

Kabul
36° / 19°



Herat
44° / 25°



Nangarhar
44° / 26°



Balkh
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Heart of Asia

Your Gateway to Afghanistan & the Region

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10 afs



Taliban Conducted 1,455 Attacks Since Withdrawal of Foreign Troops Began: Andar

The Taliban have turned to war instead of focusing on the Afghan peace talks and carried out 1,455 attacks across Afghanistan since the withdrawal of foreign troops began on May 1," said Rahmatullah Andar, spokesperson for the National Security Council on his Twitter account on Saturday. He added that in addition to destroying public institutions and public facilities, the Taliban do not even care about the death of their fighters. He said that 63 explosive attacks had been prevented as a result of the security forces' operation.

On Friday, the Taliban attacked several districts of the country at... **P3**



Foreign Ministers of Afghanistan-Turkmenistan Meet in Herat

A joint meeting of the Foreign Ministers of Afghanistan and Turkmenistan was held in Herat on Saturday. In addition to Hanif Atmar and Rashid Mardov, the foreign ministers of Afghanistan and Turkmenistan; Ajmal Ahmadi, acting head of the Central Bank; Harun Chaghansuri, the minister of mines and petroleum; Davood Noorzai, the head of the Afghan Electricity Company and a number of other Afghan and Turkmenistan government officials attended the meeting.

At the beginning of the meeting, Atmar said that Mardov's visit to Afghanistan is scheduled for two days and important bilateral issues, including peace and security in Afghanistan, will be discussed during separate meetings.

According to him, Turkmenistan's electricity exports to Herat; Herat marble exports to Turkmenistan; the TAPI project; the joint railway line between Afghanistan and Turkmenistan; the Lapis Lazuli transit route and trade and transit between the two countries are the main topics of talks between senior Afghan government... **P3**

Afghanistan Faces Vaccine Delay as it Battles COVID Surge



Three million doses promised by WHO delayed by several months as coronavirus cases rise by more than 800 percent since May 1.

Afghanistan is battling a brutal surge in COVID-19 infections as health officials plead for vaccines, only to be told by the World Health Organization that the three million doses the country expected to

receive by April will not be delivered until August.

"We are in the middle of a crisis," health ministry spokesman Ghulam Dastagir Nazari said this week, expressing deep frustration at the global vaccine distribution that has left poor countries scrambling to find supplies for their people.

Nazari has knocked on the door of

several embassies, and so far, "I've gotten diplomatic answers" but no vaccine doses, he said.

Over the past month, the escalating pace of new cases has threatened to overwhelm Afghanistan's health system, already struggling under the weight of relentless conflict. In part, the increase has been blamed on uninterrupted travel with India,

bringing the highly contagious Delta variant which was first identified there.

Also, most Afghans still question the reality of the virus or believe their faith will protect them and rarely wear masks or socially distance, often mocking those who do. Until just a week ago, the government was allowing unrestricted mass gatherings.

The Delta variant has helped send Afghanistan's infection rate soaring, hitting 16 provinces and the capital, Kabul, the hardest. This week, the rate of registered new cases reached as many as 1,500 a day, compared to 178 a day on May 1.

Hospital beds are full, and it is feared rapidly dwindling oxygen supplies will run out. Afghan ambassadors have been ordered to seek out emergency oxygen supplies in nearby countries, the foreign minister, Haneef Atmar, said in a tweet on Friday.

Massive Undercount
By official figures, Afghanistan has seen a total of 78,000 cases and more than 3,000 deaths from the pandemic. But those figures are likely a massive undercount, registering only deaths in... **P3**

Pakistan Seeks Afghan Settlement Before Foreign Troop Pullout: Khan

Prime Minister Imran Khan said Pakistan is pushing for a political settlement in Afghanistan before foreign troops leave later this year, to reduce the risk of civil war in its western neighbour.

The United States has said it will withdraw all its troops from Afghanistan on Sept. 11 after a two-decade presence.

More than 20 allied countries plan to follow suit.

"There is a lot of fear right now in Pakistan and I assure you that we are trying our level best that there is some sort of political settlement before the Americans leave," Khan told... **P2**

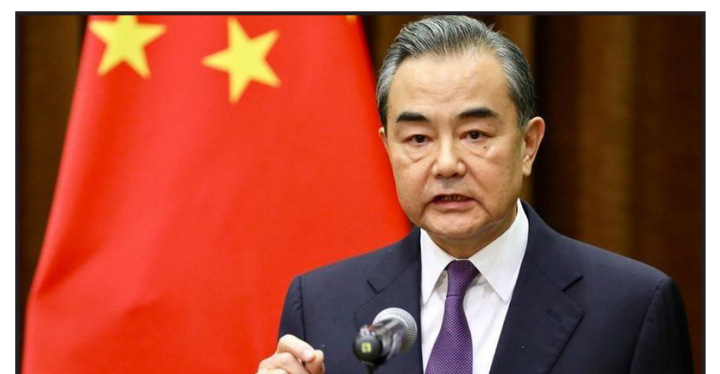


China: Afghans Can Control Their Destiny Post-Withdrawal

China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi said this week that while the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan will bring some uncertainties, the move will give the Afghan people the chance to control their own future. Following a video dialogue on Thursday with his Afghan and Pakistani counterparts, Wang said troops withdrawal will give Afghans an opportunity "to truly control their own destiny."

According to China's official readout after the trio's discussion, Wang said: "The three sides agreed to deepen the cooperation in BRI (Belt and Road Initiative), supporting the substantial expansion of it to Afghanistan, and enhance the level of interconnection between the three countries."

The three parties also agreed to create a strong dialogue mechanism between the respective foreign ministers, with China calling to add dialogue between their envoys to



discuss peace talks in Afghanistan and specific steps to be taken.

According to the South China Morning Post, Beijing fears the withdrawal will lead to a potential resurgence of terrorism in the country, which would pose security risks to its predominantly Muslim Xinjiang region bordering Afghanistan and threaten its belt and road projects in the region.

China has sought to strengthen

cooperation with Central Asian states on security to manage any potential spillover of turmoil from Afghanistan. During a meeting with the foreign ministers of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan last month, Beijing said they should jointly crack down on terrorists and prevent transnational crime.

However, the post reported that Zhu Yongbiao, a... **P3**

Artificial

the software and 3D printing plans for the technology openly available. And, as the scientists describe in a second preprint, they have simplified the sequencing steps and software so that developing countries and small organizations can take advantage of it—96 insects at a time.

Pakistan...

Reuters on Friday at his official residence in Islamabad.

Violence in Afghanistan has risen sharply since the troop withdrawal announcement, with the insurgent Taliban resisting pressure from Washington and its allies to agree to a political understanding leading to a peace deal.

“Since the moment the Americans gave a date, of when they were going to leave Afghanistan ... the Taliban feel they have won the war,” Khan said, adding it was not going to be easy to get concessions from the Taliban after the U.S. decision.

Regional Repercussions

Khan said Pakistan would suffer the most, after Afghanistan itself, if there was civil war and a refugee crisis.

“And then there would be pressure on us to jump in and become a part of it,” Khan said. He said his government had changed Pakistan’s decades-long policy of pushing for “strategic depth” in Afghanistan to ensure that there was a friendly government there.

“Any Afghan government chosen by the people is who Pakistan should deal with,” Khan said, adding that Pakistan “should not try to do any manipulation in Afghanistan”. Pakistan has long been accused of harbouring leaders and fighters of the Taliban, whom Islamabad helped to power in 1996, even as the insurgent group fought U.S.-led foreign troops. Khan said a lot depended on U.S. special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad, with Pakistan’s and Afghanistan’s help, to carve out a settlement to avoid more bloodshed.

By: CGTN Insight

Why Color Revolutions Have Bypassed China

Editor’s note: “Roots of China’s Growth” is a 10-episode series marking the centenary of the founding of the Communist Party of China (CPC), which has presided over the country’s meteoric rise as a global power. The series focuses on 10 fundamental elements of the strategy that has led to China’s transformation from an impoverished nation over the past 100 years. The “democratic centralism” is the fourth in the series.

In 2016, someone raised a question on Quora, a popular American Q&A platform, asking why educated Chinese hadn’t started a color revolution—a protest movement that gains its name by adopting a specific color.

In response, a young Shanghai lady working in the U.S. posted two photos of Shanghai’s Pudong area in 1990 and 2010. In what was acclaimed as the “shortest yet sharpest” answer, she wrote: “From a poor and blank land to this in 20 years! This is my hometown! Do we look like we’ve been oppressed, brainwashed, and deprived of freedom? Do we look like we need a better government? Thanks for your advice, but China’s current system is functioning pretty well.”

Some in the international community have long embraced the empty rhetoric that the Communist Party of China (CPC) is autocratic and authoritarian. In the meantime, though, they find themselves caught in a dilemma: Why is China’s “anti-democratic” system, rather than fueling anti-government movements like the “color revolutions,” broadly supported by the nation’s 1.4 billion people? How could this system achieve such extraordinary social and economic triumphs in the face of devastating international events, like the global financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic?

The People’s Republic of China has been true to its official name, practicing a people’s democracy, not autocratic and authoritarian rule. China follows the principle of democratic centralism, combining democracy and central control in a way that has been effective in meeting national goals.

History has proven that democracy without centralization can lead to the radicalization of the system or

even anarchism. China’s democratic centralism fully reflects the interests and expectations of the Chinese people, and ensures that national decisions are rigorously and effectively enforced. As President Xi Jinping said, “This is our Party’s greatest institutional advantage.”

‘Whole-process’ democracy at work This is how it works. Leaders of the Party and national institutions at all levels are selected through competitive elections by representatives and delegates to the National People’s Congress (NPC), the country’s top legislature.

Democratic centralism in China is not only about an electoral and representative system, but also a decision-making process underpinned by consultation with representatives of the masses. Before convening the annual plenary session, the Central Committee of the CPC must consult with the eight democratic parties and the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce before finalizing major decisions.

Furthermore, China’s institutional structure includes not only the NPC, the highest organ of state power, but also the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) – a political mechanism unique to China. Apart from discussing draft laws and regulations before the NPC, the CPPCC can also hold consultative sessions on specific topics with government departments and proffer opinions and advice.

As President Xi has said, China’s democracy is a “whole-process democracy” rather than one that is expressed at election time only and is dormant otherwise.

Collective leadership with individual responsibility

To avoid the radicalization of the system, the Party and leading national bodies, under democratic centralism, function on the principle of combining collective leadership with individual responsibility based on the division of work.

Members of a leading team are each designated specific duties, but major decisions must be made collectively. Each individual member can freely



express opinions but must abide by the collective decisions taken.

All the CPC’s intra-party resolutions must be implemented in line with the “Four Obeys” principle, namely, individual Party members defer to Party organizations, the minority defers to the majority, lower-level Party organizations defer to higher-level Party organizations, and all organizations and members of the Party defer to the National Congress and the Central Committee of the Party. In cases where individuals disagree with a Party resolution or policy, they can make a statement of reservation and present their views to a Party organization at a higher level, up to and including the Central Committee. People power on display

China can put in place a system that is widely supported because the CPC represents the fundamental interests of the broadest masses of the people. The English word “party” means a group of people that acts in the best interests of certain groups of the population. The CPC, however, is not a party like this. The Constitution of the CPC expressly stipulates that “besides the interests of the working class and the broadest possible majority of the people, the Party has no special interests of its own.” This explains why the CPC could integrate democracy and centralism to serve the people.

For example, the fifth plenary session of the 19th Central Committee of the CPC held in October 2020 adopted the proposals for the formulation of the 14th Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development and

the Long-Range Objectives Through to the Year 2035. Before submitting the proposals, the CPC consulted with democratic parties and the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce, and President Xi hosted workshops to hear a diversity of opinions from a wide cross-section of society, such as entrepreneurs, scientists, and community-level representatives.

Opinions and suggestions were also solicited online, generating more than a million responses. Advice solicited through these workshops and online channels is essential to the decision-making of the CPC Central Committee. Democratic centralism is, without doubt, China’s greatest institutional advantage. The fact that the system enjoys public support accounts for the country’s remarkable stability and the durability of the CPC to the evident dismay of critics abroad.

Li Junru is executive vice chairman of the China Institute for Innovation & Development Strategy and a former vice president of the Party School of the CPC Central Committee.

time. “During the Taliban attacks, two or three districts fell and a number of security forces were killed,” he added.

The Afghan government’s negotiating team has gone to Qatar to resume talks; but it is not yet clear when the talks between the two sides will begin. Many high-ranking Taliban members are reportedly absent in Qatar.

Meanwhile, security officials in Herat province say the Zandijan district police chief was wounded... **P3**

By: Dr. Abdel Aziz Aluwaisheg

Afghanistan Needs World’s Help to Avoid a Security Breakdown

A bomb blast on Friday killed 12 worshippers and injured 15 in a mosque on the outskirts of the Afghan capital Kabul, ending a short-lived calm during the Eid holidays. There were also several terrorist attacks earlier in the month, including one near a Kabul high school that killed at least 90 and injured scores more, many of them schoolgirls, according to a report by the New York Times. That attack appeared designed to inflict as much damage as possible. According to the Afghan Interior Ministry, a car bomb was detonated in front of the school and, as students rushed out in fear, two more bombs were set off.

Targeting schoolgirls in a district of the capital inhabited by the Hazara minority evoked fears that communal and anti-women violence could resurge after the impending American troop withdrawal. Since the US announced its intention to leave

Afghanistan, relief organizations and human rights groups have warned of such attacks.

The US-sponsored intra-Afghan talks and the US announcement of its plan to depart have not led to a cessation of the violence and, judging by this month’s events, may lead to an escalation as different groups vie for control. The US withdrawal is now scheduled to be completed in September, 20 years after its invasion of the country following the 9/11 attacks. It is not clear what the US plans are for any future presence in Afghanistan after September. The plans of America’s NATO partners are also unclear, although some have already withdrawn their forces or reduced their numbers in anticipation of the US withdrawal.

The US involvement with Afghanistan goes back decades, predating the events of 2001, with the US and NATO having handled the security situation

in partnership with the Afghan government since then. As such, there is a special responsibility for Washington to lead an international effort to restore peace and stability to the war-ravaged country.

Several great powers have invaded Afghanistan in the past, only to leave it in chaos, but the US and NATO should not repeat that pattern. The Soviet Union could be blamed for much of the mess today, with years of meddling in Afghan affairs followed by a brutal invasion that lasted 10 years and claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of Afghan civilians, while also creating millions of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). That invasion was met with a powerful insurgency that drove Soviet troops out and later turned the country into a haven for terror groups, which sow death and destruction around the world even today. The US invasion of 2001

sought to bring an end to those activities, but it has failed and, in frustration, America has decided to leave prematurely.

Located at an important crossroads between different parts of Asia, Afghanistan has been involved in great power rivalry for centuries – and that fate may continue for the foreseeable future. The British invaded Afghanistan several times in the 19th century, ostensibly to ward off imperial Russia’s meddling. Russia also tried and failed, and then the US and NATO. After America’s withdrawal, it is expected that other countries may try their luck at shaping Afghanistan’s future, including China, India and Iran.

Regardless of the merits of the American decision to leave, after two decades of calling the shots on security matters in Afghanistan, it now needs to lead the peace process before it departs. The UN’s auspices are the most obvious option for such efforts, but other avenues could be pursued to reach a negotiated political solution endorsed by

both the international community and regional organizations, such as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. That process should aim at preventing a security vacuum following the American withdrawal, which could lead to malign meddling from neighbors and others. At a minimum, a UN peacekeeping presence is necessary to protect Afghan civilians, especially vulnerable groups such as women, minorities, refugees and IDPs. Relief organizations need to be given access and protection to provide the necessary assistance to those in need. Until such a security network is in place, a US or NATO presence is needed to prevent a security breakdown.

In addition to security concerns, Afghanistan is facing an economic meltdown. A recent report by the US Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) estimated that Afghanistan’s overall poverty level increased in 2020 from an already high level of 55 to 72 percent. The rise is... **P3**

U.S. Announces \$266 Million in New Aid to Afghanistan

The United States has announced more than \$266 million in new humanitarian assistance for Afghanistan as U.S. troops exit the war-torn country.

The announcement on June 4 comes amid spiraling violence and stalled peace talks between the Taliban and the Western-backed government in Kabul that casts further uncertainty over the future of the country once U.S.-led international forces leave by September.

Despite the troop withdrawal, U.S. President Joe Biden's administration has vowed to remain committed to providing military and humanitarian aid to Afghanistan.

"As the United States withdraws

military forces from Afghanistan, our enduring commitment is clear. We remain engaged through our full diplomatic, economic, and assistance toolkit to support the peaceful, stable future the Afghan people want and deserve," the State Department said in a statement announcing the new aid.

The new funds bring to nearly \$3.9 billion the amount of U.S. humanitarian aid to Afghanistan since 2002.

The money will help support 18 million people in need, including more than 4.8 million Afghans internally displaced by conflict, according to the State Department.

It said the funds will also go toward



health and sanitation, including helping Afghans respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

They will also be used to assist

"the most vulnerable Afghans," particularly women and girls facing gender-based violence.

China: Afghans...

professor of international relations at Lanzhou University, said the expansion of belt and road projects to Afghanistan could face multiple challenges.

"First, it will face security risks due to the instability there. Besides, investment of Chinese enterprises may also fail due to the lack of understanding of Afghan culture and society. Moreover, China will be highly likely to face international accusations such as the 'debt trap,'" Zhu said.

"Looking from China's recent official statement, it is likely to be more active in Afghanistan from now on than in the past, which means China's influence in the country will be expanded.

"But it does not necessarily reduce the influence of the US, because the stance of China and the US on Afghanistan is not conflicting. Instead, they share common interests in improving the self-development capacity of Afghanistan," he said.

Afghanistan...

hospitals, not the far greater numbers who die at home. Testing is woefully inadequate. In only the past month, the percentage of positive COVID tests has jumped from about eight percent to 60 percent in some parts of the country. By WHO recommendations, anything higher than five percent shows officials are not testing widely enough, allowing the virus to spread unchecked.

At most, only 3,000 tests a day are carried out, as Afghans resist testing, even after the country dramatically ramped up its capabilities to 25,000 a day.

Only recently, the government tried to take steps to clamp down to contain the surge. It closed schools, universities and colleges for two weeks. It also shut down wedding halls, which had been operating unhindered throughout the pandemic.

But it is rare to see anyone wearing a mask in the streets, and even where masks are mandatory, like in government offices, the rule is rarely enforced. As many as 10 flights arrive daily from India, packed with Afghans, particularly students and people who had gone to India for medical treatment.

Nazari said banning flights was not an option since many Afghans cannot afford to be stranded in India and the government cannot prevent citizens from re-entering their own country.

Taliban...

the same time. "During the Taliban attacks, two or three districts fell and a number of security forces were killed," he added.

The Afghan government's negotiating team has gone to Qatar to resume talks; but it is not yet clear when the talks between the two sides will begin. Many high-ranking Taliban members are reportedly absent in Qatar.

Meanwhile, security officials in Herat province say the Zandijan district police chief was wounded in an attack by Taliban insurgents in the district of the province.

Herat police spokesperson Abdul Ahad Valizada said that clashes between security forces and

the Taliban took place in Zandijan district on Friday night. He said 15 Taliban insurgents had been killed and wounded in a counterattack by the police.

He added that the Taliban had been gathering reinforcements from other provinces for some time and were trying to bring down some districts; but with fierce resistance from police forces, all Taliban attacks have been repulsed and heavy casualties have been inflicted on them.

He said a large cache of weapons and ammunition had fallen into the hands of security forces during Friday night's Taliban attack. The Taliban have not yet commented.

Foreign...

officials and Turkmenistan.

On the other hand, Turkmenistan Foreign Minister Rashid Murdov said that the purpose of his visit to Herat was to strengthen friendly and fraternal relations with Afghanistan and that seven important issues would be discussed during the joint meetings.

Over the past few years, the work of the TAPI project, the Turkmenistan gas pipeline through Afghanistan to India and Pakistan, has been slow and has been widely criticized. According to the president's promise, Tapi gas should have reached

Herat last year, but the practical process of this project in Afghanistan has not started yet.

In addition, the cessation of the transfer of commercial goods after the import and export of a few limited shipments via the Lapis Lazuli route has also drawn criticism. The Lapis Lazuli transit route connects Afghanistan to Turkey and Europe via Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan and Georgia / Georgia.

Following the Turkmen Foreign Minister's visit to Herat, joint meetings with businessmen, craftsmen, exporters and Afghan government officials are scheduled for Sunday, June 6.

Afghanistan...

due to deteriorating security and economic conditions, as well as the unmet challenges of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). At the end of 2020, the unemployment rate was estimated to be about 38 percent, compared to 24 percent in 2019. In November 2020, more than 11 million people — about 30 percent of Afghanistan's population of 38 million — faced either a crisis or emergency state of food insecurity.

Government finances are also askew, according to the SIGAR report. While its revenue declined by about 3 percent in 2020, its expenditures increased by about 8 percent in order to meet the pandemic's challenges.

Trade has also been in decline. In July 2020, exports to Pakistan — Afghanistan's top trading partner — decreased by about 57 percent compared to July 2019, while its imports from Pakistan decreased by about 44 percent.

To meet these hardships, the UN Development

Programme last year estimated that the Afghan government would need an additional \$6 billion in international grants over the next five years — a 30 percent increase from current levels — to offset COVID-19-related budget losses and maintain expenditure levels. However, with security worries and concerns about governance, it is unlikely that donors and investors will meet these targets.

Afghanistan clearly needs help at the political, security and economic levels, as well as help mediating its internal conflicts. Its social safety net is broken and its economic governance system is badly in need of repair to weed out corruption and establish robust accountability structures.

The international community should lend a hand to address these needs. A discussion is needed between potential partners, led by the US as the current and most recent outside power in Afghanistan, to agree on a division of labor between interested countries and international and regional organizations to work at different levels.

Why Color...

in an attack by Taliban insurgents in the district of the province.

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Exchange Rates

78.15	\$	78.25
94.40	€	94.50
109	£	109.9
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United States Follows Soviet Union's Path — Putin

"The problem of empires is that they think they are so powerful that they can afford small inaccuracies and mistakes," Putin said. Russian President Vladimir Putin said he was convinced that the United States is following a typical scenario of an empire: confident of their unlimited power, empires create unnecessary problems for themselves until they can no longer cope with them. "We are hearing constant threats from the Congress and other places. All of this is done as part of domestic political processes in the United States. The people who are doing this assume that the economic, military and political might of the United States is so huge that [the problems they create as a result are] nothing serious and they can cope with that. This is what they think," Putin said on Friday

at a meeting with heads of the world's leading news agencies, organized by TASS on the sidelines of the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF).

"Do you know what the problem is? I'll tell you, as a former citizen of the Soviet Union. The problem of empires is that they think they are so powerful that they can afford small inaccuracies and mistakes," he said.

In his words, empire rulers are confident they can intimidate, persuade or buy loyalty of various nations or groups, and think all their problems can be solved this way.

"But problems keep piling up. And, at some point, they are no longer able to cope with them. And the United States is now walking the Soviet Union's path, and its gait is confident and steady," the Russian leader added.



A look at the world

India Records 3,380 Daily Coronavirus Deaths

Country registers lowest daily infections in 58 days, says Health Ministry. India recorded 3,380 new coronavirus linked deaths on Saturday, according to the Health Ministry. It said the country reported more than 120,000 new cases in the last 24 hours, taking total cases to 28.69 million. The death toll stands at 344,082. A statement by the Ministry noted that the cases are the "lowest in 58 days." After India witnessed an exponential rise in daily infections and deaths last month,



there has been a decline in the cases and deaths in many states. Local broadcaster, NDTV, citing a government study, reported Friday that the variant which was first found in India, known as the Delta strain, is "highly infectious and fast-spreading and drove the savage second surge of COVID-19" in the country. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has faced criticism for failing to handle the second wave. Now, the country is facing an acute shortage of vaccination. Government statistics show more than 220 million doses have been administered. India's signed a deal on Thursday with domestic vaccine maker Biological-E for 300 million doses.

Some Americans Resist COVID Vaccines as World Faces Shortage



California pays to encourage residents to take jabs as world suffers from rising COVID-19 cases, deaths. California held its first COVID-19 lottery on Friday, which saw 15 vaccinated residents of the state win \$50,000 each as part of a host of efforts across the United States to encourage Americans reluctant to take one of the country's jabs, as the world struggles with rising cases and deaths amid a global shortage. California is the most populous state in the US, with nearly 40 million residents, and its programme is the largest in the nation. The state government has set aside \$116m in cash prizes and incentives as part of "Vax for the Win", including awarding a \$50 grocery gift card to the first 2 million people vaccinated since May 27. Faced with a nationwide slowdown, other states have undertaken similar lotteries, including Washington, Colorado and Ohio, which has already given \$1m to two vaccinated residents as part of a lottery that will give away \$5m in total. Anyone 12 and older who has received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine is eligible for California's giveaways, Southern California's ABC 7 reported. The head of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on Friday urged American parents to vaccinate adolescent children. Dr Rochelle Walensky cited "severe health impacts of COVID-19 on adolescents" and a report on a spike in hospitalizations in that age group. The US began vaccinating children with the Pfizer jab on May 10, but the World Health Organization has said children – who face little danger of death from the virus – are "not a high priority" as the global shortage continues.

Artificial Intelligence Could Help Biologists Classify the World's Tiny Creatures

With biodiversity in decline around the world, researchers are desperate to catalog all of Earth's insects and other invertebrates, which represent 90% of the 9 million species yet to be named. To do so, scientists typically face long hours in the lab sorting through the specimens they collected. Enter DiversityScanner. The approach involves a robot, which plucks individual insects and other small creatures one at a time from trays and photographs them. A computer then uses a type of artificial



intelligence known as machine learning to compare each one's legs, antennae, and other features to known specimens. The technology then imposes a color code, or heat map, over the image (see above). The warmer the color, say, red, the more the computer program depended on that body part to make a call on the type of insect it was. This heat map makes it easier for researchers checking the identification to see what the program's "thought" process was. The robot then moves each insect into a plate with 96 tiny wells, readying these specimens for DNA sequencing. The resulting species-identifying piece of sequence—a "DNA barcode"—is linked to the image in a database of all the cataloged specimens. Although not quite as good as a human expert, the approach accurately classifies insects 91% of the time, the designers of the technology report in a study posted to the preprint server bioRxiv. That accuracy will improve as more specimens are added to the database, they note. The researchers have made... P2



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