



(JUNE 21)

- 1377** - King Edward III died after ruling England for 50 years; he was succeeded by his grandson, Richard II.
- 1788** - The United States Constitution went into effect as New Hampshire became the ninth state to ratify it.
- 1942** - Tobruk in Libya fell to the German army under Field Marshal Rommel during World War Two.
- 1963** - Cardinal Giovanni Montini was elected Pope after the death of John XXIII. He became Pope Paul VI.
- 1964** - The US civil rights bill was passed by the House of Representatives. The Senate approved it on July 2.
- 2007** - Canadian army medic signs mural at Afghanistan patrol base, starting string of handprints from medics who followed in a record now referred to as "The Healing Hands of Sperwan Ghar".
- 2009** - Denmark's Queen hands over law of Self government to Greenland.

SOURCE: REUTERS



A protestor secures a Brazilian flag next to roses placed by the NGO Rio de Paz on Copacabana beach, Rio de Janeiro, in memory of Brazil's half a million Covid-19 victims, yesterday. Brazil became the second country after the United States to surpass 500,000 Covid-19 deaths as the South American giant grapples with a third wave of the pandemic.

PHOTO: AFP

IRAN PRESIDENTIAL POLLS

World reaction

Hardliner Iranian cleric Ebrahim Raisi's victory on Saturday in a presidential election drew starkly opposed reactions, with Russia hailing a sign of greater regional stability but some condemning it as a farce.

UNITED STATES: A State Department spokesperson said the United States regretted Iranians had been denied the chance to vote in a fair election. But Washington would continue talks over Iran's nuclear programme, working with allies and partners.

ISRAEL: Foreign ministry spokesman Lior Haiat said on Twitter that Iran has "elected its most extremist president to date". "Raisi's election is, I would say, the last chance for world powers to wake up before returning to the nuclear agreement, and understand who they are doing business with ... A regime of brutal hangmen must never be allowed to have weapons of mass-destruction." Israeli PM Bennett said.

RUSSIA: "Relations between our countries have been traditionally friendly," Russian President Vladimir Putin said in a message, saying Raisi's election would help develop "constructive bilateral cooperation in many fields and our partnership in international affairs". "This responds entirely to the interests of the Russian and Iranian people and goes towards reinforcing regional stability and security," he said.

HAMAS: Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem said the Palestinian Islamist movement "congratulates" Raisi, adding: "Iran has always been a main, strong and real supporter of the Palestinian resistance and our national cause."

IRANIAN OPPOSITION: Exiled opposition groups hailed what they termed a "boycott" of the presidential polls, where turnout was 48.8 percent. Maryam Rajavi, the leader of the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), said the "unprecedented nationwide boycott" had signalled that Iranians had "voted for overthrow of the ruling theocracy".

GULF AND YEMEN: The rulers of the Gulf states of Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates all sent congratulatory messages to Raisi, their state news agencies announced. The senior political leader for Yemen's Tehran-backed Huthi rebels, Mahdi al-Mashat, also congratulated Raisi.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL: "That Ebrahim Raisi has risen to the presidency instead of being investigated for the crimes against humanity of murder, enforced disappearance and torture, is a grim reminder that impunity reigns supreme in Iran," Amnesty said. It called on the UN Human Rights Council's member states to take "concrete steps to address the crisis of systematic impunity in Iran".



SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

India official warns of early third Covid wave

AGENCIES

India may be hit by a third wave of Covid-19 far sooner than predicted because people are ignoring guidelines, the Times of India cited Dr Randeep Guleria, director at the state-run All India Institute of Medical Sciences, as saying.

Infections could start rising again in 12 to 16 weeks, the report quoted Dr Guleria as saying. That compares with the four to five months new waves are expected to take to peak, the Times of India reported yesterday.

Dr Guleria earlier told a television channel that a third wave could come as early as in six to eight weeks' time, according to the report.

He said the highly transmissible Delta variant of the virus is believed to be responsible for India's "devastating second wave" and continues to pose a high risk to a large section of the population that has not yet been vaccinated, according to the Times of India report.

India yesterday reported less than 60,000 daily Covid-19 cases for the first time in 81 days with the addition of 58,419 new infections recorded in the last 24 hours, the Health Ministry said yesterday.

With the second wave of Covid-19 waning, authorities of many Indian states lifted the curbs on economic activities and public movement but the Indian Home Ministry on Saturday advised caution and asked states to ensure strict adherence to Covid-appropriate behaviour and easing of restrictions.

India's confirmed coronavirus cases have surpassed 29 million, with more than 380,000 deaths. Experts believe both numbers are vastly undercounted.

Iran nuke talks adjourned

Israel's warns world against deal with 'hangmen regime'

REUTERS, Vienna/Dubai

Negotiators for Iran and six world powers yesterday adjourned talks on reviving their 2015 nuclear deal and return to respective capitals for consultations as remaining differences still need to be overcome, officials said.

"We are now closer than ever to an agreement but the distance that exists between us and an agreement remains and bridging it is not an easy job," Iran's top negotiator Abbas Araçchi told state TV from Vienna. "We will return to Tehran tonight."

After more than a week of negotiations in their latest round, parties to the pact wrapped up with Russia's envoy saying no date for a resumption in negotiations had been set for now, although he suggested they could return in about 10 days.

Negotiations have been going on in Vienna since April to work out the nature and sequencing of steps Iran and the United States must take



on nuclear activities and sanctions to return to full compliance with the nuclear pact.

Ebrahim Raisi, a hardliner and fierce critic of the West, won Iran's presidential election on Friday and will take office in early August, replacing pragmatist Hassan Rouhani, under whose aegis the 2015 deal was struck.

The Islamic Republic's arch-enemy, Israel, yesterday condemned Raisi's election. New Prime Minister Naftali Bennett said it would be a "regime of brutal hangmen" with which world powers should not negotiate a new nuclear accord.

However, Enrique Mora, the European Union political director, reported progress in the talks.

The United States under then-President Donald Trump left the deal in 2018, branding its terms too weak to remove the risk of Iran developing nuclear weapons potential, and reimposed sanctions on Iran.

Iran has since breached the deal's strict limits on uranium enrichment, a possible path to a nuclear bomb. It has said its moves would be reversed if the United States rescinded all sanctions.

US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said disagreements over how to save the deal persisted, repeating that the ultimate decision on the issue lay with Khamenei.

Raisi, like Khamenei, has supported the nuclear talks as a route to cancelling US sanctions that have laid waste to the Islamic Republic's oil-based economy and dramatically worsened economic hardships, stirring widespread discontent.



UK ex-Speaker Bercow defects to Labour

AFP, London

The colourful former speaker of Britain's House of Commons John Bercow said he has left the Conservatives to join the opposition Labour Party, launching a blistering attack on Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

In an interview with the Observer newspaper published yesterday, the former MP said the Conservative Party under Johnson was "reactionary, populist, nationalistic and sometimes even xenophobic".

Bercow, who stepped down as speaker in October 2019 after 10 years, said he joined the Labour Party a few weeks ago because he shared its values.

"I am motivated by support for equality, social justice and internationalism. That is the Labour brand," he told the Observer.

Bercow described the prime minister as "a successful campaigner but a lousy governor."

"I don't think he has any vision of a more equitable society, any thirst for social mobility or any passion to better the lot of people less fortunate than he is. I think increasingly people are sick of lies, sick of empty slogans, sick of a failure to deliver," he told the newspaper.

Bercow served as a Conservative MP for Buckingham for 12 years before being elected speaker in 2009, becoming the youngest person to hold the role for 100 years.

CAN 'BODY CLOCK' GOVERN IMMUNE RESPONSE?

REUTERS

When microorganisms – such as bacteria or viruses – infect us, our immune system jumps into action. It's highly trained to sense and eliminate infections and clear up any damage caused by them.

It's typically assumed our immune systems work the exact same way regardless of whether an infection occurs during the day or at night. But research spanning over half a century now shows our bodies actually respond differently at day and night. The reason for this is our body clock, and the fact that each cell in the body, including our immune cells, can tell what time of day it is.

Our body clock has evolved over millions of years to help us survive. Every cell in the body has a collection of proteins that indicate the time depending on their levels. Knowing whether it's day or night means our body can adjust its functions and behaviours to the correct time.

Our body clock does this by generating 24 hour rhythms (also termed circadian rhythms) in how cells function. For example, our body clock ensures that we only produce melatonin as night falls, as this chemical makes us tired – signalling it's time for sleep.

Our immune system is composed of many different types of immune cells that are continually patrolling the body looking for evidence of infection or damage. But it is our body clock that determines where those cells are located at particular times of the day.

Broadly speaking, our immune cells migrate into tissues during the day and then circulate around the body at night. This circadian rhythm of immune cells may have evolved so that immune cells are directly located in tissues at a time when we are more likely to be infected, primed for attack.

At night, our immune cells circulate around the body and stop off at our lymph nodes. Here, they build up memory of what

was encountered during the day – including any infections. This ensures they can respond better to the infection the next time they encounter it.

Given the body clock's control over our immune system, it's hardly surprising to learn that some research has shown that the time we're infected with a virus – such as influenza or hepatitis – can impact how sick we become.

Other research has also shown that the time we take our medicines can affect how well they work.

There's also an increasing body of evidence showing vaccines – which create an immune "memory" of a particular pathogen – are impacted by our body clock, and the time of day that a vaccine is administered.

For example, a 2016 randomised trial of over 250 adults aged 65 and older showed having the influenza vaccine in the morning (between 9am and 11am) resulted in a greater antibody response compared to those vaccinated in the afternoon (between 3pm and 5pm).

Russian ambassador returns 'optimistic' to Washington

US says preparing new sanctions over Navalny poisoning

AFP, Moscow

The Russian ambassador in Washington flew back yesterday to the United States saying he hoped to build "equal and pragmatic" ties after a US-Russia summit in Geneva aimed at reducing tensions.

The plane transporting ambassador Anatoly Antonov, who was recalled in March for consultations, took off at 9:20am (0620 GMT) from Moscow's Chermetievo airport for New York, where he will travel on to Washington, Russian news agencies reported.

"Given the results of the meeting between the two presidents, I am counting on constructive work with my American colleagues to build equal and pragmatic relations," Antonov told the Ria Novosti agency, adding he was in an "optimistic mood."

Russian President Vladimir Putin said Wednesday that Moscow and Washington agreed for their ambassadors to return,

after summit talks in Geneva with US counterpart Joe Biden.

Diplomatic relations between Moscow and Washington had all but broken down since Biden took office and accused the Kremlin of interfering in US elections and launching cyberattacks.

Meanwhile, a top White House advisor yesterday warned that the United States was preparing fresh sanctions against Russia over the near-fatal poisoning of Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny.

Jailed Navalny, President Vladimir Putin's most prominent opponent, was arrested in January upon returning to Russia after recovering from a poisoning he says was orchestrated by Moscow.

"We have sanctioned Russia for the poisoning of Alexei Navalny... We rallied European allies in a joint effort to impose costs on Russia for the use of a chemical agent against one of their citizens on Russian soil," Biden's national security advisor Jake Sullivan told CNN's "State of the Union."

BATTLE FOR YEMEN'S MARIB

Dozens killed in clashes

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates

Renewed battles between government forces and Huthi rebels over the strategic city of Marib in northern Yemen have left 47 dead, including 16 pro-government forces, military sources said Saturday.

The Iran-backed rebels are seeking to seize control of Marib and its surrounding oil fields, the Yemeni government's last stronghold in the north after six years of fighting that has plunged the country into a humanitarian crisis.

Diplomatic efforts to secure a ceasefire in Yemen had intensified, in parallel with the fierce campaign for control of Marib, which has left thousands dead on both sides.

But with no agreement in sight, the fighting has flared again after a lull over the past month.

Sources with the internationally recognised government told AFP that 16 soldiers from their ranks were killed, including six officers, on Saturday. The insurgents rarely report their casualties.

The Huthis "launched attacks on various fronts, in an attempt to advance, but they were mostly repelled," one of the officials told AFP.

The Huthis said on their Al Masirah television channel that the coalition had also carried out 17 air strikes in different parts of Marib province.

The renewed fighting over Marib comes after the failure of a diplomatic push by international community to secure a ceasefire in Yemen.

The outgoing UN envoy for Yemen Martin Griffiths on Tuesday told the Security Council his own efforts over the past three years to end the war have been "in vain".

Yemen has been devastated by the civil war which broke out in 2014, and millions of civilians are on the brink of famine, according to the UN.

The Huthis have repeatedly demanded the re-opening of the airport in the rebel-held northern capital of Sanaa before agreeing to any ceasefire.

As well as the bloody offensive in Marib, the Huthis have also stepped up drone and missile strikes on Saudi targets, including its oil facilities.

Saudi air defences on Saturday intercepted and destroyed 11 drones fired at the kingdom by Huthi rebels in Yemen, Saudi state media reported, quoting the coalition battling the insurgents.



A woman sits among offerings made at George Floyd Square on Juneteenth in Minneapolis, Minnesota, US, on Saturday. Juneteenth, or June 19th, marks the day in 1865 when a Union general informed a group of enslaved people in Texas that they had been made free two years earlier by President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation during the Civil War.

PHOTO: REUTERS