setting aside four tumultuous years with the Trump administration.

The ministers will discuss a hefty communique being drafted for the June 14 summit in Brussels, which will reaffirm the unity of the 30-nation security alliance — which has been riven by infighting in recent years — and focus on future threats and challenges. "This is a pivotal moment for our alliance, and our collective security," Nato Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said on the eve of the meetings.

"In a more competitive and unpredictable world, we need transatlantic unity." Chief among the challenges is dealing with an increasingly aggressive Russia, whose defence minister announced Monday that Russia would establish 20 new military units in its western sector this year to counter what it claims is a growing threat from Nato.

The rise of China and the impact of climate change — two of the Biden administration's key interests — will also be discussed, along with missile defence, cyber and hybrid warfare, and the use of disinformation. The most pressing subject for debate will be winding up Nato's operations in Afghanistan.

Biden has pledged to have US troops out of the conflict-ravaged country

● **THE MINISTERS** will discuss a hefty communique being drafted for the June 14 summit in Brussels, which will reaffirm the unity of the 30-nation security alliance — which has been riven by infighting in recent years — and focus on future threats and challenges.

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by Sept. 11, but many are likely to have left by the time the summit takes place. But major questions remain over exactly how Nato will continue to fund the corruption-ridden Afghan security forces, whether to continue training special forces troops somewhere outside the country, and exactly who might provide security for civilian workers, embassies and Kabul's airport. — AP

Gala time for kids



Children play with soap bubbles in the centre of the Ukrainian capital of Kiev during a festive event organised by the police to mark International Children's Day on Tuesday.

— AFP

Russian authorities increase pressure on Oppn, arrest one

Moscow, June 1: Russian authorities have ramped up their pressure on dissent ahead of a parliamentary election, arresting one opposition activist and raiding several others' homes. Andrei Pivovarov, the head of the Open Russia movement that dissolved itself last week, was pulled off a plane at St. Petersburg's airport late Monday and was to be taken to Krasnodar in southern Russia Tuesday as part of a criminal probe against him.

Also on Tuesday, police raided a country home of opposition politician Dmitry Gudkov, a former lawmaker who has aspired to run for parliament in September. At least two of his associates also had their homes searched.

The moves are part of a multi-pronged crackdown on the opposition that is widely seen as part of the authorities' efforts to prevent any opposition groups from mounting a challenge to the main Kremlin-backed United Russia party in September's parliamentary election.

United Russia's popularity has waned amid the country's economic slowdown. Last week, Pivovarov announced that Open Russia was shutting down to protect its members from prosecution after the authorities had designated it as "undesirable."

The government already has outlawed more than 30 groups using a 2015 law that made membership in "undesirable" organisations a criminal offence.

Another bill now making its way through parliament tightens punishment for their members. Open Russia was financed by tycoon Mikhail Khodorko-

vsky, who moved to London after spending 10 years in prison in Russia on charges widely seen as political revenge for challenging President Vladimir Putin's rule.

In March, police briefly detained about 200 participants of a forum of members of municipal councils that Open Russia helped organise. Putin's most determined political foe, Aleksei Navalny, was arrested in January upon his return from Germany, where he had spent five months recovering from a nerve agent poisoning.

— AP

RESIDENTS' TRAUMA

Owners flock to vet Qaddoura's clinic since May 21 ceasefire with Israel

In Gaza, Palestinians tend to shell-shocked pets

Gaza City, Palestinian Territories, June 1: A smashed goldfish bowl, panicked birds in a cage, scores of animals needing treatment. The loss or injury of treasured pets has added to the grief and trauma of Gaza residents after last month's deadly conflict.

Neriman, a nine-year-old Palestinian girl, clutched a glass jar holding her goldfish Hoor, delighted it had survived after her other one, Hooriya, died in the Israeli air strike in Gaza

City. In the latest war, Israeli strikes on Gaza killed 254 Palestinians, including 66 children, as well as some fighters, authorities there say.

Fire by Palestinian militants claimed 12 lives in Israel, including one child, a teenager and an Israeli soldier.

Pets also suffered, as well as the children who owned them.

"I was so sad that Hooriya died and I cried when I buried her in the field," said Neriman, of

her first fish, whose name meant "Mermaid" in Arabic.

"But I was so happy that Hoor had survived," she added of her second fish.

At an animal clinic in Gaza City, Amani Abu Shaaban held a fluffy cat to her chest as they waited to see a vet.

"My cat has been very scared since the war. She refuses to eat, and her hair is falling out," she said.

"Even the sound of a mobile phone ringing freaks her out."

Nearby, vet Mutasem Qaddoura examined two cats, one after the other.

One needed an operation for a broken leg, the other was dehydrated and malnourished.

Dozens of pets owners have flocked to his clinic since Gaza's May 21 ceasefire though supplies to treat them are scarce.

"The state of veterinary medicine is disastrous in Gaza," Qaddoura said.

"We use X-ray machines intended for humans and platinum screws meant to

fix children's bones to treat the animals."

Neriman and her family had been forced to flee their home on May 13, after an Israeli officer warned neighbours of an imminent strike on a nearby bank.

In the panic she left behind her fish, as well as two parakeets, Alloosh and Malloosh, given to her by her father for her sixth birthday.

But soon after, she started worrying.

"I just had to go home

with my father to get them," she said.

When they returned, she found a special outfit she had laid out on her bed for the Eid holidays covered in rubble, the bed collapsed and the windows blown in. "I heard Alloosh and Malloosh chirping under the rubble, and I found the fish bowl broken," she said.

Hooriya had died, but they saved Hoor, a scene shown in a video which has since gone viral on social media.

— AFP

DECCAN Chronicle

2 JUNE 2021

Stop misuse of sedition, all other laws to stifle dissent

The Supreme Court's observation that Section 124A of the IPC which deals with sedition will need interpretation, especially on its application with regard to freedom of the press, is welcome. It is all the more refreshing that it came along with a directive restraining the police from taking coercive action against two TV channels in Andhra Pradesh for airing news, and a query, albeit sarcastic, by a bench of the court as to whether sedition cases were being filed against TV channels which aired visuals of a body of a suspected Covid-19 victims being thrown into a river.

This is not the first time that the Supreme Court has taken a close look at the sedition law vis a vis Article 19 (1) (a) of the Constitution which guarantees freedom of speech and expression. A Constitution bench of the Supreme Court had in 1962 upheld the constitutionality of the law but held that its use must be limited to "acts involving intention or tendency to create disorder, or disturbance of law and order, or incitement to violence". The court had gone on to say that a citizen has "a right to say or write whatever he likes about the government, or its measures, by way of criticism or comment, so long as he does not incite people to violence against the government established by law or with the intention of creating public disorder". A month ago, the Supreme Court had, in fact, decided that it will review the constitutional validity of the law.

There are reports that 96 per cent of sedition cases in the last 10 years were registered after 2014... of the 405 such cases, 149 were booked against persons who spoke against the Prime Minister

Given the propensity of the governments at the Centre and in the states to invoke this law, it is appropriate that the apex court get on to the exercise of its review at the earliest. It is, however, a bit baffling that the court talked of a review with regard to the press, though the Constitution makes no mention of freedom of the press and assures every citizen of the right to speech and expression. It is expected that the review would ultimately benefit every citizen of this country.

It is not just the sedition law that the governments now find handy to muzzle dissent or criticism. The Uttar Pradesh government had recently warned that those who publicly flag shortage of healthcare facilities Covid patients face will be booked under the National Security Act. It took a stern warning by the apex court that it will brook no violation of the right to free speech of a citizen when the country is going through a humanitarian crisis for the state government to halt its draconian moves. Another forceful and timely intervention by the Supreme Court is imperative if free speech were to survive and succeed in this country.

3 kids in China: It's demographics

The China Communist Party politburo's shift to a three-child policy comes amid a falling birthrate that has led to certain demographic challenges like an ageing society which may have 300 millions people in the 60+ category by 2025. The title of the world's most populated country may not remain much longer with China as estimates have it that India is behind by a mere five crore people and is being tipped to take the title in this decade itself. The question arises, then, whether a nation can over time cope with a rising population when the economic and social indicators are far from promising as they may have been in the past.

Can society support an ageing section of people even as it faces the challenge of providing jobs for millions of young people in an environment in which industry and to an extent services too are bound to get more automated and the traditional job and livelihood prospects are fast declining in the modern age? China's problem right now seems to be to sustain what was once a demographic advantage of a vast number of younger people in the working category driving an economy that steadily rose over the last four decades into one of the most powerful in the world.

More recently, India was thought to have the advantage in which those aged above 64 represent only about 6.38 per cent of the population while 26.62 per cent are younger than 14.

As education reached all, more and more couples adopted the one or two child norm in India where family planning is only voluntary and not State policy-driven as it is in China where resentment is rife over government's invasive control over women's bodies and where unwed or single mothers with children are not only frowned upon but also made ineligible for State benefits. There are far too many factors like economic pressures and social trends among women that govern birthrates. While policy planners may fret over demographic profiles, individual choice is more likely to govern population trends. Ultimately, it will be the economy and the environment that will dictate trends than fancy ideas of social engineering.

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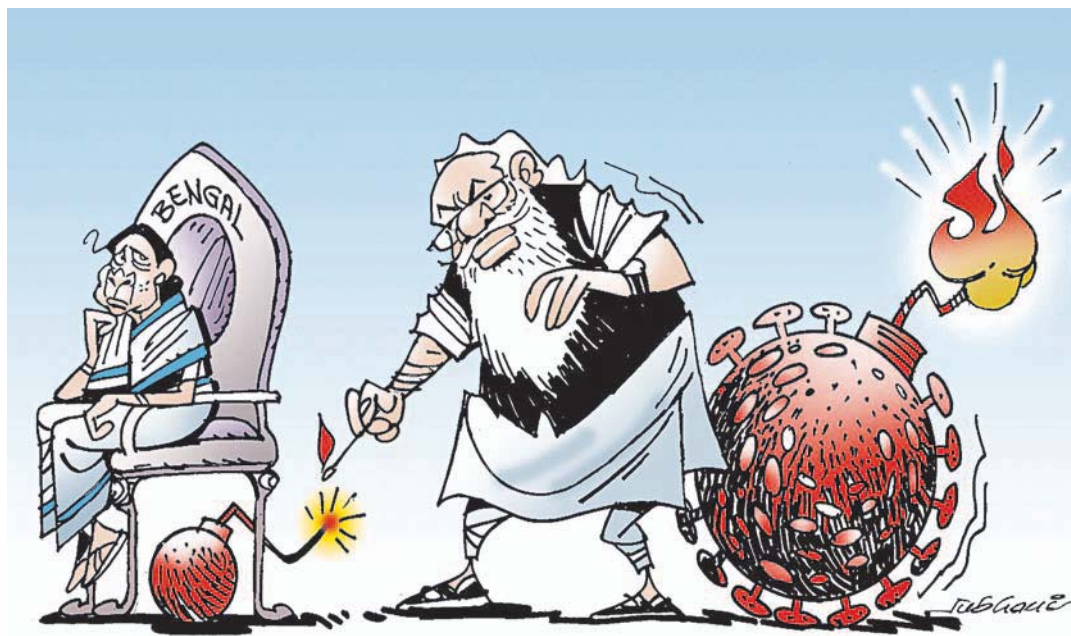
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Subhani



Game score at halftime: China — 1, Mankind — 0



Sriram Karri

Welcome. We are joined live by nearly billions of people across the world, but the telecast of this soccer game is not being broadcast live only in China. We are just a few minutes away from kick-off of the game to decide the winner of the ultimate trophy — world domination.

China, under its new coach, manager and captain, Xi, has prepared hard and meticulously for this match. Xi's strategy is unclear. The rival team, "All of Mankind", is unsure how to deal with Xi, even experts are divided. The excitement and tension among spectators is unbelievable, and it feels like a game of life and death.

Xi wins the toss against his rival captain, Donald T, who is shaking his head angrily, and claiming that the referee, Mr Who, is resorting to unfair play. Xi will kick off the ball. Against all rules, Xi has unveiled a new ball for the match. The sphere, green in colour, has tentacles on its surface. China has not revealed how or where the ball was made. Some experts feel that it was created in a lab, but a few say it was a natural mutation.

The jury is still out. But clearly China has an unfair advantage as they know a lot more about this ball, now dubbed Corona. By refusing to share information, clearly Xi is complicit as guilty as per the lab-leak theory. The game picks pace. Trump and his team mates are running around in confusion as Xi and his team are showing excellent coordination, dribbling the ball with practiced finesse, deflecting all attacks with nonchalance.

Mankind and he does it with ease. China takes the lead. 1-0.

The coach of Mankind is looking on carefully as Trump puts up a little fight back here, taking the ball into the Chinese side. It is the Quad strategy. The US, India, Japan and Australia are moving forward with some skill. But China is not giving it up.

It is using reverse aggression tactics and is targeting India again. The India-China scuffle momentarily distracts everyone. But India refuses to budge. China now kicks in other directions. China's selective aggression against the Philippines, Vietnam, Australia and Japan leads to anger in Mankind.

Meanwhile, the coach decides to substitute a player. No, not just any player, but the captain. Trump is out. Biden steps onto the ground but the exiting captain refuses to hand over the band. Some internal scuffle here... but matters seem to have finally settled nicely.

Can Biden change Mankind's strategy? He has experience and great understanding about China, having been a crucial player in Obama's Club before. Biden is pushing hard on the investigation flank. The ball is being held by Mankind for a tad bit longer as Wuhan keeps coming into the picture... Lab or natural mutation? The tactics are simple but are working. But will China wilt and relinquish its advantage? Traditionally, China believes in the Middle Kingdom domination

Can Biden change Mankind's strategy? He... is pushing hard on the investigation flank. The ball is being held by Mankind for a tad bit longer as Wuhan keeps coming into the picture. Lab or natural mutation?

strategy.

Biden is under great pressure, having taken charge after China took a lead. Will he go down in history as the captain who surrendered American global leadership, a trophy held since World War II? Or can he inflict enough high costs on Xi for his misadventures? Biden is getting his players to focus on the economy flank and pushing vaccine tactics. China is imitating the vaccine ploy but does not seem to have too many takers. Except Pakistan.

Meanwhile, the ball goes back to investigations into the origins of Covid. China is protesting. We are nearing the end of the play for the first half, with Xi's China holding on to the 1-0 lead. Mankind has not even reached China's half convincingly even once in this match, no mismatch. Europe has been disappointing in the game so far. Biden has another brief distraction on the field — it is Israel and Palestine having a go at each other.

Most Mankind players are looking on in disbelief while China is enjoying the distraction to catch its breath. We have just a few minutes left. It looks unlikely with the pace at which Covid is moving around the global field if there can be an equaliser. Clearly, the second half is when the fate of the match will be decided.

Will Mankind adopt a more aggressive challenge to China in response to their bio-warfare tactics? Will Mankind get together strongly to remove China from the UN Security Council? Or impose a fine of \$10,000 for each Covid death worldwide? Biden's response — military, diplomatic, economic, or a combination? We will find out when the game resumes after a break if he can make a strong comeback.

The referee blows the whistle. Halftime. The scoreline reads Mankind — 0, China — 1. All the players are walking out of the ground. We will take a short commercial break. Be right back...

LETTERS

ANANDAIAH 'CURE'

Finally Boningi Anandaiah conoction got nod from both the Andhra Pradesh High Court and the state government. With this several people across the state and neighbouring state who want take his preparation for Covid-19 treatment got shy of relief. In this episode one should learn that there is no authentic treatment for Coronavirus even in allopathy. Even remdesivir and plasma therapy were recommended and later they were shunned. Why can't such chance be given to Anandaiah preparation as thousands of Covid patients are eagerly waiting for it?

Pratapa Reddy Yaramala
Krishna

NON-ALIGNMENT

With the US pressing for new research to find the origins of Covid-19 and China furiously rejecting any new research it's the beginning of Cold War 2. While India had survived the first Cold War through Jawaharlal Nehru's Non-alignment strategy and protected itself from the two major powers — US and USSR — it seems even now non-alignment strategy is the best solution to protect India from the two nuclear superpowers that is USA and China.

Ratnaraj Jain
Rajahmundry

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

Ex-Minister held for alleged link with Pak spies

CALCUTTA, June 1. Former United Front Minister Golam Yazdani and former member of Lok Sabha Syed Badruddoja were arrested this afternoon for their alleged involvement in the activities of a Pakistani spy ring.

Chief Minister Ajoy Mukherji told newsmen that the arrest was made under the Maintenance of Internal Security Ordinance 1971 with a view to prevent the two persons from acting in any manner "prejudicial to the defence of India and India's relations with foreign powers and the security of India."

Aakar Patel



How Jaishankar put on mat in US over Hindutva and other issues

India's external affairs minister Subrahmanya Jaishankar was till Saturday on a visit to the United States. The first half of his trip was apparently not very productive as the person he had come to meet, US secretary of state Antony J. Blinken, had to go to the Middle East on an urgent visit. Mr Jaishankar met him only several days after reaching the US. In the meantime, the minister met the Indian teams at the United Nations and had sundry other meetings. He also had an interview with former President Donald Trump's national security adviser Lt. Gen. H.R. McMaster. The general, who is familiar with India and has visited it, spoke about radicalism in the region and how extremism had hurt Pakistan. He then asked Mr Jaishankar: "I wanted to ask you about how you see political developments in your own country. You are not a partisan person. You have served with great distinction across many administrations. There is concern in the midst of the pandemic about some of these Hindutva policies that could be undermining the secular nature of Indian democracy... Are India's friends right to be concerned about some of these recent trends?"

Mr Jaishankar first corrected Gen.

McMaster to say that he was actually partisan: "Let me clarify something. I served multiple administrations when I was a civil servant. I am today an elected member of Parliament. Do I have a political viewpoint and political interest? Of course, I do. Hopefully I will be able to articulate the interest that I represent." He then says he will give two replies: a "straight political answer" and a "slightly more nuanced societal answer".

His straight political answer is that in the past India had "votebank politics", but no longer does because democracy had deepened under the BJP. This had happened through "broader representation in politics and in leadership positions and in civil society of people... who are much more confident about their culture, about their language about their beliefs. These are people who are less from the English-speaking world, less connected to other global centres". Mr Jaishankar says there's nothing to be concerned about as there is no problem, and this set of people he is referring to are "judged politically harshly and it is often used to create a certain narrative".

His nuanced societal answer is that the BJP government doesn't discriminate, Mr Jaishankar says, as they gave extra rations to people in the pandem-

ic and put money in people's Jan Dhan accounts without separating them by religion.

We should perhaps be thankful to Mr Jaishankar that India so far hasn't decided to give entitlements to the poor based on religion. But while we are thankful, we should also note Mr Jaishankar didn't actually answer what was asked. Gen. McMaster's question was framed around the word Hindutva and its policies. What are they? They are the introduction of religion into citizenship. The United Nations and the European Union and members of the US Congress expressed disappointment and alarm over India's Citizenship Amendment Act.

The US International Commission on Religious Freedom report for 2021 identified laws in India that criminalise conversion, especially of women to Islam. These laws are the BJP's Uttarakhand Freedom of Religion Act 2018, Himachal Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act 2019, Madhya Pradesh Dharma Swatantrya Adhyadesh 2020, Uttar Pradesh Vidhi Viruddh Dharma Samparivartan Pratishedh Adhyadesh 2020 and Gujarat Freedom of Religion (Amendment) Act 2021. The USCIRF report (which recommends sanctions

against India) says while these laws 'target inter-faith marriage in particular, several other states prohibit conversion based on vague criteria, including force, inducement, allurements, coercion, fraud, or misrepresentation. These anti-conversion laws are often the basis for false accusations, harassment, and violence against non-Hindus that occur with impunity. In 2020, for example, mobs — fuelled by false accusations of forced conversions — attacked Christians, destroyed churches, and disrupted religious worship services'.

India under Narendra Modi has spent a lot of energy in drafting laws that go after minorities. The Gujarat Animal Preservation (Amendment) Bill 2017 punishes cow slaughter, that is ostensibly an economic crime, with life in jail. No other economic crime carries a life sentence. More than half of all arrests under the National Security Act in Uttar Pradesh in 2020 were for cow slaughter. This is a law that allows preventive detention, meaning the government locks up people without any crime. Muslim men are the only community for whom divorce is not a civil wrong but a criminal one. This is the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act 2019. It criminalises a non-act. Triple

tafaq in one sitting is not lawful in India. If I say talaq to my wife three times, our marriage doesn't end, and it is not a crime. If a Muslim man says it to his wife, their marriage doesn't end, but it is a crime.

India uses a 12-gauge shotgun firing birdshot into protesters in only one state. In no other state in India except Kashmir is the so-called pellet gun used on crowds. It has blinded and wounded thousands, including infants nowhere near the protest.

I could go on, but you get the picture. These are the things that India's friends are concerned about. They are new laws that are the gift to us of Hindutva, which is why Gen. McMaster used that term.

Mr Jaishankar replied to Gen. McMaster without once using the word "Hindutva", and without referring to any of the laws India was getting pulled up for around the world. The reason he ran away from the debate, of course, was that there is no defence. Obfuscation and avoiding the issue was the only way to respond to the accusation, which is a correct one, that India was harming itself and its own people through Hindutva.

The writer is a columnist and a senior journalist

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	51,934.88	0.00
Nifty 50	15,574.90	-0.05
S&P 500*	4,203.77	-0.01
Dollar (₹)	72.90	0.38
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.37	0.42
Euro (₹)	89.18	0.77
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,892,285	0.58
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	70.18	1.24
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.025	0.05
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.632	0.039

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Move to exempt electric vehicles from RC fees

The ministry of road transport and highways has issued a draft notification proposing to exempt battery-operated vehicles (BOV) from payment of fee for issue or renewal of registration certificate (RC). The ministry said comments from the public have been sought within 30 days. "The ministry...proposing to exempt BOV from payment of fees for the purpose of issue or renewal of RC and assignment of new registration mark," it said.

Curbs on export of amphotericin-B injections



The government imposed curbs on export of amphotericin-B injections that are used for treatment of mucormycosis or black fungus infections. By a notification issued by the Directorate General of Foreign Trade, export of the injections have been put in the restricted category. This means that an exporter would need permission or licence from the directorate for its outbound shipments.

Renault Triber gets 4-star adult safety rating

Renault India's seven-seater model Triber has received a four-star safety rating for adult occupants, vehicle safety group Global NCAP said. The model has achieved a four-star rating for adult occupants and three stars for child occupants as per the Global NCAP's latest round of crash tests. Vehicles are rated from zero to five based on their safety features and automobiles with a higher rating are considered safer for occupants.

Eli Lilly India gets nod for antibody combination

Eli Lilly and Company India said it has received permission for emergency use of its antibody drugs combination in the country. The company has received permission for restricted emergency use of its monoclonal antibody drugs, bamlanivimab 700 mg and etesevimab 1400 mg, used together for the treatment of patients with mild to moderate Covid-19, Eli Lilly said in a statement.



■ Reversal of stamp duty relief affects sales Mumbai property deals take bad hit

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, JUNE 1

The Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) recorded a sharp drop in property sale transactions in April-May 2021 over the Covid-19 second wave and the Maharashtra government's decision to discontinue the stamp duty waiver on property registrations from April 2021.

Sale transactions in April and May came down to Rs 10,979 crore and Rs 22,507 crore, respectively, against Rs 44,167 crore in March 2021.

The property sale transactions registered in MMR in February and January 2021 were Rs 21,696 crore and Rs 21,484 crore, respectively.

As per data from the Inspector General of Registration-Department of Registrations & Stamps Maharashtra, as on May 30, 2021, the stamp duty collection in MMR for the month was Rs 417 crore, as compared to Rs 725 crore in April 2021.

The stamp duty collection in MMR for the months of March, February and January 2021 were Rs 1,365 crore, Rs 648 crore and Rs 570 crore, respectively.

"We have started witnessing a 50 per cent dip in property sales after the Maharashtra government restored stamp duty back to 5 per cent in Mumbai and 6 per cent in the rest of Maharashtra from April 2021. The sales regis-

CONSTRUCTION TO RESUME BY MID-JUNE: ASSOCHAM

New Delhi, June 1: With several states started easing Covid-related restrictions, the employment-intensive construction industry should witness resumption in operations by the middle of June, though at a curtailed level, industry chamber ASSOCHAM said on Tuesday. The chamber said it would take about two weeks for the contractors to put together again



the material and manpower at the sites after the disruptions of about 40 days in major states like Maharashtra, UP, Rajasthan, Bihar and Haryana, among others. The major challenge is bringing back the construction workers, ASSOCHAM said, adding, "Fast vaccination of the labour force would be a big morale booster for them and their families."

—PTI

tered in the month of April & May are due to the overflow of registrations from the previous quarter where many homebuyers took advantage of the stamp duty benefit before the March deadline and registered their properties later," said Ashok Mohanani, president, Naredco Maharashtra.

"Due to the impact of the second wave of Covid-19 and the Maharashtra government's decision to discontinue the stamp duty waiver on property registrations from April 2021, there has been a decline in the property sales in the months of April and May 2021," real estate experts said.

"The second wave which has been more deadly than the first wave made the homebuyers more cautious to save money for emergencies rather than

investing in properties. Amid the sudden surge in Covid cases and the various curbs due to the lockdown in the state, the sector faced a gradual slowdown, which made it extremely difficult to sustain the momentum...the homebuyers took advantage of the stamp duty benefit before the March deadline," said Pritam Chivukula, co-founder & director, Tridhaatu Realty.

"For the second consecutive month in a row, the real estate sector faced a dip in sales due to the second wave of the pandemic. Even the festive occasions of Gudi Padwa and Akshaya Tritiya saw buyers shying away from auspicious purchases due to the surge in Covid-19 cases," Ram Naik, executive director, The Guardians Real Estate Advisory.

MANUFACTURING PMI SLIPS IN MAY

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO NEW DELHI, JUNE 1

With the Covid second wave and subsequent restrictions across many states, India's manufacturing activity slipped in May. India witnessed the loss of growth momentum last month due to the pandemic's negative impact on demand, slowest rise of new work orders and job losses, a private sector survey showed on Tuesday.

According to the monthly IHS Markit India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index survey, manufacturing PMI stood at a ten-month low of 50.8 in May, down from 55.5 in the previous month of April. "Although the health of the Indian manufacturing sector continued to improve in May, the latest results showed a significant loss of growth momentum," the survey showed.

Pollyanna De Lima, economics associate director at IHS Markit, said, "The Indian manufacturing sector is showing increasing signs of strain as the Covid-19 crisis intensifies. Key gauges of current sales, production and input buying weakened noticeably in May."

Guidelines for pharma PLI issued

New Delhi, June 1: The government on Tuesday issued operational guidelines for the production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme for the pharmaceutical industry.

The Department of Pharmaceuticals has notified the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for Pharmaceuticals, for which the approved outlay is Rs 15,000 crore, the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilisers said in a statement.

"The scheme envisages to create global champions out of India who has the potential to grow in size and scale using cutting edge technology and thereby penetrate the global value chains."

The scheme is now open to applications from the industry, the ministry said.

The applications are invited in the three groups, based on the global manufacturing revenue of FY20 of the applicants. A special carve-out for MSMEs has been kept under the scheme. The application window is for 60 days starting from June 2 to July 31, 2021.

"The products covered under the scheme are formulations, biopharmaceuticals, active pharmaceutical ingredients, key starting material, drug intermediates, in-vitro diagnostic medical devices, etc," it added.

A maximum of 55 applicants will be selected. An applicant, via a single application, can apply for more than one product.

—PTI

Nestle working to update nutrition, health strategy

New Delhi, June 1: Swiss FMCG major Nestle SA said it is looking across its entire portfolio to increase the nutrient profile of its products, following international media reports that 60 per cent of the company's mainstream food and drinks portfolio failed to meet a "recognised definition of health" and nutrition.

Nestle is working on a company-wide project to update its nutrition and health strategy. It is looking at its entire portfolio to ensure that its products are helping meet their nutritional needs and supporting a balanced diet, a Nestle SA spokesperson said.

On Monday, *Financial Times* reported that the majority of Nestle's mainstream food and drinks portfolio failed to meet recognised standards of health and nutrition.

"The world's largest food



company, Nestle, has acknowledged that more than 60 per cent of its mainstream food and drinks products do not meet a 'recognised definition of health and that some of our categories and products will never be healthy' no matter how much we renovate", the *Financial Times* report said quoting a Nestle document.

A presentation circulated among top executives this year, seen by the *Financial Times*, said that only 37 per cent of Nestle's food and beverages by revenues, excluding products such as pet

food and specialised medical nutrition, achieve a rating above 3.5 under Australia's health star rating system.

"Within its overall food and drink portfolio, about 70 per cent of Nestle's food products failed to meet that threshold, the presentation said, along with 96 per cent of beverages—excluding pure coffee—and 99 per cent of Nestle's confectionery and ice cream portfolio," the media report noted.

While issuing a global statement, Nestle—maker of KitKat, Maggi and Nescafe—said it is working on a company-wide project to update its nutrition and health strategy. "We are looking at our entire portfolio across the different phases of people's lives to ensure our products are helping meet their nutritional needs and supporting a balanced diet," he said.—PTI

Lending to MSMEs up 3% in FY21

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JUNE 1

Credit offtake by micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) increased by 3 per cent in the last fiscal year (FY21) against a marginal de-growth in FY20. However, the second Covid wave has hit incremental credit growth in April this year.

At Rs 12.43 lakh crore at the end of FY21, the total bank credit outstanding to MSMEs grew 3.19 per cent. At the end of the previous

fiscal, the outstanding had degrown 0.21 per cent.

While micro and small enterprises (MSEs) registered a growth of 4.22 per cent in credit offtake in FY21, outstanding by medium enterprises grew 5.14 per cent. The manufacturing sector recorded a growth of 3.07 per cent in FY21 against a degrowth of 6.15 per cent in the previous year. Services bettered growth from 3.89 per cent in FY20 to 4.83 per cent in FY21.

Some of the key policy

measures provided by the government during the pandemic led to the growth in bank credit. This includes the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme.

However, since the second wave of the pandemic started hitting industries, there has been a decline of bank credit.

In April 2021, incremental bank credit to the MSME sector fell by 3.2 per cent compared with a negative growth of 0.2 per cent in April 2020.

Moderate impact of 2nd wave seen

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JUNE 1

The impact of the second wave of pandemic on different sectors will be largely moderate compared to the first wave last year, says Brickwork Ratings.

Engineering goods, automobiles and ancillaries, BFSI and media and entertainment, which were in the "high impact" category in the first wave are now in the "moderate" category.

Partial opening of economic activities, declining

interest rates and a pick-up in execution are helping engineering goods. As for automobiles, demand revival over the low base of last year, robust delivery channels and pent-up demand might be supportive. Revival in the collection cycle will support BFSI. Localised and less stringent restrictions allow a slight scope of growth for media.

However, hotels and tourism, gems & jewellery and transportation will remain highly impacted

due to restricted mobility and lower disposable incomes.

Textile and accessories, metal & metal products, real estate, infrastructure, construction & construction materials, chemicals & chemical products, power and consumer durables continue to be moderately impacted as last year.

IT and TtEs will have a low impact compared to a moderate impact in the first wave due to higher demand and better economic prospects in the US.

Lockdowns drag down auto sales

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, JUNE 1

The second Covid-19 wave has brought back pain for India's automakers as their sales slumped over the preceding month on fresh lockdowns in several states and companies suspending manufacturing.

Comparisons between last month and May 2020 are not comparable as both months saw disruptions in production. The national lockdown last year had only begun being eased in a phased manner in May,

therefore, sales comparison is made to April 21 to gauge the market trend.

Vehicle sales at Maruti Suzuki, Hyundai, Tata Motors, Kia, Mahindra and Mahindra, Honda Cars, Toyota Kirloskar Motor, and MG Motor fell sharply in May amid the pandemic, which hit the rural market hard this time round.

Maruti Suzuki on Tuesday reported a 71 per cent decline in total sales to 46,555 units in May as compared to 1,59,691 units in April. The auto major had also shut production from

May 1 through May 16 so as to divert oxygen from industrial use for medical purposes.

Sales at Hyundai dipped to 49 per cent at 25,001 units last month against 49,002 units in April.

The passenger vehicle sales at Tata Motors declined 40 per cent to 15,181 units in May, down from 25,095 units in April this year.

Sales at Kia India clocked 11,050 units, making it the 4th most sold car brand last month. It had sold 16,111 units in April 2021.

KKR, CD&R TO BUY OUT CLOUDERA

LIANA BAKER JUNE 1

KKR & Co. and Clayton Dubilier & Rice LLC struck a deal to take Cloudera Inc private in an all-cash deal valuing the company at about \$5.3 billion, opening a new chapter for a once high-flying enterprise software firm that struggled to sustain growth against larger rivals.

Cloudera has explored a potential sale since mid-2020 after receiving takeover interest. The startup has seen revenue growth plunge to single digits over the past year from more than 80 per cent two years ago, hurt in part by competition from larger rivals Amazon.com Inc, Alphabet Inc and Microsoft Corp in its field of cloud software products.

—Bloomberg

TACKLING EMISSIONS

Dairy firms are under pressure to clean up their supply chains

Now, a cow mask that traps methane burps

AGNIESZKA DE SOUSA JUNE 1

Agriculture giant Cargill Inc will start selling methane-absorbing wearable devices for cows, putting its support behind an experimental technology that could help the industry cut greenhouse gas emissions.

The mask-like accessory was developed by UK startup Zelp Ltd, which claims it can reduce methane emissions by more than half. Cargill said on Tuesday it expects to start offering the devices to European dairy farmers in 2022. The companies haven't set a price yet, but Zelp says an annual subscription fee may start at about \$80 a cow.

Tackling methane emissions from livestock is one of the most critical-and most difficult-climate issues for meat and dairy companies that are under increasing



pressure to clean up their supply chains. Having access to Cargill's vast customer network could help Zelp secure demand as it prepares to roll out a product that's still under development.

"Cargill has an impressive reach across dairy farms in Europe," said Zelp chief executive officer Francisco Norris. "They are uniquely positioned to distribute our technology to a large number

of clients, both farmers and dairy companies, maximising the rollout from the very first year we hit the market."

Some 95 per cent of methane released by cows comes out as burps and through the nose. The gas traps 80 times more heat than carbon dioxide in its first 25 years in the atmosphere. Zelp's wearables, placed above cows' mouths, act a bit like the catalytic converter on a car. A set of fans powered by solar-charged batteries sucks up the burps and traps them in a chamber with a methane-absorbing filter. Once the filter is saturated, a chemical reaction turns the methane into CO2, which is then released.

Zelp is working on miniaturising the technology and optimising the energy inside the device, Norris said. It's in talks with a number of potential manufacturing partners and aims to be ready

for mass production at the end of the year. It aims to produce 50,000 units in the first year and as many as 200,000 units the next. The company is close to completing its next financing round, according to Norris.

Cargill was attracted to the masks because they can be used in combination with other solutions, said Sander van Zijderderveld, the company's ruminant strategic marketing and technology lead for West Europe. Several food suppliers are testing or have begun using feed additives which inhibit microbes in cows' stomachs to help them produce less methane.

"The nice thing about Zelp is that it could complement a cow that is already receiving feed additives to reduce methane emissions," he said. "It could still capture the methane that is coming out. We could reduce it even more."

—Bloomberg

THAILAND OKAYS \$4.5-BN STIMULUS THAT INCLUDES CASH HANDOUTS



SUTTINEE YUVEJWATTANA JUNE 1

Thailand's government approved a set of economic stimulus measures worth 140 billion baht (\$4.5 billion) to counter the impact from the nation's biggest coronavirus outbreak yet.

The measures—which include cash handouts to welfare-card holders and special groups, co-payments and cash rebates—are expected to be implemented from July, Anucha Burapachaisri, a government spokesman, said on Tuesday.

Thailand's economy is facing strong headwinds from the country's latest Covid outbreak, which has totalled more than 130,000 cases since it began in Bangkok nightlife venues in April.

The latest aid is on top of an 85.5-billion baht package last month that extended two cash hand-out programmes implemented. The two latest packages will be financed by borrowing under a 1 trillion baht programme approved in April 2020, Anucha said.

The package announced Tuesday includes: 93 billion baht in co-payments for consumer purchases, targeted at 31 million people; 16.4 billion baht in cash handouts to 13.65 million holders of welfare cards; 3 billion baht cash handout to 2.5 million people considered members of special groups, such as the disabled; A 28 billion baht cash-back measure aimed at 4 million high-income people.

The new outbreak has weakened prospects for an economic recovery, with Thailand's central bank and the economic-planning agency warning of risks to their growth forecasts.

—Bloomberg

SHORT TAKES

Coach booked for raping teen

Jaipur: A lawn tennis coach at a sports training centre in Jaipur allegedly raped a 17-year-old player on the pretext of selecting her for a domestic tournament, police said on Tuesday. According to a complaint filed by the girl, coach Gaurang Nalwaya would call her to the Sawai Man Singh Stadium for training and sexually assault her. On the latest instance, the coach allegedly raped her on the pretext of selecting her for a tournament in Udaipur, the police said.

"A case has been lodged against the coach. Investigation into the complaint has been initiated and a search is on for the accused," Jyoti Nagar police station SHO Saroj Dhayal said.

— PTI

Shafali maintains top spot in T20s

Dubai: Indian teen sensation Shafali Verma maintained her pole position among T20 batters while Kathryn Bryce became the first woman from Scotland to make it into the top-10 in the latest ICC rankings published on Tuesday. Shafali is holding onto her top rank with 776 ranking points well ahead of Australians Beth Mooney (744) and Meg Lanning (709). India's T20 vice-captain Smriti Mandhana is ranked fourth while Jemimah Rodrigues is the third Indian batter at ninth position. India also has two bowlers in the top-10 list with off-spinner Deepti Sharma at sixth and left-arm spinner Radha Yadav just a notch below at seventh. — PTI

Kahn to occupy Bayern big chair

Berlin: After 30 years in charge of Bayern Munich, Karl-Heinz Rummenigge will step down as chairman at the end of the month and be replaced by former Germany captain Oliver Kahn, the Bundesliga giants confirmed Tuesday. Rummenigge had been due to see out his contract which expires at the end of 2021, but is leaving six months early to meet the end of the financial year on June 30. Rummenigge's departure represents the start of a new era at Bayern with Julian Nagelsmann, 33, also replacing Hansi Flick as head coach going into next season. "It is strategically the most sensible and logical point in time," said Rummenigge, 65, with Kahn, 51, to be Bayern's chairman when the new season starts in August. — AFP

Scotland player +ve ahead of Euro

Glasgow: The Scotland team reported their first player testing positive for Covid-19 on Tuesday at a training camp in Spain ahead of the European Championship. The national federation said midfielder John Fleck is self-isolating and will not travel to Portugal for a warm-up game on Wednesday against the Netherlands. "The rest of the squad was retested for Covid-19 and returned negative results," the federation said. — AP

Covid positive Vidal in hospital

Santiago: Inter Milan's Chilean midfielder Arturo Vidal is receiving hospital treatment after testing positive for coronavirus, his national team said Monday. The diagnosis means the 34-year-old will miss Thursday's World Cup qualifier between Chile and Argentina. "The medical team of the Chilean national team emphasizes that at the request of the player Arturo Vidal, it is announced that he has been diagnosed positive for Covid," the national team said on its official website. — AFP

Live on TV

CRICKET

England vs New Zealand: First Test, Day 1 from 3.30 pm on Sony Six

FOOTBALL

Euro Pre-Tournament Friendlies: England vs Austria on Sony Ten 2; Germany vs Denmark on Sony Six; France vs Wales on Sony Ten 1 from 12.30 am (Thursday)

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OH!SAKA

Osaka reveals 'bouts of depression' after Paris pullout

Paris, June 1: Naomi Osaka withdrew from the French Open on Monday following the bitter fallout from her decision to boycott all media activity at the Grand Slam event, revealing she has "suffered long bouts of depression" and will "take some time away from the court".

"The best thing for the tournament, the other players and my well-being is that I withdraw so that everyone can get back to focusing on the tennis going on in Paris," the world number two wrote on Twitter.

The 23-year-old Japanese star was fined \$15,000 on Sunday and threatened with disqualification after she refused to carry out a mandatory news conference following her first round win.

She claimed on the eve of Roland Garros that such post-match inquests were akin to "kicking people when they are down" and that they had a detrimental effect on her mental health.

"I never wanted to be a distraction and I accept that my timing was not ideal and my message could have been clearer," the four-time Grand Slam title winner said in her statement.

"The truth is I have suffered bouts of depression since the US Open in 2018 and I have had a really hard time coping with that."

She added: "In Paris, I was already feeling vulnerable and anxious so I thought it was better to exercise self-care and skip the press conferences."

"I announced it preemptively because I do feel like the rules are quite out-dated in parts and I wanted to highlight that."

"I am going to take some time away from the court now."

Osaka said she has also apologised to organisers over the affair.. French Tennis Federation president Gilles Moretton had described her vow of silence as "a phenomenal error".

On Monday, he said in a statement: "We are sorry and sad for Naomi Osaka."



Japan's Naomi Osaka celebrates after defeating Romania's Patricia Maria Tig in the French Open first round match in Paris on Monday.

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WHAT THEY SAID

The only thing I feel is that I feel for Naomi. I feel like I wish I could give her a hug because I know what it's like.

— SERENA WILLIAMS
Former world No.1

I am so sad about Naomi Osaka. I truly hope she will be ok. As athletes we are taught to take care of our body, and perhaps the mental & emotional aspect gets short shrift. This is about more than doing or not doing a press conference. Good luck Naomi-we are all pulling for you!

— MARTINA NAVRATILOVA
Tennis legend

We are sorry and sad for Naomi Osaka that she has withdrawn from the tournament.

— GILLES MORETTON
French tennis federation president

Stay strong (love heart emoji). I admire your vulnerability.

— COCO GAUFF
American teen sensation

You shouldn't ever have to make a decision like this-but so damn impressive taking the high road when the powers that be dont protect their own. major respect @naomiosaka.

— STEPHEN CURRY
NBA star

Everyone talks about mental health after someone commits suicide but ridicules everyone who tries to protect their mental health. You are strong for standing up and speaking out and even giving up the game you love to protect your mental health. I salute you young queen.

— CARLOS BRATHWAITE
West Indies cricketer

The challenge today is to convince people of the value of truth, honesty, compassion and a concern for others.

— VICTORIA AZARENKA
Two-time Grand Slam champion

Mental Health is nothing to criticize. Nothing to joke about. Pls take your mental health seriously. Without my support system, I truly believe I would not be here today. Here for you @naomiosaka.

— MARDY FISH
Former top-10 ATP player

I respect her decision. I respect what she does. I can't really comment on that. I feel like everyone's dealing with their own stuff."

— SOFIA KENIN
American fourth seed

CORRUPTION | CASES

HCA heavyweights under the hammer

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JUNE 1

In a jolt to Hyderabad Cricket Association (HCA) heavyweights the Telangana High Court on Tuesday rejected their pleas to stay the proceeding against them in the Anti Corruption Bureau (ACB) Court.

Former president Arshad Ayub, secretary N. Shivalal Yadav and office-bearers D. S. Chalapathi, Naresh Sharma, John Manoj, P. Yadagiri, Syed Moizuddin, Surrender Agarwal, R. Devaraj were among those accused of corruption in allotting developmental works of the Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium at Uppal, Hyderabad.

Justice K. Lakshman of Telangana High Court dismissed the three petitions filed by these accused, who sought to quash the FIRs registered against them by ACB and to stay the trial proceedings at ACB court.

ACB had registered three cases against the accused, who are allegedly involved in misappropriation of funds with regards to construction works of RGICS at various stages.

The construction cost was estimated at ₹31 crore (the successful bidder had quoted ₹30,26,55,587) but over a period of time the cost was enhanced to ₹108 crore. Also, the bidder did not comply with the agreed terms, majorly non-fitting of fire fighting system and non construction of fire pump house.

There were irregularities in selling of tickets, investment of ₹83 lakh on three playgrounds at Mathrusri Engineering College, Qutubullapur and Osmania University. Irregularities have been found even in the installation of floodlights at the Stadium.

There are specific allegations that the committee has paid ₹910 for each bucket chair, whereas in the open market the cost is ₹450. The committee has paid an amount of ₹ 2.7 crore excess by taking huge kickbacks from the supplier, the court observed.

Cases were registered in 2016, 2017 and 2020 by Aijaz Ali Qureshi, secretary of Shalimar Cricket Eleven Club and C. Babu Rao Sagar, secretary of Sagar Cricket Club, following

● **High Court rejects pleas of several former and current office-bearers to stay graft proceedings against them in ACB Court.**

which ACB authorities had investigated and filed a chargesheet against the accused. The trial was going on at ACB courts.

Meanwhile, the accused persons approached High Court seeking to quash the cases against them and to stay the proceeding in the trial court.

The accused contended being Managing Committee Members of HCA they never discharged their functions as public servants. Therefore, the provisions of Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, does not attract against them. HCA never received any aid or grant from the Government and therefore, it is not a public authority and the accused are not public servants. The offences alleged against the accused under the provisions of the PC Act are not maintainable.

ACB Counsel submitted that there is an aid from the Government to HCA including providing of land on lease (23 acres at a nominal rent of ₹1 lakh per annum) and grants from 1963-1981. Therefore, it is a State as defined under Article 12 of the Constitution of India and provisions of PC Act are applicable.

The accused, being Managing Committee Members of the said Association, discharged public duties and therefore, they are public servants in the eye of law.

"Prima facie, there are serious allegations against the petitioners herein. However, whether the HCA has received any aid or financial assistance, whether the office bearers of HCA have discharged public duty and whether they are the public servants as defined under the provisions of the PC Act is a question of fact and triable issues. The same will be decided during the course of trial. The petitioners have to face trial and prove their innocence by leading evidence. Thus, the said issue cannot be decided in the present proceedings," the order read.

SHUTTLE ACE MARIN HURT, OUT OF TOKYO OLYMPICS

Madrid, June 1: Spain's Carolina Marin, the women's Olympic badminton singles champion, will miss the Tokyo Games after tearing the anterior cruciate ligament and meniscus in her left knee.

The 27-year-old will undergo surgery in the coming days after suffering the injury during a training session last week.

"This is another blow that I have to deal with, but I will certainly be back," she wrote on social media.

The three-time world champion also ruptured the ACL in her right knee in 2019 and missed that year's world championships. — AFP

Southern flavour on sports watch

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JUNE 1

It's the best of both worlds in sport, especially south. Sony Pictures Sports Network has launched an exclusive channel in Telugu and Tamil, Ten 4, on Tuesday. It began with quite a boom, as regional commentary accompanied the WWE wrestling live action.

The big feast would be 10 days later though, when the biggest international football tournaments of the year, Euro and Copa America, kick off. Euro will be telecast in six languages — English, Hindi, Bengali, Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam while Copa will drop Hindi from the list.

"During these difficult times, the festival of football is something to cheer about for the fans. We are very excited," says Rajesh Kaul, Chief Revenue Officer, Distribution and Head — Sports Business, Sony Pictures Networks India.

"We have four months of

top class sport lined up — Olympics, India's cricket tours to Sri Lanka and England. We couldn't have asked for more," he adds.

"We are pioneers in trying out sports content in different languages... we have been doing this for all the marquee events. We will have commentary by different experts on the cricket series and other big competitions in local languages for sure. People are going to love it," he says, adding "Apart from Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, we are trying to reach more languages across the country. We already have Bengali, Malayalam and Hindi feeds."

Sony also announced their panelists for Euro that features footballers Bhaichung Bhutia, Sunil Chhetri, Louis Saha, Luis Garcia, Don Hutchison, David James, Terry Phelan, Mark Seagraves, Ashley Westwood, Jofre Mateu, Gurpreet Singh Sandhu, Sandesh Jhingan and Robin Singh.

FAMILIES CAN ACCOMPANY PLAYERS ON ENGLISH TOUR

New Delhi, June 1: The families of players and support staff of both the Indian men's and women's cricket teams will be allowed to accompany them during their lengthy tour of England this month, a senior BCCI source revealed on Tuesday.

The BCCI had put in a request that the players be allowed the company of their loved ones given that they have to spend a considerable amount of time in a bio-secure bubble because of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, it is learnt that none of the BCCI office-bearers, including president Sourav Ganguly and secretary Jay Shah will be present for the World Test Championship final against New Zealand in Southampton from June 18 to 22, due to the strict quarantine rules of the country.

"Yes, it's good news that players will have their families during the tour of UK. Ditto for the women's team who can also have their families around. These are times when mental well-being of players is paramount," the source said. — PTI



Trent Boult

Boult wants NZ to 'create history'

Mount Maunganui (New Zealand), June 1: The qualification process for the World Test Championship final is still a bit of enigma for Trent Boult but the New Zealand pace spearhead is confident that his team is capable of creating history when it clashes with India for the inaugural title.

The WTC final is scheduled to be held in Southampton from June 18-22.

"The way the group has travelled and performed around New Zealand and the world, the boys are in a great place to hopefully create a bit of history," Boult said at the Bay Oval.

"Everything is feeling good with what lies ahead, a big stage for the World Test Championship final, and hopefully I can get over there and be part of that second Test (against England) as well," he added.

"I've taken a while to understand the process with qualifying, how everything works with the points, still think no one knows how that actually works, but to get into that final the excitement is ramping up now," Boult said.

Talking about the Dukes ball, which will be used for the WTC final, the 31-year-old said: "I haven't had too much experience with it, played a handful of Tests over in England. It