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China allows couples to have three children as birth rate falls
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NEARBY



Positivity rate falls below 1% in Delhi

NEW DELHI
The test positivity rate of COVID-19 cases fell to 0.99% in Delhi, the lowest in more than two months, said a health bulletin released by the government on Monday. The city reported 648 new cases over 24 hours, taking the total to 14,26,240.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

Family uses excavator to shift body for burial

LUCKNOW
A family in Sant Kabir Nagar of eastern U.P. used an earth mover to transport the body of a relative who had died after testing positive for COVID-19 for burial. A video of the incident was widely shared on social media. The victim's son said his father died at home after testing positive at a hospital.

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GDP shrinks by 7.3%; Q4 uptick moderates 2020-21 carnage

Curbing new pandemic waves, lockdowns, vaccination pace hold key to recovery

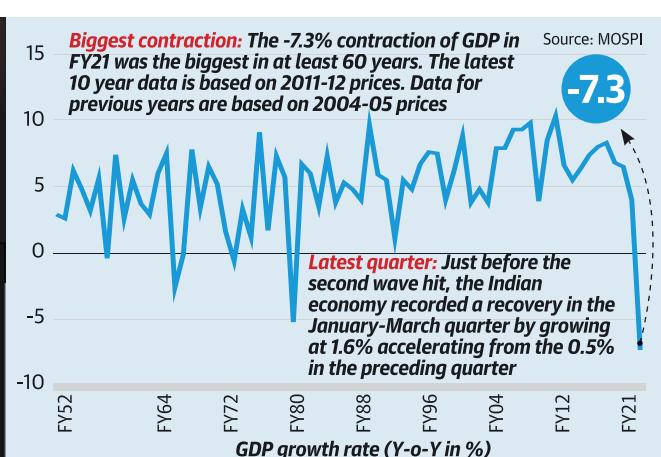
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) contracted by 7.3% in 2020-21, as per provisional National Income estimates released by the National Statistical Office on Monday, marginally better than the 8% contraction in the economy projected earlier. GDP growth in 2019-20, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, was 4%.

The Gross Value Added (GVA) in the economy shrank 6.2% in 2020-21, compared to a 4.1% rise in the previous year. Only two sectors bucked the trend of negative GVA growth – agriculture, forestry and fishing, which rose 3.6%, and electricity, gas, water supply and other utility services (up 1.9%).

Though this is the bleakest performance on record for the economy, the fourth quarter (Q4) of 2020-21 helped moderate the damage, with a higher-than-expected growth of 1.6% in GDP. This marked the second quarter of positive growth after the country entered a technical recession in

First wave impact
The Indian economy shrank by 7.3% in FY21 due to the national and local lockdowns put in place during the first COVID-19 wave



the first half of the year.

GDP had contracted 24.4% in April-June 2020, followed by a 7.4% shrinkage in the second quarter. It had returned to positive territory in the September to December quarter with a marginal 0.5% growth.

GVA for trade, hotels, transport, communication and broadcasting-related services saw the sharpest decline of 18.2%, followed by construction (-8.6%), mining and quarrying (-8.5%) and manufacturing (-7.2%).

Economists said these numbers would moderate

growth prospects for 2021-22 through the base effect, even as the scourge of the virus is hurting activity again.

"With a lower contraction in GDP as well as GVA in 2020-21, the sharp recovery projected for 2021-22 by a number of agencies like the IMF at 12.5% and the RBI at 10.5% may have to be moderated," said D.K. Srivastava, chief policy advisor at EY India.

"The combination of the second wave and the revised base effect may imply a lower GDP growth for the Indian economy for 2021-22, maybe in the range of 9-9.5%," Mr. Srivastava added.

Chief Economic Advisor to the Finance Ministry K.V. Subramanian said he doesn't expect GDP forecasts to be significantly affected.

"Whether growth will be in double digits or single digits, there is uncertainty.

Some of the scientists are talking about the possibility of a third wave too. It would be speculative to tell you exact numbers," he said, stressing that vaccination was important for the health of the people and economy.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Back on track



Work resumes on the fifth Delhi Metro bridge over the Yamuna on Monday after the city government announced easing of some restrictions. The construction is part of the Majlis Park-Maujpur corridor. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

Vaccine production in country not enough: HC

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Monday said COVID-19 vaccine production by two companies in India is not enough and the Centre should expedite the process of clearing samples of Panacea Biotech, which has collaborated with the Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) for manufacturing Sputnik V vaccine here.

A Bench of Justice Manmohan and Justice Najmi Waziri asked the Centre to ensure that in these extraordinary circumstances when vaccines are urgently needed for saving lives, the untapped potential in the country is not taken away by foreigners.

The Bench questioned the Centre for not processing Panacea's case on priority as it was producing the same product which has been produced by the Russian company initially and asked as to what more was required to be done in this regard.

It termed as "disturbing" the Centre's reply, filed in the case, saying the authorities were virtually saying they are not aware of what the firm has been doing and its relation with Sputnik.

The Bench said the Centre's officers are required to show some sensitivity and urgency in the matter. The High Court will hear the case again on June 2.

Court quashes two Delhi govt. orders on private school fees

'Directions were prejudicial to schools'

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH
NEW DELHI

The High Court on Monday quashed two separate orders issued last year by the Delhi government restraining private schools in the city from collection of annual charges and development fees from students during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Justice Jayant Nath said the orders are "prejudicial to the said schools and would cause an unreasonable restriction in their functioning".

The court directed that the amount payable by students would be paid in six monthly instalments from June 10 onwards.

The court's direction came on plea by the Action Committee of Unaided Recognised Private Schools, a registered association with approximately 450 private unaided schools functioning in Delhi as its members.

The association had challenged the orders issued by the Department of Education, Delhi government, on April 18, 2020 and August 28, 2020 in so far as it prevented private unaided schools from collecting annual charges and development fees even beyond the lockdown period and deferring it till physical opening of the schools.

They argued that even during the pandemic, the schools were directed and

encouraged to take up online teaching and learning so that there was no discontinuity in imparting education to the children.

The annual charges relate to hostel running expenses, administrative and general expenses, rents, communication expenses, printing and stationery, electricity and water charges among others.

Development fees pertains to expenditure related to furniture, benches, chairs, wall paneling, green/black boards, computers, projectors and others items.

Rights curtailed

The association argued that the action of the Delhi government curtailed their rights to fix their own fees.

The Delhi government, on the other hand, argued that the lockdown was still in operation and, therefore, the two orders continued to be in operation.

It argued that "on account of acute financial pressure and stress on the general public owing to the pandemic and measures imposed to deal with it having not abated, in such a situation the attempt of the private school to burden the parents by seeking to recover amounts presuming that normal physical functioning has resumed is harsh, unfair and unjust".

HC pulls up drug controller for 'trash' report in Gambhir case

It does not explain how 2,343 strips of medicine were supplied to his foundation: court

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Monday rejected as "trash" the status report filed by the drug controller on the issue of BJP MP Gautam Gambhir procuring huge amount of Fabiflu, used for treating COVID patients, when they were in short supply in the Capital.

"This tendency of people trying to take advantage and then trying to appear as saviour. This has to be denounced," a Bench of Justice Bipin Singh and Justice Jasmeet Singh remarked pointing at the action of the former cricketer.

The High Court said the drug controller has not done any investigation on how "a large consignment" of 2,343 strips of Tab Fabiflu was supplied to the Gautam Gambhir



BJP MP Gautam Gambhir.

Foundation, which is not a medical practitioner.

Questionable stand

It termed as "questionable" the drug controller's stand that the drug was not in short supply.

"You [drug controller] are wrong to say it was not in short supply. You want us to shut our eyes. You can't take us for a ride. If you think we are so gullible, we are naïve,

we will give you back hard. You better do your job."

While the drug controller argued that the Tab Fabiflu was bought by the Foundation through one Dr. Manish of Garg Hospital, the court asked how Mr. Gambhir was able to purchase it just because Garg Hospital said it.

"Can anybody take a letter from a hospital and say give it [drug] to me... Here is a man who is hoarding thousands of strips of medicines. He is interrupting the flow of medicines," the Bench said.

"You've not even bothered to see if it was legal to supply drugs to the Foundation," it told the drug controller.

It directed the drug controller to submit a "better" status report after taking into account the factual contradictions and legal provisions.

The court also said the former cricketer has to be "mindful" of the action he has taken.

"Thousands of needy people who could have got these medicines were unable to do so. Two hundred and eighty five strips were left. This shows that he procured more than what was required," it said. "If it continues, we know how to deal with it."

The court also noted it was not satisfied with the status report into allegations of procuring and hoarding medical oxygen made against AAP MLA Praveen Kumar.

The court's direction came while hearing a petition seeking lodging of an FIR against politicians who allegedly were able to procure COVID-19 drugs in huge quantity. It will hear the case again on Thursday.

Form policy to issue black fungus drug'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Monday asked the Centre and Delhi government to come out with a policy on distribution of Amphotericin-B, used for treating black fungus patients, due to their current scarcity.

A Bench of Justice Bipin Singh and Justice Jasmeet Singh remarked that the "cruel decision" of excluding certain age group or class of people till the drug is in shortage could not be left with the doctors and has to be taken by the political leadership in consultation with experts.

The court asked if there are two patients, one is 80-year-old and other is 35-year-old, and there is only one dose of medicine then it should be given to whom.

It also remarked that black fungus was affecting everyone in all age groups.

Tribunal dismisses plea to review ban on brick kilns

Allow activity during monsoon: owners

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has dismissed a plea seeking review of an earlier order banning operations of coal-fired brick kilns in the National Capital Region beyond the month of June.

A Bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel observed that a party cannot be permitted to reopen a case under the pretext of a review.

"Even the judgment given subsequent to the decision

in a case can be no ground for entertaining the review. Review lies only when there is error apparent on the face of the record and that fallibility is by the oversight of the court," the Bench observed. It observed, "If a party is aggrieved of a judgment, it must approach the higher court."

The observations came when the tribunal was hearing a plea by brick kiln owners who contended that operations should be permitted during the monsoon months.

Man decides to help needy soon after recovering from COVID-19

IT professional turns his car into emergency response vehicle, uses savings he kept for trips that he could not make last year

HEMANI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI

In the first week of April, 33-year-old Himanshu Nagia contracted COVID-19 with mild symptoms. After recovering in two weeks, he decided to extend support to the needy at a time when the pandemic was raging.

Mr. Nagia, resident of East Delhi's Krishna Nagar working at a Noida-based IT company, has two kids, wife and a 60-year-old mother living with him in their multistorey residence. However, for 20-odd days, the man almost stayed in his car which he had turned into an emergency response vehicle.

One can find water bottle cartons, medicines, two small oxygen cylinders, oxygen cans, thermometer



Himanshu Nagia; (right) his car loaded with essentials to help the needy. ■ HEMANI BHANDARI



and oximeters, PPE kits and gloves among other essential items.

"The thought came to me when a neighbour called for help. He needed oxygen cylinder for his sister-in-law and to arrange for the same, we went to Rajouri Garden gurdwara where I realised that there were so many people who were coming in rickshaws and autos. So I thought I can try helping them using my vehicle," he said, adding that he visited a gurdwara in Geeta Colony who was helping people with oxygen at the time and told them he would be willing to help anyone with transportation as not everyone could afford an ambulance.

"I had just recovered from COVID-19 and doctors said

that I would have enough antibodies for the next three months so I made use of it".

On April 26, Mr. Nagia received his first call to help transporting a patient from Krishna Nagar to Guru Teg Bahadur Hospital. He recalled how he wore a PPE kit and created a cabin in his car as a precautionary

cylinder to set the flow. For the last week and a half, he hasn't received any desperate calls except for ration but he continues to visit Seemapuri cremation ground to help with the last rites of unclaimed bodies.

So far, while showing some transaction receipts, he said that he has spent more than ₹2 lakh in the process, but has now started to crowdfund because he has spent more than what he thought he could. "Last year, we didn't go out anywhere, so I saved and used that money for this work," he said.

At work, he said that his clients are usually from the U.S. and the U.K., therefore, he used to manage at night and sometimes, only rarely during the day. "My office

has been supportive. There was an instance when I had to drive a person and I had a client call. I requested them for 10 minutes silence," he said.

Talking about keeping his family safe, he said that he didn't come in direct contact with his children or mother because they have never contracted the virus so far. The house is big enough to maintain distance. "For 20 days which were very dangerous, I used the washroom in our parking and now, when I go home, I bathe in sanitiser and wear a double mask even inside the house," he said.

The institute said that the new department is expected to provide the much-needed focus and visibility to the teaching and research activities of the institute in the

IIT-D to establish new department of energy

It will focus on research activities

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi, on Monday said that it would be establishing a new department named, 'Department of Energy Science and Engineering' to expand the scope and depth of activities being undertaken by the 45-year-old Centre for Energy Studies (CES).

The institute said that the new department is expected to provide the much-needed focus and visibility to the teaching and research activities of the institute in the

field of energy to meet increasing energy requirements at affordable price in an environmentally sustainable manner.

Besides continuing with three existing MTech programmes, the new department would offer a BTech in Energy Engineering starting from academic session 2021-2022 with an intake of 40 students qualifying JEE (Advanced).

K.A. Subramanian, Head, CES, said, "The BTech programme is designed to equip the students with the necessary knowledge and skills."

Timings		
DELHI		
TUESDAY, JUN. 01		
RISE 05:24 SET 19:15		
RISE 00:12 SET 11:12		
WEDNESDAY, JUN. 02		
RISE 05:24 SET 19:16		
RISE 00:49 SET 12:10		
THURSDAY, JUN. 03		
RISE 05:24 SET 19:16		
RISE 01:23 SET 13:07		

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	40	25
Safdarjung	40	25
Palam	40	25

Delhi Pali Today	37°C
An easy morning and hot day would prevail. Light spells of rain and thunderstorm likely with cloudy sky.	

Delhi Pali Tomorrow	38°C
Marginal drop in day temperature. Hot day likely to prevail with cloudy sky. Rain and thunderstorm at some places.	

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THE HINDU
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IN BRIEF

Ramdev row: RDAs to observe black ribbon stir
NEW DELHI
Residents Doctors' Associations (RDAs) of city hospitals on Monday said they will observe a "black ribbon protest" on Tuesday against comments made by Baba Ramdev. The Federation of Resident Doctors' Association said they were ready to be a party in court cases against Mr. Ramdev.

Mayoral polls slated for June 16

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA NEW DELHI

The polls to elect Mayors and Deputy Mayors of the three corporations in Delhi are now slated to be held on June 16 subject to the COVID lockdown in the city, officials said on Monday.

The decision has been taken in view of the extension of the lockdown here till June 7, East Delhi Mayor Nirmal Jain said. "The last date to file nominations was today [May 31] and the polls were supposed to be held on June 8. Now, the last day to file nominations has been extended till June 8 and the polls will take place on June 16," he said. However, the dates are subject to lockdown situation, Mr. Jain said.

FIR lodged against AAP councillor

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

An FIR was registered against Aam Admi Party councillor Ramesh Matiala based on a complaint by a party worker.

The victim, in a video, said the incident took place on May 28 when Mr. Matiala allegedly asked two women associates to slap the complainant in his presence because he objected to the latter's picture on the banner during RT-PCR testing camp. The complainant said she worked hard to organise the testing camp, which is why she put her photo on the banner. The councillor allegedly got the banner torn and asked two women to slap the complainant.

The victim then gave a written complaint in Bindapur police station following which a case under Sections 323 (causing hurt), 341 (wrongful restraint), 509 (word, gesture or act intended to insult the modesty of a woman), and 506 (threatening) of the IPC was registered and probe is under way.

Few Covaxin slots available, getting a second dose a task

No free vaccines in the city for 18-44 age group for more than a week now

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

Several people who are due to get their second Covaxin shots are finding it difficult to book slots due to a limited supply of the vaccine in the national capital.

Efficacy of first dose

Many of them have taken to social media to raise concerns over whether the first dose would be effective if the second dose is not administered within the stipulated period.

Sanoop Krishnan (32), a nursing officer at the LNJP hospital, said the due date for his second dose was on Monday, but he did could not book the slot. "I had taken the vaccine on May 3. Later, I got a message that my due date was May 31. I have been trying to book a slot for the past two days, but nothing is available. The Central government should have purchased the vaccines instead of asking States to buy themselves," the nurse said.

Mr. Krishnan added that as a healthcare worker, he was hopeful of getting the second dose on time. But, he feels, that the general public would face even more



A woman gets vaccinated at a centre in Central Delhi on Monday. ■ V.V. KRISHNAN

difficulties.

South Delhi resident Geetika Sengupta said the 42-day period between the two doses was already over and she had still not managed to book a slot.

"When I asked at the hospital where I took the first shot, they informed me that vaccines were not available. I was told that several others like me are awaiting their second dose. The hospital said there was a possibility of vaccines being available after June 15, but there was no confirmation on the same," said Ms. Sengupta.

A 28-year-old who took the first dose of Covaxin on May 4 said: "I have been trying to book a slot for the past one week but centres are not available. The government should have kept a reserve for people who got the first dose of Covaxin."

South Delhi resident Geetika Sengupta said the 42-day period between the two doses was already over and she had still not managed to book a slot.

Delhi has been facing a shortage of vaccines. Free vaccinations drive for the 18-44 age group – both Covaxin and Covishield – are not being conducted at government schools for over a week now, as per an official bulletin.

Taking to Twitter, several people questioned the efficacy of the first dose if the second one was not administered within the specified period.

Tagging Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on a tweet, Radhika Tongar, one such Twitter user wrote: "How is one supposed to get (the) second Covaxin dose considering no slots are opening for it. And as far as I know, the window for it hasn't been revised too. What happens when my 42 days get over soon? [sic]"

Vikram Garg, another Twitter user wrote, "...Opening Cowin site five times a day for the last three days, every slot is booked in Delhi, Noida and Gurgaon. No slot available, neither free nor paid. No point in dose 1 if dose 2 is not available. [sic]"

Atishi seeks more jabs

Meanwhile, AAP leader Atishi on Monday said: "Vaccinations are happening for the youth in Delhi only at private facilities at higher rates. There is no commitment from the Central government on vaccines for youth. According to the Centre, the first instalment will come on June 10 and only 5.5 lakh vaccine doses for the youth in the next month.

We need 50 lakh more doses for them in Delhi. We appeal to the Centre to give more vaccines."

CM says city may get Sputnik V from June 20; positivity rate dips below 1%

Kejriwal inaugurates free vaccination for scribes, their kin

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

The test positivity rate (TPR) of COVID-19 cases fell to 0.99% in the city – the lowest in more than two months – according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government on Monday.

Earlier in the day, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said COVID-19 vaccine Sputnik will be given to Delhi probably after June 20.

"Sputnik will probably offer vaccines after June 20. Right now, they are importing the vaccines and they will allot a section of their imported vaccines to the Delhi government. They will start domestic production from August," the Chief Minister said.

On Monday, Mr. Kejriwal inaugurated a free walk-in vaccination facility for journalists and their families at Sarvodaya Bal Vidyalaya near ITO.

"This facility will vaccinate journalists and their families of both age groups – 18-45 years and above those above 45 years – free of cost. Vaccination is the need of the hour to protect yourself from COVID. I appeal to all the journalists to come here and get them-



A man undergoes a COVID-19 test in Azadpur on Monday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

selves vaccinated for free," Mr. Kejriwal said.

A TPR of 0.99% means that less than one person out of 100 people taking COVID tests are positive for the virus.

The last time the positivity was less than this was on March 19, when it was 0.93%. The TPR was as high as 36% on April 22 and has been coming down since then.

648 fresh cases
The city reported 648 new COVID-19 cases in 24 hours, taking the total cases to 14,26,240. Also, 86 deaths

were reported, and the total number of deaths stood at 24,237. A total of 65,240 tests were done in a day, the bulletin said. Of the total cases, 13,90,963 people have recovered and there are 11,040 active cases.

Also, out of the total 24,852 hospital beds for COVID-19, 80.7% of beds were vacant. At the peak of the second wave in April, only 5.6% of beds were vacant on many days. The Chief Minister also said the city currently has around 944 cases of black fungus, including 300 at the Central government-run hospitals.

AAP demands civic bodies to pay salaries

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party on Monday demanded the BJP-governed municipal corporation to pay salaries to all its employees and said the High Court has decided to auction properties of the civic bodies for the same. "The HC has decided to auction the properties of the civic bodies to the party to pay salaries to its employees. The Delhi BJP has looted the civic bodies for 15 years and now it has no money to pay salaries..." AAP leader Durgesh Pathak said.

Factories reopen



1-3 Workers back at their jobs in small factories on the first day of the 'unlock' process at industrial areas across Delhi 4 Daily wage labourers wait to be hired at Bhajanpura Chowk in Delhi on Monday. ■ PHOTOS BY: SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA, SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR, R.V. MOORTHY

NSUI seeks age relaxation for exams

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

In wake of delays in examination schedules due to the pandemic, the National Students Union of India (NSUI) on Monday wrote to the Union Minister of State for Personnel, Public Grievance and Pensions Jitendra Singh asking for age relaxation and extra attempts for students appearing in competitive exams.

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Cong. panel bids to quell Punjab factionalism

Committee formed by Sonia meets MLAs in the wake of CM-Sidhu spat over 2015 sacrilege issue

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

As factionalism in Punjab reached a crisis point, a three-member Congress committee started meeting lawmakers from the State to work out an amicable solution.

With Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh and senior party leader Navjot Sidhu on a war path over the 2015 sacrilege issue, Congress president Sonia Gandhi has tasked Opposition leader in the Rajya Sabha, Mallikarjun Kharge, Congress general secretary in-charge of Punjab Harish Rawat and senior leader J.P. Agarwal to broker

peace.

"The meeting was for *manthan* [brainstorming]. It's not about any individual but Punjab and the Congress. These meetings will take place over three days and MLAs, MPs and senior leaders will share their views on how to consolidate the position," Punjab Congress chief Sunil Jakhar told reporters after he met the panel.

For the past several weeks, Mr. Sidhu has been attacking the Amarinder Singh government for failing to hold the previous Parkash Singh Badal-led Akali government responsible for the 2015 Kotkapur



CM Amarinder Singh

ura firing incident following the desecration of the Guru Granth Sahib in Punjab's Faridkot.

"Those who have given orders and killed unarmed Sikhs will not be spared," re-

ponded Mr. Jakhar without naming anyone.

'Tacit support'

Supporters of the Chief Minister argued that Mr. Sidhu's open rebellion cannot take place without the tacit support from the party high command since the cricketer-turned-politician is known to be close to former party chief Rahul Gandhi and general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra.

Captain Singh's loyalists also objected to Mr. Gandhi reportedly speaking to some of the Punjab MLAs through an aide ahead of their meeting

with the three-member panel.

Apart from Mr. Sidhu, the Chief Minister also faces challenge from former Punjab Congress chief Partap Singh Bajwa and Samsher Singh Dullo.

Among those who met the panel included Punjab Finance Minister Manpreet Singh Badal and Ministers Tripti Bajwa, Brahm Mohindra, O.P. Soni, Rana Sodhi, Sukhjinder Randhawa among others. The outcome of these meetings will be important as the party is seeking to revamp its Punjab unit before Assembly elections.

Bihar extends lockdown till June 8

Shops to remain open from 6 a.m. to 2 p.m.

AMARNATH TEWARY

PATNA

The Bihar government on Monday extended the lockdown for a week, till June 8, in view of COVID-19 infection with some relaxation for business activities.

"In view of corona infection, decision has been taken

to extend the lockdown for a week till June 8. But some relaxation is being given for business activities. All should wear mask and maintain social distance," tweeted Chief Minister Nitish Kumar.

This is the fourth time the Bihar government has extended lockdown since May 5, 2021.

The shops will now be open from 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. across the State but all private offices and other activities

will remain closed. Earlier, shops were allowed to open from 6 a.m. to 10 a.m.

During the lockdown period, there has been a sharp decline in the number of infections.

'Recovery rate 96.67%'

"In last 24 hours, 4,130 infected people had recovered from the disease in the State. The recovery rate in Bihar is 96.67%", tweeted Health Minister Mangal Pandey.

U.P. hooch toll rises to 36

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

The toll in the Aligarh hooch tragedy climbed to 36 on Monday with 11 more deaths being confirmed by the district authorities.

Viscera samples of 35 other people, who are suspected to have died after consuming spurious liquor, have been sent for examination, Chief Medical Officer Dr. B.P. Kalyani said.

A Division Bench of the High Court ruled that the Centre's standard operating procedure (SOP) on vaccination did not exclude the migrants from Pakistan. The State government, which is yet to take a final decision on the issue, has sought some time from the court for furnishing details about the steps taken to implement the SOP.

The Medical and Health Department organised vaccination camps in Kali Beri,

Pakistani migrants get the jab after HC intervention

Rajasthan seeks time to give details

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

JAIPUR

Amid an uncertainty about their citizenship status, Pakistani Hindu migrants residing in Jodhpur district have started getting COVID-19 vaccination following an intervention of the Rajasthan High Court. However, the migrants who do not possess any of the prescribed identity documents were still not getting the vaccine.

A Division Bench of the High Court ruled that the Centre's standard operating procedure (SOP) on vaccination did not exclude the migrants from Pakistan. The State government, which is yet to take a final decision on the issue, has sought some time from the court for furnishing details about the steps taken to implement the SOP.

The Medical and Health Department organised vaccination camps in Kali Beri,

Alkausar Nagar and Anganwa localities on the outskirts of Jodhpur city over the weekend.

Hindu Singh Soda, president of Seeman Lok Sangathan, told *The Hindu* on Monday that the distinction made on the basis of identity documents had deprived these migrants of vaccine protection. "The Union government has stated in the court that the vaccines will be provided based on the information from the State about the groups needing inoculation."

The State government submitted to the court that about 25,000 Pakistani minority migrants were at present residing in various districts, including 7,500 in Jodhpur.

The Bench also directed the State government to ensure that ration material and food packets were made available to the needy Pakistani migrants.

INTERVIEW | SUDHIR BHANDARI

'Aggressive nature of pandemic's second wave handled effectively'

Third, fourth waves predicted between Sept. and Dec.: expert

MOHAMMED IQBAL

The State-Level Core Team on COVID-19 Management and Care in Rajasthan has effectively handled the aggressive nature of second wave of pandemic by managing the younger and paediatric population. But the adolescents, who have not been vaccinated so far, may be affected more in the subsequent waves, says Dr. Sudhir Bhandari, head of the Core Team and Principal of Sawai Man Singh Government Medical College, Jaipur.



Core Team on COVID-19 Management and Care, what was your remit and how have you helped the State government in identifying the key areas where action was needed?

■ Since the beginning of the first wave, we have been working intensely with our core team in various directions, such as building up infrastructure for COVID-19 patients, creating more oxygenated and ventilated beds and enhancing the capacity for RT-PCR testing. We started with zero test at Sawai Man Singh Hospital and raised to 10,000 tests per day. We are now capable of conducting more than one lakh RT-PCR tests a day in the entire State.

Our team was the first to use hydroxychloroquine and antiviral drugs Lopinavir and Ritonavir in the first three Italian COVID-19 patients. The core team headed by me has effectively handled the aggressive nature of the pandemic's second wave by managing the younger and paediatric population.

You were the first person to receive the COVID-19 vaccine dose in Rajasthan. Are there still apprehensions among the people about vaccination and have you succeeded in sending a clear message that our indigenous vaccine is safe?

■ I had the honour of being

the first person in Rajasthan to get vaccinated. Since we were the first in many ways, such as using hydroxychloroquine and implementing the COVID management protocols, I wanted to boost the morale of the whole medical fraternity by taking the vaccine first and increase the acceptability by the public at large with the confidence that the vaccines are safe.

There are reports that people are contracting infection even after getting one or both the doses of vaccine. Does it mean that the vaccine does not provide full protection and the people should adhere to the COVID appropriate protocol?

■ It is true that even after two doses, people are getting infection. The vaccination only protects from critical disease and ventilation and one might still contact asymptomatic or mild infection. Therefore, the compliance with the COVID appropriate behaviour, especially wearing the face mask and maintaining distance, is a must even after vaccination.

What is the likelihood of a third wave of the pandemic hitting Rajasthan and the country?

■ As per the epidemiological studies, the third and fourth waves of the pandemic are predicted somewhere between September and December this year. They can also merge with the second wave. There is a possibility that the adolescents and children, who have not been vaccinated, may be affected more in the third wave, as the middle age and elderly population has been vaccinated to quite an extent.

Focus on third wave: Hooda to Haryana govt.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

The Leader of the Opposition in the Haryana Assembly, Bhupinder Singh Hooda, said on Monday that cases of COVID-19 have started to decrease but the State government should not lower its guard and focus on streng-

thening the healthcare system on priority for possible third wave.

Mr. Hooda said planning will have to be done immediately to handle the post-pandemic conditions as inflation, recession, poverty and unemployment are on the rise.

"The unemployment rate in Haryana has reached 35.1% and every third person of the State is unemployed. Therefore, the government should help people whose business has been ruined during the pandemic," he said during a virtual press conference.

Woman raped after recovery from COVID

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

The police in eastern Assam's Chiraiideo district have arrested two men on the charge of raping a woman who was walking home from a hospital after recovering from COVID-19. The alleged incident happened at 7:30 p.m. on May 27.

The Sapekhati Model Hospital, about 25 km from her home in a tea garden, had released the woman and her teenage daughter after both tested negative.

Both wanted to spend the night at the hospital complex but the medical staff allegedly did not entertain their request. They also allegedly did not provide the duo with transport during the night curfew.

Daughter escapes
The two accused pounced upon the duo when they were about 4 km short of their home. The daughter managed to escape and inform the plantation workers.

"The victim has identified the two persons we arrested. They are being interrogated and would be produced in the local court on Tuesday," district Superintendent of Police Sudhakar Singh said.

The Congress slammed the hospital authorities for failing to provide an ambulance to ferry the woman and her daughter home.

PUBLIC NOTICE

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given on behalf of Axis Bank Ltd that Mr. Suresh Kumar Bhatia intends to mortgage the Property No. B-48, area measuring 293.54 sq. mtrs. in Block B, situated in the T.H.A residential colony known as Surya Nagar, Sector 7, Tehsil Dadri, District Ghaziabad, U.P. with our client Axis Bank Ltd against the financial assistance. Mr. Suresh Kumar Bhatia acquired the said property from Mr. Amit Singh/S/o S.B. Singhal as attorney of Mr. Parag Sharma by way of Sale Deed dated 31.10.2011. However, out of the chain link documents some documents were lost/misplaced i.e., (i) Allotment Letter in favour of Mr. Goureshwar Dholappa, Regd. GPA, Agreement to sell and Regd. Will dt. 23.08.2011 in favour of Mr. Amit Singh and in this regard FIR No. 31591/2021 dt. 13.04.2021 was already lodged. Public is hereby informed not to deal with the above-mentioned documents and the property. If anyone do the same, then he will be responsible for all consequences. If any person/s having objection with regard to mortgage of the said property is/are requested to intimate in writing to undersigned within 15 days from the date of issue of this notice at below address. In the event no information is received within 15 days from date hereof, our Client i.e. Axis Bank Ltd, will proceed with the mortgage process.

RISHI KAPOOR, ADVOCATE

A-13, LGF, South Extri-II, New Delhi-49 # 011-2626210, 11, 12

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH

With deep grief, we inform the demise of

SRI. R. SIVARAMAKRISHNAN (Age 77)

Retd. Spc. Gr Draughting Officer,

TN PWD

on 23rd May 2021

Family & Friends

A-13, LGF, South Extri-II, New Delhi-49 # 011-2626210, 11, 12

PR 247172 (Urban Development) 21-22 (D)

Project Director (Technical) JUIDCO Ltd.

Sd/-

General Manager (IT) JUIDCO Ltd.

PR No. 244829

PR.NO.247212 Jharkhand Bijlee Vitran Nigam Ltd(21-22):D

General Manager (IT) JUIDCO Ltd.

PR 247172 (Urban Development) 21-22 (D)

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IN BRIEF



Congress isolated Satheseean: K.K. Shailaja

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Former Health Minister K. K. Shailaja on Monday said the Congress party had alienated Opposition Leader V. D. Satheseean for openly declaring that he would not bow to pressure from caste-based social organisations. Ms. Shailaja was piloting the motion of thanks to the Governor's policy address. By some accounts, she was the first woman legislator to undertake the task.

New medical colleges will save lives, says Jagan

GUNTUR

In tune with the National Health Policy, the Andhra Pradesh government had decided to set up 16 new colleges in rural areas, which will provide tertiary medical facilities. Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy said the colleges will save lives in rural areas.

Priest, 24 others booked for lockdown violations

KOCHI

The Nedumbassery police booked 25 persons, including a parish vicar, under the Kerala Epidemic Disease Ordinance on the charge of congregating at a church in violation of the lockdown norms on Monday. The congregation was held in connection with the first Communion of a parish member at St. Joseph Church. The priest also held a Mass attended by many people.

'Akhandha parayanam' organised at Tirumala

TIRUMALA

The Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) on Monday organised a 16-hour-long 'Akhandha Sundarakanda Parayanam' at its Dharmagiri Veda Vignani Peetam. Forty scholars divided into four groups performed the unique task by reciting 2,821 slokas.

Push for free jabs, Pinarayi tells 11 CMs

Kerala Chief Minister calls for united effort so that Centre acts immediately

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has attempted to enlist the support of his counterparts in 11 States to jointly persuade the Centre to procure and supply COVID-19 vaccines free of cost.

Mr. Vijayan has tweeted: "Wrote to 11 CMs in the spirit of cooperative federalism. Quite unfortunate the Centre absolves itself of its duty to procure vaccines, ensure free universal vaccination. United effort to jointly pursue our genuine demand is the need of the hour so that the Centre acts immediately."

In his letter dated May 29, Mr. Vijayan said the Union government had taken a stance that States should resort to their own measures to procure the COVID-19 vaccine. It was the duty of the Centre to provide adequate doses to the States. Foreign pharmaceutical companies were unwilling to enter into an agreement with the States for supplying vaccines. They sought to exploit the scarce supply situation for financial gain.

Ramp up production

India's public sector pharmaceutical companies should take up vaccine production to address the mismatch between demand and supply. The Central government should ensure that intellectual property rights and patent laws did not im-

Wrote to 11 CMs in the spirit of cooperative federalism. Quite unfortunate the Centre absolves itself of its duty to procure vaccines, ensure free universal vaccination. United effort to jointly pursue our genuine demand is the need of the hour so that the Centre acts immediately

PINARAYI VIJAYAN
Kerala Chief Minister

pede vaccine production, he said.

Mr. Vijayan said the Central government's bid to place the entire onus of procuring vaccines on States defied the very basis of cooperative federalism. "The need of the hour is a united effort from our side to put forth the genuine demand that the Centre procure vaccine needed by the States and distribute them free of cost. This will be more cost-effective as well."

Universal vaccination was the surefire method to build herd immunity. Mr. Vijayan said he had written to the Prime Minister earlier spelling out the merits of the Centre taking the lead in assessing the vaccine requirements of the States. The Centre could then float a global tender for dosages as per the States' need, he said.

(He said he had enclosed a copy of his letter to the

Prime Minister in his communication to his equivalents in other States.)

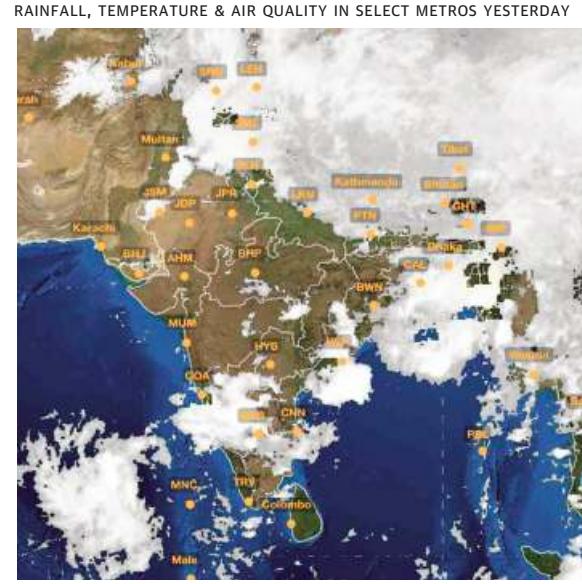
Mr. Vijayan said vaccination should be free to ensure that none shall be denied the protection 'due to lack of financial wherewithal.' The unprecedented 'impact of the second surge' had caused alarm. Experts have warned of a third surge – the country required to prepare for such an eventuality, he said.

Karnataka to get shots from manufacturers

BENGALURU

Karnataka government has decided to purchase vaccines directly from manufacturers as the two companies that had submitted bids in response to tenders for supply of vaccines have not submitted the required documents.

WEATHER WATCH



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD; POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP; INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.00 HRS)

Forecast for Tuesday: Heavy/heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Assam, Nagaland, Tripura, Telangana, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Karaikal and Kerala. Thunderstorm with lightning/gusty winds likely at isolated places over Punjab, Delhi, Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, coastal Andhra Pradesh, Yanam, Marathwada, north interior Karnataka, Kerala and Mahe

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	... 34.0 ...	27.7	24.0	Kozhikode	... 32.0 ...	24.0	24.0
Ahmedabad	... 37.6 ...	28.0	26.9	Kurnool	... 38.1 ...	26.9	26.9
Aizawl	... 28.1 ...	19.0	19.0	Lucknow	... 38.0 ...	26.5	26.5
Altahabad	... 38.4 ...	26.5	26.5	Madurai	... 41.4 ...	26.4	26.4
Bengaluru	... 32.3 ...	21.4	21.4	Mangaluru	... 31.2 ...	23.8	23.8
Bhopal	... 39.7 ...	21.2	21.2	Mumbai	... 32.0 ...	27.2	27.2
Bhubaneswar	... 37.1 ...	29.0	29.0	Mysuru	... 33.0 ...	21.2	21.2
Chandigarh	... 34.0 ...	27.4	25.0	New Delhi	... 39.6 ...	25.0	25.0
Chennai	1 ... 39.2 ...	28.2	28.2	Patna	... 35.0 ...	25.8	25.8
Coimbatore	... 34.7 ...	23.9	23.9	Port Blair	19 ... 32.4 ...	24.8	24.8
Dehradun	0.6 ... 34.6 ...	24.0	24.0	Puducherry	... 38.7 ...	25.7	25.7
Gangtok	0.3 ... 22.0 ...	17.3	17.3	Pune	... 34.6 ...	24.1	24.1
Goa	... 32.6 ...	25.8	25.8	Raipur	... 42.5 ...	29.0	29.0
Guwahati	11 ... 26.5 ...	25.7	24.9	Ranchi	0.4 ... 33.0 ...	24.9	24.9
Hubballi	... 30.0 ...	22.0	21.7	Shillong	16 ... 19 ...	17.3	17.3
Hyderabad	... 38.4 ...	27.0	19.6	Shimla	... 29.3 ...	19.6	19.6
Imphal	... 31.3 ...	20.6	19.6	Srinagar	1.3 ... 24.2 ...	15.4	15.4
Jaipur	... 40.2 ...	29.0	27.6	Thiruvananthapuram	0.4 ... 32.7 ...	25.2	25.2
Kochi	2 ... 31.4 ...	25.0	25.0	Tiruchi	... 40.3 ...	27.6	27.6
Kohima	... 24.8 ...	16.4	16.4	Vijayawada	... 38.8 ...	29.6	29.6
Kolkata	36 ... 27.8 ...	24.0	24.0	Visakhapatnam	0.4 ... 36.0 ...	29.6	29.6

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO ₂	NO _x	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	25	38	24	59	79	■■■
Bengaluru	5	37	73	27	32	■■■
Chennai	78	6	34	26	31	■■■
Delhi	12	19	16	61	228	■■■■■
Hyderabad	3	74	18	38	55	■■■■■
Kolkata	10	19	28	47	60	■■■■■
Lucknow	11	69	91	96	127	■■■■■
Mumbai	41	41	31	42	77	■■■■■
Pune	... 32.64 ...	55	48	54	62	■■■■■
Visakhapatnam	16	41	27	62	101	■■■■■

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 191, indicating a moderate level of pollution. Gadic, Karnataka recorded a healthy AQI score of 10.

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

SO₂: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease.

NORTH & WEST

Failure to control crowd on roads will lead to stricter curbs: Uddhav

CM says lockdown restrictions have already slowed down developmental works

STAFF REPORTER
MUMBAI

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Monday warned over the increasing crowd on Mumbai roads saying failing to control this would result in stricter restrictions in the city.

Speaking at the inauguration of multiple infrastructure works, Mr. Thackeray said, "I was really concerned when I saw crowd on the streets of Mumbai today. We have not yet lifted lockdown restrictions in Mumbai and Maharashtra as corona scare is not over yet."

The Chief Minister added that the lockdown restrictions had already slowed down various developmental works in the city and in the State. "If crowding continues, then ongoing works



Better connectivity: The trial run on the Metro Lines 2A and 7, ahead of its inauguration by Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray at Kandivali in Mumbai on Monday. ■ EMMANUEL YOGINI

too will have to be stopped. If crowd continues on roads of Mumbai then we will have to impose stricter restrictions in the city," he said.

Mr. Thackeray was presiding over the programmes including inauguration of the Metro line testing between

Dahanukarwadi and Aarey Metro station and stone-laying ceremony of underground and elevated road on the Western Express Highway (T1 and T2) and book launch of 'Multiplicities' and e-inauguration of one-side-arm of Rajnoli flyover to

In a bid to claim credit, Mr. Fadnavis tweeted, "Very happy about the trial run of Metro line 2A & 7. From sanctioning to finance to speedy work during our tenure made this possible. Now, we hope to see the regular metro running soon on these routes. #MumbaiMetroTrials."

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Ending encryption

Enforcing traceability on popular messaging apps will encroach into user privacy

Barely a day before the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules 2021 came into force, WhatsApp moved the Delhi High Court against the rules – specifically the one that mandates that a “significant social media intermediary providing services primarily in the nature of messaging shall enable the identification of the first originator of the information on its computer resource as may be required by a judicial order”. Given the specification that a “significant social media intermediary” is one with more than 50 lakh registered users, WhatsApp’s messenger service would clearly be affected. WhatsApp’s contention is that for compliance and traceability, it would have to break its end-to-end encryption service that allows messages to be read only by the sender and the receiver. Its argument is that the encryption feature allows for privacy protections and breaking it would mean a violation of privacy. The question to be asked is whether the traceability guidelines (by breaking encryption) are vital to law enforcement in cases of harmful content. A release by the Ministry of Electronics and IT has said that the traceability measure will be used by law enforcement as the “last resort” and will come by only in specific situations, such as “for the purposes of prevention, detection, investigation, prosecution or punishment of an offence related to the sovereignty and integrity of India... or child sexual abuse material, punishable with imprisonment....” The assertion suggests that this requirement is in line with the Puttaswamy judgment that clarified that any restriction to the right of privacy must be necessary, proportionate and include safeguards against abuse.

But the Government, as the law stands now, can already seek access to encrypted data under Section 69(3) of the IT Act, and Rules 17 and 13 of the 2009 Surveillance Rules that require intermediaries to assist with decryption when they have the technical ability to do so and when law enforcement has no other alternative. Besides, it can still seek unencrypted data, metadata and digital trails from intermediaries such as WhatsApp. The trouble with enforcing traceability is that without safeguards such as having any independent or judicial oversight, government agencies could seek any user’s identity on vague grounds and this could compromise the anonymity of whistle-blowers and journalistic sources, who can claim to be acting in the public interest. WhatsApp’s contention that “requiring messaging apps to ‘trace’ chats is the equivalent of asking us to keep a fingerprint of every single message sent... and fundamentally undermines right to privacy” is, therefore, not hyperbole. If anything, the Government needs to revisit its position on traceability commitments of intermediaries and instead revise the IT Act, 2000 in line with existing global best practices besides legislating the long-pending Data Protection Bill.

No comments

Some questions at post-match conferences are insensitive, but a player boycott is no solution

At 23, Naomi Osaka has the tennis world at her feet. With four Grand Slam titles and now ranked second in the world, Osaka has tremendous brand equity. She also speaks her mind beyond sport, be it on racism or her mixed lineage of being born to a Haitian father and Japanese mother while growing up in the United States. It looked as though the baton of success had passed from the great Serena Williams to Osaka. Yet, the Japanese star’s fresh halo suffered a dent with her media boycott in the current French Open at Paris. Shooting the messenger is a petulant attribute that crops up in politics, sport and the arts. Often these are impulsive reactions to a bad day at work. The odd tennis press conference was skipped in the past with Serena and Novak Djokovic being guilty of such violations. But what makes it worse for Osaka is her premeditated stance revealed through her message before the French Open: ‘I am not going to do any press during Roland Garros.’ She also juxtaposed her cold-shoulder of the media with mental-health issues, hinting that journalists tend to exacerbate the fragile minds of athletes, especially those who lost a match. In one fell swoop, Osaka ignored nuance, dished out a lame excuse and trivialised the serious issue of mental health.

In a universe where athletes prefer social-media posts over media interactions, the official press-conference is the last remaining avenue for probing questions that elicit insightful answers. Player-journalist interactions are the only substitute for source-based inferences that colour the narrative. Closer home, M.S. Dhoni revealed his international retirement through Instagram and lapsed into silence. Sports bodies have sensed this diffidence and in the cricket World Cup or a Grand Slam event, the post-match press-conference is a contractual obligation. In this era of click-bait headlines, it is not that all Fourth Estate members are perceptive. There have been instances of the odd insensitive question but the athlete can always offer a counter or stick to a ‘no-comments’ response. Osaka deciding to constantly pay a fine for not honouring her media commitments at the French Open has set a terrible precedent and it is fitting that the consortium of Grand Slams have hinted at harsher measures including ejecting her from the tournament. Besides excellence on the turf, commerce of the field equally drives sport. Corporate sponsors, who get some play through advertorial material as background screen in press-conferences, are obviously aggrieved. Legends such as Rafael Nadal have also spoken about how sport evolves through the symbiosis between athletes and the media. It is a pity that Osaka has suddenly turned blind to this reality.

Elected autocrats, their pandemic responses

In the U.S., India and Brazil, messianic populism, polarisation and insularity have made the pandemic that much worse



PATRICK HELLER

A year and counting into the greatest health crisis the world has faced in over a century we can identify one overwhelming factor that separates the countries that have done relatively well from those that have been complete disasters: elected autocrats. By any measure the most dismal performers in the democratic world have been the United States, Brazil and India. Despite its vast wealth and resources and its low population density, the U.S. has one of the highest per capita death tolls in the world. Brazil has taken denialism to new levels and the novel coronavirus pandemic has been allowed to range so fiercely that the country has become a petri dish for new mutations. India’s first wave numbers were relatively mild (even accounting for underreporting) but the current wave is probably the worst and deadliest the world has seen.

The reactions

In all three cases it did not have to be this bad. Former U.S. President Donald Trump took the pandemic as a personal affront, initially refused to come to terms with the threat and wilfully downplayed the gravity of the pandemic. When Washington finally decided to take action, the response was crippled by policy incoherence, partisan attacks on Democratic Governors and open hostility to the scientific community.

Mr. Trump even provided a definition of his autocratic writ declaring in April 2020 that “when so-

mebody’s the President of the United States, the authority is total, and that’s the way it has got to be.”

Brazil’s right-wing populist President, Jair Bolsonaro, who came to office on a platform of being tough on crime and the politically correct, has been called the tropical Trump. He dismissed the pandemic as a “little cold”, boasted that real men had nothing to worry about, attacked public health officials as promoting a hoax and fired health ministers who defied him. Measures to combat the pandemic that have been taken in Brazil have come from governors and mayors and have been met with fierce opposition and public mockery from Mr. Bolsonaro.

Narendra Modi was never an outright COVID denier, and his government did take decisive measures, imposing a nation-wide lockdown in March 2020. But having failed to consult with experts or any of the Chief Ministers that govern India’s federal States, the welfare consequences of the lockdown were severe as tens of millions of urban migrants were forced into a mass exodus back to their villages. The pandemic subsided for some time, but even as experts warned of a second wave driven by new variants, the government celebrated its national triumph over the virus, dragged its feet on vaccinations and forged ahead with large-scale election campaign events and religious festivals even as the second wave surged. But of all the policy failures that have led to calls for the government to resign, none is more egregious or more revealing of Mr. Modi’s indifference than the Government’s decision to stay within its Budget allocations and charge States for vaccines. At the current rate, it will take the world’s largest producer of vac-



cines more than a year to vaccinate its population.

As elected autocrats, Mr. Trump, Mr. Bolsonaro and Mr. Modi have three things in common.

First, they came to power as classic right-wing populists who branded themselves as incarnations of the people and peddled their personal virtues of strength and fortitude as substitutes for deliberation and policy making. Rulers powered by messianic faith have little patience for experts and science. All three have surrounded themselves with yes-men and ruled from the gut, peddling triumphalism (all three prematurely declared the pandemic vanquished), quack remedies (injecting disinfectants, the waters of the Ganga) and sheer macho bombast, as when Mr. Trump and Mr. Bolsonaro took a lap for surviving infection even as they received the best care in the world.

The line of nationalism

Second, autocrats feed on polarisation. All three have championed a virtuous nationalism – rooted alternatively in evangelism in Brazil and the U.S., or Hindutva in India – animated and weaponised by the demonisation of the other. Ethnicised nationalism works by demoting the “other” – Muslims, Blacks, immigrants, gays, secularists and all those who subscribe to ideals of civic nationalism – to

the status of the undeserving and the morally deficient. Membership in the community of the nation is essentialised. Mr. Trump demonised immigrants, channelled white supremacy and stoked fears of Blacks invading suburbs. Mr. Bolsonaro routinely smears his opponents as *banditos* or communists and has a long track record of making homophobic and misogynistic remarks. Mr. Modi has a long record of debasing India’s 200 million Muslims, and when re-elected in 2019, doubled down on his party’s platform of making India a Hindutva project, first by turning Kashmir (India’s only Muslim majority State) into a militarised colony of the central government and then pursuing laws that are perceived by Muslims as according them second class citizenship status. In diverse societies, ethno-nationalism can only fuel social polarisation, and a polarised society is a society that cannot mobilise the trust and solidarity that responding to a pandemic calls for.

The pandemic itself was shamelessly used to inflame identities, with Mr. Trump denouncing the ‘Kung Flu’, Mr. Modi’s minions raising the spectre of ‘corona jihad’, and Mr. Bolsonaro hurling homophobic slurs at mask wearers. More than anything else, this explains why the most common sensible public health measures – wearing masks, restricting social interaction, testing and getting vaccinated – all became so politicised in the U.S., India and Brazil.

Third, once in power, the autocrats quickly personalised, centralised and insulated their power. All three have attacked the Constitution (literally in Mr. Trump’s case), demanded fealty from independent institutions, overidden the authority of expert institutions, tampered with data, assaulted the independence of the me-

A pushback
In the U.S., India and Brazil, this toxic combination of messianic populism, social polarisation, insularity and centralisation has made the pandemic that much worse and poisoned the waters of democracy. But democracies are not just about their leaders. Throughout the crisis, health-care workers and civil society organisations have stepped up where their leaders have failed, and democratic institutions have pushed back.

Mr. Trump has been exposed by the media and shown the exit by the voters. The Brazilian Senate has launched a very public investigation into Mr. Bolsonaro’s handling of the pandemic and his poll numbers have plummeted. Mr. Modi has just been repudiated in State-level elections and the Indian Supreme Court has called out the incoherence of the government’s vaccine policy. But to take comfort in the hope that democracies will demand accountability, we must first remember, as the pandemic continues to ravage India and Brazil, that it is not only the virus, but also the hubris of autocrats, that kills.

Patrick Heller is Professor of Sociology and International Affairs, Brown University, U.S.

Power play to bring the digital ecosystem to heel

While there are problems in the system, ill-considered regulation such as the new IT Rules is not the way forward



RISHAB BAILEY & VRINDA BHANDARI

Rule 4(2) of the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 (<https://bit.ly/3c6uTyk>) imposes an obligation on significant social media intermediaries providing a messaging function, to ensure traceability of the originator of information on their platforms. A failure to implement this obligation can lead to intermediaries being held responsible for illicit content on their platforms. These rules have recently come into effect. Consequently, WhatsApp has filed a petition in the Delhi High Court (<https://bit.ly/3fypRIU>) alleging that the mandate for traceability violates the privacy rights of Indian citizens, by rendering WhatsApp unable to provide encrypted services.

In response, the Government has, through a press release (<https://bit.ly/3cop6ov>), sought to question the substance and timing of WhatsApp’s petition. On scrutiny, however, it appears that the response is misconceived.

The Government primarily relies on the argument that: privacy is not an absolute right, and that the traceability obligation is proportionate, and sufficiently restricted. Notably, the new Rules mandate traceability only in the case of significant social media intermediaries that provide messaging services (i.e. those that meet a

user threshold of 50 lakh users, which WhatsApp does), subject to an order being passed by a court or government agency and only in the absence of any alternatives.

While it is indeed true that privacy is not an absolute right, the Supreme Court of India in the two K.S. Puttaswamy decisions (of 2017 and 2018) has clarified that any restriction on this right must be necessary, proportionate and include safeguards against abuse.

On traceability as a feature

However, as we argue in a recent paper (<https://bit.ly/3wutmlj>), a general obligation to enable traceability as a systemic feature across certain types of digital services is neither suitable nor proportionate. Additionally, the Rules lack effective safeguards in that they fail to provide any system of independent oversight over tracing requests made by the executive. This allows government agencies the ability to seek any messaging user’s identity, virtually at will. However, anonymity from the government can be important, particularly in contexts of journalistic source protection and for whistle-blowers. Therefore, deciding whether to remove anonymity requires application of an independent judicial mind.

In applying the Puttaswamy tests to the Rules, one must examine not just whether the weakening of encryption systems will lead to some law enforcement gains, but whether these are worth the costs involved. Thus, one must consider the impacts of such a measure on the general digital ecosystem in terms of the overall cybersecurity and privacy problems such an obligation could create. There is near universal

consensus that mandating the presence of backdoors or weakening encryption generally – which a traceability mandate would do – would compromise the privacy and security of all individuals at all times, despite no illegal activity on their part, and would create a presumption of criminality.

Other means exist

In any event, the Government already has numerous alternative means of securing relevant information to investigate online offences including by accessing unencrypted data such as metadata, and other digital trails from intermediaries. Therefore, the present Rules attempt to shorten the investigative process, even though, as we argue in our paper, law enforcement is not supposed to be an entirely frictionless process. Frictionless processes lacking sufficient checks will merely incentivise fishing expeditions by government agencies.

Further, the surveillance powers of the Government are in any case vast and overreaching, recognised even by the Justice B.N. Srikrishna Committee report of 2018 (<https://bit.ly/3iB6M3>). Importantly, the Government already has the ability to access encrypted data under the IT Act. Notably, Section 69(3) of the Information Technology Act and Rules 17 and 13 of the Information Technology

(Procedure and Safeguards for Interception, Monitoring and Decryption of Information) Rules, 2009 (<https://bit.ly/3c83QTB>) require intermediaries to assist with decryption where they have the technical ability to do so, and where law enforcement has no alternatives. The newly notified Rules go well beyond current provisions in the law by seeking to punish relevant intermediaries for failing to adequately weaken encryption systems.

The Government’s press release appears to be well aware that this is in effect what would happen if the traceability mandate were to be imposed. However, it notes that it is the responsibility of intermediaries to find an alternative method to protect user privacy, with or without the use of encryption.

Scrutiny is a must

The press release also claims that the new Rules were introduced pursuant to consultation. However, this does not reveal the entire story. The traceability related provision in the draft version of the Rules released in 2018 faced significant opposition from numerous stakeholders, ranging from service providers, academia, and civil society organisations. The new traceability provisions are substantially similar, and carrying out a consultation merely to reject all the views that go against state interests is far from best practice.

Ideally, and given the substantive changes made to the 2018 draft (including the addition of several entirely new parts such as those pertaining to regulation of digital news), the new Rules should also have been put through a period of consultation before being notified.

. Ideally, the rules should also be

accompanied by an explanatory memorandum explaining the rationale for regulation.

Of course, this entire discussion is notwithstanding the fact that the intermediary rules are not the manner or place to go about putting in place new substantive regulation to solve the myriad problems caused by the digital ecosystem. Indeed, the ability of the government to issue progressively more onerous obligations under the guise of “due diligence” requirements under Section 79 of the IT Act (which in essence, deals with the issue of take-down of illegal content) must be subject to judicial scrutiny.

Overall, however, it is clear that the move by the Government is part of a broader power play against foreign-based technology companies, and to generally bring the digital ecosystem to heel. While, undoubtedly, there are numerous problems in the digital ecosystem that are often exacerbated or indeed created by the way intermediaries function, ill-considered regulation of the sort represented by the new intermediary rules – which appear to have little basis in evidence or care for consequences -- is not the way forward. Indeed, the only truly democratic and relatively long-term solution would be for legislative change along multiple avenues, including in the form of revising and reforming the now antiquated IT Act, 2000.

Rishab Bailey is a technology policy researcher at the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy, New Delhi. Vrinda Bhandari, a lawyer practising in Delhi, was involved in challenging the Intermediary Guideline Rules 2021 before the Kerala High Court



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

Denting federalism

The Prime Minister’s Office recalling the Chief Secretary of West Bengal raises certain basic questions about constitutional governance. Under the federal structure, the Centre should, as far as possible, help in the effective functioning of the various States. Contrarily the Centre’s action, making it impossible for the Chief Minister of West Bengal and the Chief Secretary (he has since joined the CM’s team) to effectively tackle important issues such as COVID-19 and relief measures after cyclone

Yaas, defies any respect for democracy. The Centre is negotiating the electoral mandate of the people of West Bengal by creating all sorts of problems for their elected government. This is a disguised form of using Article 356 of the Constitution. This was not the impression that Prime Minister Narendra Modi gave when he came to address a memorial lecture before an august gathering – he was the Chief Minister of Gujarat – at the Madras University Centenary Auditorium in October 2013. Mr. Modi made many

promises linked to his being elected to the main seat of power. One such promise that one vividly

FROM PAGE ONE

India's GDP shrinks by 7.3% in 2020-2021

While restrictions across States have had an impact on activity, the CEA said the second wave seems to have peaked on May 8 and is on the decline, so it is anticipated that lockdown-like curbs will reduce and eventually be removed, which will help the return of economic activity.

"The extent of recovery in the performance of the informal sectors in Q4 FY2021 remains uncertain, and we continue to caution that trends in the same may not get fully reflected in the GDP data, given the lack of adequate proxies to evaluate the less formal sectors," said Aditi Nayar, chief economist at ICRA.

Localised lockdowns
Recovery hopes will hinge on the duration for which localised restrictions will persist in coming months and whether an accelerated

pace of vaccine rollout can prevent a third Covid surge, she said.

"The economic outlook remains highly uncertain, and periodic material revisions to our growth forecasts may persist in FY2022, like last year. At present, we expect real GDP to expand in the range of 8%-9.5%," Ms. Nayar.

More revisions possible
The National Statistical Office attributed the improvement over its earlier growth estimates, to the improved performance of indicators, used in compilation of GVA, in the fourth quarter of 2020-21, owing to the calibrated and steady opening of the economy.

The NSO also warned that data collection had been impacted as much as any other activity by the pandemic, so its estimates could undergo sharp revisions.

It's time to define limits of sedition: Supreme Court

Justice Chandrachud referred to how, in an earlier *suo motu* hearing, he had wondered whether sedition charges would be launched against a news channel that had published a photograph of two persons throwing the body of a COVID-19 patient into a river from a bridge in Uttar Pradesh. "I had this case [Andhra] in mind when I said that," he said.

The court acknowledged the argument that the media was well within its rights to air critical programmes about a prevailing regime without attracting sedition.

TV5, represented by senior advocate Shyam Divan and advocates Vipin Nair and P.B. Suresh, and ABN Andhra Jyothi argued that the sedition FIR against them was an "unfortunate assault". The State had accused them of sedition for reporting news about the pandemic in an "unbiased manner".

Here the Andhra government had "gone one step ahead" to penalise the media, the channels said.

West Bengal Chief Secretary steps down

However, later in the day, the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) shot off a letter asking Mr. Bandyopadhyay to comply with the May 28 order and report at its North Block office at 10 a.m. on Tuesday. This prompted Mr. Bandyopadhyay, who had been given a three-month extension from May 31, his original date of retirement, to opt for superannuation.

Since Mr. Bandyopadhyay chose to retire on Monday and not avail the three-month extension given to him at the request of the State, it was not immediately clear what action the Centre would initiate.

A senior official said on condition of anonymity, "The Centre or the DoPT is not the disciplinary authority for an officer posted in the

State. They cannot initiate disciplinary proceedings against him."

H. K. Dwivedi, who was Additional Chief Secretary (Home) will be the new Chief Secretary and B.P. Gopalika the Additional Chief Secretary (Home).

The developments concerning Mr. Bandyopadhyay, whom the Centre had asked to report to Delhi on May 31, had brought the Centre-State ties to a new low.

According to reports, the Centre had taken exception to him not being present at the review meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the Kaliakunda air base on cyclone 'Yaas' on May 28.

The CM and Mr. Bandyopadhyay had met the Prime Minister at the same venue on May 28.

Recall Lakshadweep head: Kerala Assembly

The Chief Minister, who moved the resolution under Rule 118 in the House, said the Administrator is taking many measures to alienate the peace-loving people of the island. "In the name of development, even their livelihood is threatened. Even coconut trees are painted with saffron colour in the name of beautification. This can't be allowed at any cost," he said.

"The attempt is to impose and implement the saffron agenda and corporate interests in Lakshadweep. The Sangh Parivar is making the

CM

Central Vista project essential, of public importance: Delhi HC

Court dismisses PIL plea against work, says COVID-19 protocols are adhered to

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Monday dismissed a petition seeking to halt the construction activities at the Central Vista Avenue Redevelopment Project in view of the recent surge in COVID-19 cases in the country.

A Bench of Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Justice Jyoti Singh remarked that there was no reason for the court to suspend the construction activities as the workers were staying at the project site, and "COVID-19 protocols are adhered to and COVID-19 appropriate behaviour is being followed".

"We are of the view that this is a motivated petition preferred by the petitioners and not a genuine public interest litigation [petition]," the court said while imposing a cost of ₹1 lakh on petitioners Anya Malhotra, who works as a translator; and Sohail Hashmi, a historian and documentary filmmaker.

'Not an essential activity'
The petitioners had argued that the project was not an essential activity and hence,



Clearance given: Work in progress at the site of the Central Vista project in New Delhi on Monday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

it could be put on hold for now during the pandemic.

The court noted that the work at the Central Vista Avenue Redevelopment was part of the Central Vista Project and of vital public importance and the legality of the project had been upheld by Supreme Court.

"By no stretch of imagination, it can be said that Central Vista Project or Central Vista Avenue Redevelopment Project is not an essential project," the court said, adding, "If this type of project is stopped by the court, the main project cannot be completed within the stipulated time." It noted that the

work at the Central Vista Avenue Redevelopment Project had to be completed by November 2021.

While the petitioners argued that the time limit be extended, the court said, "Such kind of arguments cannot be accepted by this court, keeping in view that the construction activity of this essential project or of a project of national importance cannot be stopped especially when the conditions imposed by the order of the DDMA dated 19th April, 2021...are not flouted or violated."

The HC remarked that several other agencies were undertaking construction projects in Delhi. "It is obvious that petitioners have selectively chosen only one project which is of national importance, at a vital place where Republic Day celebrations are held in Delhi and is a part and parcel of the larger project, namely, Central Vista Project," it stated.

'Very selective'

Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta had argued that the PIL raised in the case was "very selective".

Senior advocate Sidharth Luthra, for the petitioners, stated that his clients were only delivering a message of health and safety for the people of Delhi and if the government could not see it, then it was a "sorry reflection" of its concern for the lives of the citizens.

Mr. Luthra had referred to the ongoing project work as not Central Vista, rather "central fortress of death", comparing it to "Auschwitz".

Mr. Mehta had expressed displeasure with the comparison, saying one could criticise and be venomous about it, but such terms should not be used in court.



Hardeep Singh Puri

shape in 2012.

The new building was being constructed as the present one was cramped. As the freeze on parliamentary seats and seat allocations to States would be lifted in 2026, the number of members in both the Houses would increase, he noted.

There was an element of mischief and wishful thinking (of those opposing the project).

When they saw that the Supreme Court cleared it, they went to the Delhi High Court where also the government had now got the clearance and a cost of ₹1 lakh was imposed on the petitioner, he said.

On Monday, the Delhi High Court ruled that the petition was motivated, and said the national project was vital and essential.

Housing Minister trashes ex-civil servants' letter

There is an element of mischief, he says

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Minister of State for Housing and Urban Affairs Hardeep Singh Puri on Monday said the 60 retired civil servants who recently endorsed an open letter expressing concern over the Central Vista project were a disgrace to the country. The letter was not based on facts and some of them needed to have their head examined before signing it, he stated at a press conference.

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Juhi Chawla moves HC on 5G technology

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Bollywood actor Juhi Chawla has moved the Delhi High Court seeking a scientific study on any adverse effects of radio-frequency radiation emitted by cellular telecommunications using 5G technology on 'health, life, organ or limb of adult or child, or to flora and fauna' before its official rollout in the country.

The petition, which will be taken up on June 2, has sought a direction to the government and the Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB) in particular to certify that deployment of 5G technology for cellular communications posed no reasonable risk or hazard to the health of citizens.

Ms. Chawla, in her petition along with Veeresh Malik and Teena Vachani, has also urged the authorities to rope in the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), and the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) to conduct their respective study on this issue.

Decision soon on oxygen use for industrial purposes

On April 22, govt. banned liquid oxygen supply to industry

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The government would take a decision to lift restrictions on use of liquid oxygen for industrial purposes "as soon as possible", an official said.

"We are talking to State governments to find out what their needs for medical oxygen are. After confirmation from them as well as the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, whatever needs to be done to revive the continuous process industries we will do as soon as possible," said Giridhar Aramane, Secretary, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, who is the convener of the Empowered Group 4 that oversees the country's demand for medical oxygen and its logistics.

"EPFO is committed to settling these claims within three days of their receipt. For this, EPFO has deployed a system driven auto-claim settlement process in respect of all such members whose KYC requirement is complete in all respects," said the statement. "Auto-mode of settlement enables EPFO to reduce the claim settlement cycle to just 3 days as against the statutory requirement to settle the claims within 20 days."

On April 22, the government issued an order banning the supply of liquid oxygen to industry in view of



Demand falls: The current demand for medical oxygen was down to 5,200 metric tonnes a day. ■ FILE PHOTO

increased demand for medical oxygen.

The Empowered Group was consulting medical professionals to assess the demand for medical oxygen for the next wave.

"Those who are blaming the government in hindsight on O2 and other issues did not warn us to be prepared for four lakh cases. The worst of projections were also not for more than a lakh of cases a day. All these people criticising the government should understand that such fierce form of second wave couldn't have been dealt with by any government like we did in such a short time," he added.

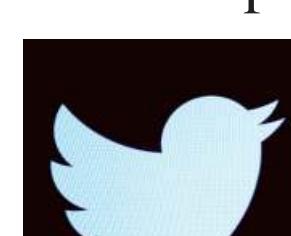
Twitter has to comply with IT Rules: HC

The court issues notices to Union govt. and the microblogging site

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Monday said Twitter has to comply with the new Information Technology Rules for digital media if they have not been stayed by the court.

Justice Rekha Palli also issued notice to the Centre and Twitter on a plea by advocate Amit Acharya, seek-



Twitter claims it complied with the rules and appointed a resident grievance officer.

ing to appoint Resident Grievance Officer under Rule 4 of the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines)

and Digital Ethics Code) Rules 2021.

"They have to follow it [Rules], if it has not been stayed," the court said during the hearing.

The Central government

standing counsel said Twitter has not complied with the Rules, but the social media platform claimed that it has complied with them and appointed a resident grievance officer.

Mr. Acharya, in his plea filed through advocates Akash Vajpai and Manish Kumar, claimed that he wanted to raise grievance against

Twitter for non-compliance with the rules.

Twitter has been given a

three-month extension in

February, effective from

March to May 31.

CBDT members

The government recently ap-

pointed Anu J. Singh, Mr.

Mohapatra and Anuja Sarangi

as members of the body.

All three are income tax

cadre officials of the 1985

batch of Indian Revenue Ser-

vice.

On Monday, the Depart-

ment of Revenue issued the

order directing Mr. Mohapatra to officiate as the chair-

man of the board besides

carrying out his regular du-

ties as a member.

Defence Ministry notifies 108 negative imports

Items on 'positive indigenisation list'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Defence Ministry on Monday notified the second negative import list – now renamed as the 'positive indigenisation list' – of 108 items that can now be only purchased from indigenous sources.

The new list takes the total number on the list to 209. It is planned to be implemented progressively with effect from December 2021 to December 2025, the Defence Ministry said.

"The second list lays special focus on weapons and systems which are currently under development/trials and are likely to translate into firm orders in the future. Like the first list, import substitution of ammunition which is a recurring requirement has been given special focus," a statement said.

The 'second positive indigenisation list' comprises complex systems, sensors, simulator, weapons and ammunitions like helicopters, next generation corvettes,

Air Borne Early Warning and Control (AEW&C

Lakshadweep
MP meets
Amit Shah

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah has given an assurance that the new draft laws for Lakshadweep that are being opposed by the islanders will not be finalised without consulting local representatives, its MP Mohammed Faizal said on Monday.

Talking to presspersons after meeting Mr. Shah here, Mr. Faizal said he apprised the Home Minister of the strong opposition to the draft laws proposed by the new administrator, Pravul Patel. He said he also told Mr. Shah about the widespread protests on the islands.

"He has assured us that whatever laws that are under the consideration, they will be sent to Lakshadweep where local representatives in the district panchayat will be consulted," Mr. Faizal said.

Mr. Faizal said Mr. Patel had been pushing for the laws – from a ban on cow slaughter to a two-child norm for those wanting to contest the gram panchayat elections, and allowing liquor to be served at resorts on inhabited islands – that have upset the islanders. The majority of the residents in the islands were Muslims.

Besides, people have apprehensions about the draft Lakshadweep Development Authority Regulation (LDAR) and the draft Lakshadweep Prevention of Anti-Social Activities Regulation, Mr. Faizal said.

Class 12 exam: govt. says decision by Thursday

SC seeks 'good reasons' in case of departure from 2020 stand

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

The Union government on Monday sought time till Thursday from the Supreme Court to take a "final decision" on whether the Class 12 Board examinations should be cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The government will take a final decision within the next few days... Give us time till Thursday," Attorney-General K.K. Venugopal submitted.

A Bench of Justices A.M. Khanwilkar and Dinesh Mshwari agreed, but stated that the government had to give "good reasons" in case it decided to depart from its policy in 2020 to cancel the conduct of the examinations because of the pandemic and assess students on the basis of their earlier marks.

"You take a decision... But in case you depart from your policy last year, you must give us a good reason why you are departing [from it]," Justice Khanwilkar said.

Mr. Venugopal tried to indicate that the pandemic had struck when the Board examinations were on last year. "Some students had one paper left, some had four papers to do," he submitted.

Justice Khanwilkar said, "There is a sanguine hope expressed by the petitioners here that the policy adopted last year – to cancel the examinations in the face of the pandemic – would be adopt-



Anxious wait: The SC was hearing a petition directing the authorities to forgo the examinations. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Offline exams may trigger a third wave: Priyanka

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Monday cautioned the Centre against conducting the Board examinations offline for Class 12 students.

Writing to Union Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank,

Ms. Vadra said many had argued that this may trigger a third wave and there would be an emotional and psychological cost. "It will be a great injustice if they [students] are pushed into circumstances that endanger their lives," she said.

ed this year, too. So, if you are departing from your notification last year, you should give us good reasons."

Last year, the Supreme Court accepted a Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) scheme to assess the marks of the cancelled papers of Class 10 and 12 by taking an average of best performances in the papers already taken.

The court, on Monday,

was hearing a petition filed by advocate Mamta Sharma to direct the authorities to forgo the examinations and conceive an objective methodology to declare the Class 12 results within a specific time frame. "Issue a writ of mandamus directing the respondents to cancel the examinations of Class 12 and devise an objective methodology to declare the result within a specific time frame," Ms. Sharma urged.

Maratha community brought under EWS quota

STAFF REPORTER
MUMBAI

In a bid to extend relief to the Maratha community in the State, the tripartite Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government in Maharashtra on Monday extended the benefits of reservation for the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) to the Socially and Economically Backward

Class (SEBC).

Previously, the government had decided that the Maratha community could not take advantage of the 10% EWS category as Maratha reservation was in force in the State. The Supreme Court, however, scrapped the SEBC reservation in jobs and education, making it possible for the

State government to extend the benefit of the EWS quota to the Marathas.

As per the government resolution, a person fulfilling the criterion for EWS would be eligible for 10% reservation in educational institutions, barring minority institutes.

This would also be applied for State government

recruitment. The resolution said the reservation would be above the existing reservation.

It also stated that the benefit would be available from September 9, 2020, when the apex court brought an interim stay on the reservation, to May 5, 2021, when the final verdict was announced.

The experience of the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic weighed heavily on the meetings. ■ PTI

gramme of rural outreach during COVID-19 pandemic announced by party president J.P. Nadda are carried out. But yes, organisational restructuring may also be discussed," said a source who did not confirm whether this could mean the replacement of the party's State president, Swatantra Dev Singh.

"The main focus of these meetings is, of course, to look at ways by which the 'seva hi sangathan' pro-

ityanath on the many ways in which the administration had failed to respond to the pandemic and also the anger among the people with the ruling party. Stock-taking is, therefore, important," the source said.

"After the panchayat polls, many zilla parishes are yet to elect the heads of these district-level bodies and, therefore, the party also needs to discuss how best to get their candidates elected to that post in most districts, get in touch with independents, etc.," an Uttar

Earlier in the week, RSS second-in-command Dattatreya Hosabe visited U.P.,

+ sources said, as part of a previously finalised tour programme, but he held meetings at the organisational level as well.

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IN BRIEF



'Govt. mismanagement has made people poorer'

NEW DELHI

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Monday took a swipe at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, flagging a report that lockdowns during the second wave of COVID-19 had made 97% of Indians poorer. "One man and his arrogance + One virus and its mutants," he posted on Twitter.

25 cr. doses per month to be available from August

NEW DELHI

With the ramping up of production, nearly 25 crore 'Made in India' vaccines for COVID-19 are expected to be available every month by August. This would go a long way in meeting the target of vaccinating one crore people daily, said N. K. Arora, Chairman of the COVID-19 working group under the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation.

Vaccine fiasco leaves students fuming

MUMBAI

Hundreds of students, who thronged the HBT Medical College and Dr. RN Cooper Municipal General Hospital in Mumbai on Monday after Cabinet Minister Aaditya Thackeray tweeted that free walk-in vaccinations would be available for students going abroad, returned disappointed as only 50 vials were available. Dean of Cooper Hospital, Dr. Pinakin Gujjur, said chaos reigned because of no registration.

1.75 crore vaccine doses are available with States: Centre

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

More than 1.75 crore COVID vaccine doses are still available with the States and Union Territories, the Health Ministry claimed in a release on Monday, adding that more than 2.73 lakh (2,73,970) vaccine doses are in the pipeline and will be received by the States and Union Territories within the next three days.

The Central government has so far provided, both through the free of cost category and through direct State procurement category, more than 23 crore vaccine doses (23,11,68,480) to States and Union Territories. Of this, the total consumption, including wastages is 21,22,38,652 doses (as per data available at 8 a.m. today), it said.

Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan also chaired a review meeting through video conferencing with administrators from States and Union Territories on the progress of vaccination, on

Year-end deadline for full vaccination tight

Govt. target of covering 94 crore adults hit by shortage

JACOB KOSHY

NEW DELHI

At the current pace of vaccination, it could be eight months before every adult Indian gets at least one shot of vaccine, back-of-the-envelope calculations from the government's portal CoWin suggest. About 16.7 crore first doses have been administered till Monday.

The Centre expects to inoculate 94.4 crore adults, according to a note last week by R.S. Sharma, Chairman of the technical committee that oversees the portal. Several Cabinet Ministers and policy advisers, spearheading India's COVID vaccination campaign, have claimed that India will inoculate "all eligible" by December. These statements do not specify if that refers to just all adults, or the number of doses administered.

Last week, India administered 30 lakh doses a day on consecutive days – after over 45 days when fewer than 20 lakh doses were given every day. Assuming that pace were to continue, it would take 256 days, or over eight months, to complete the targeted number of adults.

The recommended vaccination protocol is to administer two doses at least four to 16 weeks apart depending on the vaccine administered. Given that only 4.4 crore second doses have been administered and the



Monthly update: Around 6 crore doses were administered in May compared to 7.7 crore in April. ■ A.M. FARUQUI

daily pace of second doses – for most of last month – has been about 10% of that of the first dose (on May 29, 27 lakh first doses were administered to 3 lakh second doses), it could theoretically be years before all those over 18 get their second doses.

Jobs for all

Despite opening vaccination for all adults, there were fewer doses administered in May – around six crore – as opposed to 7.7 crore doses administered in April.

The Health Ministry said on Sunday that close to 8 crore doses were available in May (counting wastage and stocks with States) and that 12 crore will be available in June for the Centre, the States and private hospitals.

India hit a highpoint of administering 45 lakh doses a day on April 5 after which the pace has declined. Experts say that India has

the capacity to administer 100 lakh shots a day. That works out to about 25-30 crore vaccines being supplied a month.

"Drawing on our capacity of at least a 1,50,000 support staff (auxiliary nursing midwife), we have been able to administer polio drops to at least 30 million children within days," said Sujatha Rao, former Health Secretary. "However the problem we face [with COVID vaccines] is that there isn't certainty on the supply."

Chandrakant Lahariya, epidemiologist and former consultant to the World Health Organisation, said that until at least October there would be supply constraints. "It would be quite likely that India would move to a single shot vaccine administration policy. 100 lakh a day is doable, but we also have to account for people's receptiveness in the future."

India can look at plan for vaccine interchangeability'

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN

NEW DELHI

India can be looking at initiating trials for interchangeability of different COVID-19 vaccines for use to enhance the efficiency of vaccines and offer longer protection, said a senior health official on Monday.

Speaking about the possibility of a mixed dose regime trial, NITI Aayog member (Health) V.K. Paul said: "There is growing scientific interest in the matter world-wide and India too should look into it. This is a biological plausibility and if proven effective it could go a long

way in enhancing faster coverage and acting as a better booster dose that can be offered for use."

N.K. Arora, chairperson of the Working Group of the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation, said vaccines were never mixed.

"Doses of different vaccine brands are administered as separate doses to complete the schedule. Purpose is improved immune effectiveness, safety and programmatic convenience. This is also called interchangeability. There is no talk of single dose for any vaccine," he said.

Monday. At the meeting Mr. Bhushan noted that there is a substantial scope to accelerate the pace of vaccination

further amid reports from several States of vaccine shortage. He said production was being scaled up.



Hard choices: The earthmover that was used to carry the body of the COVID-19 victim in Sant Kabir Nagar, U.P.

Family uses excavator to shift body for burial

COVID victim was from a village in U.P.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

LUCKNOW

A family in Sant Kabir Nagar of eastern Uttar Pradesh used an earthmover to transport the body of a relative who had died after testing positive for COVID-19 for burial. A video of the incident was widely shared on social media.

The COVID-19 victim's son said that his father died at home in their village after testing positive in a hospital

Policy should be clear, flexible: SC

Bench tells govt. that the pandemic cannot be fought in an ad hoc manner

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL

NEW DELHI

Acknowledging one's error is not a sign of weakness but that of strength, Supreme Court judge Justice D.Y. Chandrachud told the Union government on Monday.

"The ability to recognise that I am wrong is not a sign of weakness, but of strength," Justice Chandrachud orally addressed Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta during a virtual hearing.

We are not going to run the Central government or make policy for you. This is a platform for dialogue across the spectrum... The idea is not to criticise but to strengthen the arms of the government

JUSTICE D.Y. CHANDRACHUD

Supreme Court judge



tice Chandrachud said.

Mr. Mehta agreed that no policy was cast in stone. "If matters change, the government will have to change," he said.

Justice Chandrachud referred to how the External Affairs Minister had gone abroad for a dialogue on vaccines. "It shows the seriousness of the situation," Justice Chandrachud said.

At one point, Mr. Mehta expressed his concern about having to trouble Justice Chandrachud, who has just recovered from COVID-19.

"The interest of the nation comes first, my health comes later," Justice Chandrachud replied.

Justice Chandrachud, to set the record straight with the Centre, said "We are not going to run the Central government or make policy for you. This is a platform for dialogue across the spectrum.. The idea is not to criticise but to strengthen the arms of the government".

dead are "thrown" into rivers or buried in shallow graves.

The court referred to a recent video footage and pictures of two men throwing the body of a COVID-19 patient from a bridge into a river in Uttar Pradesh.

"I don't know whether a complaint has been filed against the news channel for sedition for publishing the photograph..." Justice Chandrachud said.

This comment comes amid some States allegedly registering FIRs booking social media users and the electronic media on sedition

charge. The top court banned States from taking penal action in such cases in an order on April 30.

Justice Chandrachud said the government could not fight the pandemic on a day-to-day basis in an ad hoc manner. "You need your policy to anticipate changes. Your policy should also be enforceable on the ground. Your policy needs to be clear-cut. If new issues come up, your policy has to be amended... But first, there should be a degree of flexibility in you... It can't be that you have made a policy and you cannot change that," Just-

One of the judges on the Bench, Justice S. Ravindra Bhat said he had received distress calls from across the country from people unable to register on CoWin. The court asked why the marginalised section should not be treated on par with people having co-morbidities for early vaccination.

On the difference in prices for procurement between the Centre and States, Justice Chandrachud said, "Article 1 of the Constitution says Bharat is a Union of States. When the Constitution says that, we will follow the federal rule. Then the Government of India has to wholly procure the vaccines and distribute them. Here, individual States are left in a lurch..."

from rural India crossing the "digital divide" to register for COVID-19 vaccination on the CoWin portal where slots disappear in the blink of an eye. Justice Chandrachud said the government should be aware of the ground realities in 'Digital India'. Vaccination policy today is entirely exclusionary of the rural areas, the court said.

On the difference in prices

SC flags digital divide in vaccine access

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday asked the government to "please wake up and smell the coffee" about the digital divide hampering vaccine access in the country.

A three-judge Bench led by Justice D.Y. Chandrachud highlighted the farfetchedness of an illiterate villager

Daily test positivity rate dips to 9% from 12.7% a week ago

16.83 lakh samples were analysed in the country on Sunday

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI

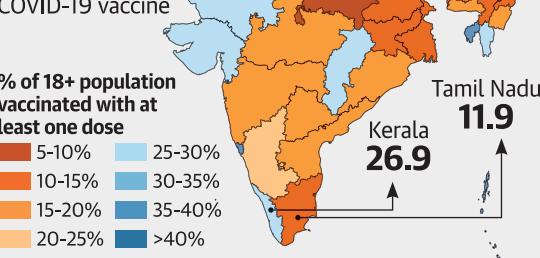
India recorded 1,22,964 new COVID-19 cases and 2,743 new deaths till 9.35 p.m. on Monday. The country has so far reported a total of 2,81,69,970 cases and 3,31,871 deaths.

Tamil Nadu reported 27,936 new infections, followed by Karnataka (16,604) and Maharashtra (15,077). Maharashtra recorded 500 new casualties on the day, followed by Tamil Nadu (478) and Karnataka (411). Maharashtra's fatalities include backlog deaths which were missed in the previous reports. The figures do not include cases and deaths from Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Arunachal Pradesh, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Tripura and Ladakh. The data are sourced from the respective States' health bulletins.

Only 16.83 lakh samples were tested in the country on Sunday (the results for which were made available on Monday), which is nearly 3.81 lakh fewer tests than those conducted on Saturday. It is also 2.45 lakh less tests than those conducted on the previous Sunday (May 23). India's average daily test positivity rate (positive cases identified for every 100 tests) continues to decline. It was 9% on May 30

Inoculation coverage

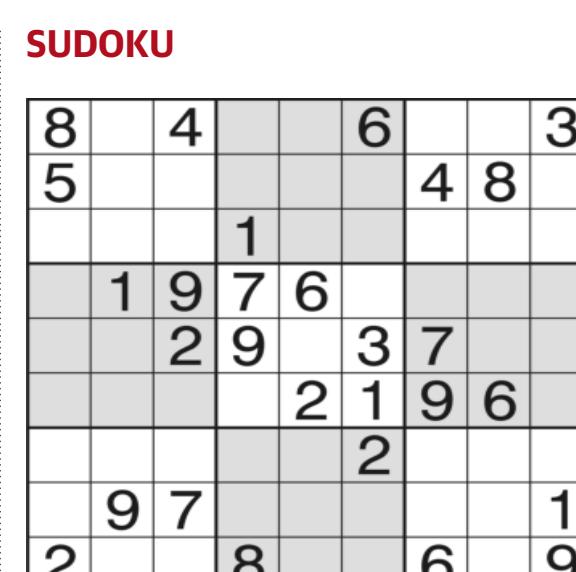
Around 18% of India's adult population have received at least one shot of a COVID-19 vaccine



compared to 12.7% recorded a week before.

About 10.18 lakh vaccine doses were administered in the country in the 24 hours ending 7 a.m. on Monday, which is 20.18 lakh doses fewer than that of the previous 24 hours. However, it is around 75,000 more doses than what was recorded during the same period a week ago.

SUDOKU



Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

H	Y	P	A	T	I	A
R	E	P	M	A	I	N
I	O	A	U	A	S	T
P	R	E	M	I	N	A
E	M	I	N	R	S	R
F	O	U	N	I	E	S
T	O	G	I	B	T	
L	A	M	I	S	R	
M	A	S	I	R	S	
C	A	N	T	E	S	
N	S	E	T	A	R	
S	E	T	A	R	S	
D	E	R	S	T	A	
M	R	S	T	A	R	
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As births decline, China to allow couples to have third child

Decision comes after the 'two-child policy' largely failed to boost birth rates

ANANTH KRISHNAN

China will for the first time allow couples to have a third child, the country's government said on Monday, in a further relaxation of family planning rules five years after a "two-child policy" largely failed to boost birth rates. The announcement followed a meeting of the 25-member Politburo, chaired by China's President and Communist Party of China General Secretary Xi Jinping, "to hear reports on major policy measures to actively address the ageing of population during the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-2025)", State media said.

The change comes less than three weeks after the release of China's once-in-a-decade population census that painted an alarming picture of declining births. The National Bureau of Statistics said on May 11 that 12 million babies were born last year, the lowest number since 1961, a time when Mao's China was in the midst of a four-year famine, and down from 17.86 million in 2016.

The census said China's population was 1.41 billion in 2020, an increase of 72 mil-



Fun time: A woman playing with her child at Wukesong shopping district in Beijing. • AFP

lion since the last census in 2010, reflecting a 5.38% growth in this period and a 0.53% annual growth. Forecasts say the population could peak in the next couple of years and most likely by 2025, when India will become the world's most populous country.

Dire situation

Some Chinese demographers said the announcement on Monday, coming so soon after the census, suggested the situation could be more dire than the official numbers indicated. "Maybe it's because the real population data is too scary," Yi Fuxian, a demographer, told

the *South China Morning Post* (SCMP). "Even if they have not published it, it probably frightened the decision makers."

The census recorded 264 million in the age group of 60 and over, up 5.44% since 2010 and accounting for 18.70% of the population. Those in the 15-59 age group were 894 million persons, down by 6.79% since 2010 and accounting for 63.35% of the population. China's workforce in the 15-59 age bracket peaked at 925 million in 2011, according to the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security said previously. That number was down to 894 million in this

census and would drop to 700 million by 2050.

Huang Wenzheng, a fellow at the Center for China and Globalisation, in Beijing, told official broadcaster China Global Television Network (CGTN) following the release of the census that the ageing crisis "might be the biggest challenge the Chinese nation faces in the next century." It is, however, unclear if the new announcement may address the problem, at least if the past five years are any indication. China introduced a "two child policy" in 2016, but the wide consensus is that it failed to have the desired impact. Surveys carried out by Chinese media attributed financial pressures as one main reason. A 2015 survey by the government said 70% of respondents attributed financial reasons for choosing to not have many children.

An online poll on Monday of 31,000 respondents conducted by the official Xinhua news agency found 28,000 "would not consider at all" having three children, while 1,600 said they would, the SCMP reported. The poll was subsequently removed, the newspaper said.

U.S. spied on Merkel, European allies with Danish help: media

NSA eavesdropped on Internet cables from 2012 to 2014

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

COPENHAGEN

The U.S. spied on top politicians in Europe, including German Chancellor Angela Merkel, from 2012 to 2014 with the help of Danish intelligence, Danish and European media reported on Sunday.

Danish public broadcaster Danmarks Radio (DR) said the U.S. National Security Agency (NSA) had eavesdropped on Danish Internet cables to spy on top politicians and high-ranking officials in Germany, Sweden, Norway and France.

The NSA had taken advantage of a surveillance collaboration with Denmark's military intelligence unit FE to do so, it said.

Denmark's Defence Ministry has not responded to AFP's requests for a comment.

Defence Minister Trine Bramsen, who took over the defence portfolio in June 2019, was informed of the spying in August 2020, according to DR. She told the broadcaster that "systematic eavesdropping of close allies is unacceptable".

It was not clear whether Denmark authorised the U.S. to use its surveillance system to spy on its neighbours. DR revealed the information following an investigation it led together with Swedish broadcaster SVT, Norway's NRK, Germany's NDR, WDR and *Suddeutsche Zeitung*, and France's *Le Monde*.



Angela Merkel

FE top management in May 2015, DR said.

DR said its information came from nine different sources who had access to classified FE information, and said their revelations were independently confirmed by several sources.

Neither the FE nor its director at the time, Lars Findsen, commented immediately on the revelations.

Snowden affair

The U.S. spying, if confirmed, was going on during and after the 2013 Snowden affair, which erupted when former NSA contractor Edward Snowden revealed thousands of classified documents exposing the vast U.S. surveillance put in place after the September 11, 2001 attacks.

Among other things, that documents showed the U.S. government was spying on its own citizens and carrying out widespread tapping worldwide, including of Chancellor Angela Merkel's mobile phone.

In November 2020, DR reported that the U.S. had used the Danish cables to spy on Danish and European defence industries from 2012 to 2015.



Pak. talk show host slams Army, ousted

ASSOCIATED PRESS
ISLAMABAD

A Pakistani television station on Monday removed a prominent journalist as host of a popular talk show after he criticised the country's powerful military.

The development comes just days after the journalist, Hamid Mir, made a fiery speech at a rally in support of a fellow reporter, Asad Ali Toor, who was beaten up by three unidentified men in his apartment in Islamabad. Mr. Toor later told the police his attackers claimed that they were from the ISI.

Geo News TV did not comment on the changes regarding its "Capital Talk" programme, in which Mr. Mir would debate current events in the country. Mr. Mir tweeted it was nothing new. "I was banned twice in the past," said Mr. Mir, who had in the past been fired by Geo News.

Saudi talks under way in 'good atmosphere': Iran

'Aim to reach common understanding'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

TEHRAN

Iran's Foreign Ministry said on Monday that the Islamic republic is continuing talks with regional rival Saudi Arabia in a "good atmosphere," in the hope of reaching a "common understanding".

Media reports last month revealed that Iranian and Saudi officials met in Baghdad in April, their first high-level meeting since Riyadh cut diplomatic ties with Tehran in 2016.

"Talks are still continuing in a good atmosphere," Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said at a press conference. "We hope these talks can achieve a common understanding between Iran and Saudi Arabia," he added.

'Many obstacles' remain in bid to oust Netanyahu, says Lapid

He, however, hopes to achieve 'greater goal'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
JERUSALEM

Israeli Opposition leader Yair Lapid on Monday said many obstacles remain before a diverse coalition can be built to oust veteran Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu but voiced hope it will achieve the "greater goal".

Mr. Lapid, a secular centrist, has been locked in talks with the right-wing nationalist Naftali Bennett on the terms of a "change alliance" that also hinges on an array of other parties ahead of a Wednesday midnight deadline.

Former TV anchor Mr. Lapid's chances of success rose



when tech millionaire Mr. Bennett, despite their ideological differences, said on Sunday he would join a "national unity government" in which the two men would take turns to serve as premier.

Israel's latest political turmoil comes more than two months after Israel's fourth inconclusive election in less than two years and could topple the right-wing leader known as Bibi who has ruled for a total of 15 years. It also

follows Israel's bloody 11-day conflict with Islamist group Hamas in the Palestinian enclave of Gaza that ended with a May 21 ceasefire.

A viable anti-Netanyahu coalition would still need the support of other parties and lawmakers to gain a majority of 61 seats in the 120-member Knesset, Israel's legislature. But while Mr. Lapid warned of remaining hurdles, he also sought to strike a cautiously upbeat note.

"We'll have to overcome them together," he told members of his Yesh Atid (There is a Future) party. "That's our first test – to see if we can find smart compromises in the coming days to achieve the greater goal."

Mr. Netanyahu warned on Sunday that a left-wing government would be "dangerous to the state of Israel".

Singapore to vaccinate schoolchildren soon

Faucet vaccine to be administered

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

SINGAPORE

Singapore will start vaccinating schoolchildren against the coronavirus soon, the Prime Minister said on Monday, after officials warned that new strains were affecting youngsters more.

The city-state, with a population of 5.7 million, recently tightened curbs following a slight uptick in cases, after months of reporting barely any local cases. This included closing schools amid signs that new variants, such as the one first detected in India, were affecting children in greater numbers.

In a televised speech, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong announced that school students aged 12 and

over will be the next group to be inoculated. Health regulators approved the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine for 12- to 15-year-olds this month. It was previously only allowed for those aged 16 and above.

"In this latest outbreak, we have seen more cases of children getting infected, in schools and tuition centres," Mr. Lee said. "The children were not seriously ill, but parents are naturally worried. Therefore, we will take advantage of the June holidays to vaccinate students."

The city's more than 4,00,000 students can start booking vaccinations from Tuesday, with the first slots available on Thursday, officials said. After schoolchildren, officials will inoculate adults 39 years and younger.

Tiger poacher wanted for 20 years arrested

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

DHAKA

The Bangladesh police have arrested a notorious poacher wanted for 20 years and believed to have killed around 70 endangered Bengal tigers.

Local police chief Saidur Rahman said Habib Talukder – nicknamed "Tiger Habib" – lived next to the forest and would flee whenever officers raided the area. "Acting on a tip-off, we finally succeeded and sent him to jail," he said.

Talukder's hunting ground was the vast Sunderban mangrove forest region straddling India and Bangladesh.

"He's a dangerous man who could fight alone with Mama (tiger) inside the forest," said local honey hunter Abdus Salam.

Thousands of Rohingya protest at Bhashan Char

They complain about living conditions

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

DHAKA

Several thousand Rohingya staged "unruly" protests on Monday against living conditions on a cyclone-prone island off Bangladesh where they were moved from vast camps on the mainland, the police said.

Since December, Bangladesh has shifted 18,000 out of a planned 1,00,000 refugees to the low-lying silt island of Bhashan Char from the Cox's Bazar region, where around 8,50,000 people live in squalid and

cramped conditions.

Monday's protest involved up to 4,000 people, the police said, and coincided with an inspection visit by officials from the United Nations refugee agency. An international rights activist said several protesters were injured in police action.

UNHCR spokesperson said the delegation was able to meet with a large group of refugees and to listen to the various issues that they raised, which the delegation will further discuss with the Bangladesh authorities.

ELSEWHERE



Sri Lanka questions crew of burning ship

NEGOMBO

Sri Lankan investigators began questioning the crew of a burning cargo ship on Monday, as the Singapore-registered MV X-Press Pearl smouldered for 12 straight days in one of the island's worst-ever marine ecological disasters. Detectives interviewed the vessel's skipper and chief engineer – both Russians – and its chief officer, an Indian, the police said. AFP

Democrat walk-out scuppers Bill for Texas vote overhaul

Biden had decried it as an attempt at voter suppression

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

AUSTIN

Democrats in the Texas legislature used a dramatic walk-out late on Sunday to torpedo Republican plans for a restrictive voting Bill that President Joe Biden had decried as voter suppression and an "assault on democracy". The law would – among other changes – make mail-in voting more difficult by requiring voters to give extra

information, bar local officials from sending absentee ballot applications to anyone who did not request one, and end after-hours and drive-through voting.

Supporters say Senate Bill 7 is designed to make voting more secure, but critics say it aims to make it more cumbersome for ethnic-minority voters, who tend to vote Democrat. "Republicans came into law. Texas Governor Greg Abbott said he would call a special session to get it through the legislature.

that would rig our democracy for their team," Democrat state representative Jessica Gonzalez tweeted after the walk-out. "Tonight, Texas Dems drew a line in the sand and made it clear that we will fight day and night, every tactic available to us, for your right to vote."

The Bill could yet make it into law. Texas Governor Greg Abbott said he would call a special session to get it through the legislature.

The Marine Products Export Development Authority
(Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of India)
Panampilly Nagar, Kochi - 682036, Kerala

CORRIGENDUM ON EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

MPEDA has invited EOI from reputed solution providers for Automation of Farm enrollment programme and Pre Harvest Test programme and integration of both programmes vide advertisement dated 15-05-2021. In this regard, it is hereby informed that the time line for the submission of EOI has been extended upto 17.00 hrs on 07-06-2021 and the Date for presentation will be on 15-06-2021 at 15.00hrs.

Sd/-
Secretary, MPEDA

National Competitive Bidding - Bid Identification No. EERWSSBAM - 05/2021-22

The Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division, Berhampur, on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites bids in Single Cover & Double cover system according to the norm of "e" Procurement system in online mode for Supply, drawing, design, construction, testing and commissioning and maintenance of different PWS Schemes and electrification works in Ganjam District from the eligible contractors as per DTCN.

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER: RWS & S DIVISION : BERHAMPUR

Near Jarada Bungalow, Pin - 760004, Ph. 0680-2296344
erwss_bam@nic.in ; rwssbam@gmail.com

Government of Odisha "e" Procurement Notice

NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING - Bid Identification No. EERWSSBAM - 05/2021-22

The Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division, Berhampur, on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites bids in Single Cover & Double cover system according to the norm of "e" Procurement system in online mode for Supply, drawing, design, construction, testing and commissioning and maintenance of different PWS Schemes and electrification works in Ganjam District from the eligible contractors as per DTCN.

1. Name of the Work : Execution of different works of different P.W.S. Scheme in Ganjam District.

2. No of Work (Tender) : 03 Nos.

3. Estimated Cost (Approximate) : From Rs.224.13 Lakhs to Rs.404.87 Lakhs

4. Period of Completion : 365 days

5. Date & Time of availability of bid document in the Portal : From 03-06-2021 at 11.00 hrs to 23-06

MARKET WATCH

	PRICE	CHANGE
Sensex	51937	1.00
US Dollar	72.62	-0.23
Gold	48608	1.45
Brent oil	69.54	-0.28

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	769.55	-6.60
Asian Paints	2977.50	36.80
Axis Bank	750.70	10.85
Bajaj Auto	4192.80	-6.70
Bajaj Finserv	11806.30	93.10
Bajaj Finance	5627.95	17.20
Bharti Airtel	534.90	11.30
BPCL	472.00	0.50
Britannia Ind	3447.85	24.40
Cipla	949.35	15.00
Coal India	147.70	0.80
Divis Lab	4194.00	73.75
D Dr Reddy's Lab	5309.15	114.60
Eicher Motors	2676.15	37.70
Grasim Ind	1471.20	5.75
HCL Tech	945.20	2.65
HDFC	2552.85	11.50
HDFC Bank	1515.85	12.40
HDFC Life	665.90	-3.05
Hero MotoCorp	3007.50	15.95
Hindustan	394.25	6.50
Hind Unilever	2340.05	18.35
ICICI Bank	662.75	19.70
IndusInd Bank	1013.00	-6.35
Infosys	1393.75	-11.30
Indian Oil Corp	109.25	-0.60
ITC	216.60	3.70
JSW Steel	710.90	21.10
Kotak Bank	1807.70	6.95
L&T	1467.70	-10.40
M&M	807.95	-37.90
Maruti Suzuki	7086.30	116.30
Nestle India Ltd.	17695.55	186.15
NTPC	110.50	1.55
ONGC	113.65	1.30
PowerGrid Corp	225.65	0.20
Reliance Ind	2160.30	65.50
SBI Life	975.65	-1.20
State Bank	424.35	2.30
Shree Cement	27578.00	-77.10
Sun Pharma	668.30	-1.45
Tata Consumer Products Ltd.	663.85	8.90
Tata Motors	318.75	0.00
Tata Steel	1125.65	22.15
TCS	3159.15	15.55
Tech Mahindra	1021.65	-4.60
Titan	1596.25	19.25
UltraTech Cement	6708.00	109.50
UPL	815.10	3.40
Wipro	539.05	0.35

EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	72.41	72.73
Euro	88.25	88.66
British Pound	102.62	103.11
Japanese Yen (100)	66.00	66.32
Chinese Yuan	11.36	11.41
Swiss Franc	80.37	80.74
Singapore Dollar	54.73	54.99
Canadian Dollar	59.97	60.26
Malaysian Ringgit	17.55	17.64

Source: Indian Bank

IN BRIEF



TVS Motor opens '3S' showroom in Baghdad
CHENNAI
TVS Motor Company announced the opening of a 3S (sales, service and spares support) showroom in Baghdad with its distribution partner Ritaj International General Trade LLC. The showroom will host a wide range of two-wheelers, three-wheelers, spare parts and a service facility, it said.

Ex-Mynta CEO's Mensa Brands raises \$50 mn

BENGALURU
Mensa Brands, established by former Mynta CEO Ananth Narayanan, has raised \$50 million in a combination of debt and equity. The Series A round was led by Accel Partners and Norwest Venture Partners. Angel investors including Mukesh Bansal, Kunal Shah and Rahul Mehta were also part of it. Mensa, which aims to create a technology-led 'House of Brands' for e-commerce, has the mandate to acquire over 50 brands across categories, including home and apparel, in the next three years.

'Non-food bank credit growth slows'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

Non-food bank credit grew at 5.7% in April as against 6.7% in the year-ago month, RBI data showed.

The growth in advances to agriculture and allied activities accelerated to 11.3% in April as compared with a 4.7% growth in April 2020, the data on Sectoral Deployment of Bank Credit - April 2021, released by the RBI on Monday, showed.

Credit growth to industry decelerated to 0.4% in April from 1.7%. However, credit to medium industries registered a robust growth of 43.8% in April as compared to a contraction of 6.4% a year ago. Personal loans registered an accelerated growth of 12.6% in April compared to 12.3%.

'Vaccination key to health of economy'

Economic impact due to spate of lockdowns across States not likely to be as bad as last year, says CEA

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The economic impact of the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic may not be very large at this point but curbing the pandemic through swift vaccination and strict COVID-19 protocols is imperative to revive economic activity, Chief Economic Adviser K.V. Subramanian said on Monday.

"Vaccination is important for the health of the people as well as the health of the economy... The economic impact is inextricably linked to the overall pandemic itself. The economy had recovered very well by March but then the second wave has moderated the momentum," he said during a briefing on the state of the economy.

While the spate of lockdowns across States is begin-



Vial of hope: The CEA says he expects the manufacturing sector to do well this year. ■ MURALI KUMAR K

ning to hurt the economy, the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic has peaked in early May and the restrictions imposed so far have been 'asynchronous and he-

terogenous' and hence the decline is not likely to be as bad as last year, the CEA said.

"There has been an internal assessment on the costs

of the restrictions... Whether or not it (growth) will be in double digits or single digits, there is uncertainty. Some of the scientists are talking about the possibility of a third wave - we don't know when it will be and what will be the impact. It would be speculative to tell you exact numbers," Mr. Subramanian said, terming the Economic Survey and Budget's GDP growth estimates for 2021-22 (11% and about 10.5%, respectively) as 'conservative'.

'Immense uncertainty'
"The caveat with everything related to the pandemic, is that estimates are subject to immense uncertainty given that the trajectory of the pandemic has been hard to predict even for epidemiologists," Mr. Subramanian pointed out.

He said he expected manufacturing to do well this year, and non-contact-intensive services will also see an enhanced demand due to the feedback effects from manufacturing.

"For contact-sensitive services sectors to come back..., will depend on the path of the vaccination itself," he said.

'Impact of restrictions'
Referring to the moderation in several indicators over the past month, the Chief Economic Adviser said: "Clearly, the restrictions imposed by the States have had some impact, but as the wave seems to be on the decline, we do anticipate that these restrictions will progressively reduce and later be removed, which may help in bringing back economic activity."

Sharp deterioration in overall business confidence: FICCI

Survey respondents seek fiscal package to spur demand

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The worsening conditions and muted near-term expectations due to the second wave of COVID-19 have led to a "sharp deterioration" in overall business confidence among companies, a survey by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) shows.

Participating firms in the 'Business Confidence Survey' "unanimously felt that the government must, first and foremost, focus on controlling COVID cases" and that only a massive vaccination drive could decouple India's economy from another pandemic-induced shock.

Also, they stressed on the need for another fiscal package, focussed on addressing the demand side, along with employment-based incentives to avert any job losses.

The 'Overall Business Confidence Index' nose-dived to 51.5 after reporting a decadal high value of 74.2 in the previous round of the survey released in March 2021, the industry body said.

About 70% participants reported weak demand conditions as a bothering factor

in the current survey compared with 56% in the previous round. The corresponding number last year was 77%.

"With household income being severely impacted and past savings already drawn down during the first wave of infections, demand conditions are expected to remain weak for longer this time around."

It added that since a much larger proportion of the population has been impacted in the current wave, there had been permanent impairment to income for many households which had faced job losses or had lost bread winners to COVID-19.

April core sector output jumps 56.1%, base buoys

Cement, steel hint at lockdown impact

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

The output of eight core sectors jumped by 56.1% in April mainly due to a low base effect and uptick in production of natural gas, refinery products, steel, cement and electricity, official data showed on Monday.

The eight infrastructure sectors of coal, crude oil, natural gas, refinery products, fertilisers, steel, cement and electricity had contracted by 37.9% in April 2020 due to the national COVID-19 lockdown.

Production of natural gas, refinery products, steel, cement and electricity jumped by 25%, 30.9%, 400%, 548.8% and 38.7% in April, as against (-) 19.9%, (-) 24.2%, (-) 82.8%, (-) 85.2% and (-) 22.9% in April 2020.

"Interestingly, capex was cut by ₹14,000 crore. Expenditure control will be important for FY22, as pressures will be there on tax revenue due to lockdowns, while non-tax receipts will be higher due to RBI transfer of ₹99,000 crore this year," he said.

ICRA chief economist Aditi Nayar attributed the spurt in cement, steel and electricity to the government's decision to keep spending to prop up demand via a combination of free foodgrains, cash transfers and higher MGNREGA outlays, she said.

"An eventual cut in cesses on fuels, which would dampen excise collections, can't be ruled out, given record-high retail fuel prices," she said, adding that the Centre would also need to hasten vaccine availability.

Board agrees to Paytm's \$3-bn IPO plan

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

The board of One97 Communications, the parent firm of Paytm, has given in-principle approval for the \$3-billion (almost ₹22,000 crore) initial public offer (IPO), sources said.

"The board has given in-principle approval for the IPO," a source said.

"The company expects to raise about ₹21,000-₹22,000 crore," the source said, adding it was eyeing October-December quarter for the IPO.

As per a note by investment research firm Bernstein, Paytm was on track to break even in 12-18 months and the revenue base may double by FY23.

It's biggest shareholders include Alibaba's Ant Group (29.7%) and Softbank Vision Fund (19.6%).

Carlyle to invest ₹3,185 cr. in PNB Housing Finance

Deal to trigger open offer for 26% stake

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI



The proposed transaction will trigger an open offer by Carlyle Investments S.a.r.l. for the purchase of up to 26% stake in PNB Housing Finance from public shareholders.

Salisbury Investments, the family investment vehicle of ex-HDFC Bank CEO and MD Aditya Puri, will also invest. "The key objective of raising capital is to augment capital adequacy, reduce gearing and accelerate growth," PNB Housing Finance said in a filing.

Aurobindo Q4 net slips 7% on lower revenue

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD

Aurobindo Pharma has posted a 7% drop in consolidated net profit to ₹801.2 crore for the quarter ended March on the back of lower revenue from operations.

Total revenue from operations dipped 2.5% to ₹6,001.5 crore. For FY21, net profit surged to ₹5,333.8 crore. Excluding exceptional items (net of tax), the net profit rose 10.5%. Since the Natrol unit was divested in FY21, the profit was not comparable.

Total revenue from operations in FY21 rose 7.3% to ₹24,774.6 crore.

The company ended the fiscal with a steady growth in a dynamic environment affected by the pandemic, said N. Govindarajan, MD.

GIFT YOUR LITTLE CHAMP THE COMMUNICATION SKILLS TO TAKE ON THE WORLD



Federer eases into round two, Swiatek has a happy birthday

The Swiss great makes a winning return to Grand Slam tennis after 16 months away; Medvedev finally wins a match at Roland Garros on his fifth attempt



ROLAND-GARROS

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
PARIS

Roger Federer marked his return to the French Open with a straight sets victory over Uzbekistan qualifier Denis Istomin on Monday.

The 39-year-old Federer, champion in Paris in 2009 but playing the event for only the second time since 2015, won 6-2, 6-4, 6-3.

Federer, who skipped the 2020 tournament, was playing just his fourth match of the year and first at a Slam since losing to Novak Djokovic in the Australian Open semifinals last year.

Defending champion Iga Swiatek picked up on Monday night where she left off last year in winning the title: running yet another opponent this way and that on the red clay in a take-no-prisoners straight-sets victory.

Her best friend on the tennis circuit, Kaja Juvan, was the victim on Court Philippe Chatrier this time as Swiatek emphatically kicked off her campaign to become the

first woman since Justine Henin in 2007 to defend the French Open title.

Playing on her 20th birthday, Swiatek treated herself to a 6-0, 7-5 victory — her eighth straight-sets win in a row at Roland Garros, having also not dropped a set in winning the trophy last year as an unseeded 19-year-old.

"She didn't give me any birthday gifts," Swiatek said of the partner with whom she won a gold medal in doubles at the Youth Olympics in 2018.

But Swiatek wasn't in the gift-giving mood, either. She secured the win with a snapped cross-court backhand at the net, on her

I feel two ways. My wish and hope and dream is that I can play it.

And Daniil Medvedev proved that perseverance pays, finally winning a French Open match on his fifth attempt. The second-seeded Russian beat Alexander Bublik 6-3, 6-3, 7-5, 15-Casper Ruud (Nor) bt Benoit Paire (Fra) 5-7, 6-2, 6-1, 7-6 (4); 32-Reilly Opelka (USA) bt Andrej Martin (Svk) 6-3, 6-2, 6-4; Lloyd Harris (RSA) bt 26-Lorenzo Sonego (Ita) 7-5, 6-4, 6-4.

Perseverance pays

Rising Italian star Jannik Sinner saved match point in a 6-1, 4-6, 6-7(4), 7-5, 6-4 win over Frenchman Pierre-Hugues Herbert.

Fourth match point, that Ju-

van hit wide.

They hugged each other warmly at the net, best buddies once again.

Playing ball

Swiatek then gamely played ball, waving her hands like an orchestra conductor, as on-court interviewer Marion Bartoli led the crowd, thinned by coronavirus restrictions, in a somewhat squawky rendition of "Happy Birthday."

Swiatek wasn't in the gift-giving mood, either. She secured the win with a snapped cross-court backhand at the net, on her

not seize his chance, shank-

ing a shot wide at 4-5, 30-40

in the fourth set.

That proved to be a turn-

ing point as Sinner finally held,

broke, and sealed the set.

Herbert's missed backhand volley then gave Sinner an early break in the decider

and the Italian prevailed

with his deep groundstrokes.

It was just the second meeting between the pair. Sinner had dropped only four games the last time they met, in a best-of-three-set match.

IMPORTANT RESULTS

First round: Men: 8-Roger Federer (Sui) bt Denis Istomin (Uzb) 6-2, 6-4, 6-3; 31-John Isner (USA) bt Sam Querrey (USA) 7-6(2), 6-3, 6-4; 18-Jannik Sinner (Ita) bt Pierre-Hugues Herbert (Fra) 6-1, 4-6, 6-7(4), 7-5, 6-4; 2-Daniil Medvedev (Rus) bt Alexander Bublik (Kaz) 6-3, 6-3, 7-5; 15-Casper Ruud (Nor) bt Benoit Paire (Fra) 5-7, 6-2, 6-1, 7-6 (4); 32-Reilly Opelka (USA) bt Andrej Martin (Svk) 6-3, 6-2, 6-4; Lloyd Harris (RSA) bt 26-Lorenzo Sonego (Ita) 7-5, 6-4, 6-4.

Women: 4-Sofia Kenin (USA) bt Jelena Ostapenko (Lat) 6-4, 4-6, 6-3; 3-Tamara Zidansek (Slo) bt 6-Bianca Andreescu (Can) 6-7(1), 7-6(2), 9-7; 8-Iga Swiatek (Pol) bt Kaja Juvan (Slo) 6-0, 7-5, 14-Elise Mertens (Bel) bt Storm Sanders (Aus) 6-4, 6-1; Polona Hercog (Slo) bt 16-Kiki Bertens (Ned) 6-1, 3-6, 6-4; 20-Marketa Vondrousova (Cze) bt Kaia Kanepi (Est) 4-6, 6-3, 6-0; Sorana Cirstea (Rou) bt 19-Joanna Konta (GBr) 7-6(5), 6-2; 10-Belinda Bencic (Sui) bt Nadia Podoroska (Arg) 6-0, 6-3.

Sunday's results: Men: 6-Alexander Zverev (Ger) bt Oscar Otte (Ger) 3-6, 3-6, 6-2, 6-2; 6-Botic van de Zandschulp (Ned) bt 19-Hubert Hurkacz (Pol) 6-7(5), 6-7(4), 6-2, 6-2, 6-4; 5-Stefanos Tsitsipas (Gre) bt Jeremy Chardy (Fra) 7-6(6), 6-3, 6-1.

Fallen seeds

Men: 19-Hurkacz, 26-Sonego.

Women: 6-Andreescu, 16-Bertens, 19-Konta

Osaka withdraws from French Open



Stepping away: Osaka said she was pulling out so that the other players could concentrate on tennis. ■ GETTY IMAGES

SPORTS BUREAU

World No. 2 Naomi Osaka announced her withdrawal from the French Open late on Monday.

The decision comes in the wake of the Grand Slam Board threatening to default her if she continued to dodge her media responsibilities.

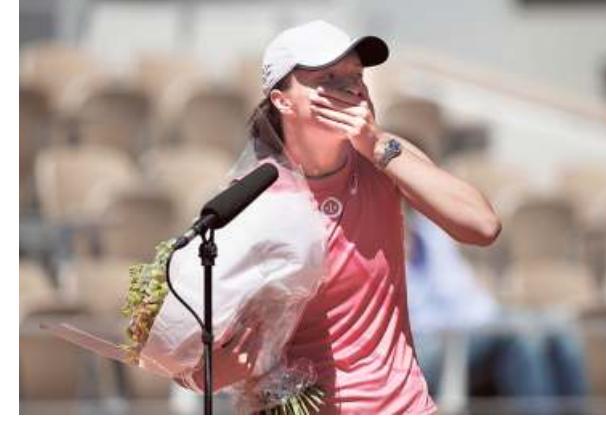
"The best thing for the tournament, the other players and my well-being is that I withdraw," Osaka said in a statement. "I never wanted to be a distraction and I accept my timing was not

ideal and my message could have been clearer.

"I have suffered long bouts of depression since the US Open in 2018. Though the tennis press has always been kind, I am not a natural public speaker.

"In Paris I was already feeling vulnerable. So I thought it was better to skip press conferences. I do feel the rules are quite outdated in parts. [But] I am going to take some time away and when the time is right, I want to discuss ways we can make things better."

Swiatek starstruck before meeting Nadal



Unusual prep: Swiatek said she had to 'write some small topics' of conversation down before practising with Nadal. ■ REUTERS

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE PARIS

She may be the reigning French Open champion, but Iga Swiatek said she had to "write some small topics" of conversation down before practising with Rafael Nadal ahead of her title defence this week.

The Pole, who celebrated her 20th birthday with a 6-0, 7-5 win over good friend Kaja Juvan in the first round on Monday, practised with 13-time Roland Garros winner Nadal for the first time.

"It was great. It wasn't a

surprise because I had to prepare," said Swiatek.

"Write some small topics, not to have awkward silence. But Rafa is really, really great. He's a really nice guy. Even though I am pretty introverted, it was really fun for me."

"Obviously I got to feel his forehand, which was great, and his top-spin."

"That was a whole new experience for me. It gave me a lot of positive energy. It was really a huge inspiration for me."

Crucial ICC Board meet to be held today

T20 World Cup venue and dates may be finalised



BCCI secretary Jay Shah and treasurer Arun Dhumal are in Dubai for the ICC Board meeting. ■ FILE PHOTOS

to wait till its annual conference in July before making the call.

A BCCI contingent, led by secretary Jay Shah, has reached Dubai to discuss with the ICC and UAE officials the issues regarding the T20 World Cup and the IPL.

Interestingly, the ICC Board is also likely to discuss the possibility of postponing the

the second cycle of the World Test Championship by two years. India is set to face New Zealand in the inaugural WTC final in Southampton from June 18.

Break for WTC?

However, with the international calendar having become way too tight due to the pandemic and the majority of members preferring to prioritise T20 leagues, the WTC may be forced to take a two-year break, until the ODI World Cup in 2023, before initiating the second WTC cycle.

Since the ODI Super League is in limbo due to COVID-19 and three limited-overs world events to be held in the next two years, the ICC Board is likely to adhere to the members' demands to push the next WTC cycle back by two years.

Superb Sanjeet wins 91kg gold

Amit Panghal dethroned; Shiva Thapa also gets silver

ASIAN BOXING

SPORTS BUREAU DUBAI

Sanjeet shocked Rio Olympics silver medallist Vassili Levit to win the 91kg title in the Asian boxing championships here on Monday.

In a battle of the south-paws, defending champion Panghal was unlucky to lose to World and Olympic champion Zoirov Shakhabdin of Uzbekistan. Panghal lost 3-2 despite dominating in the last two rounds.

Worlds silver medallist Amit Panghal (52kg) and former Worlds bronze medallist Shiva Thapa (64kg) picked up silver medals after suffering narrow losses.

Sanjeet made good use of his left jabs and mixed the body blows well to score against the experienced Kazakh who peppered the Indian with well-directed head shots.

In a battle of the south-paws, defending champion Panghal was unlucky to lose to World and Olympic champion Zoirov Shakhabdin of Uzbekistan. Panghal lost 3-2 despite dominating in the last two rounds.

Worlds silver medallist Amit Panghal (52kg) and former Worlds bronze medallist Shiva Thapa (64kg) picked up silver medals after suffering narrow losses.

second and made light of a bleeding right eyebrow to land fine combinations in the final round only to meet with disappointment.

India contested the decision of the second round of the 52kg bout, but the jury did not accept the protest.

In an evenly-contested fight, Thapa fell to Asian Games silver medallist Baatarsukh Chinzorig of Mongolia 3-2.

The results (finals): 52kg: Amit Panghal lost to Zoirov Shakhabdin (Uzb) 3-2; 64kg: Shiva Thapa lost to Baatarsukh Chinzorig (Mgl) 3-2; 91kg: Sanjeet bt Vassili Levit (Kaz) 4-1.

Jemimah pens a heartfelt note to women cricketers



Epiphany: Jemimah Rodrigues thanked the previous generation of women cricketers who laid the foundation for the team that it has become today. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Quarantine well utilised, says Desai

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA NEW DELHI

The unexpected three-week gap gave India's top cricketers much-needed rest and the hotel quarantine period has been well utilised to address the fitness areas which otherwise go untouched during a season, team's strength and conditioning (S&C) coach Sohum Desai said on Monday.

Desai, along with New Zealand's Nick Webb, are the two S&C coaches of the men's team and are in charge of getting the side into peak fitness before the World Test Championship final in Southampton from June 18. "Nick and I feel that we have benefited by the gap we got for the boys to take rest. They have had a long year," said Desai.

The Indian team will depart for the UK on Tuesday night.

FIRST MATCH

June 16

vs France, Munich, 12.30 a.m.

Usual formation: 4-3-3

FORWARDS

MIDFIELDERS

DEFENDERS

GOALKEEPER

DID YOU KNOW?

The finals will be Germany's 26th consecutive major tournament, namely World Cup or Euro

Best performance:

Winner 1972 & 1980 (as West Germany), 1996

COACH: Joachim Low

KEY PLAYER: Toni Kroos

One of the few veterans of 2014 left in a youthful squad, Kroos is an exceptional passer who dictates the pace of Germany's transitions

ONE TO WATCH:

Kai Havertz

Blessed with superb vision and calm under pressure, Havertz's tendency to float between lines makes him a perfect fit for Low's side

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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA SYDNEY

Hugs, tears of joy and relief marked the occasion as Australia's IPL contingent comprising players, support staff and commentators on Monday reunited with their family members after serving a 14-day hotel quarantine here.

The 38 Australians landed in the country two weeks ago after a stopover in Maldives due to travel ban from India.

The highlight of the day was fast bowler Pat Cummins reuniting with his pregnant partner Becky Boston, a video of which was uploaded on Twitter.

Besides Cummins, Steve Smith, Glenn Maxwell and David Warner were among those who finally embraced their loved ones after nearly eight weeks away from home.

CM

