



Pages 12 | 5 | LC

KOLKATA | NEW DELHI | SILIGURI | BHUBANESWAR

The Statesman

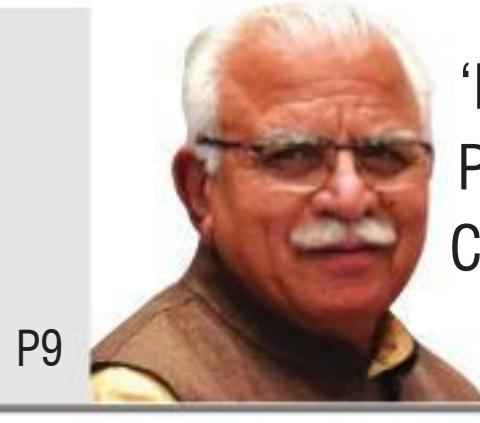
PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENT, ALWAYS IN SESSION



FARICAL ELECTION



ISRAEL HEADED FOR
A BREAK FROM THE
BIBI-REGIME



'KEJRIWAL PLAYING
POLITICS OVER
COVID-19 VACCINES'

P6

P9

FOOTBALL FINDS A
COACH TO MAKE
A MESSIAH OF

P12



WEATHER

Generally cloudy sky. Very light rain/thundershower accompanied with gusty winds. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 38 and 25 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: Nil

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 73% Min: 32%

TEMPERATURE

Max: 39.6°C (-1) Min: 25.0°C (-3)

SUN RISES SUN SETS

05:24 hrs 19:15 hrs

MOON RISES MOON SETS

00:49 hrs 11:11 hrs

THUMBNAILS



Locals stand near the broken culvert after a heavy rainfall in the aftermath of cyclone Yaas, at Raniganj in Malda on Monday. ■ AGENCIES

West Bengal eases Covid-19 norms: West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee announced some relaxations in the Covid-19 restrictions that have been imposed till 15 June. The retail shops will be allowed to remain open from 12 to 3 pm. Book shops will also be allowed to operate. The IT sector will be allowed to operate with 10 per cent staff. Construction workers will be allowed to work after being vaccinated.

Kerala House passes resolution on Lakshadweep: Expressing solidarity with the people of Lakshadweep, the Kerala Legislative Assembly on Monday unanimously passed a resolution demanding the recall of island administrator Praful Khoda Patel and requesting the immediate intervention of the Centre. (P4)

Decision on class 12 exam within two days: The government will take a final decision within the next two days on whether to conduct class 12 board exams amidst the ongoing pandemic, Attorney General K K Venugopal told a Supreme Court bench of Justices A M Khanwilkar and Dinesh Maheshwari on Monday.

'Twitter has to comply with new IT rules'

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

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

Justice Rekha Palli issued notice to the Centre and social media platform Twitter seeking their stand on a plea by a lawyer, Amit Acharya, claiming non-compliance of the rules by it.

While Twitter claimed before the court that it has complied with the rules and appointed a resident grievance officer, the central government disputed the claim.

"They have to follow it (rules), if it has not been stayed," the court said. PTI

Details on Page 5

Citing flaws, top court grills Centre on vaccine decisions

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

The Supreme Court on Monday shot a volley of tough questions at the Centre in connection with its Covid vaccine policy, and flagged various flaws: shortage of vaccine doses, pricing issues, registration for vaccination and lack of vaccine especially for the rural areas in the country.

A bench headed by Justice D.Y. Chandrachud was informed by the Centre that it expects to vaccinate all by the end of December 2021.

The bench also comprising L. Nageswara Rao and S. Ravindra Bhat cited the discrepancy in the supply of vaccine for different age groups.

VARIOUS FLAWS FLAGGED BY SUPREME COURT

- 1. Shortage of Covid vaccine doses
- 2. Pricing issues
- 3. Registration for vaccination
- 4. Lack of vaccine, especially for the rural areas
- 5. Discrepancy in vaccine supply for different age groups

Justice Bhat queried Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, representing the Centre, what is the rationale for dual policy? Centre is procuring certain amount and not willing to give it to states at some rate?

Justice Chandrachud noted that for the population above

45 years, procurement is by Centre as of 1 May, and for below 45, 50 percent to states is by manufacturers on pro rata basis.

He further queried "The price is determined by Centre. What is the basis for Centre to say that for 45 and above we will supply and procure vaccines free of charge and for below 45 states will have logistical arrangements?"

The bench told the Centre's counsel that government's rationale was high mortality in 45+ group, but in the second wave this group is not seriously affected, instead it was 18-44 age group. The bench added, "If purpose is to procure vaccines, why should the Centre procure only for over 45?"

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The Supreme Court on Monday said it will examine the interpretation of sedition law, particularly in the light of media rights and free speech, as it gave protection to Telugu news channels - TV5 and ABN Andhrayogi - from any coercive action in a case lodged against them under the colonial era provision.

The two channels were booked by Andhra Pradesh police for alleged sedition in showing 'offensive' speeches of YSR Congress rebel MP K Raghurama Krishna Raju.

A bench of Justices D.Y. Chandrachud, L.N. Rao and S. Ravindra Bhat said, We are of the view that provisions of 124A (sedition) and 153 (promoting enmity between classes) of the IPC require interpretation, particularly on the issue of the rights of press and free speech

WHAT IS SEDITION?

Two Telugu news channels-TV5 and ABN Andhrayogi~ were booked by Andhra Pradesh police for alleged sedition in showing 'offensive' speeches of YSR Congress rebel MP K Raghurama Krishna Raju.

We are of the view that provisions of 124A (sedition) and 153 (promoting enmity between classes) of the IPC require interpretation, particularly on the issue of the rights of press and free speech

The top court restrained the Andhra Pradesh police from taking any coercive action against the channels and their employees or staffers in connection with the FIR.

SUPREME COURT BENCH

penal offence of sedition.

Both the media houses have recently moved the top court seeking quashing of an FIR registered against it in a sedition case in Andhra Pradesh, with one house claiming the attempt is to create a chilling effect for news channels in the state so that they are wary of hosting any content which is critical of the government.

The channels have sought the apex court's direction to restrain the authorities in Andhra Pradesh from taking any coercive action against the

China allows couples to have 3rd child in major policy shift

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BEIJING, 31 MAY

China's ruling Communist Party will ease birth limits to allow all couples to have three children instead of two to cope with the rapid rise in the average age of its population, a state news agency said Monday.

The ruling party has enforced birth limits since 1980 to restrain population growth but worries the number of working-age people is falling too fast while the share over age 65 is rising, adding to strains on the economy and society.

A meeting on Monday of the party's Politburo decided China will introduce major policies and measures to actively deal with the aging population, the Xinhua News

Agency said. Party leaders pointed out that further optimising the fertility policy, implementing the policy of one couple can have three children and supporting measures are conducive to improving China's population structure.

It gave no details on when or how the change would be carried out.

China's population of 1.4 billion was expected to peak later this decade and start to decline. Census data released 11 May suggest that is happening faster than expected, straining underfunded pension and health systems and cutting the number of future workers available to support a growing retiree group.

Restrictions that limited most couples to one child were eased in 2015 to allow two to have two.

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of press and free speech. It restrained the Andhra Pradesh police from taking any coercive action against the channels and their employees or staffers in connection with the FIR.

The bench also sought the response of the state government within four weeks on the pleas of the channels which are charged for various offences including the harsh

penal offence of sedition.

Both the media houses have recently moved the top court seeking quashing of an FIR registered against it in a sedition case in Andhra Pradesh, with one house claiming the attempt is to create a chilling effect for news channels in the state so that they are wary of hosting any content which is critical of the government.

Lowest daily Covid cases in 50 days

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

India recorded less than 2 lakh Covid-19 cases third day in a row, with 1,52,734 new infections reported in the last 24 hours, while 3,128 more succumbed to the pandemic, the Union Health and Family Welfare Ministry said on Monday.

This is the lowest new infection reported since 9 April, when India recorded 1,45,384 cases while on 10 April, India witnessed 1,52,879 fresh cases.

Most Metro cities are still fighting huge waves, though Mumbai and Delhi have arrested the surge. Delhi on Sunday reported 946 cases, Mumbai 1,066, Bengaluru was the worst affected with 4,734 cases, followed by Chennai 2,689.

While lockdown measures are set to ease in the national capital, Tamil Nadu is micro-

A woman being taken to hospital after her condition deteriorated following inoculation in Faridabad on Monday.

managing at every level to break the chain while Bihar extended lockdown till 8 June. Fatalities have also remained below 4,000 for four consecutive days.

DELHI POSITIVITY RATE BELOW 1 PC: Delhi today reported 648 fresh coronavirus cases - its lowest in two-and-a-half months - and 86 Covid-linked deaths, while the positivity rate fell below one percent - the first time since 19 March —

FACT FILE

TOTAL CASES

2,80,47,534

ACTIVE CASES

20,26,092

NEW CASES

1,52,734

NEW RECOVERIES

2,38,022

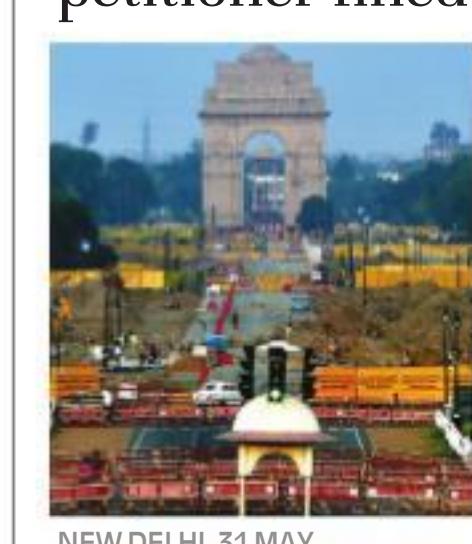
TOTAL DEATHS

3,29,100

UNION HEALTH MINISTRY FIGURES AS OF 8.00 A.M. MONDAY 31 MAY 2021

according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin. (SEE P2)

Central Vista gets HC nod; petitioner fined



Describing the Central Vista project as "vital and essential", the Delhi High Court on Monday allowed construction work on the project to continue and imposed a fine of Rs 1 lakh on the petitioners for their "motivated" plea.

The court said the legality of the project was already upheld by the Supreme Court. It added that even the Delhi Disaster Management Authority allowed it to continue, workers were already present at the site and, therefore, "we see no reason to stop the work".

A bench of Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Justice Jyoti Singh dismissed the plea seeking to halt the project during the coronavirus pandemic, saying the petition was "motivated" and "not a genuine PIL". It imposed a cost of Rs 1 lakh on the petitioners.

The court said under the contract awarded to the Shapoorji Pallonji Group, work had to be completed by November 2021 and, therefore, it should be allowed to continue.

The plea for halting the work was moved by Anya Malhotra, a translator, and Sohail Hashmi, a historian and documentary filmmaker. The two had contended in their PIL the project was not an essential activity and can be put on hold for time being. PII

SC to examine sedition law; stays steps against news channels

SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

WHAT IS SEDITION?

Two Telugu news channels-TV5 and ABN Andhrayogi~ were booked by Andhra Pradesh police for alleged sedition in showing 'offensive' speeches of YSR Congress rebel MP K Raghurama Krishna Raju.

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SUPREME COURT BENCH

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The channels have sought the apex court's direction to restrain the authorities in Andhra Pradesh from taking any coercive action against the

management and employees of the news channel in pursuance of the case lodged against them.

The Crime Investigation Department (CID), which has arrested Raju in the case, has also named two media houses and others as accused.

In its plea filed in the apex court through advocate Vipin Nair, Shreyas Broadcasting Pvt Ltd has said that freedom of speech of media is of great importance and the FIR clearly intends to breach the same by chilling the media houses into submission.

The channels have claimed that the FIR has been lodged against it for airing programmes involving Raju who has been critical of the state government led by his own party.

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government.

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government.

The channels have



Given the remoteness, lack of awareness, fear psychosis... many people are going untested

RAJU BISTA, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT, DARJEELING

AFTER HIS TOUR OF RURAL AREAS IN KALIMPONG DISTRICT TO TAKE STOCK OF THE COVID SITUATION

Delhi may get Sputnik V after 20 June: Kejriwal

Sisodia slams BJP for allegedly going after CM for demanding more Covid vaccines for Delhi

SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

Delhi is likely to receive the first consignment of Sputnik V, the Russian vaccine against Covid, in June, chief minister Arvind Kejriwal today said, stressing the point that vaccination is crucial in combating coronavirus.

He inaugurated a free walk-in vaccination facility for journalists and their families at Sarvodaya Bal Vidyalaya at DDU Marg in ITO.

"We have started this vaccination facility for journalists and their families. There was a demand from journalists to start a special vaccination facility for them. The vaccines are being administered to those who are in the 18-44 age group as well as those aged above 45. I urge all journalists to come in large numbers and get vaccinated. You can protect yourself from coronavirus only through vaccination," he told reporters.

The CM said the city currently has around 944 cases of mucormycosis or black fungus, including 300 being treated in the central government-run hospitals, but there is a shortage of drugs used to treat the disease.

"There are 300 cases of black fungus in central government hospitals and around 650 in Delhi government hospitals. However, the supply of injections is low. We had received 1,000 injections the day before yesterday, but did not receive any injections yesterday. It takes 3-



CM Arvind Kejriwal and Deputy CM Manish Sisodia inaugurate a free walk-in vaccination facility for journalists and their families at DDU Marg, ITO on Monday.

4 injections per person per day," he said. Kejriwal said Delhi is likely to get a consignment of the Sputnik V vaccine that will be imported by the firm concerned after 20 June. "Sputnik will probably offer vaccines after June 20. They will start the vaccine production from the month of August. They are importing the vaccines right now, and they will allot a section of their imported vaccines to the procurement of the Covid vaccine on an urgent basis.

The Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) has granted permission for restricted emergency use of Sputnik V with certain conditions. Dr Reddy's Laboratories will import the vaccine in the country. The process of lifting the lockdown gradually in the national capital began from today, starting with resumption of construction activities and reopening of factories for a week. However, many people also faced problems on its first day.

On being asked about the problems faced by people, the CM said, "We will rectify whatever issues people are facing. I observed that the portal was facing some issues today. We are working towards resolving those and all the other issues based on the feedback from the people," he said. The Delhi government has floated a global expression of interest (EoI) for the procurement of the Covid vaccine on an urgent basis.

On states being held responsible for the procurement of vaccines, he said, "How will the states procure the vaccines? It has been one-and-a-half to two months since the Centre had announced that states should float the tenders. There are 36 states and Union Territories. Every state and every political party has tried its best to procure the vaccines by filing global tenders," adding that none of the states has been able to procure a single injection on their own until now.

"It has become apparent that states are not able to procure vaccines on their own and the central government has to do it. States should be held responsible if and when they are not able to make proper arrangements to administer the vaccines after the Centre has procured, produced and supplied the vaccines to us. Thus, I feel that procurement, production, and distribution of the vaccines is the responsibility of the central government, and administering the vaccines is the responsibility of the state governments," the CM said.

There are people in the 18-44 age group who had received the first dose of Covaxin on 1 May and are due for their second dose. However, the vaccination for this age group has been shut owing to the stocks getting over. "As soon as Covaxin is available, we will first administer it to those who are due for their second dose," Kejriwal said.

Meanwhile, Delhi deputy CM Manish Sisodia said that BJP leaders "criticise and abuse" Kejriwal whenever he works for the people. He asserted that the Delhi CM will continue to demand Covid vaccines despite the attacks on him by the ruling party at the Centre. Haryana CM Manohar Lal Khattar and BJP chief JP Nadda have "criticised and abused" Kejriwal as he has started demanding more vaccines for Delhi, Sisodia said.

"BJP leaders have been criticising and abusing Kejriwal because they want to cover up the failure of their government in vaccine management. But no matter how much they abuse, Kejriwal will continue to demand vaccines for the people of Delhi," Sisodia said in an online briefing. The BJP is trying to stop Kejriwal's mass vaccination drive, he alleged while suggesting that the saffron party should focus on inoculating people instead of playing "dirty politics".

"Every time Arvind Kejriwal begins his work towards helping people and managing the Covid crisis, BJP leaders, instead of following the lead, start talking nonsense, abuse him and try to stop his efforts," Sisodia said. He also charged that the BJP had earlier prevented the supply of oxygen to Delhi that led to a major crisis. The Kejriwal government fought for uninterrupted oxygen supply to the city and got thousands of lives saved, he claimed.

Khattar had said Kejriwal was giving out vaccines "too fast", while Nadda was also making "condemnable" statements, Sisodia said. "They may continue saving the vaccines and selling those but the Kejriwal government's mission is to vaccinate all people and protect them," he said.

When it was time for vaccine procurement, the BJP was busy in "poll management and image management" and now its leaders were asking to vaccinate people slowly to save vaccines, Sisodia charged. The AAP-led Delhi government is committed to getting every person in Delhi inoculated before the third coronavirus wave, he added.

Delhi unlock: Factory owners grapple with shortage of raw material, labourers on day one

PTI

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

As the Covid lockdown restrictions were eased in Delhi, factory owners on Monday opened their establishments after six weeks with many grappling with shortage of labourers and raw materials, and fearing losses due to slump in production.

After a strict lockdown for six weeks since April 19, the Delhi government allowed industrial manufacturing and construction work in the city from Monday as part of its phased unlock process.

However, since the majority of the workforce had left for their native places fearing the unprecedented second wave of the coronavirus pandemic, and the markets yet to open for supply of raw material, the industrialists said they can only calculate their losses.

"We have only been able to enter the factory and that is it. There is no way we can start work," said Neeraj Sehgal, owner of Sehgal Doors in the Mayapuri industrial area.

"Only 20 per cent workers are here and there is no raw material because the government has not allowed the industrial use of oxygen, which is essential to make steel doors," said Sehgal, who makes fire-rated doors and steel doors.

And since the rules deny the use of oxygen for industries, the price for raw material has skyrocketed.

"What we were buying earlier for Rs 55 per kg is now available at Rs 90 per kg. An increase of 65 per cent, can you believe this," lamented Sehgal, who is also the general secretary of Mayapuri industrial area welfare association.

The pending electricity and water bills have only added to his woes.

As per an order issued by the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) on May 29, the workers and employees at manufacturing units and construction sites will be required to carry e-passes for movement during the ongoing lockdown that has been extended to June 7.

Another industrialist, Ashok Gupta of Jugmug Shoes in Udyog Nagar, Peeragarhi, was bogged down by not being able to get e-passes for his workers.

"The workers have been calling from their home in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar asking if we have arranged e-passes. But the system does not work. We are not able to get any passes. The entire operation has been shut," Gupta told PTI.

Gupta, who manufactures shoes for other market players, has also incurred huge losses as he could not deliver the orders.

"We had six orders from Dubai, but now they are buying from China. If this goes on we will have to scale down significantly. There is also a loan of Rs 10-12 crore, how do we pay that without any work?" Gupta said.

The unlock guidelines also allowed resumption of construction activities with staggered work hours, proper social distancing among workers, adequate gaps between shifts, and staggered lunch breaks of staff.

NBCC (India) Limited chairman and managing director P K Gupta said labour contractors have been told to bring back labourers who were working at projects prior to the lockdown.

"The vendors engaged by

NBCC are in continuous touch with various labour contractors who were working at projects prior to the lockdown for immediate re-mobilization of labours. It is expected that labour will start returning to projects in the next seven to 10 days of time," Gupta told PTI.

While awaiting the return of labourers, the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) has started executing "some important preparatory works such as the floating of tenders for Japan International Cooperation Agency-funded sections".

"There was a significant decline in the number of workers during the lockdown. However, during these difficult times also, we took care of the workers who were available by taking care of their medical and other requirements."

"With the lifting of restrictions, we are hopeful that more workers will gradually join back their sites. Apart from carrying on with whatever physical work we could, we also executed, a DMRC spokesperson said.

Apart from the reduced number of available labourers, the construction activities were also affected by the short supply of material.

"Although construction is allowed, we are facing a shortage of material as the supply has not yet resumed due to the lockdown," Nishit Jalan, CEO, Grov India Ltd, said.

The company is currently developing several projects in south Delhi.

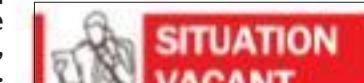
A DLF spokesperson said their construction partners were "extending all help for safe return of labour to the site".

The construction company is developing a large project at Moti Nagar in the national capital.

Classified

PUBLIC NOTIFICATIONS

Ltd. and West Bengal Text Book Corporation Ltd., dur-
ing 01-06-2021 to 30-06-2021
for various raw materials,
consumables, spares, ser-
vices, equipment, machines,
various finished goods, civil
construction, electrical
works, even management
partners, etc. Details are
being posted at our follow-
ing websites:
www.saraswatypress.com /
www.wbtextbookcorporation.com. Eligible vendors
are invited to participate in
these tenders.



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Delhi Police takes Sushil Kumar to Haridwar to get more clues

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

The Crime Branch on Monday took murder accused wrestler Sushil Kumar to Haridwar to collect further evidence in the Sagar Dhankar murder case. Notably, the 2-time Olympic medalist had escaped to Hardiwar after the death of 23-year-old Sagar Rana.

Police will investigate Sushil's hideout and the people who helped him when he was absconding, sources said.

Police said Sushil had first fled to Hardiwar after his alleged involvement in the murder of junior wrestler Sagar.

Wrestler Sushil Kumar was not cooperating in the investigation and his mobile is yet to be discovered, sources said. It is being believed that Sushil got rid of his mobile phone in Hardiwar only. Also,

police are looking for the clothes Sushil was wearing on the night Sagar was beaten to death. Police investigation revealed that total 13 people were involved behind the murder of Sagar. Out of 13, nine people have been arrested and police identified the rest four who are still absconding.

Sushil Kumar is firm on his statement that killing Sagar was not the motive and that he had called boys to just beat him up. During the investigation, he has also alleged that Sagar was "spoiling the boys" of Chhatrasal Stadium. However, the reality is that Sagar was challenging Sushil's authority at the stadium, which Sushil did not want and wanted to settle the score.

According to police Sushil had crossed the border of as many of seven states and union territories in the past eighteen days to evade his arrest following the murder.



HC asks Centre, Delhi govt to form policy on distribution of black fungus drug

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

The Delhi High Court Monday asked the Centre and Delhi government to come out with a policy on distribution of Amphotericin-B, used for treating black fungus patients, and take the "cruel decision" of excluding certain age group or class of people till the drug is in shortage.

The bench asked them not to leave the decision to the doctors and form a clear policy in this regard. Citing an example, it said that 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.

Mayors elections to be held on June 16: Officials

PTI

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

19 in view of the second wave of the pandemic in the country. The earlier unified Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) was bifurcated into north, south and east Delhi municipal corporations -- NDMC, SDMC and EDMC -- in 2012.

"All safety protocols as applicable on that date shall be followed," a senior civic official.

The outgoing mayors are Jai Prakash (NDMC), Anamika (SDMC) and Nirmal Jain (EDMC). All the three municipal corporations -- North, South and East -- are ruled by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

The mayoral five-year tenure sees five single-year terms on a rotation basis, with the first year being reserved for women, the second open category, third for reserved category, and the remaining two also being in the open category.

HC pulls up drug controller for not examining properly how Gambhir got huge quantities of Fabiflu

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

The Delhi High Court Monday came down heavily on the drug controller for not properly examining how BJP MP Gautam Gambhir procured huge quantity of Fabiflu, used for treating COVID-19 patients, and said the tendency of people to take advantage of a situation to appear as saviours has to be denounced.

The high court said its confidence in the drug controller has shaken and rejected its status report filed in connection with its inquiry into procurement of the medicine by the cricketer-turned-politician Gambhir.

The high court said everyone knows that the drug was in short supply and while Gambhir bought thousands of strips of the medicine, other people who needed it could not get it on that day.

You (drug controller) are wrong to say it was not in short supply. You want us to shut our eyes. You think you would get away with this. You can't take us for a ride. If you think we are so gullible, so naive, we are not. You better do your job. If you can't do your job, tell us, we will have you suspended and let someone else do your job, a bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Jasmeet Singh said.

The bench also pulled up Gambhir for again making a statement that he will continue to do such work. We have already said it is a malpractice.

This tendency of people trying to take advantage and then trying to appear as a saviour when they themselves created the problem, has to be denounced. And then the person goes on to state he would do it again. If it continues, we know how to deal with it, the bench said.

Delhi records 648 virus cases; positivity rate dips below 1 pc



SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

Delhi today reported 648 fresh coronavirus cases — its lowest in two-and-a-half months — and 86 Covid-linked deaths, while the positivity rate fell below one per cent — the first time since March 19 — according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin.

This is the second consecutive day that the daily Covid deaths logged in the city remained below 100.

Yesterday, Delhi had recorded 946 Covid cases and 78 deaths and the positivity rate had stood at 1.25 per cent.

The positivity rate today dipped to 0.99 per cent, the

health bulletin said. This was 0.90 per cent on 19 March.

With the fresh cases and fatalities, the national capital's cumulative tally of cases mounted to 14,26,240 and the toll rose to 24,237, the bulletin stated.

As the second wave of the Covid pandemic spread across the country, Delhi began witnessing a sharp spike in daily cases and deaths from 19 April. It had reported its highest single-day spike of 448 deaths on 3 May.

However, the number of cases and deaths have shown a declining trend over the last several days.

Delhi's fresh cases today is the lowest since 18 March, when 607 people were diag-

nosed with the disease. The fatality rate in Delhi stood at 1.7 per cent, the bulletin said.



I humbly request you to withdraw, recall, reconsider your decision and rescind the latest so-called order in larger public interest. I appeal to your conscience and good sense, on the behalf of the people of West Bengal

MAMATA BANERJEE
WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER

The Statesman
NEW DELHI, TUESDAY 01 JUNE 2021

03

Kejriwal playing politics over Covid shots, alleges Khattar

Brushing aside his remarks, Delhi CM justifies need for vaccinating people at a faster pace

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH / NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Monday accused his Delhi counterpart Arvind Kejriwal of allegedly playing politics over Covid vaccines, saying the national capital was "exhausting" its supply too soon while his own state was "stretching" it over a longer period by conducting the vaccination campaign in view of the available stock.

Speaking to reporters at a digital Press conference, Khattar clarified he did not say that the Covid vaccines should not be given. "Delhi chief minister is also aware and we also know what the status of the stock of Covid-19 vaccine is. We have said that the vaccination campaign should be conducted in view of the available stock. Now it is not appropriate to do politics over it," he said.

Khattar said 12 crore vac-



Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal addressing a digital press conference on Monday

cines are going to be available in the country soon. Distribution will be done according to the norms, he added.

Earlier, the Haryana CM said Delhi was getting more vaccine doses considering the size of its population. Giving an example of his own state and virtually admitting to rationing of vaccines, Khattar said, "Even we (Haryana) can administer two lakh doses in one day and exhaust our stock. But we know how much stock we are

getting and if we keep administering 50,000 to 60,000 doses to people daily, this (stock) will keep going on."

He said given the present Covid pandemic situation, the Centre was doing its best to lend assistance to the states.

"So far, all vaccination doses are coming from the Centre's side. Delhi's population is two crore, our population is 2.90 crore," the Haryana CM said. "If we go by this ratio, Delhi has got 51 lakh vaccine

doses and accordingly we should have got 74 to 75 lakh doses, but we have got only 58 lakh doses. If one goes by per million population, Delhi has got more and Haryana has got less vaccine doses," he added.

His remarks came amid Kejriwal's demand for more vaccine doses from the Centre. "Whatever stock is available, it has to be distributed to the entire country. Delhi alone cannot get it. And if the

entire country has to get it, then it will be given on a pro rata basis," the Haryana CM said.

Khattar said many states, including Haryana, were also making efforts to procure vaccines from abroad by floating global tenders. "The Centre is already giving vaccines and will keep giving in future too. But he (Kejriwal) always indulges in drama," he added.

Kejriwal reportedly shared a video on Twitter in which Khattar had accused him of politicising the vaccination issue and had said that the national capital was getting more vaccine doses than other states.

Khattar even suggested that Delhi was vaccinating people at a fast pace.

On being asked about Khattar's remarks and his tweet, Kejriwal reportedly said, "If we do not vaccinate people at a faster pace and as soon as possible, how will we ensure vaccination for all our people and protect them from corona?"

To fight for 'chairs of office', Cong MLAs desert Punjab amid Covid crisis: SAD

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 31 MAY

With 25 Congress legislators from Punjab getting summoned to Delhi for giving their feedback on the ongoing tussle in the party, the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) on Monday alleged that Congress ministers and legislators had rushed to Delhi to lobby for the chief ministerial chair as well as Cabinet berths.

At least 25 Congress Members of Legislative Assembly (MLAs) and ministers from Punjab, including cabinet ministers Charanjit Channi and Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa, were slated to meet on Monday at a three-member committee, formed to resolve the infighting in the Punjab Congress.

Congress leader and MLA Navjot Singh Sidhu will be among the other leaders who will meet a party panel on Tuesday. Chief Minister Amarinder Singh is also likely to meet the core committee, formed to resolve the infighting in the Punjab Congress.

Expressing concern at the manner in which the Congress government had deserted the people of Punjab in the midst of the Covid pandemic by shifting to Delhi to fight for



the "chairs of office", the SAD said Congress ministers and legislators were totally indifferent to the suffering of the people battling Covid-19.

After a meeting of the core committee held late yesterday evening, the SAD condemned the ministers and legislators for giving moral scruples a go by and showing naked greed at a time while the body count in Punjab was amongst the highest in the country.

The core committee, which was presided over by SAD president Sukhbir Singh Badal and charged to Delhi to lobby for the chief ministerial chair as well as cabinet berths but they as well as the CM had never gone to Delhi to demand life saving drugs, oxygen concentrators or vaccine doses.

chair rather than taking out time to supervise the fight against Covid.

"Amarinder Singh is behaving like a modern day Nero who is self-centered and only interested in saving his kingdom and is completely impervious to the suffering of the people. There can be no other answer for the manner in which the people of Punjab have been allowed to fend for themselves and left without basic medicines, oxygen and even vaccine doses. All this has resulted in 14,500 deaths and the highest fatality rate in the country but Amarinder Singh is least concerned.

He has joined the game with his detractors and dispatched his own team to Delhi to save his chair instead of dispatching them to Punjab to save Covid patients," the SAD said.

Sukhbir Badal while speaking in the meeting said it was shocking that Congress ministers and legislators had rushed to Delhi to lobby for the chief ministerial chair as well as cabinet berths but they as well as the CM had never gone to Delhi to demand life saving drugs, oxygen concentrators or vaccine doses.

Opp parties in quarantine during pandemic: Nadda

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 31 MAY

BJP national chief and Rajya Sabha MP JP Nadda on Monday decried opposition parties' role in Covid pandemic and charged that most of the national political parties have gone under virtual "quarantine".

But it was BJP which through its 'Sewa Hi Sangathan' programme had come forward to help the needy people in fighting the pandemic and mitigating the sufferings of the common man, he said while virtually laying foundation of PSA oxygen plants at Hamirpur medical college and CHC Ghumarwin in Bilaspur district.

Nadda further stated that the Union government had provided subsidy on fertilizers to facilitate the farmers of the country during this pandemic and the decision will benefit crores of farmers of the country.

Similarly, crores of farmers of the country had been benefited under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana, the BJP national chief

said.

Nadda stated that as many as 9,26,963 eligible farmers of the State had been provided assistance of Rs 1355.80 crore under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojna till now.

"PM Modi has effectively guided the nation during the pandemic and there was only one virology lab to test Coronavirus in the country last year both during the first wave in 2020 and also during the second wave in 2021," he added.

But the country today has over 2,500 labs providing immediate testing facilities to the Coronavirus patients," he added.

He also appreciated the Union minister of state for finance and corporate affairs Anurag Singh Thakur for generously helping the State fighting this pandemic.

He added the 140 LPM

PSA oxygen plants at medical college in Hamirpur and CHC Ghumarwin will be able to provide uninterrupted oxygen supply to 30 beds each.

Anurag Thakur said an oxygen bank would be set up in Himachal Pradesh which would provide uninterrupted oxygen supply to 700 beds.

"BJP national chief J P Nadda will flag off the first consignment of 108 oxygen concentrators and 160 oxygen cylinders for this oxygen bank," he said while virtually addressing the foundation laying event of 2 PSA oxygen plants in Hamirpur and Bilaspur districts.

He added it was due to Nadda's initiative that each and every party functionary contributed generously towards helping the Covid-19 patients and their families.

HP working to ramp up Covid testing: CM

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 31 MAY

Himachal Pradesh chief minister Jai Ram Thakur on Monday said the state government was leaving no stone unturned to ramp up Covid testing for which 35 labs have been set up and 70 ambulances have been deployed for testing people in remote areas.

Thakur said when the pandemic struck in 2020, there was not even one lab in the state to test samples for Covid after which the government took urgent steps and in no time established a network of 8 RTPCR, 25 TrueNat and 2 CBNAAT labs.

To increase testing in the far-flung and rural areas, as many as 70 ambulances had been deployed by the HP

government in various districts, he added.

He stated that Himachal had only around 200 active cases of Covid as on 23rd February 2021 and thereafter, 2nd wave struck the state that resulted in increased caseload and deaths.

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He stated that Himachal had only around 200 active cases of Covid as on 23rd February 2021 and thereafter, 2nd wave struck the state that resulted in increased caseload and deaths.

"Fortunately now the recovery rate in the state has improved to 89.3 per cent.

Liquor smuggling: 500 IMFL cases seized in H'yana, 2 held

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 31 MAY

big consignment of illicit liquor.

Based on the input, the police team signalled a truck bearing Gujarat registration number coming from Hisar side to stop for checking. Search of the vehicle led to the recovery of 500 cases of English brand of liquor.

The arrested accused were identified as Bhanwar Lal and Amra Ram, both native of district Jhalawar in Rajasthan.

The police have registered a case under relevant sections of the Excise and Disaster Management Act against the duo.

HP Cong blames Thakur govt for high Covid death rate

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 31 MAY

Himachal Pradesh Congress MLA from Shimla (rural) constituency Vikramaditya Singh on Monday criticised the BJP-led state government for failing to handle Covid pandemic effectively and said the lack of oxygen and ventilators have also contributed to high death rate in the state.

Singh, son of former chief minister Virbhadrappa Singh, said health facilities in Himachal were in shambles and the ventilators which were sent by the Union government to aid in the treatment of Covid patients were also found to be faulty.

"Congress party is doing its bit by helping needy persons while the ruling BJP is looking for opportunities in Covid pandemic.

The increasing caseload and death rate in the state is a cause of serious concern," he said while accusing the state government of reducing testing to prevent a rosy picture.

He stated that the spread of viral disease in rural areas of the



Congress MLA Vikramaditya Singh with BJP and CPM workers who joined Congress, at his residence in Shimla on Monday. SNS

state had further concerned all as health facilities in these areas were in tatters with scant coverage of health services to the people residing in these areas.

He also criticised the BJP government for increasing the prices of essential commodities and said the government, instead of providing relief to the common man, was putting additional burden in Covid pandemic.

The ruling BJP government in Himachal was talking about making liquor cheaper in the state and on the other hand was increasing the prices of ration provided to the poor under the public distribution system, he added.

He further stated that the seven-year tenure of Prime Minister Narendra Modi led government was mired with failures and though the BJP was terming it historic yet the

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)'s Punjab president and Member of Parliament (MP) Bhagwant Mann on Monday said the Punjab government was absent from the state today as Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh was sitting in his palaces in the cold valleys while the Congress ministers and legislators were sitting in Delhi to save the Covid virus.

Addressing a Press conference, Mann said Amarinder Singh did not fulfill the written promises made by the Congress government to the people in their election manifesto presented in 2017. "The culprits responsible for the desecration of Sri Guru Granth Sahib and Kotkapura firing case have not been punished till date. On the contrary, the people responsible for this tragic incident are roaming freely and enjoying themselves," he added.

Mann said that even today, the drug mafia, transport mafia, cable mafia; sand and

mining mafia were operating in the state in the same manner as it was during the Badal government. The AAP leader said that it would have been better if the Congress government of Punjab had gone to Delhi and accompanied the Congress high command to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to get the anti-farmer agriculture Bills repealed.

"It would have been better, if the Captain government had gone to the BJP government at the Centre to get medicines, vaccines, ventilators, etc to save the people of Punjab from the Covid-19 pandemic, but the Congress leaders have gone to Delhi to save their seats," said Mann. He said that the Captain

led Congress government had abandoned Punjab, as the people today did not have the necessary vaccines, medicines and ICU beds to protect them from the Covid virus.

Commenting on the statement of Captain Amarinder Singh for giving a grant of Rs 10 lakh to the villages getting 100 percent vaccination, Mann said that the Chief Minister should tell from where the vaccines can be obtained. He said that government hospitals and dispensaries in the constituency of state health minister Balbir Singh Sidhu were lying dry without vaccination.

At least 25 Congress legislators from Punjab were summoned by a party panel to Delhi for giving their feedback on the ongoing tussle in the party. These Members of Legislative Assembly (MLAs) and ministers, including cabinet ministers Charanjit Channi and Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa, were slated to meet on Monday at a three-member committee, formed to resolve the infighting in the Punjab Congress.

He stated that Himachal had only around 200 active cases of Covid as on 23rd February 2021 and thereafter, 2nd wave struck the state that resulted in increased caseload and deaths.

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"Fortunately now the recovery rate in the state has improved to 89.3 per cent.

Non-payment of salaries, pensions: HC asks North MCD to give list of assets, bank balance

PTI
NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

The Delhi High Court Monday directed North Municipal Corporation of Delhi (North MCD) to disclose its list of assets and bank balance to examine the issue of non-payment of salaries to the employees and pensions for those retired, saying right to receive dues constitute their fundamental right.

The high court warned it will now start attaching the civic body's properties as the employees and retired staff cannot wait endlessly for salaries and pensions.

A bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Jasmeet Singh directed the North MCD's commissioner to file the affidavit disclosing the assets and bank balances by July 4 and listed the matter for further hearing on July 8.

We have already said that the right to receive salaries and pensions constitutes a fundamental right and we have already directed the corporations to ensure timely payment of salaries and pensions of their employees and pensioners, the bench said, adding that, now we are going to attach your assets.

The court said either the

corporation shall retrench some of its staff or increase its revenue but it must timely pay its employees.

Give us the list of all your properties and bank accounts. We will now start attaching it and recover the money. We can't keep waiting. Either you retrench them, send them home, take drastic cuts, off load some weight, we don't know, the bench said, terming it as a perennial problem of the North MCD.

On being asked by the court as to how much more money they require to clear the dues, advocate Divya Prakash Pandey, representing North MCD, said with Rs 300 crores they will be able to clear the present dues and employees and pensioners will be paid till date.

Delhi received fresh stock of Covid vaccines on Sunday: Atishi

PTI
NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

Delhi received fresh stock of Covaxin and Covishield for the 45 plus age group on Sunday, AAP MLA Atishi said, and lamented that vaccination for the youth at government centres has been shut for more than a week owing to lack of jabs for this category.

Issuing the vaccination bulletin, Atishi said they received over 25,000 doses of Covaxin and over 83,000 doses of Covishield on Sunday. "This means, now we have

four days of Covaxin and 20 days of Covishield stock in Delhi for the 45 plus age group, frontline workers and healthcare workers.

"Covaxin will only be used to administer the second dose to those who had been administered the first dose. There were many people who were inoculated with the first dose more than a month back and were waiting for the second dose," she said. Atishi pointed out that it has been more than a week since the government vaccination centres



This is not the time to fight with the state governments, but to fight the coronavirus together with everyone

DELHI CHIEF MINISTER ARVIND KEJRIWAL

india

THUMBNAILS



Social worker Rajendra Kumar Tiwari holds up a placard adorned with cigarette boxes, as he campaigns during World No Tobacco Day on a scooter in Prayagraj, on Monday. AGENCIES

Hyderabad Metro schedule changes: Hyderabad Metro Rail Limited (HMR) on Monday decided to further extend its services by one hour, i.e. 2 pm, from Tuesday in view of the extended relaxation timing during ongoing lockdown. IANS

Judo trainer held for sexual harassment: A 41-year-old martial arts trainer has been arrested at Anna Nagar, Chennai, in connection with sexual harassment of his 26-year-old student almost seven years ago, police said on Monday. PTI

WAITING FOR JAB



An elderly beneficiary shows her identity card as she waits to receive her 2nd dose of COVID-19 vaccine, at a vaccination centre in Guwahati on Monday. PTI

Narada: Hearing of CBI's plea to continue today



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, 31 MAY

A counsel cannot dictate terms how a court should hear a matter, observed acting Chief Justice, Rajesh Bindal to state advocate general Kishor Datta.

Acting Chief Justice Bindal along with four other judges of the Calcutta High Court was today hearing the CBI plea for transferring Narada sting operation case to another state.

Acting Chief Justice made this observation when advocate general submitted that a larger bench has no jurisdiction to hear the transfer petition filed by CBI.

It is a single bench which has the jurisdiction to hear and adjudicate the issue, Datta added.

In reply to acting Chief Justice Bindal's observation, advocate general said that a counsel always has the right to make a prayer before the court, even if it's wrong. He also argued that I am arguing rule and procedure fixed by this chartered High Court.

Justice I P Mukerji observed that the Division Bench agreed to send the issue to a larger Bench and Supreme Court also directed the larger Bench should hear the merit of the case.

Appearing for the petitioners, Kalyan Banerjee argued that we are products of a chartered High Court which may not be upgraded like Supreme Court, but we

Kerala passes resolution to remove Lakshadweep admin

Requests Centre's intervention to protect lives & livelihood of the islanders

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
TRIVANDRUM, 31 MAY

Expressing solidarity with the people of Lakshadweep, the Kerala Legislative Assembly on Monday unanimously passed a resolution demanding the recall of island administrator Praful Khoda Patel and requesting the immediate intervention of the Centre to protect the lives and livelihood of the islanders.

With this, Kerala has become the first state in the country to come up with a resolution to support the people of the union territory over the recent developments.

An archipelago located in the Arabian Sea, Lakshadweep is witnessing protests by local people for some days over the recent actions and administrative reforms being implemented by Patel.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan moved the government resolution, the first such motion in the 15th state Assembly, reminiscing the historic and cultural bond between Kerala and Lakshadweep and criticising the Centre for allegedly trying to destroy the natural democracy there. Stat-

'Administrator never tried to understand islanders' culture'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

Administrator Praful Patel has been to Lakshadweep for just 15-20 days in the past five months, and cared little to understand the islanders' culture and ecology, its MP Mohammed Faizal asserted.

Faizal asserted that a legal recourse would be sought if the Centre went ahead with the controversial laws for the

ing that the future of Lakshadweep is a matter of concern, he said any attempt to undermine its unique culture and indigenous lifestyle is unacceptable.

Anyone who upholds constitutional values should register a strong disagreement against the actions of the administrator of Lakshadweep, the Chief Minister urged. Setting aside their political differences, members of the ruling CPI(M)-led Left Democ-

tic Front and the Congress-headed United Democratic Front unanimously backed the resolution, except some amendments suggested by the latter.

The hard-hitting resolution alleged that attempts were being made to impose "saffron agendas" and "corporate interests" by destroying the unique way of life of Lakshadweep people. The implementation of the agenda, rolled out in the

name of reforms, began with painting coconut trees with saffron colour and has now grown to the level of destroying the traditional habitat, life and natural relationships of the island dwellers, it alleged.

Steps have been taken to bring in the Goondas Act in the islands, where the crime rate is exceptionally low, it said, adding that such measures were in anticipation of any protests and to silence any voice of dissent. "A dictatorial system of governance is being developed through these measures," it said.

Pointing out that the authorities also aimed at destroying their traditional livelihood of fishing, the resolution said sheds where the fishermen's boats and nets are kept have been "rampantly destroyed."

Earlier, the state Assembly had passed a resolution against the citizenship amendment act (CAA), while another one was moved against the contentious farm laws.

Meanwhile, the Lakshadweep administration has denied permission to a delegation of CPI-M MPs to undertake a fact-check visit to the island citing Covid-19 protocol.

The Union minister tried to justify the taxation by saying a lot of money is spent on health care and the pandemic-related requirements and hence taxes have not been reduced.

The state Congress leadership was quick to counter reminding Pradhan of the crude price during the UPA regime and how the fuel prices in the country had never touched Rs 100 per litre at that point in time.

Pradhan and his party were hitting the streets and agitating at that point in time, chided the state Congress.

What about the savings that had accrued when the crude price hit a rock bottom of \$30 per barrel, they asked.

Why not spend from PM Care, questioned the Congress.

The short-sightedness of Pradhan and his government is evident as the economy will further suffer as prices of essentials and transportation will increase, noted the Congress party.

AIADMK: Sasikala will not be taken back; slams bid to create confusion

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KRISHNAGIRI, 31 MAY

The AIADMK on Monday hit out at VK Sasikala and decried bid to create confusion saying she is not with the party and would not be taken back, a day after she hinted at revival of attempts to regain control of the party.

Asking her to keep away from the party, senior party leader K P Munusamy asserted that under no circumstances could Sasikala enter the AIADMK.

There is no chance for her to join the party again and the cadres are clear about not allowing her to get back, Munusamy, party deputy coordinator, told reporters at Veppanahalli, near here.

The AIADMK has hit back after Sasikala's conversations with her loyalists over phone surfaced on Sunday in which she indicated efforts to get back control of the party.

No party worker from the AIADMK spoke to her, he said. The GC meet also announced invalidation of all the appointments made by Dhinakaran.

them and infighting, prompting her to act to safeguard the party interests.

Munasamy said Sasikala is not with the AIADMK and she has no links whatsoever to the party. To somehow create confusion in the party that is being run well, misinformation was being spread by projecting Sasikala, he alleged.

The aim is only to divert cadres and functionaries and create confusion and this attempt would not succeed, he said.

Not even a single AIADMK worker would fall prey to the design aimed at creating confusion, he said.

To a question on Sasikala speaking to loyalist party workers, he said no party worker called her up over phone but it was she who was calling workers of her nephew Dhinakaran-led Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam.

No party worker from the AIADMK spoke to her, he said. The GC meet also announced invalidation of all the appointments made by Dhinakaran.

TN education dept prints 3.8 cr new school textbooks

IANS
CHENNAI, 31 MAY

printed and delivered. This means that 91 per cent of the textbooks have been printed and delivered to the designated centres.

The Tamil Nadu Textbook Corporation in a statement on Monday said the printing of textbooks for school students in Tamil Nadu for the academic year 2021-22.

This exercise was done despite the long holidays and shutdown owing to the Covid-19 pandemic and the state Assembly elections. The education department has ordered 4.1 crore textbooks, of which 3.8 crore have already been

printed and delivered. This means that 91 per cent of the textbooks have been printed and delivered to the designated centres.

The Tamil Nadu Textbook Corporation in a statement on Monday said the printing of textbooks for classes 8 to 12 is complete and for other classes a small percentage remains to be printed.

The Textbook Corporation will also deliver books to private schools who have given orders for them after lockdown.

Attack on Baishali Dalmiya's son



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, 31 MAY

Former Bali MLA Baishali Dalmiya, who became a BJP candidate this year from the same constituency, on Monday lodged a complaint that her son was severely beaten up by an unknown gang around 10am.

She alleged that they suddenly stopped the car in which her son was travelling and beat up their driver and later her son. The miscreants smashed the window panes of the car and tried to drag her son out through the broken window.

"Glass shards of the window caused injury on my son's stomach. He received injuries on several parts of the body," she said.

Without mentioning any political party's name she said that the attacked was unleashed as she joined the BJP before the Assembly polls.

She tried to contact TMC secretary-general and cabinet minister Partha Chatterjee on his cell phone but did not get any response.

"When I reached the spot, the miscreants also tried to kill me," she said. She also described the incident through Facebook live. Her son was treated at a local clinic.

declared, it was directed. Such return to respective homes will be irrespective of any political affiliation, it was stated.

By tomorrow, the SLS will receive in its website, the names and addresses of the fugitives who have fled their homes, it was stated.

Law and order is a state subject, the court pointed out.

The police will have to ensure the return of those who have fled their homes owing to post poll violence, it was observed. It will have to ensure the freedom of their movement once they return home, it was further directed.

do know a little bit of law.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta said the state does not want that the court should hear the merit of the case.

The country wants to know and the constitutional court cannot throw out the matter on technical grounds.

Mehta submitted the court should hear him first.

The court will continue the hearing tomorrow.

Even as the cyclone Yaas spared Kolkata during landfall unlike Amphan, the city has received more rainfall in May this year, than its corresponding month in 2020.

According to the Regional Meteorological Centre, Kolkata, the city has received a rainfall of about 212 per cent than normal this month. While Kolkata had received about 207 per cent rainfall during the same month last year. In 2019, the city had received about 28 per cent less rainfall than normal in the month of May.

The reason for the rise in the rainfall percentage,

according to the officials, is due to the heavy downpour on the days before and after cyclone Yaas made a landfall in Odisha.

On 27 May, the city had received rainfall of about 10cm, which was a major contribution to the total percentage of this month.

Notably, the weather officials have predicted rainfall in Kolkata for the next few days and the city may continue to enjoy respite from the scorching heat and soaring temperatures till then.

A mass of clouds circulating over the neighbouring state of Jharkhand and northern belts of West Bengal is likely to bring more showers to Kolkata and other districts.

Pradhan attributes fuel price hike to int'l crude taxes

BHUBANESWAR, 31 MAY

Union petroleum minister Dharmendra Pradhan attributed the fuel price hike in the country to international crude prices and taxes.

Responding to questions here even as the price of petrol and diesel touched Rs 100 to the litre in some of the districts, Pradhan said crude price has increased. The Centre and state governments are also levying taxes, he added.

The Union minister tried to justify the taxation by saying a lot of money is being spent on health care and the pandemic-related requirements and hence taxes have not been reduced.

The state Congress leadership was quick to counter reminding Pradhan of the crude price during the UPA regime and how the fuel prices in the country had never touched Rs 100 per litre at that point in time.

Pradhan and his party were hitting the streets and agitating at that point in time, chided the state Congress.

What about the savings that had accrued when the crude price hit a rock bottom of \$30 per barrel, they asked.

Why not spend from PM Care, questioned the Congress.

The short-sightedness of Pradhan and his government is evident as the economy will further suffer as prices of essentials and transportation will increase, noted the Congress party.

NORKA hands over Rs 4 lakh to Soumya's kin

TRIVANDRUM, 31 MAY

NORKA Roots, a welfare agency of non-resident Keralites, on Monday handed over Rs 4 lakh insurance amount to the family of Soumya Santhosh, who was recently killed in a Palestinian rocket attack in Israel.

A native of Keerithodu in the hill district of Idukki, the 30-year-old woman had worked as a caregiver attending to an old woman at a house in the southern Israeli coastal city of Ashkelon.

Soumya was talking to her husband on the evening of 11 May when a rocket fired from Gaza hit the house where she was working.

The shop of Rai, a BJP worker from north Kolkata, was entirely looted in front of the police, by miscreants after the election results were declared.

The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) issued notice to DGP West Bengal regarding attacks, molestation of parents before kids in South 24-Parganas.

The NCPCR sought inquiry in an action against Diamond Harbor SP Avijit Banerjee, alleged goon Jahangir Khan, Inspector-in-charge (IC) Falta, Abhijit Hait, officer Raffikul Jaman Sk and sub-inspector Sumon Bogi.

Installation, testing and commissioning of axle counter in connection with (i). Replacement of Analog Axle counter in loop line in SSB-JHI section of Delhi Division. (ii). Provision of Dual detection of HASDAC in block section of SPR section of Delhi Division.

Installation, testing and commissioning of (i). DC track circuit in place of Analog Axle counter in loop line in SSB-JHI section of Delhi Division. (ii). Provision of Dual detection of HASDAC in block section of SPR section of Delhi Division.

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All other terms and condition will remain unchanged.

Tender No.:



The zero vaccine policy of the Modi government is acting like a dagger in Mother India's heart. Sad truth

CONGRESS LEADER RAHUL GANDHI
ON MODI GOVERNMENT'S HANDLING OF COVID PANDEMIC AND ITS VACCINE POLICY

The Statesman
NEW DELHI, TUESDAY 01 JUNE 2021

05

Govt notifies 2nd indigenisation list of defence items

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

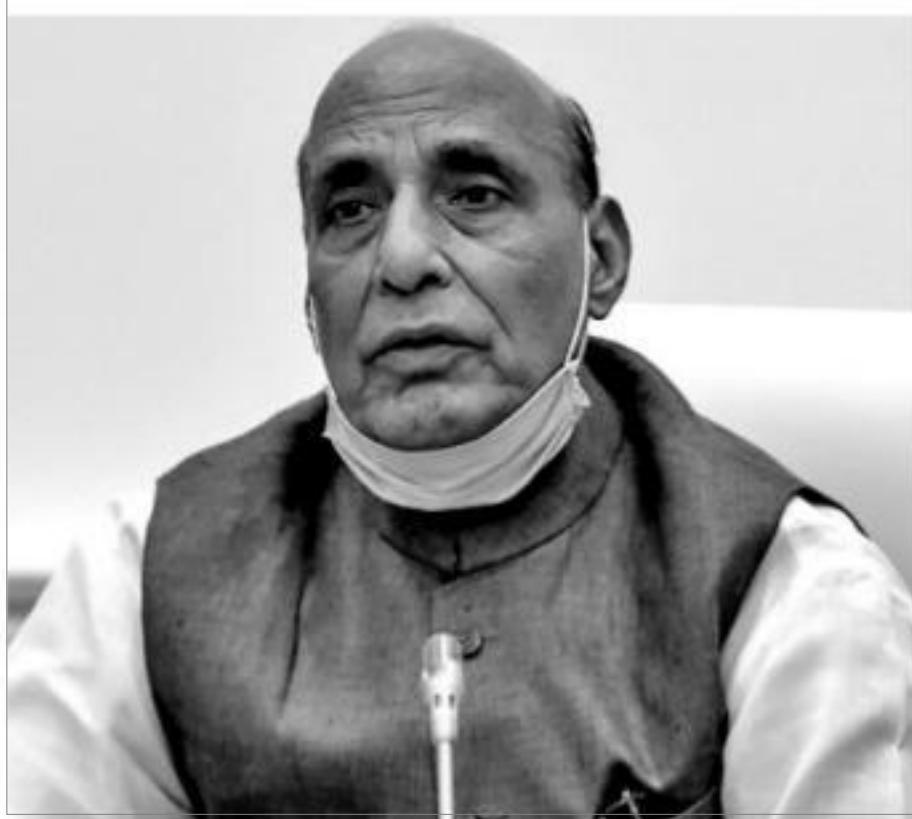
In a major step to boost indigenisation in the defence sector, defence minister Rajnath Singh has approved a proposal of the Department of Military Affairs to notify the 'Second Positive Indigenisation List' of 108 items.

The decision is in pursuance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's endeavour of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'. All the 108 items will now be procured from indigenous sources as per provisions given in the Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2020,

the Ministry of Defence (MoD) said today.

The second list lays special focus on weapons/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.

Not only does the list recognise the potential of the local defence industry, it will also invigorate impetus to domestic Research & Development (R&D) by attracting fresh investment into technology and manufacturing capabilities.



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) systems, Tank Engines, Medium Power Radar for Mountains, MRSAM Weapon Systems and many more such items to fulfil the needs of the Indian armed forces. The second list planned to be implemented progressively with effect from December 2021 to December 2025.

This second list has been prepared by MoD after several rounds of consultations with the government and private manufacturing industry confederations to assess future capabilities of Indian Industry which will be able to meet requirements of the armed forces. This list provides continuous impetus towards self-reliance in defence.

The defence industry can gainfully utilise this golden opportunity to build robust R&D facilities, capacities and capabilities to meet the futuristic requirements of the armed forces.

This list also provides an excellent opportunity for 'start-ups' as also MSMEs which will get tremendous

boost from this initiative. Towards this, The MoD, Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and Service Head Quarters (SHQs) will take all necessary steps, including hand holding of the industry, to ensure that the timelines mentioned in the 'Second Positive Indigenisation List' are met, thereby facilitating an environment for defence manufacturers to create world class infrastructure, assist in the government's 'Make in India' vision to make India self-reliant in defence and develop the capabilities for defence export in the near future.

The new defence procure-

ment policy of the defence ministry projected a turnover of Rs 1.75 lakh crore (\$25 billion) in defence manufacturing by 2025, adds PTI.

In the last couple of years, the government has taken series of measures to boost the domestic defence industry. India is one of the most lucrative markets for global defence giants. The country figured among the few top importers of military hardware in the world for the last eight to ten years. According to estimates, the Indian armed forces are projected to spend around \$130 billion in capital procurement in the next five years.

Twitter has to comply with new IT rules for digital media, says HC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 31 MAY



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

Justice Rekha Palli issued notice to the Centre and social media platform Twitter seeking their stand on a plea by a lawyer, Amit Acharya, claiming non-compliance of the rules by it.

While Twitter claimed before the court it has complied with the rules and appointed a resident grievance officer, the central government disputed the claim. "They have to follow it (rules), if it has not been

given three months to every social media intermediary, including Twitter, to comply with them. He contended that the three-month period got over on 25 May, but no resident grievance officer was appointed by Twitter to deal with complaints regarding tweets on its platform.

The petition has sought a direction to Twitter to appoint a resident grievance officer without further delay. It has also sought a direction to the Centre to ensure that the IT rules are complied with.

Twitter had recently said it was committed to India as a vital market, but criticised the new IT rules and regulations, saying they "inhibit free, open public conversation".

Responding to Twitter's comments, the Centre had said the social media platform was levelling baseless and false allegations to defame India and dictating terms to world's largest democracy.

The Centre alleged that Twitter refused to comply with new digital rules requiring identification of the originator of a flagged message.

Under the new digital rules, Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter have been asked to identify within 36 hours the originator of a flagged message as well as conduct additional due diligence, including appointment of a chief compliance officer, nodal contact person and resident grievance officer.

India, China FMs to attend virtual BRICS meet today

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

Amid the Sino-Indian military stand-off at Eastern Ladakh, external affairs minister S Jaishankar will tomorrow host the BRICS foreign ministers' meeting in which Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi will also participate.

The meeting, to be held via video-conferencing, will be attended by Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov, Brazil foreign minister Carlos Alberto and South African foreign minister Grace Naledi Mandisa Pandor.

The ministers are expected to exchange views on the Covid-19 pandemic situation, the need for strengthening and reforming multilateral system with a view to enhancing its capacity to effectively address the diverse challenges and issues of global and regional concern and sustainable development, the MEA said.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

This is notified for the information of rail passengers that the timings of the following Special Train will be revised as under:-

Train No. & Name	Station	Existing Time		Revised Time		Date (w.e.f. Originating Station)
		Arr.	Dep.	Arr.	Dep.	
08477 Puri - Yoga Nagari Rishikesh Special (Daily)	Jhansi Jn.	05:00	05:10	05:45	05:53	Ex. Puri from 01.06.2021
	Datia	05:38	05:40	06:17	06:19	
	Dabra	06:34	06:36	06:42	06:44	
	Gwalior	07:18	07:20	07:24	07:26	
	Morena	07:48	07:50	07:55	07:57	

Note: All norms of the State and Central Government regarding COVID-19 including Social distancing, sanitization etc., may be followed in the trains and at the Railway stations.

All other precautions associated with COVID-19 should also be ensured.

For any kind of information such as detailed Time-Table and Stations enroute etc., passengers are requested to contact RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or may visit Indian Railways website <http://www.enquiry.indianrail.gov.in> or NTES App.

Visit RailMadad website: www.railmadad.indianrailways.gov.in Download RailMadad app.

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PUBLIC NOTICE

This is notified for the information of rail passengers that Railways have decided to run train no 02919/02920 Dr. Ambedkar Nagar-Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra-Dr. Ambedkar Nagar Malwa Superfast Special Express (Original Train No 12919/12920) and train no 02903/02904 Mumbai Central-Amritsar Jn.-Mumbai Central Daily Superfast Golden Temple Special Express (Original Train No 12903/12904) with revised timings as under:-

REVISED TIMINGS OF TRAIN NO. 02919/02920 DR. AMBEDKAR NAGAR-SHRI MATA VAISHNO DEVI KATRA-DR. AMBEDKAR NAGAR SUPERFAST SPL. EXP. (TRI-WEEKLY) (ORIGINAL TRAIN NO. 12919/12920)

Train No. 02919		↓ STATIONS ↑		Train No. 02920	
Existing Timings	Revised Timings	Existing Timings	Revised Timings	Existing Timings	Revised Timings
ARR. 11:50	---	11:50	Dr. Ambedkar Nagar	13:15	--
12:15	12:25	12:05	Indore Jn.	12:40	12:50
13:04	13:06	12:51	Dewas	11:56	11:58
13:45	14:05	13:45	Ujjain Jn.	11:00	11:20
14:40	14:41	14:35	Maksi	10:09	10:10
14:55	14:57	14:51	Berchha	09:50	09:52
15:21	15:22	15:19	Akodia	09:23	09:24
15:34	15:36	15:32	Shujalpur	09:08	09:10
15:49	15:50	15:47	Kalapipal	08:55	08:56
16:14	16:15	16:10	Sehore	08:28	08:29
16:56	16:58	16:53	Sant Hirdaram Nagar	08:03	08:05
17:20	17:30	17:20	Bhopal Jn.	07:20	07:30
18:08	18:10	18:05	Vidisha	06:16	06:18
18:40	18:42	18:35	Ganj Basoda	05:49	05:50
19:35	19:40	19:30	Bina Jn.	05:10	05:15
20:25	20:27	20:14	Lalitpur	04:00	04:02
21:10	21:12	20:54	Babina	03:10	03:12
21:45	21:55	21:30	Jhansi Jn.	02:35	02:45
22:17	22:19	22:00	Datia	01:50	01:52
22:41	22:43	22:23	Dabra	01:23	01:25
23:18	23:23	22:55	Gwalior Jn.	00:30	00:35
23:50	23:52	23:26	Morena	23:55	23:57
00:32	00:34	00:08	Dhaulpur	23:28	23:30
01:15	01:20	00:43	Agra Cantt.	22:20	22:25
02:05	02:07	01:23	Mathura Jn.	21:33	21:35
02:38	02:40	01:53	Kosi Kalan	21:04	21:06
03:08	03:40	02:58	Palwal	20:30	20:32
03:56	03:58	03:16	Ballabgarh	19:54	19:56
04:09	04:11	03:31	Faridabad	19:43	19:45
04:36	04:38	03:54	Hazrat Nizamuddin	19:45	19:47
05:05	05:20	04:20	New Delhi	18:55	19:15
---	---	---	Subzi Mandi	18:25	18:27
06:13	06:15	05:15	Sonipat	17:40	17:42
06:49	06:51	05:45	Panipat Jn.	17:08	17:10
07:30	07:32	06:09	Karnal	16:39	16:41
08:03	08:05	06:34	Kurukshetra Jn.	16:15	16:17
09:05	09:15	07:33	Ambala Cantt. Jn.	15:35	15:40
09:54	09:56	08:14	Sirhind Jn.	14:43	14:45
10:12	10:14	08:27	Khanna	14:25	14:27
11:00	11:10	09:30	Ludhiana Jn.	13:35	13:45
11:57	12:02	10:30	Jalandhar Cantt.	12:38	12:43
12:50	12:52	11:20	Dasua	11:35	11:37
13:08	13:10	11:38	Mukerian	11:18	11:20
13:55	14:00	12:23	Pathankot Cantt.	10:40	10:45
14:33	14:35	13:05	Kathua	10:00	10:02
16:05	16:16	14:30			

Serendipity disturbed

Peace and tranquility of Lakshadweep, a tropical archipelago of 36 atolls and coral reefs in the Arabian Sea off the Kerala coast, have been deteriorating with the assumption of office as Administrator of the Union Territory by Praful Khoda Patel on 2 December 2020. He was formerly Minister of State for Home in Gujarat. Insouciance of Patel can only be described as a full-scale assault on the overwhelmingly Muslim population of the archipelago. Alarming is his suspension of Covid-19 protocols which has resulted in more than 6,600 confirmed cases in the islands where none existed earlier. Taking advantage of the worsening Covid situation, he has pushed through a series of controversial regulations. If the draft Lakshadweep Animal Preservation Regulation Bill, 2021, put out by Patel for public response in February becomes law, slaughtering of any animal would become very difficult. The regulation mandates fitness certificates of animals to be slaughtered. Section 5(2) of the draft regulation says no such certification will be given if the animal is a cow, a calf, a bull or a bullock. Apart from that, an animal useful for agricultural operations, breeding or giving milk or bearing offspring will be denied certification. Section 8 states "no person shall directly or indirectly sell, keep, store, transport, offer or expose for sell or buy beef or beef products in any form." Vehicles transporting beef are liable to be confiscated. Non-vegetarian food has been removed from mid-day meals in schools.

The ethnic community of this unique land numbering about 66,000, spread over an area of 22 sq km, had withstood the vagaries of ocean and weather without let or hindrance thus far. Patel's controversial Draft Lakshadweep Development Authority Regulation, 2021, allows the Administrator authority to forcibly remove or relocate residents from their property for developmental activity. The document said development would include "carrying out of building, engineering, mining, quarrying or other operations in, on, over or under land, the cutting of a hill or any portion thereof or the making of any material change in any building or land or in the use of any building including subdivision of any land." The administration has already razed huts erected by fishermen on the beach citing violation of the Coastal Regulation Zone rules and the Coast Guard Act. International hoteliers are eyeing the cleared beaches of Lakshadweep. The so-called development is a serious threat to the fragile ecosystem of Lakshadweep. In an attempt to intimidate the minuscule population, a draft preventive detention law has been introduced. The policy changes proposed unilaterally and arbitrarily have given no consideration to matters like land ownership and use, ocean-resource utilisation and livelihood practices of the community. The culture and traditions of the people had been violated by intervention in their food habits like banning of beef and opening of liquor shops. The BJP spokesman in charge of Lakshadweep says the "reforms" proposed by Administrator Patel are only for the benefit of the islanders, but the people of the island do not want any of it and have sought the help of the President of India and the Governor of Kerala to get Patel recalled.

Farcical election

President Bashar al-Assad has won a fourth term after winning Syria's presidential election, generally binned as a farcical exercise by his detractors, whose number is legion. It shall not be easy to shore up his reputation in the perspective of the comity of nations; suffice it to register that he will exploit his inhouse constituency to the extent possible, and in parallel to his repressive rule, Russia's meddling from the skies and the prevarication of the United Nations. Mr Assad has won 95.1 per cent of the votes, and the turnout was 78.6 per cent. His two challengers, Abdullah Salloum Abdullah and Mahmoud Ahmed Mari, gained 1.5 per cent and 3.3 per cent of the vote respectively. Syria's opposition called the vote a farce, while the US and European countries said it was not free or fair. This was gross understatement, to say the least. As he cast his ballot last Wednesday, Assad said the West's opinion counted for "zero", a testament to the intrinsically defiant attitude of a repressive dictator. Syria has been devastated by a decade-long conflict that erupted after Assad's government responded with deadly force to peaceful pro-democracy protests in March 2011 in the wake of the Arab Spring. The fighting has left at least 388,000 people dead and caused half the population to flee their homes, including almost six million refugees abroad. The election was held in government-controlled areas of the country and in some Syrian embassies overseas. It is pretty obvious that the presidential election has stoked a summer of discontent in beleaguered Damascus and further afield.

A robust protest against the election was held in the rebel-controlled Idlib province, while the country's exiled opposition called the vote a farce. Yahya al-Aridi, spokesman for the Syrian Negotiation Commission, said that it showed "contempt towards the Syrian people". "It's a decision by the government, aided by Russia and Iran, to kill the political process," he said. "It's a continuation of tyranny. This is the price we had to pay for freedom". At another remove, the foreign ministers of France, Germany, Italy, the UK and the United States released a joint statement before the vote, calling it "illegitimate" and saying it would be "neither free nor fair" without the supervision of the United Nations. Which entity, one is inclined to add, did not intervene even at the peak of the Syrian crisis. It was a statement of no-confidence against the presidential palace in Damascus. It is pretty obvious too that the tide of the war has turned decisively in Assad's favour.

World in retreat

Lukashenko remains defiant and his counter-accusations are aimed at 'Western Powers' and their insistence on liberality, transparency and democracy. He sought refuge in his only benefactor, Vladimir Putin of Russia, by deliberately conflating his concerns to those of a similarly controlled Russia



The Belarussian President since independence (almost 27 years), Alexander Lukashenko, is infamous as 'Europe's last dictator'. The authoritarian leader had once confessed to holding Adolf Hitler as his role model. Today, he faces a long list of serious accusations, ranging from forced disappearances, torture, sexual abuse to other forms of persecution.

Lukashenko 'won' his sixth consecutive term, last year – only to have the results repudiated by the US, UK, European Union etc. Recently, he ordered the scrambling of a fighter jet to intercept an international passenger flight, and forced it to land on the basis of a false bomb scare, only to arrest a 26-year-old journalist. Rightfully, the indignant CEO of the airline called the ham-handed move by the Belarussian dictator, 'a case of state-sponsored hijacking.... state-sponsored piracy'.

Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, Belarus' opposition leader said to the European Parliament that Lukashenko was, 'turning the country into the North Korea of Europe: non-transparent, unpredictable and dangerous'. Expectably, Lukashenko remains defiant and his counter-accusations are aimed at 'Western Powers' and their insistences of liberality, transparency and democracy. He sought refuge in his only benefactor, Vladimir Putin of Russia, by deliberately conflating his concerns to those of a similarly 'controlled' Russia. The Hitler fan's topical hero is thus Putin.

Earlier in the year, the democratically elected government in Myanmar was deposed unceremoniously in a junta-led coup. Familiar curbs, censorship and clampdowns returned, and the protests were brutally 'controlled'. The clear condemnation and punitive actions were led by the 'Western Powers', and there was only one major power that refused to condemn the coup i.e. the single-party run China. Myan-

mar's junta was supported by two illiberal and authoritarian countries in the United Nations, China and Russia.

Around the same time, the Central African Republic (CAR), was imploding with a bloody civil war. The traditional role of France as the arbiter in the former colony was soon replaced by Russia, via its mercenaries ('Russian advisers') from a private military contractor, the Wagner Group, linked to Yevgeny Prigozhin, an oligarch and ally of Putin.

While atrocities have been committed by all sides in the conflict, the UN working group said it was 'deeply concerned' by the purported actions of the Russian mercenaries that included summary executions, torture during interrogations and forced displacement. The African strongman in CAR banks on a quid pro quo with Russians; for securing his rule by force in exchange for lucrative contracts in its diamond industry. Most recently, a 'coup within a coup' took place in the world's second largest bullion producer, Mali, where a military man, Assimi Goita, seized power. Again, it was the 'Western Powers' led by the US, France etc., and the United Nations who decried that a 'change of transitional leadership, including forced resignations, is unacceptable'. But the Western protestations notwithstanding, the toxic combination of ostensible 'nationalism', 'stopping external interference' and 'revenge' made sure that voices of moderation, liberality and freedom of speech were suppressed.

In Yemen the humanitarian crisis designated as 'the worst in the world' is perpetuated by undemocratic regimes like Saudi Arabia on the one side, and Iran on the other; to even suggest values of participative democracies like human rights, inclusivity and liberality would be delusional here.

Globally, liberal democracy in its essence is under retreat, and the anti-democratic and authoritarian powers are gaining currency, and even public imagination. Obvious shortcomings, inequities and the perceived pusillanimity of democratic leaders has given a fillip to supposedly 'über-nationalistic', 'strongmen' and 'decisive' leaders like Vladimir Putin, Xi Jinping, Recep Erdogan, Viktor Orban, Jair Bolsonaro etc.

In its annual report Nations in Transit for 2020, 18 countries slid fur-

ther on democracy scores, while the score improved in only six and there was no net change in six countries – a crude attempt at a coup. What initially seemed very assertive and martial sounding e.g. 'America First', was later found out to be an effort to drive partisan passions and arranging pressure to manage electoral outcomes, above all. Most of these leaders were found to be inept and ill-equipped to manage the global pandemic concerns. Incredibly, many in democratic countries lazily point to the 'Chinese model' for effective governance and societal control – a euphemism for managing dissent or contrarian opinions. Murmurs of the infamous Aleksey Navalny episode, treatment of minority Uighurs or the horrific count of civilian Palestinian casualties, are contextualised as 'collateral damage' or even 'necessary for the larger good!'. In such times, the biggest enemy surprisingly becomes the 'Free World' (a propagandist term, that still captures the essence) and all its suppositions like transparency, liberality, secularism and guaranteed freedoms. Shaping the narrative and discourse towards 'enemies', 'foreign agents' and the empowerment of pro-dispensation organisations and groups (outside of official governmental framework), is the default outcome. Overtime the environment becomes so vitiated and polarised that to posit changes from the foundational and constitutional moorings is no more beyond question. In such times it is important to stand up and be counted, ensure that civic groups, minorities and conscientious voices (especially those with contrarian opinions) are not drowned, castigated or muzzled for political convenience. But for brave Belarusian journalists like Roman Protasevich, who really was the prime target of the 'hijack' – there would have been nothing abnormal in President Lukashenko continuing endlessly, by 'managing' democracy in his totalitarian and 'nationalistic' way, as is done by Xi Jingping or Vladimir Putin.

Even the traditional leader of the 'Free World', the United States had, under Donald Trump, dropped even pretenses of playing by the rules of democracy. Understandably, he made more common cause with Vladimir Putin, Kim Jong-un, Benjamin Netanyahu, Mohammad Bin Salman etc., then he did with the likes of Angela Merkel and Jacinda Ardern. The consequences of showmanship, nativism and illiberalism in politics led to the attack on Capitol Hill, in what was a

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Is life worth less in India?

BASAB DASGUPTA

When I was a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin during the 1970s, a fellow American student from another department invited me to a class he was teaching. The topic was India and he wanted me present in his class as an example of a real Indian who could answer questions from students about India and Indians. I readily agreed.

I do not remember most of the questions or how I answered them but one question has remained with me. I will paraphrase the question as follows, "Do you think there is less value attached to life in India because the population is so huge?" I was put on the spot and did not want to present a negative image of my country. I managed to give a somewhat evasive answer – something to the effect that population density in India is probably no different from what one sees in cities like New York and peoples' lives are probably viewed in the same way.

However, I knew that I did not give an honest answer. I believe that the truth is that human life in India does not indeed carry as much worth as it does in a country like US and the overwhelming population is one of the contributing factors.

I have thought about this question many times in life. I believe that there is, at least, a loose correlation between quality of life in a country and its population. If one looks at the list of the "happiest countries" in the world, the top ten entries seem to always include the four Scandinavian countries, Switzerland, Austria and Iceland, all with population in the 5 to 10 million range. China and India remain as the most populous countries with populations of 1.5 and 1.4 billion respectively and they are also not so desirable places to live, in spite of recent developments and technological advancements. Perhaps population has to remain below a critical mass in order for life of every citizen to be addressed seriously and effectively.

It makes sense. When there are less people there are fewer issues and conflicts between them and people can care more about each other. Value of life is automatically higher because any loss of life has an impact on some aspect of society. When there are a billion plus people, nothing stops if some people die because

there are plenty of people available to replace them. There is apathy towards the misery or misfortune of other people. Everyone has a mindset that with all the people available someone else would help and therefore "I need not get involved".

The USA seems to be undergoing a transition. When I first came to the US, it seemed that every life mattered. Every killing and every accident drew attention and investigations followed by fair trial, if appropriate, ensued. There was even daily reporting of lives of soldiers lost in the Vietnam war and every effort was made to bring the bodies back to their homeland. Even as recently as 2001, Americans responded vigorously to the loss of 3,000 plus lives in the 9/11 disaster by going to war in Afghanistan and Iraq and spending billions of dollars.

However, in recent decades, mass shootings, homelessness, illegal immigration across the southern border, use of excessive force by police and other such developments have diluted the intensity of that concern for human life. At the same time, population of the country has been increasing and has perhaps crossed that critical mass. The good news is that people still seem to come together to help others in difficulty, both financially as well as emotionally.

Two incidents made an impression upon me about the validity of my belief. When I was attending Science College in Kolkata, I often used to take a train from Dhakuria (where I lived) to Sealdah station and then walk to Science College. During the rush hour, it was preferable to get even tiny standing room near the door of the compartment so that one could get some breeze. One day, as I was at my usual spot, a small rock hurled by a kid came flying and hit me between my left eyebrow and eye. I felt pain, covered my left eye and simply sat down on the floor. The train soon entered the platform of Sealdah (South) station and every passenger – and I mean everyone – disembarked in a hurry without paying any attention to me or offering any help.

Fortunately, my eye was not damaged and I managed to get to the Nil Ratan Sircar Medical College and Hospital nearby.

The second incident took place during my India visit in 2013. One day, while going from Sodepur to Kolkata with a cousin in her car, I saw



a middle-aged bearded man in shaggy clothes lying flat on the side of a busy street. Everyone passed by him completely oblivious to his condition. Was he ill? Was he drunk and passed out? Was he asleep or unconscious? Was he dead? I did not know. My cousin did not care either and I guess my Indian genes prevented me from saying "Stop the car; let us find out what is wrong with this man".

It is not just these two isolated incidents; I can confess that I lived my life in India largely oblivious to the plight of "poor" people – the servants and maids, the factory labourers, the farmers, not to mention the beggars and homeless refugees. I almost accepted the socio-economic caste system as being the norm. When I visited Kolkata in 2013 after almost 30 years, I realised that, in spite of all the progress and improvements that had brought the Indian economy to the world stage, lives of poor people have not changed much

from the time I lived there.

The horrific images of people in India during the recent surge in Covid, both their suffering while desperately looking for treatment as well as their mass funerals and the apparent lack of preparedness of the country to deal with the problem made me ask the same question, "Is value of life less in India?" In a highly litigious society like America, lawyers can put a value on life. It seems that when a person dies from non-natural causes in the USA someone comes out of the woodwork and sues the party alleged to be responsible for the death. I assume that there are standard formulas and precedents that guide the lawyers in their determination of the amount needed to compensate for the loss of life. I doubt that a similar mindset exists in India.

One of my Christian friends pointed out another interesting aspect of this difference in how we see value of life. Indians who are

mostly Hindu believe in reincarnation. The present life is just one in a series of thousands of reincarnations that every person must go through in order to achieve that ultimate destiny – "Nirvana" and what happens in this life is largely predetermined by our "karma" in previous lives. The Christians, on the other hand, value their present life because they think that it is "the one life to live"; they will go to heaven or hell after that. As a result, there might be greater emphasis on not only in living one's life on the right path but also to regard everyone else's life on an equal footing.

In any event, I strongly believe that until a country views worth of life of every citizen the same way, it has not raised itself to the next level of improvement in order to become a great country.

The writer, a physicist who worked in academia and industry, is a Bengali settled in America.

Why India faced so much flak

HARSHA KAKAR

During his visit to the US last week, Foreign Minister S Jaishankar participated with General McMaster in a virtual discussion conducted by the Hoover institution. He was questioned on India's handling of the pandemic. He stated, "We are giving free food to as many as 800 million people. We've put money into bank accounts of 400 million." To underline his statement, he explained that India was providing food stocks to two and a half times the US population and funding more than its population. How many nations were able to sustain such expenditure through these trying times and receding economies?

On the global projection of a failing Indian government, Jaishankar added, "I would certainly see this very much as part of a political effort to depict our current government in a certain way and obviously I have a very profound difference with that." In recent times, the global image of India has been of funeral pyres, depicting a nation failing in its battle against the pandemic.

The world has witnessed multiple waves of the pandemic. Casualties have been higher in percentages in countries possessing smaller populations, in numbers and/or density, than India, including US, European nations, Brazil etc. In no case were the deceased so disrespectfully depicted as in our case. The reality in



the US was that Covid casualties were buried in mass graves employing mechanical means and without permitting the next of kin to pay their last respects or be present. Human touch to those who lost the battle against Covid was missing.

There were also reports of Covid casualties lying in refrigerated vans for a long time in New York, awaiting mass burials. Photographs in US and western media displayed people laying flowers in an open field in remembrance of the deceased. In Italy, the situation was so depressing that the army was called in to take over casualties and hurriedly cremate them away from cities. Most western nations, currently critical of India, adopted similar measures.

Indians, on the other hand, cremated their dead with dignity and as per religious ethos, despite short-

comings and a spreading virus. It was this display of religious reverence which the media displayed to depict a failing nation.

Victory against Covid is not determined solely by the number of casualties (dead or infected), but by protecting the majority of the population, as also catering for their essential needs during periods of enforced lockdowns. Number of casualties are dependent on the population and density within a nation; while they matter, they cannot be ultimate determinants. Success should logically depend on reversing the Covid cycle with minimum inconvenience and suffering to the populace. The fact that India being the world's second most populated nation was bound to have higher casualties was ignored.

There is no doubt the current

government erred when it went ahead with elections, religious events and protests, adding to the spread. But why was India singled out globally? There could be multiple reasons, including internal political one-upmanship and anti-government groups grabbing an opportunity.

India's national power has risen in recent years. It is immune to global commentators, who felt they could compel third world countries to behave as per their whims and fancies. India's refusal to change decisions, whether on Kashmir or the Citizenship Amendment Act, despite criticism from so-called global watchdogs or senators or members of parliament of the Western world hurt privately funded influential organizations, many of whom control media houses. These were at the forefront in tarnishing the national image.

Another plausible reason is jealousy of the Western world in witnessing an Asian nation becoming a global economic giant, overtaking most of their economies as also successfully countering the first wave. India, till recently considered a third world country, is a rising economic power where Western leaders rush to sign trade deals. Grabbing a part of the growing Indian market is a pre-requisite for economic development for any Western country. This reversal in fortunes has hurt many influential organizations in the west.

Western nations selfishly ignored third world countries and saved all vaccines and medical

equipment which they could garner for their own populace, storing far more than necessary. It was India which reached out and supported weaker nations. Indian vaccine diplomacy earned it global praise, while the West was branded selfish. Globally Indian generosity was praised, while it reflected adversely on the ethos and responsibility of the developed world. India was no longer a nation which could be ignored, and this irked so-called global watchdogs and influencers.

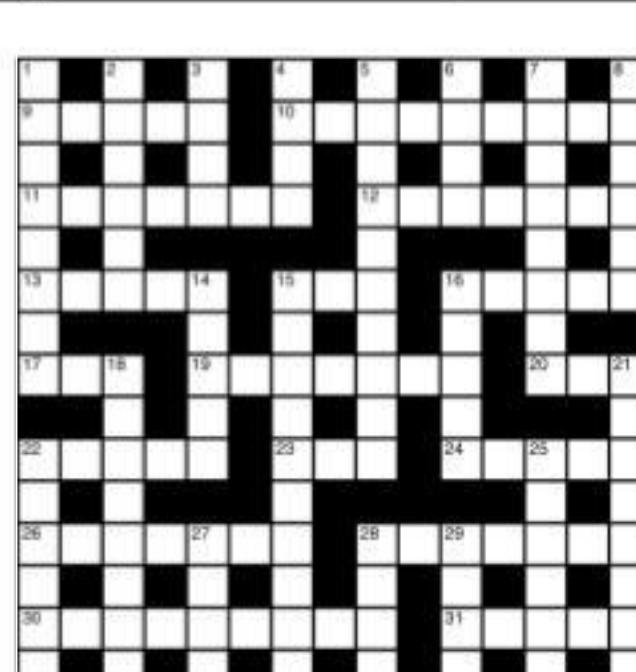
Politics, within India, aided by some media personalities, also played a role in globally maligning the country. The opposition sought to target the current government but ended up tarnishing the national image. The pandemic was exploited as a political tool for influencing public opinion, as India remains perpetually in an election mode. Claims of false reporting gained prominence. Governments are temporary and can change depending on the will of the people in future elections, while the nation is permanent. Those who exploited the pandemic to hit out at the government have harmed the national image, rather than an individual or a political party, due to their short-sightedness.

In the long term, India will win the battle against the pandemic and will rise again. It will continue supporting the globe in the fight against the pandemic. However, what will take time is changing the adverse image of the nation.

The writer is a retired Major-General of the Indian Army.

NO 28929

CROSSWORD



YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

P	A	U	P	E	R	O	T	L
P	O	N	X	P	E	U		
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A	D	M	G	I	E	S		
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H	E	A	T	E	R			

ACROSS

- 9 Subject of article about space (5)
- 10 Drunk Democrat leaves Republican tradesperson (9)
- 11 Lesson I arranged for Leo's mate (7)
- 12 A smuggler hides cut drug in small glass vessel (7)
- 13 American president's undergarment (5)
- 15 Jam lover's one way of working with damsons originally (3)
- 16 Representative sample of collagen treatment (5)
- 17 Time Henry omitted beginning of the Lord's

DOWN

- 19 Very ill person in short top and a cape (7)
- 20 Special soul music from Jamaica (3)
- 22 Loose goods stored in alcove (5)
- 23 Single drink (3)
- 24 Heath Robinson checks pulse (5)
- 26 New tool designed for sound of car horn? (3-4)
- 28 Insanity of head pursuing deterrent theory (7)
- 30 Lean meat diced briefly in a stew with head of artichoke (9)
- 31 Type of music for the audience (5)

DOWN

- 1 Knife literally raised in fight (8)
- 2 Greater than governor over North Dakota (6)
- 3 Heard successors give up (4)
- 4 Magnificent piece of old Manx cat (4)
- 5 Everywhere stormy dawned fair (3,3,4)
- 6 Keared animals for stage (4)
- 7 Steals pants in America (8)
- 8 Check artist's standing with the others (6)
- 14 Sentimental endearment director expressed after end of play (5)
- 15 Possibly aim to enter with

OCCASIONAL NOTE

The Medical Research Council at Home has issued notes upon the preparation of scientific papers for publication that contain some rules of more general application. To have a manuscript typewritten and then to send it for publication without revision is regarded as a very grave error. It might be taken for granted that proper names and technical terms should be written legibly, but a word of warning under this head is considered necessary. Footnotes, as a rule, are not desirable; they usually mean that the author has not sufficiently digested his matter. The decimal point should never be placed at the beginning of a number, where it is apt to be overlooked by the printer. The form 0.5 should be used, not .5. Plans, illustrations, diagrams, or charts, should never be drawn on the manuscript or typescript, for they have to be sent to the engravers and should be on separate sheets, but the "underlines" which explain the illustrations go to the printer, and should be numbered with a number corresponding with that of the picture. Line drawings should be employed in preference to wash drawings or photographs, as the cost of the line blocks is about half that of the half-tone blocks, which, moreover, usually necessitate special paper, multiplying the total cost by five or six. Then photographs often contain unnecessary details. The cost of reproducing coloured drawings is at the present time prohibitive.

NEWS ITEMS

STUDENTS ASSAULT ON A SERVANT

Pirojpur, May 31

Judgment in Pirojpur national school case was delivered yesterday by a Deputy Magistrate sent from Barisal. In this case the headmaster and twelve others, teachers and students of the national school, stood charged with assaulting a servant of a local Deputy Magistrate. The trying Magistrate gave the benefit of the doubt to and acquitted the headmaster and two boys aged twelve and ten respectively. Of the remaining ten accused four were fined Rs 30 each, in default three weeks' simple imprisonment; and the remaining six were fined Rs 15 each in default one week's simple imprisonment. All the convicted accused preferred to go to jail, but the guardians of seven deposited the fine in spite of their protest. The remaining three students went to jail. The accused were undefended.

FOREST FIRES RESULT OF INCENDIARISM

Allahabad, May 31

A communiqué states that the outbreak of incendiary in the forests on the hills of Kumaun and Garhwal has been extraordinarily widespread. Although full information is not available as yet, it is estimated that certainly 50 per cent, and perhaps as much as 75 per cent of the area of our forests in the hills of Kumaun and Garhwal and the upper portions of the Bhabar division have been burnt. The damage done is most serious in chit (regeneration areas), where young growth up to about 15 years of age gets scorched, and if the fire be very fierce mother trees may also die. Many animals and birds have been destroyed. Rewards have been offered and one arrest has been made.

STRIKE AT CARNATIC MILLS IN MADRAS

Madras, May 31

Messrs. Binny and Co., the managing agents of the Buckingham and Carnatic mills, in a statement regarding the strike in the latter mills say that during the past two months the work in the two mills had been unsatisfactory, resulting in four departmental strikes. On the suggestion of Mr. Turner of the Carnatic mills, the list of grievances of the workmen was handed to the Manager, to which replies were given on May 19, but on the following day the carding department refused to start work, without stating any reason. The workers in the mechanics' shop and building department were informed that they could continue in an election mode. Claims of false reporting gained prominence. Governments are temporary and can change depending on the will of the people in future elections, while the nation is permanent. Those who exploited the pandemic to hit out at the government have harmed the national image, rather than an individual or a political party, due to their short-sightedness.

In the long term, India will win the battle against the pandemic and will rise again.

It will continue supporting the globe in the fight against the pandemic. However, what will take time is changing the adverse image of the nation.

The writer is a retired Major-General of the Indian Army.



The size of the real estate sector is projected to cross \$1 trillion by 2030.

DURGA SHANKER MISHRA
HOUSING AND URBAN AFFAIRS SECRETARY

THUMBNAILS

Magma Fincorp gets new top management: The Poonawala Group on Monday announced a new management structure for Magma Fincorp, which had taken over for Rs 3,456 crore, appointing a new chairman, managing director, and a chief executive. The board of Magma appointed Adar Poonawala as the chairman, while Abhay Bhutada who is the chief executive of the Poonawala Finance, is the managing director and Vijay Deshwal, a seasoned banker with a track record of over two decades, will take over as the chief executive of Magma Fincorp from July, Magma said in a statement. PTI

CII president: Industry chamber CII on Monday said it has elected T V Narendran, CEO and managing director, Tata Steel Ltd, as its new president for 2021-22. He takes over from Uday Kotak, managing director and chief executive officer, Kotak Mahindra Bank Ltd. PTI

Realme smartphone: Smartphone maker Realme has introduced its latest smartphone "X7 Max 5G, which features India's first MediaTek Dimensity 1200 5G processor, along with NextGen Realme Smart TV 4K that gives an all-round package with 4K cinematic experience, according to a Press release from the company. SNS

Xiaomi India donates masks: As a part of its corporate social responsibility (CSR), Xiaomi India has donated 1,000 masks and bottles of sanitiser across Delhi. The company has donated these Covid essentials to frontline warriors including policemen, hospital staff, municipal employees and journalists, said the Press release. SNS

Capgemini vaccination: Capgemini has rolled out on-prem vaccination drive for its 125,000 employees and dependents in association with health and security partner International SOS across India. The company has partnered with Aditya Birla, Reliance, Apollo, MCM and Rainbow to facilitate the vaccination drives across Mumbai, Pune, Bangalore, Chennai, Kolkata and NCR, according to a Press release from the company. SNS

BRICS Chamber of Commerce & Industry organises webinar: The BRICS Chamber of Commerce & Industry organised a webinar on mental health wellness and awareness in times of Covid-19. The panel discussion was attended by an audience comprising globally recognised experts, psychologists, students, home-makers, corporate sector employees, members and civil society members, according to a Press release from the company. SNS

EPFO allows members to avail 2nd Covid advance

Move to support its subscribers during the second wave of Covid-19 pandemic

SNS & PTI
NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

Retirement fund body EPFO has allowed its over five crore subscribers to avail the second Covid-19 advance in view of the second wave of the coronavirus infections in the country.

Earlier last year, the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) had allowed its members to withdraw Covid-19 advance to meet exigencies due to the pandemic.

The members were allowed to withdraw three months basic wages (basic pay + dearness allowance) or up to 75 per cent of amount standing to their credit in their provident fund account, whichever is less.

"To support its subscribers during the second wave of Covid-19 pandemic, the EPFO has now allowed its members to avail second non-refundable Covid-19 advance," a labour ministry statement said.

The provision for special withdrawal to meet the financial need of members during the pandemic was introduced

HOW MUCH?



► The members have been allowed to withdraw (non-refundable) three months basic wages (basic pay + dearness allowance) or up to 75 per cent of amount stand-

ing to their credit in their provident fund account, whichever is less.

► Members can apply for lesser amount also.

ing in March 2020, under Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKY), it said.

An amendment to this effect was made by the ministry of labour & employment in Employees' Provident Funds Scheme, 1952, by inserting therein sub-para (3) under paragraph 68L, through notification in the official gazette.

Under this provision, non-refundable withdrawal to the extent of the basic pay and dearness allowances (which forms basic wages) for three months or up to 75 per cent of the

amount standing to member's credit in the EPF account, whichever is less, is provided.

Members can apply for lesser amount also.

The Covid-19 advance has been great help to the EPF members during the pandemic, especially for those having monthly wages of less than Rs 15,000. As on date, the EPFO has settled more than 76.31 lakh Covid-19 advance claims, thereby disbursing a total of Rs 18,698.15 crore.

During the second wave of the pandemic, "incurmcyco-

sis" or black fungus has been declared an epidemic recently.

In such trying times, EPFO endeavours to lend a helping hand to its members by meeting their financial needs. Members who have already availed the first Covid-19 advance can now opt for a second advance also.

The provision and process for withdrawal of second Covid-19 advance is same as in the case of first advance, it said.

Considering urgent need of members for financial support in these trying times, it has been decided to accord top priority to Covid-19 claims.

The EPFO is committed to settle these claims within three days of their receipt. For this, the EPFO has deployed a system-driven auto-settlement process in respect of all such members whose KYC requirements are complete in all respects.

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.

Fiscal deficit at 9.3% of GDP in FY '21

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

The fiscal deficit stood at 9.3 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) in the last fiscal, better than 9.5 per cent projected in the revised estimates in the Union Budget in February.

Economic activities were severely hit in the last financial year due to the coronavirus pandemic as well as subsequent lockdowns and restrictions to curb the spread of infections.

Releasing the revenue-expenditure data of the Union government for 2020-21, the Controller General of Accounts (CGA) today said the revenue deficit at the end of the last fiscal was 7.42 per cent.

In absolute terms, the fiscal deficit works out to be Rs 18,21,461 crore (provisional).

As per the CGA data for fiscal 2020-21, the tax revenue collection was 105.9 per cent of the revised estimates (RE) presented in the Budget.

"This high growth rate in April 2021 is largely due to low index base in April 2020 consequent to the low industrial production across all sectors caused by nationwide lockdown imposed to contain spread of Covid-19," the ministry said in a statement.

Core sectors' output up by 56.1% in April due to low base effect



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

19 last year," the ministry said in a statement.

According to the commerce and industry ministry data, production of natural gas, refinery products, steel, cement and electricity jumped by 25 per cent, 30.9 per cent, 400 per cent, 548.8 per cent and 38.7 per cent in April, as against (-) 19.9 per cent, (-) 24.2 per cent, (-) 82.8 per cent, (-) 85.2 per cent and (-) 22.9 per cent in April 2020, respectively.

Coal, and fertiliser segments too recorded positive growth during the month under review.

However, crude oil output dipped by 2.1 per cent in April as against (-) 6.4 per cent in the same month last year.

In March this year, the eight sectors had recorded a growth rate of 11.4 percent.

'Regulate unorganised tobacco trade'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

The illustrious panel comprising consumer policy experts, scientists, healthcare professionals, farmer leaders, academics, and people representatives among others unanimously recommended regulation on the unorganised tobacco trade in India and called for equitable taxation policies across all types of tobacco products to ensure quality products are available to consumers.

It also suggested a symmetrical increase in taxes across all types of untaxed tobacco products which are widely available in the form of chewing tobacco, gutkha, pan masala variants, zarda etc and affecting the health of the consumers who are getting victimised under the influence of NGOs of western countries and consuming spurious and inferior quality tobacco products.

The webinar also discussed the amendments proposed in the COTPA law by the Ministry of Health of Family Welfare and its impact on consumers and livelihoods of retailers who are reeling under the attack of the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Failure to bring them under the ambit of a uniform tax structure defeats the purpose

of a tobacco control programme. Bringing in appropriate regulations and ensuring that all tobacco products will equitably not only reduce its consumption or ensure superior quality product is offered to consumers but will also fetch additional revenues to the government.

India consumes 596 million kgs of tobacco of which only about 52 million kgs i.e., 9 per cent is consumed in the form of duty paid cigarettes while the rest 91 per cent of the tobacco consumption is in various other forms like bidi, khaini, gutka, chewing tobacco, illegal cigarettes, zarda, snuff, cheroot, etc. Also, internationally 90 per cent of tobacco consumption is in the form of cigarettes with India accounting for less than 2 per cent of global cigarette consumption. Our country accounts for 84 per cent of the world's tobacco consumption in a smokeless form.

Reliance Industries was the top gainer in the Sensex

Nifty closes at fresh lifetime high

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 31 MAY

SENSEX SOARS 515 POINTS



► Rising for the fourth day, the 30-share BSE Sensex ended 514.56 points or 1.00 per cent higher at 51,937.44 points.

► The broader NSE Nifty surged 147.15 points or 0.95 per cent to 15,582.80 points.

► Halting its three-day winning run, the rupee on

Services.

India reported the lowest daily new coronavirus infections in 50 days with 1,52,734 cases, taking the tally to 2,80,47,534 today, while the active caseload declined to 20,26,092, the health ministry said.

After opening marginally in red, the benchmark drifted marginally lower in the early trades but healthy buying interest in select heavyweights triggered sharp recovery as the day progressed... Meanwhile, the last leg of earnings season is also expected to induce stock-specific volatility," said Ajit Mishra, VP - research, Religare Broking.

Meanwhile, halting its three-day winning run, the rupee today declined by 17 paise to close at 72.62 against the US dollar, tracking the strengthening of the American currency in the overseas market.

Sebi directive to listed companies

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

entity controlled by them, it has been decided to mandate such disclosures on a half yearly basis, in the compliance report on corporate governance," Sebi said.

Under the new format, any loan or any other form of debt advanced by the listed entity directly or indirectly to promoter, promoter group directors including relatives, key management personnel or any other entity controlled by them need to be disclosed, along with aggregate amount advanced during six months and balance outstanding at the end of six months.

In order to bring about transparency and to strengthen the disclosures around loans/ guarantees/comfort letters/ security provided by the listed entity, directly or indirectly to promoter/ promoter group entities or any other

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

TVS Motor Company today said it will launch two new products in Iraq as part of its expansion plan in that country. The company, which opened a new showroom with sales, service and spares support in Baghdad, said it will launch its commuter motorcycle TVS StaR HLX 150 5 Gear and three-wheeler TVS King Deluxe Plus in that market.

TVS StaR HLX 150 5 Gear comes with a 150cc engine. It has been designed especially for Iraqi roads offering a comfortable riding experience, along with a stylish black coloured theme for alloy rims and engine, TVS Motor Company said in a regulatory filing.

On the other hand, TVS

TVS Motor expands in Iraq, launches two new products



King Deluxe Plus is a three-wheeler powered by a 4 Stroke, single cylinder, air cooled 199.26cc engine, it added.

The company said its new showroom spread over 500 sq meters at Palestine Street in Baghdad, will not only retail a wide range of two-wheelers and three-wheelers but will also host spare parts and feature a service facility.

The showroom demonstrates our commitment to the market and will host a diverse range of products

that will cater to customer requirement and aspiration.

The strategic location of the store, as well as the end-to-end service and spare support, will help enhance customer satisfaction," TVS Motor Company executive vice-president - international business R Dilip said.

The new retail outlet has been set up with distribution partner Ritaj International General Trade LLC, which has been distributing the company's products since 2017.

GST return filing deadline extended

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

The government today said the deadline for filing monthly GST sales returns for May has been extended by 15 days till 26 June.

The GST Council, chaired by the Union finance minister and comprising state counterparts, on 28 May had decided to extend certain compliance relaxations on account of Covid-19.

The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) in a series of tweets listed out the various relaxations extended by the Council.

The due date for furnishing details of outward supplies in Form GSTR-1 for the month of May 2021 is extended by 15 days. The extended due date is 26 June, CBIC said.

Businesses file GSTR-1, giving details of supplies made during the month, by the 11th

day of the subsequent month. For payment of goods and services tax (GST), Form GSTR-3B is filed by businesses in a staggered manner between 20th-24th day of the succeeding month. The GST Council also approved extending by three months till 31 July the due date for filing annual returns for fiscal 2020-21 by composition dealers.

"Due date for furnishing annual return in Form GSTR-4 for FY 2020-21 to be extended to 31 July 2021," CBIC said, adding relevant notifications to give effect to these relaxations would be issued in due course.

Also, taxpayers who are registered under the Companies Act, have been permitted to furnish GST returns by using electronic verification code (EVC) instead of digital signature certificate (DSC) till 31 August 2021.

One-third of pilots could be jobless in a year: Analysts

RAJA MURTHY
MUMBAI, 31 MAY

Commercial airline pilots worldwide are seeking jobs as train and bus drivers as the economic carnage of Covid-19 continues battering the civil aviation industry. With airlines operating at less than half capacity, aviation analysts say one-third of pilots could be jobless in a year.

The trend of Airbus, Boeing pilots driving trains and trams is spreading worldwide, particularly in Europe where a third of passenger planes grounded. Lufthansa operated 81 per cent fewer flights per day this May compared to 2019, with most being cargo flights. Lufthansa might be forced to lay off 1,200 pilots

next year, reported Deutsche Welle.

More fortunate pilots found themselves at least flying cargo in 2021, such as Swiss Air's talented senior first officer Jennifer Knecht, a favourite among aviation fans after the excellent "Pilot's Eye" cockpit documentary of her Airbus 330 flight from Zurich to Miami with captain Thomas Frick.

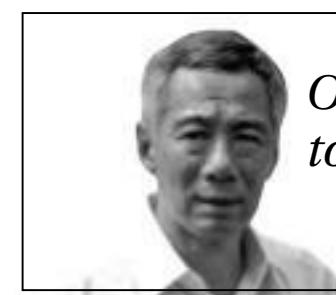
Those were halcyon days circa 2016. Now pilots are seeking jobs in grocery stores. Ireland's Aer Lingus first officer Alice Farrell flew only twice this year, from Dublin to Chicago and Munich. To keep herself occupied, she applied for a minimum-wage retail job and faced an astonished supermarket manager in her interview.

bai and breakfast at Jumeirah in Frankfurt as part of their working days.

In a poll of 2,500 pilots worldwide, industry journal FlightGlobal found only 43 per cent doing the job for which they were trained. Others were unemployed, furloughed or in non-flying roles. About 82 per cent of pilots were willing to take pay cuts for a new job. In the changing supply-demand equations, Germany, Switzerland and Austria are desperately short of train drivers. Germany's Deutsche Bahn told news agency Deutsche Presse-Agentur (dpa) that it received job applications

from 1,500 pilots, flight attendants and so far hired about 280 – another dramatic irony of pilots returning to train-driving jobs once considered glamourous by schoolboys before the age of civil aviation.

Felician Baumann from Hamburg finished his pilot training with Austrian Airlines but now works as a tram driver in Vienna. 27-year-old Baumann reassured a shocked Austria that surprisingly the pay



One day this global pandemic will subside. But I do not expect Covid-19 to disappear. It will remain with humankind, and become endemic.

SINGAPORE'S PRIME MINISTER LEE HSIEH LOONG

NEW DELHI, TUESDAY 01 JUNE 2021

Israel's Netanyahu could lose office, rivals join hands to form new govt

Naftali Bennett, former Netanyahu ally announced that he intends to form a national-unity govt to put 'Israel back on track'

ASSOCIATED PRESS

JERUSALEM, 31 MAY

Israel could be headed for a break from the "Bibiregime" as several former allies of longest-serving Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu seem to have joined hands with political opponents to form a national-unity government that would not only have political formations from the Left, the Centre and the Right, but may also be supported by an Arab party.

In a dramatic development, a former ally of Netanyahu announced on Sunday that he intends to form a national-unity government to "stop the craziness" of more elections and continued political deadlock to put "Israel back on track".

Bennett, whose support base consists primarily of hardliners drawn from religious and nationalist Jews, has for months weighed in the option of risking his political future by getting into this new alignment or "take responsibility" and lead a government of national-unity.

"At such a crucial moment, responsibility must be taken. Therefore, I am announcing today that I intend to act with all my strength to form a national-unity government together with my friend Yair Lapid, given that there was no possibility of a right-wing government."

Naftali Bennett, leader of the small hardline Yamina party, who in the past served as Netanyahu's Chief of Staff and as a minister with various portfolios over the years including defence, made it clear that he was going to negotiate a coalition deal with Opposition leader Yair Lapid, given that there was no possibility of a right-wing government.

Getting unseated from premiership at this juncture would be a huge blow for



and we will get Israel back on track, Bennett, 49, said on Sunday.

"Yair and I disagree on a number of issues of substance. But we are partners in our love for the country and willingness to work for the sake of the country," he asserted, in what was the first clear indication coming from him of having taken a decision after vacillating between options.

Informed sources said that the "path forward is not easy" in getting a coalition of diverse ideologies together but "all the sides look serious in their intent" to end the political deadlock which has seen the country go through an

unprecedented four elections in two years and still stares at the possibility of a fifth one if discussions fail.

A government like this will succeed only if we work together as a group. Everyone will need to postpone fulfilling part of their dreams. We will focus on what can be done, instead of fighting all day on what's impossible, Bennett stressed in his announcement.

Interestingly, almost one-third of the lawmakers supporting the ouster of Netanyahu can be seen as his "natural allies" and are being led by leaders who are "friends turned foes" of the Prime Minister.

"If Netanyahu had acted with a bit more consideration toward his right-wing partners, if he had avoided sinking into bitter disputes with people like Avigdor Lieberman, Gideon Sa'ar, Naftali Bennett and Ayelet Shaked, he could have retained their loyalty.

Netanyahu is now paying for the contempt with which he and his supporters treated all of the above," a political analyst for daily Haaretz commented on Monday.

Bennett and Lapid, a former journalist, have until Wednesday to complete a deal in which each is expected to serve two years as Prime Minister in a rotation deal, with the former holding the job first.

Before the announcement, Israeli media reported that under the proposed terms of the deal, Bennett would replace Netanyahu as prime minister and later give way to Lapid, 57, in a rotation agreement. The arrangement has not been officially confirmed.

President Reuven Rivlin had tasked Lapid with the responsibility of forming a government in 28 days after Netanyahu, who got the first shot as the leader of the largest party, expressed his inability to do so.

Failure to achieve a major-

ity coalition by the Wednesday deadline may lead Rivlin to decide to send the mandate to the Knesset (Parliament) to try and form a government within 21 days, else Israel would be headed towards a fifth general election in less than two-and-a-half years.

On the other hand, a successful coalition deal would put an end to the record-setting tenure of Netanyahu, at least for the time-being, who has led Israel at the helm of affairs uninterrupted since 2009.

He also served as Prime Minister between 1996 and 1999. He surpassed the record of longest serving Prime Minister of the Jewish state set by founding father Ben-Gurion in July of last year.

Netanyahu accused Bennett of betraying the Israeli right wing and urged nationalist politicians not to join what he called a leftist government.

A government like this is a danger to the security of Israel, and is also a danger to the future of the state, he said in a televised statement.

Indicted on charges of fraud, breach of trust and accepting bribes, Netanyahu has been unable to put together a coalition of majority in the 120-member Knesset despite relative political dominance.

ic, said, according to the official Korean Central News Agency. It is engrossed in confrontation despite its lip-service to dialogue.

The US is mistaken, however. It is a serious blunder for it to pressurise (North Korea) by creating asymmetric imbalance in and around the Korean Peninsula as this may lead to the acute and instable situation on the Korean Peninsula.

It's North Korea's first response to the 21 May summit between the leaders of the United States and South Korea, during which the US ended decades-long restrictions that capped South Korea's missile development and allowed its ally to develop weapons with unlimited ranges. The accusation of US policy being hostile to North Korea matters because it said it won't return to talks and would enlarge its nuclear arsenal as long as US hostility persists.

The range is enough for a South Korean weapon to strike all of North Korea but is short of hitting potential key targets in other neighbors like China and Japan.

Some South Korean observers hailed the end of the restrictions as restoring military sovereignty, but others suspected the US intent was to boost its ally's military capability amid rivalry with China.

The commentator Kim accused Washington of trying to spark an arms race, thwart North Korean development and deploy intermediate-range missiles targeting countries near North Korea.

Vietnam to test all 9 million residents in Ho Chi Minh city

ASSOCIATED PRESS

HANOI, 31 MAY

Vietnam plans to test all 9 million people in its largest city for the coronavirus and imposed more restrictions Monday to deal with a growing Covid-19 outbreak.

People in Ho Chi Minh city are only allowed to leave home for necessary activities and public gatherings of more than 10 people are banned for the next two weeks, the government announced.

Prior to the order, the city, also Vietnam's economic hub, shut down non-essential business last Thursday when cases started to increase.

State newspaper Vietnam News said the city authority is planning to test its entire population with a testing capacity of 100,000 samples a day. The newspaper also said police had filed a case Sunday against the couple who head a Protestant church mission for spreading dangerous infectious diseases, citing poor health protocols applied at the premises.

At least 145 cases of coro-

navirus infection have been reported with links to the Revival Ecclesia Mission, a Protestant sect, and the city district of Go Vap, where the church is based, has been locked down. Vietnam has since banned all religious events nationwide.

The newspaper said church

followers gathered in small space for singing and chanting without proper distancing and mask wearing. Ho Chi Minh city police said the mission has 48 registered members. The report said the husband and wife accused in the case were responsible for leading and organizing activities at the church. They were not identified and are not under arrest.

Since the end of April, a surge in Covid-19 has spread to 31 municipalities and provinces in Vietnam with over 4,000 cases, almost double the total number that the country reported since the beginning of the pandemic.

Some recent patients in Vietnam were infected with a hybrid of the virus variants first found in India and the UK,

the health minister said on Saturday. Nguyen Thanh Long said the hybrid might spread more easily and could be responsible for Vietnam's recent surge. Vietnam has vaccinated 1 million people with AstraZeneca shots. It has a deal with Pfizer for 30 million doses to be delivered later this year.

Thailand reports record Covid-19 cases

Thailand reported a record number of new coronavirus cases on Monday as the governor of Bangkok announced an easing of some restrictions in effect for more than a month including people visiting parks for exercise.

Thailand has been fighting to deal with a virus surge that began in early April in a group of nightclubs in Bangkok and has since spread around the country. The Center for Covid-19 Situation Administration reported a record 5,485 new cases, of which 1,953 were in prisons. Confirmed deaths increased by 19 to bring the total to 1,031 since the pandemic began last year.

Egypt bets on ancient finds to pull tourism out of pandemic

ASSOCIATED PRESS

CAIRO, 31 MAY

Workers dig and ferry wheelbarrows laden with sand to open a new shaft at a bustling archaeological site outside of Cairo, while a handful of Egyptian archaeologists supervise from garden chairs.

The dig is at the foot of the Step Pyramid of Djoser, arguably the world's oldest pyramid, and is one of many recent excavations that are yielding troves of ancient artifacts from the country's largest archaeological site.

As some European countries reopen to international tourists, Egypt has already been trying for months to attract them to its archaeological sites and museums.

Officials are betting that the new ancient discoveries will set it apart on the mid- and post-pandemic tourism market. They need visitors to come back in force to inject cash into the tourism industry, a pillar of the economy.

Saqqara is a treasure, said Tourism and Antiquities Minister Khaled el-Anany while announcing the November discovery, estimating that only one per cent of what the site contains has been unearthed so far.

cinated. The country has, up until now, received only five million vaccines for its population of 100 million people, according to its Health Ministry.

In early May, the government announced that 1 million people had been vaccinated, though that number is believed to be higher now.

In the meantime, authorities have kept the publicity machine running, focused on the new discoveries.

In November, archaeologists announced the discovery of at least 100 ancient coffins dating back to the Pharaonic Late Period and Greco-Ptolemaic era, along with 40 gilded statues found 2,500 years after they were first buried. That came a month after the discovery of 57 other coffins at the same site, the necropolis of Saqqara that includes the step pyramid.

Saqqara is a treasure, said Tourism and Antiquities Minister Khaled el-Anany while announcing the November discovery, estimating that only one per cent of what the site contains has been unearthed so far.

UNICEF says malnutrition spikes for Haiti kids amid pandemic

ASSOCIATED PRESS

LES CAYES, 31 MAY

Severe acute childhood malnutrition is expected to more than double this year in Haiti as the country struggles with the coronavirus pandemic, a spike in violence and dwindling resources, a UNICEF report said Monday.

More than 86,000 children under age 5 could be affected, compared with 41,000 reported last year, said Jean Gough, UNICEF's regional director for Latin America and the Caribbean.

I was saddened to see so many children suffering from malnutrition, she said after a weeklong visit to Haiti. Some will not recover unless they receive treatment on time.

Severe acute malnutrition is considered a life-threatening condition.

In a slightly less dangerous category, acute malnutrition in kids younger than five in Haiti has risen 61 percent, with some 2,17,000 children expected to suffer from it this year, compared with 1,34,000 last year. Overall, UNICEF said,

about 4.4 million of Haiti's more than 11 million inhabitants lack sufficient food, including 1.9 million children. Gough told during a recent visit to a hospital in the southern city of Les Cayes that UNICEF has only a one-month supply left of a special food paste given to children in need and is seeking \$3 million by the end of June.

Officials said the pandemic also has disrupted health services, with childhood immunisation rates dropping from 28 per cent to 44 per cent, depending on the vaccine. The decrease has led to a rise in diphtheria cases as health workers brace for an expected measles outbreak this year.

UNICEF noted that unvaccinated children also are more likely to die from malnutrition.

Lamir Samedi, a nurse who works at a community health center in the southern town of Saint-Jean-du-Sud, said the target was to vaccinate 80 per cent of children in the area, but they had yet to reach 50 per cent.

Among the children hospitalized is 11-month-old Denise Joseph, who lay quietly in a crib in Les Cayes after being diagnosed with tuberculosis two weeks ago.

She never eats, said her grandmother, Marie-Rose Emile, who is caring for the infant since her mother also is ill. Emile is struggling to provide for the baby, saying she has barely harvested any beans, corn or potatoes this year.

LEISURE

10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



ACROSS
1 Elephant, for example
4 Leg joint (4)
7 Young horse (4)
8 NCO (8)
9 Basic realities (Informal) (5,5)
11 As one (6)
13 Box (8)
14 Sheets, blankets, etc (10)
18 Sudden plunge (4,4)
19 Notion (4)
20 Throw carelessly (4)
21 Tangled into a thick mass (6)

DOWN
1 Brass instrument (8)
2 Spicy sauce (5)
3 Let off (7)
4 Critical person (Informal) (7)
5 Dutch cheese (4)
6 Region (4)
10 Large cask (8)
12 Area of eastern England (3,4)
13 Intestinal infection (7)
15 Film excerpt (4)
16 Raise aloft (5)
17 Unaccompanied (4)

SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Myrrh, 16 Undertaking, 17 Pilchard, 18 Idol, 19 Inactive, 20 Meet, 9 Hairdresser, 11 Plea, 21 Minus, 6 Over, 13 Regions, 14 Truant, 15 Riddle, 16 Snare, 17 Unit, 18 Cue.
DOWN
1 Menthol, 2 Reprimand, 3 Hailstone, 4 Beaver, 5 Act, 6 Over, 10 Suspicion, 11 Regions, 12 Area of eastern England, 13 Intestinal infection, 14 Critical person (Informal), 15 Film excerpt, 16 Raise aloft, 17 Unaccompanied.

By arrangement with The Independent. Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required

BEETLE BAILEY/Mort Walker



RED EYE/Bill Yates & Mel Casson



NEED TO KNOW

HOSPITALS

22586262, 22585007

RAILWAY INQUIRY

General Inquiry 139

Toll Free Nos. 1800112511

SMS Inquiry Nos. 57886, 54959, 5676747

ROADWAYS INQUIRY

ISBT (General Inquiry):

23868836, 23865181

INDIGO AIRLINES New Delhi City Office 43513185, Call Center 09910383383, 18001803838, Reservation 43513186; Indigo Airlines Airline 43513187; Indigo Airlines Airline 43513188; Indigo Airlines Airline 43513189; Indigo Airlines Airline 43513190; Indigo Airlines Airline 43513191; Indigo Airlines Airline 43513192; Indigo Airlines Airline 43513193; Indigo Airlines Airline 43513194; Indigo Airlines Airline 43513195; Indigo Airlines Airline 43513196; Indigo Airlines Airline 43513197; Indigo Airlines Airline 43513198; Indigo Airlines Airline 43513199; Indigo Airlines Airline 43513190; Indigo Airlines Airline 43513191; Indigo Airlines Airline 43513192; Indigo Airlines Airline 43513193; Indigo Airlines Airline 43513194; Indigo Airlines Airline 43513195; Indigo Airlines Airline 43513196; Indigo Airlines Airline 43513197; Indigo Airlines Airline 43513198; Indigo Airlines Airline 43513199; Indigo Airlines Airline 43513190; Indigo Airlines Airline 43513191; Indigo Airlines Airline 43513192; Indigo Airlines Airline 43513193; Indigo Airlines Airline 43513194; Indigo Airlines Airline 43513195; Indigo Airlines Airline 43513196; Indigo Airlines Airline 43513197; Indigo Airlines Airline 43513198; Indigo Airlines Airline 43513199; Indigo Airlines Airline 4351



Immediate need is to rally democracies together against Covid-19

INDIAN-AMERICAN CONGRESSMAN RAJA KRISHNAMOORTHI

STATING THAT ACHIEVING GLOBAL HERD IMMUNITY IS THE RIGHT THING TO DO OUT OF COMPASSION AND MORALITY

WEATHER

CITY	MAX	MIN
SINGAPORE	30°C	28°C H
HONG KONG	26°C	20°C H
TOKYO	18°C	12°C CL
LONDON	17°C	9°C H
DUBAI	31°C	27°C S
SAN FRANCISCO	13°C	04°C H
NEW YORK	16°C	08°C H
MOSCOW	15°C	05°C H

S=sunny, CL=clear, H=hazy, R=rainy...

THUMBNAILS



Clayton Dillard, right, talks with a police official, left, seeking information about a family member outside of the scene of a shooting at a banquet hall near Hialeah, Florida on Sunday. ■ AP

Ryanair plane threat: A Ryanair flight from Ireland to Poland diverted was to Berlin after the crew were warned of a 'potential security threat' on the plane, the airline said Monday. German air traffic control warned the crew of the Dublin-Krakow flight of the potential threat on Sunday. The captain followed procedures and diverted to Berlin, the nearest airport. Passengers were taken off the plane to facilitate extensive security checks. ■ AP

Australia finds more infections: Authorities say a Covid-19 cluster in Australia's second-largest city has spread into nursing homes. Victoria state began a seven-day lockdown on Friday due to a cluster in its capital Melbourne. State health authorities on Monday announced 11 new cases. Health minister Martin Foley described the cluster spreading into aged care homes as a very great concern. The vast majority of Victoria's 820 deaths have been in nursing homes. ■ AP

UK to resettle more Afghan interpreters as NATO troops leave

LONDON, 31 MAY

Britain said Monday it will make it easier for Afghans who worked with British troops to settle in the UK, amid rising fears for their safety as foreign forces leave Afghanistan.

More than 1,400 Afghan interpreters and their relatives have already moved to Britain under a resettlement scheme.

The government says about 3,000 more are expected to come under new rules which broaden eligibility and make it easier for people to bring their families with them.

Defense Secretary Ben Wallace said that with Western powers leaving Afghanistan, the threat is increasing and has increased, including targeted attacks by the Taliban.

He told Sky News it's absolutely right that we stand by people who risked their lives to help British troops.

They sacrificed a lot to look after us, and now we're going to do the same, he said.

At the peak of the post-2001 deployment there were almost 10,000 British troops in Afghanistan, mostly in Helmand province in the south. Britain ended combat operations in 2014, but about 750 troops remain in the country to train Afghan forces.

They are due to leave by September along with U.S. and other NATO troops, ending a deployment launched against al-Qaeda and Taliban forces in the wake of the 11 September, 2001, attacks. ■ AP

Dems walk, stop Texas COP's sweeping voting restrictions

The revolt is one of Democrats' biggest protests against COP nationwide to impose stricter election laws

ASSOCIATED PRESS
AUSTIN, TEXAS, 31 MAY

Texas Democrats pulled off a dramatic, last-ditch walkout in the state House of Representatives on Sunday night to block passage of one of the most restrictive voting Bills in the US, leaving Republicans with no choice but to abandon a midnight deadline and declare the legislative session essentially over.

The revolt is one of Democrats' biggest protests to date against GOP efforts nationwide to impose stricter election laws, and they used the spotlight to urge President Joe Biden to act on voting rights.

But the victory may be fleeting: Republican Gov. Greg Abbott, who had declared new voting laws a priority in Texas, quickly announced that he would order a special session to finish the job. He called the failure of the bill "deeply disappointing" but did not say when he would drag lawmakers back to work.

"We've said for so many years that we want more people to participate in our democracy. And it just seems that's not the case," Democratic state Rep. Carl Sherman said.

One by one, Democrats left the House chamber until there was no longer the 100-member quorum needed to pass Senate Bill 7, which would have reduced polling hours, empowered poll watchers and scaled back ways to

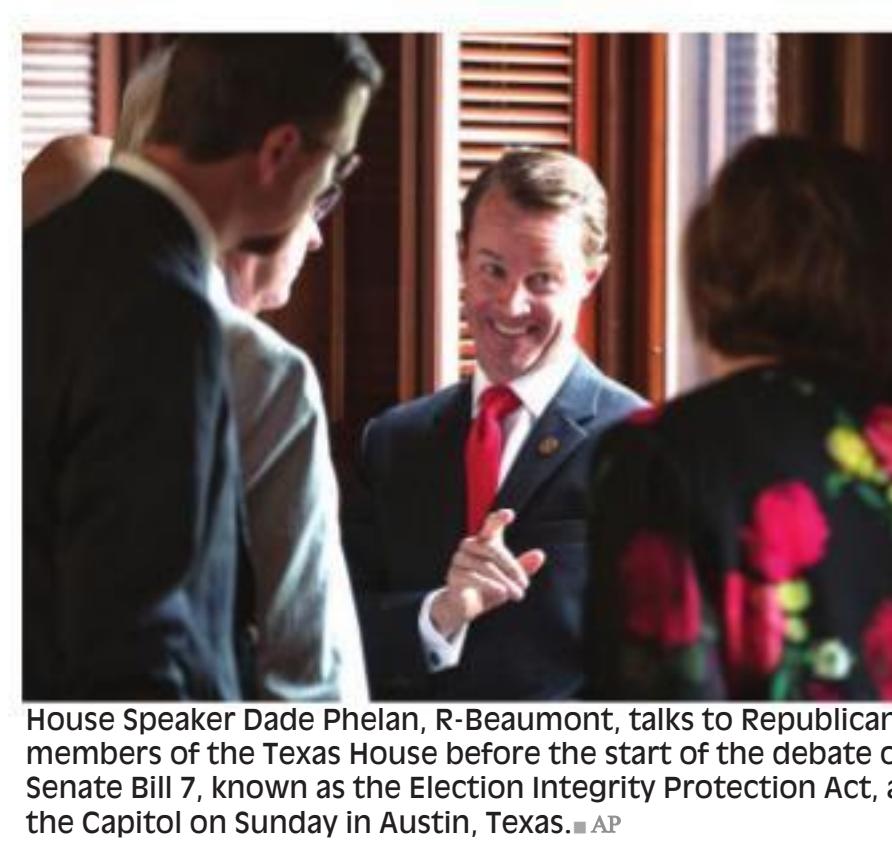
vote in Texas, which already has some of the nation's strictest voting laws.

They gathered later outside a black church, driving home their anger over a last-minute change to the Texas bill that would have prohibited Sunday voting before 1 p.m., when many Black worshippers go to the polls. Democrats said they did not go into the House vote intending to break quorum, but instead became fed-up after Republicans repeatedly refused to take their questions while racing to pass the bill.

It was a stunning turnaround from just 24 hours earlier, when the bill seemed all but guaranteed to reach Abbott's desk. The Texas Senate had signed off before sunrise earlier Sunday after Republicans, who hold an 18-13 majority in the chamber, used a bare-knuckled procedural move to suspend the rules and take up the measure in the middle of the night.

But as the day wore on in the House, the GOP's chances wobbled. State Rep. Chris Turner, the Democratic House leader, said he sent a text message to members of his caucus at 10:35 p.m. telling them to leave the chamber. But even by that point, the exodus had already been well underway.

"We knew today, with the eyes of the nation watching actions in Austin, that we needed to send a message, and that message is very, very clear: Mr. President, we need



House Speaker Dade Phelan, R-Beaumont, talks to Republican members of the Texas House before the start of the debate of Senate Bill 7, known as the Election Integrity Protection Act, at the Capitol on Sunday in Austin, Texas. ■ AP

a national response to federal voting rights," Democratic state Rep. Trey Martinez Fischer said.

Republicans showed restraint in criticising Democrats for the move. "I am disappointed that some members decided to break quorum," said Republican state Rep. Briscoe Cain, who carried the bill in the House. "We all know what that meant. I understand why they were doing it, but we all took an oath to Texans that we would be here to do our jobs."

Texas is the last big battleground in Republicans' campaign to tighten voting laws, driven by former President Donald Trump's false claims that the 2020 election was stolen from him.

Georgia and Florida have also passed new voting restrictions, and Biden on Saturday had unfavorably compared Texas' Bill to election changes in those states as "an assault on democracy."

Under revisions during closed-door negotiations, Republicans added language to the 67-page measure that could have made it easier for a judge to overturn an election. The Bill would have also eliminated drive-thru voting and 24-hour polling centers, both of which Harris County, the state's largest Democratic stronghold, introduced last year.

Major corporations joined the backlash, including Texas-based American Airlines and Dell, warning that the efforts

could harm democracy and the economic climate. But Republicans shrugged off their objections, and in some cases, ripped business leaders for speaking out. By the time the Texas bill was poised to pass over the Memorial Day weekend, the opposition from businesses had grown faint.

Since Trump's defeat, at least 14 states have enacted more restrictive voting laws, according to the New York-based Brennan Center for Justice. It has also counted nearly 400 bills filed this year nationwide that would restrict voting.

It was not the first time Texas Democrats—who have been out of power in the state Capitol for decades—have been able to block contentious legislation despite being outnumbered.

They twice broke quorum in 2003 to stop Republican efforts to redraw voting maps, at one point leaving the state for Oklahoma. A decade later, former state Sen. Wendy Davis ran out the clock on a sweeping anti-abortion bill with a filibuster that lasted more than 11 hours, propelling her to a failed run for governor.

But in each instance, Republicans ultimately prevailed.

"We may have won the war tonight but the battle is not over," Democratic state Rep. Nicole Collier said. "We will continue to fight and speak out against those measures that attempt to silence our voices."

GOOD TIMES RETURN



Visitors fun into the pool as tourists flock to Las Vegas for the weekend at Mandalay Bay hotel and casino in Las Vegas, Nevada, on Sunday. ■ AGENCIES

Greek, Turkish leaders to meet in June in bid to mend ties

ASSOCIATED PRESS
ATHENS, GREECE, 31 MAY

The leaders of Greece and Turkey will meet next month on the sidelines of a NATO summit, the two countries' foreign ministers agreed on Monday, as they seek to mend frayed ties that led to a sharp escalation in tension last year.

In brief statements in Athens, the ministers said their talks were an opportunity to agree on a meeting between Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis at the NATO summit in Brussels on 14 June.

"We are fully aware of the different, and in quite a few particularly serious issues, of the diametrically opposed positions that we espouse, I mean we and Turkey," Greece's Nikos Dendias said, noting he and his Turkish counterpart Mervut Cavusoglu had dis-



Greek PM Kyriakos Mitsotakis, right, speaking with Turkish PM Mervut Cavusoglu at Maximos Mansion in Athens on Monday. ■ AP

cussed the full range of Greek-Turkish and Turkish-European Union relations.

"The aim of our meeting today was to attempt a process of initial consultation and if this proves possible, a gradual normalization of the situation over time," Dendias said.

They said they had agreed their countries would recognize each other's vaccination certificates for Covid-19, so that

"We have issues that have been awaiting resolution for a long time. We have differences of opinion," Cavusoglu said. "We want all of these issues and differences of opinion to be resolved with a foundation of neighborliness, international law and a respect for mutual rights and interests. And for this reason, our dialogue must continue uninterrupted. On this subject both sides are willing, we've reestablished that today."

Cavusoglu said the two sides were working "on concrete projects focused on action and cooperation," and that they had agreed on 25 items and were working on a broad area of cooperation "from transportation to energy, from tourism to environment to commerce."

Dendias said a "limited list of economic cooperation programs" was agreed upon, but provided no details.

LONDON, 31 MAY

UK surge vaccinations to fight variant from India

ASSOCIATED PRESS
LONDON, 31 MAY



people need to be vaccinated before measures can be eased safely.

The government will announce its decision on 14 June.

Three-quarters of UK adults have had one dose of a coronavirus vaccine, and almost half have had both doses.

The Twickenham walk-in vaccination center is offering

jabs without an appointment on Monday to people from northwest London, a hotspot for the Indian-identified variant.

Health officials in the north-west England town of Bolton, which had the highest rates of the new variant, say infections are starting to fall after a mass testing and "surge vaccination" campaign.

Ravi Gupta, a member of a committee that advises the government on respiratory diseases, said it would be wise to delay the June 21 reopening "by a few weeks."

"We are not too far from reaching the sort of levels of vaccination that would help us contain the virus," he told the BBC. "If you look at the costs and benefits of getting it wrong, I think it is heavily in favor of delay."

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON, 31 MAY

Johnson & Johnson is asking for Supreme Court review of a \$2 billion verdict in favour of women who claim they developed ovarian cancer from using the company's talc products.

The case features an array of high-profile attorneys, some in unusual alliances, including former independent counsel Kenneth Starr, who is representing the women who sued Johnson & Johnson. The nation's largest business groups are backing the company, and a justice's father also makes an appearance because of his long association with the trade group for cosmetics and personal care products.

The court could say as soon as Tuesday whether it will

get involved.

At the root, Johnson & Johnson argues that the company didn't get a fair shake in a trial in state court in Missouri that resulted in an initial \$4.7 billion verdict in favour of 22 women who used talc products and developed ovarian cancer.

A state appeals court cut more than half the money out of the verdict and eliminated two of the plaintiffs, but otherwise upheld the outcome in a trial in which lawyers for both sides presented dueling expert testimony about whether the company's talc contained asbestos and asbestos-laced talc can cause ovarian cancer.

The jury found for the women on both points, after which Judge Rex M Burlison wrote that evidence at the trial showed particularly reprehensible conduct on the part of Defendants."

The evidence, Burlison wrote, included that the company knew there was asbestos in products aimed at mothers and babies, knew of the potential harm and misrepresented the safety of the products for decades.

Nine of the women have died from ovarian cancer, lawyers for the plaintiffs said that Johnson & Johnson denies that its talc products cause cancer and it called the verdict in the Missouri trial at odds with decades of independent scientific evaluations confirming Johnson's Baby Powder is safe, is not contaminated by asbestos and does not cause cancer.

The company also argued that the verdict was an outlier in a series of trials involving talc and ovarian cancer.

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Exploring without inhibitions



Virtual reality-based education is encouraging students to think beyond traditional methods and seek practical answers

RISHI JALANI

In the digital era, everything about the way one lives, works and even learns has been transformed. Learning is an ongoing process and new advancements in technology only make it more effective.

One such development is the use of virtual reality technologies, which transcend the boundaries of directly experienced reality and offer a real-time interface for students to feel and understand things in a way they otherwise could not. The prime focus of schools and colleges is to help their students grasp concepts better. The education system is now vastly moving away from theories taught in

schools to employing VR courses, which have been found to be more effective than regular school curriculum.

Studies have found that employing VR allows students to think beyond a frame of reference and the theories taught in schools. Emphasis is laid on how VR can be a great tool to improve the quality of education as it helps to understand and interpret concepts better. Also known as augmented reality, it is a medium to create real-life experiences, which trends in various industries ranging from education to gaming, healthcare, space science and others, having changed the face of these sectors steadily.

Mutual interest

Adoption of VR, as we are witnessing it today, is here to stay because of its contribution in the evolution of the education system and making it more practical. Besides, in science classes, the usefulness of VR has come to light as many institutes across the world are relying on it for helping students understand social-science subjects as well. In the case of life sciences, it helps create hypotheses, tests and draw inferences.

Studies in VR have also shown that learning concepts practically helps to grasp and retain information better and it is becoming a great success model for both teachers and students. On the other hand, students have also shown great interest in learning as it allows them room for experimentation, beginning by solving small problems at hand. This makes them confident, encouraging them to take bold and daring

approaches full of possibilities. Children, who are not scared to go beyond what is being taught by teachers, are the ones who grow up intrepid of the unknown, ask questions and eventually, find solutions to problems that haunt humankind.

Grooming young minds

Students from across the globe are being taught lessons in coding languages, artificial intelligence, machine learning, robotics and other nuances of technology. This type of pedagogy has not only proved successful in imparting knowledge but also got students interested in studying.

The objective of any education system is to prepare students to be not just well-versed with different fundamental concepts, rather imbue them with the ability to implement the same in real life. The usage of VR has not only elevated the level of academics but has also led to the

rise in demand of experts, who are adept in creating innovative programmes and curricula that are helpful for students of all age-groups. It has brought in creative approaches to teach subjects in humanities as well.

The application of VR has enabled students to think like scientists as its usage can be deployed anywhere right from exploring the air to underwater. Marine biology, geology, archaeology and space research are some of the subject matters that students are currently opting for based upon their interest, with an urge to delve into the unknown.

Many schools are now aiming to bring creative education to students around the world. Their mission is to empower the next generation of young designers, entrepreneurs, makers and inventors who will impact their communities and the world through their ideas and work.

The curiosity to go deeper into a subject matter and the ability to rethink all that one has been taught is a primary highlight of the use of virtual technology in learning. Students now do not shy away from thinking differently and are willing to seek answers from their understanding, which is helping them to evolve as future scientists who are looking at practical solutions before them and are not afraid to go deeper. The whole purpose of education is being served when children take interest in the subject to learn new things.

Shaping future workforce

Modern technologies such as VR are making education affordable as its deployment in schools provides cost-effective practice of procedures. Schools will be able to cut down expenses on staff since students can work independently. Education via virtual reality has a sense of adventure that excites students and makes them better understand and remember topics.

The growing demand from corporations, which are driven by technology for their daily work and processes, see a profound need for the future workforce to be adept in using technologies of any kind while coming up with innovative solutions to the problems at hand. Prospective employees are being prepared by the current VR-based education system, which is encouraging students to think of a practical, long-term way out from inherent troubles by learning to deal with them tactfully.

VR has turned out to be an effective way to improve the education process and is finding active takers through schools, which are constantly working on developing new and innovative methods to make education simpler for students. A host of courses are now being taught in this method that has only made it more credible for the long run.

The writer is founder and chief executive officer, The Big Red Group, New Delhi

PLUS POINTS

Young scholar



Samiya Caur, an engineering student of Indraprastha Institute of Information Technology's class of 2021, received the 2021 IAPP Annual Westin Scholar Award. With the growing need for well-qualified privacy and data protection professionals, the annual Westin Scholar Awards were created by the International Association of Privacy Professionals to support students who are identified as future leaders in the field of privacy and data protection.

As a participating Westin Scholar Award school, IIIT-D's professor Ponnurangam Kumaraguru selected Caur to receive this year's award in recognition of her contribution, enthusiasm, and excitement around the topic of privacy in his class "CSE648: Privacy and Security in Online Social Media".

Free online classes



Vidyakul, a vernacular e-learning platform, recently collaborated with eVidya – a digital learning venture by national award winning 40-year-old publishing giant, Vidya Prakashan Mandir – to help children prepare for exams and basic school education. The collaboration will allow students of Uttar Pradesh to have free access to live online classes based on proven board exams prep resources and books of Vidya Prakashan Mandir.

Giving children in tier III and tier IV cities a platform to support their education that has been neglected for long due to lack of resources, quality and affordable education, it will give them an opportunity to stand out.

Budding journos



Applications are now open for Future News Worldwide 2021 – a prestigious international online conference run by the British Council in partnership with some of the world's leading media organisations.

Under the theme "Climate, Covid-19 and the rise of disinformation: how journalism can best serve a world in crisis", the conference will offer a rich and packed programme for the next generation of newsmakers and content creators. Taking place online, there are 100 places available for the brightest young student bloggers, vloggers, photojournalists, and reporters from across the globe to take part.

The opportunity is available to undergraduate and postgraduate students from any country between 18-25 years as of 1 July 2021. Applicants should be able to speak English at an advanced level and need to demonstrate passion about following a career in journalism. The last date for application is 8 June. For details visit, www.britishcouncil.org/future-news-worldwide

Interesting course

Mudra Institute of Communications, Ahmedabad – an institute for strategic marketing and communications in India – partnered with Results and Outcomes recently for a radical career changing course for working professionals. It is called advanced digital transformation programme and is a path-breaking course that professionals must consider if they want to bring about a dynamic shift in their careers.

ADTP is not just a digital programme loaded with theoretical knowledge but is an advanced and intensive 45-week course for working professionals, delivered by a faculty comprising 100 per cent experienced professionals, who are experts in their respective fields. The course will start from August 2021. For details visit, www.adtp.co.in

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'THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS IS LONGER NOW'

In this insightful interview, Ashley Fernandes, India head for Emyon Business School, France, says Covid-19 has clearly demonstrated that 'attitude is as important as aptitude'

SUCHETA CHATTERJEE

With the second wave of the pandemic underway in India and multiple states enforcing lockdowns, a long-term disruption has been caused in the employment sector again. Post-university life should be filled with exciting job offers, but for the 2020 cohort of graduates the reality is far more uncertain.

Students with plans to study abroad have also been majorly affected. Nearly two-thirds of university students feel negatively about their career prospects and many have lost job offers or placements as a result of the Covid-19 crisis. On the other hand, a few say they now have more time to plan their future.

Given such a situation, to provide a sigh of relief to students, Ashley Fernandes, India head for Emyon Business School, France, and chairman of the higher education committee of the Indo-French Chamber of Commerce and Industry for the 2020-2021 financial year, shares his insights on the uncertain present and what the future holds for graduates. Excerpts:

How is the pandemic changing the stance of companies when it comes to recruiting students with business degrees?

There has always been a fight for

quality. Companies want to attract the right candidates and bright candidates want to join companies and land jobs that have purpose and meaning. The work from home scenario has also put an emphasis on work/family balance and this dynamic should be a long-lasting trend.

What changes can be seen in the employability process both in India and overseas?

The recruitment process is definitely longer, but that's the case everywhere and not only applicable to India and Indian students in particular. The current Indian scenario is probably weighing in on the process a little bit more. But in the end, leadership and character are the current drivers more than ever.

How can one's professional experience weigh in during the admission process?

What the pandemic has clearly demonstrated is that your attitude is as important as your aptitude. The way you can leverage your experience and put it in perspective speaks volume of your intellectual, emotional and cognitive skills.

Given the pandemic, are more Indian students choosing b-schools in India over those in Europe or the United States?

Staying at home and going abroad are two different options and I do not believe they are chosen by the same type of students. Besides the legal short-term constraints put on foreign travel and stay, I believe that students seriously wanting the exposure and experience of international studies have found a way to reach their goals. Institutions have also been flexible and accommodating to help them do so.

After becoming graduates, will students be hired in the same way as before Covid-19?

I believe that quality graduates will be needed to rebuild and reshape, which also underlines that new ways

and means will be needed to address the situation. It cannot be the "same way as before" – that's one thing I believe this crisis has taught us. Are there any provisions of student support at your school and in general across B-schools in India?

Emyon Business School has a wellness centre. Obviously, the Covid-19 pandemic hit everyone hard especially, students but we are very prompt to extend financial, medical and psychological help to all those who need it. It is never enough but we are on it significantly and genuinely.

How can Emyon Business School prepare students for employment in the present situation?

This crisis will pass. We will prepare our students as we have done for the last 150 years. We believe that we offer students a strong knowledge base, the way one learns and the skills they acquire along with the impeccable intellectual grooming has always made Emyon Business School students "early makers". Our B-school is ranked second in France and within the top 40 across the world in terms of employability.

The writer is a staff member, Features, The Statesman, Kolkata

