



## DADDY'S GIRL

Actor Kriti Sanon took to social media Sunday to express love for her father on the occasion of Father's Day

LEISURE P2



## BRAZIL HITS 5L DEATHS

Anti-govt protesters took to the streets across Brazil Saturday as the nation's Covid death toll soared past half a million

INTERNATIONAL P10



## JAMIESON SHINES

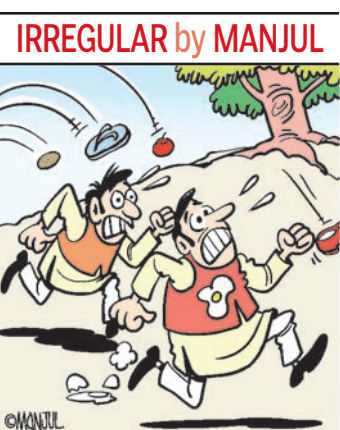
Kiwi pacer Kyle Jamieson takes 5 wickets as India are bowled out for 217 in WTC final

SPORTS P12

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## PETROL, DIESEL PRICES AT ALL-TIME HIGH

AGENCIES

New Delhi, June 20: Fuel prices are witnessing a trend of record highs with petrol and diesel prices being hiked again Sunday. In Delhi, petrol was hiked by 29 paise and diesel by 27 paise. With this, a litre of petrol now costs ₹97.22 in the national capital and diesel is retailing at ₹87.97 per litre.

### CITY FUEL PRICES (JUNE 20)

PETROL	₹98.04 (+0.29)
DIESEL	₹95.93 (+0.31)

With the latest revision by the state-run Oil Marketing Companies (OMC), the fuel rates have hiked for the 28th time since May 4. In Mumbai, petrol stood at ₹103.36 per litre and diesel was priced at ₹95.44 per litre. The fuel rates dropped slightly Saturday in the financial capital. Among other metro cities, a litre of petrol and diesel in Kolkata now costs ₹97.12 and ₹90.82 respectively. Witnessing an upward trajectory, petrol has breached the ₹100 mark in at least seven states and Union Territories.

WEATHER		BHUB	CTK
TEMP		35.6°C	35.6°C
MAX		35.6°C	35.6°C
MIN		26.6°C	25.0°C
Humidity		100%	73%
Rainfall		9.6mm	NIL

Forecast: Light rain very likely



FISHING ON A RAINY DAY: Fishermen cast their nets hoping big catch in the swollen Daya river on the outskirts of Bhubaneswar, Sunday

PHOTO: BIKASH NAYAK

# Can't pay ₹4 lakh for Covid victims: Centre

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 20: The Centre has told the Supreme Court that ex-gratia compensation of ₹4 lakh cannot be paid to the kin of Covid-19 victims as it is beyond fiscal affordability and the finances of the Central and state governments are under severe strain.

In an affidavit filed before the top court last Friday night, the Ministry of Home Affairs said the Centre submitted that it has by ways of "Minimum Standard Relief", under Section 12 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, taken several steps providing for substantial and speedy measures by way of increase in health, infrastructure, ensuring food safety to every citizen.

"The prayer of the petitioner for payment of ex-gratia to all deceased persons due to Covid-19 is beyond the fiscal affordability of the state governments. Already the finances of state governments and the central government are under severe strain due to the reduction in tax revenues and increase in health expenses on account of the pandemic.

"Thus, utilisation of scarce resources for giving ex-gratia may have unfortunate consequences of affecting the pandemic response and health expenditure in other aspects and hence cause more damage than good. It is an unfortunate but important fact that the resources of the governments have limits and any additional burden through ex-gratia will reduce the funds available for other health and welfare schemes," the af-

## GOVT U-TURN



The Centre told the SC that ex-gratia compensation of ₹4 lakh cannot be paid to the kin of Covid-19 victims as it is beyond fiscal affordability of the Central and state governments

On June 11, the Centre had told the top court that pleas seeking ex-gratia compensation of ₹4 lakh to the kin of Covid victims are "genuine" and are under consideration

fidavit filed by the Centre said.

It further submitted that under the Disaster Management Act, 2005, Section 12, it is the "National Authority" which is empowered to recommend guidelines for the minimum standards of relief, including ex-gratia assistance and this is the function entrusted to the authority by the law passed by the Parliament.

"It is well settled through numerous judgements of the Supreme Court that this is a matter which should be performed by the authority to whom it has been entrusted and not one where the Court will substitute its own judgement for the decision to be taken by the Executive."

## All Covid deaths to be certified

NEW DELHI: All coronavirus deaths regardless of where they take place should be certified as Covid deaths, the Centre has said in an affidavit in the Supreme Court after media reports pointed out huge discrepancy in death figures in at least six states. In a 183-page affidavit filed late last night, the Centre also promised action against doctors who fail to comply with this rule. So far, only deaths of coronavirus patients that took place in hospitals were certified as Covid, not the ones that happened at home or even at hospital parking lots, leading to a discrepancy in fatality figures that ran into lakhs.

"Any attempt to second guess may create unintended and unfortunate constitutional and administrative ramifications. It may also be noted that the term 'ex-gratia' itself connotes that the amount is not based on legal entitlement," the affidavit stated. "A broader approach, which involves health interventions, social protection, and economic recovery for the affected communities, would be a more prudent, responsible and sustainable approach. Globally, the governments in other countries too have followed this approach, and have announced interventions that provide fiscal stimulus. Government of India has followed a similar approach," it said.

## Draft Cabinet note floated for 100% FDI in oil PSUs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 20: The Commerce and Industry Ministry has floated a draft Cabinet note seeking inter-ministerial views on a proposal to allow up to 100 per cent foreign investment under automatic route in oil and gas PSUs, which have an 'in-principle' approval for disinvestment, sources said.

The move, if approved by the union cabinet, would facilitate privatisation of India's second biggest oil refiner Bharat Petroleum Corp Ltd (BPCL). The government is privatising BPCL and is selling its entire 52.98 per cent stake in the company.

Sources said that as per the draft note, a new clause would be added in the FDI policy under the petroleum and natural gas sector. According to the proposal, foreign investment up to 100 per cent under the automatic route would be allowed in cases where an 'in-principle' approval for disinvestment of a PSU has been granted by the government.

For BPCL privatisation, mining-to-oil conglomerate Vedanta had put in an expression of interest (EoI) for buying the government's 52.98 per cent stake in the PSU. The other two bidders are said to be global funds, one of them being Apollo Global Management.

After collating the views, the Commerce and Industry Ministry would seek approval of the Union Cabinet on the proposal. At present, only 49 per cent FDI is permitted through automatic route in petroleum refining by the public sector undertakings (PSU), without any disinvestment or dilution of domestic equity in the existing PSUs.

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## Naveen launches 'Ashirbad' scheme for Covid orphans

The scheme has been planned to take care of financial, healthcare and educational requirements of the hapless children

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, June 20: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Sunday announced a special scheme for the welfare of children who have either been orphaned due to Covid-19 or lost their earning parents to the deadly virus.

The scheme, christened 'Ashirbad', has been launched to take care of the financial, healthcare and educational requirements of the hapless children. It will benefit children who lost either one, especially the earning parents to Covid.

The scheme will benefit three categories of children - children who have been orphaned, those who have moved to welfare homes and are under the supervision of a caretaker and, lastly, children who have lost their earning parent.

Children who have been orphaned will be entitled to ₹2,500 per month from the government in the bank accounts of their guardians till they become adults. Children who have lost their earning parent will be eligible for ₹1,500 per month and the mother of the child would be given pension under the Madhu Babu Pension Scheme on a priority basis, the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) said.

The Chief Minister said that children covered under the scheme would be entitled to the state and Central food security schemes. In addition, they will also be included in the state government's Biju Swasthya Kalyana Yojana health insurance scheme.

Under the provisions of the scheme, the state government will also help in the education of such kids and facilitate their admission to Adarsh Vidyalayas and other schools. Their higher education will be covered under the 'Green Passage' scheme of the government.

However, if the orphaned children are adopted, they will not be eligible for the scheme. The government has also given its approval for providing pucca houses to the caregivers of the children under various housing schemes. The CMO said that the guardians and caretakers of the aggrieved kids may approach the Child Protection Units with requisite documents like death certificates of their wards' parents to avail the housing scheme.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, June 20: The Health department is all set to launch a massive anti-Covid inoculation drive in all the blocks and ULBs from Monday to achieve the target of three lakh vaccinations per day in the state.

The boost to the vaccination drive comes following the Centre taking up the responsibility of procuring vaccines from the manufacturers for all segments of beneficiaries from June 21. Following assurance of constant supply of vaccine doses, the Health department now plans to scale up the inoculation drive.

Bijay Panigrahi, Director, Odisha Health and Family department, said, "We plan to vaccinate three lakh people per day from June 21. All district administrations have been given their vac-

ination targets in proportion to the local population." Currently, Odisha has around 1,500 vaccination centres and the government plans to increase the number of such centres. "We plan to scale up the number of vaccination centres to 2,000 to cater to the needs of the people," he said.

"As per plan, each block and Notified Area Council (NAC) will have five vaccination centres. Each municipality and municipal corporation will have 10 and 20 vaccination centres respectively. If the need arises, we will have more centres in each of these areas," he added.

Earlier, state Health Minister Naba Kishore Das had announced that the government wanted to augment the vaccination drive and extend it for people in the 18-44 year group to new areas.

# Robots may campaign in 2022 Assembly polls in India

A HUMANOID ROBOT CALLED 'DOOT' CAN COMMUNICATE AND DELIVER THE IMPRESSION OF A HUMAN BEING

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, June 20: As mass public gatherings remain an obvious danger in India amid the lethal Covid-19 waves, you may see humanoid robots performing campaigning on behalf of political leaders in the 2022 Assembly elections.

Onestand India Pvt Ltd has developed a humanoid robot called 'DOOT' for this purpose, which can communicate and deliver the impression of a human being with excellent voice recognition, face recognition and gestures.

These robots are likely to be seen campaigning for the Assembly polls next year and, according to the company, they are in talks with different political parties to deploy these robot campaigners for the state elections next year.



The states that go to the polls in 2022 are Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Goa and

Gujarat. In the Tamil Nadu Assembly polls in April, a newly-formed political outfit India Makkal Munnetra

Katchi (IMMK) introduced a humanoid robot for campaigning for the first time. Called 'Doozy', the four-foot robot was also the party symbol.

Now, 'Doot' is ready to serve political parties by reaching out to a limited group of people with their messages amid the pandemic.

"The robot's rover has a large wheel-base, with an all-wheel-drive gearbox, which enables it to move easily even on rough surfaces. Through artificial intelligence (AI)-enabled voice recognition, the humanoid robot will address the public on behalf of the politician," Kumar Kanhaiya Singh, Director, Onestand India, said.

Questions and interactions will be reviewed periodically by a team that will have an answer to common queries updated after every review. 'Doot' is

equipped with a custom-made servo motor, which enables the full upper body to bend and raise with ease.

It can also twist itself with 140 degrees of freedom, making it the only humanoid in the country to do so.

HD cameras are located in the head of the robot which enables the operator to have a look at the audience and also record the attendees.

"The 4th generation servo motors, which are indigenously manufactured, barely make any noise and are tested to work in hot Indian conditions for long hours without any breakdown or need for servicing," Singh said.

The humanoids are built on an aluminium frame with industrial-grade components. They have 10 axes (joints), which enables it to shake hands or wave at people.

# leisure



## DICK VAN DYKE, 95, LOOKS FORWARD TO TURNING 100

Actor Dick Van Dyke, 95, is determined to make it to his milestone birthday in 2025. "The point is to enjoy. I'm looking forward to 100. George Burns made it and I'm gonna do it too!" Van Dyke told US magazine *Closer*.

## DAD STOP EMBARRASSING ME! CANCELLED AT NETFLIX AFTER S1

Hollywood star Jamie Foxx-led comedy sitcom *Dad Stop Embarrassing Me!* will not be returning for a second season on streaming platform Netflix. According to *Deadline*, Foxx was involved in the decision to end the series, which debuted on the streamer in April.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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**ARIES**  
Someone new in your life is going to make you smile; remember, however, that it doesn't always have to be fun and diamonds. A song sung straight from the heart makes a greater impact, says Ganesha. Today's the right time to go out and do things which will make you proud later.

**TAURUS**  
This day could be full of surprises, mostly unpleasant, fears Ganesha. Nothing is likely to turn out as planned and expected. There will be sharp and sudden twists and turns, unexpected shocks and setbacks all day long. You will, however, with the grace and blessings of the Almighty, manage to stay steady and unruffled, and move ahead.

**GEMINI**  
You will feel the need to pursue your passions today. You will give more time to your family and will spend as much time as possible with your children and will bestow your love and affection on them. You will be in an imaginative and romantic mood today. You need to harness your creativity into creating opportunities for yourself, says Ganesha.

**CANCER**  
Sometimes acting a little eccentric and adopting an approach that you will usually not helps you redefine your style, says Ganesha. Go ahead and do that today! Although you will be open to adapt and bring in some revolutionary changes, you will make sure to follow a proper pattern.

**LEO**  
Reinvention and rejuvenation – these are the two words that shall dictate your philosophy for the day. Refurbishing oneself does not always have to be in accordance with something new; taking a look back can be equally enlightening. In any case, it's a small world, and, hence, chances are that you shall revive most of your old contacts either in a social occasion or an official meeting.

**VIRGO**  
A mixture of the desirable and undesirable is on the cards today. Sentimental people will tend to think of you as a little immature. However, your sense of humour will be as robust as ever and you will never fall short of jokes.

**LIBRA**  
Ganesha says that today is going to be an unforgettable day for all those people who are in love or a romantic relationship. If you plan to propose to your beloved today is a good opportunity for it as success will come easily to you. You will be able to spend a day filled with joy, happiness and enjoyment.

**SCORPIO**  
Retail therapy with your loved ones is a perfect recipe to have a good time! You will be more than willing to buy things of your choice. Hagglng will be a trait you have closed today as you go about being lavish in your expenses, says Ganesha.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Be ready with your bags packed as you may decide to undertake an impromptu trip today. It could be a business trip or simply travel in pursuit of pleasure. Nostalgia will grip you as you run into an old childhood friend today. Sharpen your public relation skills, which will come in handy when you deal with strangers today, says Ganesha.

**CAPRICORN**  
That you are affectionate towards your loved ones will be more noticeable today than ever before, says Ganesha. In fact, you will enjoy their company and will do everything in your capacity to make them feel wanted. Long-term relationships will also thrive.

**AQUARIUS**  
Fortune favours the brave, and who knows it better than you? Your performance may come under scrutiny, but your bosses will come away pleased as punch. Want to make some money? Ganesha points to real estate and the construction business.

**PISCES**  
The focus today is on touching base with your near and dear ones, says Ganesha. It is likely that you will renew some old associations in a social function, or in matters related to business. You are likely to surge ahead of your competitors when it comes to work related matters.

## I am always Daddy's little girl: KRITI

**Mumbai:** Actress Kriti Sanon took to social media Sunday to express love for her father on the occasion of Father's Day. Kriti took to Instagram Sunday evening to share a video which is made of a collage of photographs featuring the actress with her father. While some of the photos are a throwback from the actor's childhood, some are recent. Along with the video, she wrote: "He said 'you can be anything you want to in this great big world'. But I'm always gonna be... Daddy's little girl.. Happy Father's Day Papa. Love you beyond words. @sanonrahul."

On the work front, Kriti will feature alongside Akshay Kumar in the upcoming film *Bachchan Pandey* which is currently on the floors in Jaipur, Rajasthan. The Farhad Samji directorial film also stars Arshad Warsi, Jacqueline Fernandez, Pankaj Tripathi and Prateek Babbar. IANS



## Tahira announces her fifth book

**Mumbai:** Author and filmmaker Tahira Kashyap Khurana announced her next book *The 7 Sins of Being a Mother Sunday*. Tahira, who is married to actor Ayushmann Khurana, took to Instagram to announce her fifth book. Posting pictures of herself jumping with joy showcasing her laptop screen, Tahira revealed the title of her second book penned during the pandemic. The author said, "I love dads (mine and my kids') but on Father's Day I want to share some special news about my new book!! It's sinful and hopefully delightful... It's called... THE 7 SINS OF BEING A MOTHER!! Swipe to see my calmness about it. #newbook #comingsoon #author @juggernaut.in." Tahira had launched her fourth book *12 Commandments of Being A Woman* last year, which received an exceptional response from the audience. Earlier, she has authored books like *Cracking The Code: My Journey in Bollywood*, and *Souled Out*. IANS



## COVID AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

### Puppetry plays key role in educating people of NE India

THE TRIPURA PUPPET THEATRE TROUPE HAS PARTICIPATED IN VARIOUS INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL FESTIVALS AND WORKSHOPS

The Tripura Puppet Theatre (TPT) group, which has performed in many countries and in states in India, is educating people about Covid-19 through the traditional Putul Nach (puppet dance), garnering people's attention and appreciation. The TPT, a 47-year-old folk cultural body, since March 21 last year, the World Puppet Day, has started a unique endeavour to make people aware about the danger of novel coronavirus and how to be protected from this disease. Many videos of the puppet dance on novel coronavirus, prepared by the artists of TPT group, and uploaded on the YouTube platform and other social media are attracting people's attention and admiration. The Covid awareness puppet videos in Bengali, Hindi and other local languages are also being telecast on various channels in Tripura and other north-eastern states. One of the founders of TPT, Prabhintang Das said that since the beginning of the Covid pandemic last year they are continuously undertaking a variety of performances and shows and these are being shown on various platforms to make the people aware. "The themes of our puppetry programmes are focused on social distancing, preventive measures, Covid appropriate behaviour; useful food and immunity boosting diet and various other measures and actions announced by the government," added Das. In Bengali, Hindi and other languages, TPT's 17 seconds to 90 seconds awareness videos with English subtitles show a story where a government official coughs and shows flu-like symptoms and is advised by his wife and daughter to consult a doctor. Das, son of TPT's founder Haripada Das, said that all the characters (puppets) of the video are made by their members and some of the performances are verbal and some others are non-verbal. "Puppetry is one of the powerful traditional folk cultural medium and it has numerous examples of efficacy in public health issues," said Das, who was awarded the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 2016 besides many other awards in recognition of his contribution to contemporary puppetry. The TPT has participated in various international and national puppet festivals and workshops in India and abroad including Germany. AGENCIES

## Pandemic takes sheen off celebrations



A file photo of World Music Day celebrations at Rabindra Mandap, Bhubaneswar.

**ARINDAM GANGULY, OP**

**Bhubaneswar:** A bleak future stares at those work in Odia music industry with the theatres and auditoriums remaining shut for nearly two years. Deaths of eminent musicians like Amarendra Mohanty, Santiraj Khosla and Tapu Mishra due to Covid-19 has only worsened the situation. In such difficult times, when many performers are struggling to make ends meet, the celebration of World Music Today is the last thing that comes to mind, said eminent music director Prem Anand. Popular singer Swayam Pravash Padhi said, "The pandemic has hit the music industry badly as all the live performances are on hold now. Recording of songs has also been stopped at studios as movies don't get release dates these days. The online performance doesn't strike the right chord with the music lovers. It is really tough for all of us to eke out a living."

Singer Antara Chakraborty said, "Things have gone from bad to worse. While people of other professions manage to save their jobs by working from home, this system doesn't work in the music sector. It is becoming difficult to sustain as there are restrictions in place for live performances and recording of songs."

Singer Susmita Das was of the view that though the country is going through a difficult phase, people connected with the entertainment industry should come forward to create awareness on the pandemic. This is the only way to keep others safe and survive, added Das. Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi (OSNA) President Aruna Mohanty said that the Akademi is organising virtual musical performances to help out the artists. Besides, the government is providing pension and financial assistance to the needy under Mukhyamantri Kalakar Sahayata Yojana, added Mohanty.



### PEANUTS



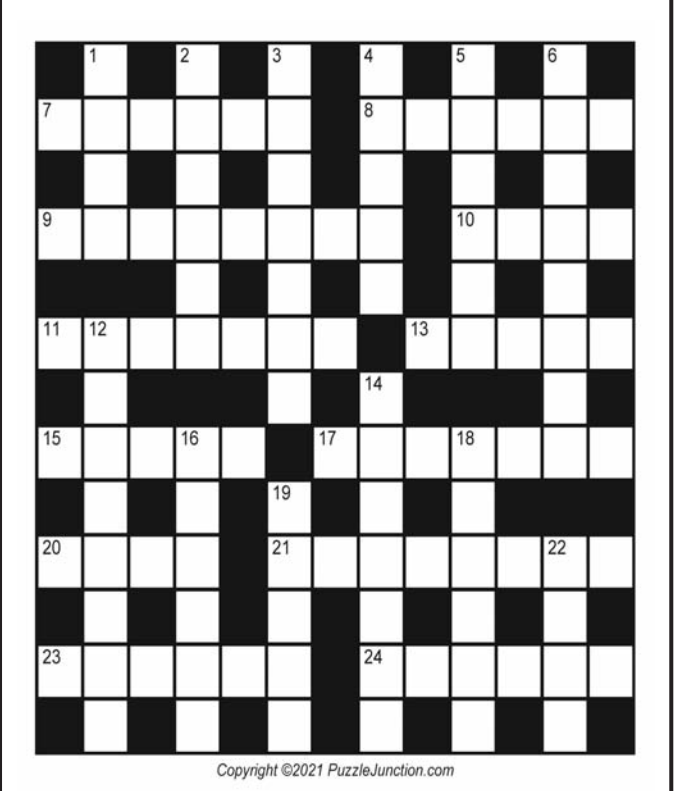
### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### BREVITY

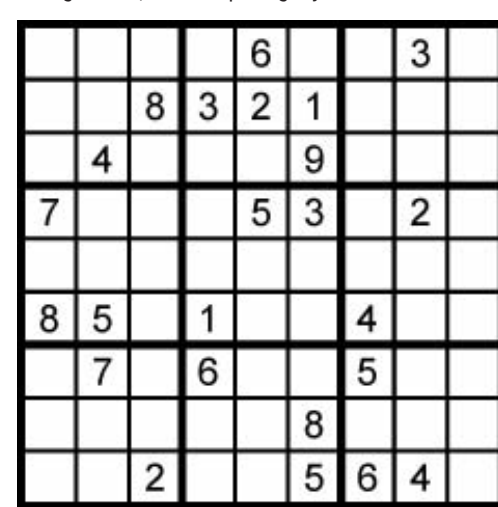


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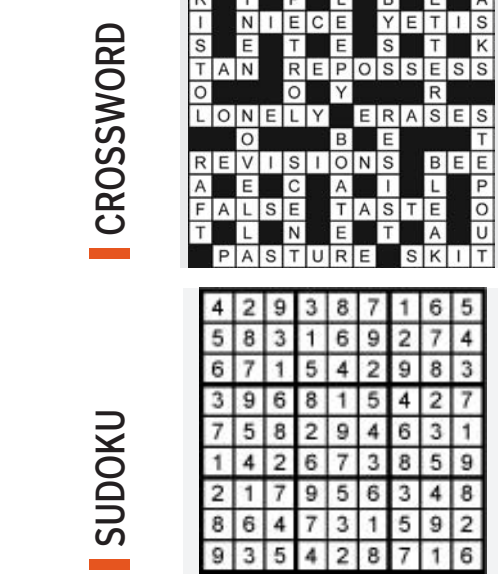


- Across
- 7 Auto body part
  - 8 Apparition
  - 9 Grottesque ornament
  - 10 Mystique
  - 11 Frenzied
  - 13 Photo tint
  - 15 Earth tone
  - 17 Buy, buy, buy
  - 20 Bread maker
  - 21 Barren ground caribou
  - 23 Typeface
  - 24 Accumulate
- Down
- 4 Title holder
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### SUDOKU



### SOLUTIONS



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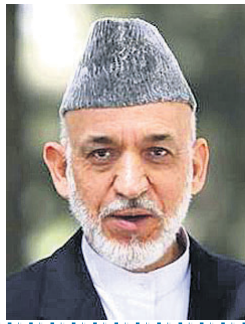








# international



The international community came here 20 years ago with this clear objective of fighting extremism and bringing stability...But extremism is at the highest point today. So they have failed  
HAMID KARZAI | FORMER PRESIDENT, AFGHANISTAN

## EX-UK SPEAKER JOINS LABOUR

Former UK House of Commons Speaker John Bercow, who gained international fame refereeing the country's political drama over Brexit, said Sunday that he has quit the governing Conservatives to join the opposition Labour Party



## of the day quote

I assert Egypt's support for the interim executive authority represented in Libyan presidential council and the national unity government in performing their tasks during the transitional stage  
SAMEH SHOUKRY | FOREIGN MINISTER, EGYPT

As President Rivlin approaches the end of his term, this visit will honour the dedication he has shown to strengthening the friendship between the two countries over the course of many years  
JEN PSAKI | PRESS SECRETARY, US

Absolutely not. There is no way we are going to allow any bases, any sort of action from Pakistani territory into Afghanistan. Absolutely not  
IMRAN KHAN | PRIME MINISTER, PAKISTAN

# Saudi seeks religious reset as clerical power wanes

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Riyadh, June 20: Muezzins issuing high-decibel calls to prayer have long been part of Saudi identity, but a crackdown on mosque loudspeakers is among contentious reforms seeking to shake off the Muslim kingdom's austere image. Saudi Arabia, home to the holiest Muslim sites, has long been associated with a rigid strain of Islam known as Wahhabism that inspired generations of global

extremists and left the oil-rich kingdom steeped in conservatism. The role of religion faces the biggest reset in modern times as Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, spurred by the need to diversify the oil-reliant economy, pursues a liberalisation drive in parallel with a vigorous crackdown on dissent. Chipping away at a key pillar of its Islamic identity, the government last month ordered that mosque loudspeakers limit their volume to one-third of their max-



imum capacity and not broadcast full sermons, citing concerns over noise pollution. In a country home to tens of thousands of

mosques, the move triggered an online backlash with the hashtag "We demand the return of mosque speakers" gaining traction. It also sparked calls to ban loud music in restaurants, once taboo in the kingdom but now common amid liberalisation efforts, and to fill mosques in such large numbers that authorities are forced to permit loudspeakers for those gathering outside.

that began even before the rise of Prince Mohammed, Saudi Arabia neutered its once-feared religious police, who once chased people out of malls to go and pray and berated anyone seen mingling with the opposite sex. In what was once unthinkable, some shops and restaurants now remain open during the five daily Muslim prayers. Saudi Arabia is revising school textbooks to scrub well-known references denigrating non-Muslims as "swines" and "apes".

'Post-Wahhabi era' In the most significant change

## NUCLEAR TALKS

# Israel warns of dangers with Iran's new President



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Jerusalem, June 20: Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett Sunday opened his first Cabinet meeting since swearing in his new coalition government last week with a condemnation of the new Iranian president. He said Iran's presidential election was a sign for world powers to "wake up" before returning to a nuclear agreement with Tehran.

These guys are murderers, mass murderers: a regime of brutal hangmen must never be allowed to have weapons of mass destruction that will enable it to not kill thousands, but millions  
NAFTALI BENNETT | PM, ISRAEL

Progress made in Vienna: Diplomats Top diplomats said Sunday further progress had been made at talks between Iran and global powers to try to negotiate and restore a landmark 2015 agreement to contain Iranian nuclear development. Enrique Mora, the European Union official who chaired the final meeting of the sixth round of talks between Russia, China, Germany, France, Britain and Iran, told reporters that "we are closer to a deal, but we are not still there. We have made progress on a number of technical issues," Mora added. "We have now more clarity on technical documents - all of them quite complex - and that clarity allows us to have also a great idea of what the political problems are."

from obtaining nuclear weapons. Iran insists its nuclear program is intended for peaceful purposes. Earlier this month, Israel's outgoing Mossad intelligence chief signaled that Israel was behind a string of recent attacks targeting the country's nuclear program. Bennett heads a broad coalition of parties ranging from Jewish ultranationalists to liberal factions and a small Islamist party. His government convened its first Cabinet meeting since it was sworn in last week, ousting long-time prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu from office and sending him to the opposition for the first time in 12 years.

Bennett said Raisi's election as Iranian president was "the last chance for the world powers to wake up before returning to the nuclear agreement and to understand who they're doing business with. "These guys are murderers, mass murderers: a regime of brutal hangmen must never be allowed to have weapons of mass destruction that will enable it to not kill thousands, but millions," he said. Israel has long stated that it opposes arch-enemy Iran's nuclear program and said it would prevent Tehran

# China administers 1bn vax doses

AGENCE-FRANCE-PRESSE

Beijing, June 20: The number of Covid-19 jabs administered in China has passed the one billion mark, health officials said Sunday, more than a third of the doses given worldwide. The announcement by the National Health Commission comes after the number of shots administered globally surpassed 2.5 billion Friday, according to an AFP count from official sources. It is unclear what percentage of

China's population has now been inoculated but its vaccination drive got off to a slow start after a successful fight against the virus left little sense of urgency to be jabbed. A lack of transparency and previous vaccine scandals have also led to resistance among residents. Authorities have set an ambitious target of fully vaccinating 40 percent of the country's nearly 1.4 billion people by the end of this

## COVID MILESTONE

## BLACK INDEPENDENCE DAY



People hold signs on the Brooklyn Bridge during a Juneteenth march in New York City

## SL ship fire caused significant damage to planet, says UN

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Colombo, June 20: The United Nations Sunday said the Singapore-flagged cargo vessel, which caught fire off the coast of Colombo last month, has caused "significant damage to the planet by the release of hazardous substances", as the world body announced a team of experts to determine the full extent of the disaster and necessary follow-up action. The UN representative in Sri Lanka said international efforts are being coordinated to help in assessing the damage, recovery efforts and prevention of such disasters in the future. "The UN is coordinating international efforts and mobilising partners to support Sri Lanka in addressing the disaster of the (cargo vessel) MV X-press Pearl, based on a request by the (Sri Lankan) government," said UN Resident Coordinator, Sri Lanka, Hanaa Singer-Hamdy. A team of oil spill and chemical experts from the UN and the European Union is working with Sri Lankan agencies to assess the impact of the disaster. The UN report aims to produce key findings and recommendations on short-term response measures and longer-term recovery planning. It will be submitted to the government. It will include technical advisory support, oil spill contingency planning, clean-up operations and environmental impact.

## Brazil tops 5L deaths, protests against Prez

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Rio De Janeiro, June 20: Anti-government protesters took to the streets in more than a score of cities across Brazil Saturday as the nation's confirmed death toll from Covid-19 soared past half a million—a tragedy many critics blame on President Jair Bolsonaro's attempt to minimize the disease. Thousands gathered in downtown Rio de Janeiro waving flags with slogans such as "Get out Bolsonaro. Government of hunger and unemployment." Other marchers hoisted posters reading: "500 thousand deaths. It's his fault," alluding to Bolsonaro. Similar marches took place in at least 22 or Brazil's 26 states, as well as in the Federal District, Brasilia. They were promoted by left-wing opposition parties who have been heartened by Bolsonaro's declining poll ratings with next year's presidential race looming.

As per critics Bolsonaro's promotion of disproven treatments such as hydroxychloroquine, have contributed to the soaring death toll and a sluggish vaccine campaign that has fully inoculated less than 12%. "For the leftists, putting their followers in the streets is a way of wearing Bolsonaro down for the election," said Leandro Consentino, a political science professor at Insper, a university in Sao Paulo. Saturday's marches came a week after Bolsonaro led backers in a massive motorcycle parade in Sao Paulo, though his supporters and critics differ dramatically on the size of that event.



# Covid survivors still at risk from Alpha, Beta variants

THE TEAM FOUND AN EARLY IMMUNE SIGNATURE, DETECTABLE ONE MONTH POST INFECTION AND LINKED TO BOTH CELLULAR AND ANTIBODY IMMUNITY, WHICH PREDICTED THE STRENGTH OF IMMUNE RESPONSE MEASURED AT SIX MONTHS POST INFECTION

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

London, June 20: Immune response following a coronavirus infection can vary between individuals and may not be enough to fight Alpha, and Beta variant of Covid-19, finds a study reinforcing the need for vaccination. The preprint study was led by University of Oxford, in collaboration with the Universities of Liverpool, Sheffield, Newcastle and Birmingham, suggests that whether it is symptomatic or asymptomatic infection, it does not necessarily protect people long-term from Covid-19, particularly against new Variants of Concern. "Our study is one of the most comprehensive accounts of the



immune response following Covid-19 in both symptomatic and asymptomatic individuals. It is very important that we all get the Covid vaccine when offered even if you think you may have previously had Covid-19," said Christina Dold, from the University of Oxford. "We found that individuals showed very different immune responses from each other following Covid-19, with some people from

both the symptomatic and asymptomatic groups showing no evidence of immune memory six months after infection or even sooner," Dold added. The study examined how the immune system responds to Covid-19 in 78 healthcare workers who had experienced either symptomatic or asymptomatic disease. An additional eight patients who experienced severe disease were included for comparison. Blood samples were taken monthly from 1-6 months post infection to examine different elements of the immune response. The report details a highly complex and variable immune response following Covid-19 infection. The team found an early im-

mune signature, detectable one month post infection and linked to both cellular and antibody immunity, which predicted the strength of immune response measured at six months post infection. This is the first time that such a signature has been found and improves understanding of the development of lasting immunity. While the majority of people who had symptomatic disease did have measurable immune responses at six months post infection, a significant minority (26 per cent) did not. The vast majority of people who experienced asymptomatic disease (92 per cent) did not exhibit a measurable immune response at six months post infection, the researchers said.

## Libyan guards accused of sexually abusing minors

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Cairo, June 20: When Libyan security forces rescued her earlier this year, the young Somali woman thought it would be the end of her suffering. For more than two years, she had been imprisoned and sexually abused by human traffickers notorious for extorting, torturing and assaulting migrants like her trying to reach Europe. "While it is not the first time I suffer from sexual attacks, this is more painful as it was by the people who should protect us," said the 17-year-old said. "You have to offer something in return to go to the bathroom, to call family or to avoid beating," she said. The UN refugee agency has documented hundreds of cases of women raped while in either DCIM detention or traffickers' prisons, with some even being impregnated by guards.



