



**Kashmir road map must for talks, says Pakistan PM Imran Khan**

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**A deserted Taj Mahal awaits its first visitors and revival**

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**China's internal security is still Xi's biggest concern: Vijay Gokhale**

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**Nadal, Djokovic and Swiatek advance with ease in Paris**

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### NEARBY



**Farmers protest outside BJP leaders' offices**

**CHANDIGARH**  
Observing 'Sampoorna Kranti Diwas' on Saturday on the first anniversary of the promulgation of the Centre's farm laws, farmers burnt copies of the laws outside the residences and offices of leaders of the BJP and its allies in various States.

NEWS PAGE 6

**Mamata's nephew made TMC general secretary**

**KOLKATA**  
In a major development in the Trinamool Congress, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's nephew and Diamond Harbour MP Abhishek Banerjee was on Saturday appointed the party's national general secretary.

NEWS PAGE 8

**Doorstep ration delivery stalled by Centre: CM**

**NEW DELHI**  
The Delhi government's "revolutionary" doorstep delivery of ration scheme has been stalled by the Central government just days before it was to be launched, read a statement released by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's office on Saturday.

CITY PAGE 2

MAGAZINE 8 PAGES  
CLASSIFIEDS PAGE 4

## Govt. sends 'one last notice' to Twitter to adopt new IT Rules

Platform could lose exemption from liability

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The government on Saturday sent out "one last notice" to U.S.-based social media platform Twitter to immediately comply with the new IT Rules that came into effect on May 26, and warned that failure to do so will lead to the platform losing exemption from liability under the IT Act.

In a notice addressed to Twitter Inc's deputy general counsel Jim Baker, the Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY) said the refusal to comply with the rules, which came into force more than a week ago, demonstrated Twitter's lack of commitment and efforts towards providing a safe experience for the people of India on its platform. "...as a gesture of goodwill, Twitter Inc. is hereby given one last notice to immediately comply with the rules, failing which the exemption from liability available under Section 79 of the IT Act, 2000, shall stand withdrawn and Twitter shall be liable for consequences as per the IT Act and other penal laws of India," the notice said.

As a gesture of goodwill, Twitter Inc. is hereby given one last notice to immediately comply with the rules, failing which the exemption from liability available under Section 79 of the IT Act, 2000, shall stand withdrawn and Twitter shall be liable for consequences as per the IT Act and other penal laws of India

Needless to state, such non-compliance will lead to unintended consequences, including Twitter losing exemption from liability as intermediary available under Section 79 of the Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000. This has clearly been provided under rule 7 of the aforesaid rules

MEITY NOTICE TO TWITTER



Twitter declined to comment on the notice.

MeitY pointed out that while Twitter has not shared the details of its chief compliance officer, the resident grievance officer and the nodal contact person nominated by the company are not employees of Twitter Inc. in India, as required under the rules. Further, the office address submitted for Twitter Inc. is that of a law firm in India.

Noting that Twitter, in its earlier responses, had failed to address clarifications sought by the Ministry and indicate full compliance

with the rules, the MeitY said, "Needless to state, such non-compliance will lead to unintended consequences, including Twitter losing exemption from liability as intermediary available under Section 79 of the Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000. This has clearly been provided under rule 7 of the aforesaid rules."

India has been among the first countries in the world, outside the parent country of Twitter Inc., to enthusiastically adopt the platform, the government said.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

Row erupts as RSS handles lose 'blue ticks'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu's personal Twitter account lost its "blue tick" of verification on Saturday morning, only to have it restored later in the day after the matter was taken up by his office with officials of the social media platform, in a set of events that set off a spiral of such complaints by several senior members of the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) as well.

According to Twitter, Mr. Naidu now mainly tweets from his official account @VPSecretariat rather than his personal Twitter account @mvenkaiahnaidu.

Officials from the social media platform said this was the reason the blue tick of the account was removed. According to Twitter rules, accounts that are inactive, that is, not logging in for more than six months lose the badge or blue tick of verification.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

## G7 nations agree on uniform minimum corporate tax

MNCs to pay taxes where they operate

### Landmark deal

A look at some key points from the deal and why it is significant for India

- The G7 move will close loopholes for MNCs to shift profits and tax revenues to low-tax jurisdictions
- OECD has been overseeing tax talks among 140 countries to curb tax base erosion
- According to the U.K.-based Tax Justice Network, India suffers an annual loss of \$10.3 billion from global tax abuse



British Finance Minister Rishi Sunak told reporters.

The accord, which could form the basis of a global pact next month, is aimed at ending a decades-long "race to the bottom", in which countries have competed to attract corporate giants with ultra-low tax rates and exemptions.

That has, in turn, cost their public coffers hundreds of billions of dollars — a shortfall they now need to recoup all the more urgently to pay for the huge cost of propping up economies ravaged by COVID-19.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6  
ANOTHER REPORT PAGE 13

## GST revenue falls to ₹1.02 lakh crore in May

Lowest collections since Sept. 2020

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

India's Gross GST revenue fell to ₹1.02 lakh crore in May, from a record ₹1.41 lakh crore in April, but the number was likely to be revised upwards, the government said on Saturday.

The May collections, broadly pertaining to transactions in April, are the lowest since September 2020, which recorded revenue of ₹95,480 crore.

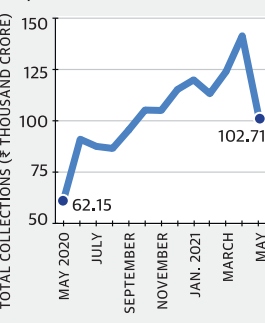
**Further dip expected**

Economists expect the collections to dip further in June even though the current lockdowns across the States may not be denting activity as much as last year's national lockdown.

"The moderation in GST inflows was expected as evident in the sequential slowdown in e-way bills between March and April. With the

### Sliding down

The May 2021 GST collections are the lowest since September 2020



extension and widening of restrictions by various States in May 2021, the generation of e-way bills have declined further, which will further dampen GST collections in June," said ICRA chief economist Aditi Nayar.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

## Green light to metro, malls, markets as Delhi 'unlocks'

New relaxations allowed from tomorrow

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

With new COVID-19 cases on the decline in the Capital, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday announced new relaxations, including resumption of metro services with 50% capacity and re-opening of malls and markets on odd-even basis from June 7 (Monday).

Liquor vends and neighbourhood shops are set to become operational once again as part of the city's unlocking process. Private offices will be allowed to function with 50% staff while those working in essential services can work at 100% capacity. Cinemas and theatres, bars, gyms, spas, barber shops and beauty parlours will, however, continue to remain shut; restaurants have been allowed to be in operation but can only provide home deliveries and

takeaway services.

"The COVID-19 situation in Delhi appears to be improving and keeping that in mind we began the unlock procedure last week. It is necessary to bring the economy back on track," Mr. Kejriwal said in a digital briefing.

The lockdown extension announced last week, he said, will be applicable till 5 a.m. on Monday, following which all markets and malls will open on an odd-even basis from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.

In all government offices in Delhi, 100% of Group A officers will have to work while those junior to them will work at a capacity of 50%. Private offices can reopen at 50% capacity. The CM said efforts should be made to ensure that more people work from home and work hours should be staggered.

MORE REPORTS ON PAGES 2 & 3

## Shadow of debt looms over Dharmapuri

The lockdown and a shrinking MGNREGS have left the rural economy starving

P.V. SRIVIDYA  
DHARMAPURI

The little black goat hungrily sucked from the feeding bottle Muthammal held to its mouth. Ms. Muthammal had just bought half a litre of milk from her neighbour Ambigai, who stood by holding her aluminium milk can, measuring to refill the feeding bottle.

"She bought this kid as a new-born from someone, who needed money. She will raise it, and then sell it to make some money," Ms. Ambigai said, explaining the economics of goat rearing in M.Thanda village in the dry Eiriyur block of Dharmapuri. "Sometimes it may go up to ₹10,000, if she is lucky."

As she waits, Ms. Muthammal tells Ms. Ambigai that



**Making ends meet:** Muthammal feeding her goat in M. Thanda village in Eriyur block of Dharmapuri. ■ BASHAKARAN N

she withdrew the last of the MGNREGS work payment of ₹1,200 this week. Those were the wages for the six days of work credited for

March that she had saved up.

"There is no more work now," said Ms. Muthammal.

Work under the scheme has come down to just three

weeks a year now, with more people and less work, never 100 days, said Ms. Ambigai.

With the pandemic induced lockdown and work under the MGNREGS drying up, the rural economy is tottering, barely sustained by

### SPECIAL

the State government's COVID-19 cash relief of ₹4,000 for every ration card, with dry rations providing minimal sustenance.

Ms. Ambigai, who supplies an average of 5 litres daily to the local milk cooperative society, diverted some milk to Ms. Muthammal's goat because she needed the extra money.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

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Case registered after rapper goes missing

**STAFF REPORTER**  
NEW DELHI

The police have lodged a kidnapping case following the disappearance of a 22-year-old Delhi-based rapper after he posted a message on Instagram, the police said on Saturday.

The rapper was being criticised online after an old video of him went viral on social media wherein he was heard passing remarks on Hindu religious texts.

On May 2, he made a post on Instagram suggesting that he was going to end his life.

His mother, a resident of Vasant Kunj, approached Mehrauli police station and said her son, a resident of Saidulajab, had gone missing on May 2. She added that he had posted a message on Instagram stating he is going to end his life.

“Investigation is being done on priority,” said DCP (South) Atul Thakur.

Doorstep ration delivery stalled by Centre: CM

Food Minister Imran Hussain says L-G cited ‘invalid reasons’ to reject scheme

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government’s “revolutionary” doorstep delivery of ration scheme has been stalled by the Central government just days before it was to be launched, read a statement released by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal’s office on Saturday.

**‘All suggestions’**

It said the scheme was intended to benefit more than 72 lakh beneficiaries; the Delhi government had sent the file for final approval and immediate rollout of the scheme to L-G Anil Bajjal on May 24 after accepting “all suggestions” on it received from the Centre.

But, the CMO stated, the L-G had returned the file saying the scheme cannot be implemented in Delhi, citing what Food and Civil Supplies Minister Imran Hussain termed “invalid reasons”.

The Centre had made just one observation on the no-



L-G advised for the constitutional scheme of things to be followed, said sources in Raj Niwas.

menclature of the scheme stating that the name – Mukhyamantri Ghar Ghar Ration Yojana – could not be used since the ration was being distributed under the existing NFS Act, the CMO stated. In order to “prevent any controversy”, the Delhi Cabinet had decided to change the name.

“L-G cited two invalid reasons to reject the implementation of Doorstep Delivery of Ration scheme, the deci-

sion politically motivated,” Mr. Hussain alleged.

According to the CMO, the L-G raised two concerns – the scheme hasn’t been approved by the Central government and that there is an ongoing court case on the scheme.

“No approval for launching such a scheme is required as per existing law. Nevertheless, we have written six letters to the Centre since 2018 apprising them of this revolutionary scheme at every stage,” Mr. Hussain said.

“Moreover, based on the last communication received from the Centre on 19.02.2021, their concerns regarding scheme name have also been accepted by Delhi Cabinet. What further approval is required?” he demanded.

**‘L-G didn’t reject’**

Sources said it has been advised again, like earlier on March 20, 2018, that since

the proposal seeks to change the method of distribution, it would mandatorily require the prior approval of the Government of India as per Section 12 (2) (h) of the National Food Security Act 2013.

Additionally, it was brought to the notice that a Writ Petition WP (C) 2037/2021 in the said matter has been filed by the “Delhi Sarkari Ration Dealers Sangh” in High Court challenging the proposed arrangement of doorstep delivery of ration by GNCTD wherein the Union of India is also a party. The said petition is scheduled to be heard on August 20, 2021.

The sources added that the L-G has not rejected the proposal as is being portrayed.

He has advised for the constitutional scheme of things to be followed with the aim of ensuring seamless benefits to people at large.

Delhi Metro to run at 50% capacity from tomorrow

Full strength and normal services likely by June 9: DMRC

**STAFF REPORTER**  
NEW DELHI

Metro services will resume from June 7 with 50% seating capacity and half of the available trains will run on the network with a frequency of 5-15 minutes, the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) said on Saturday.

“On Monday, only half of the available trains will be inducted into service... full strength will resume in a graded manner by Wednesday and thereafter services will be available as per normal frequency which was available before the lockdown,” said DMRC spokesperson Anuj Dayal. The DMRC also advised passengers to set aside extra time for commuting due to restricted services and adherence to COVID-19 rules.

Commuters will not be



Metro trains parked at Timarpur Yard in New Delhi on Saturday. • SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

permitted to stand inside the coaches and will occupy alternate seats. Officials said each coach can accommodate around 50 people when operating at full capacity.

Due to curbs, only 25 commuters will be permitted inside each coach.

Officials said entry to stations will be regulated via identified gates, as was the practice before the latest lockdown was imposed.

Since resumption of services in September last year, following the nationwide lockdown, only select gates at each station are kept functional by the DMRC as a crowd-control measure. “The DMRC is also writing to authorities for maintenance of law and order outside metro stations to handle the extra rush,” Mr. Dayal added.

Pandemic parenting in COVID carnage

Mums and dads talk to their kids about death and a disease they aren't sure whom it will get next



Last year, parents navigated online classes, chores, sometimes sickness. • THE HINDU

**SUNALINI MATHEW**  
NEW DELHI

Suneeta Verma, whose husband died of COVID, is focussed on making ends meet, so she can bring up her six-year-old daughter to do better than to work in other people’s houses for little money.

Sneha Mitra\* is looking for a counsellor for her four-year-old son. The family lost two elderly relatives whose laps he would fall into daily. He is expressing his grief in the way children his age would, with anger, distraction, and clinginess to his mother who also went into COVID quarantine.

Jatin Singh is confronting his own mortality, and though he has put in place mechanisms to take the virus head on, he worries, wondering aloud whether to adopt a COVID orphan.

For many, parenting in 2020 was about experi-

ments with online classes, keeping kids occupied with board games so they wouldn’t become screen dependent, and explaining the gravity of the pandemic. Free downloadable books like *Piperpotamus Learns About Coronavirus and Kids*, *Vaayu & Corona: Who Wins the Fights?* helped. Some children experienced second hand stress, when parents faced layoffs from work or there was marital strife.

In 2021, many children have lost loved ones, or gone through periods of isolation because of sick parents. “Last year, children experienced trauma as witnesses. This year, it’s the immediacy of facing up to a traumatic experience,” says Dr Amit Sen, who runs Children First, a child and adolescent mental health service in Delhi.

He talks of his current experience in practice, where isolation or a parent’s hospitalisation has scared children. The emotional turmoil can go from children feeling dazed, not eating or sleeping well, despair, panic attacks, eventually leading to anxiety and depression, even self harm and substance abuse, especially if children don’t get support or understanding. Some who do, are better able to channelise their energy into taking on responsibility of reaching out to help.

“During such times when families and communities support each other, it takes away some of the loneliness and desperation that children may feel,” he says. It’s like a group hug, sans the touch.

Mr. Singh’s family has been

relatively lucky - they have not seen death or suffering close up. And while he jokes that he has done nothing more than provide his 14-year-old son with food, water, clothing, Internet, he has also introduced to him concepts of giving to those less privileged.

For parents with younger children, it has meant more age-specific communication. Gaurav Chintamani’s almost seven-year-old son Ishaan sang R.E.M.’s ‘Everybody Hurts’ for his tabla teacher, who lost his mother – the family was close to her. Mr Chintamani played guitar, and put out a message on social media, a joint offering for a friend-like-family, going through a difficult time.

Initially, he was reluctant to share the news of death with his son, worried about him being scared. “But we’ve never treated him anything less than a full member of the family,” he says, adding that it was his wife Priya who broke the news.

“With children, in my experience, it’s always better to be honest and break it down to something simple. Death doesn’t have to be complex,” she says. Be-

cause Ishaan was open to nature, she found it easy to draw analogies from the life cycle of flowers and leaves, staying open to questions, but avoiding news on TV or social media.

**One-point parenting**

“Parents have become the only point of reference for their children,” says Vandana Nangia, who counsels families with both neurotypical and children with special needs. She acknowledges the ‘strong emotional and psychological stresses’ of parents themselves, who are in a “chronic state of stress and hyperarousal”, and need to look after their own mental health.

To offer a window outside of their own gated community in Gurugram, Shuchi Sinha encouraged her 12-year-old daughter to volunteer with an NGO to teach Class 3 and 4 students from a basti.

In an uncertain future, daily life can be about listening, collaborating, and some amount of negotiating. Mostly, it is about the ability to share spaces, thoughts, even feelings with children.

*\*Name changed to protect privacy*

BJP seeks govt. aid for shopkeepers, others

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

The BJP on Saturday demanded that the Delhi government provide relief packages to traders, shopkeepers and those associated with the education sector in addition to total exemption on power and water bills.

Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta said two months’ closure had hit these sectors as well as factory owners and labourers hard; staff of private schools should also get their dues from the government, he said.

Leader of the Opposition

Ramvir Singh Bidhuri sought the intervention of L-G in further liberalising the terms and conditions for opening of markets in the Capital from June 7. “The traders are unhappy with the odd-even formula announced by the Delhi government; Banquet halls and restaurants should also be allowed to operate with COVID-related protocols,” he said.

Former LoP Vijender Guptademandated that the L-G launch a probe into quintals of dry ration meant for the poor allegedly rotting at government schools.

Officer’s death: ‘He was being harassed by SHO’

**STAFF REPORTER**  
NEW DELHI

A day after a 31-year-old sub-inspector was allegedly found dead inside the police station, his family has alleged that the Station House Officer was harassing him.

The officer, posted in East Delhi’s Pandav Nagar police station, was found dead on the terrace on Friday while on duty. He was from Agra.

In a complaint submitted to District Deputy Commissioner of Police, the victim’s brother alleged that the officer was troubled by

the Station House Officer and had also submitted a transfer application. However, he was not relieved from duty there despite being transferred a year ago to Sarita Vihar police station. The family claimed that the victim had shared these problems with them. DCP (East) Priyanka Kashyap said, “We have received the complaint and are inquiring into it”.

*Suicide prevention helpline: Sanjivini, Society for Mental Health, 011-4076 9002, Monday-Saturday (10 a.m.-7.30 p.m.)*



**Govt. of Bihar**



**MUZAFFARPUR SMART CITY LIMITED**

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP) FOR SELECTION OF PROJECT MANAGMENT CONSULTANT(PMC) UNDER SMART CITY MISSION IN MUZAFFARPUR (BIHAR).**

**Tender Notice for Consultancy Services No. –05/MSCL/2021-22**

Muzaffarpur Smart City Limited invites Request for proposal from reputed multidisciplinary consultancy firms who have experience in Project Management Consultancy services for projects of central and state Government:

Name of Service	Earnest money deposit (Rs).	Bid processing fee	Period of Completion
Selection of Project Management Consultant (PMC) to Design, Develop, Manage and Implement Smart City Projects under smart city mission(SCM) in Muzaffarpur (Bihar).	₹ 7.5 lakhs (Indian Rupees Seven Point Five Lac only)	₹10000/- (Indian Rupees Ten Thousand only)	12 months  Twelve months)

i	RFP Downloading End Date	23-06-2021
ii	Last date & time and address for submission (uploading) of both technical and financial proposal	Date : 27-06-2021 Time : 04:00 P.M Address: <a href="https://eproc2.bihar.gov.in/">https://eproc2.bihar.gov.in/</a> The Managing Director, Muzaffarpur Smart City Limited, Kachhari Campus Near Muzaffarpur Railway Station, Muzaffarpur-842001 (Bihar).
iii	Pre Proposal meeting	09-06-2021 Time:12:30 P.M
iv	Place of Pre Proposal meeting	Conference Hall, Muzaffarpur Municipal Corporation, Kachhari Campus Near Muzaffarpur Railway Station, Muzaffarpur (Bihar)-842001
v	Date and Place for Submission of Hard Copies of EMD Deposit & RFP Documents.	28-06-2021 up to 05:00 P.M at Muzaffarpur Municipal Corporation Office, Muzaffarpur.
vi	Date of opening of Technical Bid	29-06-2021 at 11:00 A.M
vii	Date of opening of Price bid	After Decision of Technical Bid

**Terms:**

- This notice and tender documents are available on following internet site <https://eproc2.bihar.gov.in/>
- A complete set of tender can be downloaded from above websites.
- Bids shall remain valid for 120 days (One hundred twenty days) from the date of submission of the tender.
- Any bid not accompanied by cost of tender and Earnest Money as in the NIT will be rejected as non-responsive.
- Muzaffarpur Smart City Limited will not be responsible for any delay in submission of bid in electronic/ physical form.
- Muzaffarpur Smart City Limited reserves the right to accept or reject any bid, and to cancel the bidding process and reject all bids, at any time prior to award of the Contract, without incurring any liability to the affected bidder or bidders or any obligation to inform the affected bidder or bidders on the grounds of Employer's action.
- Detailed descriptions of the item and instructions for submitting your offer can be downloaded from e-tender website <https://eproc2.bihar.gov.in/> <http://muzaffarpur.nic.in>
- In order to appear in the e-tendering process, firstly the bidder must register on <https://eproc2.bihar.gov.in/> The bidder must have Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) and e-Tendering User-id of the e-Procurement website (<https://eproc2.bihar.gov.in/>) for submission of e-Bid.
- For support related to e-tendering process, bidders may contact at following Mobile or e-Mail “Toll Free Number: 1800 572 6571, e-Mail - [eproc2support@bihar.gov.in](mailto:eproc2support@bihar.gov.in) or may visit the link “Vendor info” at <https://eproc2.bihar.gov.in/>.
- Corrigendum/ Addendum, if any, will be published on the NIC website, and e-Procurement, Bihar <https://eproc2.bihar.gov.in/> <http://muzaffarpur.nic.in>
- The bidder shall digitally sign on the supporting statements, documents, certificates, uploaded by him, owning responsibility for their correctness/authenticity. The bidder shall attach all the required documents for the specific tender after uploading the same during the bid submission as per the tender notice and bid document.
- The bidders shall upload the scanned copies of all the relevant certificates, documents etc., in support of their eligibility criteria / technical bids and other certificate /documents in the eProcurement web site (<https://eproc2.bihar.gov.in/>).
- Contact Person: **Chief Executive Officer, Muzaffarpur Smart City Limited, Mobile-9866109543, Email id: [ceo@muzaffarpursmartcity.org](mailto:ceo@muzaffarpursmartcity.org)**

बिस्तृत जानकारी के लिए [state.bihar.gov.in/prdbihar](https://eproc2.bihar.gov.in/prdbihar) पर देखा जा सकता है।

**Managing Director,**  
**Muzaffarpur Smart City Limited**  
**Muzaffarpur (Bihar).**

**PR- 01986 ( Ni Ni ) 2021-22**

नोवल कोरोना के संर्बंध में बिस्तृत जानकारी एवं सहायोग हेतु  Toll Free No.: **104** पर संपर्क कर सकते हैं।

**Government of Jammu & Kashmir**

**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER MECHANICAL HOSPITAL AND CENTRAL HEATING DIVISION SRINAGAR**

**(Tele-fax No: 019-2496089, e-mail id:[xenmhchdk@yahoo.in](mailto:xenmhchdk@yahoo.in))**

**GIST of E -NIT NO: MHCHD/TS /2021-22/37/e-tendering Dated:-03.06.2021.**

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor, J&K State e-tenders are invited from registered/reputed/experienced firms with J&K State Govt., CPWD, Railways and other State/Central Governments for the below mentioned work:-

Name of Garden	Est. Cost (Rs. in Lacs)	Cost of T/Doc. (In rupees)	Technical sanction No.	Time of completion (in Days )	Position of AAA/funds
1	2	3	4	5	6
<b>Annual Comprehensive Maintenance Contract for H1N1 Lab for year 2021-22 at Govt. CD Hospital, Srinagar.</b>	<b>7.04</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>of 06/21</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>Mc/Plan/H1N1-Works/1004-08 Dt:-02.06.2021</b>

- The Tender document Consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the departmental website [www.jktenders.gov.in](http://www.jktenders.gov.in) from **03.06.2021 (18.00 hrs).**
- The bidders shall deposit their bids in electronic format on the above web site from 04.06.2021 (10:00hrs) to 11.06.2021 (14:00 hrs) in two (02) cover
- The bids uploaded on the website up to due date and time will be opened on 11.06.2021 (16.00 hrs) or any date convenient to the department in the office of Executive Engineer, MHCHD, Srinagar

No: MHCHD/ TS/1499-04  
Dated:03.06.2021

**Sd/-**  
**Executive Engineer,**  
**MHCHD, Srinagar**

**DIPK-2518/21**

**SEARCH FOR MISSING**



**Muskaaan**

General Public is hereby informed that one girl namely **Muskaaan D/o Sh. Rakesh Kumar R/o** H.No. 10, Gali No.4A, Swaroop Vihar Swaroop Nagar, Delhi has been missing since 19.03.2011 from his house. In this regard a **FIR No.178/21 Dated 19.03.2021 U/s 363 IPC** has been lodged at PS, Burari, Delhi.

The description of missing girl is as under :

**Name :** Muskaaan, **Father's Name :** Sh. Rakesh Kumar, **Age :** 17 years, **Height :** 5'0", **Face :** Long, **Complexion :** Wheatish, **Built :** Thin, **Wearing:** Pink Colour Suit and Salwaar and Blue Colour slippers in feet.

If anyone having any clue/information, kindly inform the undersigned.

Website : <http://cbi.nic.in>  
e-mail : [cic@cbi.gov.in](mailto:cic@cbi.gov.in)  
Ph.: 011-23014046 (Direct)  
23015229 & 23015218 Extn.-210  
Fax: 011-23011334  
DP/1061/N/2021

**SHO**  
**P.S., Burari, Delhi**  
**Ph. : 011-27616844**

**SEARCH FOR MISSING**




**Om Prakash**

General public is hereby informed that a man namely **Om Prakash, S/o** Late Ramcharan R/o H.No. B-79/1, Gali No. 1, Harijan Basti, Karawal Nagar, Delhi has been missing since 07.04.2021 from his house. In this regard a **DD No. 119-A dated 09.04.2021 has been registered at P.S. Karawal Nagar, Delhi.** Sincere efforts have been made by the local police to trace out the missing man but no clue has come to light so far. The description of the missing man is as under: **Name:** Om Prakash, **Gender:** Male, **Age:** 55 years, **Height:** 5'7", **Face:** Long, **Complexion:** Shallow, **Built:** Thin, **Identification:** Mentally unstable, **Wearing:** White colour kameez and grey colour pant.


If anyone has any information regarding this missing man, kindly inform SHO/Karawal Nagar, Delhi.

E-mail : [cic@cbi.gov.in](mailto:cic@cbi.gov.in)  
Ph.: 011-24368638, 24368641  
Fax : 011-24368639  
DP/791/NE/2021

**SHO**  
**P.S. Karawal Nagar, Delhi.**  
**Ph. No. 011-22932396, 22932323**



**Government of Jharkhand**



**Jharkhand Rural Health Mission Society**

**Department of Health, Medical Education & Family Welfare**  
**Namkum, Ranchi.**

Phone No. 2261000, 2261002 & 2261856, Email : [mdnchmjharkhand@gmail.com](mailto:mdnchmjharkhand@gmail.com)  
Letter No. IDSP/MTL/22/2021 Ranchi, Date:-05.06.2021

**CORRIGENDUM**

of (e-Procurement Notice- PR 247227 Jharkhand Rural Health Mission Society (21-22)#D, dated 31" May)

Last Date/time for receipt of e-tender No. NHM/Nam/22/2021 (Rate Contract for hiring services of Mobile COVID RT-PCR Testing Laboratories in Jharkhand) and e-tender No. NHM/Nam/23/2021 (Rate Contract for hiring services of Mobile COVID RT-PCR Sample Collection & Testing Laboratories in Jharkhand) through most urgent e-procurement notice, dated 31.05.2021 via PR 247227 Jharkhand Rural Health Mission Society (21-22)#D is hereby extended up-to 14.06.2021, 02:00 PM. The e-tender will be opened on 15.06.2020, 02:30 PM in RCH Conference Hall, Namkum, Ranchi.

**Sd/-**  
**In charge Procurement Cell**  
**JRHMS**

PR 247547 (Jharkhand Rural Health Mission Society) 21-22 (D)



Timings DELHI
SUNDAY, JUN. 06
RISE 05:24 SET 19:17
MONDAY, JUN. 07
RISE 05:24 SET 19:18
TUESDAY, JUN. 08
RISE 05:24 SET 19:18
Delhi Weather
Delhi City
Safdarjang
Palam

Delhi Palam Today
40°C Light to moderate warm winds likely to prevail during day.
Delhi Palam Tomorrow
41°C A hot day would prevail.

THE HINDU
DISCLAIMER: Readers are requested to verify and make appropriate enquiries to satisfy themselves about the veracity of an advertisement before responding to any published in this newspaper.

IN BRIEF
Mayor installs mosquito-repellant cooler
NEW DELHI
North body Mayor Jai Prakash on Saturday inaugurated the installation of a mosquito-repellant air cooler as part of the civic body's anti-vector borne disease campaign in the city.

Facebook’s timely alert to police saves life

They were able to locate man in 55 mins.

HEMANI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI
A call from Facebook’s U.S.’ office - 14,000 km away – and timely action of the Delhi police ensured that a 39-year-old man, trying to end his life, was saved.
DCP (Cyber Unit) Anyesh Roy said that at 12.50 a.m. on Friday, he received a phone call from Facebook's U.S.’ office informing him that they’ve come across a live video in which a man is trying to harm himself.

CM meets experts to gear up for possible third wave

Paediatric task force, storage for 420 tonnes of O2 part of plan

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI
Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday said the Delhi government had made several preparations well in advance for a possible third wave of COVID.

Mr. Kejriwal on Friday chaired a meeting each with the Expert and the Preparations Committees where several decisions to mitigate the impact of the third wave were made.
“Experts are saying that a third wave is bound to emerge, but nobody has any information on when such a wave will arrive and how dangerous it could be.



A health worker attends to a COVID-19 patient at an isolation centre on Saturday.
SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

beds and medical resources for children. A separate paediatric task force has been formed to look into the number of oxygen and ICU beds to be reserved for children, the Chief Minister announced.
“For children, different types of equipment will be required like different masks, different oxygen masks. The pediatric task force formed yesterday [Friday] will give its recommendations separately,” he said.

Indraprastha Gas Limited and they have been asked to prepare a 1.5 tonne oxygen production plant. They said the plant would be ready in 18 months,” he said.
The government in the next one or two months, the city will have 25 oxygen tankers, 64 small oxygen plants and oxygen concentrators.
A team of doctors and experts has been set up to examine and inform that whether a particular medicine in high demand was actually beneficial in treating COVID patients.
A list of all “important medicines” too had been made and a buffer stock would be created for these.
Genome sequencing labs are also being created in LNJP hospital and ILBS so that the government could identify COVID variants in Delhi and ask experts what precautions to take against them.

Positivity rate stays below 1% for sixth day

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI
Delhi reported 414 new COVID-19 cases over the past 24 hours, taking the tally to 14,28,863 on Saturday.
A total of 77,694 tests were done in a single day and the Test Positivity Rate (TPR) was 0.53%. This is the sixth consecutive day, that the figure is below 1%.
The TPR had reached 36% on April 22 during the peak of the second wave.
The city also reported 60 deaths over 24 hours, pushing the toll to 24,557.

To deal with next surge, govt. taking lessons from last peak

During 42 days of second wave, city recorded 11 deaths per hour

JATIN ANAND
NEW DELHI
The peak of the second COVID wave – based on which the Delhi government is preparing for the next wave – officially claimed nearly 12,000 lives but led to 16,000 funerals in the Capital in just over a month.
As per the COVID death figures provided by the government and funeral data by the civic bodies, it has emerged that there continued to be a difference of 4,000 cases between the two.



A man at Subhash Nagar Crematorium during mass cremations in the city.
SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday said the peak had seen a maximum of 28,000 COVID cases in a single day.
This figure – of 28,395 new cases to be precise – was recorded on April 20 when the government recorded 277 deaths and the city witnessed 410 funerals.
This peak of single-day cases has now informed the Delhi government's decision to conclude that it should prepare for a peak of 37,000 daily cases during the potential third wave of infection.
Figures recorded by the Delhi government and the Municipal Corporations after this peak reveal the extent of the damage inflicted

on the city by COVID's second wave.
Through a 42-day period, which ended last month, the government recorded over 11 deaths every hour culminating in a daily average of 282 COVID deaths per day; the municipal corporations noted the last rites of over 378 COVID-afflicted patients each day – or more than 15 funerals an hour.
After reaching peak
After attaining its peak on April 20, COVID claimed 11,870 lives, according to the Delhi government and led to 15,905 funerals by May 31. While the highest number of single-day deaths conceded by the government – 448 – was recorded on May 3, at 717, the number of funerals

in the city had already peaked four days prior to this.
According to records, the number of COVID funerals continued to be significantly higher than the number of COVID deaths recorded by the government for the most part of the 42-day interval before both almost became aligned on May 16 when the government recorded 262 deaths and the civic bodies’ 274 funerals.

Reversal in trend
Beginning May 17, the trend was reversed – more deaths were acknowledged by the government on a daily basis compared to funerals taking place at city crematoria and burial ground – which a government source attributed to the addition of deaths from previous days after being verified as COVID deaths.
On May 17, for instance, 340 deaths were recorded by the government against 254 last rites by the civic bodies, 265 against 225 on May 18, 235 against 202 on May 19, 233 against 222 on May 20. By the end of the month, both dropped to double digits: 78 deaths were recorded against 68 funerals on May 30 and 86 against 50 on May 31.

Clear pending results, DUSU tells colleges

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI
The Delhi University Students’ Union (DUSU) on Saturday wrote to colleges over evaluation of answer scripts.
It asked principals and teachers to ensure that results of certain subjects from earlier semesters that are still pending, be declared.
The students’ body also met officials of the DU Principals’ Association and presented a memorandum of demands.
“Principals should take combined steps to form a policy that must be adopted at the university-level so that the component of attendance should not be added in the marking of assignment based evaluation,” read the memorandum.

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‘Act against de-sealing of scrap units’

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI
Following a plea against de-sealing of scrapping units operating illegally in the Mayapuri Industrial Area, the National Green Tribunal has asked the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) and other authorities to take action against unauthorised activities.
Taking note of an action-taken report by the DPCC, a Bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice A.K. Goel said, “We do not find any other direction is required at this stage except that further action may be continued by the DPCC and other authorities.”

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First round of Covaxin dose suspended in Assam

No home isolation for positive people with comorbidities: CM

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT GUWAHATI

The Health Department in Assam has suspended the first dose of Covaxin until sufficient stocks are available.

The decision on Friday coincided with the relaxation of pandemic-induced curfew in the State by an hour and a directive to not allow home isolation for COVID-19 positive people with comorbidities.

“We are expecting a batch of 50,000 Covaxin doses for the 18-44 age group in about a week. We have about 20,000 doses but we have given priority to those who have to get the second jab within 42 days,” State Health Minister Keshab Mahanta said.

He added that Assam has about 3.2 lakh doses of the Covishield vaccine for the

45-plus. He also said the government has fixed the maximum rate private hospitals can charge per day for COVID-19 treatment following complaints of overcharging and non-acceptance of payment other than in cash.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma directed the Health Department not to allow home isolation to COVID-19 patients of any age group with comorbidities and refer them to institutional quarantine. A standard operating procedure is expected soon. Earlier, only people about 50 years were not allowed home isolation if they have comorbidities. “Institutional quarantine has become necessary for bringing down the positivity and mortality rate,” Dr. Sarma said.

Late Friday evening, the State Disaster Management Authority issued a modified set of restrictions relaxing curfew hours in the urban and rural areas by an hour while extending the partial lockdown to June 16.

Monsoon to reach Odisha, Jharkhand by June 15: IMD

It has advanced into Arabian Sea, Karnataka and Maharashtra

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA NEW DELHI

The southwest monsoon is likely to advance into Odisha, Jharkhand, parts of West Bengal and Bihar, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Saturday, hinting at its good progress in the next 10 days.

The IMD said the southwest monsoon has further advanced into more parts of central Arabian Sea, entire coastal Karnataka, Goa, some parts of Maharashtra, most parts north interior Karnataka, some parts of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, more parts of Tamil Nadu and central Bay of Bengal, and some parts of north-east Bay of Bengal.

However, a lull is expected in the rainfall activity on June 7-8, Rajendra Jenamani of the National Weather Forecasting Centre of the IMD, said. “But a low pressure area is expected to form in



Pre-monsoon clouds hovering over the Bhubaneswar sky on Saturday. • BISWARANJAN ROUT

the Bay of Bengal by June 11. This will help in the progress of the monsoon and it is likely to advance into Odisha, Jharkhand, parts of West Bengal and Bihar,” he said.

Normal rainfall

The IMD has also made a forecast of a normal rainfall in June. It said no heatwave conditions are likely in the country over the next five

days. The IMD said maximum temperatures of more than 40 degrees Celsius were recorded at many places over west Rajasthan and at isolated places over Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Saurashtra and Kutch in Gujarat and Odisha. The highest maximum temperature of 43.2 deg. C was recorded at Banda in east Uttar Pradesh on Friday.

Makeshift COVID centres in Gurugram set for long haul

Started a fortnight ago, it is now gearing up for a ‘third wave’

ASHOK KUMAR GURUGRAM

Set up a fortnight ago, amid the raging pandemic crisis, the temporary field hospital and the two makeshift COVID care centres in the Millennium City, with a combined strength of 600 beds, run thin on occupancy as the wave of the deadly virus subsides, but these facilities now gear up for a possible third wave and may remain in place till next year.

M3M Foundation trustee Payal Kanodia told *The Hindu* that the 400-bed COVID care facility set up by the philanthropic arm of the M3M Group with support from other organisations was now being readied for a possible third wave that is widely anticipated to affect children.

“Of the 400 beds, we now aim to convert 150-200 beds for paediatric treatment alone and plan to engage more paediatricians to prepare for the third wave. Though we have treated a couple of children, aged 12-15 years for COVID, we are in talks with the district authorities and “Doctors For You”, an NGO, to convert this facility partially into a paediatric one,” said Dr. Kanodia.

Scaled up facility

A joint initiative of the Haryana government and the M3M Foundation, this free-of-cost facility is managed by the Indian Air Force and “Doctors for You”, a Mumbai-based humanitarian organisation with an international presence.

While the centre was started with 150 beds, the facility was scaled up through additional 250 beds.

The centre also has a pro-



At one of the makeshift COVID care centres in the Millennium City. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

vision of food and medical facilities, including oxygen, wherever required, for patients. A mobile medical unit and round-the-clock helpline is also available for shifting any patient from the care centre to the hospital.

The centre, situation at M3M Urbana in Sector-67, also works as a step-down facility for nearby hospitals and admits less-critical patients based on their health status through a referral procedure to make beds available in these hospitals for more critical patients.

Dr. Kanodia said the facility only took “mild” and “moderate” patients, but had treated a few patients with co-morbidity as well. “We had committed the district administration to run the facility for six months, but might continue for another year keeping in view the situation,” she said.

Similarly, a 100-bed temporary field hospital set up at Tau Devi Lal Stadium in Sector-38 in collaboration with Vedanta Group, Give India and “Doctors for You” has only 15% occupancy.

“We have 100 beds, including 20 ICU beds, but the occupancy remains low because of the sharp decline in cases. The doctors at the facility are provided by the

Civil Hospital and “Doctors For You,” said Lokender Singh, senior security manager of Vedanta Group.

Oxygen supply

Another 100-bed COVID care centre has been set up at Government College in Sector-14 in collaboration with Hero MotoCorp. While the centre runs under the supervision of Civil Surgeon, the disposal of bio-medical waste and sanitation remains the responsibility of the Municipal Corporation of Gurugram. The district administration ensures oxygen supply at the centre, but the Hero MotoCorp group, too, has arranged 100 oxygen concentrators.

“It’s a heartening sign to see a rapid decline in COVID cases in Gurugram. We are staying fully prepared to face any subsequent waves of the pandemic in the coming months, and in keeping with this objective, we have plans to keep all the three COVID care centres in Gurugram running till these are required. These are fully equipped facilities and will help us address any healthcare issues in the coming months. All our stakeholders and partners such as Hero MotoCorp and M3M are fully aligned on this,” said Gurugram Deputy Commissioner Yash Garg

Rajasthan starts giving crop loans

The scheme, announced in 2018, will benefit 7.50 lakh farmers

MOHAMMED IQBAL JAIPUR

The Rajasthan government has started disbursing crop loans during the COVID-19 pandemic to the farmers who had availed of the loan waiver in 2018 and 2019 after turning defaulters. The decision is set to benefit over 7.50 lakh farmers who were being denied fresh loans, as their overdue debt had earlier exceeded ₹5,000 each, despite there being no outstanding amount at present.

Cooperative Minister Uday Lal Anjana said here on Saturday that the farmers were being connected with the

short-term credit facility and given loans for this year’s kharif crop cycle. The central cooperative banks will give them loans of ₹25,000 each or up to their credit limit, whichever is less.

The loan amount may be increased during the next crop cycles, Mr. Anjana said. A committee has been appointed for bringing the farmers within the purview of the short-term credit security.

The Congress government had announced loan waiver for farmers, shortly after coming to power in December 2018, resulting in

the burden of an estimated ₹18,000 crore on the exchequer. The agricultural loans of defaulters up to ₹2 lakh each with the banks were waived with a cut-off date, while there was no monetary ceiling for the cooperative loans.

The previous BJP regime had waived farm loans up to ₹50,000 each obtained from the cooperative banks.

Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot had later stated that the BJP government had paid only ₹2,000 crore to the farmers and left a burden of ₹6,000 crore on his government.

Group renews demand for law against lynching

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT GUWAHATI

A pan-northeast legal group has refreshed its demand for enacting a law to deal specifically with cases of mob lynching. The Assam-based North East Legal Organization (NELO) renewed its year-old demand following the mob assault on a doctor at a COVID Care Centre in central Assam’s Hojai district on June 1.

The police arrested 24 people, including a woman, for grievously injuring doctor Seuj Kumar Senapati, holding him responsible for the death of a COVID posi-

tive person who healthcare officials said died by the time he reached the centre.

In a letter to Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Friday, NELO president Sumit Nripanka Krishnatraya and secretary-general Debajit Barman said a specific law could go a long way in checking mob lynching and mob attacks.

“Even the IPC doesn’t specifically deal with mob lynching as an offence. A specific and strict penal statute shall definitely help the State in the intervention and prevention of such instances,” they said in the letter.

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IN BRIEF
ATS collects voice samples of Ravi Pujari

KOCHI
The Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) probing the Panampilly Nagar beauty parlour firing case of 2018 collected the voice samples of the gangster Ravi Pujari, the third accused in the case, further corroborating his role. The voice samples will now be compared with the alleged voice clips of the gangster the investigation team has collected from a Malayalam news channel.

Determined to conduct SSC exams: A.P. Minister

RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM
Andhra Pradesh Education Minister Adimulapu Suresh on Saturday said the State government would not cancel the Class X (SSC) and Intermediate final examinations for the academic year 2020-21, but prepare to conduct the exams under the safest conditions.

Students going abroad get priority jab

They get Covishield in four States with reduced time interval between doses to meet deadlines

STAFF REPORTER
HYDERABAD

Students going abroad for higher studies are being given COVID-19 vaccination under special plans in Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Karnataka to meet foreign entry requirements. Telangana's free vaccination drive began at the Institute of Preventive Medicine (IPM) in Hyderabad on Saturday. Around 7,000 students registered and nearly 280 got the first dose on day one. Only Covishield vaccine was being given, and the time interval between two doses was reduced from 12-16 weeks to four weeks. IPM director K. Shankar said the State government sought and received permission from the Centre to reduce the interval for students. A code was generated for IPM to give the second dose after four weeks. Vaccination certificates would be generated on CoWin. The State Health department

uploaded an e-link to register for the drive on 'health.telangana.gov.in' on Friday. Using the 'Vaccination for students going abroad' link, the applicants were directed to another site to enter mobile numbers. The date and time slot for vaccination was then communicated. From Monday, around 700 students would be given the jab every day. Students must carry their original passport and show either the visa stamp or admission letter from a recognised overseas university. In Andhra Pradesh, thousands of students planning to travel abroad for the September intake had been told by many universities in the U.S. that vaccination with a World Health Organisation (WHO)-approved vaccine was mandatory. Even though the Central government had opened vaccination for the 18-plus age group, the State government deferred it for this section, as



Rush hour: Students waiting to travel abroad at a special vaccination camp in Hyderabad.

supply was limited. Only those over 45 were being vaccinated. However, the decision was amended to accommodate students with overseas travel plans and NRIs. "The only option we have is Covishield. We can't risk taking Covaxin given the possibility of delay in approval by WHO beyond September. Even if I take Covishield now, the next dose can be taken just a week before September. If everything goes as planned there may be no issue, otherwise I have to go for the January term," C. Swetha, an aspirant, said. In Kerala, students and individuals going abroad for higher studies or jobs and for whom a vaccination certificate was necessary, were being given Covishield vaccine with doses spaced four to six weeks apart. The government

issued an order stating that those going abroad would get vaccination certificates from the Health and Family Welfare Department with the passport number on it. They were given priority in the 18-44 year age group and would be provided Covishield from stocks directly procured by the State. As the CoWin portal did not allow the second dose before 12 weeks, it would be recorded separately by districts. The districts would verify live visa, admission or job confirmation or work permit. Karnataka started vaccinating students set to travel abroad for education or on work from June 1. On day one, 275 were vaccinated. The State government said students under this category could take a second Covishield dose after 30 days. (With inputs from Vijayawada, Thiruvananthapuram and Bengaluru bureaus)

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 17.00 HRS)

Forecast for Sunday: Heavy/very heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, coastal Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry. Thunderstorm with lightning likely at isolated places over Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, coastal Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, central Maharashtra, Kerala, Lakshadweep and Andaman & Nicobar Islands

Table with 4 columns: CITY, RAIN, MAX, MIN. Lists weather data for various cities including Agartala, Ahmedabad, Aizawl, Allahabad, Bengaluru, Bhopal, Bhubaneswar, Chandigarh, Chennai, Coimbatore, Dehradun, Gangtok, Goa, Guwahati, Hubballi, Hyderabad, Imphal, Jaipur, Kochi, Kohima, Kolkata, Kozhikode, Kurnool, Lucknow, Madurai, Mangaluru, Mumbai, Mysuru, New Delhi, Patna, Port Blair, Puducherry, Raipur, Ranchi, Shimla, Shillong, Srinagar, Thiruvananthapuram, Tiruchi, Vijayawada, Visakhapatnam.

Table with 4 columns: CITY, SO2, NO2, CO, PM2.5, PM10, CODE. Lists air quality data for various cities including Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Lucknow, Mumbai, Pune, Visakhapatnam.

Air Quality Code: Poor Moderate Good (Readings indicate average AQI)
SO2: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.
NO2: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.
CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.
PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

BJP gave me ₹2 lakh, smartphone: Sundara

He says he was induced to withdraw as BSP candidate from Manjeswaram

STAFF REPORTER
KASARAGOD

K. Sundara, who withdrew his nomination to contest as a BSP candidate from the Manjeswaram constituency in the Assembly election earlier this year, and later joined the BJP, has claimed that he was given ₹2 lakh and a smartphone to make the switch.

According to him, the reason he was made to switch sides was because he got over 400 votes in the 2016 Assembly election that spoiled the opportunity of BJP State president K. Surendran's victory. In 2021, on the eve of the last day for withdrawal of



K. Surendran

nominations, he decided to pull out and join the BJP. Mr. Sundara said he had demanded ₹15 lakh for the change. But he was given ₹2 lakh and a mobile phone. The BJP gave the money to his mother

and promised to help him open a wine shop and to construct new house in Karnataka. Mr. Sundara who had filed his nomination as a BSP candidate, caused a furore after he went missing, with BSP leaders lodged a missing complaint at the Badiyadukka police station. The leaders claimed he had been abducted by the BJP. However, the party had to withdraw the complaint after the BJP released a statement that Mr. Sundara had decided to support the party candidate and withdraw his nomination. Mr. Sundara's revelations come amid the Kodakara

black money heist investigations linked to the BJP. Manjeswaram MLA A.K.M. Ashraf has demanded a comprehensive probe into the revelations and claimed that the money and kits were given at various places in Manjeswaram, and it was laundered by the BJP Karnataka leadership. The issue would be raised in the Assembly. Meanwhile, BJP Kasaragod district president K. Srikanth rejected Mr. Sundara's claims as a "fabricated story." He said the Indian Union Muslim League and the CPI (M) were behind this baseless allegation.

Sharmila appoints party spokespersons

She files application with poll panel

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

A day after a formal application was made to the Election Commission of India for registration of YSR Telangana Party, former Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy's daughter Sharmila has appointed nine official spokespersons to her proposed party.

They included Konda Raghava Reddy, Tudi Devender Reddy, Indira Sobhan, Pitta Ram Reddy, Epuri Somanna, Syed Mubeen Ahmed, Matin Mujahid,



Sharmila

Bhumi Reddy and Biswa Ravinder. Ms. Sharmila was scheduled to announce her party on July 8, according to sources.

Maharashtra reports 13,659 COVID-19 cases

State's lowest single-day spike in infections since March 10

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

Maharashtra on Saturday reported 13,659 new COVID-19 cases, its lowest single-day spike since March 10, taking its total case tally to 58,19,224. With 300 more deaths, the total toll has risen to 99,512, the State Health Department said. The State has reported less than 20,000 cases for the sixth consecutive day. On March 10, the State reported the same number of daily cases: 13,659. The death toll has been rising by over 700 on a daily basis for more than a fortnight with past fatalities, not recorded earlier, being added. Out of 300 deaths, 211 occurred in the last 48 hours and 89 in the last week.

With 300 more fatalities, the total death toll in Maharashtra has risen to 99,512

STATE HEALTH DEPARTMENT

As many as 21,776 patients were discharged, pushing the tally of recoveries to 55,28,834. There are 1,88,027 active cases now.

863 cases in Mumbai
Mumbai reported 863 new cases and 29 deaths, taking its tally to 7,09,857 and toll to 14,951. The wider Mumbai division, including satellite towns, reported 2,792 infections and 38 deaths, pushing the case load to 15,46,074 and the toll to 28,228. Nashik division reported

1,379 cases, and 38 deaths, of which 14 took place in Ahmednagar district, followed by 12 in Nashik city, and 10 in rural parts of Nashik. The Pune division registered 3,442 cases, 1,348 of them in Satara district. The division reported 54 deaths, of which 18 were in rural parts of Pune and 10 in Pune city. Another 17 deaths were reported in Satara district. Kolhapur division reported 3,586 cases, including 1,095 in Kolhapur district. The division reported 104 deaths. The State's recovery rate has improved to 95.01%, while the case fatality rate now stands at 1.71%. As many as 2,40,088 people were tested on Saturday, taking the number of samples examined so far to 3,62,71,483.

Siltation affecting width of waterways in Mumbai: study

107 sq km of waterways, agricultural land lost, says report

STAFF REPORTER
MUMBAI

A study assessing satellite data over 30 years (1990 to 2019) on identifying critical impacts of coastal inundation along the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) and the Konkan region has found siltation at the mouth, causing shrinking of width of creeks and waterways. It indicates that 107.6 sq km of waterways and agricultural land has been lost and naturally converted into mudflats or mangrove areas in MMR due to rapid changes in the coastal ecosystem. The report predicts excessive flooding in MMR if corrective measures are not taken. "The shrinking creek is not good for a city because the drainage capacity during monsoon will reduce significantly, leading to excessive flooding. Once it becomes shallow, the water carrying capacity of the creek will be reduced. As a result, during heavy rains and high tide water will enter the city spaces even with a subtle increase in sea level rise scenario," said Deepak Apte, executive director of Srushti Conservation Foundation (SCF), a Pune-based non-profit organisation that undertook the study. The National Centre for Coastal Research (NCCR), under the Ministry of Earth Sciences, along with the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation, last year developed an Integrated Flood warning system, i-flows, for Mumbai for flood mitigation during monsoons and extreme events. "The exper-

tise of NCCR could be utilised for drawing a comprehensive plan for conservation/restoration ecosystem using scientific study and to prevent the impact of sea-level rise, which is of serious concern for the island city of Mumbai and adjoining areas," Dr. Apte said. SCF is building satellite datasets for 15-20 locations across the Maharashtra coastline over this year to bring out a comprehensive report. Incursion of saline water and emergence of mangroves on agricultural (paddy fields) landscapes, for example, in Karanja area of Uran has led to a 4.5-fold increase in mangrove area by formation of creek-lets and saltwater invasion across 60.6 sq km of cultivable area replaced by mangroves.

Tigress under observation found dead in Tadoba

Injured animal had attacked veterinarian

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
CHANDRAPUR

A tigress that was under observation was found dead in Mul range of Tadoba Tiger Reserve on Saturday, forest department officials said. She was found with injuries a few days ago and a team from Chandrapur

along with a veterinarian had arrived to treat it. "She attacked Dr. Ravikant Khobragade while he was examining her. A post-mortem has suggested it may have died of hypovolemic shock resulting from internal hemorrhage caused by injuries," an official said.

A year after Cyclone Nisarga, Raigad on road to resilience

Plans affair to set up multi-purpose cyclone shelters, lightning arresters, saline water embankments, says District Collector

RAINIA ASSAINAR
NAVI MUMBAI

A year after Cyclone Nisarga made landfall in Murud, the Raigad administration has disbursed relief to the affected people and is on the path of building resilient infrastructure in the district. "Due to the Nisarga experience, we have built two multi-purpose cyclone shelters (MPCS) at Borli and Dighi under the National Cyclone Risk Mitigation Project. With the district being prone to such weather conditions, we will be building 26 more MPCS," said District Collector Nidhi Choudhary. All 26 shelters will come up in zilla parishad schools, of which 22 will be rebuilt at

a proposed cost of ₹109.48 crore, while four will be repaired at ₹8.06 crore to make them cyclone-resilient. The proposals have been sent to the State government. 924 spots identified The district administration has also identified 924 spots to install lightning arresters. "The State has sent the proposal to the Government of India. At an estimated cost of ₹8.31 crore, the lightning arresters will be installed on buildings and bus stops," Ms. Choudhary said. The District Collector said the administration received ₹447 crore as relief, of which ₹348 crore had been distributed to the affected people.

The remaining ₹99 crore has been handed over to the State government. "All relief pertaining to individuals has been disbursed. A part of the grants to repair schools, anganwadis, and government buildings has not yet been received from the State Disaster Response Fund," Ms. Choudhary said. The State government's proposal to set up a unit of the National Disaster Response Force at a plot in Mahad is awaiting the approval of the Ministry of Animal Husbandry and Dairying as the land belongs to it, Ms. Choudhary said. Meanwhile, 23 non-functional public distribution system godowns have been shortlisted to be

turned into animal shelters. "Estimates are under way and will be submitted before June 10," she said. The administration has identified 20 landslide-prone villages and a ₹41.36 crore proposal has been sent to the State government for building a retaining wall. Underground cabling Last year, the district submitted a proposal for underground cabling of coastal cities. However, the proposal is being modified to add lines to provide oxygen to hospitals. A proposal to build saline water embankments at 27 spots to prevent sea water from entering villages has also been submitted.

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Nadda holds meet with BJP office-bearers

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

BJP president J.P. Nadda's two-day meet with the national general secretaries of the party began with exhaustive reporting on the 'Seva hi Sanghathan' (service through organisation) programme he launched last month and a brief discussion on the recent Assembly polls. Mr. Nadda later briefed Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the discussions.

The meet, which is to end on Sunday, was being held in person. According to a general secretary present at the meeting, the office bearers first gave detailed presentation on the work that had been assigned to them under the programme, which envisaged reaching out to over one lakh villages to spread awareness of the pandemic, provide medical and other help to people. "The first half of the meeting was dedicated to briefing by general secretaries and after lunch, Morcha chiefs of the various wings did their share of presentations."

The Opposition parties and the BJP-led Central government have been at loggerheads over the COVID-19 immunisation drive in the country

Cong. alleges inequity in vaccine policy

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi alleged that the Centre's unfair policy of vaccine distribution was leading to inequity. Reports said 80% of the vaccines went to just six cities, he stated.

Reports suggested that 50% of the doses went to only nine hospitals, he said. "In the absence of a fair policy of vaccine distribution, the inequality policy of the Modi government will give such results," he observed in a tweet.

BJP leaders have been claiming that the Opposition parties had changed the goalpost. They said the Opposition first demanded that the States should be given control of the vaccination policy and when it was done, they wanted the Centre to take over.

Clarifying the Congress's position on the issue, Mr.



Safety first: A health worker administering a COVID-19 jab to a farmer in Tral village of Kashmir on Saturday.



Vaccines should be procured by Centre and distributed by the States

RAHUL GANDHI Congress leader

Gandhi said, "I have always said this, the vaccines should be procured by the Centre and distributed by the States."

In a joint letter written on May 12 to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, 12 Opposition parties demanded that the

Centre provide free and universal mass vaccination. "Procure vaccines centrally from all available sources - global and domestic. Immediately begin a free, universal mass vaccination campaign across the country," the letter said. Congress President Sonia Gandhi was one of the signatories.

Recently, four Chief Ministers of non-BJP ruled States had picked loopholes in the vaccination policy of the Centre.

Probe Punjab vaccine sale: Minister

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The BJP on Saturday demanded a probe and accountability after allegations surfaced of profiteering by the Amarinder Singh-led Congress government in Punjab by selling COVID-19 vaccines to private hospitals.

Union Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri in a press conference in New Delhi said the State government's decision to withdraw the controversial order showed that there was something "fishy" in the matter. He said Congress president Sonia Gandhi and party leader Rahul Gandhi had questioned the Modi government over the vaccine supply "when their government in Punjab was indulging in alleged profiteering to the tune of ₹38 crore by selling jabs to private hospitals". Large doses of vaccines have been found dumped in Rajasthan, another Congress-ruled State, he alleged.

"Government profiteering should stop. There



Virus protection: A health worker showing vials of Covishield and Covaxin.

should be a probe to bring facts in the public domain," Mr. Puri said adding, "heads should roll". He also sought to know the "nature of the fund" to which the money received by the State government from private hospitals was credited.

Citing a Punjab government communication, he said it had procured Covishield vaccines for ₹412 per dose but sold it to private hospitals for ₹1,000 and they, in turn, charged ₹1,560 from the people. Two private hospitals in Mohali charged people ₹3,000 and ₹3,200, he alleged.



Govt. profiteering should stop. There should be a probe to bring facts in the public domain

HARDEEP PURI Union Minister

sector laws in his presser accusing Opposition parties of spreading misinformation and lies. "The State of Punjab saw record procurement, contributed over 32% of 411.19 lakh tonnes of the wheat procured, with over ₹26,103.89 crore credited to bank accounts of farmers directly," he said. Opposition leaders had alleged that the new laws would lead to the minimum support price regime and mandis being done away with, he said.

Attacking the critics of the Central Vista project, the Minister asserted that as of now work on raising a new parliament building, costing ₹900 crore, and Central Vista avenue costing ₹400 crore was under way.

"An MLA hostel being built in Maharashtra is alone costing ₹900 crore," he alleged.

'Kashmir road map must for talks'

Always wanted a 'civilised' and 'open' relationship, says Pak. PM Imran Khan

REUTERS ISLAMABAD

Prime Minister Imran Khan said on Friday that Pakistan is ready to restart talks with India if New Delhi provides a road map towards restoring the previous status of the disputed Himalayan region of Kashmir.

"If there is a road map, then, yes, we will talk," Mr. Khan told Reuters in Islamabad.

Previously, Mr. Khan and his government have held that India would have to first reverse its 2019 steps for any normalisation process to be

Even if they give us a road map, that these are the steps that we will take to basically undo what they did... then that is acceptable

IMRAN KHAN Prime Minister, Pakistan



gin. "Even if they give us a road map, that these are the steps that we will take to basically undo what they did, which is illegal, against international law and United Nations resolutions... then that is acceptable," Mr. Khan said.

India's External Affairs Ministry did not immediately respond to Reuters' request for comment.

Mr. Khan said he has always wanted a "civilised" and "open" relationship with India. "It is common sense that if you want to re-

duce poverty in the subcontinent, the best way is to trade with each other," he said, referring to the example of the European Union.

Pakistan in March deferred a decision by its top economic decision-making body to restart trade with India until Delhi reviewed its moves in Kashmir.

He said India had crossed a "red line" by revoking the autonomy of Kashmir. "They have to come back for us to resume dialogue," he said, adding, "at the moment there is no response from India".

BMS concerned over minimum wage revision

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) on Saturday wrote to Union Labour and Employment Minister Santosh Kumar Gangwar to raise its concern at the lack of revision in minimum wages for the past seven years and the recent decision of the government to appoint a committee on fixing wages over the next three years.

BMS general secretary Binoy Kumar Sinha wrote that setting up of the six-member expert group this week to fix minimum wages and national floor minimum wages had set aside the recommendations of the Satpathy Committee, which was formed in 2017 and submitted its report in 2019. "Further it is notable that the government has given the committee [expert group] three years to present its report, which sounds ridiculous as the tenure of the incumbent government is set to end, under normal circumstances, before the completion of the tenure of the committee."

Modi, Xi capable leaders, can solve bilateral issues: Putin

He cautions against interference from 'extra-regional power'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ST. PETERSBURG

Asserting that both Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping are "very responsible" leaders, Russian President Vladimir Putin on Saturday said both are capable of solving China-India issues, and cautioned against any interference from "extra-regional power" in the process.

With Russia publicly critical of the Quad, the four-nation grouping of India, the U.S., Japan and Australia, Mr. Putin said though it was not up to Moscow to assess how any nation should participate in an initiative and to what extent they should build their relations with other countries but no partnership should be aimed at making friends against anyone.

The Russian President's remarks, to a question on Moscow's view on Quad and India's participation in it, were a veiled reference to the Chinese claim that the grouping is to contain Beij-



Vladimir Putin

ing's influence in the strategic Indo-Pacific region.

No contradictions

He also said there were no "contradictions" in Russia's partnership with India and the ties with Beijing.

"Yes, I do know that there are some issues related to India-China relations but there are always a lot of issues between neighbouring countries but I know the attitude of both the Prime Minister of India and also the President of China. These are very responsible people and they earnestly treat each other with utmost respect and I

believe that they will always arrive at a solution to any issue that they might face.

"But it is important that no other extra-regional power is interfering with that," he told PTI through a translator during a virtual interaction.

Trust factor

Asked about the growing proximity between Russia and China and if that will impact the Indo-Russia security and defence cooperation, Mr. Putin said the relations with India were developing quite rapidly, quite successfully based on "trust".

"We highly appreciate such a high level of cooperation with our Indian friends. These relations are of a strategic nature. They cover a whole range of avenues of our cooperation in economy, energy and hi-tech. In defence, and I am not just talking about purchase of Russian arms... We have very deep profound relations with India based on trust," he said.

Job creation needs a boost, says Gangwar

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

Union Labour and Employment Minister Santosh Kumar Gangwar said there is a need for greater support to healthcare systems, social protections and job creation to counter the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

He was addressing the virtual meeting of Non-Aligned

Movement Labour Ministers under the 109th session of the International Labour Conference on Friday.

He "reiterated India's commitment towards making all possible efforts to counter the impact of the pandemic, and emerge stronger", a Labour Ministry statement on Saturday said.

Mr. Gangwar said the

world had seen loss of lives and livelihoods, slowing down of economics and adverse impact on entire sections of society, particularly the vulnerable sections.

"He said, there is need to ensure better support to the healthcare systems, social protection and employment generation. Governments are required to deal with the

pandemic and provide an effective response at policy levels, to balance business continuity, income security and above everything, well-being of all, he added," the statement said.

He said there was a need to develop a new approach towards the style of work, given the extraordinary changes in the past year.

Pakistan makes progress on terror finance ratings

Development comes ahead of FATF blacklist decision in June

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

Pakistan improved its ratings with the Asia Pacific Group (APG) on Money Laundering, a 41-country grouping that is a regional associate of the Financial Action Task Force, ahead of a decision on its grey listing status later this month. Of the 40 parameters, Pakistan has made progress in about 21 and been downgraded on 1, the APG's Mutual Evaluation Report (MER) published on June 4 said, adding that this meant Pakistan moves 'up' one category in its evaluation at the APG.

"Overall, Pakistan has made notable progress in addressing the technical compliance deficiencies identified in its MER and has been re-rated on 22 recommendations," explained the APG's second follow up report on the MER, adding that it had cleared 31 of 40 points in total as compliant or largely compliant of the international body's standards on anti-money laundering/combating financing of terrorism (AML/CFT) measures.

"Pakistan will move from enhanced [expedited] to en-

hanced follow-up, and will continue to report back to the APG on progress to strengthen its implementation of AML/CFT laws. Pakistan submitted its third progress report in February 2021," said the APG's report that was presented in May, which noted that Pakistan had passed a number of new laws in the past few months that made its systems more compliant on these issues.

The APG's meeting, which included India, also retained Bhutan on the "enhanced follow-up" list, with 29 of 40 recommendations being rated as compliant or largely compliant.

Government sources here said it is not necessary that Pakistan's improvement in the APG would also lead to a reprieve at the FATF, which will decide at its next plenary session from June 21-25 on whether to retain Pakistan on the greylist, downgrade it to the blacklist or remove it from the colour-coded list of countries facing punitive measures that has impacted its global credit rating and access to international loans.

In particular, Pakistan's inability to end funding to

the UN Security Council-designated terror groups and entities, including the Haqqani group, the Al-Qaeda, the Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Jaish-e-Mohammad, and prosecute their leadership successfully had held up its ratings. The Paris-based FATF, has thus far cleared Pakistan on 24 of 27 points on the action plan it has been tasked with since 2018, leading its Industries [now Energy] Minister Hammad Azhar to declare in February 2021, that being downgraded to the FATF blacklist is "not an option" any longer.

The last three outstanding action points on which Pakistan claims it will also be cleared are: demonstrating that terrorist financing (TF) investigations and prosecutions target persons and entities acting on behalf or at the directive of the designated persons or entities; demonstrating that TF prosecutions result in effective, proportionate and dissuasive sanctions; and demonstrating effective implementation of targeted financial sanctions against all designated terrorists, particularly those acting for them or on their behalf.

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PG INTEGRATED PROGRAMMES
PG PROGRAMMES
PG Diploma Programmes, Diploma Programmes and Certificate Programmes



IN BRIEF



States, UTs have over 1.65 crore doses: Centre

NEW DELHI  
More than 1.65 crore COVID-19 vaccine doses are still available with States and Union Territories, the Union Health Ministry said on Saturday. So far, over 24 crore doses had been provided to the States and UTs, it said in a statement. The total consumption, including wastage, stood at 22,65,08,508 doses, according to the data available at 8 a.m. on Saturday, the Ministry said.

Brazil gives approval to import Covaxin

HYDERABAD  
Brazil has agreed to import Bharat Biotech's COVID-19 vaccine, Covaxin. The National Health Surveillance Agency of Brazil – Anvisa – had earlier denied permission to import Covaxin after authorities found that the Indian plant in which the jab was being made did not meet the Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) requirements. According to Anvisa's approval, Brazil is expected to receive four million doses of Covaxin initially. All batches for Brazil must meet GMP requirements, the country said. PTI

7-day average of daily vaccination improves

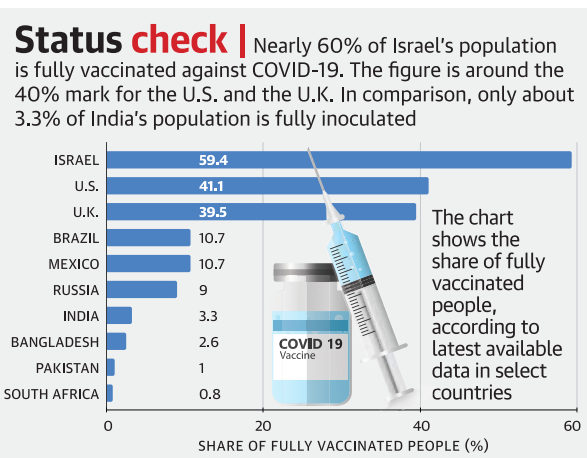
It stood at 25.98 lakh on June 4, against 18.1 lakh a month ago

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI

India recorded 1,13,254 new COVID-19 cases and 2,545 new deaths till 9.30 p.m. on Saturday. The country has so far reported a total of 2,88,07,211 cases and 3,46,648 deaths. Tamil Nadu reported 21,410 new infections, followed by Kerala (17,328) and Karnataka (13,800). Maharashtra recorded 741 new casualties on the day, followed by Tamil Nadu (443) and Karnataka (365). Maharashtra's new deaths figure includes backlog fatalities which were missed in the previous reports.

The figures do not include cases and deaths from Chhattisgarh, Punjab, Jharkhand, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Tripura and Lakshadweep. The data are sourced from the respective States' health bulletins.

Around 20.84 lakh samples were tested in the country on Friday (the results for which were made available on Saturday). India's average daily test positivity rate (positive cases identified for every 100 tests) continues to decline. It was 4.8% on June



4 compared to 9.8% recorded a week before.

About 36.5 lakh vaccine doses were administered in the country in the 24 hours ending 7 a.m. on Saturday, which is 7.75 lakh doses higher than what was recorded in the previous 24 hours. It is also 5.87 lakh more doses than what was recorded during the same period a week ago. The seven-day rolling average of daily vaccinations in India stood at 25.98 lakh on June 4, which is more than the 18.1 lakh recorded a month ago.

About 19.5% of adults in

India, 40.1% of those aged above 45 and 44.4% of people aged above 60, have been administered with at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, until 8 p.m. on Saturday. The figures are based on the estimated population in 2021.

India continues to record the highest number of new cases in the world with 1,37,947 average daily infections on June 4. The two other countries with the highest new case count after India were Brazil (64,211) and Argentina (30,425). Nearly one in every three new cases is from India.

INTERVIEW | NIKHIL TANDON

‘COVID-diabetes link needs study’

Course of treatment brings its own challenges, says endocrinologist

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN

**Nikhil Tandon, Professor and Head, Department of Endocrinology and Metabolism, AIIMS, Delhi, says there is the possibility of new-onset diabetes in COVID-19 patients but more data is required to understand the phenomenon. He also elaborates on the treatment for diabetic COVID-patients. Excerpts:**

**Why do viral infections lead to elevated blood sugar levels?**

■ Any infection or febrile illness can elevate blood sugar levels. It is basically a consequence of the mechanism that the body employs to fight the infection. In some cases, the medicines given to treat that infection may cause this rise in blood sugar levels. When there is an increase in inflammatory markers, an extreme example of which is the “cytokine storm” in the case of COVID-19, it affects both the insulin release by the pancreas as well as the sensitivity of the tissue to insulin. Insulin facilitates the movement of glucose into tissues and any malfunctioning (either in production or tissue sensitiv-

ity) will lead to elevation of glucose levels in the blood.

**Is it difficult to treat diabetic COVID-19 patients?**

■ In most cases, a person with well-controlled diabetes responds to the COVID-19 treatment the same way a non-diabetic does. However, in people with long-standing and poorly controlled diabetes, or those with diabetic complications such as kidney or heart disease, the management of COVID-19 can become more complex.

Conversely, the management of COVID-19 in such patients can make the treatment of diabetes more difficult. For example, steroids, which are an important part of COVID-19 treatment, can cause a significant worsening in blood sugar control. Hence, patients with diabetes invariably require treatment with intensive insulin regimens.

**Can COVID-19 cause diabetes?**

■ Diabetes is an asymptomatic disease in most people, so there could be a good number of people who may not be aware of their diabetes before they caught CO-



Pancreas have ACE2 receptors, which can enable SARS-CoV-2 to gain entry

VID-19. There are studies that state that in poorly resourced countries, as many as 50% people with chronic illness, such as diabetes, are undiagnosed.

Then there are people who may have had the tendency to develop diabetes, and COVID-19 has caused what we called stress hyperglycemia. In some patients, it could be a combination of stress hyperglycemia and medications such as steroids. And finally, there is an ongoing discussion about the possibility of COVID-19 disease itself causing new-onset diabetes in a patient.

Theoretically, COVID-19 can also cause diabetes as

the pancreas have ACE2 receptors, which can enable SARS-CoV-2 to gain entry into the pancreatic beta cells, resulting in structural and functional damage. However, we need more data to support this.

**So, when can we say that COVID-19 has caused diabetes?**

■ At the time of COVID-19, if we do a test called HbA1c, which gives us average glucose of the previous three months, and if these levels are elevated, it means that the person had diabetes even before he contracted COVID-19. If the HbA1c was normal, we should reassess the blood glucose levels after the COVID disease has settled and the steroid therapy (if used) has been discontinued – the glucose levels will normalise if either the disease itself or steroid therapy contributed to the rise in blood sugar.

If the blood sugar remains high weeks after recovery from the acute disease or the cessation of steroids or both, it will raise the possibility of COVID having caused the diabetes.

(For the full interview, log on to bit.ly/nikhiltandon)

Insurance firms asked to settle claims faster

Finance Minister urges States to help

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Insurance companies have processed just 419 claims pertaining to frontline healthcare workers who lost their lives in the COVID-19 pandemic, Union Finance and Corporate Affairs Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Saturday, urging insurers to expedite settlement of pending claims under different schemes.

The government had launched the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package (PMGKP) Insurance Scheme for health workers with a life insurance amount of ₹50 lakh. So far, ₹209.5 crore has been disbursed to nominees of the deceased healthcare workers, the Minister noted in a meeting with chiefs of insurance companies.

Directing States to take up COVID-19 claims of health workers on a priority basis, Ms. Sitharaman said a new simplified system had been put in place to address “delays arising out of States sending documents” that must be put to “maximum” use.

As per the new mechanism, “a simple certificate” from the District Magistrate (DM), endorsed by the nodal State health authority would

be sufficient to process claims. Citing an example from Ladakh of a health worker's insurance claim being settled within four hours of receiving the DM's certificate, Ms. Sitharaman called for a similar approach to be maintained in future as well.

The PMGKP scheme for healthcare workers has been extended for a year after the emergence of the second COVID-19 wave in April.

The Minister also sought to accelerate the disbursement of pending claims under the Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY) and the Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY) during the pandemic.

The PMJJBY and the PMSBY, launched in 2015, provide life and accidental insurance covers respectively of ₹2 lakh each, at an annual premium of ₹330 and ₹12 respectively.

Under the PMJJBY, a total of 4.65 lakh claims amounting to ₹9,307 crore has been paid, of which 1.2 lakh claims amounting to ₹2,403 crore were settled since the beginning of the pandemic last year. The PMSBY scheme has settled 82,660 claims worth ₹1,629 crore by May 31 this year.

Tough test



**In it together:** A girl readies to give swabs for COVID-19 test after her village in Khetri, near Guwahati, was declared a containment zone on Saturday. ■ RITU RAJ KONWAR

A deserted Taj waits for the missing buzz

The impact on livelihoods that depend on tourism is evident everywhere in COVID-19-struck Agra

AMIT BARUAH  
AGRA

The monument to love and its environs are deserted. Parking lots are empty; ticket counters are shut; State police personnel lounge around the closed gates to the Taj Mahal, fiddling with their masks or mobile phones with little else to do.

Agra city is open now, but as you drive towards the Taj itself, the desolation is evident. Some shopkeepers stand outside the Meena Bazaar, complaining how they had been ruined, while the odd autorickshaw brings the odd pilgrim to Hazrat Syed Jalal Shah Bukhari's dargah just outside the Taj.

Unmanned Babloo, who drives an e-rickshaw, says he has no work. “Earlier, I used to make ₹600-800 a day, now I am lucky to get ₹50-60 from local passengers,” he said.

Iqbal, an auto driver, is on the same boat as Babloo. If there's no work, why does he bring his vehicle out on the streets? “What to do sitting at home? Today, I brought some passengers to the dargah. That seems to be it for the day. Our situation is very bad,” he said.



**Still life:** Known for its long queues, this ticket counter outside the Taj is shut on account of the pandemic. ■ AMIT BARUAH

Rajiv Saxena, vice-president of the Tourism Guild of Agra, estimated that the city had lost about ₹5,000 crore on account of the two lockdowns since end-March 2020.

Industry in doldrums

Nationally, the Confederation of Indian Industry estimated in September 2020 that the Indian tourism and travel industry was set to lose ₹5 lakh crore on account of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Five lakh people are directly or indirectly employed by tourism in the city, Mr. Saxena told *The Hindu*. “Tour guides, for instance, are not able to pay the school

fees for their children,” he said. “There has been no mapping of people's requirements on the part of the administration,” Mr. Saxena said, adding ruefully that tourism did not make politicians win elections. Agra District Magistrate Prabhunagar Singh claimed that the city was hoping the Taj Mahal would open up when the current closure deadline set by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) expired on June 14. The Taj, along with other ASI-protected monuments, has been shut since April 15. In 2020, these were closed from March 16 to July 16. “After June 14, they [the

ASI] might open the Taj. The decision to close came from the ASI, the decision to open will also come from them,” Mr. Singh said. On Friday, Agra reported only 200 COVID-19 cases.

Death toll

As of Friday, Agra district, which has a population of about 50 lakh, roughly equally divided between the urban and rural spreads, had reported 424 COVID-19 deaths overall. “As on March 20, the number of deaths reported was 174,” Mr. Singh revealed.

Rahul Rathore, who manages the only electric crematorium in the city, claimed that between 50-55 bodies were cremated at the facility every day between April 13 and May 5. “We had to introduce a token system as we have four furnaces in the facility,” he stated.

Banners at the now-deserted crematorium, which is also close to the Taj Mahal, point to the all-pervading fear that gripped relatives and friends bringing the bodies of loved ones. They said a sum of ₹1,000 would be charged for lifting COVID-19-positive bodies and placing them inside the furnace. Other

wise, Mr. Rathore said, the funeral service was free.

Outside the Taj, the silence is broken by a bunch of well-built men who want to take a peek at Shahjahan's memorial for his wife, Mumtaz Mahal, unaware that it has been closed from April 15 this year.

Mithilesh Kumar and his associates are policemen in civvies from Haryana, who are returning to Jind after paying a visit to Jharkhand on work. “We thought we could see the Taj while coming back. But it's closed – we didn't know that,” Mr. Kumar said.

For Agra, the reopening of the Taj and the return of the domestic tourist is an obvious priority. Hari Sukumar, vice president of Jaypee Palace Hotel, said his hotel was booked to capacity on the Diwali weekend in 2020. Most hotel guests were people who drove into Agra from the National Capital Region.

Mr. Sukumar is hopeful that destination weddings and offices keen to have team gatherings will offer a new lease of life to the tottering tourism industry as it must wait for the return of the foreign tourist.

person one party.

“Today, the All India Trinamool Congress takes a new step towards effective leadership. Going forward, we shall be committed towards being #OnePersonOnePost party. Once again, our commitment to serve the people of India in the best way possible, remains top priority,” the party tweeted from its official handle.

During the meeting, the issue of leaders from the BJP who want to return to the TMC was also discussed. TMC spokesperson Kunal Ghosh said the issue required a policy decision of the higher-ups. He, however said that several leaders from the BJP were in communication with the party.

BJP leader Prabir Ghosal has expressed displeasure that senior party leadership did not contact him after death of his mother. He joined the BJP before the Assembly polls and contested and lost from Uttarpara.



Trinamool Congress MP Abhishek Banerjee. ■ FILE PHOTO

er senior party leader, made the announcement after a meeting of the working committee and core committee of the party. Actor Sayoni Ghosh has been appointed head of the party's youth wing, Lok Sabha member Kakuli Ghosh Dastidar head of the women's wing and Rajya Sabha member head of the trade union wing.

One party one post

The TMC also changed presidents of several districts, keeping the policy of one

Five-level plan to lift curbs in Maharashtra

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI

The Maharashtra government has announced a five-level plan to relax the lockdown-induced restrictions based on the weekly positivity rate and occupancy of oxygen beds.

In the first category, cities and districts, which have a positivity rate of 5% and an oxygen bed occupancy of less than 25%, will open up completely with regular timings of essential and non-essential shops, malls, theatres, auditoriums, restaurants, private offices, public places, and sports establishments.

In the second category, places with positivity rate of 5% and oxygen bed occupancy of 25 to 40%, essential and non-essential shops can open as per regular timings, but malls, theatres, multiplexes, auditoriums and restaurants will function at 50% capacity. In the third level – for places with positivity rate of 5 to 10% and oxygen bed occupancy of over 40% – essential shops can remain open till 4 p.m. Stricter norms will be in place for the other two levels.

SUDOKU

	4					3	5
5				2			
			6		5	7	1
2			3				
		8	2	6	1	4	
					8		3
4	2	5	1		6		
				9			1
1	9					7	

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

8	4	2	3	7	5	1	6	9
5	9	3	4	6	1	7	8	2
7	6	1	9	8	2	3	5	4
4	2	7	1	5	9	6	3	8
3	1	6	8	2	4	9	7	5
9	8	5	6	3	7	2	4	1
1	3	9	5	4	6	8	2	7
2	5	8	7	9	3	4	1	6
6	7	4	2	1	8	5	9	3







SNAPSHOTS



**Toothy dinos**  
By studying fossilised dinosaur bones that had the bite mark of juvenile *T. rex*, researchers have concluded that these had powerful bites, between that of a hyena and a crocodile. They estimated a juvenile *T. rex* could have exerted 5,641 newtons of force. The force of a human's bite is 300 newtons.



**Carbon storage**  
Carbon capture and storage poses the challenge of establishing economic value. Researchers from Universities of Sydney and Toronto have designed advanced electrolyzers to convert captured carbon into building blocks of everyday materials. Some of it is used to produce ethylene. The technology needs to be perfected before it can be used practically.



**Pause and speak**  
Just like humans pause in between words when speaking, electric fish too were observed to have pauses in their communication which were significant. The study, published in *Current Biology*, also pointed out how pauses allow the neurons in the mid-brain to recover from stimulation. The researchers from Washington University, used mormyrids for the study.

The need to stay prepared for multiple waves and variants

R. PRASAD

Even as the second wave in India seems to have already peaked, many States still report high test positivity rates suggesting more cases remain to be detected. The slow down in daily cases has been mainly due to strict lockdowns in many States. With the alpha (B.1.1.7) and delta (B.1.617.2) variants widely present across the country, and the possibility of new variants with higher transmissible ability getting imported or emerging in India cannot be ruled out, the possibility of a third wave appears to be real.

In an email to *The Hindu*, Dr. Bhramar Mukherjee, Professor of Biostatistics and Epidemiology at the School of Public Health, University of Michigan, and Dr. Giridhara Babu, Professor of Epidemiology at the Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI), Bengaluru discuss when a third wave is likely to begin in India, how to identify one and the measures required to achieve vaccine equity to reduce the daily cases and deaths in the third wave.

With the second wave appearing to have peaked in India. At what stage can it be said that the second wave has been contained?

**Bhramar Mukherjee:** The seven-day test positivity rate (TPR) is at about 7%, effective reproduction rate is at 0.68, so I think as a nation, one can say that the wave is in decline. But with 1,30,000 cases and 2,500-3,000 deaths every day, I cannot say it is contained. There are large States still registering a significant number of cases with TPR of over 15% such as Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal and Odisha. Then there are smaller States with high TPR such as Goa, Manipur, Nagaland, Sikkim, Meghalaya and the north east cluster.

**Giridhara Babu:** It is projected that the daily case count will decrease beneath 50,000 around June 13. Assuming that we will maintain over a million tests each day, we might see daily test positivity at the national level to come below 5% during June 13-20.

Both alpha (B.1.1.7) and delta (B.1.617.2) variants were the main drivers of the second wave in India. Will India experience a third wave and worryingly more waves in the future?

**BM:** This is probably not the last wave and these are not the last set of variants. We have to stay prepared for the future. What happens when we see another uptick or outbreak is to a great extent in our hands. We know how to fight this virus. Even with the second

wave, if we had acted in mid-March, thousands of lives could have been saved. My point of view is that we need to stay prepared for the nth wave and the zth variant. We have to stay prepared for outbreaks for the foreseeable future. With accelerated vaccination, we can fight back and turn a peak into a bump.

**GB:** There is no doubt that there will be another wave around November-December. Any outbreak of infectious disease will occur when the build-up of susceptible persons reaches beyond a critical point. Super-spreader events will only facilitate reaching this point earlier. In addition, variants such as delta can spread faster than alpha. Therefore, it is only a matter of time.

What indicators should be looked for to call it as the beginning of a third wave?

**GB:** As we emerge from the second wave, seven-day average growth rates of cases and deaths should be regularly monitored. In order to have objective monitoring, the testing levels have to be stepped up, and the syndromic approach of surveillance has to be strengthened and reviewed in all the states. Whenever we observe the occurrence of cases clearly in excess of the previous weeks, we should be on high vigil to detect clusters and investigate them both for epidemiological and genomic investigations. Other indicators to help in the process are test positivity rate (doubled in a week subject to no changes but high testing le-

vels) hospitalisation rates (doubled in the corresponding seven consecutive days). The centre should provide guidelines indicating when we can call a new outbreak as the next wave.

The following four prerequisite criteria are necessary to declare the third wave. First, the second wave should have been contained, which means that the reproduction number is below 1 for two weeks. Second, the low rate of infection has to be sustained for at least one month. Third, see if cases are increasing steadily for over two-three weeks, and finally, check if cases are increasing steadily after crossing the basic effective reproduction number (RT) of 1.5.

The government is projecting 10 million vaccinations per day by mid-July. Over 28 million have been already infected naturally though the actual numbers will be many times more. So what is the minimum percentage of the population that needs to be vaccinated to prevent a third wave?

**BM:** We need to keep India's age pyramid in mind. Forty per cent of the Indian population is in 0-18 years for whom we do not have any vaccines available yet. If we can get Pfizer vaccine for those aged 12-18 years and for pregnant women, and Covaxin gets approved for kids that will be a big help to the immunisation strategy. Data also shows (a recent paper in *Nature Medicine*) that in people with past COVID-19 infection, one dose can produce similar antibody levels as in an infection-free person with two doses. If a large fraction of India is infected, then one dose of vaccine post infection will likely give good protection.

I also hope we can get some one-shot vaccines. This could go a long way for India where vaccine adherence is an issue along with a large population.

**GB:** The 1.3 billion plus people in India constitute the source population at risk of infection. We have a long way to go. Ideally,



There is no doubt that there will be another wave around November-December. Any outbreak of infectious disease will occur when the build-up of susceptible persons reaches beyond a critical point. Super-spreader events will only facilitate reaching this point earlier.

GIRIDHARA BABU

GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

more than 70% of people should be protected with the vaccine in order to have lower peaks of the waves. I would not consider infected as a component of this estimation, as evidence suggests that even those who are infected should be vaccinated.

What vaccine strategy is needed to protect the vulnerable people in the 18-44 age group, particularly the urban poor and those living in rural areas?

**BM:** For urban poor and rural areas, we need mobile vaccination, door-to-door campaigns, seeking buy-in from religious and community leaders, and vaccine clinics in front of places of religious gathering. Employers encouraging and providing vaccination to employees, even supporting and ensuring vaccination of all household help in urban metros goes a long way. People with comorbidities and special health conditions should have a priority.

**GB:** Any person with comorbidity should be part of the vulnerable population, irrespective of the age group. In addition, the parents, those who work in occupations with high people contact, school teachers etc., should be prioritised for two doses. Every eligible person should get at least one dose by December.

Over-reliance on the CoWin platform for the 18-44 age group is causing vaccine inequity even in cities. Can COVID vaccination

be carried out without relying on CoWin in the rural areas to reduce vaccine inequity?

**GB:** The digital divide is a significant barrier created by the Government, which worsens the existing health inequities. India is a global leader in conducting vaccination campaigns. These are done by a bottom-up approach for micro-planning to include all the eligible beneficiaries without missing a single person. Also, mobilisation campaigns are important to alleviate the concerns related to vaccination and ensure that people visit the vaccination sites in time.

Since a surge in cases was first seen in big cities in both the first and second wave, will it be prudent to increase vaccine coverage in big cities to reduce the possibility of a third wave? Will such an approach lead to vaccine inequity between cities and between urban and rural areas?

**BM:** First of all, the second wave has penetrated rural areas. The rural-urban vaccine inequity will happen even if you try to prevent it, so the governments have to take vaccines to rural areas. We have a strong immunisation framework using community health workers in rural areas. So we have to activate all our powers to get through this.

**GB:** That's not the correct characterisation. The lower reported numbers from rural areas reflect the poorer testing and sparse pop-

ulation density in rural areas. There are also no hospitals in rural areas. If anything, it is important to ensure that people in the rural areas are well covered in the vaccination programme.

India has so far not undertaken any large-scale, real-world study to understand the effectiveness of the two vaccines against the alpha and delta variants. How concerning is this?

**BM:** Why do we have vaccine data against new variants from the U.K. but not India? India should be providing data on effectiveness of the Covishield vaccine against the delta variant, but all we have is based on U.K. studies. How is the government assessing vaccine effectiveness studies? Are they employing test negative designs? How many breakthrough infections have happened with one dose? How many fatalities, hospitalisations? These are key information that the world needs to know from India.

We have to do careful studies of vaccine versus variant interface and understand the immune escape properties of emerging variants. We have to design studies to make sure if we need another booster dose of the vaccine, we get one before vaccine induced immunity wanes. There are still big unknowns and uncertainties in this pandemic that we need to first recognise and then prepare for.

Emergence of order from chaos in turbulent systems and Bose-Einstein condensation

This ordering leads to aeroelastic flutter and thermoacoustic instabilities as observed during the failure of the F1 engine of Apollo rocket during trials

SHUBASHREE DESIKAN

An important phenomenon studied in aerospace engineering is the emergence of order from chaos in turbulent systems that leads to detrimental large amplitude fluctuations. Examples of this include aeroelastic flutter as observed in the wings of aircraft and thermoacoustic instabilities in rocket combustors, both of which can lead to the breaking down of the system. For this reason, it is important to be able to predict and understand such happenings and avoid them.

At R.I. Sujith's lab in the Department of Aerospace Engineering of IIT Madras, this phenomenon has been

studied for years. As he succinctly explains: Thermoacoustic instability, which comprises self-sustained large amplitude periodic oscillations, can overwhelm the thermal protection system in combustion chambers, cause damage to structural parts such as turbine blades, or even affect the guidance and control system of rockets and lead to mission failures.

**Apollo rocket failure**  
An oft-quoted example of this is the failure during testing of the F-1 engine in the Apollo rocket. Initially, every time they tested the rocket, the engine would get into this instability and explode.



**Danger zone:** Thermoacoustic instability can affect the guidance and control system of rockets and lead to mission failures, says R.I. Sujith.

They later introduced baffles that disrupted the interactions between the flames and that between the flames and the combustion chamber giving the engine the desired stability.

In a combination of theory and experiment, Prof. Sujith and his student Shruti Tan-

don have come up with an understanding of the emergence of order in chaotic systems by drawing an analogy with a phenomenon widely studied in quantum statistical physics - Bose-Einstein condensation (BEC). In BEC, Bosons, which are elementary particles having spins that take integer values, such as 0, 1 or 2, condense to the lowest energy level when temperature is taken to very low values. The group has shown an analogous condensation taking place in the case of order emerging from chaos in turbulent systems.

To understand this, take the concept of phase space - a dynamic imaginary space where a particle is represent-

ed by its position and momentum at every instant of time. The acoustic dynamics of the combustor is represented as a trajectory moving in this imaginary space.

**Orbit condensation**  
During chaotic movement, there are several possible orbits, and so even as the trajectory moves towards one orbit, it is attracted to a different orbit, and therefore does not stick to any one orbit.

However, as the parameter is tuned and the system makes a transition towards order, the number of orbits is reduced and therefore, the trajectory gets caught in a few stable orbits. The re-

searchers label this process a type of "condensation."

"In the current work we have provided a novel perspective to study the transformation of the phase space structure with transition from chaos to order using analogy with Bose-Einstein Condensation," says Ms Tandon, a dual degree student in the department.

"The next step would be to use statistics of Bosons, namely, tools from statistical mechanics that are used to study Boson particles and Bose-Einstein condensation, to quantify the transformations in the topology of the phase space," she adds.

The paper that draws out the analogy is published in

the journal *Chaos*. "Using measures from cycle networks and using analogy with BEC we were able to develop 'early warning indicators' that identify the onset of intermittency and hence forewarn the occurrence of thermoacoustic instability in the combustor," says Prof Sujith, who is the D. Srinivasan Chair Professor in the department.

**Strategies to mitigate**  
"In future, we would like to also analyse the spatio-temporal data from the perspective of BEC transition; thus, develop strategies to prevent the condensation transition and thus mitigate such instabilities," he adds.

Study points to pileup of biomedical waste

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Over two lakh kilograms of biomedical waste was generated each day last month by hospitals in India dealing with COVID-19 patients, a new report revealed. The report titled, "State of India's Environment 2021," released by the Centre for Science and Environment, said 2,03,000 kg of COVID-19 biomedical waste was produced daily in May this year and it was roughly 33% of India's non-COVID biomedical waste.

It said the COVID-19 biomedical waste generated per day in May was 46% more than in April when 1.39 lakh kg of such waste was produced daily. In March, the daily figure was 75,000 kg, according to the report. April and May witnessed a deadly second wave of coronavirus cases that swept through the country stretching the healthcare infrastructure to its limits.

How to recover from a spinal cord injury

ASWATHI PACHA

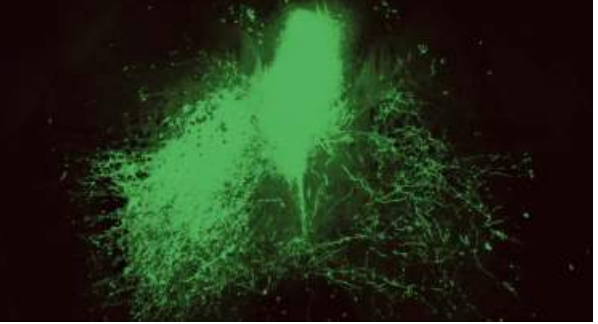
A violent fall, a vehicular accident, or a sports injury can sometimes damage the spinal cord and brain leading to paralysis and other life-threatening health problems. The nerve fibres that carry important information are unable to regrow, leading to irreversible damage. Using novel bioinformatics frameworks and screening platforms, researchers have now identified a new gene combination that can help enhance the growth of nerve fibres after an injury.

It is well known that mammals including humans show a high capacity for brain and spinal cord regeneration but only during young ages. The researchers set out to decode why and how young neurons respond so well to injury. They studied a class of genes called transcription factors. They identified a particular combination of genes KLF6/Nr5a2 that when expressed lead to enhanced growth of nerve fibres following injury. The results

were published last month in *Nature Communications*.

Ishwariya Venkatesh, the first and co-corresponding author of the paper explains: "If you think about growth after an injury, it is very similar to developmental growth that happens during the early embryonic stages. Inside the neuron, when you want an axon or nerve fiber to grow, there are networks of genes that work together. Between embryonic day 18 to about a week after birth, these genes are still on because they're helping the axons grow. So, if an injury occurs during this period, the genes quickly deploy these networks to repair. But a week after birth, these genes are no longer active because active developmental axon growth has ended and they are no longer needed." She was a Research Assistant Professor at Marquette University when the paper was published.

**Rebooting networks**  
"So, if we are able to turn back these gene networks in



**Spotlight on recovery:** A high-resolution image of the treated spinal cord.

response to an injury, then we have a chance for high regenerative success. We're trying to artificially reboot those gene programs and trying to coax an older neuron to switch back to a younger, growth-competent state. And we do that by manipulating transcription factors that simultaneously regulate the expression of hundreds of growth-relevant genes because we can't go in and tweak the expression of individual genes," she adds.

When asked if there is any evolutionary basis for these genes losing their program when we are adults she ex-


**Researchers have identified a new gene combination that can help enhance the growth of nerve fibres after an injury.**

plains: "There could be a couple of reasons. One is we gave up or traded the ability to regenerate because even if these axons do regenerate, the chances of them reintegrating into a functional circuit in a complex system like the mammalian system is trickier. I also speculate that the longer the distance the axons have to grow, the more

guidance errors can happen, and they can synapse onto the wrong targets leading to unintended behavioral outcomes."

The team adds that these findings can open up avenues to discover additional groups of transcription factors with stronger reprogramming abilities to ultimately allow us to fully revert an older neuron into a younger growth-competent state following injury. These findings also hold promise as a novel molecular strategy for the treatment of human spinal cord injuries in the future.

"We are continuing with pre-clinical tests of Klf6/Nr5a2, for example confirming the genes are still effective when delivered in the chronic injury state, many months after the initial damage. This information is critical for individuals now living with spinal injury," adds Murray G. Blackmore, Associate Professor at Marquette University and co-corresponding author in an email to *The Hindu*.



Question Corner

Nosy elephants

**Do elephants breathe and drink using their trunks?**

Elephants have two nostrils in their trunks. They can also suck up water at a speed of three litres per second into their trunk and then blow it into the mouth. New research (*Journal of The Royal Society Interface*) has now found that elephants can dilate their nostrils to create more space in their trunks, allowing them to suck up to nine litres of water. First author Andrew Schulz, said in a release that the trunks act like suitcases, capable of expanding when necessary.

The team studied

elephants eating various foods, to decode the suction mechanism. They used an ultrasonic probe to measure the trunk walls and see how the inner muscles worked. By contracting those muscles, the animal dilates its nostrils up to 30%. The team suggests elephants can inhale at speeds comparable to Japan's bullet trains.

Lead author David Hu explained that an elephant uses its trunk like a Swiss Army Knife: It can detect scents and grab things, other times blowing objects away like a leaf blower or sniffs them in like a vacuum.

The researchers note that by investigating the mechanics and physics behind trunk muscle movements - a combination of suction and grasping - they could build better robots.

Readers may send their questions / answers to questioncorner@thehindu.co.in





# A Chinese enclave in Sri Lanka?

Why has the China-backed Colombo Port City project come under attack from the Opposition and citizens?

MEERA SRINIVASAN

**The story so far:** Last month, Sri Lanka passed the controversial Colombo Port City Economic Commission Bill, which governs the China-backed Colombo Port City project worth \$1.4 billion, amid wide opposition to the creation of a “Chinese enclave” in the island nation.

**Why is the project surrounded by controversies?** The Colombo Port City has grabbed headlines in Sri Lanka in recent months even as the relentless third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic sweeps through the country. Almost an artificial island, the territory coming up on 2.69 square kilometres of land reclaimed from Colombo’s seafront has stirred controversy since its inception. Those backing it see in that patch of land their dream of an international financial hub – a “Singapore or Dubai” in the Indian Ocean. But sceptics claim that it could well become a “Chinese colony”, with the Bill, which is now an Act, providing the Port City and the powerful Commission that will run it substantial “immunity” from Sri Lankan laws, besides huge tax exemptions and other incentives for investors.

Pitched as a “world-class city for South Asia”, the development is envisioned under five distinct “precincts” – the Financial District, the Central Park Living and the Island Living; residential areas under The Marina, which is planned as a leisure destination, and the International Island, which would include educational institutions and convention centres. The Port City project is scheduled for completion by 2041.

Opposition parties and civil society groups, including many who do not oppose the project per se, protested against the new Act, saying it allows governance by ‘an all-powerful commission answerable to no one’

**When was it launched?** The project was launched in September 2014 by Chinese President Xi Jinping during a visit to the island nation under the Mahinda Rajapaksa administration’s second term. After President Mahinda Rajapaksa was ousted in January 2015, the successor “national unity” government of Maithripala Sirisena and Ranil Wickremesinghe went ahead with the project after briefly halting it. On

returning to power in November 2019, the Rajapaksas vowed to expedite the project. The Sri Lankan government says the project will bring in around 83,000 jobs and \$15 billion initially.

**What is the extent of China’s involvement?** The project is financed chiefly through Chinese investment amounting to \$1.4 billion, via CHEC Port City Colombo, a unit of the State-owned China Communications Construction Company (CCCC). In return, the company will receive 116 hectares (of the total 269 hectares) on a 99-year lease.

The Colombo Port City – separate from but located adjacent to the Colombo Port, the country’s main harbour – is the third major port-related infrastructure project where China has a significant stake. China Merchants Port Holdings has an 85% stake in the Colombo International Container Terminals Ltd. (CICT) at the Colombo Port, under a 35-year ‘Build Operate and Transfer’ agreement with the Sri Lanka Port Authority.

In 2017, the Sirisena-Wickremesinghe administration, unable to repay the Chinese loan with which it was saddled by the previous government, handed over the Hambantota Port in the Southern Province to China on a 99-year lease.

Effectively, China has substantial control over two key infrastructure projects in Sri Lanka for a century. These projects are within the ambit of China’s ambitious Belt and Road Initiative, in which it sees strategically located Sri Lanka as a trusted partner. In March this year, Mr. Xi told Mr. Gotabaya Rajapaksa that the two countries must “steadily push forward” in major projects and promote “high-quality collaboration in jointly building the Belt and Road”, *Xinhua* reported.

**What are the concerns?** Since its launch, the Colombo Port City project has faced opposition from environmentalists and fisherfolk, who feared that the project would affect marine life and livelihoods. However, in the absence of wider political and societal support, their resistance did not dent successive governments’ resolve to pursue the project.

The more recent opposition was specific to the Colombo Port City Economic Commission Bill. The resistance came from Opposition parties and civil society groups, including many who do not oppose the project per se, but rather its governance by “an all-powerful commission answerable to no one”. Significantly, a section of Buddhist monks, wielding much influence in Sri Lankan politics and the Sinhala society, also opposed the Bill and said that it eroded Sri Lanka’s sovereignty.

During a heated parliamentary debate, Opposition MPs said the Bill paved the way for a “Cheelam” or “ChiLanka”, referring to China’s “control” over the Colombo Port City. Trade unions resisted too, contending that labour rights had no protection under the new physical and legal entity. For the first time, there was widespread resistance to a Chinese-backed project from within the Rajapaksas’ support base.

As many as 19 petitions challenged the Bill in the Supreme Court, leading it to recommend a few amendments, which some Opposition legislators termed “cosmetic changes”.

The government accepted these promptly to avert the constitutional requirement of a two-thirds majority in Parliament and/or a referendum of people. The amended Bill received a parliamentary majority.

# COVID-19 vaccines and the indemnity clause

How will the legal protection being sought by makers affect the pricing and availability of doses in India?

K. VENKATARAMANAN

**The story so far:** The Union government is in talks with foreign manufacturers of COVID-19 vaccines on their demand for indemnity from liability as a condition for selling their vaccines to the country. Pfizer, which supplies the Pfizer-BioNTech mRNA vaccine, is said to have requested that the government indemnify it from any claim that may arise from vaccine users in the future based on any adverse effects after getting the jab. No decision has been made yet on the request. However, it has already given rise to a similar demand from domestic vaccine-maker Serum Institute of India (SII), which says all players should be treated the same way.

**What is indemnity and why is it sought?** Indemnity is a form of contract. The law on drugs in India does not have a provision for indemnity related to the grant of approval for any new drug or vaccine in the country. If at all any indemnity is to be granted to any company for a particular drug or vaccine, it can only be in the form of an indemnity bond executed on behalf of the government of India, or a clause or set of clauses in any contract that the government may sign with the supplier. There appears to be no precedent for any company getting such indemnity in India for any drug. Section 124 of the Indian Contract Act, 1872, defines a contract of indemnity as one by which one party promises to save the other from any loss caused to the latter. Once the government of India grants such indemnity to the vaccine manufacturer or importer, it would mean that if a particular vaccine is perceived to have caused death or any lasting damage to a recipient, any claim of compensation arising from it will have to be met by the government, and not by the company. In the event of a court ordering payment, the company will be in a position to recover the amount from the government.

**Is the demand for or grant of indemnity a standard practice?** Indemnity is essentially a contractual matter between the supplier and recipient, and therefore, a good deal of confidentiality is attached to such agreements. Pfizer is believed to have obtained such indemnity from several countries, including the United Kingdom, from which it has received supply orders. However, it has declined to discuss the issue in public. Normally, it is the company applying for approval of a new drug or vaccine that submits itself to various conditions, processes and regulations. Approvals in most



A woman getting a shot of COVID-19 vaccine in Ahmedabad on Saturday. ■ AP

By indemnifying companies in respect of vaccines, the government of India may be able to negotiate lower prices and higher volumes. It may help accelerate the country’s national vaccination programme

countries come with stringent conditions regarding conformity to national guidelines, quality standards, safety assessments and requirements regarding various phases of clinical trials. For imported drugs, a local clinical trial may not be required if it has been approved and marketed in countries specified by the Central Licensing Authority and if no major adverse events have been reported. However, given the peculiar global situation arising out of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the severe shortage of vaccines faced by countries such as India, which urgently needs to inoculate hundreds of millions of people, some vaccine suppliers may be in a position to set conditions.

**What have the overseas companies got so far?** The Drugs Controller-General of India has already taken a big step towards fast-tracking the import of vaccines by dispensing with the need for local trials. Earlier, the Centre had decided that foreign-produced vaccines that had been granted emergency approval for restricted use by regulators in the U.S., the U.K., the European Union and Japan, or those included in the WHO’s Emergency

# U.S. delays tariffs against digital services tax

Why is the Biden administration considering retaliatory measures and how will the move impact India?

NARAYAN LAKSHMAN

**The story so far:** During the past week, the United States announced and then immediately suspended a 25% tariff on \$2 billion of imports from six countries, including India, as a retaliatory measure against each of these countries’ imposition of a digital services tax impacting the giant tech corporations of Silicon Valley, including the likes of Alphabet, Amazon, Apple, Facebook and Microsoft. The purported logic of suspending the tariff for up to 180 days after announcing it is to allow time for ongoing international tax negotiations to continue, and, in the words of U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) Katherine Tai, seek “a multilateral solution ... while maintaining the option of imposing tariffs under Section 301 if warranted in the future”. Other than India, the countries slapped with this tariff proposal are Austria, Italy, Spain, Turkey, and the United Kingdom.

**What is the basis of the U.S.’s action?** The essence of the argument made by the USTR office is that a “Section 301” investigation initiated by the Trump administration in June 2020 found digital services taxes imposed by each of these countries to be discriminatory against U.S. tech firms. The Biden administration was likely aware that the deadline for authorising tariff action based on these investigations would have lapsed this week, thus necessitating the approval of the 25% tariff. The immediate suspension of the tariff is likely in part a recognition of the fact that the six countries potentially impacted are limping through a feeble post-COVID-19 recovery and opening a new trade war front could be damaging not only to them, but also to the broader global economy. The combination of depressed economic



FILE PHOTO

activity owing to the effects of the pandemic and tectonic shifts in global supply chains engendered by the Trump administration’s trade war with China has already left many economies in a weakened condition.

**Why is Section 301 significant?** Under Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974, the USTR enjoys a range of responsibilities and authority to investigate and take action to enforce U.S. national interests under trade agreements and respond to certain foreign trade practices. Until recently, this facility was used by multiple administrations to build cases and pursue dispute settlements at the World Trade Organization (WTO). Under former President Donald Trump, however, this authority was used to promote what his administration considered to be “free, fair and reciprocal” trade, specifically to close the gap or balance of trade between the U.S. and foreign governments in cases where the latter had deployed trade practices that allegedly

# First human infection of the H10N3 bird flu

What does the World Health Organization say about avian influenza and is there a reason to worry?

JACOB KOSHY

**The story so far:** China has confirmed the first instance of human infection from H10N3, a rare strain of a virus that normally infects poultry. On Tuesday, the National Health Commission of Beijing reported that a 41-year-old man in the eastern Jiangsu province had been infected with the rare strain but no details were given as to how he caught it.

**What do we know so far about H10N3?** Chinese authorities said the 41-year-old man was the first human case of an infection with the strain. They said the person was hospitalised on April 28 and was diagnosed with the strain after a month. The Beijing-based National Health Commission said the strain has low pathogenesis – the ability to cause disease – among birds, implying that the virus did not spread easily among poultry and was likely to be restricted to limited populations. “As long as avian influenza viruses circulate in poultry, sporadic infection of avian influenza in humans is not surprising, which is a vivid reminder that the threat of an influenza pandemic is persistent,” *Reuters* quoted the World Health Organization (WHO) as saying.

**What is avian influenza?** H5N1 is the most common virus causing bird flu, or avian influenza. Though largely restricted to birds, and often fatal to them, it can cross over to other animals, as well as



FILE PHOTO

humans. According to the WHO, the H5N1 was first discovered in humans in 1997 and has killed almost 60% of those infected. Though it is not known to transmit easily among humans, the risk remains.

There are several subtypes of the avian influenza virus. Since 2003, these avian and other influenza viruses have spread from Asia to Europe and Africa. In 2013, human infections with the influenza A(H7N9) virus were reported in China. An outbreak of the H7N9 strain killed around 300 people in 2016 and 2017. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says, “All known subtypes of influenza A viruses can infect birds, except subtypes H17N10 and H18N11, which have only been found in bats. Only two influenza A virus subtypes (i.e., H1N1, and H3N2) are currently in general circulation among people. Some subtypes are found in other infected animal species. For example, H7N7 and H3N8 virus infections can cause illness in horses, and H3N8 virus infection

disadvantaged or discriminated against U.S. firms. To a great extent, the Trump administration trained its Section 301 guns on China, leading to an escalating tariff war that ultimately engulfed the final years of its tenure. Now, the Biden administration appears to be unwilling to walk back Trump-era 301 investigations in their entirety; rather, it appears to be seeking a middle path of waving the stick of the USTR while allowing some space for continued tax negotiations with the nations concerned.

**How will it affect India?** The Finance Bill, 2021, introduced an amendment imposing a 2% digital service tax on trade and services by non-resident e-commerce operators with a turnover of over ₹2 crore. According to reports, early estimates by the USTR suggest this tax could yield approximately \$55 million annually. Negotiations with Washington that may result in the scaling back of this tax would imply that a part of this revenue would be lost to the exchequer, depending on the final rate agreed. On the other hand, close to \$118 billion of India’s exports to the U.S. would be subject to the tariff proposed by the USTR, impacting 26 categories of goods, including basmati rice, cigarette paper, cultured pearls, semi-precious stones, certain gold and silver jewellery items and specific types of furniture products.

India will have to consider its options carefully at this juncture. On the one hand, it would seek to avoid getting into any escalating matrix of retaliatory taxation with the U.S., as that would damage its growth prospects at a crucial point in its laborious recovery. However, it will also not be able to simply abandon its articulated intent to tax global tech firms, which have generally enjoyed low-tax operations across numerous jurisdictions.

cause illness in horses and dogs.” So far, the H10N3 appears mild and not very transmissible, and hence, its categorisation status remains unclear.

**What are the typical symptoms of an avian influenza infection?** According to the WHO, avian, swine and other zoonotic influenza virus infections in humans may cause disease with symptoms like mild upper respiratory tract infection (fever and cough), early sputum production and rapid progression to severe pneumonia, sepsis with shock, acute respiratory distress syndrome, and even death. Conjunctivitis, gastrointestinal symptoms, encephalitis and encephalopathy have also been reported in varying degrees depending on the subtype.

**Why are bird flu viruses a cause of concern?** Speculation about the origin of the SARS-CoV-2 has heightened worries about animal- and bird-borne viruses. The emergence of new strains, particularly among domesticated animals and birds, is a story of evolution and inevitability, and sporadic reports of new viruses infecting humans abound. An outbreak of the H5N8 virus in birds led to hundreds of thousands of poultry being culled in various European countries. In February, Russia reported that seven poultry workers in a plant were infected by the H5N8 strain. All of them recovered. India, too, faced an outbreak of the virus in flocks of poultry in January and undertook culling.



BRICS

The coming together of the powerful five

As India is gearing up to host this year’s BRICS summit, the grouping is facing fresh challenges, from disputes among member countries to tackling COVID-triggered crises and opportunities

SUHASINI HAIDAR

In Focus

■ The origins of BRICS can be traced back to a paper written by Goldman Sachs’ Jim O’Neill in 2001, titled “Building Better Global Economic BRICs”, in which he said Brazil, Russia, India and China would drive economic growth in the future

■ In 2006, leaders of the BRIC countries met in St. Petersburg, Russia, and the grouping was formalised that year

■ On June 16, 2009, PM Manmohan Singh met with Presidents Hu Jintao, Dmitry Medvedev and Lula da Silva for the first BRIC summit in Yekaterinburg. South Africa was admitted two years later

Twenty years after it was first thought of, the BRICS group of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa still mystifies all. Hailed by members as an alternate grouping of emerging economies that challenge the post-War world order, sneered at by critics as a rag-tag band of disparate countries across four continents with little in common, and which, aside from China, have not fulfilled their economic potential, BRICS still defies a focus. In addition, ties between countries such as Russia and China are growing at a much strong pace than the group’s own cohesion, which is increasingly tested by tensions between members like India and China. In recent months, it seems, India’s membership of the U.S.-India-Australia-Japan Quadrilateral Strategic Dialogue (Quad) is taking a higher profile, with a major vaccine initiative and summit of the leaders planned later this year.

India, Brazil and South Africa have equal, if not stronger, strategic ties with western powers today, prompting Rachel Salzman, author of *Russia, BRICS, and the Disruption of Global Order*, to ask whether BRICS is a bridge between the east and west or whether it is being positioned as a bulwark against them.

To be clear, BRICS was not invented by any of its members. In 2001, Goldman Sachs’ Jim O’Neill authored a paper called “Building Better Global Economic BRICs”, pointing out that future GDP growth in the world would come from China, India, Russia and Brazil.

Significantly, the paper

didn’t recommend a separate grouping for them, but made the case that the G-7 grouping, made up of the world’s most industrialised, and essentially Western countries, should include them. Mr. O’Neill also suggested that the G-7 group needed revamping after the introduction of a common currency for Europe, the euro, in 1999. In 2003, Goldman Sachs wrote another paper, “Dreaming with BRICs: Path to 2050”, predicting that the global map would significantly change due to these four emerging economies, and that BRIC economies combined would outstrip the western domi-

Contradictions and criticism notwithstanding, BRICS is an idea that has endured two decades, and not one of the leaders has skipped the annual summits since 2009

nated world order before 2039.

In 2006, leaders of the BRIC countries met on the margins of a G-8 (now called G-7) summit in St. Petersburg, Russia, and BRIC was formalised that year. The global financial crisis of 2007-08 reinforced the idea as BRIC countries had been relatively unscathed in the market collapse. On June 16, 2009, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh met with Presidents Hu Jintao, Dmitry Medvedev and Lula da Silva for the first BRIC summit in Yekaterinburg, and South Africa was subsequently admitted two

years later.

Common ground for the members was built by ensuring that no bilateral issues were brought up, but the contradictions remained. Many economists soon grew tired of “emerging” economies that didn’t reach the goals they had predicted. Others saw India’s closer ties with the U.S. after the civil nuclear deal as a sign its bonds with BRICS would weaken. Meanwhile, Russia, which had hoped to bolster its own global influence through the group, had been cast out of the G-7 order altogether after its actions in Crimea in 2014. China, under Xi Jinping, grew increasingly aggressive, and impatient about the other underperforming economies in the group, as it became the U.S.’s main challenger on the global stage.

Long-term prospects

China’s decision to launch the trillion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative in 2017 was opposed by India, and even Russia did not join the BRI plan, although it has considerable infrastructure projects with China. South Africa’s debt-laden economy and negative current account has led some to predict an economic collapse in the next decade. Brazil’s poor handling during the Covid-19 crisis has ranked it amongst the world’s worst-affected countries, and its recovery is expected to be delayed. India’s economic slowdown was a concern even before Covid-19 hit, and government policies like “Aatmanirbhar” were seen as a plan to turn inward.

Meanwhile, concerns about aggressions from Russia in Ukraine and Eastern Europe and China in the



ILLUSTRATION: R. RAJESH

South China Sea, the border with India and internally in Hongkong and Xinjiang, as well as creeping authoritarianism in democracies like Brazil and India have made investors question long-term prospects of the group.

In the market, BRICS has been mocked for being “broken”, while others have suggested it should be expanded to include more emerging economies like Indonesia, Mexico and Turkey, called the “Next-II”. Others suggested BRICKS (including South Korea).

Perhaps the biggest blow to the BRICS firmament was dealt by the very company that laid its foundations: In 2015, Goldman Sachs wound up its BRIC fund, which had reportedly lost 88% of its asset value since 2010, and merged it with a larger emerging markets fund. In an article he wrote for Project Syndicate in 2021, to mark the idea of “BRICs at 20”, Mr. O’Neill said he was disappointed by the group’s performance but hadn’t lost hope entirely.

All the contradictions and criticism notwithstanding, BRICS is an idea that has endured two decades, an idea its members remain committed to, and not one has skipped the annual summits held since 2009. Along the way, BRICS has created the New Development Bank (NDB) set up with an initial capital of \$100 billion, a BRICS Contingent Reserve Arrangement fund to deal with global liquidity crunches, and a BRICS payment system proposing to be an alternative to the SWIFT payment system.

While its *raison d’etre* was economic, BRICS statements have always been deeply political, calling for more inclusion in the multilateral world order, decrying U.S.-Europe backed military interventions, and expressing an independent line on several world events from Afghanistan to West Asia.

Reforming the UN

India is set to host the BRICS summit under Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s chair-

manship, either virtually or in person with Presidents Vladimir Putin, Xi Jinping, Jair Bolsonaro and Cyril Ramaphosa later this year. The BRICS ministerial meeting held this week sent several important signals to that end, issuing two outcome documents, including the first “standalone” joint statement on reforming multilateral institutions, including the UN and the UNSC, International Monetary Fund and World Bank and the World Trade Organization.

It remains to be seen how far countries like China and Russia, which are already “inside the tent” at the UNSC, will go in advocating for the other BRICS members to be a part of a reformed Security Council.

Another important agreement was the BRICS ministerial decision to support negotiations at the WTO for the waiver of trade-related intellectual property rights (TRIPs) for vaccines and medicines to tackle the Coronavirus pandemic. While it stopped short of backing the

India-South Africa proposal for a three-year waiver, something Brazil has been holding out given opposition from big Pharmaceutical companies, BRICS support at the WTO for the TRIPs waiver negotiations will be a boost for the effort. It will also be interesting to watch how BRICS countries move ahead on a “BRICS Vaccine Centre”, proposed to be based in Johannesburg, given that at least three members – Russia India and China – have manufactured a substantial chunk of all globally authorised vaccines.

What appears clear is in the post-Covid world, priorities for all economies will change, and offer up a churning in the world of the kind seen two decades ago, when the idea of a grouping of emerging economies was first floated. For BRICS, the next few months could crystallise that idea, or sink it further, leaving others to wonder whether the “Rise of the Rest” as it was once called, is an idea whose time will ever come at all.

NAFTALI BENNETT

From kingmaker to king

The right-wing millionaire could become the next Prime Minister of Israel

STANLEY JOHNY

Earlier this year, Naftali Bennett joined coalition talks with Israel’s opposition as a potential kingmaker. Opposition leader Yair Lapid, whose Yesh Atid is the second largest party in the Knesset with 17 seats after Likud, was trying to put together a coalition to replace Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, but he did not have the majority. Mr. Bennett, whose right-wing Yamina party has seven legislators, was expected to join the coalition. But not many thought that when Mr. Lapid’s deadline to form the government expires on June 2, it would be Mr. Bennett who would emerge wearing the crown.

Mr. Lapid has claimed that his coalition has the support of 61 Members of the Knesset (MKs). If the majority is proved in Parliament, Mr. Bennett would be Israel’s next Prime Minister, replacing Mr. Netanyahu, his former boss and the country’s longest-serving head of government.

Born in Haifa to wealthy Jewish immigrants from the U.S., Mr. Bennett, 49, has built his political career as a right-wing alternative to Mr. Netanyahu. Like most other Israeli politicians, he had served in the military. In 1999, after his military stint, Mr. Bennett founded an American start-up, Cyota, which made anti-fraud software. The company was sold to a U.S. security company for \$145 million in



ILLUSTRATION: SREEJITH R KUMAR

Mr. Bennett’s views on Palestinians are well-known. He has said the creation of a Palestinian state would be “suicidal” for Israel. In the past, he has proposed “autonomy with steroids” for Palestinians in some parts of the West Bank and urged the Israeli government to annex the areas where Jewish settlements have been built. It may sound ironical that the same Bennett with his hawkish views could become the first Israeli leader forming a government with support from an Arab-majority party. Ra’am (United Arab List) is one of the eight parties in the ‘change’ coalition.

What brought them all together is their shared goal to replace Mr. Netanyahu. Mr. Lapid, the architect of the coalition, offered the Prime Minister’s job to Mr. Bennett for two years may be because he thought that was the only way to rally two right-wing parties – Yamina and New Hope – into a predominantly centrist coalition.

Stitching together a coalition is only the first step. The next is to prove majority in the Knesset. Even if the coalition passes the Knesset test, Mr. Bennett would face an enormous challenge to lead the most diverse coalition in Israel in decades. It’s to be seen whether he could set aside his ideological views and find common ground for governance with the other members in the coalition, and if he does, for how long.

The new party had a rocky start in electoral politics. In the April 2019 election, the New Right failed to enter the Knesset. That was the first of the four deadlocked elections Israel has seen in two years. In the second vote, in September 2019, Mr. Bennett formed a right-wing coalition with Jewish Home and National Union-Tkuma, called Yamina. They won seven seats, declaring the arrival of Mr. Bennett as a right-wing force in Israel’s fractious political landscape.

In the March 2020 election, Yamina won six seats. When Mr. Netanyahu joined hands with Blue and White leader Benny Gantz to form a unity government, Mr. Bennett decided to sit in the Opposition. The Netanyahu-Gantz coalition did not last long, pushing the country into another election. This time, Mr. Bennett fought the polls without Jewish Home and Tkuma. Still Yamina won seven seats in March.

2005. In 2006, the millionaire entrepreneur said goodbye to his business career to join politics. He became the chief of staff of Mr. Netanyahu, who was then the Opposition leader. That was the launching pad.

After parting ways with Mr. Netanyahu, Mr. Bennett championed pro-settler politics. He became the director of Yesha Council, an organisation that fought for the expansion of Jewish settlements in Palestinian territories, and founded, along with Ayelet Shaked, My Israel, an extra-parliamentary Zionist group. Subsequently, Mr. Bennett joined the far-right Jewish Home, and became its leader in 2012.

New Right

When Jewish Home was part of Mr. Netanyahu’s coalition, Mr. Bennett had served as a Minister several times. He handled education, Diaspora and defence portfolios. In December 2018, he left Jewish Home and founded

NAOMI OSAKA

Resistance and reflection

Tennis’ leading lady has stirred up a debate by withdrawing from French Open

N. SUDARSHAN

Ever since Naomi Osaka won her first title in 2018 at Indian Wells – dubbed the fifth Grand Slam in tennis – and backed up that victory by defeating the legendary Serena Williams in the very next tournament in Miami, she has lived a life under the spotlight.

Anointed the next big thing in women’s tennis, she duly won her first Major at the 2018 US Open by beating Serena in the final. Since then, she has won three more hard-court Majors, established herself as one of the world’s best, and according to *Forbes*, is the best-paid female athlete ever, earning \$55 million from endorsements alone in the past 12 months. All through this success, her calm and poise have stood out and the head that wore the crown didn’t seem to hang heavy. This was especially true during that US Open final, which will be equally remembered for Serena’s run-in with the chair umpire and the partisan crowd booing Osaka for denying Serena a record-equalling 24th singles Grand Slam.

Off court, Osaka’s was a leading voice in the Black Lives Matters movement against police brutality. Born to a Japanese mother and a Haitian-American father, she has lived nearly all her life in the U.S. At the 2020 US Open that she won, she wore seven masks for seven matches, each highlighting the name of a victim



ILLUSTRATION: J.A. PREMKUMAR

of racial injustice.

Seen in this context, Osaka’s decision ahead of the ongoing French Open to shun the obligatory press conference because she didn’t want to “subject herself to people who doubt her” and her refusal to engage on the same with tournament authorities seemed surprising. For someone who had taken to the big stage like duck to water and lit up the occasions she graced with refreshing candour, it seemed out of step.

After the first-round victory, Osaka skipped the media interaction and was immediately threatened with a default. A day later, she withdrew from the tournament, and her statement acknowledged that her initial message could have been clearer and better-timed.

Also, for the first time, Osaka detailed her struggles with depression and anxiety, setting the stage for reflection. The terms of the

debate, however, had been set by then.

Social media influence

Osaka is probably the first of global tennis superstars to have lived a life entirely under the influence of social media. The absolute control of the message it offers has often led to players shunning conventional media. But as Osaka found out, while one-way communication offers freedom, there is very little space for dialogue and certainly no immunity from the backlash a loosely worded or wrongly timed message can potentially generate.

Osaka’s first statement did mention the word “mental health” but it seemed generic and instead of driving a much-needed conversation on mental well-being of athletes, it led to discussions on her below-par record at the French Open and Wimbledon, something the 23-year-old ostensibly wanted to avoid by refusing to talk

to the media. She has not progressed beyond the third round at either event. Bred on the hard courts of the U.S., Osaka has a power game best suited for acrylic, on which the bounce is true and a repeatable technique works. Clay and grass demand fleet-footed movement, sharp instincts and patience, all of which are still works in progress for Osaka.

While solutions to the clay and grass riddles will take time, her ascent as one of the biggest sporting icons has been rapid. Osaka’s stardom has come at a tenuous time for a deeply divided America and the world. Where globalisation and multiculturalism are under increasing strain, Osaka, with her cultural diversity, is being projected as the poster child by the liberal order.

She also represents Japan, which ironically is a nation with one of the least ethnically diverse populations, and is gearing up for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics.

Such is her pull and heft that when she initially withdrew from the semifinals of the 2020 Cincinnati Open to protest against police violence, the organisers decided to suspend the tournament for a day in solidarity.

The present episode in Osaka’s nascent career is probably the first to stir some resistance. When the temperatures eventually cool, the hope is for better outcomes for all stakeholders, including players, media and the fans.



# Buffeted by ‘unhealthy’ tag, Nestle eyes defensive outreach

Firm says under 30% of global portfolio will miss external ‘healthfulness’ norms

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Buffeted by global reports that the majority of mainstream food and drink products from Nestle could not be considered healthy, the Indian unit of the Switzerland-based multinational is planning an outreach campaign in a bid to reassure and retain consumers.

“Recent reports have questioned the healthfulness of Nestlé products, because of a global internal working document that was reported out of context,” a Nestle India spokesperson said, adding that the portfolio analysis only covered about half the global sales, since several prominent categories were not included.



**Small doses:** Some indulgent products, which are acceptable in moderation, may miss norms, says a spokesperson. •REUTERS

categories were not included.

**‘Indulgent products’**  
“Looking at the global portfolio as a whole, less than 30% would not meet stringent external ‘healthfulness’

standards, mostly representing indulgent products, which are acceptable in moderation as part of healthy, balanced and enjoyable diet,” the spokesperson added.

The Financial Times last month reported an internal company presentation at the Swiss food giant had acknowledged that more than 60% of its products do not meet the ‘recognised definition of health’.

“We will be releasing print advertisements over the next few days reassuring consumers that we genuinely care about what matters to them, what concerns them and that we are there for them 24x7 if they have any questions or suggestions,” the spokesperson said, adding the advertisements would carry details of e-mail id and phone numbers that could be used to reach out to the company.

## BoB board agrees to loss set-off plan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

State-run Bank of Baroda (BoB) has received board approval to set off accumulated loss of over ₹11,048 crore against the share premium account of the bank.

The board of directors of the bank approved the proposal on June 5, BoB said.

The bank is to set off its accumulated losses of ₹11,048.44 crore as of March 31 by utilising an equivalent amount standing to the credit of share premium account of bank as on the date of set off and take the same into account during FY22, it said.

The setting off is subject to approval from shareholders and prior permission from the RBI. For FY21, the bank reported a 52% rise in net profit to ₹828.95 crore.

# What is a global minimum tax and what will it mean?

G7 nations have agreed to close cross-border tax loopholes

REUTERS

Finance Ministers from the Group of Seven (G7) rich nations on Saturday reached a landmark accord setting a global minimum corporate tax rate, an agreement that could form the basis of a worldwide deal.

The deal aims to end what U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen has called a “30-year race to the bottom on corporate tax rates” as countries compete to lure multinationals.



**Taxing times:** The G7 deal will end what Janet Yellen terms a ‘30-year race to the bottom on corporate tax rates’. •AFP

**Why a global minimum?**  
Major economies are aiming to discourage multinationals from shifting profits – and tax revenues – to low-tax countries regardless of where their sales are made.

Increasingly, income from intangible sources such as drug patents, software and royalties on intellectual property has migrated to these jurisdictions, allowing companies to avoid paying higher taxes in their traditional home countries.

## EXPLAINER

With its proposal for a minimum 15% tax rate, the Biden administration hopes to reduce such tax base erosion without putting American firms at a financial disadvantage, allowing competition on innovation, infrastructure and other attributes.

**Where are the talks at?**  
The G7 talks feed in to a much broader, existing effort.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development has been coordinating tax negotiations among 140 countries for years on rules for taxing

cross-border digital services and curbing tax base erosion, including a global corporate minimum tax.

The OECD and G20 countries aim to reach consensus on both by mid-year, but the talks on a global corporate minimum are technically simpler and less contentious. If a broad consensus is reached, it will be extremely hard for any low-tax country to try and block an accord.

The minimum is expected to make up the bulk of the \$50 billion-\$80 billion in extra tax that the OECD estimates firms will end up paying globally under deals on both fronts.

## How would a global minimum tax work?

The global minimum tax rate would apply to overseas profits. Governments could still set whatever local corporate tax rate they want, but if companies pay lower rates in a particular country, their home governments could “top-up” their taxes to the minimum rate, eliminating the advantage of shifting profits.

The OECD said last month that governments broadly agreed on the basic design of the minimum tax but not the

rate. Other items still to be negotiated include whether investment funds and real estate investment trusts should be covered, when to apply the new rate and ensuring it is compatible with U.S. tax reforms aimed at deterring erosion.

## What about that minimum rate?

Talks are focusing around the U.S. proposal of a minimum global corporation tax rate of 15% - above the level in countries such as Ireland but below the lowest G7 level.

Any final agreement could have major repercussions for low-tax countries and tax havens.

The Irish economy has boomed with the influx of billions of dollars in investment from multinationals. Dublin, which has resisted EU attempts to harmonise its tax rules, is unlikely to accept a higher minimum rate without a fight.

However, the battle for low-tax countries is less likely to be about scuppering the overall talks and more about building support for a minimum rate as close as possible to its 12.5% or seeking certain exemptions.

## Punjab National Bank to pick up stake in bad bank

Tags ₹8,000 cr. for 1st-tranche transfer

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

Punjab National Bank (PNB) on Saturday said it will pick up a stake in the National Asset Reconstruction Company Ltd. (NARCL) and has identified NPAs worth ₹8,000 crore to be transferred to the proposed bad bank for resolution.

“NARCL is being formed by all the banks whereupon some of the NPA advances will be transferred to that ARC for recovery,” MD S.S. Mallikarjuna Rao said.

In the first tranche, roughly ₹8,000 crore is identified to be transferred to NARCL, he said.

On a recent order by the special Prevention of Money



Laundering Act (PMLA) court on Kingfisher Airlines, Mr. Rao said the bank had not much outstanding and PNB will get its share based on the sales proceeds.

The bank said it was expecting an almost threefold jump in its net profit to ₹6,000 crore in the current financial year as the consolidation process was over.

# ‘Bank NPAs set to rise, deposit growth outpacing credit flow’

‘Expansion in credit in FY21 was the lowest in four years’

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

Gross non-performing asset (GNPA) ratios of scheduled commercial banks (SCBs) are expected to shoot up in the coming quarters, according to data compiled by BCT Digital. This is despite the regulatory interventions to provide relief to both borrowers and lenders in the wake of the pandemic.

The GNPA for the banking system was at 7.5% in September 2020, an improvement from pre-pandemic levels. This is expected to shoot up to 13.5% in a base-case scenario and 14.8% in an extreme scenario by Sep-

tember 2021 as per RBI’s assessment in the latest Financial Stability Report (FSR), said Jaya Vaidhyanathan, CEO of BCT Digital, which helps banks manage risk.

“For public sector banks, GNPA are expected to zoom from 9.7% in September 2020 to 16.2% and 17.6% in the base case and extreme scenarios, respectively, by September 2021,” she added. As per data that BCT Digital has collated from the FSR, the September 2015 quarter saw year-on-year (YoY) credit growth of 9.4%.

It declined to 8.8% in March 2016, the first quarter after the asset quality review

was mandated. In March 2017, YoY credit growth slowed sharply to 4.4% while September 2019 saw 8.7% growth. Credit grew 5.9% and 5%, in March and September 2020, respectively.

Deposit growth, however, has quickened. September 2015 saw YoY growth of 9.9% while March 2016 and March 2017 posted 8.1% and 11.1%, respectively. Growth was 10.2%, 8.6% and 10.3% in September 2019, March 2020 and September 2020.

Care Ratings recently said FY21 credit growth was the lowest in 4 years as lenders and borrowers have remained risk averse.

## Paytm’s FY21 loss shrinks to ₹1,704 crore

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

Digital payments firm Paytm has reported narrowing of consolidated loss to ₹1,704 crore for 2020-21, according to the company’s annual report.

It had posted ₹2,943.32 crore loss in FY20.

A Paytm spokesperson said: “Despite a significant disruption in the business of our merchant partners due to the ongoing pandemic especially in the first half of the year, we have had a minimal impact on revenue, due to strong recovery in the second half of the year.” This is the second consecutive fiscal year when the firm has reported narrowing of loss.

Total revenue of the company declined about 10% to ₹3,186 crore in FY21.

## IndiGo’s FY21 revenue plunges, loss widens

Q4 ticket sales slump 30% to ₹4,974 cr.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Budget-carrier IndiGo posted a loss of ₹5,806 crore for the financial year 2021 compared with a loss of ₹233 crore in FY20 following a 60% drop in revenue.

For the quarter ended March, the airline incurred a loss of ₹1,147 crore.

Total income dropped 26% to ₹6,361 crore in the fourth quarter.

For the quarter, passenger-ticket revenue dropped 30% to ₹4,974 crore. Ancillary revenue decreased 17% to ₹890 crore compared with the year-earlier period.

### Revenue see-saws

“This has been a very difficult year with our revenue slumping hard due to COVID-19, showing some signs



of recovery during the period December to February and then slumping again with the second wave of COVID-19,” said CEO Ronojoy Dutta.

“While we have seen a sharp decline in revenue in March through May, we are encouraged by the modest revenue improvements starting last week of May and continuing through June,” he added.

## INTERVIEW | KAVINDER SINGH

# ‘Mass vaccination will inspire confidence’

Travel and tourism sector is pinning hopes on vaccine passports, says MD & CEO of Mahindra Holidays

LALATENDU MISHRA

*Mahindra Holidays & Resorts India Ltd. (MHRIL), which operates under the Club Mahindra brand, is gearing up for growth, says its MD & CEO Kavinder Singh. Excerpts:*

**How did MHRIL cope with the downturn?**

■ As the process of unlocking began in June last year, people started taking holidays as they wanted to travel. They were opting for trusted brands like us who would offer enhanced safety and hygiene features, preferring destinations at drivable distances in the safety of their vehicles.

We focussed on enhancing customer safety; introducing new outdoor experiences; enhancing operational efficiencies; cost conservation and opening new resorts. We

emerged stronger due to our unique and resilient Vacation Ownership business model which is significantly different from the traditional hospitality sector.

About 80% of our resorts are at drivable distances from the cities and it helped.

Despite COVID-19 related challenges, we have delivered a strong fourth-quarter performance

We added nine resorts in FY21 to reach a total of 79. As of March 2020, our cash position has risen from ₹781 crore to ₹940 crore.

**What is your FY22 outlook?**



■ The resurgence in COVID-19 cases has impacted the tourism sector as occupancies have dipped in Q1 FY22. We will have to just wait and see how the travel situation unfolds.

The travel and tourism sector is pinning its hopes on vaccine passports. We are hopeful that mass vaccination would inspire confidence, lead to ease of travel, and boost domestic and in-

ternational tourism in the near future.

Our growth plans continue to remain on track as we will keep adding destinations. We have earmarked ₹1,200-1,500 crore for creating new assets and enhancing the existing inventory over the next two years.

We plan to add close to 1,500 rooms in the next 3-4 years and take our room count from 4,197 to over 5,500 through acquisitions, greenfield development in our own land banks, expansion at our existing resorts and by taking resorts on long-term lease.

We will continue to focus on international markets. We are looking for new resorts in southeast Asia.

**What are the holiday trends**

that you foresee?

■ Travellers have become more cautious and prefer to travel and stay with trusted brands. They are visiting destinations that are at driveable distances in the safety of their vehicles.

There is a surge in domestic tourism and people are opting for offbeat, non-congested tourist destinations. Leisure destinations will lead the recovery. There is also a visible increase in the duration of an average stay by our members and guests.

We have also seen members spending time outside the rooms and enjoying outdoor experiences. We also see a rise in trends like workations and staycations as soon as the country begins to ease lockdown restrictions.

## Team MRF wins Rally Italia Sardegna

### MOTORSPORTS

SPORTS REPORTER  
CHENNAI

Paolo Andreucci and Rudy Briani of Team MRF Tyres clinched three out of four stages to win the Rally Italia Sardegna on Saturday.

It was double celebration for Team MRF Tyres with Simone Campedelli and Gianfrancesco Maria Rappa finishing third.



**Double celebration:** The Team MRF Drivers took the first and third spots. •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The result is the first victory for Team MRF Tyres in top-line national rallying in Europe after the Indian tyre manufacturer committed to European rallying in 2019.

The Rally Italia Sardegna was the second round of the CIRI, or the Italian Rally Championship Gravel.

Andreucci and Briani won by 31.8 seconds, ahead of

Umberto Scandola and Guido D'Amore.

Tamara Molinaro and Piercarlo Capolongo kept up the celebrations for Team MRF in their Citroen C3 Rally2.

The duo finished seventh and achieved their goal of winning the Ladies Trophy for the second rally in succession and ended second in the U-25's Division.

## National age-group event from June 10

AICF faces logistical challenges in holding the championship

### CHESS

RAKESH RAO  
NEW DELHI

Within 15 days of the International Chess Federation (FIDE) announcing the holding of World cadet and youth chess championship in August, the All India Chess Federation will commence its National age-group online chess championship from June 10 to July 3.

The rapid format will follow 15 minutes, plus a 10-second increment per move, per player. Events will be held over 11 rounds, in five age-groups ranging from under-10 to under-18, separately for boys and girls. A total of ₹19 lakh will be disbursed as prize fund.

“This is a major logistical challenge for us,” said AICF



Bharat Singh Chauhan

secretary Bharat Singh Chauhan as he looked at the prospects of holding competitions involving “anywhere between 2000 to 3000 players.”

“First of all, it was difficult for the players to get into the online module. Secondly, training of arbiters to officiate in this kind of tournament was very challenging. In addition, and very importantly, we had to find ways to eliminate the possibility of

cheating in these online events,” said Chauhan.

When FIDE announced the World cadet and youth championships on May 25, many AICF officials felt it was not possible to hold the State championships online, and thereafter the Nationals, to select the Indian team for the World championship. Many even suggested selecting the squad as per the players’ international rating.

“But I was firm that we should find a way to provide competition to our players. After all, for more than a year, players across age-groups are desperate for competitions. So I asked AICF’s core technical team to find a way to hold online events on the same lines as the FIDE. And they have done a fantastic job.”

### IN BRIEF

#### Kawhi Leonard helps Clippers stay alive

LOS ANGELES

Kawhi Leonard tied his post-season career high with 45 points as Los Angeles Clippers beat Dallas Mavericks 104-97 on Friday to stave off elimination and force game seven in their Western Conference NBA series. AFP

#### Thapa tests positive for COVID-19

NEW DELHI

India midfielder Anirudh Thapa tested positive for COVID-19 and is under quarantine in a separate room of the team hotel in Doha. PTI

### TV PICKS

**Roland-Garros:** SS Select 1 & 2 (SD & HD), 2.30 p.m.  
**England vs New Zealand:** 1st Test, Sony Six (SD & HD), 3.30 p.m.

**F1:** Azerbaijan GP: SS Select 2 (SD & HD), 5.30 p.m.

#### Former sports journalist Banerjee passes away

KOLKATA

Former city-based sports journalist Chandan Banerjee, 64, on Saturday died of heart attack, family sources said. He was the son of former president of Calcutta Sports Journalists' Club Bipul Banerjee. PTI

#### Sasikumar moves into double semifinals

LITTLE ROCK (USA)

Sasikumar Mukund and Michail Pervolarakis made the doubles semifinals with a 7-6(5), 1-6, [10-7] victory over Sekou Bangoura and Donald Young in the \$52,080 Challenger tennis tournament.

In the €44,820 Challenger in Biella, Italy, third seeds Sriram Balaji and Ramkumar Ramanathan were beaten in straight sets by second seeds Luis David Martinez and David Vega Hernandez 2-6, 4-6.

## SPORT



# Perfect 10 as defending champion Swiatek moves into the last 16

The Pole records her 10th successive straight-sets win in Paris; Krejcikova shocks fifth seed Svitolina; Djokovic and Nadal power into the fourth round

### THE HIGHLIGHTS


**1** Sinner and Musetti, the two teenagers in the French Open fourth round, a first in Paris since Djokovic and Monfils at the 2006 edition

**2** Krejcikova's win over Svitolina was her second over a top-10 player in a month (first: Kenin). She has also won 10 of her last 11 matches

**4** Defending champion Swiatek has dished out four bagels (6-0) in her last four singles matches, including two against Pliskova in the Rome final

**6** Musetti is the sixth player since 2000 to reach the fourth round or better on his Grand Slam debut. Previous: Tai-Lee (2000 US Open, 4R), Goffin (2012 French Open, 4R), Londero (2019 French Open, 4R), Altmaier (2020 French Open, 4R), Karatsev (2021 Aus Open, SF)

**17** At 17, Gauff is the youngest American to reach the fourth round in Paris since a 16-year-old Serena in 1998



**SWIATEK**

### SUNDAY'S PICKS

**MEN**

**2**-Medvedev vs **22**-Garin

**5**-Tsitsipas vs **12**-Carreno Busta

**6**-Zverev vs Nishikori (night session)

**DOUBLES:** Bopanna-Skugor vs Arevalo-Middelkoop

**WOMEN**

**7**-Serena vs **21**-Rybakina

**15**-Azarenka vs **31**-Pavlyuchenkova

**20**-Vondrousova vs Badosa

**He's young and plays with lots of spin and power. He has nothing to lose so I need to be ready for this challenge**

**DJOKOVIC** on his fourth-round opponent Musetti

**I'm super happy. I can't really believe it. I think most of my shots have been actually amazing. It was my best match and happy that I'm entertaining the crowd**

**KREJCIKOVA** after her third-round win

### ROLAND-GARROS

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE PARIS

Defending champion Iga Swiatek overcame an early break to defeat Estonia's Anett Kontaveit and reach the last 16 at Roland Garros on Saturday.

The eighth-seeded Pole won 7-6(4), 6-0 to stretch her record of straight-sets victories here to 10 matches.

Swiatek reeled off 11 of the last 13 games and will face Ukraine's Marta Kostyuk for a place in the quarterfinals.

"She had a fast start and I was late getting going," said Swiatek, who had lost both her previous matches to Kontaveit.

Sofia Kenin advanced to the fourth round for the third consecutive year by winning a seesaw match against Jessica Pegula 4-6, 6-1, 6-4.

Kenin is the highest-seeded player left in the women's

draw at No. 4, and she has shaken a slump with her return to Roland Garros, where she was the runner-up to Swiatek in October last year.

American Sloane Stephens, who is ranked 59th and is out of the top 50 for the first time since 2017, advanced by beating 18th-seeded Karolina Muchova 6-3, 7-5.

Stephens, the runner-up in 2018, will next face Barbora Krejcikova, who upset No. 5 Elina Svitolina 6-3, 6-2.

Novak Djokovic cruised into the fourth round for the 12th consecutive year with a 6-1, 6-4, 6-1 victory over Lithuania's 93rd-ranked Ricardas Berankis.

The World No. 1 will take on Italian 19-year-old and Grand Slam debutant Lorenzo Musetti for a place in the quarterfinals.

"He's young and plays with lots of spin and power. He has nothing to lose so I need to be ready for this challenge," Djokovic said of a first meeting with Musetti. Defending champion Rafael Nadal claimed his third win of 2021 over Britain's Cameron Norrie.

### IMPORTANT RESULTS

**Third round: Men:** 1-Novak Djokovic (Srb) bt Ricardas Berankis (Ltu) 6-1, 6-4, 6-1; 3-Rafael Nadal (Esp) bt Cameron Norrie (GBR) 6-3, 6-3, 6-3; Lorenzo Musetti (Ita) bt Marco Cecchinato (Ita) 3-6, 6-4, 6-3, 3-6, 6-3; 18-Jannik Sinner (Ita) bt Mikael Ymer (Swe) 6-1, 7-5, 6-3; 10-Diego Schwartzman (Arg) bt Philipp Kohlschreiber (Ger) 6-4, 6-2, 6-1.

**Women:** 8-Iga Swiatek (Pol) bt 30-Anett Kontaveit (Est) 7-6(4), 6-0; 25-Ons Jabeur (Tun) bt Magda Linette (Pol) 3-6, 6-0, 6-1; Sloane Stephens (USA) bt 18-Karolina Muchova (Cze) 6-3, 7-5; Barbora Krejcikova (Cze) bt 5-Elina Svitolina (Ukr) 6-3, 6-2; 4-Sofia Kenin (USA) bt 28-Jessica Pegula (USA) 4-6, 6-1, 6-4;

**24**-Coco Gauff (USA) bt 13-Jennifer Brady (USA) 6-1, retd.; 17-Maria Sakkari (Gre) bt 14-Elise Mertens (Bel) 7-5, 6-7(2), 6-2.

**Friday's results: Men:** 5-Stefanos Tsitsipas (Gre) bt 31-John Isner (USA) 5-7, 6-3, 7-6(3), 6-1.

**Women:** 20-Marketa Vondrousova (Cze) bt Polona Hercog (Slo) 6-3, 6-3; 33-Paula Badosa (Esp) bt Ana Bogdan (Rou) 2-6, 7-6(4), 6-4.

### Fallen seeds

■ **Men:** 31-Isner

■ **Women:** 5-Svitolina, 13-Brady, 14-Mertens, 18-Muchova, 28-Pegula

## T20 WC set to be moved out of India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA NEW DELHI

The marquee T20 World Cup in October-November is set to be shifted to the UAE and Oman with the BCCI having internally informed the ICC to go ahead with its preparation due to the COVID-19 situation in India.

While the UAE was always the first back-up option, Oman's capital Muscat has been added as the fourth venue, apart from Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Sharjah, for the tournament that will start in the last week of October.

A senior board official said that Muscat has been zeroed in specifically for the preliminary rounds of the 16-team competition, which will allow the three UAE grounds to get sufficient time to freshen up after 31 IPL games.

### IN BRIEF

#### Milkha stable, still on oxygen support

CHANDIGARH  
Legendary Indian sprinter Milkha Singh, who is battling COVID-19 in the ICU of PGIMER here, is stable and his condition is "better than yesterday", the hospital said on Saturday. The 91-year-old, who is being closely monitored by a team of three doctors, is still on oxygen support. PTI

#### Good day for Daruvala

BAKU  
India's Jehan Daruvala finished third in the second sprint race of the FIA Formula 2 championship here on Saturday. The Carlin driver started seventh and moved up the order to secure his second podium of the season. In the first race, he ended fourth after starting second.

#### SL players turn down reduced pay contracts

COLOMBO  
Sri Lanka's cricket players on Saturday refused to sign new pay contracts, but said they would be available for the tour of England later this month. AFP

## Staggered training allowed for Indians

### INDIA IN ENGLAND

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA SOUTHAMPTON

Indian cricketers trained in a staggered manner on the third day of their quarantine here on Saturday after being allowed to run in the gymnasium and the main playing field at different time slots.

#### Instagram video

Senior batsman Cheteshwar Pujara uploaded a video of his running on his Instagram stories, indicating that the England and Wales

Cricket Board (ECB) has got the requisite permission from the health authorities to allow the visiting teams an opportunity of staggered training.

It is understood that with the Hilton hotel being part of the Hampshire Bowl property, the players were allowed to come out of their rooms on the third day even though they are still not supposed to meet each other.

The men and the women could use the gymnasium separately for running and other physical training purpose.

## Burns battles it out; Southee's six puts Kiwis in control

The England opener's 132 takes the hosts to 275, 103 behind the visitors' total

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE LONDON

Rory Burns hit a gutsy century to help England recover from a collapse on the fourth day of the first Test against New Zealand at Lord's on Saturday.

England was in danger of following-on but Burns' 132 meant it avoided the embarrassment, although a total of 275 was still 103 adrift of New Zealand's score of 378 that featured debutant opener Devon Conway's remarkable 200. The Kiwis were 34 for no loss at the time of going to the press. Veteran paceman

BURNS. ■ AFP

Southee. ■ AP

Tim Southee led New Zealand's attack with six for 43 in 25.1 overs to secure yet another place on the Lord's honours board after his 10-

wicket haul in 2013. The Black Caps would have been in an even stronger position had they not reprieved Burns on 77 and 88.

### SCOREBOARD

**New Zealand — 1st innings:** 378.

**England — 1st innings:** Rory Burns c Watling b Southee 132, Dom Sibley lbw b Jamieson O, Zak Crawley c Watling b Southee 2, Joe Root c Taylor b Jamieson 42, Ollie Pope lbw b Southee 22, Dan Lawrence c de Grandhomme b Southee 0, James Bracey b Southee 0, Ollie Robinson c Jamieson b Southee 42, Mark Wood c Watling b Jamieson 0, Stuart Broad b Wagner 10, James Anderson (not out) 8; Extras (b-4, lb-4, w-1, nb-8); 17; Total (in 101.1 overs): 275.

**Fall of wickets:** 1-4, 2-18, 3-111, 4-140, 5-140, 6-140, 7-203, 8-207, 9-223.

**New Zealand bowling:** Southee 25.1-8-43-6, Jamieson 26-8-85-3, de Grandhomme 15-5-24-0, Wagner 24-3-83-1, Santner 10-4-30-0, Williamson 1-0-2-0.

**New Zealand — 2nd innings:** Tom Latham (batting) 14, Devon Conway (batting) 19; Extras (lb-1): 1; Total (for no loss in 16 overs): 34.

**England bowling:** Anderson 6-1-11-0, Broad 6-1-9-0, Robinson 2-1-4-0, Wood 2-0-9-0.

**FIRST MATCH**  
**June 13**  
vs Croatia,  
London,  
6.30 p.m.

**Form guide: W W W W W**  
**Euro appearances: 9**

**Usual formation: 4-3-3**

**GOALKEEPERS:** Dean Henderson, Sam Johnstone, Jordan Pickford

**DEFENDERS:** Trent Alexander-Arnold, Ben Chilwell, Conor Coady, Reece James, Harry Maguire, Tyrone Mings, Luke Shaw, John Stones, Kieran Trippier, Kyle Walker

**MIDFIELDERS:** Jude Bellingham, Jordan Henderson, Mason Mount, Calvin Phillips, Declan Rice

**FORWARDS:** Dominic Calvert-Lewin, Phil Foden, Jack Grealish, Harry Kane, Marcus Rashford, Bukayo Saka, Jadon Sancho, Raheem Sterling

**COACH:** Gareth Southgate


**DID YOU KNOW?**  
The Three Lions went 43 successive European Championship and World Cup qualifiers without defeat before losing to the Czechs in October 2019

**Best performance:** Third place 1968, semifinals 1996

**KEY PLAYER**  
**Harry Kane**  
Kane, the skipper and talismanic striker, remains integral to Southgate's plans despite the emergence of the younger crop

**ONE TO WATCH**  
**Jadon Sancho** | England has arguably not had a player since Wayne Rooney who was this advanced in his development at such a young age; the 21-year-old forward Sancho continues to grow at Dortmund

**COMPILED BY S.V. SRIRAM | SOURCE: UEFA/AGENCIES**



## Leclerc clinches pole

Hamilton joins him on the front row

### AZERBAIJAN GP

REUTERS BAKU

Ferrari's Charles Leclerc grabbed a surprise pole position for the Azerbaijan Formula One Grand Prix on Saturday in a qualifying session littered with crashes and four red flag stoppages.

The pole was Leclerc's second in a row and once again came as a result of the final session being stopped early by a red car banging into the barriers.

Seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton of Mercedes qualified alongside the Monegasque on the front row, with Red Bull's championship leader Max Verstappen starting a frustrated third. "It was just a stupid qualifying to be honest," said the Dutch driver.

Leclerc owed some of his time of one minute 41.218 seconds to Hamilton, who was in front of him for his first flying lap and without wanting to provided a hefty aerodynamic 'tow' down the long straight.

The first phase of qualifying was twice stopped by crashes, with Canadian Lance Stroll smashing his

Charles Leclerc.

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Aston Martin into the barriers at turn 15 and Alfa Romeo's Antonio Giovinazzi following minutes later.

#### The starting grid:

**Row 1:** Charles Leclerc (Ferrari), Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes); **2:** Max Verstappen (Red Bull), Pierre Gasly (AlphaTauri); **3:** Carlos Sainz (Ferrari), Sergio Perez (Red Bull); **4:** Yuki Tsunoda (AlphaTauri), Fernando Alonso (Alpine); **5:** Lando Norris (McLaren), Valtteri Bottas (Mercedes); **6:** Sebastian Vettel (Aston Martin), Esteban Ocon (Alpine); **7:** Daniel Ricciardo (McLaren), Kimi Raikkonen (Alfa Romeo); **8:** George Russell (Williams), Nicholas Latifi (Williams); **9:** Mick Schumacher (Haas), Nikita Mazepin (Haas); **10:** Lance Stroll (Aston Martin), Antonio Giovinazzi (Alfa Romeo).

## Brazil downs Ecuador for fifth consecutive win

### WC QUALIFYING

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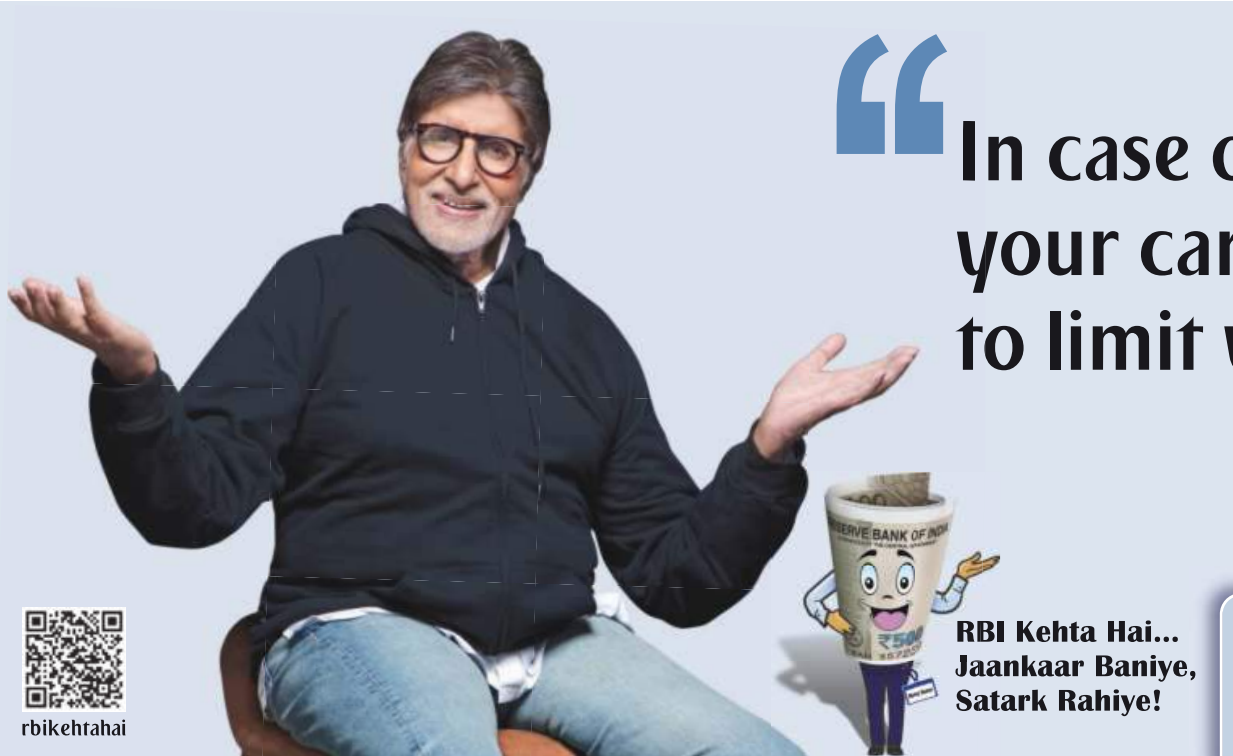
Amid a possible player revolt, Brazil defeated Ecuador 2-0 on Friday to win its fifth consecutive match in South American World Cup qualifying.

Brazil now leads the round-robin tournament with 15 points, four ahead of second-placed Argentina. It appears all but certain that Brazil will qualify for one of the four direct South American spots for Qatar 2022.

Gabriel Barbosa had a goal disallowed for offside in the first half before Richarlison opened the scoring in the 65th minute with a powerful shot from close range.

Neymar assisted on the first goal and added the second from the spot in added time. The penalty was awarded after a video review, which also allowed Brazil's No. 10 to take a second chance after being stopped by goalkeeper Alexander Dominguez.

**The hero:** Neymar, right, who assisted on the first goal and scored the second, celebrates with Paqueta. ■ AP



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