



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

Page 7



A deserted Taj Mahal awaits its first visitors and revival

Page 8



Nadal, Djokovic and Swiatek advance with ease in Paris

Page 14

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with the rules, failing which the exemption from liability available under Section 79 of the IT Act, 2000, shall stand withdrawn and Twitter shall be liable for consequences as per the IT Act and other penal laws of India," the notice said.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which the exemption from liability available under Section 79 of the Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000, shall stand withdrawn and Twitter shall be liable for consequences as per the IT Act and other penal laws of India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 Swayamsevak 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

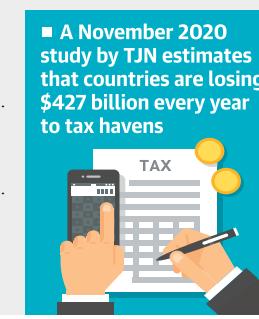
G7 nations agree on uniform minimum corporate tax

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



REUTERS

LONDON

British Finance Minister Rishi Sunak told reporters.

A group of the world's richest nations reached a landmark deal on Saturday to close cross-border tax loopholes used by some of the world's biggest companies.

The Group of Seven said it would back a minimum global corporation tax rate of at least 15%, and put in place measures to ensure that taxes were paid in the countries where businesses operate.

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

Delhi hospital 'bans' nurses from talking in Malayalam

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

A Delhi government hospital on Saturday banned its nursing staff from speaking in Malayalam in the hospital and warned of "serious action" if they do not talk in English or Hindi.

"A complaint has been received regarding Malayalam language is being used for communication in working places in GIPMER. Whereas maximum patient and colleagues do not know this language and feel helpless causing a lot of inconvenience. So it is directed to all Nursing Personnel to use only Hindi and English for communication otherwise serious action will be taken (sic)," read the order issued by Govind Ballabh Pant Institute of Postgraduate Medical Education and Research.

Reacting to the order, a nurse from Kerala working at GIPMER said: "There are around 300-350 Malayali nursing staff at the hospital and we always talk to the patients in Hindi. Do you think they will understand anything if we talk to them in Malayalam? Now they are saying that we can't even talk among ourselves in Malayalam." The nurse said they will oppose the move through the hospital's nurses' union on Monday.

GST revenue falls to ₹1.02 lakh crore in May

Lowest collections since Sept. 2020

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

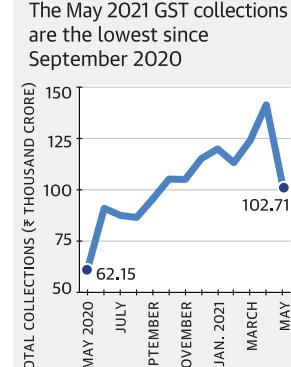
India's Gross GST revenue fell to ₹1.02 lakh crore in May, from a record ₹1.41 lakh crore in April, but the number was likely to be revised upwards, the government said on Saturday.

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



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 reopening 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.

CONTINUED 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 suckled 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 newborn 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 Eriyur 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. ■ BASHKARAN 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

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 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 Mehruli 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 Baijal 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.

menclosure 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 Sarakari 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 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



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

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



SUNALINI MATHEW
NEW DELHI

Suneeta Verma, whose husband died of COVID, is focussed on making ends meets, 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, vice 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 immediacy of facing up to a traumatic experience," says Dr Amit Sen, who runs Children First, a child and adolescent mental health ser-

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.

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

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 Gupta demanded 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

SEARCH FOR MISSING



General Public is hereby informed that one girl namely **Muskaan 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 : Muskaan, Father's Name : Sh. Rakesh Kumar, Age : 17 years, Height : 5'0", Face : Long, Complexion : Wheatish, Built : Thin, Wearing: Pink Colour Suit and Salwar and Blue Colour slippers in feet. If anyone having any clue/information, kindly inform the undersigned.

Website : <http://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

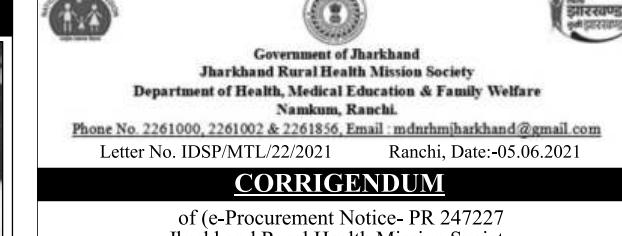
SEARCH FOR MISSING



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
Ph.: 011-24368638, 24368641
Fax: 011-24368639
DP/791/NE/2021



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)

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-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
Annual Comprehensive Maintenance Contract for H1N1 Lab for year 2021-22 at Govt. CD Hospital, Srinagar.	7.04	500	of 06/21	365	Mc/Plan/H1N1-Works/1004-08 Dt-02.06.2021

1. 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.jktders.gov.in from 03.06.2021 (18.00 hrs).

2. 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

3. 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

DIPK-2518/21

Sd/-
Executive Engineer,
MHCHD, Srinagar

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.

अपना मास्क सही से लगाना है।
कोरोना का हाजा है!!

SD/-
In charge Procurement Cell
JRHMS
PR 247547 (Jharkhand Rural Health Mission Society) 21-22 (D)

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A day after a 31-year-old sub-inspector was allegedly found dead inside the police station, his family has

Timings DELHI	
SUNDAY, JUN. 06	
RISE 05:24	SET 19:17
RISE 02:51	SET 15:46
MONDAY, JUN. 07	
RISE 05:24	SET 19:18
RISE 03:21	SET 16:38
TUESDAY, JUN. 08	
RISE 05:24	SET 19:18
RISE 03:53	SET 17:33

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	39	23
Safdarjung	39	23
Palam	38	21

Delhi Palam Today
40°C Light to moderate warm winds likely to prevail during day. Mainly clear sky and hot day likely.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
41°C A hot day would prevail. Short spell thunderstorm with light rain with gusty winds may occur at few places.

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TITLE THE HINDU
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IN BRIEF

Mayor installs mosquito-repellent cooler

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

At the meeting, all calculations were being made regarding hospital beds, ICU

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. It is our duty to be prepared," Mr. Kejriwal told a digital briefing.

"This time, the COVID peak saw a maximum of 28,000 cases in a single day, which was around April 22 or 23. Based on this figure, we estimated how high the next peak might be. After our discussions, it was concluded that we should prepare for a peak of 37,000 cases per day," he said, adding that this does not mean that if the peak goes beyond this figure, the government would not be prepared.

At the meeting, all calculations were being made regarding hospital beds, ICU



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.

Mr. Kejriwal said that during the second wave, "a huge shortage of oxygen" had emerged and to avoid this, preparations are being made and a storage capacity of 420 tonnes of oxygen is being readied.

"We have had talks with

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.

"I want to assure you that your government is working 24 hours to mitigate the situation. I hope that the third wave does not come and we will try to vaccinate our people before that, but if the wave comes, then the people should not face any difficulty," he said.

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.

There are now 6,731 active cases in the Capital.

Earlier in the day, Health Minister Satyendar Jain met the family of deceased 'corona warrior' Deep Chand, and handed over financial aid of ₹1 crore.

Later, he inspected works related to increasing the number beds at Lal Bahadur Shastri Hospital, Chacha Nehru Bal Chikitsa complex and Dr. Hedge-war Aarogya Sansthan.

Meanwhile, Aam Aadmi Party leader Atishi said it has now been almost two weeks since free vaccination of the 18-44 age group was stopped at government centres due to shortage, but "private hospitals continue to have huge supply and administer vaccines at expensive rates".

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.

There are now 6,731 active cases in the Capital.

Earlier in the day, Health Minister Satyendar Jain met the family of deceased 'corona warrior' Deep Chand, and handed over financial aid of ₹1 crore.

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 city witnesses 410 funerals.

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.

Meanwhile, Aam Aadmi Party leader Atishi said it has now been almost two weeks since free vaccination of the 18-44 age group was stopped at government centres due to shortage, but "private hospitals continue to have huge supply and administer vaccines at expensive rates".

Figures recorded by the Delhi government and the Municipal Corporations after this peak reveal the extent of the damage inflicted



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.

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. The police managed to locate and reach him in 55 minutes after the information was received.

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. They also sent an email with link to the video. "This alert was generated as part of the coordination framework established between CyPAD, the Nodal Cyber Unit of Delhi Police, and international social media platforms," Mr. Roy said.

In the video, Mr. Roy said, the man's minor daughter could be heard pleading with him to open the door which was shut from inside and he could be seen slitting his wrists.

The unit swung into action and analysed the profile. The live video had ended by then and the number attached to it was found to be switched off. Assistant sub-inspector Aditya Gautam, within minutes, then obtained the address attached to the number and

'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.

Last 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.

Rajasthan starts giving crop loans

The scheme, announced in 2018, will benefit 750 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.

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-

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 Susmit Nripanga Krishnaratna 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.

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 that 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



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, situated 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 health-care 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

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.

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"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.

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-

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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 SSSC exams: A.P. Minister

RAJAHMundry, 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 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.

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.



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

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 govern-

ment 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)

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 moth-

er and promised to help him open a wine shop and to construct new house in Karanataka.

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 Kasargod 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 Mujeeb 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.

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.

A year after Cyclone Nisarga, Raigad on road to resilience

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

RAINA 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 underway 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.

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/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

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	22...	27.8	24.0	Kozhikode	3...	30.0	25.4
Ahmedabad	4...	37.2	23.1	Kurnool	3...	36.2	24.8
Aizawl	...	27.0	21.6	Lucknow	...	38.1	26.9
Altahabadi	...	38.1	27.6	Madurai	25...	32.2	24.1
Bengaluru	...	29.2	21.2	Mangalore	1...	28.4	21.9
Bhopal	...	34.7	25.2	Mumbai	0.3...	34.0	26.2
Bhubaneswar	...	38.2	28.2	Myrsu...	...	21.4	
Chandigarh	10.3...	32.8	23.4	New Delhi	5...	39.1	23.4
Chennai	...	36.1	27.6	Patna	...	38.4	26.8
Coimbatore	...	32.6...	24.4	Port Blair	1...	32.2	26.1
Dehradun	2...	36.0	21.6	Puducherry	...	33.8	25.0
Gangtok	26...	21.2	17.7	Pune	12.3...	31.5	22.0
Goa	0.3...	31.7	26.4	Raipur	...	38.5	25.5
Guwahati	57...	31.2	24.4	Ranchi	...	35.2	24.3
Hubballi	...	27.0...	22.0	Shillong	...	25.0	18.6
Hyderabad	2...	34.6	23.8	Shimla	...	31.0	19.0
Imphal	2...	27.8	20.3	Srinagar	...	30.5	16.8
Jaipur	...	39.2	27.0	Thiruvananthapuram	1...	31.0	24.0
Kochi	11...	28.8	25.0	Tiruchi	9...	34.1	25.6
Kohima	...	37.8	17.2	Vijayawada	...	37.7	26.6
Kolkata	...	38.7	29.4				

FROM PAGE ONE

Govt. sends 'one last notice' to Twitter

The Ministry added it is "beyond belief" that the company has doggedly refused to create mechanisms that will enable the people of India to resolve their issues on the platform in a timely and transparent manner. "Leave alone proactively creating such a mechanism, Twitter Inc. is in the inglorious bracket of refusing to do so even when mandated by law," it said.

Row erupts as RSS handles lose 'blue ticks'

"How does Twitter determine inactivity? It is based on logging in. To keep the account active, the account holder must make sure to log in at least once every six months," said an official from the social media site.

While Mr. Naidu's office got in touch with Twitter and got back the verification, it set off a social media flurry from RSS sympathisers that the Twitter handles

of their senior leaders – RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat, and senior office bearers like Suresh Soni, Krishna Gopal and Arun Kumar had also been divested of the blue tick of verification. RSS functionary Rajiv Tuli alleged that it "clearly shows biasness and a clear example of 'tech feudalism' by Twitter."

The verification had been restored to all accounts.

G7 nations agree on uniform minimum tax

Ministers met face-to-face in London for the first time since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to a copy of the final agreement, the G7 ministers said they would "commit to a global minimum tax of at least 15% on a country by country basis".

"We commit to reaching an equitable solution on the allocation of taxing rights, with market countries awarded taxing rights on at least 20% of profit exceeding a 10% margin for the largest and most profitable multinational enterprises," the text added.

GST revenue falls to ₹1.02 lakh crore in May

The ₹1,02,709 crore collected in May includes revenues from domestic transactions till June 4. This is 65% higher than May 2020, when just ₹62,151 crore was received amid the national lockdown that began in late March 2020. "The actual revenues for the month of May 2021 would be higher and would be known when all the extended (compliance) dates expire," the Finance Ministry said in a statement, citing the relaxations given to

taxpayers in filing returns in the wake of the second wave of COVID-19.

"...While the taxpayers with turnover above ₹5 crore had to file their returns by June 4, which they would have otherwise filed by May 20, smaller taxpayers with turnover less than ₹5 crore still have time till first week of July to file the returns without any late fee and interest and the revenue from these taxpayers is deferred till then," it said.

Shadow of debt looms over Dharmapuri

While the cooperative society procures milk at ₹22 per litre, she can sell it in the open for ₹40 per litre. But there's a catch.

"The society's oftake is a steady income. I know they will buy it. Here, no one can afford milk every day. They will buy on one day but then may not buy for another 10 days. I can't lose the society," says Ambigai.

Though the society has not paid her since March, she's certain they will clear the dues. "But on days like these, when someone asks, I sell it." And Ambigai is unaware of larger changes effected by government policies since her payments are yet to come. The cooperative societies have cut down the procurement price by ₹3 payable to the suppliers like her.

Across villages, as women go about their daily chores, the spectre of debt owed to the SHGs is the staple of every conversation. The women were given loans on the understanding that they would find work and that their menfolk were also working, says Ambigai. But, now the men have returned from their jobs and are unemployed. "Without men, we ate what was there, not needing to cook three times. Now, the rations and the gas always falls short," she says as her husband, who was employed in a snacks making unit, has returned having lost his source of income.

In a predominantly rain-fed, drought-prone region like Dharmapuri, the summer showers brought seasonal

Farmers hold protests outside BJP leaders' offices, residences

Stir held to mark the day the farm laws were promulgated as Ordinances in 2020

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
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.

Shouting anti-BJP slogans, groups of farmers were seen holding demonstrations and burning copies of the farm laws outside or near residences and offices of BJP leaders and its political alliance partners in Punjab and Haryana. The demonstrations were held on a call given by the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), the umbrella body of farmer unions spearheading the ongoing farmers' protests.

Demonstrations were also staged in other States, including Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Telangana, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, according to the SKM.

At Panchkula in Haryana, after they were stopped in their march towards Assembly Speaker Gian Chand Gupta's residence, members



Marching on: Farmers' groups holding a protest in Patiala, Punjab, on Saturday. ■ PTI

of the Bhartiya Kisan Union blocked the Kalka-Zirakpur Road. At Hisar, farmers protested near the residence of Deputy Chief Minister Dushyant Chautala.

At Tohana in Fatehabad, scores of farmers led by Rakesh Tikait, Gurram Singh Chaduni and Yogendra Yadav gathered to "court arrest" in protest against the Haryana government's arrest of farmers following a recent spat with Tohana MLA Devender Babli.

Amid the raging controversy, Mr. Babli, in a video statement about the incident

on June 1 in Tohana, said, "I am a public representative and I uttered certain words that were inappropriate. I take my words back."

The SKM, however, said on Monday, a sit-in would be held in front of all the police stations across Haryana if the ruling BJP-Jannayak Janta Party (JJP) government did not withdraw the cases filed against the farmers.

Farmers associated with the Kisan Mazdoor Sangarsh Committee (KMSC), a prominent outfit at the forefront of the ongoing agitation, burnt copies of the farm laws in 11

districts of Punjab, primarily in the Majha and Doaba region, while Bharatiya Kisan Union (Ekta-Ugrahan) members burnt copies at around 50 places across 15 districts in the State, according to Sukhdev Singh, general secretary, BKU(U).

Sarwan Singh Pandher, general secretary of the KMSC in Amritsar, accused the BJP of imposing a "pro-corporate agenda" on farmers and labourers. "The entire country has come together and is raising voice against the farm laws," he said.

'Electorate will penalise govt. for anti-farmer steps'

They work for the corporates: Cong.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Marking the first anniversary of the three controversial farm laws, the Congress on Saturday said the electorate will penalise the Narendra Modi government for trying to rob the livelihood of the farmers and accused the government of taking anti-farmer steps for the last seven years.

In a statement, Randeep Surjewala, Congress general secretary and communication in-charge, said Prime Minister Narendra Modi had claimed that he was creating an opportunity for the farmers through these laws. Instead, Mr. Modi was giving a trade worth ₹25 lakh crore to his crony capitalist friends at the cost of 62 crore farmers, he said.

"With these black laws, the BJP government created opportunities for hoarding and black marketing of foodgrains for its capitalist friends, while the farmers had to brave lathi charge, water cannons and tear gas shells," Mr. Surjewala said.

He said the "unethical" provisions in the law providing for contract farming were intended to make the farmers "bonded labourers" of select capitalists. "It seems that the Modi government remains committed to



Randeep Surjewala
pay back its crony capitalists who helped them capture power in 2014," he added.

Mr. Surjewala also accused the BJP government of working for the corporates since the day they came to power in 2014. "As soon as the Modi government came to power in 2014, it tried to grab the lands of the farmers through an ordinance. Then in 2015, the Modi government filed an affidavit in the Supreme Court stating that farmers can never be given cost plus 50% profit as the Minimum Support Price [MSP]. Then came the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana in Kharif 2016, from which a few insurance companies earned a whopping profit of ₹26,000 crore."

The BJP government, he said, waived loans worth ₹10 lakh crore of the corporates, but refused to extend the same courtesy to farmers.

New database for missing persons

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Interpol has launched a new global database named 'I-Familia' to identify missing persons through family DNA and help the police solve cold cases in member countries.

Describing it as a groundbreaking database officially launched this month, the Interpol, in a statement, said it applied cutting-edge scientific research and used the DNA of relatives to identify missing persons or unidentified human remains around the world. DNA kinship matching is used mostly in cases where a direct sample of the missing person is not available. "I-Familia is the first global database to automatically control for such differences without requiring knowledge of the missing person's genetic ancestry and provide standardised guidelines on what constitutes a match," the interpol said.



Pandemic has wrecked homes, petition in SC contends

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A petition was filed in the Supreme Court to direct the Union government to offer a moratorium on loans for the period between June and August, stating that the pandemic has wrecked homes and is pushing the middle class into poverty.

"It is not a hidden truth that the middle class have been badly hit by the financial implications of COVID-19. The second wave has actually been worse than the first, and the death toll is just one of the indicators of its severity," the Distress Management Collective, an NGO represented by advocate Jose Abraham, said.

The weekly extension of lockdowns for the past month-and-a-half had resulted in more people from the middle class losing their jobs, and those who have

August, it said.

The petition asked the court to intervene with the Union government to roll out a financial package primarily focusing on the severely affected sections of society and also keeping in mind an imminent third wave. "Consider the grievances of scores of borrowers who have taken housing loans or loans that fall in other categories from banks..." it stated.

It referred to how work had slowed for professionals like lawyers, who have shifted back to their hometown. "The Small and Medium Enterprises [SME] sector has also been badly jolted by the second wave of the pandemic," it said. The emergence of the second wave had come at a time when the SME sector had hardly recovered from the blow received by the first wave, it pointed out.

Retired officials write to Modi on Lakshadweep

Concerned over developments in UT.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Centre's farm laws and the government response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We are a group of former civil servants of the All India and Central Services who have worked with the Central and State Governments in the course of our careers... We write to you today to register our deep concern over disturbing developments taking place in the pristine Union Territory [UT] of Lakshadweep in the name of 'development', the letter stated.

Referring to draft regulations introduced by Lakshadweep Administrator P.K. Patel, the group said the proposals were drafted without local consultation and were now with the Union Home Ministry for necessary approvals.

"It is clear that each of these draft regulations is part of a larger agenda that is against the ethos and interests of the islands and islanders," the letter stated.

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been badly hit by the financial implications of COVID-19. The second wave has actually been worse than the first, and the death toll is just one of the indicators of its severity," the Distress Management Collective, an NGO represented by advocate Jose Abraham, said.

In a rare order on June 1, the J&K administration directed all schools to reduce pre-primary and primary online classes to 30 minutes and 90 minutes a day, respectively. "For the students up to 8th standard, online synchronous learning may be undertaken for not more than two sessions of 30-45 minutes each on working days," the order said.

However, the J&K Education Chamber demanded a roll back of the order, saying "education policies cannot be changed based on a viral video". "We have not been consulted [on the decision]," G.N.Var, president of the Private Schools Association of Jammu and Kashmir, said.

The office of Directorate of School Education, on Friday, decided to stick to the decision spurred by the video.

The judgment ignores the key evidence of an apology e-mail written by Mr. Tejpal, including one in which he acknowledged a "shameful lapse of judgement" and "clear reluctance" on the part of the survivor, the network said.

The judgment in Tejpal case a huge setback'

Judgment in Tejpal case a huge setback'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The trial court judgment acquitting journalist Tarun Tejpal, former editor-in-chief of *Tehelka* magazine, who was charged in 2013 of the rape, unlawful confinement and sexual harassment of a young woman journalist working at the magazine, is a grave miscarriage of justice, and a massive setback for the Indian women's rights movement and the safety of working women in particular, the Network of Women in Media, India, (NWMI) has said.

The court put the victim on trial, persistently shamming and discrediting her, NWMI said. The judgment by Additional Sessions Judge Kshama M. Joshi sets out standards for a "sterling witness" and the "normative" look of a traumatised woman, it added.

The judgment ignores the key evidence of an apology e-mail written by Mr. Tejpal, including one in which he acknowledged a "shameful lapse of judgement" and "clear reluctance" on the part of the survivor, the network said.

The judgment in Tejpal case a huge setback'

Experts discuss law and social sciences at meet

They highlight its inter-disciplinarity

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

As part of its Virtual Conclave for Career Guidance 2021, the SRM Institute of Science and Technology (SRMIST), in association with The Hindu Group, hosted a webinar on Interdisciplinary connections between Law and Humanities on Friday. The session, moderated by Yashaswini Rajeshwar, saw speakers discuss the ways in which law and the social sciences are connected, the nature of this inter-disciplinarity and its opportunities.

Pointing out that there has been a move from traditional to more esoteric practices, Sridhar Krishnaswami, Deputy Dean and Professor, Department of Journalistic and Mass Communication, Faculty of Science and Humanities, SRMIST, said: "We need to have fusion and that is why interdisciplinary courses are the needed solution today."

V.M. Kannan, advocate at the Supreme Court, emphasised that one cannot study law only to become a lawyer. "Law does not exist

on its own. Humanities precedes the law and is all about changing culture, and hence the interdependence."

Professor Gurudath Anantharamaiah Chilkunda, Dean, Faculty of Law, SRMIST, said legal education in India has become highly professional. "Law is being attached to other degrees like BA LLB [Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Law], B. Com LLB [Bachelor of Commerce and Bachelor of Law], B. Sc LLB [Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Law], BBA LLB [Bachelor of Business Administration and Bachelor of Law], and B. Tech LLB [Bachelor of Technology and Bachelor of Law] – making it an attractive option for students."

The session ended with the speakers fielding questions from the audience. View it at <http://bit.ly/SRMISTTHYI>

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Mahira Irfan

cided to address my video to Modi sahib. I am happy the class timing has been reduced to 30 minutes. But I miss my school," said Ms. Irfan, in a red dress, pausing to collect her thoughts in reply to a question.

In her 45-second extempore message to Mr. Modi, she said, "Asalam-alai-kum Modi sahib. I want to share about what happens to small children. I get elaborate homework, as much as is assigned to senior students. Our classes start at 10 a.m. and end by 2 p.m. Why such prolonged online classes Modi sahib?"

Earlier this week, Ms. Irfan, finding her four-hour daily online classes taxing, gave vent to her despair in a video that went viral on all social media platforms. She said she did not know about Prime Minister Narendra Modi, but was told about him by her father.

"My father told me that it's Modi sahib who gets to decide on the lockdowns [related to the pandemic]. I

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**

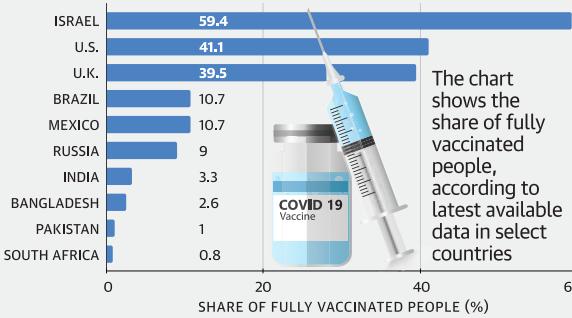
India recorded 1,13,254 new COVID-19 cases and 2,545 new deaths till 9.30 p.m. on Saturday. The country has so far reported a total of 2,88,07,211 cases and 3,46,648 deaths.

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 Ladakh. 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

Status check | Nearly 60% of Israel's population is fully vaccinated against COVID-19. The figure is around the 40% mark for the U.S. and the U.K. In comparison, only about 3.3% of India's population is fully inoculated



The chart shows the share of fully vaccinated people, according to latest available data in select countries

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.

About 19.5% of adults in

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.

Unmasked 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 Prabhu Narain 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. Oth-

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 sensitivity)

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 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



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

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 normalize 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 new-onset diabetes in a patient.

Theoretically, COVID-19 can also cause diabetes as

SUDOKU

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5			2					
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	8	2	6	1	4			3
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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

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

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

No.5509 Date: www.brightfutures.com

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, 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.

AM-ND-E

Nigeria suspends Twitter 'indefinitely'

This comes two days after network deleted a tweet from the President's account for violating its rules

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

ABUJA

Telecoms operators in Nigeria said on Saturday they had complied with a government directive to suspend access to Twitter indefinitely, two days after the U.S. social media giant deleted a tweet from President Muhammadu Buhari's account for violating its rules.

International human rights groups and diplomats have condemned the move, which followed previous attempts by the government of Africa's most populous country to regulate social media.

Twitter on Wednesday deleted a remark on the President's account after he re-



Access denied: A file photo of Muhammadu Buhari. ■ REUTERS

Facebook suspends Trump for two years

Ex-President calls it an insult to voters

REUTERS

SAN FRANCISCO

Facebook Inc on Friday suspended former U.S. President Donald Trump until at least January 2023 and announced changes to how it will treat world leaders who break the company's rules on postings on its site.

Facebook suspended Trump's account the day after the Jan. 6 Capitol Hill riot, determining he had incited violence. That suspension will last at least two years from the date of the initial block and would only be lifted if the risk to public safety has receded, Facebook said.

Trump criticized the decision as a form of censorship and an insult to his voters.

This new timeline denies Republican Trump a major social media megaphone ahead of the November 2022 national midterm elections, when his party will be competing for Congressional seats. However, it means he may be able to return to



Donald Trump
Facebook well before the next presidential election in late 2024.

Mr. Trump has been permanently banned by Twitter and remains suspended by YouTube after the riot. The former President has teased plans to launch his own platform but his team has given little detail.

"Given the gravity of the circumstances that led to Mr. Trump's suspension, we believe his actions constituted a severe violation of our rules which merit the highest penalty available under the new enforcement protocols," Facebook's head of global affairs Nick Clegg said in the post.

20 dead in Afghanistan air strike

ASSOCIATED PRESS

KABUL

An Afghan airstrike on Friday that targeted Taliban fighters inside an abandoned Army base in southern Helmand province killed at least 20 people, including some civilians, reports said.

There were conflicting accounts about the site of the strike and the number of casualties, adding to concerns that as the U.S. military and NATO forces complete their pull out, Afghanistan would sink into more violence and turmoil.

The military said its air force and troops struck the Taliban in the province's Nahr Saraj district as they were looting weapons and ammunition from the base. It said 20 Taliban fighters and a "few civilians" who were looting with the insurgents were killed.

The Taliban said they overran the base late on Thursday. The insurgents said the death toll on Friday stood at 30, and that all were civilians.

China hits out at U.S., EU consulates in Hong Kong

They lit candles for Tiananmen victims

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

HONG KONG

China on Saturday berated the U.S. and EU consulates in Hong Kong for displaying candles to commemorate the June 4 Tiananmen crackdown, slamming it as a "shameless political show" to destabilise the city.

Candles were seen lit in the windows of the U.S. consulate building, which is next to the residence of Hong Kong's Beijing-appointed leader Carrie Lam, and the European Union's office on Friday night.

The missions also posted photographs of their Tiananmen memorials on social media.

"Any attempt to exploit Hong Kong to carry out infiltration or sabotage activities against the mainland crosses the red line ... is absolutely intolerable," a spokesperson for the Hong Kong office of China's Foreign Ministry said.

"We again urge the organs of relevant countries in Hong Kong to immediately

move, calling on Nigeria to "immediately reverse the unlawful suspension".

Twitter said that the move was "deeply concerning". "We're investigating and will provide updates when we know more," it said.

"VPN app" was the second most searched trend on Saturday on Google in Nigeria, as virtual private networks can enable Twitter users to bypass the ban.

Twitter is popular in Nigeria, and has played a role in public discourse with hashtags #BringBackOurGirls, after Boko Haram kidnapped 276 schoolgirls, and #EndSARS, during anti-police brutality protests last year.

INTERVIEW | VIJAY GOKHALE

'China's internal security is Xi's biggest concern'

'Studies show there's severe factionalism within the CCP'

SUHASINI HAIDAR



China's internal situation remains its biggest concern 32 years after the Tiananmen Square protests, says former Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale, the author of the book 'The Making of a Protest: A Diplomat Looks Back'. In an interview, he says President Xi's challenges are similar to the past, but circumstances are different. Edited excerpts:

Your book not only focuses on the growing unrest among students in 1989, but also on the divisions within the Chinese Communist Party that led to protests. Do those divisions still exist?

■ One of the myths is the sense among many in India that China and the CCP is a monolith, with one leader, one chain of command, and 1.4 billion people following that leader. Any study of the CCP would show the severe factionalism within the party at different points in history. Mao Tse Tung, Deng Xiaoping and currently Xi Jinping are dominant figures, but even their times have seen factionalism and rivalry within the party. It is just that the Chinese system is closed.

Are the challenges Mr. Xi faces internally, in Xinjiang, Tibet, Hong Kong, of a different order from what Deng faced in 1989 with the protests?

■ When it comes to the pacification of the minorities and of the borderlands, I think there is almost nothing to choose between Mao, Deng and Mr. Xi. However, I feel the response of the government to the protests in Hong Kong, the haste with which they are proceeding, the determination to completely crush any kind of dissent must be watched closely in India as it will also play

Flashes of defiance still flickered across the city Friday night as residents simultaneously turned their mobile phone lights or lit candles in multiple districts across the city to mark the date.

There were online calls for people to turn off the lights at home and place candles in their windows in commemoration.



They think any country which doesn't align with China is potentially a threat to them

out badly in Taiwan. The concern is whether the Chinese leadership has reached the view that a reunification of Taiwan with the Mainland by peaceful means may no longer be possible, and therefore they may have to contemplate some kind of military or forceful action. If that conclusion has already been reached in Beijing, then what they're doing in Hong Kong makes perfect sense, because then they're not looking to set up Hong Kong as an example for Taiwan, which is what Deng did with his one country, two systems experiment (for Hong Kong).

Thirty-two years ago too, we were in the middle of a long stand-off at the LAC. In terms of dealing with India, how has China changed?

■ China's confidence today comes from what some might call a false confidence that China is fated to rise and rise, and the West is fated to fall and fall. However, this strong external confidence is still combined with an internal paranoia, especially about the sustainability of the CCP in China. Any country which doesn't align with China is one which is potentially a threat to them, and increasingly it is in this category that India falls. In the short term, of course, what has been happening [at the LAC] is concerning for us. In the long term, one hopes China senses that it is not in its national interest to create an adversary of a country which is not only a neighbour, but also going to share a bigger stage with China in the future. But, I think that in the interim, we are in for a difficult ride.

(Full version of the podcast can be heard at <http://bit.ly/VijayGokhaleInterview>)

114 killed in Burkina Faso attacks

Massacre by Islamists near the borders with Mali, Niger is the deadliest since 2015

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

OUAGADOUGOU

Suspected jihadists have massacred at least 114 civilians in Burkina Faso's volatile north in the deadliest attacks since Islamist violence erupted in the west African country in 2015, officials said on Saturday.

President Roch Marc Christian Kabore denounced an attack near the borders with Mali and Niger where jihadists linked to Al-Qaeda and Islamic State have been targeting civilians and soldiers.

"We must remain united and solid against these obscurantist forces," Mr. Kabore said, condemning a massacre that left at least 100 people dead in Solhan as "barbaric" and "despicable."

The worst attack occurred during the night of Friday to



Increasing hostilities: Burkinabe soldiers patrolling in Gorom-Gorom, northern Burkina Faso, in this file photo. ■ AFP

Saturday when "armed individuals staged an incursion" into Solhan, a security source said.

"The toll, which is still provisional, is about about 100 dead, men and women of different ages", the source said with the government confirming the toll.

The VDP was set up in December 2019 to help Burkina's poorly-equipped military fight jihadists but it has

a position of the Volunteers for the Defence of the Motherland (VDP), an anti-jihadist civilian defence force which backs the national Army, before attacking homes and carrying out "executions," a local source said.

The authorities have declared three days of national mourning, ending Monday night at 11:59 p.m.

Assailants struck around 2:00 am (0200 GMT) against

suffered more than 200 fatalities, according to an AFP tally.

The government said in a statement that "terrorists," a term for jihadists, killed civilians of all ages and set fire to homes and the main market.

"In addition to the heavy human toll, the worst recorded to date, homes and the market were set on fire," another security source said, voicing concern that the "still temporary toll of a hundred dead may increase."

The government said that "the defence and security forces are at work to neutralise these terrorists and restore calm to populated areas."

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Nor were they related to objects like research balloons, which some postulated were behind the reports.

But it then could not explain what, for example, U.S. Navy pilots saw when they recorded objects traveling at seeming hypersonic speeds, spinning and mysteriously disappearing.

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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 upturn 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 percent 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,

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?

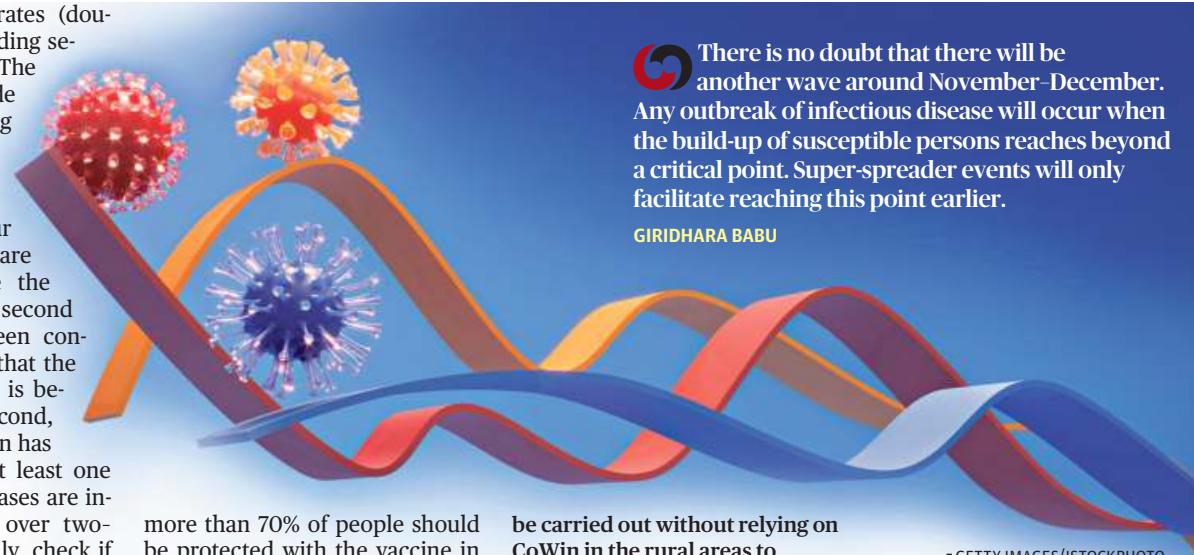
BM: For urban poor and rural areas, we need mobile vaccination, door-to-door campaigns, seeking buy-in from religious and community leaders, and vaccine clinics in front of places of religious gathering. Employers encouraging and providing vaccination to employees, even supporting and ensuring vaccination 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

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

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 F1 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 - an 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 Sudhakar, 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

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 reentering 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 sniffing 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



• SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

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 Rajapaksa 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 Rajapaksa's 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. VENKATARAMAN

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

Use Listing, would be granted Emergency Use Authorisation in India. The condition was that there would be a post-approval parallel bridging trial. However, this condition was waived a few days ago and no bridging trial is now necessary. The significance of this exemption is that both the delay attached to such trials and the risk of adverse events to participants have been avoided.

The New Drugs and Clinical Trial Rules, 2019, set down stringent regulations for grant of approval as well as for trials. The Rules provide for payment of compensation by the sponsor of the trial or its representative to any participant who dies or suffers disability as a result of such trials. Exemption from these trials has reduced the risk to overseas manufacturers. However, companies probably fear that they would still be liable under the ordinary law of tort, arising from future claims by anyone adversely affected after receiving the shot.

What does India gain by giving indemnity?

In the absence of indemnity, overseas manufacturers may load the risk onto the price of the vaccines, making each dose more expensive. By indemnifying the companies in respect of these vaccines, the government of India may be able to negotiate lower prices and higher volumes. It may help accelerate India's national vaccination drive. On the flip side, the government may be forced to make it a level playing field for local manufacturers, too, by extending indemnity to them, and thereby inviting upon itself the entire risk associated with more than a billion vaccine shots.

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

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 \$18 million 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 labourious 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.

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 H1N10 and H1N11, 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

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

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 ragtag 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.

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

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-

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

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-11". 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'être* 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.



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

NAFTALI BENNETT

From kingmaker to king

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

STANLY 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



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

the New Right. 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.

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.

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 Matter 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

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.

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.



ILLUSTRATION: J.A. PREMKUMAR

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.

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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 Nestle 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 ca-



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

tegories 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.

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.

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?



international 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 drivable 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 fin-

ishing third.

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 CIRT, 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 Ral-

ly.

The duo finished seventh and achieved their goal of winning the Ladies Trophy for the second rally in suc-

cession and ended second in the U-25's Division.

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

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

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."

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

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.

FI: 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.

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

6 Musetti is the sixth player since 2000 to reach the fourth round or better on his Grand Slam debut. Previous: Taik-Lee (2000 US Open, 4R), Goffin (2012 French Open, 4R), Londero (2019 French Open, 4R), Altmair (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



SUNDAY'S PICKS
MEN WOMEN

2-Medvedev vs 22-Garin
5-Tsitsipas vs 12-Carreno Busta
6-Zverev vs Nishikori (night session)
DOUBLES: Bopanna-Skugor vs Arevalo-Middelkoop

T20 WC set to be moved out of India

Staggered training allowed for Indians

INDIA IN ENGLAND

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
SOUTHAMPTON

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

BANGALORE
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

RBI Kehta Hai... Jaankaar Baniye, Satark Rahiye!

FIRST MATCH

June 13

vs Croatia,
London,
6.30 p.m.



CAN THE THREE LIONS ROAR?

England has a squad bristling with young and exciting talent, coupled with a home advantage through to the final and a strong recent tournament record

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, Kalvin Phillips, Declan Rice

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

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

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 has now made 12 straight fourth rounds at Roland Garros, an Open Era record

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

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-set 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-seed 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 chal-

lenge," Djokovic said of a first meeting with Musetti. Defending champion Rafael Nadal claimed his third win of 2021 over Britain's Cameron Norrie.

Nadal, chasing a 14th Roland Garros title and record-setting 21st Grand Slam, won 6-3, 6-3, 6-3 and goes on to face Italian teenager Jannik Sinner.

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; 5-Maria Sakkari (Gre) 6-3, 6-4, 6-2; 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: 2-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; 3-Sloane Stephens (USA) bt 18-Karolina Muchova (Cze) 6-3, 7-5; Barbara 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

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

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.

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 provide 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.
GETTY IMAGES

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), Esteban Ocon (Alpine); **6:** Sebastian Vettel (Aston Martin), Lance Stroll (Aston Martin); **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

ASSOCIATED PRESS
SAO PAULO

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 Ameri-

can spots for Qatar 2022.

Gabriel Barbosa had a goal disallowed for offside in the first half before Richardson 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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