



THE RACE TO ACHIEVE
NET ZERO BY 2050

P7



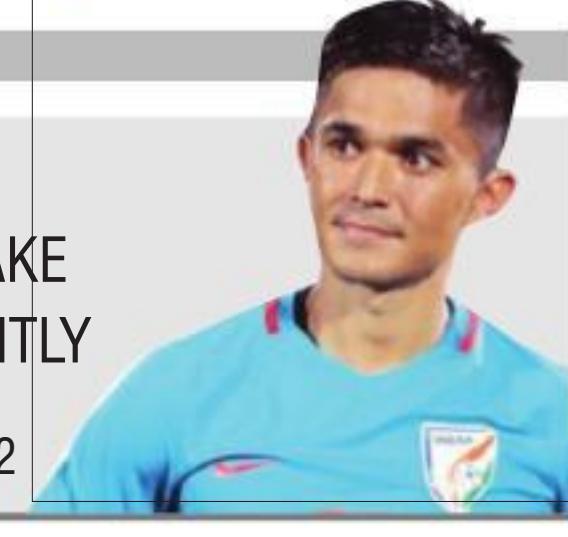
'WILL REMAIN CM AS
LONG AS HIGH
COMMAND WANTS'

P4



BORIS TO URGE G7 TO
VACCINATE ENTIRE
WORLD BY 2022-END

P10



INDIA IN NO
MOOD TO TAKE
B'DESH LIGHTLY

P12

WEATHER

Partly cloudy sky with possibility of very light rain/drizzle. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 40 and 25 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: NIL

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 84% Min: 41%

TEMPERATURE

Max: 38.1°C (-2) Min: 24.0°C (-4)

SUN RISES SUN SETS

05:23 hrs 19:18 hrs

MOON RISES MOON SETS

03:52 hrs 16:38 hrs

THUMBNAILS



Health workers administer Covid-19 vaccine to a class 12 student during a vaccination drive at South Point High School in Kolkata. IANS

Petrol prices above ₹100-mark in six states: Petrol price on Sunday crossed Rs 95 a litre in Delhi and diesel breached Rs 86 per litre mark for the first time ever as fuel prices were hiked again. Petrol price was increased by 21 paise per litre and diesel 20 paise a litre, according to a notification of state-owned retailers. (P8)

No cabinet expansion in UP: BJP national vice-president Radha Mohan Singh on Sunday dismissed the possibility of an imminent Cabinet reshuffle in Uttar Pradesh and shot down the speculation over a rift between chief minister Yogi Adityanath and PM Narendra Modi. (P4)

TMC calls out Dhankar's nepotism: Addressing West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankar as 'uncleji', TMC MP Mahua Moitra on Sunday said that his family members and acquaintances have been appointed as officers on special duty in Raj Bhavan. Moitra said Sekhawat is the son of Dhankar's brother-in-law, Ruchi Dubey and Prasant Dikshit are respectively wife and brother of guy's former aide-de-camp Major Gorang Dikshit.

Report highlights need to prioritise pregnant women for Covid-19 jabs

PREGNANT SKY



A cloud-covered sky over the Esplanade area as it wears a deserted look during the Covid-induced lockdown in Kolkata on Sunday. IANS

If pizzas can be delivered, why not ration: Kejriwal

SNS & PTI
NEW DELHI, 6 JUNE



► The Delhi government on Saturday had claimed the doorstep delivery of ration scheme was rejected by the Lt governor saying the Centre's approval was not sought and that a litigation was pending in the high court regarding it.

► The Central government has said that Delhi government's claim that its doorstep delivery scheme was rejected was "baseless".

Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi why the doorstep ration delivery scheme by his government was stalled by the Centre and appealed to him to allow its implementation in the national interest.

He said the scheme should be implemented across the country in view of Covid-19 otherwise ration shops will act as "super-spreaders".

"If pizza, burgers, smartphones and clothes can be delivered at home, then why can't ration be delivered at their doorstep," Kejriwal asked.

He alleged that the Centre was fighting with everyone, including West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee, Maharashtra, Delhi and Jharkhand governments, farmers and the people of Lakhsadweep.

"People are distressed that the Central government

is fighting everyone. If we fight like this, how will we tackle Covid-19," the chief minister said at an online briefing.

"The Delhi government legally did not require the Centre's approval for the implementation of the scheme, but it sought per-

mission five times to avoid any dispute," Kejriwal said.

The Delhi government on Saturday had claimed the doorstep delivery of ration scheme was rejected by the Lt Governor saying the Centre's approval was not sought and that a litigation was pending in the high court regarding it.

The Centre has said that Delhi government's claim that its doorstep delivery scheme was rejected was "baseless".

Kejriwal said the scheme would have finished the powerful ration mafia in Delhi whom he had fought while working in Delhi's slums 17 years ago and faced attacks several times. "If you stand with the ration mafia, who will stand with the poor peo-

ple," he said, adding that the scheme was intended to benefit 72 lakh people in the national capital.

He claimed that it was being said by some central government officers that the Delhi government can not take credit for the scheme by using the ration provided by the Centre.

In a blistering attack on Kejriwal, BJP's spokesperson Sambit Patra said the Delhi government's ration-at-doorsteps scheme was a sham. Kejriwal is trying to mislead the country. The party will expose this drama.

He is trying to project PM Narendra Modi as someone opposed to the scheme. 'One nation, one ration card' is a central government scheme, he said. (MORE ON P2)

India in no mood to take B'desh lightly

P12



dipped to 0.5 per cent, according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin. (SEE P2)

New low in Covid nos

India logs 1.14 L new cases, lowest in two months, positivity rate falls

PTI & SNS
NEW DELHI, 6 JUNE

India reported 1,14,460 new coronavirus infections, the lowest in 60 days, while the daily positivity rate further dropped to 5.62 per cent, according to Union Health Ministry data updated on Sunday. With the fresh cases, the total tally of coronavirus cases in the country climbed to 2,88,09,339.

The Covid-19 death toll climbed to 34,675 with 2,677 daily deaths, the lowest in 42 days, while active cases dropped below 15 lakh.

With Covid numbers falling, previous hotspots Delhi and Maharashtra have eased some lockdown restrictions starting from Monday.

Markets and malls in Delhi can open on odd-even basis while Delhi Metro will resume services with 50 per cent capacity.

Maharashtra has announced a five-level plan to relax the coronavirus-induced restrictions in

the state from Monday, with chief minister Uddhav Thackeray saying the government was taking a "calculated risk" by relaxing the restrictions.

The Uttar Pradesh government has allowed shops and markets in Varanasi, Muzaffarnagar, Gautam Buddha Nagar and Ghaziabad to open for five days a week from Monday after active Covid-19 cases in these districts fell below 600.

The Haryana government extended the lockdown in the state till 14 June, while easing several restrictions that were in place earlier. While there are further relaxations regarding opening of shops and shopping malls, religious places have been allowed to open.

Delhi adds 381 cases, 34 deaths: The national capital today reported 381 new coronavirus infections — reportedly the lowest since 10 March — and 34 Covid-linked deaths — the lowest in about two months — while the positivity rate

Hosp revokes order barring nurses from talking in Malayalam

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 6 JUNE

The circular issued at Delhi's G B Pant hospital read, "A complaint has been received regarding Malayalam language being used for communication in working places in GIPMER. Whereas maximum patients and colleagues do not know this language and feel helpless causing a lot of inconvenience."

chandani, claimed the circular was issued based on a complaint sent by a patient to a senior officer in the health department, regarding use of Malayalam language at the hospital, while adding that the wordings used in the circular.

The circular which was issued by the Nursing Superintendent, G B Pant Hospital, without any instructions or knowledge of the hospital administration and the Delhi government stands withdrawn with immediate effect, a new order issued by the Medical Director Dr Anil Agarwal read. "The matter is being investigated and strict action will follow," Dr Agarwal said.

The circular issued on Saturday read, "A complaint has been received regarding Malayalam language being used for communication in working places in GIPMER. Whereas maximum patients and colleagues do not know this language and feel helpless causing a lot of inconvenience."

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi called for stopping language discrimination. Party leader Shashi Tharoor said that the order was unacceptable, crude, offensive and a violation of the basic human rights of Indian citizens.

Slamming the Delhi government over a hospital circular, the BJP on Sunday said this was ironical that it requested Kerala for oxygen when in need during the Covid crisis and has now attempted to snatch its peoples' right to speak in their language with each other.

Ex-bureaucrats write to PM over Lakshadweep

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 6 JUNE

A group of 93 former civil servants wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday, expressing "deep concern" over what they called were "disturbing developments" in the Union Territory of Lakshadweep in the name of "development".

They have urged the Prime Minister to ensure an appropriate development model, in consultation with the islanders with emphasis on access to safe and secure healthcare, education and just governance among others.

Asserting that Lakshadweep occupies a unique place

in India's geographic and cultural diversity, the group highlighted drafts of three regulations introduced by P K Patel after assuming additional charge of Administrator of Lakshadweep in December 2020. Patel is also the Administrator of Dadra and Nagar Haveli, and Daman and Diu.

"These drafts have been introduced without local consultation and are presently with the Ministry of Home Affairs, Centre, for necessary approvals," said the letter.

"We write to you today to register our deep concern over disturbing developments taking place in the pristine UT of Lakshadweep in the name of 'development', the letter said.

L'dweep admin order fuels outrage

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KOCHI, 6 JUNE

Amidst protests by islanders against its "reform" measures, the Lakshadweep island administration has taken a set of decisions, including deputing government officials on board local fishing boats for intelligence gathering.

The administration also issued a new order on managing cleanliness and hygiene, on 4 June, directing the islanders to "scientifically dispose" of the tender coconut shell, tree leaves, coconut husk, coconut shell, trunk etc in and around dwelling and public places.

Lakshadweep MP Mohammed Faizal attacked the administration for its new directives, terming them as a

mockery" and urged the authorities to withdraw them immediately. On 28 May, a meeting chaired by Principal Secretary cum Advisor to the Administrator decided to depute responsible government servants on board local fishing boats for intelligence gathering

"surveillance by the Navy and the Coast Guard was already in place in all the islands, while the fishermen were regularly trained to report suspicious movement at sea.

The meeting also decided to strengthen security measures to monitor the local fishing boats and crews, inten-

sify checking of passenger boats and vessels reaching the islands and strengthen the ship berthing points and heli-base by installing CCTV cameras.

Faizal questioned the practicality of implementing the order, saying there are hundreds of fishing boats operating from the islands and asking how many officials are going to be deployed in such vessels. He pointed out that a well-established system of surveillance by the Navy and the Coast Guard was already in place in all the islands, while the fishermen were regularly trained to report suspicious movement at sea.

He alleged that the administration's actions showed that they do not trust the fishermen community of isles.

India slips two spots to 117 rank on 17 SDGs adopted as 2030 goal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 6 JUNE

India's rank dropped to 115 because major challenges like ending hunger and achieving food security, gender equality, building strong infrastructure remain in the country

in the country. India ranks below four South Asian countries—Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, it said. The overall SDG score of India is 61.9 out of 100.

Elaborating state-wise preparedness, the report said Jharkhand and Bihar are the least prepared to meet the SDGs by 2030, which is the target year. While Jharkhand lags in five of the SDGs, Bihar lags in seven.

It said the states/UTs with the best overall score which are on the path to achieving the SDGs are Kerala, Himachal Pradesh and Chandigarh.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, was adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, which provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future.

There are 17 SDGs which are an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing.

The report said India ranked 168 out of 180 countries in Environmental Performance Index (EPI), which is calculated on indicators, like environmental health, climate, air pollution, sanitation among others.

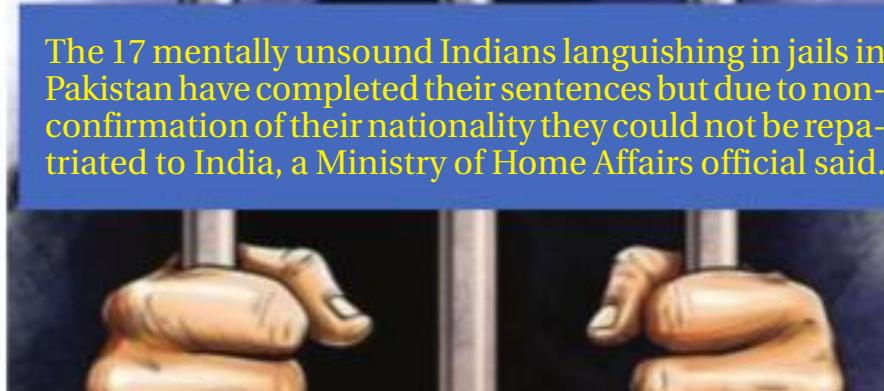
Among the 17 prisoners in Pakistan who are believed to be Indians, four are women and were named Gullu Jan, Ajmeera, Naqaya and Hasina by Pakistani authorities.

The others are Sonu Singh, Surinder Mahto, Prahalad Singh, Silrof Salim, Birju, Raju, Ramesh and Raju Rai.

The MHA has said anyone who can identify these 17 persons should give information to the UnderSecretary (Foreigners) in the Ministry of Home Affairs, the home department of state governments or UT administration concerned or respective Director General of Police or Inspector General of Police or Commissioner of Police.

"Photographs of 17 men-

The 17 mentally unsound Indians languishing in jails in Pakistan have completed their sentences but due to non-confirmation of their nationality they could not be repatriated to India, a Ministry of Home Affairs official said



tally unsound persons, believed to be Indian nationals, who are lodged in jails in Pakistan, are attached. These persons have not been able to disclose any other particulars about them including the names of their parents or relatives, address in India, etc, due to their mentally unsound condition," the MHA notification said.

In 2015, Pakistan had conveyed to India about these 17 Indians lodged in their jails and said they have completed

their jail terms in that country but they cannot be sent back home as they are unable to recall their whereabouts since they are mentally unsound. As Pakistan failed to get details of their background, the Indian High Commission in Islamabad was given special consular access to these prisoners hoping to make breakthroughs.

The Indian High Commission in Islamabad had sent the pictures of all these 17 prisoners to the Ministry of External Affairs to trace their family members.

The MHA subsequently forwarded the pictures to the MHA to help identify their families and homes in India. We have put their photos on the MHA website but so far no clue has been received from anyone. We have shared their photos with the states, UTs but no information has been received, a MHA official said.





Every election teaches us a lesson

BINOY TAMANG, LEADER, GORKHA JAN MUKTI MORCHA

ON HIS PLANS TO SHUFFLE THE PARTY ORGANISATION IN THE POST-ELECTION SCENARIO

Kejriwal: If pizza, burger can be home-delivered, why not ration

CM asks PM Modi why Delhi govt's doorstep ration delivery scheme meant for lakhs of poor was stalled by Centre, says it should be rather implemented across the country amid Covid pandemic

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, 6 JUNE



Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal today questioned Prime Minister Narendra Modi why the AAP-led Delhi government's doorstep ration delivery scheme was stalled by his BJP-led central government, appealing to him to allow its implementation in the interest of the poor and underprivileged people.

"If pizza can be home-delivered, burgers can be home-delivered, smart-phones and clothes can be home-delivered, then why should ration not be delivered at the doorsteps of the poor?" Kejriwal asked during an online press briefing.

He said for the last 75 years, the poor people of this country have been victims of the ration mafia. He urged the PM not to stop the doorstep ration delivery scheme in the national capital as it was launched for the welfare of the people.

The CM pointed out that this "revolutionary scheme" of his government was blocked just two days before it is to be launched. The Delhi government has completed all the

necessary formalities for the purpose. He said his government had sought the Centre's approval for this scheme five times in spite of "no such legal obligation to do so" and had accepted all the suggestions the Centre had made, including removal of the words "Mukhya Mantri" from the scheme named "Mukhya Mantri Ghar Ghar Ration Yojana" earlier.

Kejriwal said the central government has claimed that the scheme was stopped due to a case involving ration shopkeepers in the Delhi High Court. However, neither has the court stayed the scheme nor has the Centre put forward any objection in the court, he said, wanting to know if the judiciary did not find anything wrong with the scheme, how

could the Centre do so. Kejriwal said if implemented, the beneficiaries under the scheme would have received 4 kg of wheat flour (atta), 1 kg of rice and 1 kg of sugar per person at their homes as against the current provision of 4 kg wheat, 1 kg rice and 1 kg sugar from fair price shops. The new scheme would have enabled a person to get wheat flour (atta) instead of wheat.

"For the last 75 years, the poor of this country have been victims of the ration mafia. Every month, ration in the name of the public is issued in the files, but they do not get it. Most of it is stolen. This ration mafia is very powerful."

"Seventeen years ago I dared to challenge this mafia when I used to work for an NGO in the slums of Delhi. As a result, we were attacked seven times. Once these people slit the throat of one of our sisters. However, her life was saved. At that time, I did not think even in my dreams that one day I will become the CM of Delhi," he said. He also said, "This is a tough time due to the coronavirus pandemic. I think in Delhi and elsewhere, too, this scheme of

door-to-door delivery of ration should be implemented. It will also help prevent the spread of the coronavirus. These ration shops are super spreaders. The overcrowding at ration shops could be avoided through this scheme."

Kejriwal said the Centre was "fighting" with everyone, including West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee, the Maharashtra, Delhi and Jharkhand governments, farmers, and the people of Lakhsadweep. "People are distressed that the central government is fighting everyone. If we fight like this, how will we tackle Covid-19," he asked.

The Delhi government had yesterday reportedly claimed that the doorstep delivery of ration scheme was rejected by the Lt Governor saying the Centre's approval was not sought and that a litigation was pending in the high court regarding it.

Kejriwal today said he was "deeply anguished" over the Centre's rejection of the ration doorstep delivery scheme and wanted to directly ask the PM why it was stalled.

He said the scheme would have neutralised the powerful ration mafia in Delhi whom he had fought while working

in Delhi's slums 17 years ago and faced attacks several times.

"If the Centre stands with the ration mafia, who will stand with the poor people," he asked, pointing out that the scheme was intended to benefit 72 lakh people in the national capital. "This ration mafia has strong connections which is evident now as they got the doorstep delivery scheme rejected," the CM said, maintaining that the Delhi government had made all preparations and was going to launch it in a few days.

Kejriwal also reportedly noted that it was being said by some central government officers that the Delhi government cannot take credit for the scheme by using the ration provided by the Centre.

"I am not doing this for credit. Please allow implementation of doorstep delivery of ration scheme and I will myself tell everyone that it was done by Prime Minister Narendra Modi," he said.

The CM said the ration does not belong to the BJP or the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) but the people of the country. "It is the responsibility of both of us that it reaches the people without theft," he added.

Delhi riots: HC grants bail to three men accused of murder, rioting

PTI
NEW DELHI, 6 JUNE

The Delhi High Court has granted bail to three men, accused of murdering a person and injuring his son while being part of an unlawful assembly which indulged in stone pelting during the communal violence in north east Delhi last year.

The high court directed that accused Shabir Ali, Mehtab and Rais Ahmed be released on bail on furnishing of a personal bond of Rs 25,000 each along with a surety of the like amount.

Justice Mukta Gupta said the issue in these bail applications is whether the petitioners accused were part of the unlawful assembly which in order to fulfil its object caused injuries to Nitin Kumar and death of Vinod Kumar in Brahmputri gali in north east Delhi in February 2020.

The court said the subsequent forming of an unlawful assembly at a different place, that is, gali no.1 Akhadewali gali will not implicate the petitioners as members of an unlawful assembly for causing the offences at gali no.1 Brahmputri gali.

Keeping in view the fact that the petitioners even though were present as members of a mob at gali no.1 Akhadewali gali after 11 PM when some members of this mob were armed with saris, dandas,



The counsel for the other two accused also said merely because they along with other people of Akhadewali gali, had gathered at the corner of the lane at February 24, 2020 night in view of the information pouring in that time, it cannot be attributed as the common object of the mob which committed the murder of Vinod and injured Nitin in Brahmputri.

Advocate Pritish Sabbarwal, representing Shabir Ali, submitted that even as per the prosecution, Ali was seen for just two seconds coming out of the gali wearing vest and was admittedly not armed with any weapon and even the face of the person in vest was not clear to be that of this accused.

He further said the call detail records of Ali have no relevance for the reason that he was residence of the same place and his location would be in that lane and that no injured witness had stated that Ali was part of the mob which caused injuries to the two victims resulting in death of one of them at gali no.1 Brahmputri.

Drizzle likely today

PTI
NEW DELHI, 6 JUNE

The national capital experienced a sunny Sunday and the maximum temperature was recorded at 31.1 degree Celsius, two notches below the season's average, the Met office said.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast partly cloudy sky with possibility of very light rain on Monday.

The maximum and minimum temperatures would settle around 40 and 25 degrees Celsius, the IMD said. Sunday's minimum temperature settled at 24 degree Celsius, four notches below the season's average and the relative humidity recorded at 5.30 pm was 40 per cent, the IMD said.

Delhi adds 381 virus cases, lowest since 10 March; 34 deaths logged

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

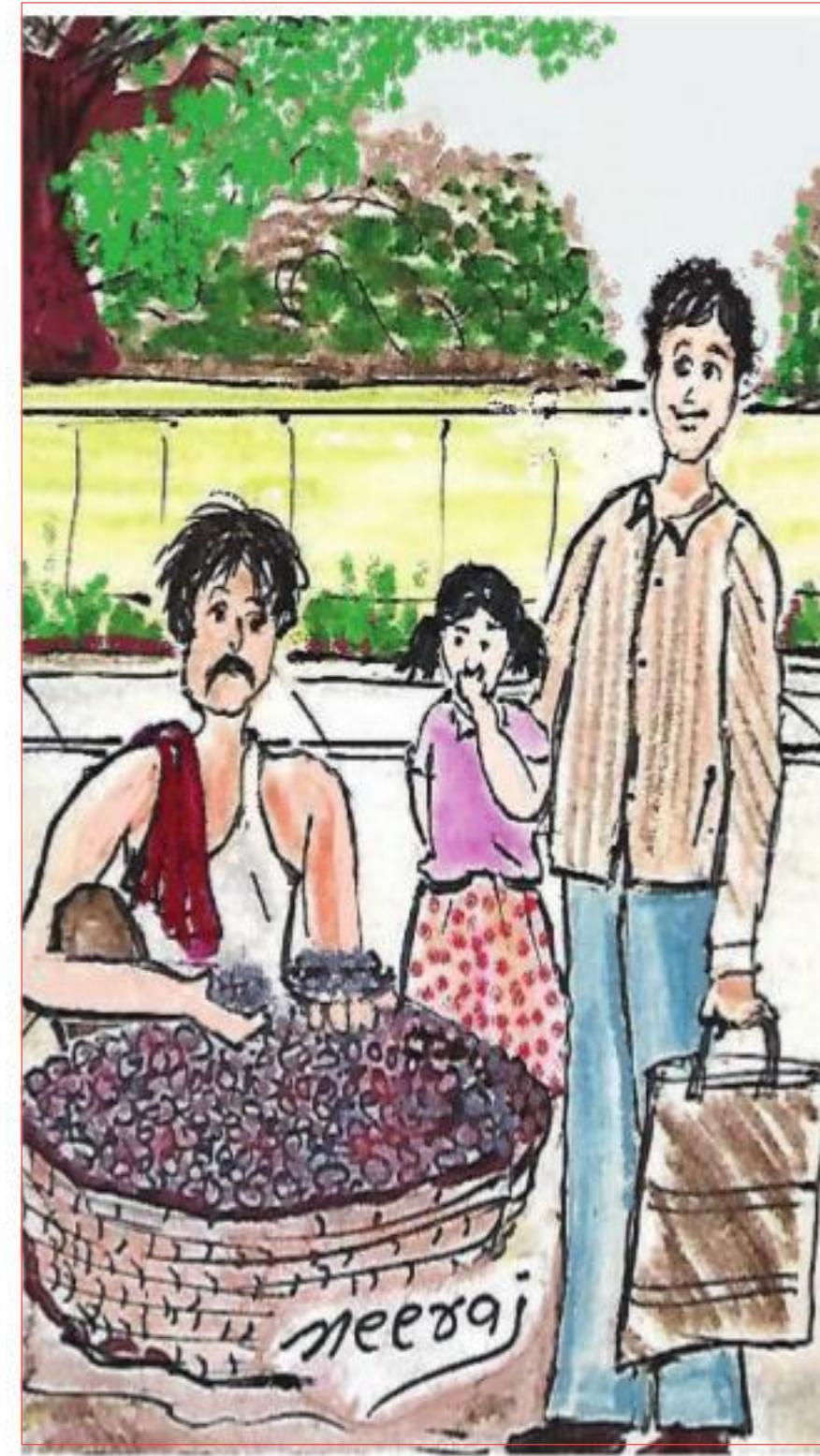
NEW DELHI, 6 JUNE

The national capital today reported 381 new coronavirus infections — reportedly the lowest since 10 March — and 34 Covid-linked deaths — the lowest in about two months — while the positivity rate dipped to 0.5 per cent, according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin.

On 10 March, Delhi had recorded 370 infections.

The fresh Covid deaths pushed the city's toll to 24,591 while the new cases

SUMMER FRUIT



One of the street vendors we sorely miss these days in a now 'sophisticated' Delhi is the rustic 'phalsewale'. As kids who grew up in the capital in the 1960s and 70s, we waited eagerly for the 'phalsewale' to announce his arrival in the neighbourhood during our long summer vacation in May-June. In a sing-song tone he would chant 'kaale kaale phalse, bade raseeley phalse, sharbat wale phalse' to advertise the fruit which he carried on his head in a flat wicker basket. 'Phalsa' is a purple sweet-sour berry of the Tiliaceae family, barely a centimetre in diameter, with a thin layer of greenish white pulp above the seed. It had very little to chew on, yet its tangy sweet-sour taste, tempered with a generous sprinkling of 'masala' (made up of powdered herbs like dhania, zeera, aamchur and kaali mirch) diligently stored by the vendor in a rusty cigarette tin with a small hole on the middle of its cap, made a delightful mid-morning diversion to tickle our taste buds. Served on a leaf plate,

the phalsewale quoted its price in 'chhatka' which roughly corresponded to present day 60 grams. Since the fruit grew for only a limited period in highly localised territories in Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh with a short shelf life, it was marketed in small quantities by the roaming 'phalsewale' with children forming the core of his clientele. In those days, our demands were few and reasonable. There were no exotic imported fruits to gorge on as we do these days. As children, we were happy with the humble phalsa, jamun and local mangoes which we joyfully shared with our siblings and friends in those hot summer months. Times have changed. Children have better diversions and the roaming 'Phalsewales' with their trademark chant have all but vanished from the neighbourhoods. The fruit, though still available, is naturally not on the list of priorities in present day fruit baskets. Perhaps that is the price of modernisation and "upward mobility" of our society at large.

HOMEBUYING SIMPLIFIED

The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has badly disrupted businesses, including real estate. However, with greater focus on wellness and safety in the post-pandemic period, the importance of owning a home has significantly gone up. Home sales notwithstanding pandemic shocks, speak for themselves as home seekers are now increasingly opting for home ownership rather than renting. Amid

these changing dynamics of the housing market, a newly-launched book, 'The A to Z of Residential Real Estate', assumes significance. This first-of-its-kind book, that simplifies the process of home buying, has been brought out by an author-editor team of Ashwinder R Singh and Vinod Behl. Singh brings a rich experience of housing and housing finance to produce insightful and valuable content. Behl, founder editor of Realty Plus magazine and a real estate

columnist, leverages his long experience as a real estate journalist to put across the rich content in a reader-friendly and racy manner. The book that traces the evolution of housing from the post-independence era to the post-pandemic times, has been written to serve as a useful guide for the key stakeholders of residential real estate eco-system, comprising developers, brokers, home buyers, investors and policy makers. It educates and empowers

homebuyers/investors to make informed decisions about property buying. It offers practical advice to them in the form of what, when and where to buy, selection of real estate consultant, home finance entity, besides legal due diligence. The 381-page book advises developers and brokers to evolve with the new trends to meet the changing needs of homebuyers. It guides brokers and marketing teams of developers to take to digital marketing

needs and leveraging technology to develop value homes and deliver on-time.

TAILPIECE

"It certainly is a 'testing' time!" quipped an elderly gentleman standing in queue at a hospital to get himself tested for Covid.

Contributed by: Deepak Razdan, Bhaskar Roy, Ashok Tuteja and Asha Ramachandran

India

Himachal ranked 3rd in anaemia-free index

From 18th position in national rankings in the Union govt's Anaemia Mukt Bharat (AMB) Index in 2018-19, HP has now jumped to 3rd rank in this index in 2020-21 thanks to its 'consistent & robust efforts' against anaemia

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 6 JUNE

Himachal Pradesh has been ranked third with a score of 57.1 in the Anemia Mukt Bharat (AMB) Index 2020-2021's national rankings that was released by the Union government recently.

An HP government official said the anemia prevention and control has been a priority of the state government with Himachal showing the steady trend of decline in cases, which is evident from the AMB Index ratings of 2020-2021.

Himachal was ranked 18 in the year 2018-2019 but with 'consistent efforts' of the state government this rank has been improved to 3 in the 2020-21 AMB index, he said.

The official said this rank was the result of "consistent efforts of the state government and robust implementation of policies". The state government is working with the various strategies under Prime Minister's Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nourishment (POSHAN) Abhiyan and targets have been set up to reduce anemia.

The programme covers the age groups of children 6 to 59 months, adolescents and women of reproductive age 15



to 49 years and it aims to provide preventive and curative mechanisms through a 6x6x6 strategy. The strategy includes six target beneficiaries, six interventions and six institutional mechanisms for all stakeholders to implement the strategy," he said.

He further stated that the strategy emphasizes on improv-

ingsupply chain, targeted monitoring and continuous social mobilization using various channels of communication.

Besides prophylactic iron and folic acid supplementation were also being given to women and children.

The official said with the regular deworming of the school going children being done by

the state, the prevalence of "Soil Transmitted Helminths" had decreased from 29 per cent to 0.3 percent in a short span of 3 years indicating its effective implementation.

In addition, intensified year-round Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) Campaign, testing of anemia and point of care treatment and mandato-

ry provision of iron and folic acid fortified foods in government funded health programmes had been made for addressing non-nutritional causes of anemia.

"This comprehensive strategy is expected to yield positive results in decreasing anemia prevalence and the scorecard and rankings in the AMB index are based on certain parameters like coverage of the IFA supplementation across selected target beneficiaries to support assessment of progress and performance," he stated.

He added that India is one of the countries with anemia as a serious public health concern today and almost 50 per cent of the pregnant women, 59 per cent of children under 5 years of age, 54 per cent of adolescent girls and 53 per cent of non-pregnant non-lactating women of our country are anemic. Anemia during pregnancy is associated with postpartum hemorrhage, neural tube defects, low birth weight, premature births, stillbirths and maternal deaths.

The decline in anemia prevalence will in turn contribute to improved maternal and child survival rates, and improved health outcomes for other population groups, the official added.

Centre to set up ethanol plant in HP: Jai Ram

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 6 JUNE

Himachal Pradesh chief minister Jai Ram Thakur on Sunday said the Union government will set up an ethanol plant in the state at a cost of Rs 200 crore through Hindustan Petroleum.

He announced this after a meeting with Union petroleum and natural gas minister Dharmendra Pradhan in New Delhi. Thakur said Pradhan assured him about setting up an ethanol plant of 200 kL capacity with an investment of 200 crore through Hindustan Petroleum in the hill state.

The ethanol plant produces



from grains for mixing the same in petrol and diesel which in turn will help in reducing pollution due to vehicular emissions in the state, he said, adding this

which 500 cylinders were on the way whereas 500 had been received by the state.

"10 half-tonne capacity each cryogenic oxygen tanks would be installed in hospitals of the state and 300 oxygen concentrators under the Corporate Social Responsibility funds have also been assured for the state."

These steps will further boost the oxygen capacity of the state and efforts are also being made to procure B-type oxygen cylinders soon if need arises," he added.

He added that the Union minister also assured him about sanctioning a state-of-the-art hospital in HP at an estimated cost of Rs 60 crore. Additional chief secretary to the Chief Minister JC Sharma and deputy resident commissioner Pankaj Sharma were also present at the meeting.

HP min calls for making state stray cattle free

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 6 JUNE

Himachal Pradesh rural development and animal husbandry minister Virender Kanwar on Sunday directed the officials to take time bound steps to ensure shelter to all the destitute cows so that the state could be made stray cattle free soon.

He gave these directions during a review meeting of various activities and schemes being run by the rural development and animal husbandry department.

Kanwar said the officers of the department must work with their utmost dedication and commitment so that the benefits of various schemes could be ensured to the eligible beneficiaries.

"A dedicated helpline number must be started soon for the livestock owners of the state so that they can easily get the necessary information through the helpline of the department," he added.

He also directed the officers to complete the work of Animal Health Cards at the

earliest and also asked them to chalk out an action plan for providing training to progressive dairy farmers.

"These trainings would be helpful in bringing improvement in animal husbandry methods and the cattle farmers of the state would get immensely benefitted with it," he added.

He gave necessary directions for the development of gaushalas and cow sanctuaries in the state and also asked officials to further strengthen the facilities being provided in these facilities.

Lockdown journeys inwards



Most Delhiites had no choice but to continue watching videos of the Martian surface last week. Though Lockdown in the city is being relaxed considerably in view of a dramatic fall in the number of Covid-19 cases, the authorities believe a complete withdrawal of the curbs could cause a sudden surge in cases. Everybody knows the virus waits just outside our homes. For some more time, therefore, the government decided that people should essentially keep their activities in-house. Rover Perseverance has been exploring Mars and sending videos for earthlings to study. If not their city, Delhiites could "go round" the Martian landscape with Perseverance, relaxing at home. There was plenty to watch — ancient lakes, sand dunes, frozen ice, and rock pieces strewn all around mysteriously. Rover's companion, the light-weight helicopter Ingenuity delights everyone with its short flights around the red planet every other day. Looking at empty Mars, one can shudder to think, if it were to become a crowded place like Earth. One can think of many possibilities, if one lets one's imagination have a free run. The Martian story has just begun and it can be followed up, watching fresh videos. For other activities, people will not find the capital, as far away as Mars, but not within their easy reach yet. It would not be unreasonable for them to wish that they had a Rover of their own, and could travel around their city, and enjoy the sights in the wee hours of a cool day. If their wish were to come true soon, it would certainly not be a pleasant trip. In South Delhi, the

Ashram Chowk is still in a mess. None can say when the flyover-underpass construction will be completed to restore the key intersection. The Pragati Maidan underpasses are not complete yet, and if one wants to collect a variety of dust samples on their vehicles, one could go round the area. The Barapullah flyover's flight from Ashram to Mayur Vihar is still in the air; it is yet to take a shape on the ground. As if this

was not enough, Rajpath surroundings have been dug up for what is unquestionably the construction project of the century. There is a virtual mining of earth everywhere. Delhi continues to dig, dig and dig; whether it is needed or not, none cares. It would be, therefore, worthwhile to let some more time pass before one takes a trip around the city. When the mind is not without fear, and a lockdown is not fully withdrawn, the only journeys possible are introspective ones. One has to adjust to the new realities of city-life. The CBSE board-class exams have been cancelled. Staying at home for indefinite periods, one has time now to engage in "long-term" planning. Building inner strength can be the focus now. People are devoting time to books, the repository of knowledge and wisdom. On the physical plane, none

may know how to react to the easy "availability" of ICU beds for Covid-19 patients now. Hospitals and health-workers certainly earned a well-deserved breather. Vaccinations are on, but are costlier at non-government centres. The city's first "drive-through" vaccination centre was started at Chhatrasal Stadium in North Delhi. This reminded old-timers of another "drive-in" facility in the city — an "open-air"

restaurant in Connaught Place, at the site now occupied by the Palika Parking lot opposite Regal, in the early Seventies. It did not last many years, like the famous Indian Coffee House nearby. The Chhatrasal facility had a normal inauguration compared to a similar facility in the nearby Gurgaon, where bikers protested on a day when the jabs were given only to those who "drove-in" riding their cars.

needs and leveraging technology to develop value homes and deliver on-time.

TAILPIECE

"It certainly is a 'testing' time!" quipped an elderly gentleman standing in queue at a hospital to get himself tested for Covid.

Contributed by: Deepak Razdan, Bhaskar Roy, Ashok Tuteja and Asha Ramachandran



DMK members start Thalapati kitchen to help the poor and homeless by distributing free food, during lockdown, in Coimbatore, on Sunday.

AGENCIES

Defying corona curfew: Police arrested 24 people in Kashmir Valley on the charges of violating corona curfew and also realised Rs 2,40,470 fine from 2,105 people for violating guidelines and SOPs. SNS

Trader abducted, killed: Body of a Moradabad-based trader was recovered near Gangadharpur of Bijnor district, on Saturday night. The trader was abducted and killed even after having paid a ransom of Rs 4 lakh. SNS

Hooch case: Key accused Rishi Sharma, carrying a reward of Rs 1 lakh on his arrest in Aligarh hooch incident that claimed 35 lives, was arrested on Sunday, police said. PTI

'Fixing TN's financial position & increasing GDP are priorities'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
CHENNAI, 6 JUNE

Tamil Nadu has to take back its first position in the growth rate at country level, for which the government will initiate more proactive measures

PALANIVEL THIAGARAJAN
FINANCE MINISTER

Fixing Tamil Nadu's financial position in the wake of Covid-19 pandemic, increasing its contribution to the country's GDP from 10 percent to 14-15 per cent and reducing the interest payment of the state are the priorities of the DMK government, finance minister Palanivel Thiagarajan has said.

The government would adopt a more inclusive approach in taking all policy decisions to achieve this, he said here on Saturday, addressing members of Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) Tamil Nadu unit.

"Tamil Nadu has to take back its first position in the growth rate at country level, for which the government will initiate more pro-active measures", he said.

Safeguarding Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises and improving Ease of Doing Business (EoDB) would attract more investment and generate employment opportunities in the state, he said.

Extending his gratitude to the Tamil Nadu government for taking 'proactive policies', CII Southern Region chairman CK Ranganathan said the state has a vibrant ecosystem to attract investment in the banking and financial ser-

vices sector.

Ranganathan urged the minister to revive the 'FinTech City' and suggested that the government help in restructuring MSME loans.

Some other suggestions included reduction of 50 percent in road tax to give a boost to automobile sales, digitisation of vehicle registration to ensure transparency and an exclusive package for investors to set up units in Tier II and III cities. The minister was urged to set up a petrochemical industrial park in the state and take measures on up-skilling, re-skilling the youth.

CII Tamil Nadu chairman S Chandramukar, Thiagarajar Mills chairman T Kannan, CII-SR past chairman S Mahalingam, Tube Investments, chairman Arun Murugappan, Sridhar Vembu were among those present during the interaction.

BSY: Will remain CM till high command wants

Karnataka CM says will resign the day the party leadership asks him to quit

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU, 6 MAY

Chief minister B S Yediyurappa sought to set aside speculation today that he is on his way out while asserting at the same time that he will remain in the chair as long as the BJP high command has confidence in him.

He told newsmen here that he would resign the day the party leadership asks him to quit, stating: "I do not speak about rumours and the speculation created by some ministers and legislators."

In the same breath, he hastened to add that the party had enough alternatives to replace him when the time came. He appeared to be responding to Opposition leaders' observation that Yediyurappa was continuing as chief minister as the BJP lacked an efficient candidate for the top post.

Responding to a question on "alternate leadership" to him, Yediyurappa said: "I will not criticise anyone. I won't agree that there is no alternate person. There will always be alternate persons in the state and the country, so I won't agree that there are no alternate persons in Karnataka, but



Karnataka chief minister B S Yediyurappa pays respect to former chief minister D Devaraj Urs on his 39th death anniversary, at Vidhana Soudha, in Bengaluru, on Sunday.

also ruled out any change in the leadership declaring that Yediyurappa would continue his term.

According to other party leaders, people seemed to forget that he had built the party from scratch in the state and for them 'BJP' meant Yediyurappa. Under the circumstances, it was difficult to understand why some MLAs and state party leaders wanted to have him replaced.

Also, Yediyurappa is aware that at 78, the time has come to step down, going by the party's unwritten rule as per which leaders above 75 cannot hold any positions. This apart, recent visits by state tourism minister CYogeshwar and legislator Arvind Bellad, to New Delhi, were seen as an attempt to unseat him.

Along with them several legislators have also complained that his son, B S Vijayendra, was interfering in the affairs of the state. They wanted the chief minister to rein in his son as otherwise, the credibility of the party would be affected.

In addition, his critics have been talking about the embarrassment caused to the party over the controversy on sale of 3,667 acres to steel giant JSW, and the BJP's U-turns.

Two women IAS officers shunted out of Mysuru after public spat

BENGALURU, 6 JUNE

Karnataka government has shunted out two warring IAS officers Rohini Sindhuri and Shilpa Nag C T who had indulged in an ugly public spat over the past few days, out of Mysuru.

Sindhuri, deputy commissioner of Mysuru district, has been transferred as commissioner for Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments, a post she had held earlier. She is replaced by Bagadi Gautham, who was additional commissioner for Commercial Taxes (Enforcement), until now.

Nag, who was Mysuru City corporation commissioner, has been posted as Director (e-Governance) at the RDPR department, and she will be replaced by Lakshminath Reddy G, who was until now managing director of Karnataka Food and Civil Supplies Corporation, an official notification late on Saturday said.

Nag had announced resignation at a Press conference, accusing Sindhuri of "harassment". However, Sindhuri denied the allegations, stating she had only asked for details regarding Covid management. The transfers came after Chief Secretary P Ravi Kumar, who had held a review meeting in Mysuru on Friday, had briefed chief minister B S Yediyurappa on the spat. PTI

Gorkha certificate row: Bista urges Shah to intervene

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
DARJEELING, 6 JUNE

Darjeeling's BJP MP Raju Bista has taken up with Union Home Minister Amit Shah a case where the Gorkha Certificate produced by a man from Jalpaiguri district was rejected during his selection process in the Central Armed Police Force (CAPF).

According to Mr Bista, he has drawn Mr Shah's attention to a notification issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs dated 19 November 2018, which provides for certain height relaxation for male Gorkhas in their recruitment into the CAPF.

"Recently, I was made aware of an incident concerning a Gorkha youth, a resident of Bagrakote TG, Malabazaar, Jalpaiguri District (Doopars), who had produced his Gorkha Certificate during a Central Armed Police Force selection process. However, he has complained that his Gorkha certificate was not accepted for the selection procedure, as he does not reside in the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA) region," Mr Bista said today.

"I have informed him that perhaps



due to administrative miscommunication, the height relaxation granted for Gorkha recruits is only being provided to Gorkha youths who belong specifically to the GTA region, while Gorkhas from elsewhere in India are deprived and denied of this relaxation," he added.

According to him, he has informed Mr Shah that 'Gorkhas' is a common terminology used to denote the ethnicity of the community, and is not bound to a specific territory.

"The Gorkhas are today spread beyond GTA region and are residing in various parts of our nation. Hence, non-exemption of height relaxation provided to the Gorkhas, for Gorkha youths from the rest of the country is rendering them with great disadvantage, as they are unable to apply for the various posts in CAPF," Mr Bista said.

Kerala police register case against state BJP chief over bribery charge

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, 6 JUNE

Kerala police on Sunday registered a case against BJP Kerala president K Surendran based on the revelation of K Sundara, a BSP functionary, that he was paid money to withdraw his nomination papers filed to contest from Manjeswaram constituency in the recent Assembly polls.

Sundara whose name is similar to that of K Surendran, was a namesake candidate from the Manjeswaram constituency in 2016 Assembly poll. In 2016, Surendran lost in Manjeswaram by just 89 votes while BSP candidate Sundara got more than 400 votes. In the 2021 polls too, Sundara filed his nomination at Manjeswaram constituency, but later withdrew from the fray.

Following this, LDF candidate in Manjeswaram VV Rameshnan lodged a complaint with Kasaragod police. Then, the police conducted a preliminary probe into the incident and registered a case against Surendran.

Sundara has given statement confirming BJP state president K Surendran's involvement in offering him money to withdraw his nomination.

Sundara is report-

edly told the probe team that Sunil Naik, who has close links with K Surendran, handed over the money to him. Sunil Naik is former state treasurer of Yuva Morcha. The probe team recorded Sundara's statement on Sunday at the Badyaduka police station.

Sundara whose name is similar to that of K Surendran, was a namesake candidate from the Manjeswaram constituency in 2016 Assembly poll. In 2016, Surendran lost in Manjeswaram by just 89 votes while BSP candidate Sundara got more than 400 votes. In the 2021 polls too, Sundara filed his nomination at Manjeswaram constituency, but later withdrew from the fray.

Meanwhile, BJP on Sunday came out against the CPI-M and LDF government saying that a biased investigation is going on in the Kodakara hawala case. BJP former Kerala president Kummanam Rajasekharan said efforts are on to tarnish the image of BJP over the Kodakara hawala robbery case.

Asked about a TV news channel report claiming an imminent Cabinet expansion in UP, Singh said: "No expansion

OFFERINGS



Social workers and priests perform a 'mahayaga' for those who succumbed to Covid-19, in Varanasi, on Sunday.

However, on being asked about the Cabinet expansion to fill some ministerial berths, Singh said some seats are vacant but they are not major ones. "As far as vacant seats are concerned, the chief minister may take a decision at an appropriate time," he added.

There has been speculation earlier in media that former IAS officer A K Sharma, considered close to Prime Minister Modi, would be inducted into the UP Cabinet as a senior minister following his election as an MLC.

About his meeting with Governor Patel, he said: "After becoming the party's in-charge of UP, I have not met the governor. When she was the Gujarat CM, I was the agriculture minister. I had an old association with Gujarat. As I could not meet her in the past six months, I met her today. This was a personal meeting".

Singh discounted reports on Cabinet reshuffle. He said there is nothing like that.

Darjeeling org begins ambulance service



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
DARJEELING, 6 JUNE

Adding to the different initiatives to help Covid-affected people, the VikRun Foundation has now also started free ambulance services.

Two ambulances will be used, with one of them to be provided to Covid patients and the other for non-Covid patients. "One of the ambulances was given to us by Gorkha Jan Mukti Morcha leader Binoy Tamang and the other one by CII Chairman Sanjay Trewala.

The ambulances will also be used to deliver oxygen to those who need it in their homes," said Vikram Rai, the founder member of the Foun-

dation. The oxygen will be provided through the VikRun Foundation, which, in association with Yuma Hospital, has also started an oxygen bank.

It may be noted here that the VikRun Foundation has been supporting the Sursum Corda Covid Care Centre opened by Jesuit priests at St Joseph's College in Darjeeling.

It has also taken its Covid Crisis Support Scholarship Programme forward, along with the Rama Krishna Siksha Parisad (RKSP) in Darjeeling. They have formed the 'Siksha Sahara,' which will work to provide scholarships to students in the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration area who have lost their parents to Covid-19.

AJAYBHAN SINGH
RAIPUR, 6 JUNE

Political corridors in Chhattisgarh are abuzz with a raging debate over whether the Congress top brass is truly considering the change of guard in Chhattisgarh as part of implementing the much-touted '50-50 power formula' reportedly reached between Bhupesh Baghel and T S Singh Deo in December 2018 when the country witnessed a fierce power struggle between the contenders for the top job in the fledgling state. Baghel is completing two-and-a-half year term in office this month, triggering despatchateness among his followers and adversaries alike.

Political punditry has never been on board on the issue and has been prop-

agating starkly opposite narratives on the '50-50 formula' allegedly reached between Baghel, who now heads Congress government in the state, and health minister T S Singh Deo in the presence of Congress scion Rahul Gandhi in December 2018. As per the so-called agreement, it was decided both would head the government alternatively for 2.5 years each. Neither Baghel nor Singh Deo have confirmed the mutual arrangement as yet.

In deep slumber for more than a decade then, Congress miraculously trounced the soft-spoken Raman Singh-led BJP dispensation in Assembly 2018 hustings and ascended to power with a brute majority. The power struggle between Singh Deo and

Bhupesh Baghel who managed to take the mantle in the race for the top job has always dodged the question of the '50-50 formula' as hearsay. However, the narrative is so prevalent among all hues of political analysts that he had to categorically deny any such arrangement reached between him and

Singh Deo. Baghel reacted angrily to the murmurs of a probable change of guard when Congress dispensation was inching closer to complete its two years in office in December last year. He asserted he was the CM for a full five-year term.

Terming the mumbles of a possible leadership change to lead the Chhattisgarh government, Baghel said those who have been setting canards of change of guard, can't see the ongoing development in the state. "There

is no 50-50 formula to head the government. I'm the CM for a full five-year term. Such formulas are promulgated when coalition governments are formed. Congress won 68 seats and our government has no threat," he said.

The enthusiasm for this entirely internal Congress affair, however, has grown exponentially and is catching momentum with each passing day. A section of Congress leaders and journalists close to CM Baghel out-rightly dismiss the talks of a full five-year term.

Articulated Singh Deo, one of the key architects of the Congress dispensation,

said if Chaubey has claimed so, then it must be true. But this is how the scion of erstwhile Sarguja principality outwits most political pundits and his political opponents. Singh Deo maintains the change is a natural process and only Congress top brass can decide on as to who will be the CM.

Politically, however, Baghel and his aides did well to neutralize the threat posed by Singh Deo, who observers believe, was the top choice of over 45 newly elected Congress MLAs.

The CM has not only denied his finance portfolio but also undermined his independence and authority in day-to-day functioning of health and other portfolios. Singh Deo holds, one of his close confidantes once told 'The Statesman'.



Bhupesh Baghel and T S Singh Deo

Bhupesh Baghel who sailed the ailing Congress through bad weather together, set in motion soon after the party crossed the magic mark.

Chief minister Bhupesh Baghel who managed to take the mantle in the race for the top job has always dodged the question of the '50-50 formula' as hearsay. However, the narrative is so prevalent among all hues of political analysts that he had to categorically deny any such arrangement reached between him and



*Malayalam is as Indian as any other Indian language.
Stop language discrimination*

AFTER A DELHI HOSPITAL ASKED ITS NURSES NOT TO CONVERSE IN MALAYALAM

CONGRESS LEADER RAHUL GANDHI

The Statesman
NEW DELHI, MONDAY 07 JUNE 2021

05



A health worker takes a swab sample from a food delivery executive for the Covid-19 testing, in Guwahati, on Sunday. AGENCE

Amarnath pilgrimage: The Amarnath pilgrimage might be cancelled because of the ongoing second wave of Covid-19. The governing body of the Shri Amarnath Shrine Board headed by Lieutenant-Governor Manoj Sinha had temporarily suspended the registration of pilgrims by banks across the country in April in view of rising Covid-19 cases.

PTI

'Noorjanan' mangoes: The 'Noorjanan' mango, cultivated in Madhya Pradesh's Alirajpur district, is fetching a higher price. The mango is priced at Rs 500 to Rs 1,000 a piece this season, a farmer said on Sunday. Locals claim 'Noorjanan' mangoes are of Afghan origin and cultivated only in the Katthiwada region of Alirajpur.

PTI

Dilip Kumar hospitalised: Legendary actor Dilip Kumar was admitted to a hospital in Mumbai on Sunday morning after experiencing "episodes of breathlessness". Kumar, 98, was taken to the suburban Khar-based Hinduja Hospital, a non-Covid-19 facility, around 8.30 a.m. Kumar's Twitter handle said, he has been admitted to the medical facility for routine tests and investigations.

PTI

DEFAULT ROUTE



People along with their motorcycles travel in a boat to cross the Ganga after the collapse of a portion of Pipa bridge, considered as a life line that connects Danapur to Nakta Diara, in Patna on Sunday. AGENCE

Odds heavy, these Siliguri women give the dead the last honours

SANKHAGHOSH
SILIGURI, 6 JUNE

"Cadavers do not transmit disease," say the World Health Organisation guidelines for managing bodies of those who die of Covid-19. However, Covid-19 stigma has led to people being reluctant to be in contact with the deceased. The pandemic is upholding this slogan "no dignity in death" in the wake of elements of ignorance and irrational fears obstructing coronavirus funerals.

At 10.30 pm on Friday, a hearse entered the Kiranchandra Crematorium in Siliguri with a group of women clad in white churidar and gamcha (towel) around their necks. They brought down a body, while 10 of the women remained there to complete all the rituals for the next few hours. These women are rendering a yeoman's service, setting an example at a time when relatives have been shying away from cremating the bodies of their near and dear ones, who have died of non-Covid reasons, due to fear of contracting the coronavirus, stigma, and financial constraints.

"It is almost daily that we perform the last rites of the dead, irrespective of time-day or night. We even arrange for transportation of the bodies of the persons who have died of Covid-19 for cremations at

Covid-19 infected over 53K kids in MP during 1st & 2nd waves

Only about 30 have succumbed to the virus while all others have recuperated well and are healthy

Gaurav Chandra
Bhopal, 6 JUNE

En as experts have rung the alarm bells about the possible lethality of the third wave of Covid-19 on children; the first and second waves have also not been too easy on them, as more than 53,000 kids and adolescents in Madhya Pradesh have been infected already.

It has also been noticed that Covid-19 has attacked more boys than girls. It has been noticed that the positive cases of children in the age group of zero to 18 years is low and so is the death rate. Only about 30 of them have succumbed to the virus while all others have recuperated well and are healthy now.

During the first wave in 2020, about 27,000 children and youngsters in the age category of newly born to 18 years were infected in the state.

Meanwhile, the state government has already begun to put in place the measures to battle the predicted third wave of Covid-19 and the possibility that it would attack kids more.

Paediatric Intensive Care Units (PICU) are being set up in the government hospitals of all the 51 districts. Presently, such units are available in government hospitals of only 20 districts.

In Bhopal, a special 50-bed ICU is being prepared in the Hamidia Hospital. In addition, more than 350 beds, including ICU beds, are also being prepared for kids in the other

20 districts.

On the other hand, the age bracket of newly born to one-year-old infants has witnessed the least number of pos-

itive cases in the entire age group of zero to 18 years.

Around 580 boys and 407 girls have been infected taking the total in this age group to 987.

The second highest number of positive cases has been seen in adolescents in the age group of 10-14 years. More than 12,870 such minors were infected, including 5545 girls and around 7,330 boys.

In the age group of 5-10 years old, more than 10,360 kids have tested positive. This includes about 5,870 boys and nearly 4,500 girls.

More than 2,500 boys and about 2040 girls in the age bracket of 2-5 years old have suffered Covid-19, taking the total cases in the age group to almost 4,550. Amongst the infants aged between one-year-old to two-year-old, about 1,300 total positive cases have been seen so far. This includes about 570 girls and 725 boys.

Meanwhile, the state government is fighting for the blue tick while leaving people to become "aatmanirbhar" (self-reliant) to get Covid vaccines.

Hitting back at the Congress leader, the BJP said he should get out of social media and work on the ground. The party also asked him to speak to chief ministers of Congress-ruled states regarding alleged scams and irregularities in the Covid vaccination programme there.

Gandhi's remarks came a day after outrage over the removal of 'blue tick' badge from the

Govt fighting for blue tick, be self-reliant for Covid vaccine: Rahul

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 6 JUNE

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday took a swipe at the Modi government, saying it is fighting for a blue tick while leaving people to become "aatmanirbhar" (self-reliant) to get Covid vaccines.

Hitting back at the Congress leader, the BJP said he should get out of social media and work on the ground. The party also asked him to speak to chief ministers of Congress-ruled states regarding alleged scams and irregularities in the Covid vaccination programme there.

Gandhi's remarks came a day after outrage over the removal of 'blue tick' badge from the

government hospitals.

Covid-19 experts and senior paediatricians are being engaged to train doctors in hospitals across the state to gain expertise in treating kids and teenagers suffering from Covid.

The state has also decided to prioritise the vaccination of parents having children below 12 years of age.

"We have decided to give

personal accounts of Vice President M Venkiah Naidu and RSS top functionaries, including Mohan Bhagwat, by Twitter, only to restore it later.

"The Modi government is fighting for the blue tick. If you want a Covid vaccine, then be self-reliant," he said in a sarcastic tweet in Hindi, using the hashtag "#Priorities".

Taking a dig at Gandhi, BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra said doing politics on Twitter is his (Gandhi's) "most important subject" and "biggest platform". Patra asserted that the Modi government has done an admirable job in spearheading such a big inoculation programme and providing free ration to the poor.

priority in vaccination to the parents of children less than 12 years of age as it is feared that the third wave of corona will affect them the most," chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said.

"This will help in better care of the children, as their parents will be able to be around them in case they get infected," the CM reasoned.

Dr. Sharma stressed on maintenance of good oral hygiene during Covid-19.

Dentists: Dental disease can complicate Covid
JAMMU, 6 JUNE

A leading dentist and former president of the Indian Dental Association (IDA) Jammu, Dr. Gautam Sharma has warned that the coronavirus has the capability to complicate particularly among those suffering from periodontal disease.

Dr. Sharma, while quoting research across the globe, said it has been observed that dental disease might complicate the situation as tissues of teeth have the risk of getting implicated.

As study by Dr. Marouf and co-associates published in 2021 conducted on 568 patients using the national electronic health records of the State of Qatar between February and July 2020, has clearly indicated that periodontitis was associated with higher risk of ICU admission, need for assisted ventilation and death of Covid-19 patients, and with increased blood levels of biomarkers linked to worse disease outcomes. Dr. Marouf's study was to find whether Covid-19 complications are caused by a severe inflammatory reaction that shares some common signals with periodontitis.

Dr. Sharma stressed on maintenance of good oral hygiene during Covid-19.

Covid-19 Report



Mega Covid vaccination drive, a joint initiative by Cyberabad Police, SCSC and Medicover Hospitals at Hitex Exhibition Grounds, in Hyderabad on Sunday.

AGENCIES

Jailed godman Ram Rahim tests positive: Controversial Dera Sacha Sauda sect chief Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh, who is serving a 20-year jail sentence in Haryana for raping two of his disciples, was on Sunday tested positive for Covid-19, jail authorities said. He was taken to Medanta Hospital in Gurugram where he was diagnosed coronavirus positive. Ram Rahim (53) is currently lodged at the high-security Sunar Jai in Rohtak.

IANS

Covid-19 cyber scam: Punjab Police have busted an interstate gang of criminals in Mohali indulging in Covid-19 cyber scams, a police official said. All the three arrested accused have been found to be cheating patients by falsely promising them to deliver fake Remdesivir and other medicines, SP Cyber Crime, Gurjot Kaler told. They lured the victims by calling on their WhatsApp numbers and after getting advance payments in bank accounts, they used to switch off their numbers, he said.

IANS

Corona curfew lifted in UP districts: The Uttar Pradesh government, on Sunday, lifted Covid-imposed curfew from all districts barring Lucknow, Meerut, Saharanpur and Gorakhpur, as active cases in these four districts are still above 600. Lucknow had reported 1,121 active cases, Meerut had 1,248 active cases while Gorakhpur had 783 and Saharanpur 1,171 active cases.

IANS

Gujars, Bakarwals await vaccination camps: Nomadic families belonging to Gujar and Bakarwal communities await a special drive to get inoculated against Covid-19. Several members of the tribal community are annoyed with the government for ignoring them. Over 10,000 nomads belonging to Gujar and Bakarwal communities reside in the vast meadows of the higher reaches of Bhadarwah valley and other parts of Doda. Doda District Development Commissioner Vikas Sharma assured that special vaccination camps would be held for the tribal population shortly.

PTI

A leopard attack cut short 5-year-old's life

SRINAGAR, 6 JUNE

Five-year-old Mir Adda chose a Barbie dress, wore a crown and was excitedly calling for family to cut her brother's birthday cake, minutes before a leopard took her away from the lawn of her house in the city's outskirts, in a tragic case underlining human-animal conflict because of rapid forest destruction.

The Mirhouse at Am Pura, a locality just outside the city limits in Budgam, became the centre of attention as mourners swarmed the residence.

Adda's heart-wrenching shrieks pierced the silent evening of 3 June. Her family members, joined by neighbours and forest officials, only found some blood stains and a doll that she was carrying with her. The next day Adda's body parts were recovered from an adjacent nursery-turned-forest, leaving a grieving family behind.

They bid a tearful adieu to her as she was laid to rest on Saturday and people reminisced about her smile and banter.

PTI

Over 2 cr Covid vaccine doses administered in UP till now

PTI & SNS
LUCKNOW, 6 JUNE

Uttar Pradesh has administered over two crore COVID-19 vaccine doses till now with over 30 lakh jabs given to beneficiaries in the 18-44 age group, the state government said on Sunday.

So far, 1,66,27,059 people have received the first dose of vaccine while 36,27,433 have received both doses, it said.

"Till now, we have administered more than two crore (2,02,34,598) doses of vaccine. In view of the huge population of Uttar Pradesh, we have to speed up the vaccination drive," Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said at a high-level COVID review meeting.

Uttar Pradesh is the most populous state in the country. Last month, Maharashtra has achieved the milestone of administering two crore vaccine doses.

"We must now work on increasing the target set under Mission June by three times for July," the chief minister said.

Uttar Pradesh had set a target of administering one crore vaccine doses in one month under 'Mission June'.

The UP government also said the state has administered over 30 lakh vaccine doses in the 18-44 age category, the highest in

The target is to administer at least 10 crore people in the next three months.

the country. In a day, the state has jabbed around 3.88 lakh people.

CM Adityanath said the speed of vaccination must be increased further to prevent a third wave of COVID-19 infections and start targeting to administer at least 10 lakh doses a day from July.

The target is to administer at least 10 crore people in the next three months.

So far, India has administered around 22.80 crore vaccine doses, with Uttar Pradesh accounting for around 8.9 percent of it. "District-wise strategy should be prepared to meet the target of administering 10 lakh doses a day in July. There is no shortage of vaccines. With the help of the Centre, many new vaccines will be available soon," Adityanath said.

"About one lakh additional vaccinators, including the nursing students, should be trained to achieve the new target."

To encourage women to take the jabs, 'Special Pink Booths' will start operating in all the 75 districts of the state from Monday. Each district has been directed to set up at least two such booths.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

It is notified for the information of rail passengers that the Railways have decided to restore & increased in frequency of the following Special Trains, as per the following details:-

RESTORATION OF SPECIAL TRAINS

Train No. & Name	Revised Frequency	Restoration w.e.f.
02033/02034 Kanpur Central-New Delhi-Kanpur Central Shatabdi Special	4 Days a week (except Tue, Thu, Sun)	07.06.2021 to till further advice
02179/02180 Lucknow Jn.-Agra Fort-Lucknow Jn. Reserved Superfast Special	5 Days a week (except Sat, Sun)	07.06.2021 to till further advice

INCREASED IN FREQUENCY OF SPECIAL TRAINS

Train No. & Name	Existing Frequency	Revised Frequency	Dates effective from
04113 Subedarganj-Dehradun Express Special	Bi-Weekly (Mon, Fri)	Tri-Weekly (Mon, Wed, Fri)	09.06.2021 to till further advice
04114 Dehradun-Subedarganj Express Special	Bi-Weekly (Mon, Thu)	Tri-Weekly (Mon, Thu, Sat)	12.06.2021 to till further advice
04125 Kathgodam-Dehradun Express Special	Bi-Weekly (Wed, Sun)	Tri-	

Coalition in Israel

As the clock ticked towards midnight, it signalled the end of an era and the start of a new one in Israel with the conclusion of the 12-year tenure of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, mired as he was in court battles and political instability that necessitated at least three elections in the span of a year. It's curtains on the Netanyahu era with Opposition leaders agreeing on Thursday to form what they call a unity government. Yair Lapid has informed the country's President that he can form a coalition government. Arguably, a deepening of the political crisis has thus been staved off not the least because failure to agree would have meant yet another election. Under the coalition agreement, Naftali Bennett and Yair Lapid will rotate as Prime Minister. Lapid, leader of the Yesh Atid party, was tasked with forming a government by President Reuven Rivlin after Netanyahu again failed to put together his coalition following Israel's fourth election in less than two years. "This government will work for all the citizens of Israel, those that voted for it and those that didn't. It will do everything to unite Israeli society," Lapid said shortly before a midnight deadline. Lapid, a former TV presenter and a secular centrist, won the crucial support of hardline religious-nationalist Naftali Bennett, a technology multi-millionaire who has held a number of government portfolios including the defence ministry. Going by the terms of the coalition agreement, Bennett will take up the post of Prime Minister for the first two years and Lapid the final two. The agreement still needs to be voted in the Knesset, Israel's parliament, where it requires majority support before the government can be sworn in. The vote is expected to be held within seven to 12 days.

Israel's latest political drama adds to the woes of Netanyahu, who is on trial for criminal charges of fraud, bribery and breach of trust while in office - accusations that he has denied. Having lost the office of Prime Minister, he will not be able to buttress changes to basic laws that could give him immunity. He will also lose control over certain justice ministry nominations. It would be useful to recall that Netanyahu's Likud won the maximum number of seats in the March 23 election but he was unable to form a majority with his natural allies. Crucially, Bennett's far-right party - allied with Netanyahu - refused to join forces with the United Arab List, party that emerged as a king-maker of sorts. In the net, Thursday's coalition includes the Right, the Left and the centrists, verily a cross-section of the political spectrum, a rather contrived example of political unity. The coalition is a patchwork of ideologically opposed parties and will include a party that represents Palestinian citizens of Israel for the first time in Israeli history. That said, governance in a potentially explosive swathe of the Middle East is a different kettle of fish altogether.

Voting Rights

The Democrats have won against the Republicans in a fractured legislature. Party members from Texas pulled off a dramatic walkout from the House of Representatives on Sunday night and thus blocked the passage of one of the most restrictive voting bills in the United States of America. As it turned out, Republicans had no option but to abandon a midnight deadline and declare the legislative session essentially over. The revolt is one of the Democrats' biggest protests to date against GOP's efforts nationwide to impose stricter election laws, and they used the spotlight to urge President Biden to act on voting rights. But the victory may be fleeting: Republican Governor Greg Abbott, who had declared new voting laws a priority in Texas, quickly announced 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. One by one, Democrats left the 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. The Bill is known as the Election Integrity Protection Act. They gathered later outside a Black church, underscoring their anger over a last-minute change to the Texas bill that would have prohibited Sunday voting before 1 p.m., when many Black worshipers go to the polls. Democrats said they did not go to the House intending to break quorum, but instead became fed up after Republicans repeatedly refused to take their questions while racing to pass the bill. Profoundly significant, therefore, must be the defeat of the Republicans in the House of Representatives. The Texas Senate had signed off before sunrise earlier on Sunday after Republicans, who hold an 18-13 majority in the chamber, used what they call a bare-knuckle procedural move to suspend 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 Representative 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 by that point, the exodus was already well under way. Texas is the last big battleground in the GOP's nationwide efforts to tighten voting laws, driven by Donald Trump's unsubstantiated claims that the 2020 election was stolen from him. Georgia and Florida have also passed new voting restrictions, and President Biden on Saturday unfavourably compared Texas' bill to election changes in those states as "an assault on democracy." The 67-page measure would also have eliminated drive-through voting and 24-hour polling centres, both of which Harris County, the state's largest Democratic stronghold, introduced last year. The two parties have fallen out on a deeply critical issue.

Jinxed Games

If Japan cancels the event, China would be hosting the Winter Games in 2022 and would then take the credit of hosting the world's first international post-pandemic games. Japan would be hesitant to accord that credit to China, which is seen now as a pariah state with its aggressive stances on a host of bilateral and regional issues



Even as the coronavirus is sweeping the world with ferocity and people are dying like ants, the Japanese leadership is showing extreme political immaturity and a headstrong approach to go ahead with hosting the Olympics in July. True, Japan has invested enormous amounts of money in preparations, but can it play with peoples' lives? With a high number of aged people and with more than 65,000 centenarians, even the vaccination has not taken off. Still, the Suga administration clamours for the fame and glory that it expects the event will bring to the country. In view of the abnormal situation the world is facing, there is still time for a rethink and for good sense to prevail by announcing the cancellation of the Olympics.

In hosting the Olympic Games, the Japanese political leadership, first with Shinzo Abe and now with Yoshihide Suga, saw a great public relations opportunity to promote the country and jump-start the economy. That was certainly the case when Tokyo first hosted the summer Olympics in 1964. At that time, the Games allowed Japan to showcase its successful emergence from the ravages of World War II and led to a slew of infrastructure development projects including building of the Shinkansen bullet train system, besides bolstering consumer demand for televisions and other goods. This time, the situation is dramatically different.

Even before the pandemic, critics in Japan argued that the gains of hosting the event would pale in comparison to the cost, which would be too high for too little return. There has been a heavy escalation in cost after the event was postponed from 2020

because of the global pandemic. It is estimated that the cost has increased by 22 per cent as a direct result of the pandemic to \$15.4 billion from \$12.6 billion, with an additional \$2.8 billion in added costs to renegotiate contracts and make other adjustments. Yet, Japan prefers to be a risk-taker and wants to put the country on the world map as a can-do country that would not accept no for an answer.

The option before Japan is to cancel the event altogether. That would be the easiest and safest thing to do. But the political leadership in Japan view things differently. They feel that if the Grand Slam tennis tournament, the baseball and golf championship, the IPL cricket matches and the planned India-Sri Lanka cricket series, etc., could be organised even without spectators and with even social distancing going for a toss, then why not the Olympics? Yet, the super-spreading potential of such an event will always remain.

There could be another consideration that the political leadership might have in mind. This is to showcase to the world that Japan wants to empower women after Seiko Hashimoto was appointed to head the Olympic Organising Committee in February following Yoshiro Mori's sexist remarks about women. In a country long perceived to be male-dominated, with most high-ranking positions held by men, the political leadership probably wanted to convey a message to the world by choosing Hashimoto that it was gender

neutral and accorded space and respect to women. If Japan still goes ahead with hosting the event, it would be at enormous cost but would prove to be a tremendous win for women in high office and their ability to get things done.

There is another dimension to this twist. If Japan cancels the event, China would be hosting the Winter Games in 2022 and would then take the credit of hosting the world's first international post-pandemic games.

Japan would be hesitant to accord that credit to China, which is seen now as a pariah state with its aggressive stances on a host of bilateral and regional issues.

Public opinion is clearly against Japan hosting the Games. According to a poll by Japanese daily Yomiuri Shimbun, only 36 per cent endorse that the Games should move forward as planned.

Of course, Suga is also under tremendous pressure from many stakeholders to stick to the position of hosting the event. Other public opinion polls show that 60 to 80 per cent are against Japan hosting the event. Since the opening of the Olympics is slated for 23 July and the vaccination process is yet to take off, there is not much time left for the Suga government to be ready to host the event. Even the vaccination issue is problematic. Who should get preference - the aged population, its own nationals or the athletes and the support staff?

Even when a state of emergency is on, it is strange that the

Suga administration is hand-in-glove with the Switzerland-based International Olympic Committee in supporting the Games. Here economics is the only consideration. The IOC gets almost 75 per cent of its income from selling broadcast rights, a key driver in pushing on. And Tokyo's official spending of \$15.4 billion to organize the Olympics could be much higher.

At the moment, Tokyo, Osaka and several other prefectures are under a state of emergency. Health-care systems are being stretched. The emergency measures have been extended to 19 June. So far about 12,000 deaths have been attributed to the virus in Japan and the vaccination is still a long way away.

There is risk of the virus and contagious variants spreading quickly. If that happens, can Japan handle the situation if it goes ahead with organising the event?

The 6,000-member Tokyo Medical Practitioners' Association has called for the Olympics to be cancelled in letters sent to Prime Minister Suga, Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike, Olympic Minister Tamayo Marukawa, and Seiko Hashimoto, the head of the organizing committee. IOC President Thomas Bach plans to arrive in Tokyo only on July 12. He was forced to cancel a trip to Japan earlier because of rising Covid-19 cases.

The staggering cost to Japan of cancelling the 'cursed' Olympics could be heavy. The coronavirus crisis could spell 1.5 per cent contraction in GDP amid loss of 1.8 billion pounds in tourist spending if Tokyo 2020 is called off. But can economics triumph over human lives? Without losing much time, Suga should announce the cancellation of the Games.

A MEMBER OF THE **ANN**
ASIAN VOICES

'Neither allies nor friends'

In a statement of unity issued on May 30, former Health Secretaries Dr. Jaime Galvez-Tan, Dr. Carmencita Reodica, Dr. Manuel Dayrit, and Dr. Pauly Jean Ubial - joined by more than 40 of the country's top medical organizations led by the Philippine Medical Association as well as law group ImagineLaw, past PhilHealth chief Alexander Padilla, and former National Anti-Poverty Commission undersecretary Florencia Dorotan - said they "reject and denounce the tactics and strategies employed by the tobacco industry and their front groups seeking to relax tobacco control policies in the country." "In safeguarding Filipinos' health, tobacco companies are neither allies nor friends," they declared, noting that at least 117,000 Filipinos die every year from tobacco-related diseases.

The issuance of the statement was prompted by calls in Congress to strike down Joint Memorandum Circular No. 2010-01, released by the DOH and the Civil Service Commission in 2010 in line with the country's obligations under the World Health Organization (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. The landmark joint circular on the "Protection of the Bureaucracy Against Tobacco Industry Interference" requires government officials to "avoid" unnecessary interaction and engagement with the tobacco industry.

And in case they have to deal with them as part of regulation, supervision, and control, it must be done with transparency and accountability, to shield policymaking from the powerful

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

influence of the moneyed tobacco industry, given its well-documented history of not only concealing evidence of addiction and harm in smoking, but also interfering with the setting and implementation of tobacco control measures.

Due to these and other provisions strengthening tobacco control, the joint circular was cited in 2018 as one of the "good country practices" in the implementation of the guidelines under the WHO tobacco control framework. And yet several lawmakers are now pushing for its repeal, calling it "unlawful" and "unconstitutional," particularly because it was used by the DOH as basis for the drafting in March of an administrative order that would have barred tobacco companies and other industries "in conflict with the interest of public health" from procuring Covid-19 vaccines.

That controversial provision in the implementing guidelines for the Covid-19 Vaccination Law, described by objecting lawmakers as an "overreach," has since been removed. All private companies, including cigarette companies, are now allowed to purchase vaccines.

As correctly pointed out by Senate Minority Leader Franklin Drilon, such a policy barring a specific industry from purchasing vaccines was "discriminatory and morally unacceptable."

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR editor@thestatesman.com

No time for confrontation

SIR, Apropos 'Covid vaccination policy irrational: SC' (June 3), this government has been attracting judicial observations on policy too often for comfort. A pandemic riding hard on an already fragile economy calls for deeper introspection far beyond the current national predicament. PV Narasimha Rao can be largely credited with an orbital shift in our economy after decades of toeing an unpretentious Hindu rate of growth and the nation's improved pre-eminence in foreign relations.

His leading economist, Dr Manmohan Singh, as his FM and a bevy of economists-bureaucrats formulated themes and moulded them into precise policies. This is a feature we sorely miss today, more so at elevated levels of growth. Consummate babus who knew how to get policies implemented made Rao's reforms larger than life as they showed visible impact.

After him, Dr Singh, an economist, sustained and improved upon the growth indices. But his tenure had no big contributions in global management and diplomacy, despite his tutelage under Rao. Nor could the mild Dr Singh extract from his team the same degree of excellence. He could survive on the strength of his inclusive economic schemes.

Narendra Modi climbed the development plank with great intentions to erect too many things at one go but was impatient with an economist-bureaucrat. Slogan-pitching bureaucrats sold him pet themes. Demonetisation was a terrible idea and it was executed even worse. GST could have been a great tax reform but ended up energetically small and medium industries, stalling the economy that is yet to fully recover.

Covid is now serving as the icing on the whole crumbling cake. The second wave has washed away much of the government's image. At the least it should compel the gov-



ernment to look at inclusive economics with far greater respect and humility. Rural India is suffering the most. The next few months are too critical for the government to afford confrontational politics.

Yours, etc., R Narayanan,

Navi Mumbai, 3 June.

OF RULES & HUMANITY

SIR, There have been much discussion about the transfer of the Chief Secretary of Bengal Mr Alapan Bandhopadhyay. I do not want to get into the matter of whether it is wrong or right of the Chief Secretary to submit his resignation by not complying with the extended service period of 3 months granted to him. In my opinion, the Central service conduct rules must be followed by every officer during his/her tenure in service.

No order can be countered or challenged other than in court. Complying with orders is the foremost duty of any official. It is known that Mr Bandhopadhyay was informed in advance about the review meeting of the Prime Minister at Kalaikunda Airbase. Instead of attending the meeting, his leaving along with the Chief Minister after making a brief call on the Prime Minister was not perhaps according to the provisions of service conduct rules. Mr Bandhopadhyay ought to have informed Delhi in writing about his inability to attend the meeting. He also should have informed the cause of being unable to join at Delhi due to non-receipt of release order from the State Government.

Now the question is whether an IAS officer acting as Chief Secretary can be justifiably withdrawn when the state is reeling under twin catastrophes such as a pandemic and a cyclone. The answer is no. Because it is a question of humanity, not humility.

Yours, etc., Mihir Kanungo,

Kolkata, 3 June.

CUMBERSOME

SIR, Apropos your report 'Union Cabinet approves Model Tenancy Act' (June 3), I would like to comment that in the fitness of things, the landlord ought to have been given an unfettered right to make any improvement in or construct any additional structure on any premises without causing any harm to the tenant.

If the matter is dragged to the court in case of refusal by a tenant to allow such work, the landlord may suffer an irreparable loss. Because, it will take years to dispose of the matter and the purpose of the landlord is likely to be defeated.

In my opinion, the Tenancy Act is cumbersome and most landlords therefore prefer to enter into a Lease and Licence Agreement for 11 months with a tenant.

Yours, etc., Arun Gupta,
Kolkata, June 3.

ENVIRONMENT DAY

That night
They did not sleep
Their men slept and snored
As they crept out of their huts
They giggled and whispered
They slowly walked towards
Their forest with its many
Tree-gods, many secrets stored
In the roots and branches
Laughter and love
In the rustle of leaves
The shark-like jaws
Of the electric saws
Waited impatiently
To fell them
To kill them
The timber mafia
The land grabbers
The illegal miners
Revelled in the murder
Of forests and trees
The women of the village
Each hugged a tree
Clinging, embracing
As securely as adhesive
They clung on in intimate union
Embracing the tall proud silent trees
Like Radha clinging to Krishna
"Cling on dear sisters
Hug as tightly as if it's the last day
Of your lives
Chipko, Chipko"
Resonated the voice
Of their leader Gaura Devi
As the women passionately clung
To the trees like lovers
As women hugged the trees like mothers
No word or force could
Tear them away
From their beloved trees.

Yours, etc., Sanjukta Dasgupta,
Kolkata, 5 June.

ANDREW SHENG

As the rich countries get their vaccination numbers up, whilst poorer countries are still struggling, there is some hope that we are getting to grips with the pandemic. On the climate change front, there have been some remarkable achievements in the last two months.

First, US President Biden's Climate Summit in April got 40 top leaders to commit towards working together on climate change. Even though several countries did not commit to anything new, notably Australia, just getting the US back to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change was a big deal. With China, Russia and all G20 emerging markets on board, this was a sign that enemies and rivals can cooperate where it is important for mankind.

Second, the International Energy Agency (IEA) just published their Net Zero by 2050 report. Since the energy sector accounts for three-quarters of greenhouse carbon emissions, its views on whether Net Zero by 2050 is possible counts. The main message was that "all technologies needed to achieve the necessary deep cuts in global emissions by 2030 already exist, and the policies that can drive their deployment are already proven." In other words, science and industry think that Net Zero is technically solvable. Net Zero means that the carbon dioxide emissions are balanced globally by removal of carbon dioxide through capture or storage, such as reforestation.

Third, the leading oil and gas firms are facing major pressure to change to low carbon strategies. In May, activist investors forced Exxon-Mobil to pay attention by replacing two board members so as to drive a greener carbon strategy. Chevron also buckled to investor pressure. In addition, the Dutch courts forced Shell to cut its carbon emissions by 45 per cent in the next decade.

Fourth, the world's central banks are ramping up pressure on the financial system to manage their climate risks. A Green Swan Conference is on this week, hosted by the Bank for International Settlements, Bank of France, the IMF and Network for Greening the Financial System (NGFS), to see how the financial sector can take immediate action in practice on climate risks.

All these suggest that following Greta Thunberg's wake-up call, both the public and private sector are gearing up for UN COP26 (Annual UN Conference of the Parties on climate change), which will be held in Glasgow this November. The UK hosts hope that COP26 will deliver concrete

The race to achieve Net Zero by 2050



commitments to reduce carbon emissions this year.

Former Bank of England Governor Mark Carney, in his role as UN Special Envoy for Climate Finance, was instrumental in establishing the Network of Central Banks and Supervisors for Greening the Financial System (NGFS) launched at the Paris One Planet Summit in 2017. This indirectly used the financial system to push the real sector (corporations, households and governments) to the up the ante on climate action.

Working with the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosure (TCFD), chaired by Michael Bloomberg, the NGFS aims to improve climate related metrics and targets, risk management, strategy on climate-risks and governance measures on the broad climate action by financial firms.

Will all these new energy and efforts work?

If the technical solutions are there, and finance seems readily available, why is progress on reduction of carbon emissions still slow? The fun-

damental barriers are politics and very basic issues on how to put these complex ideas into practice.

First, the controversial politics of climate change has always been about who was responsible for the bulk of carbon emissions, and who should pay for the cleaning up. The rich countries today are still the big emitters, but they feel that newcomers like China and emerging markets should now play a bigger role in helping to limit carbon emissions. China-bashers argue that since the Paris Climate Agreement in 2015, half of the increase in CO2 emissions is due to China, with China still building more coal burning power stations.

Second, the scale of zero carbon transformation is so deep and complex that it requires huge coordination between whole-of-government and whole-of-society to make the necessary changes. The slow response to carbon action was fundamentally due to economists' bias for market-based solutions, thinking that carbon pricing would help create carbon-trading markets so those who "save"

on carbon emission are rewarded or paid by offenders who are carbon emitters. Carbon markets have not been successful because of the lack of good rules, enforcement and efficient pricing of carbon.

It has taken a long time for the public and climate activists to realize that climate action needs both market and state, since pollution and resource depletion are essentially market failures. Thus, the current race to the top on climate action between the US and China is the best thing that can happen for the planet.

Let us see who can implement the commitments to Net Zero by 2050 faster, better and more comprehensively.

Each government will have to design very comprehensive road maps and timelines to achieve their Net Zero carbon targets. This requires government and market working together to design and implement very specific but practical plans, projects and programmes, so that individual consumers, households, corporations and different levels of government will be

incentivized to meet these targets or punished if they do not. This is truly about mass mobilization, not about elite wishful thinking.

To contribute to Net Zero, rich cities like Hong Kong must lay out very clear programmes and projects that will cut carbon emissions, energy and resource wastages at household and firm levels. This means that Net Zero strategy must fit into the Smart City with Smart Green Living that is also market and people friendly. Net Zero is like the 2050 Olympics for every city or country to demonstrate that they can win on behalf of not just their community, but for the whole world.

Greta Thunberg is right when she says "we are in the beginning of a mass extinction and all you can talk about is money and fairy tales of eternal economic growth."

The Net Zero Olympics is on, and may the best city or economy win.

The writer, a former Central banker, comments on global affairs from an Asian perspective. The views expressed are his own. Special to ANN.



IT CAME TO MIND | MANISH NANDY

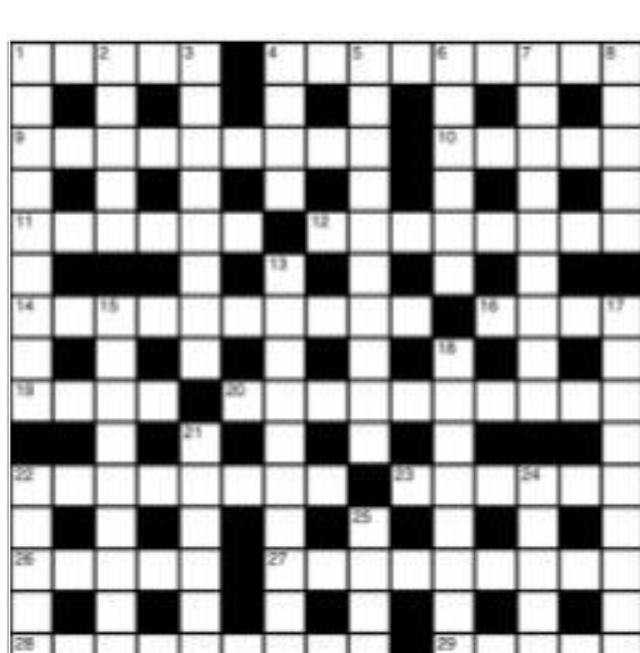
The Joy of Eccentricity



Atrue-blue eccentric is a joy forever. I had a friend who kept a python as a pet and fed it live mice for lunch and dinner. Two other friends had a thing for birds: one whistled to them, the other – believe it or not – spoke to them. I even had a girlfriend who believed in devils. I dared not contradict her lest she should consider me one.

Now the world has an authentic eccentric to watch. The Conservative leader of Britain's House of Commons, Jacob Rees-Mogg. According to the New York Times, he is very tall and very thin. That comment should annoy him, for he detests the word 'very.' He has a thing for words.

CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1 Selection from Italian designer's range (5)
- 4 Driving away fast, one avoided reversing first (9)
- 9 New players breaking real ground for City (9)
- 10 Sign of hesitation after key change (5)
- 11 Sweet smell associated with insect (6)
- 12 Instruction to musicians playing trio to hold melody back? (8)
- 14 Parent keeps naughty girl finally in line for many years (10)

DOWN

- 16 Help to give worker influence (4)
- 19 A little problem? So we hear (4)
- 20 Arrest involved capturing certain people handling money (10)
- 22 French sea song required for commercial (8)
- 23 Be sparing with hot, not cold, seafood (6)
- 26 Opinion of boxer, perhaps Muhammad Ali originally (5)
- 27 Brew a beer in it and get drunk (9)
- 28 Runner turned green after hash (9)
- 29 Loved one needs protection? Not right (5)
- 1 Awkward bum must head for bingo hall (3,6)
- 2 Material is exploited, having turned up (5)
- 3 Time to stop representative figures making laws (8)
- 4 Old car loses its initial value (4)
- 5 Exceptional pressure of the joints (10)
- 6 Raise the dough to quit before November (6)
- 7 Attendants dashed out carrying incense? On the contrary (9)
- 8 Roughly holding up end of

ment with your proposal to introduce the new procedure with effect from 15th of August, 2019," one could write "Please start the new procedure from 15 August." Clearly, "great" and "complete" are redundancies, "pleasure" is irrelevant, "introduce" is a pomposity and "with effect from" a legalistic bombast. Instead of a eight-word sentence, when one writes a 38-word sentence, it does not help anything, certainly not business. It is just a stumbling block.

Why say "It is a matter of deep and abiding concern for our organization" when you really mean "It limits our production" or "It delays our sales drive?" Why say hypocritical things like "We assure you of our continuing and ongoing interest in your current offer" when you don't intend to buy, instead of an honest and simple, "We can't buy now, but please tell us of future offers?" If you don't like something, it is better for both sides to say it clearly but courteously. If you have an interest, though you can't offer business now, it is better to sound like a decent ally than a sputious well-wisher.

Rees-Mogg is an eccentric politico par excellence, and he has proscribed words like 'equal' and 'lot.' But I sympathize with his loathing of abominations like 'due to', 'hopefully', 'yourself', 'ongoing', 'unacceptable' and 'pleased to learn.' These pesky phrases mar most missives in the business world.

The patrician politician, alas, does not seem to have kept up with the cyberworld. He prescribes, like old typewriter users, two spaces after each period before a new sentence begins. He doesn't seem to know that word-processing software is already programmed to allot greater space after a full stop. Still, I like a quirky curmudgeon when he appears on our horizon.

The writer is a Washington-based international development advisor and had worked with the World Bank. He can be reached at mnandy@gmail.com

NO 28935

NOTE: Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required. (By arrangement with The Independent, London)

100 YEARS AGO

OCCASIONAL NOTE

Rightly or wrongly, the impression produced upon most people by the proceedings at Leipzig in the matter of the German war criminals, is that they might just as well not have been launched at all - better so, in fact, since their main result has been to embitter anti-German feeling among the nationals of the Entente. The first achievement of the tribunal was to award ten months' imprisonment to the brutal sergeant Heynen. The farcical effect of this sentence is not lessened by the fiasco of the attempt to bring to justice the sinker of the hospital ship Dover Castle, the man put up for trial being so obviously innocent that the prosecution, conducted by selected legal experts from the Allied countries, was obliged to abandon the proceedings. Yet someone sank the hospital ship. Why was not he produced? The answer is possibly suggested by the next case on the list, a private who is openly alleged to be a mere whipping-boy for a sergeant who cannot be found, but is supposed to be in Poland. So much distrust must inevitably be generated by these fiascoes, that, even should some draconic punishment be meted out before the close of the proceedings, the tendency will be to suspect that the wrong man has been made to bear the brunt of someone else's crime.

NEWS ITEMS

ALLEGED CHEATING OF A JEWELLER

Babu Anandola Mullick, a jeweller of Chitpore Road, informed the C.I.D. that a Bengalee, who posed as a priest, had cheated him out of jewellery valued at about Rs 56,000, which the man had offered to sell for him. The complainant's story was that the "priest" frequently visited his shop and got on friendly terms with him. He told Mullick that he was known to wealthy Indians and offered to sell jewellery for him, and articles to the value of Rs 56,000 were given him to dispose of. The Bengalee paid Rs 11,000 on account and agreed to pay the balance later on. The C.I.D. made an arrest and recovered jewellery to the value of Rs 53,000 from various poddars, who stated that the jewellery had been pledged with them.

WATER SCARE IN CALCUTTA

The bursting of a water main at Tallah, causing a stoppage of the supply of filtered water, caused a scare in Calcutta on Sunday. Rumour quickly supplied a variety of reasons for the failure - the menials at the pumping stations were said to be observing hartal at the instigation of Mr. Gandhi; others thought the water had been stopped by the authorities to teach the people a lesson in connection with the Chandpur harat; while there were those who believed a sinister attempt was being made to force Mr. St. George Moore's water scheme upon the Corporation. In the northern section of the city, no water for cooking or washing purposes and as a result there were frantic rushes to tanks and wells.

SELLING LIQUOR TO GUEST AT A CLUB

An interesting point in regard to Excise law was decided yesterday by the Third Presidency Magistrate when Father Populaire and Mr. Hickmott, Secretary and Assistant Secretary respectively of the Xaverian Club, appeared to answer a charge of having sold liquor to the public without a license. On May 23 there was a dance at the club which was attended by a number of guests besides members. Amongst the former were two police officers to whom, it is alleged, liquor was sold. They had sold liquor to the two officers under the impression that guests who attended the dance became for the time being members of the club. The magistrate fined Father Populaire Rs 20. The case against Mr. Hickmott was withdrawn.

LADY CHELMSFORD'S CHILD WELFARE FUND

Her Excellency Lady Chelmsford has now secured a sum of eight lakhs of rupees for her Maternity and Child Welfare Fund, of which Her Majesty the Queen-Empress has just signed her intention of becoming the patron. This sum of eight lakhs will be invested in an endowment fund, and Her Excellency has made a special appeal for further funds to raise it to at least ten lakhs before she leaves India. Her Excellency's great interest in the women and children of India during the last five years is well known, and there are many who hope that her desire to secure this ten lakhs of rupees before she leaves the country in less than three weeks will be gratified.





Cod India is alive and sensitive to the need of environmental protection and pursues sustainable mining practices persistently.

PRAMOD AGRAWAL
COAL INDIA CHIEF

THUMBNAILS

Emami hikes product prices: SFMCG major Emami Ltd has raised product prices on an average by four per cent in the current fiscal to offset the present input cost pressure that will help the company to retain a gross margin of 66-67 per cent, a senior company official said on Sunday. The company's long awaited project Khoj that aims deeper rural reach to retain profitability momentum, has been launched in Uttar Pradesh with the relaxation of lockdown. PTI

Avigna group to invest ₹800 cr: Tamil Nadu-based Avigna group will invest around ₹800 crore during the current financial year to develop industrial and warehousing parks in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka as part of its expansion plan, its Chief Executive Officer Abhijit Verma said. Avigna group, which is into garment, education and export businesses, entered the industrial and logistic park segment in 2017-18. PTI

BOM may see rise in customer: State-owned Bank of Maharashtra (BOM) said the pandemic-driven slowdown in the economic activities may lead to a rise in customer defaults, and its impact on the bank will depend on the COVID-19 situation going forward. There has been a significant volatility in the global and Indian economy as the outbreak of the pandemic continues to spread. Bank of Maharashtra said in its annual report 2020-21. PTI

IFFCO begins commercial production: Leading fertiliser cooperative major IFFCO on Sunday said it has started commercial production of nano urea liquid and dispatched the first consignment to Uttar Pradesh for use of farmers. Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Ltd has priced nano urea liquid at Rs 240 per bottle, which is 10 per cent cheaper than the cost of a bag of conventional urea. PTI

Disruption in operations: Asian Paints expects an "uncertainty in demand" in the home improvement categories, including paints, on account of disruptions in operations after the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic, the company said in its latest annual report. Besides, the country's leading paint maker is also concerned about the inflationary pressure on the input materials in its product segments, said Asian Paints in the annual report. PTI

CIPACA eyes to manage 1,000 ICU beds: Healthcare service provider Chennai Interventional Pulmonology and Critical Care Associates has aimed to set up and manage 1,000 ICU beds across southern states during the next two years. The company currently manages over 300 ICU beds across Tamil Nadu according to its founder. PTI

'Global min 15 pc corporate tax pact will benefit India'

FM of G-7 countries on Saturday reached a landmark deal on taxing multinational companies

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 6 JUNE

India is likely to benefit from the global minimum 15 per cent corporate tax rate pact inked by the world's richest nations as the effective domestic tax rate is above the threshold, and the country would continue to attract investment, tax experts said on Sunday.

The Finance Ministers of G-7 countries, comprising US, UK, Germany, France, Canada, Italy and Japan, on Saturday reached a landmark deal on taxing multinational companies as per which the minimum global tax rate would be at least 15 per cent. They also agreed to put in place measures to ensure businesses pay taxes in the countries where they operate, a move aimed at plugging loopholes in cross-border taxation.

Nangia Andersen India Chairman Rakesh Nangia said the G7 commitment to global minimum tax rate of 15 per cent works well for the US government and most other countries in western Europe. How-



ever, some low-tax European jurisdictions such as the Netherlands, Ireland and Luxembourg and some in the Caribbean rely largely on tax rate arbitrage to attract MNCs.

"The global pact would face the challenge of getting other major nations on the same page, since this impinges on the right of the sovereign to decide a nation's tax policy," Nangia added.

India had in September 2019 slashed corporate taxes for domestic companies to 22 per cent and to 15 per cent for new domestic manufacturing units. The concessional tax rate was extended to the existing domestic companies as well, subject to certain conditions.

Consulting firm AKM Global Tax Partner Amit Maheshwari said India is expected to benefit as it is a big market for a large number of tech companies.

"It remains to be seen how the allocation would be between market countries. Also, the global minimum tax of at least 15 per cent means that in all probability the concessional Indian tax regime would still work, and India would continue to attract investment," Maheshwari added.

EY India National Tax Leader Sudhir Kapadia said the global corporate tax pact is a path breaking one, especially for large and developing

countries like India which would always find it very difficult to keep corporate tax rates artificially lower in a bid to increase much-needed foreign direct investments in the country.

"Even the recently announced lower rate of 15 per cent for new manufacturing units in India just about meets this new threshold, thus, not affecting this much needed boost to manufacturing in India. Equally important is the explicit granting of taxing rights to 'market countries' for a share of global profits of multinational corporations, thus aligning right to taxation with place of economic contribution," Kapadia added.

The decision of the Group of seven (G-7) advanced economies would be placed before the G-20 countries, a group of developing and developed nations, in a meeting scheduled for July in Venice.

Nangia said since India's effective tax rate is still above the global minimum tax rate, it would not impact companies doing business in India. "The global minimum

impacts companies using low-tax jurisdiction to achieve low global tax cost. Moreover, India attracts foreign investment owing to its large internal market, quality labour at competitive rates, strategic location for exports, and a thriving private sector," he added.

Maheshwari said that the G-7 agreement will have a lot of weight in the G20/OECD discussions, but is still a lot of work to reach global consensus. "Countries like Ireland are expected to have a challenging time and may oppose this minimum tax rate. However, a minimum tax of 15 per cent may not raise substantial revenues and there is a possibility that other countries may want a higher minimum global tax rate," he added.

In a statement issued on Saturday, OECD Secretary-General Mathias Cormann said the consensus among the G7 Finance Ministers, including on a minimum level of global taxation, is a landmark step toward the global consensus necessary to reform the international tax system.

Pace of vaccination among major drivers for markets: Analysts



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 6 JUNE

Industrial production data is scheduled to be announced on Friday post market hours. Union Bank of India, Petronet LNG and NHPC would also announce their quarterly earnings this week.

"The market is expected to maintain its resilience on a short to medium-term basis due to declining Covid cases and global risk-on strategy. Manufacturing and Industrial production data for the month of April are the key economic data points to be released this week," Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services said.

"Investors will continue to focus on trajectory of daily caseload and vaccination ramp up in the country in the near term," said Binod Modi, Head Strategy at Reliance Securities.

Nirali Shah, Head of Equity Research, Samco Securities said, "Indian markets could continue to mimic the movement across global commodities and equities."

Meanwhile, trend in Brent crude, rupee and foreign institutional investors would also continue to guide markets.

FPIs invest ₹8,000 crore in Indian mks in just four trading sessions

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 6 JUNE

crore in the Indian equity market during 1-4 June.

Prior to April's outflow, FPIs had been infusing money in equities since October. They invested over Rs 1.97 lakh crore in equities during October 2020 to March 2021. This included a net investment of Rs 55,741 crore in the first three months of this year.

"With Covid numbers rapidly falling, more foreign investors are feeling comfortable investing in the Indian economy," Harsh Jain, Co-founder and COO, Groww, said. Though big parts of the country remain locked down, some areas with low cases are starting ease restrictions following which certain parts of the economy are starting to function again, he added.

Making a similar statement, Morningstar India's Srivastava said that "signs of

improvement in the coronavirus situation with daily Covid-19 cases falling consistently in India over the last few weeks have provided comfort to foreign investors. The daily case count has come down below 1.5 lakh mark, along with improving recovery rate."

"This coupled with good quarterly results and a positive earnings growth outlook over the long-term prompted FPIs to turn their attention again on Indian equities. In addition to this, better than forecasted GDP number for the Covid-hit 2020-21 also boosted investor sentiments," he added. Divam Sharma, co-founder of Green Portfolio, said that fourth quarter results from most of the listed players continue to surprise foreign investors on the positive side.

Goverment challenges Panna-Mukta field arbitration before English High Court

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 6 JUNE

The government has challenged before an English High Court an arbitration award over a cost recovery dispute in the western offshore Panna-Mukta and Tapti oil and gas fields of Shell and Reliance Industries Ltd.

An arbitration tribunal gave favourable award on January 29, 2021, Reliance said in its latest annual report.

Reliance and Shell had through the arbitration sought raising of the limit of cost that could be recovered from sale of oil and gas before profits are shared with the government. The award came this year.

Both sides filed clarification applications before the Tribunal.



"On April 9, 2021, Tribunal issued its decision on the Clarification Applications of both the parties. It granted the minor correction requested by the Claimants (Reliance and Shell) and has rejected all of the Government of India's clarification requests," it said without giving details.

Subsequent to that, the government of India (GoI) has challenged the award before the English High Court, it

recovery, and short accounting.

The three-member arbitration panel headed by Singapore-based lawyer Christopher Lau by majority issued a final award on October 12, 2016. It upheld the government view that the profit from the fields should be calculated after deducting the prevailing tax of 33 per cent and not the 50 per cent rate that existed earlier.

It also upheld that the cost recovery in the contract is fixed at \$545 million in Tapti gas field and \$577.5 million in Panna-Mukta oil and gas field. The two firms wanted that cost provision be raised by \$365 million in Tapti and \$62.5 million in Panna-Mukta.

Reliance and BGEPIL sought raising of cost recovery limit through arbitration.

Labour codes on the cards: Cos' PF liability to go up, workers to see reduction in take-home pay

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 6 JUNE



The ministry had even finalised the rules under the four codes. But these could not be implemented because many states were not in a position to notify rules under these codes in their jurisdiction.

"Many major states have not finalised the rules under four codes. Some states are in the process of finalising rules for the implementation of these laws. Central government

cannot wait forever for states to firm up rules under these codes. Therefore it is planning to implement these codes in a couple of months as some time would have to be given to establishments or firms to align with new laws," a source said.

According to the source, some states had already circulated the draft rules. These states are Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana,

Odisha, Punjab, Gujarat, Karnataka and Uttarakhand.

Under the new wages code, allowances are capped at 50 per cent. This means half of the gross pay of an employee would be basic wages. Provident fund contribution is calculated as a percentage of basic wage, which includes basic pay and dearness allowance.

The employers have been splitting wages into numerous allowances to keep basic wages low to reduce provident fund and income tax outgo.

The new wages code provides for provident fund contribution as a prescribed proportion of 50 per cent of gross pay. After the implementation of new codes, the take-home pay of employees would reduce while provident fund liability of employers would increase in many cases.

Petrol crosses ₹95 a litre in Delhi, above ₹100 mark in six states



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 6 JUNE

Petrol price on Sunday crossed Rs 95 a litre in Delhi and diesel breached Rs 86 per litre mark for the first time ever as fuel prices were hiked again.

Petrol price was increased by 21 paise per litre and diesel 20 paise a litre, according to a price notification of state-owned fuel retailers.

The hike - 20th since May 4 - took fuel prices across the country to a historic high. Petrol is now above Rs 100 per litre mark in six states and

union territories - Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana and Ladakh.

In Delhi, petrol hit an all-time high of Rs 95.09 a litre, while diesel is now priced at Rs 86.01 per litre.

Fuel prices differ from state to state depending on the incidence of local taxes such as VAT and freight charges.

Retail prices have risen after an increase in international oil prices on investors' optimism that improving demand and a dwindling supply glut may mean the market can absorb any additional production from OPEC and its allies.

Brent crude, the global oil-price benchmark, is nearing \$72 per barrel for the first time in two years.

Rajasthan levies the highest VAT on petrol and diesel

Second wave not to impact India's agri sector in any way: Niti Aayog

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 6 JUNE

Niti Aayog Member (Agriculture) Ramesh Chand on Sunday said the second Covid-19 wave will not impact the Indian agriculture sector in any way as rural areas saw spread of infections in May when agriculture activities remained at bare minimum.

In an interview, Chand said that India's policies on subsidy, price and technology have remained too much in favour of rice, wheat and sugarcane, and there is need to make the procurement and minimum support price policy favourable to pulses.

"COVID-19 cases started spreading in the rural areas in the month of May, with the beginning of the month of May,



increase in COVID-19 cases in urban areas and these labourers are willing to work in the agriculture sector for rural people, is intact.

"So even if less availability of labour is there in the month of May till mid-June, I don't think that will impact agriculture in any way," Chand said.

He pointed out that labour force is moving to rural areas as there has been a lot of

"I would say that the government should keep its emphasis on MGNREGA," Chand suggested.

The Niti Aayog member, however, admitted that remittance from urban areas that has been going to rural areas and aiding rural demand will fall.

On being asked why India is not self-sufficient in pulses production, he said there is need to increase pulses area under irrigation and that will make a lot of difference in production and stability in prices. He added that "in India, our subsidy policy, our price policy, technology policy, have remained too much in favour of rice and wheat and sugarcane. So I strongly believe that along with the technological breakthrough, we need

to make our procurement, our MSP favourable for pulses".

Chand pointed out that pulses are not like edible oil that can be imported in big quantity from outside the country as pulses are available in international markets in small quantities.

Asked whether the government was considering reduction in import duty of edible oils, he said the main reason for the increase in edible oils prices is the rise in international rates and it's not that India's output is low.

"I feel that if prices (of edible oils) do not come under control then the government has a lot of cushion and that cushion is that duty rate on import should be reduced," Chand said.

MSI hints at 'some action' to boost market share

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 6 JUNE

The country's largest carmaker Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) is looking at "some action" in the mid-SUV segment for strengthening its market share in the vertical, in order to sustain the firm's current 50 per cent levels in the overall domestic PV sales going ahead, according to a senior company official.

MSI is there in the segment with S-Cross but the model has so far failed to draw in big volumes for the auto major.

"In the mid-SUV, our market share is actually quite low, even though Vitara Brezza is leading in the entry-SUV segment. In the mid-SUV, we will see some action there," Srivastava said.



PORTUGUESE PRIME MINISTER ANTONIO COSTA

CRITICISING BRITAIN FOR REMOVING HIS NATION FROM A COVID QUARANTINE-FREE TRAVEL LIST

WEATHER

CITY	MAX(°C)	MIN(°C)
SINGAPORE	31	27 R
HONG KONG	29	26 R
TOKYO	26	20 H
LONDON	23	11 H
DUBAI	43	31 CL
SAN FRANCISCO	16	11 H
NEW YORK	31	22 R
MOSCOW	23	14 R

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

THUMBNAILS



Naomi Tucker, of Alexandria, VA, wins the Longines Prize for Elegance fashion contest and the Official Watch of the event, a model from the Longines DolceVita collection, on Saturday at Belmont Park in New York. AP

Three dead in Mexico mine collapse: The bodies of two miners were pulled from a small coal mine in a northern Mexico border state by early on Sunday, bringing to three the number confirmed dead in the flood and partial collapse of the shaft. Three miners remain missing. AP

Greek man allegedly kills couple, self: Police on the Greek island of Corfu said Sunday that a Greek man facing eviction killed his landlady and her husband and then committed suicide. The deaths occurred shortly before noon Sunday, in the resort town of Dassia, on the island's northeast. AP

Mongolia records highest daily Covid cases: Mongolia reported 1,393 new Covid-19 infections, the highest daily spike since the outbreak, bringing the national tally to 63,978. IANS

PM Boris Johnson urges G7 to vaccinate world by end-2022

The meeting, starting on Friday, is the first between G7 leaders since the pandemic began

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LONDON, 6 JUNE

The UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson will call on fellow G7 leaders to make concrete commitments to vaccinate the entire world against coronavirus by the end of 2022 at the Leaders' Summit in Cornwall, Downing Street has said.

The meeting, starting on Friday, is the first between G7 leaders since the coronavirus pandemic and the UK as president of the summit has made vaccine supply and support for equitable access, tackling climate change and getting more children into school as central themes of the meeting of the world's leading economies.

India has been invited as a guest country, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi expected to participate virtually.

Next week the leaders of the world's greatest democracies will gather at an historic moment for our countries and for the planet.

The world is looking to us to rise to the greatest challenge of the post-war era: defeating Covid and leading a global recovery driven by our shared



values, Johnson said in a statement on Saturday.

Vaccinating the world by the end of next year would be the single greatest feat in medical history. I'm calling on my fellow G7 leaders to join us to end to this terrible pandemic and pledge will we never allow the devastation wreaked by coronavirus to happen again, he said.

The UK government is keen to highlight its efforts to ensure the world's poorest and most vulnerable people have access to vaccines.

At the outset of the pandemic, Downing Street said the UK funded the development and production of the

Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine and guaranteed it would be made available at cost around the globe.

As a result, almost one in three vaccines administered around the world have been the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine 450 million out of 1.5 billion doses with the Serum Institute of India among those licenced to manufacture the doses as Covishield in India.

The UK also worked to establish the COVAX scheme to distribute the vaccine to developing countries, providing a significant financial contribution of 548 million pounds early on and encouraging other countries to com-

mit to the scheme. COVAX would not have been able to deliver the 80 million doses it already without Oxford-AstraZeneca, which made up 96 per cent million of those doses, Downing Street said.

As part of his G7 message, Johnson is expected to call for stepping up the manufacture of vaccines, lowering barriers to the international distribution of those vaccines as the UK has done with Oxford/AstraZeneca and ultimately sharing surplus doses with developing countries bilaterally and through COVAX.

The UK says it has already pledged to share a significant majority of its surplus doses with the scheme and will announce more details of the UK's plans to support developing countries by sharing doses not needed by the country at the summit.

G7 leaders from the UK, US, Canada, France, Germany, Italy and Japan as well as the European Union will arrive at Carbis Bay in the coastal region of Cornwall on Friday for three days of meetings on a huge range of global issues, with a particular focus on how the group can lead the global recovery from coronavirus.

Next Saturday, the G7 countries will be joined by the leaders of Australia, South Africa, South Korea and India for discussions on health and climate change a mix of person and virtual, as in the case of India.

As well as asking leaders to join the UK in efforts to vaccinate the world, Johnson will call on them to support the Global Pandemic Radar a new global surveillance system which will protect immunisation programmes against new vaccine-resistant variants by detecting them before they have the chance to spread.

Alongside efforts to defeat the pandemic itself, Downing Street will stress the need to build back better, with a recovery that puts opportunity, sustainability and democratic values at its heart.

This is the first G7 where all members will have committed to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

Johnson will ask leaders to channel this ambition and make strong commitments on cutting emissions, shifting to renewable energy and providing climate finance for developing countries ahead of the UK-hosted COP26 Summit later this year.

Delta variant around 40 pc more transmissible, says UK health minister



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LONDON, 6 JUNE

at all and only a "small minority" had had both doses of a Covid-19 vaccine, which the minister said reflects the scientific advice that one vaccine is not quite as effective against the Delta variant of concern (VOC) as against the Alpha variant but both doses are just as effective.

That figure, around 40 per cent more transmissible, is the latest advice that I have. That means that it is more difficult to manage this virus with the new Delta variant, but crucially we believe that with two doses of the vaccine you get the same protection as the old variant," Hancock said.

The minister also confirmed that vaccines would be opened up to the next age cohort of under-30s in the next few days by the National Health Service (NHS).

"This week we will be opening up vaccines to the under-30s and so we are getting a step closer to the point when we've been able to offer the vaccine to all adults in this country," he said.

"Everybody must go and get their second jab because the first isn't as effective on its own. We all need to go and get vaccinated and that way we will break this link between the number of cases and the number of hospitalisations," he added.

NATO warns Russia, Belarus against threatening allies

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE
BRUSSELS, 6 JUNE



NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg on Sunday warned Russia and Belarus against threatening the alliance's allies, following the forced landing of a passenger plane within the European Union (EU) by Belarusian authorities.

"We are of course ready, in an emergency, to protect and defend any ally against any kind of threat coming from Minsk and Moscow," Stoltenberg said.

"We are vigilant and we are following what is happening

"We have had to learn in the past that Russia has massively violated the territorial integrity of states such as Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova."

"He did not want to speculate too much," Stoltenberg said, noting, "NATO is a defensive alliance." Lithuania, Latvia and Poland, all members of NATO, share borders with Belarus.

On 23 May, Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko forced a Ryanair commercial flight between two EU capitals, Athens and Vilnius, to make an emergency landing in Minsk.

It's already had a significant impact on her work in the

Harris visits Latin America to tackle migration, corruption

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON, 6 JUNE



Kamala Harris, on her first foreign trip as vice president, is looking to deepen diplomatic ties with Guatemala and Mexico, two Latin American nations key to the Biden administration's efforts to stem the spike in migration at the US border.

Harris, who is set to depart Washington later Sunday, is seeking to secure commitments for greater cooperation on border security and economic investment, but corruption in the region a far more intractable challenge will complicate her efforts.

It's already had a significant impact on her work in the

region. Harris has yet to engage substantively with the leaders of Honduras and El Salvador, who are both embroiled in corruption scandals. And it's an issue that experts in the region say will need to be addressed to make any lasting changes.

Corruption is a cancer in the region, said Jason Marczak, director of the Atlantic Council's Adrienne Arsht Latin America Center. Addressing corruption is fundamental to creating hope and creating the potential for opportunity.

Marczak noted that corruption in the region affects human rights protections, employment opportunities, the cost of goods and much more. Jobs, he said, will come "with investment, and invest-

ment comes where there is certainty in the rule of law. Without that, efforts to improve living conditions can only go so far.

In the months since she was tasked by President Joe Biden, Harris has laid out an approach centered on creating better opportunities and living conditions in the region through humanitarian and economic aid. Harris announced plans to send \$310 million to provide support for refugees and address food shortages, and recently secured commitments from a dozen companies and organisations to invest in the Northern Triangle countries to promote economic opportunity and job training.

PRAYER TIME



President Joe Biden departs the White House to attend Mass at Holy Trinity Catholic Church, on Saturday, in the Georgetown area of Washington. AP

Eastern German state votes in final test

BERLIN, 6 JUNE

Voters in Saxony-Anhalt went to the polls Sunday to elect a new state assembly in what is seen as the last big test for Germany's political parties before a national election in September.

Chancellor Angela Merkel's center-right Christian Democratic Union won the last election in the sparsely populated state of 2.2 million five years ago. Recent opinion polls show it faces a strong challenge from the far-right Alternative for Germany, which came second in Saxony-Anhalt in 2016.

Alternative for Germany has benefited from anti-government sentiment in the state, which until 1990 was part of communist East Germany. AP

Cruise ships restart in Venice, bring environmental protests

ASSOCIATED PRESS
VENICE, 6 JUNE

the fragile lagoon due to environmental and safety concerns.

Italian Premier Mario Draghi's government pledged this spring to get cruise ships out of the Venice lagoon, but reaching that goal will take time. Even an interim solution rerouting larger ships away from the Giudecca Canal is not likely before next year. Ridding the lagoon of the ships, which run more than 250 meters (yards) in length and weigh over 90,000 tons, could take years.

Venice has become one of the world's most important cruise destinations over the last two decades, and in 2019 served as a lucrative turnaround point for 667 cruise ships embarking nearly 700,000 passengers and crew carrying a total of 1.6 million,

according to the association Cruise Lines International (CLIA).

Passengers arriving Saturday for the week-long cruise aboard the 92,409-ton, 16-deck MSC Orchestra, with stops in southern Italy, two Greek islands and Dubrovnik, Croatia, were greeted at the port with signs reading Welcome Back Cruises.

Antonella Frigo from nearby Vicenza had her departure date delayed multiple times due to the pandemic and was excited to finally be leaving on vacation. But she also sympathised with activists who want the huge ships moved out of the Venice. The long battle over cruise ships in Venice ramped up after the Costa Concordia cruise ship sank off Tuscany in 2012, killing 32 passengers and crew members.

When the sun rises over Omaha Beach, revealing vast stretches of wet sand extending toward distant cliffs, one starts to grasp the immensity of the task faced by Allied soldiers on June 6, 1944, landing on the Nazi-occupied Normandy shore.

Several ceremonies are scheduled Sunday to commemorate the 77th anniversary of the decisive assault that led to the liberation of France and western Europe from Nazi control, and honor those who fell.

On D-Day, more than 150,000 Allied troops landed on the beaches code-named Omaha, Utah, Juno, Sword and Gold, carried by 7,000 boats. This year on June 6, the beaches stood vast and empty as the sun rose, exactly 77 years since the dawn invasion.

For the second year in a row,

Meghan Markle, Prince Harry announce birth of daughter



ASSOCIATED PRESS
SANTA BARBARA, 6 JUNE

The second baby for the Duke and Duchess of Sussex is officially here: Meghan gave birth to a healthy girl on Friday.

A spokesperson for Prince Harry and Meghan said Sunday the couple welcomed their child Lilibet "Lili" Diana Mountbatten-Windsor. Their daughter weighed in at 7 lbs, 11 oz.

Her first name, Lilibet, is

a nod to Her Majesty The Queen's nickname. Her middle name is in honor of her grandmother and Harry's mother. The baby is the eighth in line to the British throne. No photos of the newborn or the Sussexes accompanied the announcement.

The birth comes after the Harry and Meghan's explosive TV interview with Oprah Winfrey in March. The couple described painful discussions about the color of their first child's skin, losing royal protection and the intense

pressures that led her to contemplate suicide.

Buckingham Palace said the allegations of racism made by the couple were "concerning."

The royal family said the issue would be addressed privately. Winfrey and Harry on mental illness have recently collaborated on the Apple TV+ mental health series "The Me You Can't See."

Harry and American actor Meghan Markle married at Windsor Castle in May 2018. Their son Archie was born a year later.

In early 2020, Meghan and Harry announced they were quitting royal duties and moving to North America, citing what they said were the unbearable intrusions and racist attitudes of the British media.

The birth comes after the Harry and Meghan's explosive TV interview with Oprah Winfrey in March. The couple described painful discussions about the color of their first child's skin, losing royal protection and the intense

pressures that led her to contemplate suicide.

Dozens of French World War II history enthusiasts, and a few travelers from neighboring European countries, could also be seen in jeeps and military vehicles on the small roads of Normandy. Some reenactors came to Omaha Beach in the early hours of the day to pay tribute to those who fell that day, bringing flowers and American flags.

On D-Day, 4,414 Allied troops lost their lives, 2,501 of them Americans. More than 5,000 were wounded. On the German side, several thousand were killed or wounded.

A few kilometers (miles) away from Omaha Beach, the British Normandy Memorial is to be inaugurated on Sunday outside the village of Ver-sur-Mer. Visitors stand in awe at the solemnity and serenity of the place providing a spectacular view over Gold Beach.

Amazon region sees highest ever flood level

BRASILIA, 6 JUNE

The Rio Negro river in Brazil's Amazon region has reached its highest level since records began in 1902, rising to 30 metres in the city of Manaus, a news portal said.

More than 24,000 families were affected by the river's flooding.

The Rio Negro flows into the Amazon River near Manaus and is subject to strong fluctuations during the rainy and dry season.

It recorded its lowest level, 13.63 metres, in 2010.

An elaborate cover-up?

People are questioning the cause of death of 18 wild elephants in Assam's Nagaon



NAVITA THAKURIA

this year. Suklabaidya, who visited the site on the Nagaon-Karbi Anglong border following the direction of chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, asserted that it was a natural disaster.

As news spread, various theories started circulating among the people since elephants are worshipped and adored as a symbol of Lord Ganesha, the elephant-headed god. Many devotees from the neighbourhood arrived at the remote location to pay their last respects and later, as is customary, the animals were buried with flowers at the same place.

The first categorical contradiction to the "lightning theory" was raised by the All Assam Engineers' Association, which termed it absurd. The forum of engineering graduates asserted that if, at all, such a thunderbolt had hit Earth that night to kill the giant animals within seconds, then gloomy days are ahead for both wildlife and humans as it may happen again in future.

Nature's Beacon, a conservation group, also came out with statements saying that it might be a well-planned conspiracy to erase all the elephants. Its director Soumyadeep Datta, while expressing doubts over the authenticity of a histopathology report recently leaked by the Nagaon division forest office, termed it a conspiracy to misguide the public about the elephants' deaths. He demanded a high-level probe to deliver justice to

the dead.

Addressing a webinar, moderated by Datta, experts on elephants, nature conservation and electrical engineering, among others, strongly ruled out the possibility of lightning as the cause of death for 18 elephants at one go. Some distinguished speakers even termed it a planned murder with electrocution to arrange space for various economic activities in the eco-sensitive zone.

Manash Lochan Das, who has grown up with domesticated elephants, decried the lightning claim by the forest department. Citing the positions of many dead elephants, he stated that it is difficult for the animals to follow. Das also mentioned the bubbles seen on some of the dead animals' mouths, which do not justify that they died due to electrocution by a thunderbolt.

A conservationist with a background in electrical engineering, Bhaskar J Barua argued that if there was a high intensity flash, it should have destroyed the trees and also microorganisms on the soil around. But after visiting the site he did not notice any such thing. Barua also challenged the views of some forest officials who had said that the area was rocky, and that it worked as a good conductor of electricity. He claimed that there was heavy topsoil with vegetation instead of a barren rocky terrain.

Petro-physician and environmental enthusiast Pradip Saikia also disagreed with the thunderbolt theory claiming that during an incident of lightning, nobody gets time to change positions after the strike as it collapses the victim's heart and nervous systems. In the Bamunipahar incident, the elephants seemingly got "enough time" to die and no visible burn injuries were found on the carcasses.

Sanjan Hazarika, a PhD in lighting from the Indian Institute of Technology-Roorkee, asserted that the dead elephants were found in a scattered position and in such a situation it is too difficult to admit that lightning killed every individual. He said that a massive thunderbolt may kill four to five elephants but not 18 at a time. Moreover, he said that the chances of repeated lightning at the same place where all the animals get electrocuted one after the other cannot be accepted under any scientific argument.

Elephant expert Dwipen Chandra Kalita also rubbed off the claim of lightning as the cause of death. He reacted sharply to the assumption that the elephants were close to each other and hence got electrocuted on that night. He clarified that during summer, elephants do not stick together with an aim to maintain their body temperatures. Kalita also insisted on a genuine probe into the incident to unearth the real cause of

Villagers protesting against the solar power plant

the elephants' death. Bubul Sharma, secretary of environmental group Green Nature, drew attention towards a solar power plant that is coming up in the area with a no-objection certificate from the forest department. He claimed that Bamunipahar, located inside the Kundi proposed reserve forest under Kothiatali forest range, is a known elephant habitat, but even then, authorities allowed the 15-Megawatt solar power project there.

Mentionable is that hundreds of marginal farmers from Mikir Bamuni grant village, under the Samaguri revenue circle in Nagaon, are protesting against Azure Power Forty Private Limited for grabbing their fertile land, which they have cultivated for generations. Many Karbi and Adivasi villagers were also put behind bars by the administration for demanding protection of their land rights.

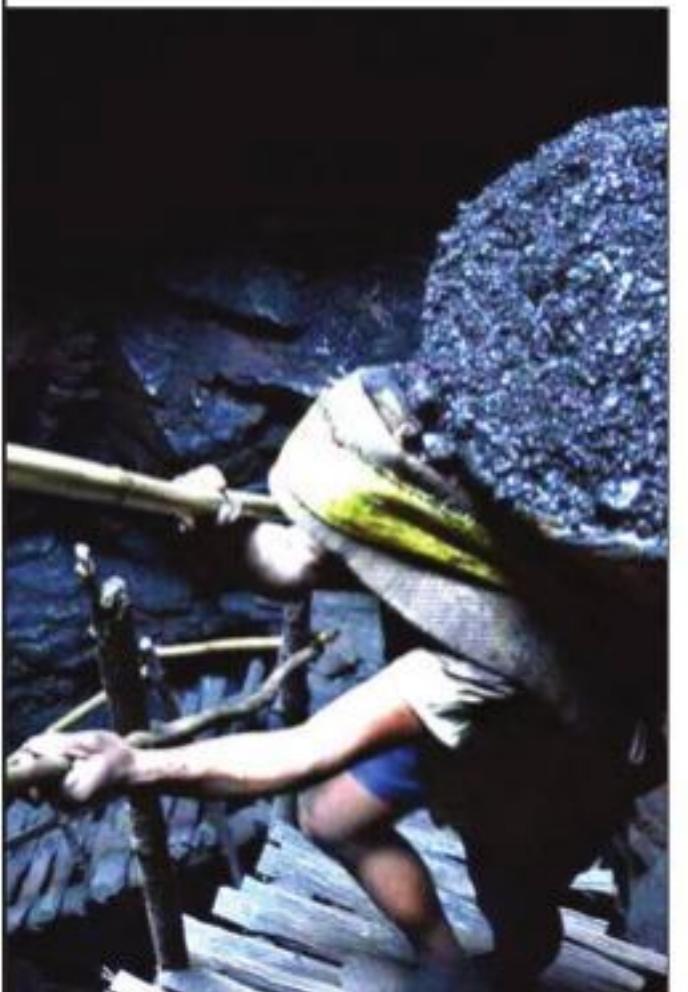
The \$ (United States) 400 million company claimed that it had bought the land from the erstwhile landlord's (or *zamindar*) family in August 2020. When the country was battling the Covid-19 pandemic, the company took possession of the land under police protection. In March this year, Gauhati High Court ordered a *status quo* on construction work of the power plant covering 276 bighas.

An East Assam-based environmental activist and journalist Apurba Ballav Goswami has lodged a police complaint against the probe conducted by the forest department and demanded an independent inquiry into the death of the Bamunipahar elephants. He claimed that newly placed fencing of the power project had blocked the herd's traditional route and they took a detour, only to succumb to tragic deaths because of human activities.

The writer is a Guwahati-based special Representative of *The Statesman*

PLUS POINTS

Rescue efforts hit



Heavy rainfall hampered efforts to rescue at least five miners trapped for four days deep inside an illegal rat-hole coal pit in Meghalaya's East Jaintia Hills district, officials said.

The district administration has identified five miners, four from Assam and one from Tripura, who were trapped in the coal pit in the remote Umpleng area of Sutnaga Elaka from 30 May when a dynamite blast led to the flooding of the coal mine. Superintendent of Police in neighbouring Assam's Silchar district had sent information to the authorities in Shillong about the possibility of six miners of his state being trapped in the mine.

"Anyone having any knowledge about this matter is requested to deposit at the office of the deputy commissioner between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. on or before 8 June," the order said. Locals said the possibility of any of the trapped miners coming out alive is slim although the district administration is making all efforts to reach them. "The mine is vertically dug for over 100 feet until a coal seam is met. Then a network of smaller vertical holes is dug across to collect the coal. An inundated mine means that the entire network of holes is also flooded," an elder of Sutnaga Elaka said.

—PTI

Free vaccines sought



Mizoram chief minister Zoramthanga has urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to provide free Covid-19 vaccines to the 11 Special Category states, which have poor resources.

While in early May this year, local media reported that seven doctors posted in Ukhral district hospital were found absent from duty. The chief medical officer was reported to have said that the hospital was in urgent need of specialists in anaesthesia, sinology, orthopaedics, blood banks and surgeries. The 50 bedded-district hospital requires 30 doctors in various speciality departments. Due to such ill-equipped district hospitals and lack of adequate manpower, people are forced to travel to Imphal, the reports stated.

It may also be mentioned here that hundreds of doctors are produced every year at two of Imphal's top medical colleges — the Regional Institute of Medical Sciences and Jawaharlal Nehru Institute of Medical Sciences. An equal number of nursing and paramedical students are also studying at various training institutes in the state.

There could be several reasons why doctors or medical professionals are hesitant or even unwilling to work in rural areas. Several more reasons why PHCs are non-functional or non-existent. And even more reasons why every patient, at the slightest hint of a minor complication, is referred to the state capital. But all of them pale in comparison to the loss of an unborn child or the death of a patient on a bamboo stretcher on the way to hospital.

Access to healthcare services is a human right. If at all there is a lesson to be learnt from this pandemic, it is vastly improving the healthcare system across the country, more so in scarcely accessible rural areas. It will require holistic planning with the cooperation of several sectors. But is anyone listening?

The writer is a freelance journalist based in Imphal and Dimapur

RUING THEIR COLLECTIVE FATE

Healthcare services and medical professionals are non-existent in the tribal hill districts of Manipur



NINGLUN HANGHAL

The non-availability of health-care facilities and services or medical professionals is considered a "normal" phenomenon in the tribal hill districts of Manipur. It is even accepted as part of the "fate" of being an inhabitant of rural and underdeveloped areas.

It will not be surprising to see dilapidated primary health centres in rural and semi-urban Manipur, if they exist at all in the first place. In some PHCs, there are a couple of state health department staffers available for a few hours at the most. But by and large, PHCs are either non-existent or non-functional and the presence of a doctor there is beyond the expectation of villagers. District hospitals in the tribal hills are in no better shape either.

Even if patients manage to reach the district hospitals, in most cases, they are advised to seek "Imphal doctors" — in other words, referred to hospitals in the state capital Imphal

for better treatment and more advanced technology. It is a normal and an obvious story in Manipur — every patient, who can afford to do so from the rural areas, is taken to Imphal for medical treatment.

The situation has worsened in this pandemic. For instance, during the nation-wide lockdown last year, a 20-year-old pregnant woman from Noney in west Manipur was taken to the nearest Senapati district hospital.

Once there, she was referred to Imphal, about 70 kms away, only to be denied admission in all the five hospitals they went to in the state capital. Finally, along with her unborn child, the woman died at the entrance of a private hospital — 12 hours after arriving in Imphal. The hospitals reportedly denied her admission on the grounds of Covid restrictions.

Unfortunately, this is not a one-off incident. As reported in these columns, patients from villages in the interior are brought to district hospitals on temporary handmade bamboo stretchers by villagers. It is a common

practice across all the tribal districts of Manipur. Last year, a patient was brought by villagers on foot in a bamboo stretcher, all the way from Henglep to Churachandpur district hospital, about 80 kms away. Besides the non-availability of public transport, roads are in such a bad condition that no vehicle can ply on them.

Pregnant women are frequently ferried in such a manner from villages to district hospitals. In August last year, the video of a woman in labour being rushed to a hospital in Manipur went viral on social media (*in photo*). A dozen-odd youngsters of Dunong village in Tamenglong district were seen carrying the heavily pregnant woman on a bamboo stretcher through a narrow, treacherous path to reach the nearest PHC at Tamei — located 54 kms away. Fortunately, the delivery was successful.

Many pregnant mothers, however, cannot make it. Recently, in mid-May this year, a young pregnant woman was brought from Sugnu to Churachandpur district hospital but could

not survive. The distance is 30 kms.

The primary reason is the unavailability of medical infrastructure and healthcare workers — forget doctors or specialists — in rural areas. Additionally, apart from the economic condition of rural inhabitants, the absence of public transport and pitiable road connectivity are major reasons for such a sorry state. Matters become even worse during the monsoon months from April to October.

Distance is one thing, but the pandemic has brought into sharp focus the predicament patients find themselves in. Such stories are indicative of the fact that there are no healthcare services in the rural areas. Though one may not expect a doctor or nurse in every rural PHC, even district hospitals are without specialists or modern technical equipment.

The "latest" health indicator statistics are from the Manipur Health Directorate's 2011 Census. Even so, the numbers present a stark picture — maternal mortality rate stands at 64.80 per cent, institutional delivery is

only at 68.3 per cent and mothers with full antenatal care is only 46.7 per cent. Such figures are clear enough to say that even in the 21st century, hundreds of women continue to die while giving birth or during pregnancy. They also indicate that many pregnant women in Manipur do not go to a hospital for delivery nor have access to healthcare services.

Meanwhile, in early May this year, local media reported that seven doctors posted in Ukhral district hospital were found absent from duty. The chief medical officer was reported to have said that the hospital was in urgent need of specialists in anaesthesia, sinology, orthopaedics, blood banks and surgeries. The 50 bedded-district hospital requires 30 doctors in various speciality departments. Due to such ill-equipped district hospitals and lack of adequate manpower, people are forced to travel to Imphal, the reports stated.

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'FEW PROBLEMS'

Former India batsman Sanjay Manjrekar has said that he has a "few problems" when people call Ravichandran Ashwin (*in photo, left*) as "one of the all-time greats of the game". The off-spinner, who has played 78 Tests and taken 409 wickets, has 30 five-wicket hauls, most of them on Indian pitches. "When people start talking about him as being one of the all-time greats of the game then I have a few problems. One basic problem I have with Ashwin is that when you look at SENA (South Africa, England, New Zealand and Australia) countries, Ashwin doesn't have a single five-wicket haul there," Manjrekar said.

For more updates www.thestatesman.com

THUMBNAILS

Daruvala bounces back: Indian racer Jehan Daruvala capped off a productive outing in Azerbaijan with a seventh place finish in the feature race of the FIA Formula 2 Championship here on Sunday. He had registered a podium finish in sprint race two earlier in the weekend. Jehan, a Red Bull junior driver, secured crucial points in all three races in his maiden run on the streets of Baku.

Top-10 finish for Diksha: Indian golfer Diksha Dagar shot a final round of two-under 70 to settle for a morale-boosting tied 9th finish at the Amundi Czech Ladies Challenge in Bystrice (Czech Republic). The 20-year-old Indian, who had played at the Ladies Italian Open, fired four birdies in the last eight holes on the last day.

Australian clubs pull out: The Asian Football Confederation has confirmed a revised eastern zone Champions League group and playoff schedule after three Australian clubs, Sydney FC, Melbourne City and Brisbane Roar, pulled out of the 2021 tournament amid an interrupted domestic season prolonged by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Canada routs Aruba 7-0: Lucas Cavallini scored twice and Alphonso Davies, Cyle Larin and Jonathan David added late goals to lead Canada over Aruba 7-0 in a World Cup qualifier, setting up a matchup against Suriname for a berth in the second round.

South Korea beat Turkmenistan: South Korea resumed its World Cup qualifying campaign after 19 months with a 5-0 win over Turkmenistan on Saturday to move within sight of the third round. Bordeaux striker Hwang Ui-jo opened the scoring in Goyang after 10 minutes and Nam Tae-hee netted late in the first half to send the hosts on their way to 10 points from four games in Group H.

Last chance: Versatile distance runner Sudha Singh is focussed at this month's National Inter-State Athletics Championships will be to crack the Olympic Games' qualification mark of women's 3000 meters steeplechase. "The Inter-State meet will be my last chance to qualify for the Tokyo Olympic Games. I'm hopeful of winning a ticket to Tokyo before the June 29 deadline to achieve the qualification time," Olympian Sudha told IANS on Sunday. The Olympic qualification mark is 9 minutes 30 seconds. The National Inter-State Athletics Championships is scheduled to be held from June 25 in Patiala.

Roger Federer pulls out of French Open

AGENCIES

PARIS, 6 JUNE

Roger Federer (*in photo, right*) withdrew from the French Open on Sunday to give himself a chance to recover after emerging from a tight third-round victory that lasted about 3 1/2 hours. "After two knee surgeries and over a year of rehabilitation it's important that I listen to my body and make sure I don't push myself too quickly on my road to recovery," the 20-time Grand Slam champion said in a statement released by the French tennis federation.

"I am thrilled to have gotten 3 matches under my belt. There is no greater feeling than being back on court."

Federer, who turns 40 on Aug. 8, was competing in his first major tournaments since the 2020 Australian Open. Shortly after that event, he had the first of a pair of operations on his right knee. He had played just three matches this season before arriving in Paris for the clay-court Slam, which he won in 2009.



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approached Sunday.

The No. 8-seeded Federer was supposed to play No. 9 seed Matteo Berrettini of Italy in the fourth round on Monday.

The winner of the match will face either No. 1 Novak Djokovic or unseeded Lorenzo Musetti in the quarterfinals.

The Roland Garros tournament is sorry about the withdrawal of Roger Federer, who put up an incredible fight last night," tournament director Guy Forget said in a statement. "We were all delighted

to see Roger back in Paris, where he played three high-level matches. We wish him all the best for the rest of the season.

Maria, Coco move into pre-quarterfinals

No. 17 seed Maria Sakkari of Greece secured a hard-fought victory over No. 14 seed Elise Mertens of Belgium 7-5, 6-7(2), 6-2 in a nearly three-hour contest to reach the fourth round of the French Open

Zidansek is 1st Slovenian woman into a major QF

AGENCIES

PARIS, 6 JUNE

Tamara Zidansek has become the first Slovenian woman to reach the quarterfinals of a major tournament. She did so by winning 7-6 (4), 6-1 against Romanian Sorana Cirstea, who was also unseeded here.

Zidansek dropped to her knees and held her head in her hands after winning on her first match point with a forehand winner. Prior to the tournament the 23-year-old Zidansek had never even beaten a top 10-ranked player. Her previous best at a



major was the second round at the Australian Open and Wimbledon. She'd twice lost in the first round at Roland Garros. The previous best by a Slovenian woman was when Katarina Srebotnik reached the fourth round at the French Open and the U.S. Open.

for the first time in her career. Maria will now take on last year's finalist, American Sofia Kenin, in the pre-quarterfinals.

No. 4 seed Sofia overcame

first-set blues to beat compatriot and No. 28 seed Jessica Pegula 4-6, 6-14 for a berth in the fourth round for the third year running.

No. 24 seed Coco Gauff of the US also made it to the pre-quarterfinals here for the first time after her compatriot, No. 13 seed Jennifer Brady, retired due to a foot injury after losing the first set 1-6. Gauff will next have to beat No. 25 seed Ons Jabeur of Tunisia in the round of 16. Ons shook off a rough first set to eventually get past Magda Linette of

Poland, 3-6, 6-0, 6-1. "I think it was one of my best matches I have played in a long time," Maria Sakkari said after beating Elise Mertens.

"Elise played extremely well, I think. She never gave up. I think I just played probably the right way when I had to. I gave myself a better chance today. I just took the chances, especially in the third set," Maria told wtatnenis.com.

On her upcoming pre-quarterfinal match against Sofia Kenin, Maria said:

"(Kenin) played the final here last year, so she's playing good here, for sure. You know, you don't get easy opponents in these rounds of a Slam."

Pavlyuchenkova's back in French Open quarters, 10 years on

AGENCIES

PARIS, 6 JUNE

Ten years later, Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova (*in photo*) is back in the quarterfinals of the French Open after beating 2013 semifinalist Victoria Azarenka 5-7, 6-3, 6-2 on Sunday. Former Wimbledon champion Marion Bartoli, who was doing the courtside interview, congratulated her.

"I've known you for a long time. We're friends off the court, Bartoli said. "I can see the joy on your face."

Indeed, it was hard for Pavlyuchenkova to stop smiling for the first time at any major, beating No. 20 Marketa Vondrousova 6-4, 3-6, 6-2.



coincidentally happened just as the wind was picking up.

No. 33 Paula Badosa of Spain reached in the last eight for the first time at any major, beating No. 20 Marketa Vondrousova 6-4, 3-6, 6-2.

Bopanna-Skugor advance

India's Rohan Bopanna and his Croatian partner Franko Skugor advanced to the quarterfinals of the French Open after receiving a walkover from their opponents here on Sunday.

The Indo-Croat duo got a walkover in its men's doubles pre-quarterfinal clash against Netherlands' Matwe Middelkoop and Marcelo Arevalo of El Salvador. Bopanna and Skugor will now face the Spanish pairing of Pablo Andujar and Pedro Martinez in the quarterfinals. The unseeded Bopanna and Skugor had notched up a straight set win over Americans Frances Tiafo and Nicholas Monroe in the second round earlier this week.

Perez wins Azerbaijan GP after Verstappen crashes from lead

AGENCIES

BAKU (AZERBAIJAN), 6 JUNE

Sergio Perez won the Azerbaijan Grand Prix in a two-lap shoot-out after championship leader Max Verstappen crashed while leading with a tire failure and Lewis Hamilton went off course trying to seize the win on the standing restart.

Verstappen was four laps away from a second consecutive victory Sunday when his Red Bull suddenly slammed hard into the wall with a puncture to his left rear tire. The Dutchman climbed from his car, inspected the tire and kicked it in anger before stomping off in disgust over the race-changing failure.

"Is he OK?" radioed rival and seven-time champion Hamilton. Verstappen was fine but Red Bull was furious over a second failure of a Pirelli tire in the race and asked for a stoppage to allow tire changes for safety reasons.

Lance Stroll had crashed earlier in the race after his own unexpected tire failure. Formula One red-flagged the race and brought the field to pit lane before deciding to resume with a standing start for a two-lap sprint to the finish.

Perez was the leader but Hamilton shot past him in his attempt to win the race and reclaim the points lead from Verstappen. But he failed to brake in the first corner and his Mercedes slid off track. Hamilton dropped to 15th, snapping a streak of 54 consecutive races of earning a points position finish.

"So sorry, guys," he told the team.

Four-time champion Sebastian Vettel took second for Aston Martin after an impressive drive after qualifying 11th. Pierre Gasly was third for AlphaTauri.

Sunday's race was the second red-flagged F1 round of the year after Valtteri Bottas and George Russell crashed at Imola in April, and the longest suspension since a fiery crash for Romain Grosjean in Bahrain last year caused the race to be stopped more than an hour. It was the second career win for Perez, who is in his first season with Red Bull.

Milkha Singh showing 'continuous improvement' in COVID fight

AGENCIES

CHANDIGARH, 6 JUNE

Indian sprint icon Milkha Singh is showing "continuous improvement" as he battles COVID-19 in the Intensive Care Unit of PGIMER hospital, the facility's spokesperson said on Sunday. The 91-year-old is being closely monitored by a medical team at the Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER).

"Legendary sprinter Shri Milkha Singh ji, who has been admitted in the ICU of PGIMER since June 3 and getting treatment for COVID-19, is showing continuous improvement," hospital spokesperson Prof Ashok Kumar stated.

"On the basis of all the medical parameters today, that is June 6, his condition has been observed better than previous days," he added.

Milkha's family also issued a statement through a spokesperson stating that the iconic athlete is improving and his condition is sta-

ble. His COVID positive wife Nirmal Kaur (82), however, "continues to battle it out bravely," according to the spokesperson.

Kaur is currently admitted at the Fortis hospital in Mohali.

Milkha was also admitted at the same hospital earlier but was discharged on Sunday last on the request of his family. He, however, continued to be on oxygen support at home and was admitted to PGIMER after his oxygen levels began to dip.

In England's second innings, New Zealand's Neil Wagner dismissed first-innings' centurion Rory Burns for 25 in the 24th over and Tim Southee accounted for Zak Crawley in the 31st over.

Brief scores: New Zealand 378 all out and 169 for 6 wkts declared (Tom Lathan 36, Ross Taylor 33, Ollie Robinson

Chasing 273 for win, England lose early wickets

AGENCIES

LONDON, 6 JUNE

Chasing a target of 273 runs in 75 overs, England were 56 for two wickets in 32 overs at the tea interval on the fifth and final day of the first Test against New Zealand at Lord's here on Sunday. England now need 217 runs in the final session of play. At the tea break, captain Joe Root was batting without a run and Dominic Sibley was on 19.

Earlier in the day New Zealand declared their second innings at 169 for six wickets, and asked England to score an average of 3.64 runs per over for victory. Tom Latham was the top scorer of New Zealand's second innings with 36 while Ross Taylor scored 33. For England, Ollie Robinson was the top wicket taker with three for 26.

In England's second innings, New Zealand's Neil Wagner dismissed first-innings' centurion Rory Burns for 25 in the 24th over and Tim Southee accounted for Zak Crawley in the 31st over.

Brief scores: New Zealand 378 all out and 169 for 6 wkts declared (Tom Lathan 36, Ross Taylor 33, Ollie Robinson

3/26); England 275 all out (R. Burns 132, J. Root 42, Ollie Robinson 42, Tim Southee 6/43, Kyle Jamieson 3/85) and 56/2 wkts (Rory Burns 25, Dominic Sibley batting 19, Joe Root batting 0).

'NZ hopeful of forcing win'

Experienced New Zealand pacer Tim Southee (*in photo*) says his team has not given up hopes of an outright win despite losing the third day of the opening Test against England due to rain here.

Southee (6/43) claimed six wickets spread over two days to dismiss hosts England for 275 in their first innings just before tea on Saturday.

At 62 for 2, going into the final

day, the Kiwis are 165 runs ahead. "Losing yesterday doesn't help, but there's 98 overs tomorrow (Sunday) and it's always great to turn up on the last day with all results possible. Who knows what may happen but it's great to be in a position where we can push on," Southee was quoted as saying by ESPNcricinfo.

"You play to win Test matches for your country and a Test win at Lord's would be pretty special, so I'd imagine we'll chat overnight, get together as a side and come up with a plan for day five." Southee found his name on the honours board at Lord's for the second time after his stupendous effort with the ball. His pace colleague Kyle Jamieson too chipped in with three wickets on Saturday.

"Yeah, with the wicket of Joe Root from the first ball of the day, we probably couldn't ask for a better start," Southee said referring to fellow pacer Kyle Jamieson's dismissal of the England skipper.

"It was a dream start to take those early wickets but we knew there was going to be a counterpunch from England at some stage, they're too good a side just to roll over."

Desperate India eye win against Bangladesh to keep Asian Cup hope alive

AGENCIES

DOHA, 6 JUNE

A winless India desperately need a positive result against neighbours Bangladesh in their joint World Cup and Asian Cup qualifiers match here on Monday, if they want to avoid the ignominy of playing in the qualifying play-off round of the continental showpiece.

India are already out of contention for a World Cup berth but still in the reckoning for a place in the 2023 Asian Cup.

But with just three points from six matches, India are at the fourth spot in Group E and are yet to guarantee an automatic berth in the third round of the Asian Cup qualifiers.

Only the best four fourth-place finishers in each of the eight groups directly qualify for the third round of the Asian Cup.

The other four fourth-place finishers and all the bottom-place finishers of the eight groups will play in a play-off round from which eight will re-enter the qualifying process again.

Among the fourth-place finishers, six teams have more points than India currently. That would mean that Igor Sti-



mac's men will have to beat Bangladesh to have any chance of an automatic berth in the third qualifying round of the Asian Cup. A win on Monday will also be India's first in six years as they played against UAE in an international friendly in March.

Historically also, 105th-ranked India have the edge over Bangladesh (184th). India

had beaten Bangladesh twice in the World Cup qualifying round, though the wins were registered way back in 1985 (2-1 result in both double-legged matches).

"We still haven't opened our account in Doha. We need to focus (against Bangladesh) and then the next one (against Afghanistan)," said senior defender Sandesh Jhingan, who took the captain's armband

in the second half of the Qatar match from Sunil Chhetri, who played only the first 45 minutes.

But India cannot be complacent as Bangladesh can be tough opponents as they had shown in the first leg of this qualifiers in 2019 in Kolkata where they had taken an early lead. An 88th minute header from defender Adil Khan helped India to