



June 14, 2021 – Monday

## Key Developments

### **India should focus on exports, attracting best manufacturers: NITI Aayog**

NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant on Sunday said that path to India's economic recovery post the Covid-29 pandemic lies in attempting to focus on capturing the export markets, as the world is flush with liquidity due to the various packages put in by various countries, and also push for consumer demand as the economy opens up. Kant on Sunday in an exclusive interview to ANI said that the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report found India's Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP), launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2018, has benefited almost 21 per cent of the nation's population and improved their quality of life. He said that the UNDP report found the ADP acted as a "catalyst for expediting development" that brought about "major changes" in sectors such as health care, nutrition, and education.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/india-should-focus-on-exports-attracting-best-manufacturers-niti-aayog-121061300500\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/india-should-focus-on-exports-attracting-best-manufacturers-niti-aayog-121061300500_1.html)

### **'Project O2 for India' initiated to meet rising oxygen demand amid pandemic**

The office of the Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government on Sunday said 'Project O2 for India' has been initiated to ensure supply of critical raw materials such as zeolites, setting up of small oxygen plants, and manufacturing of compressors. The second wave of COVID-19 saw an increase in demand for medical oxygen in different parts of the country, it said in a statement. While meeting the current demand, manufacturing medical oxygen also became important to ensure the country has adequate supply in the future. "'Project O2 for India' of the Office of Principal Scientific Adviser is to enable stakeholders working to augment the country's ability to meet this rise in demand for medical oxygen.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/healthcare/biotech/healthcare/project-o2-for-india-initiated-to-meet-rising-oxygen-demand-amid-pandemic/articleshow/83486473.cms>

### **E-consultation facility to fast-track policy decisions on corporate laws**

Policy decisions on India's corporate laws are set to get fast-tracked with the e-consultation facility under the latest version of the ministry of corporate affairs' (MCA) digital portal, MCA21 V3. The facility, which allows comments on draft laws to be submitted directly on the updated MCA website, would provide policy makers with an immediate analysis of public sentiment and feedback compared to over a month's time earlier, a government official said.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/e-consultation-facility-to-fast-track-policy-decisions-on-corporate-laws/articleshow/83482635.cms>

### **Nationwide sero survey to help in Covid vaccination, lockdown say experts**

Health experts dealing with COVID-19 believe that a nationwide coronavirus serological survey will be beneficial as it will help in bringing out exact viral load and thus help in building up strategies. Sero surveys estimate as well as monitor infection trends in the population which is specifically location-based to understand the current course of the virus. The Centre recently announced that it would commence a nationwide sero surveillance project and has asked the States to participate for fact-based monitoring of the situation. Associate Professor, Department of Medicine, AIIMS Dr Neeraj Nischal told ANI, "Most of the COVID-19 patients are asymptomatic or mildly

symptomatic. They may not actually seek any test or medical intervention so there can be a substantial chunk of people who have got infected but are not aware of their status. The basic role of sero surveys is to know the exact burden of infection. From this point of view, sero surveillance becomes very important because based on that one can find out which particular area has a susceptible population."

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/nationwide-sero-survey-to-help-in-covid-vaccination-lockdown-says-experts-121061300354\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/nationwide-sero-survey-to-help-in-covid-vaccination-lockdown-says-experts-121061300354_1.html)

#### **India, S Africa's proposal for patent waiver on vax gets G7 support: MEA**

A proposal by India and South Africa to temporarily waive patents on COVID-19 vaccines to ensure their equitable access received widespread support at the G7 summit in the UK, the Ministry of External Affairs said on Sunday.

In a virtual address at an inaugural outreach session of the summit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi sought the support of the grouping to lift patent protections for COVID-19 vaccines.

The MEA said Modi's call was supported by South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison, WTO Director-General Okonjo Iweala and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/india-s-africa-s-proposal-for-patent-waiver-on-vax-gets-g7-support-mea-121061300798\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/india-s-africa-s-proposal-for-patent-waiver-on-vax-gets-g7-support-mea-121061300798_1.html)

#### **WTO convenes key meeting of trade ministers on July 15 on fisheries subsidies**

The chief of the World Trade Organization (WTO) has convened a meeting of all trade ministers on July 15 to iron out differences with regard to providing fisheries subsidies, sources said. The aim is to conclude the negotiations soon and after that a text is finalised so that an agreement on fisheries can be reached in the forthcoming ministerial meet of WTO in December in Geneva.

Hectic negotiations are going on in Geneva on the matter. The objective of these negotiations is to discipline subsidies with the overall objective to have sustainable fishing and to eliminate IUU (illegal, unreported and unregulated) fishing subsidies and prohibit subsidies contributing to overcapacity and overfishing.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/wto-convenes-key-meeting-of-trade-ministers-on-july-15-on-fisheries-subsidies/2270463/>

### **Economy**

#### **Sharpening income inequalities telling story of 'uneven' recovery: Subbarao**

Former RBI Governor D Subbarao has expressed concerns over "extreme unevenness" in economic recovery and "sharpening inequalities" between upper income segments and lower income households in the country, cautioning that the trend will hit growth prospects going forward. Terming the uneven recovery "morally wrong and politically corrosive", he said liquidity in the domestic market and foreign fund inflows are leading to soaring of prices of stocks and other assets despite disruptions due to Covid pandemic. The ex-central bank governor further said that earlier expectations of a sharp economic recovery this year have been dashed by the new pandemic wave.

"The economy contracted last year, for the first time in four decades, by as much as 7.3 per cent. That was less deep than we had first feared but still deep enough to have caused distress to millions of families in the informal sector. There was expectation of a sharp recovery this year but those expectations are now tempered by the impact of the second wave," Subbarao told PTI.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/income-inequalities-telling-story-of-uneven-economic-recovery-ex-rbi-guv-121061300255\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/income-inequalities-telling-story-of-uneven-economic-recovery-ex-rbi-guv-121061300255_1.html)

#### **GST Council likely to meet in July on compensation issue**

The Goods & Services Tax (GST) Council is likely to meet next month to discuss the compensation issue.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/policy/gst-council-likely-to-meet-in-july-on-compensation-issue/article34806243.ece>

#### **Defence Ministry approves ₹500 crore for iDEX**

The Defence Ministry has approved the budgetary support of ₹498.8 crore to Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX) under the Defence Innovation Organisation (DIO) for the next five years.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/defence-ministry-approves-500-crore-for-idex/article34805451.ece>

#### **EPFO is planning automatic settlement of non-Covid claims**

Retirement fund body the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) is considering automatic settlement of claims to reduce the time taken to process non-Covid claims, currently done manually. Millions of withdrawal claims — both Covid-related and non-Covid — have been pouring in since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic last year, as EPFO subscribers dug into their retirement savings to meet their financial requirements.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/banking/finance/insure/epfo-plans-automatic-settlement-of-non-covid-claims/articleshow/83475430.cms>

### **Banking and Finance**

#### **Irdai looking for agency to manage its grievance redressal centre**

Regulator Irdai is looking for an agency to manage its multi-media grievance redressal centre with a view to address complaints of insured public against insurance companies. The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (Irdai) had set up a consumer affairs department (CAD) to oversee compliance of insurers and intermediaries with respect to Protection of Policyholders' Interests Regulations. It will also empower consumers by educating them on grievance redressal mechanisms. To provide alternative channels to receive complaints against insurers, it has set up the Irdai Grievance Call Centre (IGCC) that receives complaints through a toll-free telephone number and by e-mail. It also registers complaints apart from furnishing the status of the resolution.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/irdai-looking-for-agency-to-manage-its-grievance-redressal-centre-121061300461\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/irdai-looking-for-agency-to-manage-its-grievance-redressal-centre-121061300461_1.html)

#### **Post SC order, banks move to assess value of promoters' assets**

Armed with the Supreme Court's order on invoking personal guarantees of defaulting promoters, banks have set in motion the process to assess the value of assets held by promoters of at least 40 companies that are under the insolvency process.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/money-and-banking/post-sc-order-banks-move-to-assess-value-of-promoters-assets/article34806617.ece>

#### **Public sector banks support for Covid-19 health infra gathers pace**

Public sector banks in the country appear to be supporting the government's efforts to boost Covid-19 related healthcare infrastructure in the country by actively lending to the healthcare and associated segments that are in need of liquidity.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/money-and-banking/public-sector-banks-support-for-covid-19-health-infra-gathers-pace/article34806560.ece?homepage=true>

### **Industry**

#### **CAIT fully geared up to fight Amazon, Flipkart**

For more than five years, Amazon, Walmart-owned Flipkart and many other foreign-funded e-commerce companies have indulged into all kinds of unethical business practices with an objective of taking control of not only the e-commerce but even the retail business of India, the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) said. Their sinister designs have greatly vitiated the e-commerce landscape of the country, the traders body said. In view of such a situation, the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) has launched an "e-commerce purification week" from Monday to June 21, which is gaining massive support from thousands of trade associations across the Country. During the e-commerce purification campaign, the trade organizations across the country will handover a memorandum to the District Collectors in all states in the Country. On the other hand, the trade delegations will meet the Chief Ministers and Finance Ministers of their respective States urging them to set up a monitoring mechanism for e-commerce trade in the State for ensuring strict implementation of FDI in e-commerce policy of the Government.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/cait-fully-g geared-up-to-fight-amazon-flipkart-121061300510\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/cait-fully-g geared-up-to-fight-amazon-flipkart-121061300510_1.html)

### **Demand for Ayurvedic stress busters surges amid second wave of Covid-19**

With most Indians confined to their homes amid Covid-19, demand for stress relief products has surged especially during the second wave of the pandemic. As per data from leading companies such as Emami, Amrutanjan Health Care, Himalaya Drug Company and Dabur, sales of balms, anti-stress products and herbs such as Ashwagandha grew 50-80% year-on-year in the past three months, clocking their highest ever revenue in most cases.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/cons-products/fmCG/demand-for-ayurvedic-stress-busters-surges-amid-second-wave-of-covid-19/articleshow/83492980.cms>

## **Infrastructure**

### **Skyrocketing freight costs having detrimental impact on small and medium exporters, says report**

Rising freight costs over the last year due to the shortage of shipping containers are having a detrimental impact on small and medium-sized exporters, said a new report. As of June 10, 2021, Drewry's composite World Container Index (WCI) — a global index for container spot market freight rates on all the major routes, peaked at \$6727, up by over 300 per cent since the emergence of the coronavirus in December 2019, trade finance company Drip Capital said in its report Global Shipping Crisis. As per its internal analysis, SMBs globally have more than 25 per cent share of the \$18 trillion maritime trade. While the Suez Canal blockage in March 2021 underscored different challenges faced by the shipping and logistics industry, SMBs particularly have been going through a more profound and widespread crisis since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting economic contraction, the company said. "In March 2020, with social distancing protocols and coronavirus clusters amongst dockworkers (meant slower shipment processing times), there emerged a shortage of containers in Asia as empty metal boxes were stranded at North American and European ports," the report noted.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/sme/skyrocketing-freight-costs-having-detrimental-impact-on-small-and-medium-exporters-says-report/2270459/>

### **Covid: Stoppage of sale of platform tickets see Railways' earnings dip by 94 pc in FY 20-21**

The Railways' earnings from platform tickets took a severe hit in 2020-21 with revenue from sale dipping by about 94 per cent as compared to the previous year due to restrictions imposed on entry into stations because of the coronavirus crisis, a RTI has found. In a reply to a RTI query from Madhya Pradesh-based Chandra Shekhar Gaur, the Railways said it earned Rs 10 crore till February in 2020-21 through sale of platform tickets. In 2019-2020, the Railways netted Rs 160.87 crore which was the highest earning from platform tickets for the national transporter in the last five years, the RTI has found.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/transportation/railways/covid-stoppage-of-sale-of-platform-tickets-see-railways-earnings-dip-by-94-pc-in-fy-20-21/articleshow/83481163.cms>

### **Gurugram most suitable city to live in during COVID-19 : Report**

Gurugram is the most suitable city to live in during COVID-19 considering factors such as population density, open area ratio and hospital infrastructure, according to a report by Square Yards. The study titled Suitability Index: The COVID Perspective, throws light on the suitability of living and working in three prime cities in the country - Bengaluru, Mumbai and Gurugram with respect to COVID-19.

[https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/gurugram-most-suitable-city-to-live-in-during-covid-19-report/articleshow/83485558.cms?utm\\_source=contentofinterest&utm\\_medium=text&utm\\_campaign=cpst](https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/gurugram-most-suitable-city-to-live-in-during-covid-19-report/articleshow/83485558.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cpst)

## **Energy**

### **Coal India's 114 mining projects under different stages of implementation**

State-owned CIL's 114 ongoing coal projects, costing Rs 20 crore and above, are under different stages of implementation, according to a report. Implementation and completion of these projects depend upon critical extraneous factors such as possession of land, green clearances and evacuation infrastructure, the Coal Ministry said in its annual report 2020-21. In 2020, total 34 projects were sanctioned and nine mining projects completed by Coal

India Ltd (CIL), it said. The coal behemoth took various measures to ensure timely completion of projects. There was persistent persuasion by CIL with state governments for expediting land authentication in Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.

"Further, land owners are being constantly persuaded to accept compensation and handover land acquired by the company," the report said.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/coal-indias-114-mining-projects-under-different-stages-of-implementation/2270482/>

#### **Discoms' outstanding dues to gencos fall 11.2 pc to Rs 81,628 cr in April**

Total outstanding dues owed by electricity distribution utilities or discoms to power producers fell 11.2 per cent to Rs 81,628 crore in April 2021 from a year ago. Distribution companies (discoms) owed a total Rs 91,915 crore to power generation firms in April 2020, according to portal PRAAPTI (Payment Ratification And Analysis in Power procurement for bringing Transparency in Invoicing of generators). However, outstanding dues of discoms towards electricity producers have been increasing year-on-year as well as month-on-month for years showing perennial stress in the power sector till February this year. It has started tapering off from March 2021. Total dues in April increased sequentially compared to Rs 78,841 crore in March this year. Total outstanding dues of discoms had dipped 3.4 per cent in March this year from Rs 81,687 crore in the same month last year.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/discoms-outstanding-dues-to-gencos-fall-11-2-pc-to-rs-81628-cr-in-april/2270420/>

#### **Iran could offer India access to Jask port for strategic oil reserve facility**

Iran, currently negotiating with global powers for its return to the mainstream global economic scene, could offer India access to its port of Jask as a base for strategic oil reserves and a standalone gas pipeline to meet New Delhi's growing energy demands. The proposal was put forward by Iranian ambassador to India Ali Chegeni at a roundtable held this week on the future of bilateral ties, amid Tehran's efforts to negotiate revival of the nuclear deal that would also bring the Persian Gulf country into the economic mainstream.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/oil-gas/iran-could-offer-india-access-to-jask-port-for-strategic-oil-reserve-facility/articleshow/83477030.cms>

### **States**

#### **T'gana farmers to get Rs 7,509 cr investment support from June 15**

Telangana government will provide Rs 7,509 crore as investment support to over 63 lakh farmers for cultivation during Kharif season under Rythu Bandhu scheme. Agriculture Minister S. Niranjan Reddy said on Sunday that the government has made all arrangements to credit the amount at the rate of Rs 5,000 per acre to the bank accounts of the farmers from June 15 to 25. This year farmers who received landholding (pattadar) passbooks and registered their details through CCLA on the Dharani portal by June 10 will be eligible to receive Rythu Bandhu assistance. The Minister said CCLA has submitted a list of 63,25,695 beneficiaries to the agriculture department. The departments estimated that an amount of Rs 7,508.78 crore is required for assistance under the scheme for cultivation on 150.18 lakh acres across the state.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/t-gana-farmers-to-get-rs-7-509-cr-investment-support-from-june-15-121061300572\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/t-gana-farmers-to-get-rs-7-509-cr-investment-support-from-june-15-121061300572_1.html)

#### **Over 4.5 lakh non-PDS beneficiaries received food grains: Delhi govt**

The Arvind Kejriwal government on Sunday said it has provided food grains to over 4.5 lakh people who did not have ration card under a new scheme in the national capital. Starting from June 5, the scheme allows those who don't have a ration card to avail five kilogram of food grains by showing their Aadhaar card. "The scheme caters to people who do not possess ration cards, including unorganised workers, migrant workers, building and construction workers, and domestic helpers. More than 4.5 lakh people have been aided up until now through this scheme," the Delhi government said in a statement. Under the scheme, the beneficiaries receive four kg of wheat and one kg of rice each.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/over-4-5-lakh-non-pds-beneficiaries-received-food-grains-delhi-govt-121061300494\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/over-4-5-lakh-non-pds-beneficiaries-received-food-grains-delhi-govt-121061300494_1.html)

### **Delhi allows restaurants to resume operations with 50% capacity, but most outlets may not open from Monday**

You might have to wait it out to grab a table at your favorite pub or restaurant in Delhi. While the Delhi government allowed restaurants to reopen at 50% capacity on a trial basis from Monday for a week, most might not open immediately. Getting the staff members back, ensuring the restaurants are up and running takes time, restaurateurs said, and added that not being allowed to sell alcohol is another deterrent.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/services/hotels-/restaurants/delhi-allows-restaurants-to-open-with-50-capacity-but-most-outlets-may-not-open-from-monday/articleshow/83485340.cms>

### **DDMA issues SOPs for weekly markets in national capital**

The Delhi government on Sunday said weekly markets, barring those in containment zones, will be allowed to open between 4 PM and 10 PM for one week. The Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), which issued standard operating procedures for weekly markets, said only asymptomatic customers will be allowed in them. Pregnant women, children aged below 10, elderly aged above 65 and persons with comorbidities have been advised to stay home. "Weekly markets in containment zones will remain closed. Only those outside containment zones would be allowed to open up as per the orders of DDMA from 4 PM to 10 PM, the SOPs read. Stall owners and customers have to maintain a physical distance of at least 6 feet, and use face masks and hand sanitisers.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/ddma-issues-sops-for-weekly-markets-in-national-capital-121061300378\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/ddma-issues-sops-for-weekly-markets-in-national-capital-121061300378_1.html)

### **AP pegs GST revenue collection target at ₹53,935 cr for 2021-22**

Andhra Pradesh government is aiming to mop up ₹53,935 crore under Goods and Services Tax (GST) revenue during the year 2021-22.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/ap-pegs-gst-revenue-collection-target-at-53935-cr-for-2021-22/article34804821.ece>

### **License needed to sell tobacco products in Uttar Pradesh**

It is now mandatory for tobacco sellers in Uttar Pradesh to take a license. The government has taken this decision keeping in mind the growing problem of tobacco and the danger it poses to public health and also ensure effective enforcement of the rules and policies applicable for tobacco control. According to the government spokesman, the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare had sent an advisory letter to all the state governments recommending the licensing of tobacco vendors to the municipal corporation. In view of this, this system has been implemented in UP.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/cons-products/tobacco/license-needed-to-sell-tobacco-products-in-up/articleshow/83482172.cms>

### **Tamil Nadu notifies Renault Nissan industrial dispute arbitration**

The Renault Nissan Automotive India Private Ltd and its workers' union have created a history by going in for an arbitration to settle wage revision and other aspects, said a union official. The Tamil Nadu government recently published the terms of reference for arbitration on the dispute between car maker Renault Nissan Automotive and its union Renault Nissan India Thozhilalar Sangam (RNITS). This is the first time an industrial dispute in a multinational company will be decided by arbitration under the Section 10A of the Industrial Disputes Act 1947 in this part of the country, a union official told IANS.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/auto/auto-news/tamil-nadu-notifies-renault-nissan-industrial-dispute-arbitration/articleshow/83479957.cms>

## **Healthcare**

### **Pvt hospitals say no clarity on vaccine procurement; seek proper guidelines**

Several private hospitals across the country said they have no clarity on procuring COVID-19 vaccines under the new policy announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and that it has led to the vaccination being put on hold at their centres. The hospitals have sought a proper mechanism and a single-window system to be put in place for

procurement of vaccine doses. They also claimed that they had approached the vaccine manufacturers -- Bharat Biotech and Serum Institute of India (SII) -- and also state governments, but to no avail.

Meanwhile, in a recent communication to the Union health ministry, Prakash Kumar Singh, director, Government and Regulatory Affairs at SII, is learnt to have written, As per your direction, we are not accepting any further orders/payment from any private hospital in the country. We await your further direction with regard to roadmap for future supplies to private hospitals.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/private-hospitals-say-no-clarity-on-vaccine-procurement-seek-guidelines-121061300517\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/private-hospitals-say-no-clarity-on-vaccine-procurement-seek-guidelines-121061300517_1.html)

#### **India's first medical drone delivery trials from June 18**

India's first official beyond visual line of sight (BVLOS) medical drone delivery experiment is scheduled to begin this week in Gauribidanur, some 80km from Bengaluru. While the consortium of firms led by Bengaluru's Throttle Aerospace Systems (TAS) had got Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) approval for object delivery experiments as early as March 2020, the pandemic had led to delays in some other permissions from agencies.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/healthcare/biotech/healthcare/indias-first-medical-drone-delivery-trials-from-june-18/articleshow/83478040.cms>

#### **Russia's Sputnik V likely to be available at Delhi's Indraprastha Apollo Hospital from next week**

The Russian COVID-19 vaccine Sputnik V is expected to be available at Indraprastha Apollo Hospital in Delhi from June 15, sources said. According to the sources, the program for Sputnik V rollout at Indraprastha Apollo Hospital will depend on the consignment received. The first phase of the Sputnik V rollout by Apollo Hospitals and Dr Reddy's Laboratories had started on a pilot basis on May 17 in Hyderabad and on May 18 in Vishakhapatnam. Besides Apollo Hospitals, the vaccine is also available in Hyderabad at Continental Hospitals.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/healthcare/biotech/healthcare/russias-sputnik-v-likely-to-be-available-at-delhis-indraprastha-apollo-hospital-from-next-week/articleshow/83482845.cms>

#### **External**

#### **US embassy to start visa appointments for Indian students from Monday**

The US mission in India is "actively working" to accommodate as many student visa applicants as possible in July and August, and facilitating their legitimate travel remained a top priority for it, a senior American diplomat said on Sunday. Don Heflin, the Minister Counselor for Consular Affairs at the US embassy, also said that the US-bound students will not require any proof of Covid-19 vaccination to enter the country. They will need a negative report of their Covid-19 test taken within 72 hours prior to their departure. There has been growing anxiety among a sizeable number of Indian students aspiring to fly to the US for higher studies in view of certain restrictions in getting visa appointments due to the coronavirus pandemic. The embassy will start giving visa interview slots for Indian students from Monday. "We recognise the stress and anxiety this has caused to students and their families, and we are actively working to accommodate as many student visa applicants as possible in July and August. Facilitating legitimate student travel to the United States remains a top priority for the US Mission to India," Heflin told PTI in an interview.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/us-embassy-to-start-visa-interview-slots-for-indian-students-from-monday-121061300452\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/us-embassy-to-start-visa-interview-slots-for-indian-students-from-monday-121061300452_1.html)

#### **WHO chief asks China to cooperate with probe into origins of COVID-19**

World Health Organization (WHO) chief Tedros Ghebreyesus has called on China to cooperate with the ongoing investigation into the origins of the COVID-19 amid renewed call to further probe the virus. Dr Tedros made these remarks after taking part in the Group of Seven (G7) summit by video conference on Saturday, The Wall Street Journal (WSJ) reported. The WHO Director-General hoped there would be better cooperation and transparency when the next phase of the probe into the virus's origin is underway. "As you know we will need cooperation from the Chinese side," he said. "We need transparency to understand or know or find the origin of this virus...after the report was released there were difficulties in the data sharing, especially in the raw data."

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/who-chief-asks-china-to-cooperate-with-probe-into-origins-of-covid-19-121061300218\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/who-chief-asks-china-to-cooperate-with-probe-into-origins-of-covid-19-121061300218_1.html)

### **Lack of product mix variety, failure to leverage GI tag led to tea exports slowdown: Experts**

Shortage of product mix variety, high price of CTC brew and failure to leverage geographical indication (GI) tag in the overseas market are among the many reasons that have led to a slowdown in Indian tea exports, traders and planters said on Sunday. In contrast, they felt, Sri Lanka, a major competitor of India in the global tea market, has managed to pip its larger neighbour by "concerted marketing efforts". "We used Darjeeling GI as a tool to legislate and threaten buyers whereas the need of the hour was to promote it with substantial funding on the lines of Colombian coffee and take international buyers with us.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/agriculture/lack-of-product-mix-variety-failure-to-leverage-gi-tag-led-to-tea-exports-slowdown-experts/articleshow/83482741.cms>

### **Zero duty imports from Nepal become major concern for Darjeeling's tea and edible oil industry**

Zero duty imports from Nepal under the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) agreement have emerged as a major concern for Darjeeling's tea and edible oil industry. Darjeeling's tea industry, which is a major sufferer on account of the entry of cheaper Nepalese teas, has decided to take up the issue with the West Bengal government once the lockdown in the state is withdrawn. It wants the state government to curb sales of Nepalese teas, which do not conform to the quality parameters.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/zero-duty-imports-from-nepal-become-major-concern-for-darjeelings-tea-and-edible-oil-industry/articleshow/83481917.cms>



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