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Assam's flood situation takes a turn for the worse, 12 lakh hit

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Aishwarya Rai, daughter test positive for coronavirus

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In a first, Trump dons mask during visit to a military medical facility

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Blackwood shines as West Indies beats England in first Test

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NEARBY



New cases below 2,000 for second day in a row

NEW DELHI
 The Capital on Sunday reported 1,573 new COVID-19 cases in a single day, taking the total to 1,12,494. A total of 1,781 fresh cases were reported on Saturday.

CITY PAGE 3

Markets in U.P. to remain shut on weekends

LUCKNOW
 All markets and establishments in Uttar Pradesh will remain closed on weekends as part of the State's efforts to check the spread of COVID-19.

NORTH & EAST PAGE 4

EDUCATION PLUS PAGE 11

Xi's mobilisation order, months of planning ahead of border moves

'Timing of incursions shows high level of coordination'

DINAKAR PERI
 ANANTH KRISHNAN
 NEW DELHI

China's moves into the Galwan Valley, Pangong Lake area and several other spots along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), starting in early May, were likely planned for months and followed a new mobilisation order issued by President Xi Jinping, according to the assessments of Indian officials.

Several Chinese incursions across the LAC took place almost simultaneously in locations several hundred kilometres apart — some

even hours apart on the same day — leading to skirmishes in early and mid-May.

The timing of the incidents suggested a high level of coordination and planning, the officials said.

In Galwan Valley and Pangong Lake, the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) de-

EXCLUSIVE

ployments appeared to have been aimed at pushing India back from the LAC and re-drawing it to more closely align with China's official borders.

A buffer zone that both sides have temporarily agreed to in Galwan has, on China's insistence, been structured around Beijing's new LAC perception, shift-



Watchful eyes: An Army vehicle moving towards Ladakh on Saturday. •PTI

ing the line around 1 km west.

In Pangong Lake, China has thinned its presence from its LAC perception at Finger 4 but moved only to Finger 5, still much deeper

inside from the Indian claim line at Finger 8 which is about 8 km from Finger 4.

Starting in late January and early February, the PLA began what was viewed as routine mobilisation for an-

nual exercises in Xinjiang, which borders Ladakh.

This year, however, in a major departure from the earlier annual exercises, PLA troops that used to train far inside their territory,

while border frontier troops remained in forward areas, for the first time moved close to the border. Due to this, there was huge mobilisation since April and the move was very evident, officials stated.

Significant new order

In January 2020, President Xi signed a new Training Mobilisation Order (TMO) for strengthening military training in real combat conditions and "to maintain a high level of readiness". The new order updated the 2019 TMO, which was the first such order to be signed by Mr. Xi, and had called for implementing new military training guidelines announced by him in 2018 to improve combat readiness.

While the announcement

was seen as routine at the time, Indian officials believe it dramatically altered the pattern of annual exercises and China's forward deployments, not just with India but also in other theatres, where tensions have flared this summer with Japan, Taiwan and in the South China Sea.

Government sources said the TMO called for "confrontational training" to assess the reaction of commanders in real-time combat situations and deal with "a multi-front situation".

"They are putting these to test and are war-gaming in real-time," said one government source, who like others quoted in this article requested anonymity.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

NATGRID gets access to data from 14,000 police stations

VIJAYA SINGH
 NEW DELHI

The National Intelligence Grid has signed an MoU with the National Crime Records Bureau to access the centralised online database on FIRs and stolen vehicles.

First conceptualised in 2009, NATGRID seeks to become the one-stop destination for security and intelligence agencies to access database related to immigration entry and exit, banking and telephone details of a suspect on a "secured platform". The project aims to go live by December 31.

The MoU, signed in March, will give NATGRID access to the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems database, a platform that links around 14,000 police stations.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

INFO FROM FIR PAGE 9

U.P. sets up judicial panel to probe killing of Dubey, aides

Single-judge panel will also look into Bikru ambush

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
 LUCKNOW

The killing of history-sheeter Vikas Dubey allegedly while trying to escape from police custody on July 10 will be probed by a single-member commission, led by a retired judge, the Uttar Pradesh government said on Sunday.

Retired Allahabad High Court judge Sashi Kant Agarwal will head the commission, which will be based out of Kanpur, and have two months to submit its report.

Petitions in SC

The decision comes a day after a series of petitions were filed in the Supreme Court seeking an independent probe into the killing of Dubey and his associates by the police following the Bikru ambush.



The probe team visiting Bikru village in U.P. on Sunday. •PTI

The commission will also investigate "intensively" the Bikru ambush as well as all the cases of 'encounters' between the police and Dubey's associates, a government spokesperson said.

The incidents had become a "matter of public importance," making a probe necessary, the spokesperson added.

Eight policemen were killed in the ambush while five associates linked to Dubey were killed later by the police in alleged exchange of fire. The commission has been formed barely a day after the State government set up a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe the Bikru incident, the financial and criminal background of the accused and the role of the Kanpur police.

The SIT has been mandated to investigate the involvement of policemen in the incident, examine a full-year's call records of Dubey and his associates and recommend "suitable and tough" action against policemen they were in touch with, if evidence was found against them.

RELATED REPORTS PAGE 10

Pilot's rebellion with 30 MLAs puts Gehlot govt. on the edge

Simmering differences spill out; Rajasthan Deputy CM says govt. is in minority

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
 JAIPUR/NEW DELHI

The power struggle between Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and his deputy Sachin Pilot, that has been simmering for long, spilled out into the open on Sunday, threatening the stability of the 20-month-old Congress government in Rajasthan.

In a statement released through his media adviser, Mr. Pilot said the Gehlot government was now in a minority after over 30 Congress MLAs and some independent lawmakers had pledged support to him. Mr. Pilot also said he would not attend a meeting of the Congress Legislature Party scheduled for Monday.

Late night on Sunday, Congress sources said form-



Divided house: Television crews outside the hotel in Manesar, where some MLAs are said to be staying. •ASHOK KUMAR

er Congress chief Rahul Gandhi had had a conversation with Mr. Pilot. The outcome of the discussion was not immediately clear.

'Moved too far'

Meanwhile, BJP sources said Mr. Pilot had moved too far from the Congress for a tur-

naround and the party's next move would depend on the number of MLAs that he could rally behind him. Several MLAs who support Mr. Pilot, have moved to a hotel in Manesar on the outskirts of Delhi while others have moved in with relatives in the Gurgaon area, all in BJP-

ruled Haryana, a source close to him told *The Hindu*.

Mr. Pilot was miffed over a notice issued by the Special Operations Group of Rajasthan police seeking time from him to record his statement in a case of conspiracy and sedition registered after attempts were allegedly made by the BJP to bribe Congress MLAs to switch sides during last month's Rajya Sabha polls. "The police sending a similar notice to the Chief Minister was just a pretext to harass Mr. Pilot," the source in his camp said.

A source close to Mr. Gehlot, however, said Mr. Pilot was playing into the hands of the BJP.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

RELATED REPORTS PAGE 9

Viral tracker

India recorded 28,211 new COVID-19 cases on Sunday, its highest single-day increase. The total infections stood at 8,78,570

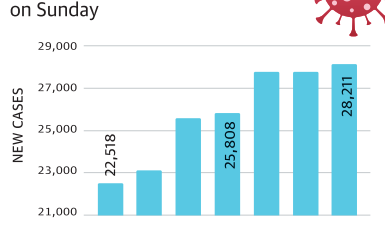
NEW CASES AND DEATHS

CASES 28,211	DEATHS 499
7 DAY-CHANGE +25.3%	7 DAY-CHANGE +6.6%

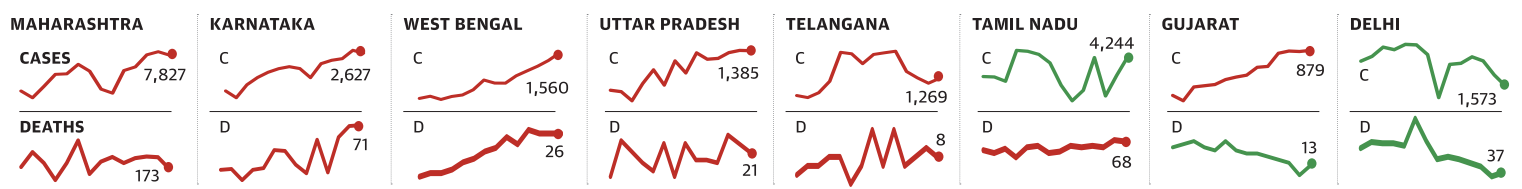
The graphs depict the new cases and deaths in the last 14 days in select States. If average cases/deaths in the last seven days are higher than the previous seven days, then the cases/deaths are rising (red); if they are lower, then dropping (green); if they are similar, then flattening (orange).



CONSISTENT RISE
 New cases crossed 25,000 for the fifth consecutive day on Sunday



Helping hand: A health worker serving food to a COVID-19 patient at the Shehnaai Banquet Hall, which has been converted into a COVID-19 care centre, in New Delhi on Sunday. •R. V. MOORTHY



FIGURES IN THE GRAPHS DEPICT NEW CASES AND DEATHS RECORDED ON SUNDAY

Punjab farmers find a better way to grow paddy

Many chose the direct seeding method for the crop during COVID-19, with a bonus: no stubble burning

VIKAS VASUDEVA
 MADAN HERI

Labour shortage after the exodus of pandemic-struck migrant labourers forced Gurtej Singh in Punjab to plant paddy using the direct seeding of rice (DSR) technique in the kharif season, rather than do traditional transplanting. A month later, he is upbeat about his crop yield, and relieved at being spared of a major problem: handling crop residue after harvest.



Fast forward: Farmers removing weeds in a paddy field at Sotal village in Punjab. •VIKAS VASUDEVA

problem of stubble burning, a key cause of air pollution across the northern region. "I have used direct seeding for the first time.

The growth looks good. I have saved on labour. Last year, I spent ₹30,000 on labour to sow and transplant. This year, I have

spent only ₹10,000 on paddy planting in eight acres." Another benefit is less water needed for irrigation. Most importantly, there will be very little post-harvest stubble," said 48-year-old Gurtej of Madan Heri village. "As my crop will mature around 10-11 days earlier, I'll have more time to prepare the field for the next winter crop," he said. With sufficient time available, farmers need not burn the stubble.

After harvest, the farmers usually burn the stubble to get rid of it. A short window of 20-25 days is the key

reason for stubble burning, rather than opt for other ways of disposal. This year, the Punjab government relaxed sowing schedules, and many farmers chose direct seeding.

Harjap Singh at Sotal also direct-seeded his paddy. "The DSR crop gets mature 7-10 days faster than with transplanting," he says.

Punjab could see paddy crop in 27 lakh hectares this season, with DSR used in about six lakh hectares, said K.S. Pannu, Agriculture Secretary. DSR was employed in some 60,000 hectares last year.

Pak. militant among 3 killed in Kashmir

PEERZADA ASHIQ
 SRINAGAR

Three militants were killed in an operation in north Kashmir's Baramulla on Sunday. "Three unidentified militants

were killed in the Sopore encounter. Incriminating material, including arms and ammunition, was recovered from the encounter site," Inspector General of Police

Kashmir Vijay Kumar said. Pakistani militant Usman of the Lashkar-e-Taiba was among the killed militants.

DETAILS ON PAGE 9

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SIDHARTH RAVI
JAIDEEP DEO BHANJ
NEW DELHI

Room for trouble

Every year in the second week of July, the area surrounding Delhi University's North Campus colleges erupts with activity as 'freshers' (first-year students) go on the hunt for paying guest (PG) accommodation.

At the corner of every campus street, people hand out flyers for PG accommodations – promising a host of facilities to suit every budget – and everybody from the e-rickshaw drivers to student-run helpdesks have a recommendation.

This year, however, uncertainty over reopening of universities on account of COVID-19 has pushed paying guest and hostel owners to the "brink of collapse" as there are no freshers coming in and most of the older students have moved out.

Rajesh Gupta, who has been running a PG accommodation in Vijay Nagar since 2017, said he had to give up one of the three floors he had taken up on rent to use as students' residence. "The floor had been lying empty for nearly three months as there were no tenants coming in. The only reason we are still running is because we have about 8-10 students still living here," Mr. Gupta said, adding that the cost of running common areas, electricity and maintenance had made it a loss-making endeavour.

"Usually, when the students go back home around this time, there is one month where we incur losses as we are getting no rent but have to pay for maintenance work such as painting. This year, however, most students left for home in March and have not returned since. Many of

them were not in a position to pay rent either," he added.

Love Jain, who runs a PG in Kamala Nagar – near DU colleges such as Hansraj, Kirori Mal, and Ramjas, said that the industry had practically collapsed. "Most of the people running PG's here have taken property on rent from building owners. So, even if tenants are not coming, they have to pay rent to their landlord," he said.

In a bind

PG owners find themselves in a tough spot, having to either pay rent for property with no tenants or forgo investments they have made on the building by giving up the lease.

The situation has been made worse with recent orders of the government and the High Court. "On the one hand, commercial properties have been ordered to continue paying rent, and on the other, we have been told to waive rent for students. What are we supposed to do?" wondered Mr. Jain.

Ruchika Bansal, who has been running Bansalville PG since

1995, said this is the first time her venture has faced such a problem.

Life interrupted

"When students left for home in March just before the lockdown started, nobody expected it to last this long. The students left most of their belongings here. Now, they are stuck back home and all their books and clothes are locked here," Ms. Bansal said.

"While some students living near Delhi were able to come and clear out their rooms, I have been helping others who stay far away by sending back their belongings via courier. Several students living in the Northeast and Odisha have mailed me their keys. We start a video call, and their belongings are packed up right in front of them and mailed back," Ms. Bansal added.

Uncertain about the future, Ms. Bansal said that many people were fearful of returning to Delhi given the high number of infections in the Capital. "Parents do not want to send their children to Delhi," she added.

During the lockdown, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had appealed to landlords to not take money from tenants. Several people who run PG facilities said that many people used this as an excuse to not pay any rent.

"On humanitarian grounds, if someone was not in a position to

Hostels have been nearly empty since March and owners claim they are on the brink of collapse; students who returned home say they are facing a crisis too

pay, I would have not charged money... but if someone continues to stay or has left for home without emptying the room... it is very difficult to sustain myself," said Sudha V., who runs a PG for working women.

She added that Mr. Kejriwal's appeal led to an uncomfortable situation with two of her tenants as they were "living lavishly but not paying rent".

Many PG owners have demanded that the government provide them relief.

What students say

The students who left their belongings behind claimed that PG owners and landlords were "less than charitable in relaxing rent" despite government orders, and often used "emotional pressure" to extract rent.

Mansi, a second-year BA English student who was residing at a PG in Janakpuri, said her landlord insisted on collecting rent for all the months during lockdown, arguing that students who came to Delhi to study came from privileged backgrounds.

Mansi's father is a labourer in Saharanpur and has been unable to find work since the beginning of the lockdown. Un-

able to continue paying her landlord, she drove to Delhi to collect her belongings last week.

Rishima Saha, a BA Sociology student at Lady Sri Ram College who stayed in a flat with three others, said she is in a tough spot as the landlord has refused to return the security deposit. "When we told the landlord about the government order on relaxing student rent, she threatened to call the police," she said.

Eventually, they had to courier their keys to friends or relatives in Delhi so that their belongings could be shifted.

Arundati K., who is from Kerala and a BA German student, said she and her flatmates have been paying rent as well as water charges for their 2 BHK apartment despite not having returned for the last three months. "We tried negotiating with the landlords but they are not budging. They emotionally manipulate us by saying they have bank loans and education fees to pay. They even told us to return to Delhi as places are reopening."

After the High Court recently rejected a petition filed by the Students-tenants Union, calling for extension of rent relaxation for students, the number of evictions have gone up, claimed a member of the union.

"Without government directions to landlords, tenants have no security and are facing a crisis," the member added.

Property dealer Rajveer Bhasin, who has spent over 10 summers sweating it out with parents and their children to find suitable accommodation near North Campus, said that almost all flats and PGs are empty.

"Colleges are shut, coaching centres are shut and nobody knows when they will reopen. I have a huge inventory and owners are willing to cut down on rent so that they get some form of income," said Mr. Bhasin.

Coping with the caseload crunch

Forced to stay open, smaller private hospitals and clinics take a big financial hit as patients, wary of the mounting COVID-19 cases in the Capital, prefer the safety of their homes

NIKHIL M BABU
NEW DELHI

For Balbir Singh, 54, co-owner of Sukhmani Hospital, a 35-bed facility in Safdarjung Enclave, the novel coronavirus pandemic has brought unprecedented distress. "Since the virus hit the city, the number of OPD patients in the hospital has fallen from around 100 a day to 15-20 now. Patient admissions used to be three to four a day but now there is hardly any patient being hospitalised," said Dr. Singh.

His is not the only tale of woe. Sunil Kumar Jain of Pentamed Hospital, a 30-bed hospital in Model Town, said that revenue is down by half. Vandana Gupta, who runs Agarwal Hospital in Pitampura, a 30-bed neonatal ICU facility, said hardly four-five people visit the OPD daily now, compared to 10-15 people earlier.

Dr. Singh said it makes "more sense" to close the facility at this point. "But we cannot do that as the government has asked us to be functional. We are currently incurring losses," he said. On April 17, the Delhi government had issued an order that all hospitals should maintain full operations and try to accommodate the load of those which have been declared as dedicated COVID hospitals.

Revenue loss

Since the outbreak of the virus, more than 300 small hospitals with less than 50 beds and catering to non-COVID-19 patients have been suffering a loss of revenue of around 50-60%, according to multiple doctors who own such hospitals, including Mr. Singh. The same has also been confirmed by the Delhi Medical Association (DMA).

"Non-COVID patients are reluctant to go to hospitals as they are afraid and do so only in case of an emergency. While health workers seek higher pay, beds are vacant and hospitals are earning less," said DMA president Dr. Girish Tyagi.

The loss of income has led to the DMA seeking assistance from the Delhi government, given that the latter has directed such hospitals to remain functional. About 80% owners of such hospitals are doctors and most of them are elderly, said Dr. Rajender Sharma, chairman of DMA's nursing home forum.

"We had requested the Chief Minister to at least provide PPE kits to these hospitals, as they do in government hospitals, and also provide sanitisers at subsidised rates. We had also urged the government to reduce electricity bills and property tax, but they are yet to reply to the requests,"



On April 17, the Delhi government had issued an order that all hospitals should maintain full operations. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

said Dr. Sharma.

Adjusting to reality

"We have reduced salaries of some senior doctors by 20%, but not lower-level employees who earn less," said Dr. Singh.

"We admit suspected COVID-19 patients and staff attending to them are paid extra. Also, earlier 100-150 visited the OPD daily, now it is down to 30-50 people. Also daily surgeries are down from four-five to one or sometimes none," said Dr. Jain of Pentamed Hospital. He said patients are self-treating or go to the chemist to procure medicines. "The incidence of many diseases has also come down as people are not stepping out or eating food from outside," he said.

"In March and April, there were no OPD services. In May and June, they have picked up, but we are still running 50-60% short. Out of a staff strength of 70-80, only 40 are working and they stay in the hospital building. The rest are still on the rolls – we will pay them once they are back, including perhaps a part of their lockdown dues. We are still figuring it out," said Dr. Gupta of Agarwal Hospital.

Both Mr. Singh and Mr. Jain said many employees are not willing to join duty due to the acute COVID-19 situation in the Capital. All three owners said they have started virtual consultation after the virus outbreak, but it is yet to pick up.

Mr. Singh said he initially started it via Zoom and then switched to WhatsApp. "But that is only two to three in a day. We started doing video consultation only after lockdown," he added.

"I have also started WhatsApp consultation, but that's only one or two patients a day," said Mr. Jain.

Ms. Gupta said they started tele-consultation at normal OPD charges after the nationwide lockdown kicked in. "But only our old patients who know us do it. There are no new patients for it," she said.



Students at a Paying Guest accommodation in Delhi.

■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA



Students at a Paying Guest accommodation in Delhi.

■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Clear stand on plea alleging inadequate preparation in DU's SOL, UGC told

High Court also directed university to submit report of committee for correcting all defects in the course material

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The High Court has asked the University Grants Commission (UGC) to submit its stand on a plea alleging inadequate preparation in the introduction of Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) in the Delhi University's School of Open Learning (SOL).

Justice Prathiba M. Singh also directed DU to submit the report of the committee, appointed pursuant to any order of the court, for cor-

recting all the defects in the course material.

The court's direction came on a plea by five first-year students at SOL contending the hard copies of proper course material have not been provided with either for the first semester or for the second semester. The students said study material dispatched to the students was incomplete and defective in nature.

They further claimed that the course material which has been uploaded contain



several defects, due to which it was virtually impossible for SOL students to give the examinations and to upload the answer sheets within the deadline.

On June 4, DU had issued

an examination notification for conduct of online examinations due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Under the system, evaluation of papers for the first and second-semester students was to be based on online assignments.

The question papers have been already uploaded on June 26 and the last date for submission and uploading of answer sheets was initially on July 11. On Friday, the DU's counsel informed the court

that the deadline for submission of answer sheets has been extended to July 15.

The university, in an affidavit, also claimed that more than 50,000 students of SOL have already submitted their assignments online. It is also stated that hard-copies of the study material have been made available to approximately one lakh students for Semester-I and approximately 92,000 students for Semester-II.

Additionally, it submitted

that about 3,20,000 students have hit the SOL website for online study material during the lockdown period.

The students in their main petition have sought quashing of the implementation of CBCS, introduced in the SOL. They asked for the appointment of an eminent educationist to make recommendations as to whether the CBCS should be discontinued and be replaced with the annual mode of examinations, as done hitherto.

SDMC may enter into 50% revenue sharing with DTC

Last week civic body had signed MoU

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) may soon enter into 50% revenue-sharing arrangement with the Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) after the approval of an MoU by the civic body's Standing Committee last week.

The SDMC had been seeking a revenue share from advertisements on DTC buses and its properties, as well as had a say in advertisements before they were put up among other clauses, the proposal states.

Earlier, due to violations of the outdoor advertisement policy, the civic body had undertaken removal of

advertisements on DTC properties following which the matter had been taken to court in 2015. The two authorities were directed to resolve the matter.

Rates revised

Following deliberations "it has been in principle agreed that DTC will share 50% revenue from advertisements", the proposal reads. Rates under different categories have been increased from ₹4,500 to ₹5,500 for interior and exterior bus wraps from ₹2,500 to ₹3,000 for the only exterior and from ₹2,000 to ₹2,500 for the interior body of the buses, including four to eight panels.

Ominous clouds



Dark clouds seen over Dwarka as several parts of NCR received rain on Sunday morning.

■ V.V. KRISHNAN

HC: treat plea seeking single agency for disaster management as representation

Exercise must be carried out as early as possible, says court

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has asked the Centre to treat as representation a plea seeking synchronization of the work under the National Capital Region Planning Board Act, 1985 and the National Disaster Management Act, 2005 under a single nodal agency.

A Bench of Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Justice Prateek Jalan said: "This exercise will be carried out as early as possible and practicable."

During the brief hearing, the Bench remarked that the petitioner, law student Arjun Narang, ought to have first made a representation to the

Centre as it was a policy decision. The petition had contended that Delhi-NCR has been battling with executive problem on account of numerous discrepancies between the guidelines issued by the NCR governments – of Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh – in relation to the response mechanisms to the disaster outbreaks such as COVID-19 pandemic or an earthquake.

It stated that the discrepancies were mostly in relation to inter-State travel, patient admissions and treatment, testing, dealing with containment zones and dealing with COVID-19 positive persons.

It had pleaded for the Cen-

tral, State governments and district-level authorities of NCR region to work in tandem and provide a single set of parameters or guidelines under a common COVID-19 response plan for the entire NCR region.

"In order to bring about uniformity in the COVID-19 response, it is imperative that the respondents [Centre and governments of Delhi, U.P., Haryana and Rajasthan] designate the NCRPB or any authority, consisting of executive members from all the States and UTs concerned, as the single nodal agency, to carry out disaster management tasks in the NCR region in a uniform manner," the petition had said.

Timings
DELHI

MONDAY, JUL. 13
RISE 05:33 SET 19:22
RISE 00:08 SET 12:45

TUESDAY, JUL. 14
RISE 05:34 SET 19:22
RISE 00:38 SET 13:38

WEDNESDAY, JUL. 15
RISE 05:34 SET 19:21
RISE 01:10 SET 14:31

Delhi Weather

	max	min
Delhi City	35	23
Safdarjang	35	23
Palam	36	26

Delhi Palam Today
37°C Short spell of rain likely at few parts with partly cloudy sky. A moderate winds would occur with hot afternoon.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
38°C Partly cloudy with humid condition. Light thunderstorm or rain likely at few places.

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Air quality of Delhi-NCR

City	AQI	Category
Delhi	71	Moderate
Gurgaon	78	Moderate
Ghaziabad	131	Poor
Faridabad	89	Moderate
Noida	94	Moderate
Greater Noida	62	Moderate

Legend: Good (0-50), Satisfactory (51-100), Moderate (101-200), Poor (201-300), Very poor (301-400), Severe (>401)

AIR QUALITY INDEX AT 4 P.M. YESTERDAY (AVERAGE OF PAST 24 HOURS) [SOURCE: CPCB]

Bike-borne men loot ₹25 lakh

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Two bike-borne men allegedly looted ₹25 lakh from a 31-year-old man after intercepting his vehicle near Shastri Nagar metro station, the police said on Sunday.

The victim, Manish Verma, a resident of outer Delhi's Nangloi, works at a packaging unit in Rohini Sector-3, they said.

The incident took place on July 10, when Mr. Verma was returning to office after collecting ₹25 lakh from a man in Kucha Ghasiram, the police said.

When he reached near Shastri Nagar metro station, two bike-borne men intercepted his vehicle, engaged him in a conversation. Before he could realise that he was looted, they managed to flee with the money, which was kept in a polythene bag inside the trunk of his scooter.

Soon after they left, he checked the trunk of his vehicle and realised that the bag was missing, a police officer said.

As per the instruction of his boss, Mr. Verma had gone to collect money from a person in Kucha Ghasiram, the officer said.

Case registered

On the basis of his complaint, a case was registered and efforts are on to trace the culprits, the police said, adding that CCTV camera footage are being scanned to identify the routes taken by the accused.

COVID-19 bed occupancy low in the Capital

Delhi clocks a recovery rate of nearly 75% against the national average of 62.93%, show Union Health Ministry data

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN
NEW DELHI

Touted as a game changer by the Central government in easing the acute hospital bed crisis in the Capital for COVID-19 patients, the recently-opened 10,200-bedded Sardar Patel COVID Care Centre (SPCCC) at the Radha Soami Satsang Beas in Chhatrapur currently has a bed occupancy of just 123 patients and 2,000 functional beds. Catering to 11 districts of Delhi, the facility mirrors the low-bed occupancy across the Capital, where over two-third of COVID beds are lying vacant.

As per the Health Ministry data, the health infrastructure dedicated to provide medical attention to the COVID affected across the country includes 1,370 Dedicated COVID Hospitals (DCH), 3,062 Dedicated COVID Health Centres (DCHC),



A view of the Sardar Patel COVID Care Centre in the Capital. •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

and 10,334 COVID care centres (CCC).

The Capital alone offers 15,253 hospital beds, 9,217 beds in dedicated COVID care centres and 544 in COVID healthcare centres. Earlier this week, the Capital got an additional 1,000 beds with the opening of a temporary medical centre built

by the Defence Research and Development Organisation.

In mid-June there was a huge demand for COVID beds. An analysis by the Delhi government showed that during this period, patients were brought in and admitted in a critical condition and 15% of COVID deaths

took place within two days of arrival.

However, Delhi is doing better in July with over 75% recovery rate against the national recovery rate of 62.93%, according to the Union Health Ministry data.

Treatment approach

"Currently, the approach for treatment of COVID-19 is largely based on supportive care since there is no cure. Maintaining good hydration is essential. Based on the severity of symptoms, COVID-19 can be categorised into three groups: mild, moderate and severe," said a senior Health Ministry official.

As per the Health Ministry's clinical management protocol of COVID-19 for moderate and severe cases, adequate oxygen support, appropriate and timely administration of anti-coagu-

lants, and widely available and inexpensive corticosteroids in accordance with the protocol can be considered the mainstay of COVID-19 therapy. For mild cases, which comprise nearly 80% of the cases, hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) has been recommended. The standard of care treatment strategies have shown to yield positive results.

Decline and climb

"Delhi, however, has benefited from stringent testing measures, priority containment of cases and their contacts and the medical support that has been offered to patients at home isolation. We are in a better position infrastructure-wise than we were in mid-June. But we are dealing with a virus that is unpredictable and trends in several countries have shown that there can be a

decline and then a climb in number," said a Delhi Health Department official.

COVID-19

D.K. Sharma, Medical Superintendent of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) noted that despite the fact that the rush for beds is currently manageable, the infrastructure has to be in a state of preparedness.

"One-third COVID beds of AIIMS Trauma Centre and Jhajar campus are currently occupied with approximately 400 patients in both," he said.

Lok Nayak Hospital Medical Director Suresh Kumar agreed that the stress on hospital beds for COVID has come down by 50%, as patients are opting for home isolation and care.

Plan to convert stadiums into COVID centres put on hold

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Authorities in Delhi have put on hold their plan to use stadiums as makeshift COVID care centres for now in view of the city witnessing a good recovery rate, officials said on Sunday.

Seeing the current situation, there is no need to convert stadiums into COVID-19 care facilities, an official in the east Delhi district administration said.

However, he said, the stadiums can be converted into COVID facilities in the coming days if the need arises.

Last month, a Delhi government panel constituted by Lt. Governor Anil Bajjal had suggested to use Pragati Maidan, Talkatora Indoor Stadium, Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium, JLN Stadium, Thyagaraj Indoor Stadium and Dyanchand National Stadium for the purpose.

A government study on Saturday said that there has been a "sharp decline" in daily fatality figures in the city in the past two weeks.

'Sardar Patel COVID Care Centre part of joint effort by State, Centre'

Union Health Minister reviewed the facility on Sunday

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan visited and reviewed the Sardar Patel COVID Care Centre (SPCCC) here on Sunday and said that the SPCCC is part of the "coordinated efforts of the Centre and the Delhi government to bolster the containment measures".

"The healthcare facility follows naturopathy and protocols of Ayurveda for boosting immunity of the in-patients at the centre. They are given Ayurvedic *kadha* in the morning followed by meals as advised by dieticians and the day ends with milk with turmeric," noted a release issued by the Health Ministry.

The Ministry added that a unique feature of the Centre is that it has been backed by the community and donors, in kind, donation and support through beds, oxygen cylinders etc.

"Out of the 10,200 proposed beds, 2,000 are functional. There are 88 enclosures each with 100-116 bed



Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan interacting with a COVID-19 patient at the centre on Sunday. •ANI

capacity with two enclosures supervised by one nursing station. Currently, the SPCCC is ready with 20 enclosures and 10 nursing stations. Also, 10% of the beds comprise the Dedicated COVID Health Centre (DCHC) with oxygen support. As on date, 123 patients are admitted, out of which 5 patients with comorbidities have been shifted to hospitals for tertiary care," noted Mr. Vardhan.

The healthcare facility also has in-house psychological counselling and psychiatry services provided by NIMHANS-trained counsellors along with meditation

and yoga sessions for the patients.

"India's clinical protocol has focused on early detection through widespread testing, surveillance, prompt triaging and clinical management of cases. This has resulted in one of the lowest fatality rates of 2.66%. Our success can be seen in the recovery rate which is almost 63%, with more than 5.3 lakh recoveries," said the Minister.

The Minister added that as we proceed into Unlock 2.0, it is critical to ensure that all of us rely on the "social vaccine - 'Do Gaj ki Door'".

Youth shoots newly married woman before taking own life

Police suspect the victim and accused were in a relationship

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GURUGRAM

A young man allegedly shot dead a 20-year-old newly married woman of his village before killing himself in a similar manner in the early hours of Sunday. The police suspect that the two were in a relationship.

The woman, belonging to Scheduled Caste, got married in Basai village on June 29 this year and had come to visit her parents in Nanu Kalan village. The accused took the woman to a vacant plot behind some shops that belong to one Kisan Pal, on some pretext and allegedly

shot her. He then shot himself. The matter came to light when the woman's uncle spotted the bodies lying in the plot in the morning. The family claimed that the villagers had heard the gunshots around midnight. They said the man and the woman did not know each other and the motive behind the murder was unclear.

A countrymade pistol used in the commission of crime was also found lying close to the bodies. The woman's uncle called the police control room to inform about the incident. The police sent the bodies for post-

mortem and the weapon was seized.

A case has been registered on charges of murder and under the Scheduled Castes and Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act and Arms Act at Pataudi police station.

Gurugram Police spokesperson Subhash Boken said an investigation was under way, but prima facie, it seemed that the duo was in a relationship.

Suicide prevention helpline: Sanjivini, Society for Mental Health, 011-4076 9002 (Monday-Saturday, 10 a.m. -7.30 p.m.).

Security guard killed during burglary attempt at factory

Body of victim spotted by workers; no valuables or any other item were stolen

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 62-year-old security guard at an iron factory in north-west Delhi's Wazirpur Industrial Area was killed after he was allegedly hit on the head with a rod during a burglary attempt, the police said on Sunday.

The victim, identified as Madhav Mishra, who hailed from Bihar, lived here with his son in a slum cluster in Shalimar Bagh, they said.

The incident took place on the intervening night of Saturday and Sunday, the police said.

The body was spotted on Sunday morning by a few workers who had come to work. The factory owner arrived soon after and the police were informed around 8 a.m., a senior police officer said.

The police also said that the security guard, who was alone on night shift, was

killed by unidentified people who hit him on his head with a rod during a burglary attempt at the factory.

'Nothing stolen'

However, no valuables or any other property was reported to be stolen, the police said.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (North-West) Vijayanta Arya said a case has been registered under Section 302 (murder) and other relevant

sections of the Indian Penal Code and an investigation is under way.

He died on the spot and his body was taken to Babu Jagjivan Ram Memorial Hospital for a post-mortem, she said.

There was no CCTV camera installed on the premises of factory, the police said. However, they are scanning footage of those in the adjoining areas to identify the culprits and nab them.

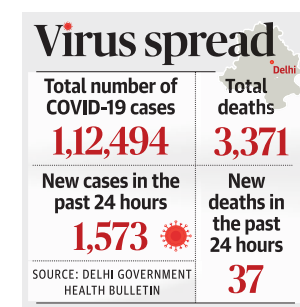
New cases in the Capital below 2,000 for second day in a row

Able to minimise death of patients in home isolation: CM

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Capital reported 1,573 new COVID-19 cases in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of cases to 1,12,494, according to a health bulletin by the Delhi government. The bulletin states that 37 deaths were reported in the last 24 hours, taking the total tally to 3,371. Also, 2,276 patients have recovered in Delhi, taking the total recoveries to 89,968.

The government said that



number of people tested in the Capital to 7,89,853.

Currently, there are 19,155 active cases here, out of which 11,059 are in home isolation. Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said that Delhi has been able to minimise death of COVID-19 patients in home isolation with the help of pulse oximeter.

On Saturday, a government report stated that there had been no death of patients put under home isolation in July first week.

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Police team
attacked in
BulandshahrPRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BULANDSHAHR

A special operations group team of the Uttar Pradesh police was attacked by some persons when it had gone to arrest a man wanted in a murder case here, police said on Sunday.

The incident took place on Saturday evening when the team tried to apprehend one Shahid, a resident of Sarai Kaaji locality in the Kotwali Nagar area, wanted in a murder case, they said.

As soon as the accused, his brothers and some four-five men saw the police, they started fleeing. When policemen tried to stop them, they attacked them with bricks and stones, Superintendent of Police (City) Atul Kumar Srivastava said.

The policemen had to fire some rounds in the air in self defence, he said.

Markets, establishments in U.P.
to remain shut on weekends

Restrictions will be imposed from coming Saturday, says government official

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

All markets and establishments in Uttar Pradesh will remain closed on weekends as part of the State's efforts to check the spread of COVID-19.

Markets and all industrial units will be cleaned and sanitised on Saturdays and Sundays, a government spokesperson said on Sunday.

Additional Chief Secretary (Home and Information) Awanish Awasthi said the restrictions will be imposed from the coming Saturday and remain in place at least for July. "Banks will remain open. Economic activities will not suffer. Social activities will remain limited," he said.

He added that all markets will open from 9 a.m. to 9



People thronging the Alambagh vegetable market in Lucknow on Saturday despite the lockdown. • PTI

p.m. from Monday to Friday.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has instructed all officials to ensure that all COVID-19 hospitals have uninterrupted oxygen supply and that they also store a backup of 48 hours of oxygen.

He also asked officials to increase testing to 50,000

samples per day.

The State recorded 1,388 fresh cases over the past 24 hours and 21 deaths, taking the toll to 934, said the Health Department.

The State has 12,208 active cases. Of the new cases, 38 were recorded in Muzaffarnagar on Sunday, taking the total number of active

cases in the district to 144, officials said. The new cases include 11 inmates of the district jail, six employees of the U.P. Power Corporation Limited and seven police personnel, they said.

New cases

According to Muzaffarnagar DM Selvakumari J, the Health Department had received 839 results of samples, of which 38 were positive for COVID-19. She said eight patients have recovered from the infection. All the new patients are being shifted to a COVID hospital in Begarapur, officials said.

The most number of deaths have been recorded in Agra (94), followed by Meerut (90) and Kanpur (86) districts.

(With PTI inputs)

M.P. MLA quits Cong., joins BJP

'Only through BJP, the Bundelkhand region can be developed'

SIDHARTH YADAV
BHOPAL

A Congress MLA from the Bundelkhand region of Madhya Pradesh resigned as a legislator on Sunday and joined the BJP, dealing another jolt to the Congress.

Kunwar Pradyumna Singh Lodhi, MLA from Malhara in Chhatarpur district, joined the BJP at its office here in the presence of Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and State party president V.D. Sharma.



Kunwar Pradyumna Singh Lodhi joining the BJP in Bhopal on Sunday. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

'Cabinet Minister status' Later, he was appointed chairman of the M.P. State Civil Supplies Corporation Ltd. "He will have the status of a Cabinet Minister," the Chief Minister's office said.

"I have come as a soldier of the BJP without any condition," Mr. Lodhi said. "My priority is the region's development and work on irrigation schemes should be ex-

pedited so that migration from the region stops."

Only through the BJP the region could be developed, he added. "Because of the pandemic, many people have returned. Bundelkhand needs employment opportunities and irrigation schemes," he said, adding that Mr. Chouhan had approved an irrigation scheme in his constituency.

Pro tem speaker Rameshwar Sharma said the MLA

had submitted his resignation on Saturday. "He gave me the resignation yesterday. I asked him to reconsider it, but he reappeared today saying he wanted to resign. On his insistence, we have accepted his resignation today and completed legal procedures," Mr. Sharma said on Sunday.

With Mr. Lodhi's resignation, the Congress numbers in the Assembly have dropped to 91.

Two Maoists say farewell to arms

Duo surrender before police in Odisha's Malkangiri district

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BHUBANESWAR

Two CPI (Maoist) cadres surrendered before the police in Odisha's Malkangiri district on Sunday.

Two ultras, identified as Kanna Madi and Lake Punem, laid down their arms before Malkangiri Superintendent of Police Rishikesh Dnyandeo Khilari.

Madi, carrying a reward of ₹4 lakh on his head, was reported to be involved in killings and setting up improvised explosive devices since 2013. Punem carried a bounty of ₹2 lakh.

"I got disillusioned by CPI

(Maoist) ideology. The recent development being undertaken in Swabhiman Anchal motivated me to join the mainstream," Madi said.

Moreover, increased presence of the Border Security Force (BSF) and the police and fear of action by security forces also contributed to the surrender.

Both said they were influenced by the appeal of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik and Director General of Police Abhay, who called upon the Maoists to surrender and become part of the developmental initiatives of the State.

According to the BSF, the CPI (Maoist) had established safe havens in Swabhiman Anchal taking advantage of the topographical isolation of the area.

"Malkangiri had been one of the worst Maoist-affected districts with as many as 332 incidents recorded in 12 years since 2008, claiming the lives of 101 civilians and 77 security force personnel," said the BSF.

Swabhiman Anchal, part of Malkangiri district, had seen much bloodshed with the death of 25 civilians and 49 security personnel, including five BSF officers.

Odisha dancers forced to work as labourers in U.P.

Caught in the COVID-19 lockdown, they were finally rescued with help from actor Sabyasachi Mishra

SATYASUNDAR BARIK
BHUBANESWAR

If anyone thinks that the migrants' agonizing return journey to their native places has ended following the opening up of public transport options, then he or she is mistaken.

Three Odisha dancers, who were stranded in Uttar Pradesh, were forced to work as agricultural labourers for a month before being rescued by Sabyasachi Mishra, the Odia actor who has been helping those in distress due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Tempted by an attractive contract of performing in 45

stage shows, three young women professional dancers had left for Uttar Pradesh in the month of January. They had barely performed 10 to 12 stage shows when the COVID-19 lockdown came into force.

'Hopes crushed'

"I saw my hopes being crushed. I had dreamed of earning ₹1 lakh at one go and shift to small business as we hardly get regular stage shows in Odisha. For a few days, we managed with whatever resources we had. But in the month of April, we started to feel the pinch," said Sunita Sa-

hoo, who left behind her 13-year-old daughter with her mother in Cuttack.

She is trained in modern dance. Her younger colleagues, Pinky Patra and Pinky Sahoo, also have years of experience in dancing in public functions.

Put up in a temporary accommodation at Sonughat area in Deoria district of Uttar Pradesh, they tried everything to return. They could not muster courage to walk back to Odisha. For a few weeks, their family members had sent some money to sustain themselves. The arrangement could not last long.

As the fund fast exhausted, they volunteered themselves to work in a wheat field. "We were being paid ₹60 for cutting one katha (720 sq ft) area of wheat plant. Though we knew the wage was too low, we did not have any option. Soon after the wheat harvesting season was over, we opted to work in paddy field," said Ms. Sahoo who had no previous experience of working as an agricultural labourer.

'Poignant story'

When they got to know that Odia film actor Mr. Mishra was helping those in distress, they collected his number

and dialled him. "Their story was poignant. The young women opted to work in rice field despite being trained dancers. It shows their resolve to stay afloat without sacrificing dignity. I arranged a taxi for them from Sonughat to Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Nagar where they took train to Bhubaneswar," the actor said, adding that they proved no work is big or small if done with honesty and hard work.

After their return on July 5, while two girls are now under quarantine in Cuttack, another girl has returned to her home in Angul district.

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH

HOMAGE

Prof. W. P. Vijayaraghavan
Principal (1971-1980)
College of Engineering, Guindy
Passed away on 8th July 2020

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Amid deluge, Assam farmer stands out with flood-resistant paddy

The new variety sown last year has inspired a majority of cultivators in Golaghat district to shift over from traditional ones

RAHUL KARMAKAR
GUWAHATI

Nitu Bora took a "risk" with an unfamiliar variety of paddy in 2019. A year later, he has inspired a majority of some 1,500 farmers who saw their hard work undone by floods in Assam's Golaghat district.

According to the Assam State Disaster Management Authority, this year's flood since May 22 has affected crop, mainly paddy, on more than 125,097 hectares of land across 25 of the State's 33 districts.

Nitu Bora's 0.9-hectare paddy field in Balidua village

of Golaghat district's West Brahmputra area was flooded too. But unlike that of most other farmers in Assam, his paddy crop of the Ranjit Subi variety withstood the deluge.

He had tested waters in July 2019 with the variety - the Subi in its name means submergence - on about 0.2 hectares of his plot.

"I decided to take the risk with the new variety after listening to crop experts. This paddy survived 15 days under water while the flood damaged the common varieties in the rest of my plot," the 45-year-old farmer said.



Nitu Bora's paddy field in Golaghat district. •

He had virtually dragged neighbours Luhit Bora and Babu Bora to the District Agriculture Office in Golaghat town two days after crop specialists had campaigned for adopting Ranit Subi and two

other flood-tolerant varieties named Swarna Subi and Bahadur Subi.

The other two farmers too used a fraction of their respective plot to invest in seedlings of the flood-resistant paddy collected from the Agriculture Department.

Farmers in flood-prone areas of Assam have been harvesting the water-resistant Swarna Subi, developed by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research and the Manipal-based International Rice Research Institute, since 2009. But the switchover from traditional varieties of

paddy has been slow.

Flood impact study

"We introduced the flood-resistant varieties in 2018 and the 5.6 tonnes of rice per hectare that Nitu Bora harvested was the first flood-impact study, although we cannot compare with the traditional varieties since they were damaged," said Abhishek Singha, research technician of the Assam Agribusiness and Rural Transformation Project (APART).

The Assam Rural Infrastructure and Agricultural Services Society headed by bu-

reaucrat Laya Madduri is the coordinating agency for the World Bank-funded project.

"The experiment of the Boras has this year made about 60% of the farmers in the West Brahmputra area switch to the flood-tolerant paddy. Some 1,500 farmers cultivate on about 950 hectares in this area," Mr Singha told *The Hindu* on July 5.

Nitu Bora's example has made convincing the other farmers easier for Golaghat's District Agriculture Officer Nabin Chandra Bora and APART's Golaghat nodal officer Syed Rajibur Rahman.

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Be it known to the general public at large on behalf of my clients namely (1) Shri Mool Chand Aggarwal son of Shri Har Prashad Aggarwal and (2) Smt. Neelam Aggarwal wife of Shri Mool Chand Aggarwal, both R/o X-126, Gali No. 12, Near Shiv Mandir, Brahmputra, Delhi-110053, that my aforesaid clients have disowned and disinherited their son namely Rahul Aggarwal, his wife namely Neha and their two daughters namely (1) Radhya Aggarwal and (2) Surbhi Aggarwal from their all movable and immovable properties because all of them are out of control of my clients. In case any body deal with them, he/she/they shall do the same at his/her/their own risks, costs and consequences and my above named clients shall not be responsible for same in any manner whatsoever. SHARDA SINGH ADVOCATE, CHAMBER No. 229, CIVIL WING TIS HAZARI COURT, DELHI-110054

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Be it known that our client Sh. Rajesh Ghai and Smt. Annu Ghai W/o Sh. Rajesh Ghai both R/o D-14/18, Model Town II New Delhi have severed all connection and relations with their son Sh. Chetan Ghai and his wife Smt. Nidhi Ghai R/o D-14/18, Model Town II New Delhi for their malicious activities, indecent immoral abuse and disobedience. Our client shall not be liable for any acts, deeds or things done by their son Sh. Chetan Ghai and his wife Smt. Nidhi Ghai. Neither Sh. Chetan Ghai and his wife Smt. Nidhi Ghai or their children shall inherit any right, title or interest in any of the movable and/or immovable assets of our clients acquired till date and in future also.

Narendra Kalra (Advocate)
Ch.No.34, Tehsil Building, Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi-54

PUBLIC NOTICE

My clients Sh. Roshan Lal son of Late Sh. Pyare Lal, his wife Smt. Neer Lata and his daughter Sonia all R/o A-666, JJ Colony, Chokhandi, Tikar Nagar, S.O. West Delhi, Delhi, 110018 have severed all their social relations with their son/brother Manoj Kumar and his wife Lalita @ Lavi, both R/o A-666, JJ Colony, Chokhandi, Tikar Nagar, S.O. West Delhi, Delhi-110018 due to their disobedient as well as due to picking up quarrel with my clients. My client disowned and debar them from their all movable and immovable properties. My clients shall not be responsible for any act and conduct done by their son and daughter-in-law

KAUSHAL THAKUR-ADVOCATE
Chamber No. 358, Lawyers' Chamber Block, Rohini Courts Complex, Delhi-85

Mizoram quake zone caught
between two geological faults

Threat only if aftershocks are over 5 on Richter scale: expert

RAHUL KARMAKAR
GUWAHATI

Mizoram's zone of "scary" earthquakes is caught between two subterranean faults, a geologist assigned to make a preliminary study on the frequent tremors said.

The State's Champhai district and adjoining areas could experience aftershocks for several months but the people there have nothing to worry if their magnitude does not measure above 5 on the Richter scale, he assured.

Mizoram experienced at least eight moderate earthquakes between June 21 and July 9. The tremors ranged from 4.2 to 5.5 on the Richter scale.

The epicentre of most of these quakes was beneath Champhai district bordering Myanmar, including the last one of magnitude 4.3 and about 10 kilometres deep. A few were beneath the adjoining Saitual and Serchhip districts.

are the Churachandpur Mao Fault and the Mat Fault," said Dr. Saituanga who teaches geology at the Pachhunga University College in State capital Aizawl.

Faults are discontinuities or cracks that are the result of differential motion within the earth's crust. Vertical or lateral slippage of the crust along the faults causes an earthquake.

The Churachandpur Mao Fault is named after two places in Manipur and runs north-south into Myanmar along the border of Champhai. The Mat Fault runs northwest-southeast across Mizoram, beneath river Mat near Serchhip.

"There are several shallower transverse or minor faults in between these two major faults that are deeper. We have reason to believe the earthquakes have been caused by these minor faults," Dr Saituanga told *The Hindu*.

The tremors after the strongest of these earthquakes on June 22 have been aftershocks that can happen for a long time, he said. "But as long they are be-

low the intensity of 5, there's nothing to worry. Quakes are happening all the time, most of them not felt by us, which is good because the release of energy in small amounts can prevent the build-up of a large earthquake," he added.

An aftershock of 5 or more on the Richter could be a sign of a major earthquake waiting to happen, he said.

CM's calls for study

On July 10, Mizoram Chief Minister Zoramthanga wrote to the Centre seeking assistance and sanctioning of an extensive study by seismologists or geophysicists on why the frequent earthquakes were happening.

He also sought installation of earthquake observation centres in the eastern part of the State with "real time seismic telemetry for earthquake disaster preparedness".

According to Champhai's Deputy Commissioner Maria C.T. Zuali, much destruction was done by the earthquake of intensity 5.5 on June 22. "The quakes have damaged 158 houses, churches and community halls," she said.

Maharashtra tally surges past 2.5 lakh with 7,827 new cases

173 more deaths in State push toll to 10,289; Mumbai's case load touches 92,988

SHOUMJOIT BANERJEE
PUNE

With another massive surge of 7,827 COVID-19 cases on Sunday, Maharashtra's tally breached the 2.50 lakh mark and touched 2,54,427. The State also recorded 173 more fatalities, pushing its death toll to 10,289.

Since July 1, the State has reported single-day spikes of over 7,000 cases at least four times, with the highest single-day surge of 8,139 cases being reported on Saturday.

With 1,243 new cases, Mumbai's total case load has now reached 92,988. As many as 44 more deaths were reported in the city, taking its toll to 5,288. While there are 22,540 active cases in the city, the tally of active cases in the State is 1,03,516.

State Health Department officials said 3,340 patients were discharged on Sunday, pushing the cumulative tally of recoveries to 1,40,325.

Dip in case fatality rate
State Surveillance Officer Dr. Pradeep Awate said the State's recovery rate stands at 55.15%, while its case fatality rate has marginally reduced to 4.04% from last week's figure of 4.15%.

Pune district reported 1,711 new COVID-19 cases till Sunday evening, taking the district's total case tally to 39,125. Of the total cases, 21,601 are active, according to the State Health Department. Pune district administration authorities, however, said there were only 14,484 active cases. The district also reported 37 deaths, taking its toll to 1,097.

Along with Mumbai and Pune, big surges continued to be recorded across the



Health workers arrive to conduct a screening of residents in a COVID-19 containment zone at Malad in Mumbai on Sunday. •PTI

Goa sees 85 fresh cases

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
PANAJI

Goa reported 85 new COVID-19 cases and two more deaths on Sunday, taking the infection count to 2,453 and the toll to 14, an official said.

An 80-year-old woman and 49-year-old man died in ESI Hospital in Margao,

he said. Fifty-nine people were also discharged, leaving the State with 952 active cases, he said.

A total of 5,008 samples were tested during the day, of which 85 were positive, 2,328 negative and 2,595 reports are awaited, the official added.

Mumbai Metropolitan Region. Thane reported 775 new cases to take the district's total tally soaring past the 23,000 mark.

28 deaths in Thane

Thane also recorded 28 deaths, pushing its death toll to 718. Kalyan-Dombivli out-did Thane to report another massive spike of 779 cases,

taking its total case tally to 14,611. Navi Mumbai added 321 fresh cases, pushing its cumulative total to 10,837. Navi Mumbai also reported 10 fatalities, taking its death toll to 288. Mira-Bhayander and Vasai-Virar recorded big spikes as well, adding 134 and 352 cases respectively to take their total case tallies to 5,960 and 7,893. Seven more

deaths in Vasai-Virar pushed its cumulative toll to 166.

Nashik in north Maharashtra reported eight more fatalities, taking the district's death toll to 290. Jalgaon recorded 209 fresh cases, pushing its tally to 5,810, of which 2,129 are active ones.

The rise in cases continued in Aurangabad, with the district reporting 222 new cases, taking its case tally to 8,217, of which 3,837 are active. With six more deaths being recorded on Sunday, the district's death toll has now reached 338.

Dr. Awate said, "Till date, of a total of 13,17,895 laboratory samples, 2,54,427 (19.3%) have tested positive. Nearly 32,000 samples across the State were tested on Sunday." He said 6,86,150 people across the State are in home quarantine, while 47,801 are in institutional quarantine facilities.

Bhima-Koregaon: NIA gets another 90 days to file chargesheet

Central agency also granted Gautam Navlakha's custody for 10 days

SONAM SAIGAL
MUMBAI

The City Civil and Sessions court on Sunday allowed the National Investigation Agency (NIA) an extension of 90 days to file its chargesheet against Anand Telumbde and Gautam Navlakha, accused in the Bhima-Koregaon case.

The Central agency was also granted Mr. Navlakha's custody for 10 days till July 22. Special Judge D.E. Kothalikar directed the Superintendent of the Talaja jail to hand over Mr. Navlakha's

custody to the NIA. He had surrendered before the New Delhi office of the NIA on April 14. The agency was granted custody till April 21, which was extended by seven days. The NIA had then claimed that he was not cooperating with it and giving evasive replies. It therefore sought his judicial custody, which was granted. Mr. Navlakha is at the Talaja jail's quarantine centre located at Namdar Gopal Krishna Gokhale Vidya Nagar, Kharghar.

The agency's application seeking his custody was on the grounds that it had to confront him with data recovered from seized electronic articles and question him about the whereabouts of the other accused absconding in the case.

Guv. should reconsider stand over varsity exams, says Raut

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut on Sunday said Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari should reconsider his stand on holding the final year university exams in the State.

Mr. Raut's remarks came against the backdrop of 16 personnel at the Raj Bhavan in south Mumbai testing positive for COVID-19.

"The entry of coronavirus in Raj Bhavan is nature's indication to the Governor that his stand that the exams should be held is wrong. He should reconsider his stand," Mr. Raut said.

The insistence that exams be held is "wrong" as it puts the lives of students and their parents at risk,

the Rajya Sabha member said.

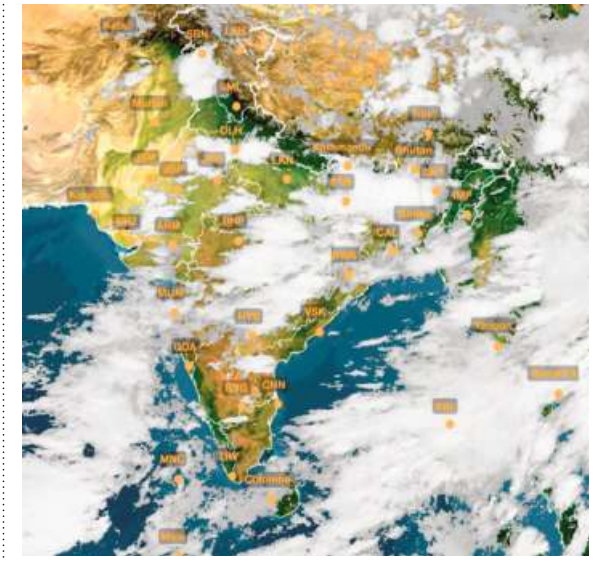
The Uddhav Thackeray-led State government earlier decided to cancel the final year university examinations in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak.

The Governor, however, last month said the decision would jeopardise the future of students and asserted that the chancellor of universities a position which he holds ex-officio has the final authority over all university matters, as per the Maharashtra Public Universities Act.

He also said not conducting the final year examinations amounts to breach of guidelines of the University Grants Commission.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 16.30 HRS)

Forecast for Monday: Heavy to very heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Bihar, Goa, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, central Maharashtra, coastal Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	34	33.0	25.6	Kozhikode	11.4	32.8	24.4
Ahmedabad	2.5	36.0	26.2	Kurnool	...	33.1	25.7
Aizawl	...	22.1	18.0	Lucknow	...	36.3	27.0
Allahabad	27.4	36.0	27.4	Madurai	...	4.3	37.0
Bengaluru	0.2	29.0	21.0	Mangaluru	...	36.3	28.0
Bhopal	...	32.1	24.8	Mumbai	...	39.2	28.6
Bhubaneswar	27	33.0	24.6	Mysuru	...	29.0	21.1
Chandigarh	52.6	35.0	22.4	New Delhi	...	2.4	35.7
Chennai	...	35.0	25.8	Patna	...	0.2	33.6
Coimbatore	...	32.7	22.6	Port Blair	...	0.3	30.0
Dehradun	...	32.5	21.7	Puducherry	...	37.2	25.2
Gangtok	52.6	22.4	18.4	Pune	...	31.0	23.0
Goa	...	28.0	24.1	Raipur	...	16.6	34.0
Guwahati	6.9	29.4	24.8	Ranchi	...	3.9	31.6
Hubballi	...	27.0	22.0	Shillong	...	49.8	22.1
Hyderabad	...	32.0	23.9	Shimla	...	16.6	27.3
Imphal	4.7	29.2	22.0	Srinagar	...	1.2	30.4
Jaipur	3.6	36.9	28.8	Thiruvananthapuram	...	31.8	24.1
Kochi	...	30.0	24.6	Tiruchi	...	75.4	37.5
Kohima	...	25.0	18.3	Vijayawada	...	34.0	35.4
Kolkata	2.7	34.0	26.3	Visakhapatnam	...	6	32.7

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

CITIES	SO ₂	NO ₂	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE	Yesterday
Ahmedabad	24	35	28	40	62	...	In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Nandedari, Gujarat, recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 259 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution.
Bengaluru	...	9	13	53	31	...	In contrast, Kannur, Kerala, recorded a healthy AQI score of 17
Chennai	...	2	29	95	55	...	
Delhi	...	2	121	50	73	...	
Hyderabad	...	13	20	7	38	...	
Kolkata	...	8	9	17	26	...	
Lucknow	...	2	9	55	63	...	
Mumbai	...	59	18	7	21	...	
Pune	...	29	11	56	28	...	
Visakhapatnam	...	9	54	31	54	...	

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)
SO₂: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO₂: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

Country needs another Manmohan Singh for revival of economy: Pawar

NCP chief attacks Modi for creating picture of camaraderie with Xi Jinping, says China is a bigger threat than Pakistan

ALOK DESHPANDE
MUMBAI

Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) chief Sharad Pawar on Sunday said the country again needs an economist like Dr. Manmohan Singh to revive the economy.

"When Dr. Singh was the Union Finance Minister, he gave new directions to the Indian economy. I was also part of that Cabinet. I credit Dr. Singh and late P.V. Narsimha Rao for the turnaround of the economy from the crisis," Mr. Pawar said, adding Prime Minister Narendra Modi should also take the help of experts as the country needs another Dr. Singh.

He was talking to Shiv Sena mouthpiece *Saamana*, in the second part of a three-part interview. Sena MP Sanjay Raut interviewed the NCP president, who is only the third leader after Sena founder late Bal Thackeray and Sena president and Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, to be featured in the Marathi daily.

When asked about Mr. Modi calling him a political guru, Mr. Pawar said there is no such thing as guru in politics. "There is no dialogue between the Modi govern-



Sharad Pawar

ment and leaders of other parties. When Dr. Singh, Pranab Mukherjee, and P. Chidambaram were the finance ministers, they would constantly be in touch with experts and political leaders cutting across party lines to get their views on various issues facing the country. This is not happening now."

Commenting on the ongoing tensions with China, Mr. Pawar, a former Union Defence Minister, said China is a bigger threat to India than Pakistan. "When we think of an enemy, the first name that comes to our mind is Pakistan. But we need not worry about Pakistan. In the long term, it is China that has the power, vision, and programmes to act against Indian interests. China is a bigger threat to India."

Nehru was of the view that China would become a superpower some day and that India should maintain a cordial relation with it since tensions were not beneficial to either of the two countries, he said.

Nehru signed the Panchsheel treaty with China and there was peace in the region, the NCP chief said. "Unfortunately, the Chinese leadership took a different stand and there was a conflict," he said.

'Pune lockdown an attempt to mask MVA's failures'

BJP leaders, outfits oppose sudden transfer of former PMC Commissioner

SHOUMJOIT BANERJEE
PUNE

A day after a major administrative reshuffle saw Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) Commissioner Shekhar Gaikwad being transferred, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MLA Siddharth Shirole said the imposition of the 10-day lockdown in Pune district was an attempt to disguise the failures of the State government, and was unfair to the citizens of a city limping back to normalcy.

Mr. Shirole, the legislator from Shivajinagar, said Mr. Gaikwad, a known opponent of the lockdown, was merely made a political scapegoat. The 10-day lockdown comes into effect from midnight of July 13.

Stating that the city's health infrastructure should always be ahead of the graph of rising cases, Mr. Shirole said it was unfathomable how a 10-day lockdown could help in bringing the city's deplorable medical infrastructure up to snuff. He also alleged that the State government had been misleading

people with projections and the state of preparedness with statistics that were miles away from reality.

"The lockdown has now become a compulsion, but could have easily been prevented with proactive action on part of the State government. Given the drastic surge in cases in the past fortnight, the State authorities should have foreseen and accordingly ramped up their infrastructure," Mr. Shirole said.

With the district witnessing an average surge of 1,400 cases daily (of which 1,000-odd are from Pune city) since the beginning of July, hospitals in the city are packed to capacity.

"Last week, it took me six hours to obtain a bed for a 75-year-old woman who had tested COVID-19 positive. And even then, the woman, a resident of Aundh, finally got a bed at Bharti Hospital, at the other end of the city. I think it is time to give the public the true picture of the beds available in the city," Mr. Shirole said, adding that



Siddharth Shirole

Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray had neither visited the city personally nor had any review videoconference with elected representatives.

Given that Pune's mortality and infection growth rates were among the highest in the country, the BJP leader expressed surprise that the State had yet to set up a jumbo 10,000-bed COVID-19 treatment centre.

"Even after more than 100 days following the first lockdown in March, the State leadership has failed woefully in preparing Pune for this spike in cases, forecast by most epidemiology studies and models. This, despite the fact that I had been repeatedly cautioning State

authorities and ministers to boost Pune's medical infrastructure," Mr. Shirole said.

Ramesh Iyer, Pune city Congress general secretary and party spokesperson, urged the State government to ensure that facilities like the private COVID-19 hospital set up by Wipro, are utilised as soon as possible.

"With the monsoon in earnest, cases will rise dramatically. The State health authorities must arrange for staff in facilities like Wipro's hospital in Hinjewadi, which is gathering dust. To cope with the shortage of doctors, final-year MBBS students should be assigned the responsibility of administering preliminary treatment of patients," Mr. Iyer said.

Meanwhile, a number of leaders and outfits across the political spectrum opposed both the lockdown and the sudden transfer of Mr. Gaikwad, who had served as the city's Commissioner for barely six months.

Pune Metropolitan Region Development Authority (PMRDA) Commissioner Vik-

ram Kumar has been appointed in Mr. Gaikwad's stead as the new PMC Commissioner.

Echoing Mr. Shirole, senior BJP leader and Pune MP Girish Bapat, too, spoke of Mr. Gaikwad being made the "fall guy to mask the failures of the tripartite Maha Vikas Aghadi government" to check the spread of the contagion in Pune merely because he had been a vocal opponent of the lockdown.

"Why was the previous PMC Commissioner, who has been working hard, being shunted out in the midst of the pandemic? The State government should do a rethink on the lockdown as it will impose massive strain on those struggling to make ends meet," Rahul Dambale of the Republican Yuva Morcha said.

Likewise, Santosh Shinde of the Sambhaji Brigade, questioned as to what purpose had been served by the transfer of an officer who was already well-set in managing the problems facing the civic body.

Crime Branch to investigate fraud case

RAINAA ASSAINAR
NAVI MUMBAI

The Crime Branch will now investigate a case in which a 35-year-old MBA graduate was arrested for allegedly duping women after befriending them on matrimonial sites. The Rabale police arrested Sachin Dilip Sambre-Patil on June 23, based on a complaint filed by a 33-year-old lawyer on May 31.

Assistant police inspector Tukaram Nimbalkar said, "During our investigation, we found that the accused had created at least five fake

profiles on matrimonial sites and approached around 1,000 prospective brides through each profile. The Crime Branch is taking over the case to find out how many women responded to his messages and met him in person."

Pravin Patil, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Crime Branch, said the cyber cell will identify the women who came in contact with the accused. "He claims to have met 10 women, but we suspect the number to be higher. We appeal to the women

who have been duped by the accused to approach us immediately or write to the cyber cell," Mr. Patil said.

The police said the accused got married in 2014, but later met a doctor and married her in 2017. The next year, he divorced his first wife. The accused has an 18-month-old son with his second wife. The police said the accused started making fake profiles on matrimonial sites in 2015 and approached women claiming to be unmarried, divorced, widowed or awaiting divorce.

SHOUMJOIT BANERJEE
PUNE

Long queues were witnessed outside grocery and retail stores across Pune city throughout Sunday as people scrambled to stock essentials ahead of the 10-day lockdown commencing at the midnight of July 13.

Hundreds thronged the Market Yard in Gultekdi, which comprises Pune's largest wholesale vegetable, grocery and fruit market.

Given the scale of the crowds, officials at the agricultural produce market committee and the police found it difficult to control buyers, most of whom had thrown physical distancing to the winds. As per the an-



People buy vegetables at a market in Pune on Saturday, after authorities announced a 10-day lockdown from the midnight of July 13. •FILE PHOTO

nouncement on Friday, only the supply of milk is permitted in the first five days of the strict lockdown period, with all vegetable and grocery stores remaining shut.

Meanwhile, Pune district reported 1,711 new COVID-19 cases till Sunday evening, as its total cases surged to 39,125, of whom 14,484 cases are active. Of the total case

tally, 23,591 people have been discharged, Pune Divisional Commissioner Deepak Mhaisekar said.

As many as 558 of the active cases in the district are in a critical condition.

According to district officials, the death toll climbed to 1,050, while State Health Department figures put the total fatalities at 1,097.

The death toll in Solapur district has climbed to 328, with only one fatality reported on Sunday. The death toll in Pune division, which consists of Pune, Satara, Sangli, Kolhapur and Solapur districts, has now reached 1,483, as per Pune divisional office figures. Mr. Mhaisekar said Pune division's total case tal-

ly has reached 45,897, of whom 16,483 are active cases, while 27,931 people have been discharged till date.

Solapur reported 109 new cases to take its total case tally to 3,930, of whom 1,409 are active. Satara, which has reported 65 deaths thus far, reported a record high surge of 153 new cases as its total cases shot to 1,696, of whom 621 are active cases.

Sangli recorded 16 new cases to push its tally to 624, of whom 306 are active ones, while with 35 new cases, Kolhapur's total cases stand at 1,174, of whom 315 are active. While Sangli's death toll stands at 16, Kolhapur's count has climbed to 24.



Sure power

India's solar strategy should look at tapping the best globally, to make locally

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's stated resolve to tap the energy of the sun to substantially power the economy and everyday life is to be welcomed, because it could help chart a green deal for the future. He restated the case for greater reliance on solar power, for energy and as a path for self-reliance industrialisation, at the inauguration of a 750 MW photovoltaic project at Rewa, in Madhya Pradesh last week. But as he would recognise, the idea of building a domestic solar manufacturing industry that delivers increasing volumes of quality photovoltaic cells, modules and associated equipment is long in the tooth. India's installed base of this green power source is about 35 gigawatts (GW), and its projected addition of capacity until 2024 in a COVID-19 affected future is estimated by the industry to be of the order of 50 GW. Viewed against the goals set five years ago for the Paris Agreement on climate, of installing 100 GW of solar power by 2022, there could be a sharp deficit. Combined with low domestic cell manufacturing capacity at 3.1 GW last year, and heavy reliance on China, high ambition must now be supported by aggressive official policy. The Chinese story is one of a steady rise from insignificant manufacturing capability in the 1990s, to virtual dominance through active government support in identifying and acquiring top technologies globally, importing critical raw materials such as polysilicon, acquiring solar manufacturers abroad, and investing in third countries with ready capability. Importantly, the domestic market was treated with great importance while promoting exports.

The pandemic presents a critical opportunity for India to plan a green deal, on the lines of what the EU has committed itself to: that future growth and employment should align itself to environmental and sustainability objectives, particularly in energy production, away from dirty fuels such as coal. There is no better time than now to make solar energy a strategic sector, giving it as much importance as defence. As the architect of the International Solar Alliance, which attracted about 120 nations at its launch, India needs to show leadership to advance the manufacture and absorption of solar photovoltaic infrastructure in low- and middle-income countries. The key requirements are integrated policies fully supported by States. Industry must get help to set up facilities and avail low cost financing – both important elements in China's rise – and be able to invest in intellectual property. A forward-looking programme should also look at emerging trends in deploying solar innovatively. These include newer technologies such as aesthetic photovoltaic window and roof tiles for buildings, multi-role urban structures, and greater use of residential and commercial buildings to deploy more panels. Rapid progress requires a strategic shift to aid competitive domestic manufacturing.

Museum to mosque

Turkey is reopening old religious wounds by changing the status of Hagia Sophia

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's decision to turn Hagia Sophia back into a working mosque is a major setback to the country's secular values that are already under attack from Islamists. The sixth century Byzantine monument had been at the centre of the conflict between Ottoman Muslims and eastern Orthodox Christians for centuries. Built as a cathedral by Byzantine Emperor Justinian I, it was converted into a mosque by the Ottomans after Mehmed the Conqueror captured the city in 1453. For five centuries, it was a jewel in the Ottoman Sultan's crown. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founding father of modern Turkey, closed down the mosque in 1930 as part of his secularisation drive and reopened it as a museum five years later. Ever since, it has been one of Turkey's most visited monuments as well as a symbol of Christian-Muslim co-existence. In recent years, the demand for converting the museum into a mosque gained traction with support from Mr. Erdoğan and his party. On Friday, as soon as the country's highest administrative court cancelled Hagia Sophia's museum status, he signed a decree transferring its management to the Directorate of Religious Affairs. Reopening Hagia Sophia as a mosque is now only a matter of time and formality.

Mr. Erdoğan, whose Justice and Development Party (AK Party) came to power in 2002 on promises of reforming the Kemalist state into a more inclusive and democratic one, has, instead, been systematically unmaking the secular republic. He has tightened his grip on power by moving religion to the centre of his governance. He has rewritten the Constitution, turning Turkey into an all-powerful executive presidency, and launched a war against journalists and critics at home. His foreign policy bets on Syria and Libya had backfired with jihadists making gains in both countries. After the failed coup of 2016, he started a purge to get rid of rivals from the government. Now, with the decision on Hagia Sophia, his brand of Islamism is taking a giant leap forward. The symbolism is hardly lost on anyone. For Turkish Islamists, Hagia Sophia has always been associated with the "glory" of the Ottoman imperial era. He is appealing to those sentiments, while symbolically marking an end to Kemalist secularism. The move comes at a time when the President is facing challenging times. The economy is in free fall. The COVID-19 pandemic is spreading. His popularity is sliding, especially after the AK Party lost local elections in Istanbul and Ankara last year. Whether the Hagia Sophia decision would help him politically or not, it could further fracture Turkish society and worsen international relations. Mr. Erdoğan is opening the wounds of the past, which could have lasting consequences. Surely, 2020 is not 1453.

The sum and substance of the EU's China dilemma

Though the Asian giant is critical to European economic health, the political narrative is a sign of a shift in the wind



VIJAY GOKHALE

Europe and China have been major partners for a generation. According to the Global Office of the International Comparison Program at the World Bank, China and the European Union (EU) jointly account for nearly 35% of global GDP in PPP terms. Europe championed China's case for World Trade Organization (WTO) membership and China supported the 'European Project'. A single example is sufficient to demonstrate how critical China is for European prosperity. Between 1995 and 2012, Germany, Europe's economic powerhouse, enhanced its industrial value by 37%, the largest chunk of which came from supply chains not in the United States but in China.

Behind the presumption

Therefore, when on June 9, Josep Borrell Fontelles, the European Union's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, publicly proclaimed that "China is without doubt one of the key global players. We have to engage with China to achieve our global objectives, based on interests and values", a logical assumption might be that there is unlikely to be any change in the Europe-China relationship after the novel coronavirus pandemic. Such a superficial impression is reinforced by European statements that they will not choose sides between the United States and China. Yet any such presumption bears closer examination.

In March 2019, the EU Commission published "A Strategic Outlook", describing China as, simultaneously, a cooperative partner,

an economic competitor and a systemic rival promoting alternative models of governance. This was the product of a long process of distillation during which the political and security dimensions began to jostle with the economics that had been the primary determinant of China-EU ties for two decades.

Red flags go up

There was a growing appreciation that the balance of challenges and opportunities presented by China were shifting as its economic power and concomitant political influence grew with unprecedented scale and speed, and in ways that concerned European security. China's efforts to cultivate separate European sub-constituencies like the 16+1 Format with the Central and Eastern European States, and meetings with the Nordics and the Southern Europeans; the sailing of the PLA Navy into the Baltic Sea for joint exercises with Russia in 2017; cross-sectoral hybrid threats including information operations in European countries; Chinese behaviour in the South China Sea and Indian Ocean; and its targeted acquisition of key high-technology companies such as Kuka in Germany or key ports like Piraeus in Greece, began to raise red flags in the Chancelleries of Europe. China's economic and financial practices backed by strategic motives threatened unity and the European project itself, since it appeared to undo their efforts in terms of connectivity, regulatory frameworks and the building of a single European entity.

Thus, even before the pandemic, the "Strategic Outlook" recommended that the EU should shift towards "a more realistic, assertive and multifaceted approach" to China.

China's actions in the first half of 2020 have sharpened such contradictions. Its early handling of COVID-19, and even more impor-



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

tantly, the clumsy Chinese efforts to use the confusion inside Europe to their propaganda advantage, led the EU to make a rare and blunt accusation against China on June 10, 2020: "Foreign actors and certain third countries, in particular Russia and China, have engaged in targeted influence operations and disinformation campaigns around COVID-19 in the EU, its neighbourhood and globally, seeking to undermine democratic debate and exacerbate social polarisation, and improve their own image in the COVID 19 context." China's aggressive actions in the South China Sea, on the Line of Actual Control with India, and in Hong Kong, among others, have also gained European eyeballs, so much so that even though China remains critical to European economic health, the EU Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen, after the virtual Summit with Chinese Premier Li Keqiang on June 22, 2020, said that Europe's relations with China are "simultaneously one of the most strategically important and one of the most challenging that we have". This then is the European dilemma.

Determinants and focus now

The European debate is no longer simply about market access, industrial subsidies, over-capacity in steel and hi-tech industries; stealing of IPR, and China's assertive approach to the security, resilience and stability of digital net-

works. It has begun to turn towards how to balance economic co-dependency and co-prosperity with China's strategic global intentions and efforts to seek military supremacy and its bearing on European security. In the trinity of determinants identified by the EU in March 2019 – namely [negotiating] Partner, [economic] Competitor and Systemic Rival – the last dimension is gradually becoming the dominant political narrative.

China also views Brussels as increasingly antagonistic. Yuan Peng, President of China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations, which belongs to China's intelligence services, has opined in a stellar article on June 17, titled "The Coronavirus Pandemic and a Once-in-a-Century Change", that "Europe's star is fading". Ironically, the retreat of the U.S. from global leadership is providing the Chinese with the means to take advantage, even when they no longer deem it in their strategic interests to support the "European Project". During recent EU-China leader level meetings, the Chinese have downplayed the differences. Yuan Peng puts it thus: "The United States, Europe and Japan have common interests in curbing China, but China, Europe and Japan also have much to gain in tapping the potential of their relations." The Chinese intention is to delay the former by dangling the economic carrot.

Sentiments after pandemic

None of this should lead to the inference that the EU will follow the U.S. in 'de-coupling' or join an 'against-China' camp. The European Union Chamber of Commerce in China, which recently released its Business Confidence Survey 2020, says that most European businesses are chiefly "in China, for China". European companies still hope that China's President Xi Jinping will use this pandemic to make fundamental

reforms in the way that Deng Xiaoping and Zhu Rongji did in 1992 and 1998, respectively. European companies still regard China as the biggest potential market. Yet, the pandemic has also triggered calls for diversifying European businesses away from an overreliance on any single market. The deteriorating relationship between China and the U.S. is causing many new investors to look for alternative investment spaces. If either the Chinese fail to restore their end of the global supply chains or if the world demand cannot be revived, more companies will tend to look elsewhere.

A role for India

This, then, is an opportune time for India-EU relations, but only if we do not waste the crisis. Political conditions are favourable especially after the withdrawal of the United Kingdom. The Europeans recognise India's role in helping provide peace and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific. They see great potential in working together on technologies and issues of the future. But we are not the only economic alternative for Europe in the aftermath of COVID-19. If the Broad-based Trade and Investment Agreement can be put back on track or, at the very least, if we conclude a new investment agreement, and if we are ready to join in high-technology collaboration including 5G and artificial intelligence, we may be able to align our stars. This will require imagination from our side, but Europe will also need to change its positions on trade in goods and be ready to accommodate India on services. The opportunity for India and the EU to build a partnership that is both economic and strategic is there for the taking in a post-COVID-19 strategic scenario.

Vijay Gokhale is a former Foreign Secretary of India and a former Ambassador to Germany and to China

Hardly smart about urban health care

Despite the renewed policy focus on cities, the pandemic has exposed the weaknesses in handling a public emergency



MATHEW IDICULLA

The novel coronavirus pandemic has largely been an urban crisis so far, with megacities such as Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru and Chennai accounting for most of the COVID-19 positive cases. Indian cities are not only facing a public health crisis but also a larger emergency of economic issues and livelihoods. A high percentage of urban residents have lost employment during the lockdown and continue to face an uncertain future. So, are Indian cities equipped to deal with the pandemic and its aftermath?

Still an urban dream

Over the last decade-and-a-half, cities have started receiving more policy attention from the government, with dedicated national-level programmes on urban development. The 'Smart Cities Mission', a flagship programme of the Narendra Modi-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government, completed five years, in June 2020. The Mission had sought to make 100 selected cities "smart", primarily through an "Area-Based Development" model under which a small portion of the

city would be upgraded by retrofitting or redevelopment.

Five years after its launch, the enthusiasm regarding Smart Cities seems to have waned. While "smart cities" and "bullet trains" were buzzwords in the initial years of the first term of the NDA government, over the last few years there has hardly been any mention about them by the top political leadership. Many of the projects undertaken under the 'Smart Cities Mission' are behind schedule. According to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, of the 5,151 smart city projects across the 100 cities, while around 4,700 projects have been tendered, only 1,638 projects have been completed. In terms of expenditure, of the total investment of ₹2,05,018 crore, only projects worth ₹26,700 crore have been completed. Hence, the idea of completely transforming India's derelict cities into "smart cities" within five years now seems a pipe dream.

A blind spot

Most of these Smart Cities are now reeling under the devastation caused by COVID-19. Some cities have been using the Integrated Command and Control Centres created under the 'Smart Cities Mission' as "war rooms" for monitoring real time data regarding the spread of the virus. However, tackling the larger public health and economic fallout remains a more difficult challenge.



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

In fact, the 'Smart Cities Mission' has given short shrift to basic services such as public health. An analysis of the smart city projects under the Mission shows that only 69 of over 5,000 projects undertaken under the Mission were for health infrastructure. These projects are for an estimated cost of ₹2,112 crore, amounting to just around one per cent of the total mission cost. Hence, public health seems to be a major blind spot in India's smart city dreams.

While one could argue that health infrastructure is not a core element of a "smart" city, the 'Smart Cities Mission' was never focused merely on technology; it had the stated aim of improving the quality of life of urban residents. Further, public health is an essential local government function in India's constitutional scheme. As per the 12th Schedule of the Constitution, introduced by the 74th Amendment, "public health" is one of the 18 functions that are to be devolved to the municipalities. However, public health infrastructure of cities has often

been neglected over the years and new programmes such as the 'Smart Cities Mission' have further driven local governments away from their core responsibilities.

Strengthening local capacities

The COVID-19 crisis has exposed the weaknesses in the institutional and human capacity of Indian cities to handle a public health emergency. Despite the renewed policy focus on cities, India's urban local bodies continue to be financially and administratively weak and heavily understaffed. There is also high level of vacancy of Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) workers, the frontline public health workers carrying out contact tracing, in urban areas, especially in COVID-19 hotspot cities such as Mumbai.

The relative success of Kerala in containing the pandemic has shown how a decentralised political and administrative system with strong local governments and high investment in local public health care can be effective. In the absence of such participative local government institutions, authorities in some cities have roped in resident welfare associations to monitor COVID-19 cases. In this process, resident welfare associations have become emboldened and are often imposing draconian rules as they exercise a form of private authoritarianism in their neighbourhoods.

To tackle the COVID-19 crisis, it

is important to strengthen local government capacities, invest heavily in urban public health systems, and promote programmes that improve the livelihoods of urban vulnerable communities. The 'Smart Cities Mission', with its skewed priorities and parallel governance structures of Special Purpose Vehicles, offers little hope in this regard. Instead, programmes such as the National Urban Livelihoods Mission and National Urban Health Mission, which have lately received limited focus and resources, need to be strengthened.

Think jobs too

Further, it is time to consider the introduction of a national urban employment guarantee programme that assures jobs for urban residents and strengthens the capacities of urban local bodies. Kerala has been running such a scheme since 2010 and States such as Odisha, Himachal Pradesh and Jharkhand have also recently launched similar initiatives in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis. As Indian cities face an unprecedented challenge, it is important to get the priorities of urban development right and invest in programmes that improve the health and livelihoods of its residents.

Mathew Idiculla is a lawyer and researcher on urban issues, and a consultant with the Centre for Law & Policy Research, Bengaluru

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

Mission Rajasthan

The allegation by Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot that the BJP is trying to topple his government in the midst of the pandemic cannot be brushed aside (Page 1, July 12). The ruling party, ever since it assumed power at the Centre, has been accused of indulging in political games using money and muscle power. How can one forget the events in Karnataka, Manipur and Goa? The ruling party could be forgetting that the people are watching. Democracy is not about winning elections alone.

J. ANANTHA PADMANABHAN,
Tiruchi, Tamil Nadu

■ It appears that the BJP is on a toppling spree of

Opposition-ruled State governments. The Narendra Modi government came to office in 2014 and retained power in 2019 with the promise of clean administration but its actions in the past year seem to be with the main aim of snatching power by subverting democracy.

N.A. JOSEPH,
Tittumanoor, Kottayam, Kerala

■ What is Mr. Gehlot striving to accomplish by going public? Is he is naive and expecting that the BJP will refrain from pulling the rug under his feet after his public indictment? The anti-defection law has failed to deter India's law-makers as inducements outweigh the cost of losing the seat. The Indian National Congress has

indulged in horse trading during its heyday and is now getting a taste of its own medicine. All parties are cut from the same cloth and it is like the pot calling the kettle black. Even if a piece of legislation is enacted to disqualify such turncoats for life it may not have any bearing on them as their sole purpose of entering politics, to make money, would have been accomplished.

Contemporary politics is a great money-spinner and morals and ethics have taken a backseat. Voters are left with no meaningful choice which is also why such MPs and MLAs have the gumption to put up a brave face and confront the electorate brazenly and repeatedly.

DEEPAK SINGHAL,
Chennai

Crime, law, politics

The gangster, Vikas Dubey, undoubtedly deserved severe punishment – either the death penalty or life sentence. Whatever be the case, it should have been done after observance of all the legal and judicial processes. The brutality of the police, in this case the Uttar Pradesh police, in the name of an encounter was unwarranted. The police taking the law into its own hands and delivering instantaneous death penalty disregarding processes and procedures prescribed in the Indian Penal Code are barbaric and unconstitutional. The "encounter" which is being used in a routine or an easy way by the police to eliminate criminals on the

whims and fancies of the powers-that-be will have to be curbed. The judiciary must intervene.

MANOHARAN MUTHUSWAMY,
Ramanathapuram, Tamil Nadu

■ A small-time *dadha* grows into a Frankenstein monster. He attains political clout, gains wealth and becomes a threat. He commits heinous crimes but exploits

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:
The photograph published along with the report titled "1st phase of disengagement completed" (July 11, 2020) was erroneously identified as a C-17 aircraft. It was actually an IL-76 aircraft.

In a report titled "4 more COVID-19 deaths in Punjab, 3 in Haryana" (July 11, 2020) the cumulative tally in Haryana was erroneously given as 19,934. It should have been 19,934.

It is the policy of The Hindu to correct significant errors as soon as possible. Please specify the edition (place of publication), date and page. The Readers' Editor's office can be contacted by Telephone: +91-44-28418297/28576300 (11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday); Fax: +91-44-28552963; E-mail: readerseditor@thehindu.co.in; Mail: Readers' Editor, The Hindu, Kasturba Buildings, 859 & 860 Anna Salai, Chennai 600 002, India. All communication must carry the full postal address and telephone number. No personal visits. The Terms of Reference for the Readers' Editor are on www.thehindu.com

Nurturing citizens in social studies

The proposed move of rationalising the syllabus strikes at the target of training good citizens



HAMID ANSARI

The list of jettisoned subjects is comprehensive; the apprehension that it is purposeful is unavoidable; the conclusion that a 'happening' has been converted into a 'penalty goal' is inescapable. These thoughts cross the mind while reading about the decision of the Ministry of Human Resource Development to exclude certain subjects from the list of topics of study in the social science curriculum for Classes 9 to 12 with the objective of reducing by 30% the "load" while retaining "core concepts". The stated rationale of the move is the disruption caused by COVID-19 to the academic year. The exercise covers other subjects too, but the focus of this analysis is on the social sciences only for reasons that will become evident in this essay.

The argument for disruption and the resultant load is self-evident and valid. The phenomenon is universal and applies to all stages of education and to all lands across the globe. Not all have reacted the same way and pedagogues would argue that there could be more than one method of lightening the academic load that in any case predates the pandemic. Democratic societies the world over have developed methodologies of nurturing young citizens in essential values and procedures and none have so far abandoned them on account of the pandemic.

Salient features of curriculum

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) on its website indicates nine salient features of the senior secondary school curriculum for Classes 11 and 12 for the years 2020-2021. It mentions that the curriculum strives to "provide ample scope for physical, intellectual and social development of students". The curriculum also strives to "uphold Constitutional values such as Socialism, Secularism, Democracy, Republican character, Justice, Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, Human Dignity of Individual and Unity and integrity of the Nation by encouraging value-based learning activities."



"Would the young person exercising franchise for the first time be an informed voter?" First-time voters in Bhopal on January 25, 2020. — A.M. FARUQUI

With some abridgments, therefore, the features reiterate the values mentioned in the Preamble of the Constitution of India. Item 4 of the salient features says the curriculum strives to "nurture Life-Skills by prescribing curricular and co-curricular activities to help improve self-esteem, empathy towards different cultures etc." There is, however, no mention of Fundamental Duties (Article 51A of the Constitution); of the duty "to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture" and of the duty "to develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of enquiry and reform". The wording here is curious. Are "different cultures" synonymous with our "composite culture"? Is it an admission that ours is a land of "different cultures"?

It would be argued in defence of abridgments that the CBSE curriculum for Classes 9 and 10 has identical wording for items 3 and 4 and that the themes are therefore covered at an earlier stage of school education. This is to presume that levels of student comprehension between Classes 9 and 11 or 10 and 12 remain static and do not need upgradation either in teaching or in understanding.

Being 'politically conscious'

Our system of democratic governance is based on the Constitution that prescribes universal adult suffrage with the voting age now being

18, after the 61st Amendment of 1988. It was then argued formally in Parliament that "the present-day youth are literate and enlightened and the lowering of the voting age would provide to the unrepresented youth of the country an opportunity to give vent to their feelings and help them become a part of the political process. The present-day youth are very much politically conscious. It is, therefore, proposed to reduce the voting age from 21 years to 18 years."

In other words, and since the general average school-leaving age after Class 12 is 16-17 years, this objective of being "politically conscious" is to be attained suddenly at the age of 17 and without the benefit of formal instruction on fundamental principles of our polity. And if this formal instruction on the principles of the Constitution is not available to the young person at that age, she or he has no option but to resort to informal knowledge acquired through hearsay and media or social media with all the tilt or prejudice of demagoguery and propaganda that go with it. Would the young person exercising franchise for the first time then be an informed voter?

In this context, it is useful to examine the relevant portions of the Draft National Education Policy 2019 with a Message from the Minister of Human Resource Development. It has on page 96 a section on 'Development of Constitutional Values'. It

states that "the process and the content of education at all levels will also aim to develop Constitutional values in all students, and the capacities for their practice... Some of these Constitutional values are: democratic outlook and commitment to liberty and freedom; equality, justice, and fairness; embracing diversity, plurality, and inclusion; humanness and fraternal spirit; social responsibility and the spirit of service; ethics of integrity and honesty; scientific temper and commitment to rational and public dialogue; peace; social action through Constitutional means; unity and integrity of the nation, and a true rootedness and pride in India with a forward-looking spirit to continuously improve as a nation." The same document, on page 231, reiterates the objective of developing "an understanding of our Constitutional values, and the disposition and capacities for their practice, amongst all their students." The other objectives mentioned in this section are diversity, plurality humanness, fraternal spirit, scientific temper and commitment to rational dialogue.

Focus on the next generation

Will these virtues and constitutional values and capacities for their practice be developed without formal instruction? Would this necessarily be the best training for citizenship? Could the objective be to lessen the instruction in constitutional values and their impact on perceptions and practices of the next generation?

The BJP's Sankalp Patra for the 2019 general election mentions in several places the objective of good governance and of putting in place for it "a framework of governance which will yield rich dividends over the next generation". This focus on the next generation requires good citizens who in turn need to be educated in good governance. This is precisely what the objective of the jettisoned items of the curriculum was intended to be. The proposed move of load-shedding goes counter to this and strikes at the target of training good citizens and teaching them civility. Would a sceptic be justified in suspecting that the objective may be to have a less literate young voter?

Hamid Ansari is the former Vice-President of India, 2007-2017

FROM THE READERS' EDITOR

Re-imagining journalism-2

The nature of the press is directly linked to the kind of society we want



A.S. PANNEERSELVAM

In this 400th column, I continue our collective efforts to re-imagine journalism. This also marks the 40th anniversary of the Organization of News Ombudsmen and Standards Editors (ONO). The organisation, which was born in the U.S. in 1980, deliberately chose the acronym ONO to mark the difficult relationship between an ombudsman and the newsroom. According to the official history of ONO, "It was said at the time that 'Oh No!' was the most common thing an ombudsman would hear from nervous or annoyed reporters whenever the ombudsman was seen on the newsroom floor, as their appearance often heralded a difficult discussion about poor decisions or outright mistakes. So the chance to call the organization itself 'Oh No!' was simply too good to pass up."

Reflections on journalism

There have been many reflections on journalism over the last three centuries. From Benjamin Franklin's declaration on journalistic ethics (found in his autobiography published in 1791) and Mahatma Gandhi's reflections on running *Indian Opinion* (1904-1915) to the findings of various commissions, there is a rich oeuvre of literature about what makes journalism a public good. India had two press commissions – the First Press Commission (1952-54) and the Second Press Commission (1978-1982) – to define the contours of the Indian press.

The first commission to come up with a comprehensive report was called the Hutchins Commission (the Commission on Freedom of the Press). In 1943, Henry R. Luce, the publisher of Time Inc., and Robert Maynard Hutchins, president of the University of Chicago, came up with the idea of forming a panel to reflect on the state of the U.S. press. The commission had a generous grant of \$2,00,000 from Luce, and 13 American and four international advisers. It examined the role of journalism during the financial crisis following the Great Depression and World War II. As Chair of the commission, Hutchins told his fellow members that their purpose was to answer three questions: "What society do we want? What do we have? How can the press... be used to get what we want?" These questions remain valid. The commis-

sion's key recommendations were that newspapers should redefine themselves as "common carriers of public discussion" by providing "a truthful, comprehensive account of the day's events in a context which gives them meaning, a forum for the exchange of comment and criticism, a means of projecting the opinions and attitudes of the groups in the society to one another, and a way of reaching every member of the society by the currents of information, thought, and feeling which the press supplies."

It is heartening to receive a number of responses from readers, though a couple of them were merely clever jibes at the vocation itself. Academics define the news media as knowledge machines which make a distinct product: accounts. The role of these machines includes having editorial judgment in selecting and rejecting materials. As Professor Pablo J. Boczkowski said: "From a multitude of potentially newsworthy events happening in the world, these machines produce reports of the facts that count and explanations of why they count."

Space for debate

When Internet 2.0 happened, there was a wide belief that this would enable readers to voice their opinions in the comments section leading to better dialogue and debate. Unfortunately, the comments section, instead of becoming a site for democratic mediation of ideas, soon descended to a gladiatorial arena drawing more blood than ideas. Many publications opted to shut down the comments section fully. Some like *The Hindu* have opted for a moderated comments section, which means deploying more human resources in these hard times. The unbridled space, and the choice to be anonymous, offered by platform companies like Facebook and Twitter amplifies hate, bigotry and misogyny. Debate has given way for shrill acrimonious exchanges that often end up as personal abuse. Digital disruption often blurs some of the crucial distinctions – for instance, how a local newspaper covers an international development as opposed to a global player such as Reuters or The Associated Press. For instance, a report in *The Hindu*, "The spectre of U.S. sanctions" (July 12), dealt with the adversarial impact on India of the U.S. Congress's move to implement the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act. A community requires not just hyper-local news but also needs to know about decisions taken by foreign leaders that have a profound impact on its livelihood.

readerseditor@thehindu.co.in

The travesty of film journalism

Gossip, sensationalism and hype dominate the film news space

KUNAL RAY

The recent death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput has raised several questions. Many have expressed their concerns about blind items that regularly feature in film-related news space slandering actors. Some have also said that these news items are manipulated and controlled by rivals of the target. No evidence is given in such news items; they are all based on hearsay. Often the news item doesn't even mention the writer of the piece. That we still call it news is nothing short of farcical.

A serious concern

Film editor and writer Apurva Asrani wrote a long blog explaining his agonising experience when targeted by a series of slandering articles aimed at tarnishing his credibility. Mr. Asrani had to pay a heavy price in terms of health and mental consequences that he suffered. Actor Himanshu Malik also wrote an article enumerating his unsavoury experiences and the ugly machinations of the Hindi film industry. Rajput's death has opened the floodgates of numerous social accounts – mostly social media posts and personal blogs. The insider-outsider debate has been long ensuing. However, there's another serious concern that shouldn't be brushed under the carpet – the nature of film reporting in India or, to be more specific, film reporting in Bollywood.

Film journalism or whatever that means has been reduced to gossip, sensationalism and hype. Most film reviews are just badly written plot summaries with a few comments about song, dance, costume. In fact, that's exactly how one shouldn't write about films. These reviewers think cinema happens in a vacuum. There's no mention of the sociocultural dimensions of the film. The rest of the stories are interviews with actors. Most of these are PR-driven exercises engineered before the launch of a film or intended to serve vested interests. Questions are often sent beforehand. Tailor-made answers are offered. Then there are lifestyle features about actors' homes, their holidays, children and their birthday parties and unending inanities. Rumours, link-ups and scandals form a

bulk of film-related reporting in this nation. This deviance has been normalised. However, exceptions exist – there are a handful of writers who are interested in discussing the merits and demerits of a film. At the same time, alternative online platforms like *Film Companion* have emerged that are interested in discussing films and not stars.

Post-liberalisation phenomenon

The question to ask is, how did film writing descend so low? This could be seen as a post-liberalisation phenomenon with major changes in the media landscape of the country and the advent of lifestyle or 'sunny journalism' as some would call it. The range of film magazines that soon emerged did very little to create interest in cinema per se; their sole focus remained on the life of the stars and fashioning a halo around the persona of the leading actors. The magazines were sold on the merit of who featured on the cover and other juicy details they offered. These magazines also started their own film awards. An unholy nexus thus flourished. The film award show is nothing less than a TRP-generating spectacle. All claims of honouring the finest in filmdom are pure convenience.

This kind of film writing that thrived by spawning personal details of stars soon became an industry. Space for contemplative film writing and analysis began to shrink and a tabloid-type reporting took over by splashing photos of stars arriving at airports or leaving from home. We were told that this is what readers want to see.

Such reporting encourages unabashed voyeurism. It breeds ugly consumerism. In such a climate, films that deserve to be written about don't get featured because they are either too arty or their actors do not have a fan following whose 'airport looks' will bring the publication more attention. There are a lot of things to fix in any social structure including the Hindi film industry. But let us not leave film journalism out of the radar.

Kunal Ray teaches literary and cultural studies at FLAME University, Pune

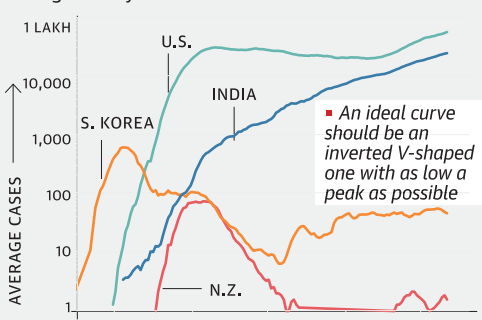


DATA POINT

No bend in sight

With COVID-19 cases continuing to rise steadily in India, there seems to be no infection peak in sight yet. The curve of new cases for countries will eventually bend, but the area under the curve is an indication of the effectiveness of the COVID-19 response. India's high case rate and spread suggest that the response has so far been ineffective. By **The Hindu Data Team**

IDEAL CURVE | The graph shows the 7-day moving average of daily cases in select countries

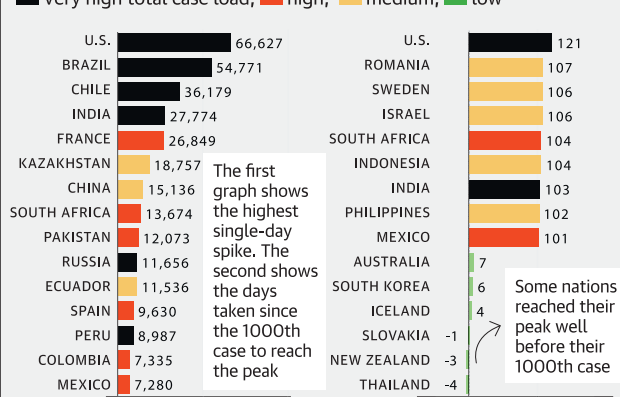


NZ managed an "ideal curve" - rise in cases capped at a relatively small peak and eventually there were no increases at all

Cases rose to a higher peak in S. Korea but fell sharply rendering a near "ideal curve". In India & the U.S. there is no peak in sight

PEAKS & DAYS | More than 100 days since its 1,000th case, India registered a single-day spike of 27,774 cases - the 4th highest among all nations. Only six nations took longer to record their respective peak rises

Very high total case load; high; medium; low



COMBINED PICTURE | The graph plots a country's highest single-day spike against the days taken to peak since the 1000th case. India is among the few nations that had peak rises above 25,000 on a single day and did so more than 100 days after recording 1000 cases. The infections curve for these nations is not only getting steeper but also wider

Chile, Brazil & the U.S. also show the same trend as India's

LAST WORD

1 The U.S. managed a dip in cases before opening up the economy brought a second wave of infections. Now the curve is scaling higher peaks. South Korea also had second & third waves but, unlike the U.S., with much lower case counts compared to its first wave

2 There has been no major dip in case rise in India suggesting we are still going through our first wave. Rise in cases has slowed down relatively in Delhi, Mumbai and Chennai. But they have gone up in Bengaluru and Hyderabad and Tier-2 cities indicating a geographic spread of the virus in the country

The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO JULY 13, 1970

Studying punitive fine proposal

A conference of Inspectors-General of Police will be held here [New Delhi] for three days from July 22 to discuss the law and order situation in the country. The conference will be inaugurated by the Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, who has taken over the Home Portfolio. This conference, it is learnt, was arranged by Mr. Y. B. Chavan as Home Minister to discuss the law and order situation with special reference to certain communal incidents. Police chiefs confer once in two years. During the last meeting of the Inspector-Generals of Police held in Delhi the student problem was discussed. Several important suggestions emanated as to the role of the police in curbing student unrest. The present conference is expected to devote attention to the growth of naxalite movement besides communalism. The Prime Minister is expected to stress the importance of prompt police action to tackle difficult communal and other law and order situations. Several important proposals, including punitive fine, have already been mooted to curb communalism. Opposition leaders as well as the sub-committee of the National Integration Council were sounded on this proposal and the Prime Minister also wrote to the Chief Ministers on the subject.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JULY 13, 1920

Painting the lily.

(From an editorial)

The reactionary reforms rules drafted by the Government of India in consultation with the Local Governments, regarding the composition of and elections to Legislative Councils and the procedure thereof, have secured the approval of the Joint Committee. The Joint Committee, we are told, opine that the Draft Rules "accurately and liberally interpret the recommendations of their report and the intentions of Parliament in framing the Act." We are unable to say that this is not so for the Committee, we must grant, know their intentions better than we others. We daresay, however, that this will come as a surprise to some who claim to have laboured hard along and in co-operation with the Committee; for, they have been assuring the country that while many of the rules were in accordance with the Act and the intentions of the Joint Committee, they considered many others were distinctly against the expressed intentions of the Parliament and of the Committee and that they had done all in their power to get them rescinded.

FROM PAGE ONE

Xi's order, long planning ahead of border moves

With the TMO likely to be in place till at least 2021, India is preparing for a new normal along the border, and is considering the possibility of positioning an additional division under its Leh-based 14 Corps, which sources said was likely to happen.

The PLA's mobilisations began in January after the order was signed, a government source said, and was initially focused on the more than 200 km-long axis stretching from Galwan Valley to Pangong Lake. On the night of May 5, skirmishes or confrontations simultaneously took place in the Galwan Valley and on the north bank of Pangong Lake, as has been confirmed in Indian and Chinese official statements.

China has blamed the tensions in Galwan Valley, which culminated in a clash on June 15 that claimed the lives of 20 Indian soldiers and an unknown number of Chinese soldiers, on India's construction activities transgressing the LAC. The LAC along the India-China border has never been demarcated. In Ladakh, it broadly aligns with China's perceived border, while in Arunachal Pradesh it broadly aligns with India's perceived border.

There are around 11 spots in Ladakh where there are differing perceptions of the LAC.

There are also areas where the LAC differs from China's claimed border, and the Galwan Valley is one of them. While China's official maps show the border passing through the bend in the Galwan river where it turns sharply to meet the Shyok river, known as the Y-nallah, the LAC lies around 1 km east of it. India has been routinely patrolling up to Patrolling Point 14, which is a few hundred metres east of the bend, and was the site of the June 15 clash, which took place around 1 km inside India.

'Exaggerated' claim

The LAC is broadly in alignment with the coordinates China provided India in 1960 regarding its territorial claims in Galwan, although Chinese maps now show its border further west, at the bend, which China calls the 'estuary'.

Since May, China has referred to the LAC as running at the estuary in line with its territorial claims, which India has said was an "exaggerated and untenable" claim.

Starting in late April, China began objecting to India crossing the Y-nallah and reaching PP14. On July 7, Chinese State media released

Pilot's rebellion puts Gehlot govt. on edge

The source said there has been no communication between Mr Gehlot and Mr Pilot for months. "Mr. Gehlot is very accommodative but gave up on Mr. Pilot after a while," the source said.

Other sources said efforts by senior Congress leader Ahmad Patel to broker peace did not succeed. The central leadership despatched party communications chief Randeep Surjewala and Ajay Maken to Jaipur on Sunday.

In the 200-member State Assembly, the Congress has 107 MLAs, while the BJP has 72. The ruling party has the support of one Rashtriya Lok Dal, two CPI(M) and two Bharatiya Tribal party MLAs. All 13 Independents earlier supported the Congress, but

images, thought to be from early May, purporting to show Indian troops carrying out construction, such as foot bridges across the narrow river, in the area that falls in between the Y-nallah and the LAC. The images have not been authenticated.

In a statement on June 19, the Chinese government accused Indian troops of "crossing the LAC" on the night of May 5 and said Chinese troops "have been forced to take necessary measures to respond to the situation on the ground and strengthen management and control in the border areas". According to Indian officials, China had never previously patrolled up to the Y-nallah bend.

On the same night of May 5, another skirmish unfolded more than 200 km away near Finger 4 on the north bank of Pangong Lake. Here, the difference in perception of the LAC was mutually recognised. China's maps claim up to Finger 4, while India has been patrolling up to Finger 8. The Fingers 1-8 refer to mountain spurs running from west to east, towards the lake.

China has previously dominated up to Finger 4 and built a road there in 1999, while the terrain means India can only patrol on foot from Finger 3 to 4. Since May, China has objected to India crossing Finger 4 and built a road to the top of the spur, occupying the ridge line.

Buildup of forces

Throughout May, there were simultaneous Chinese deployments at other areas along the LAC as well as a buildup of Chinese forces in depth areas.

A week after the Galwan and Pangong skirmishes, the PLA bolstered deployments both in the far north, from Dahongliutan near the Xinjiang-Tibet border starting May 12, and in the eastern sector of the India-China border near Naku La in North Sikkim from May 13, where a skirmish took place on May 9. Chinese troops also made incursions at Pangong Tso, Galwan Valley, Hot Springs and Gogra and built up at Chip Chap, Spanggur gap and Changlung La. The rear areas were all occupied by mid June, officials said.

With the disengagements currently under way, the concern in Delhi is the PLA's strategy might be a "many steps forward and a few steps back" approach. With the new PLA training module in place until 2021, officials believe this summer's events may not be the last.

Panel suggests 21-day lockdown for Bengaluru

Karnataka records 2,627 cases and 71 deaths; 1,933 test positive in A.P., 1,269 in Telangana; local transmission tops in Kerala

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

With Bengaluru reporting 1,525 out of 2,627 cases and 45 of 71 deaths in Karnataka on Sunday, members of the State's COVID-19 expert and technical advisory committee

COVID-19

tees recommended a minimum three-week lockdown.

Andhra Pradesh witnessed 19 new deaths and 1,933 new cases, taking the toll to 328 and the tally to 29,168.

With the discharge of over 1,019 patients in 24 hours, 15,412 patients had recovered, and active cases stood at 13,428. Of the total cases, 26,336 patients were locals while 2,403 were people from other States and 429 foreign returnees.

The number of cases in Telangana touched 34,671 as 1,269 samples tested positive on Sunday. On the same day, eight more patients died, tak-

ing the toll to 356.

The State Health department said there were 11,883 active cases, 22,482 were discharged and 356 died till July 12. However, adding the numbers totalled 34,721 while total cases were mentioned as 34,671.

The 1,269 new cases included 800 from Greater Hyderabad, 132 from Rangareddy and 94 from Medchal.

Kerala's COVID-19 burden continued to rise with increase in local transmission. For the third consecutive day on Sunday, community-acquired cases exceeded imported ones. The State reported 435 new cases, of which, 215 were imported cases of people with travel, while cases of local transmission stood at 218.

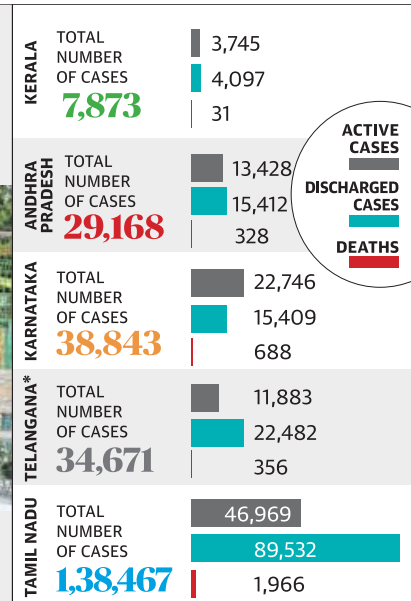
In Thiruvananthapuram, 31 out of 40 new cases were through local transmission, as were 35 of 57 cases in Alappuzha, 41 out of the 50 cases in Ernakulam, 41 out of 56 cases in Kasaragod and 24 out of 39 cases in Pathanamthitta. Ten health-care work-

Tight control

With no decrease in the number of COVID-19 cases, many States have started reimposing strict lockdown measures. The graphic shows the spread of COVID-19 in the southern States:



Vigil increased: A policeman stopping a vehicle as the rider tries to leave a red zone in Tadepalli, Andhra Pradesh. ■ K.V.S. GIRI



*Certain discrepancies in the official numbers given by the State

ers and two paramilitary force personnel contracted the disease through local transmission.

Local transmission raised the patient load. Thiruvananthapuram with 548 patients had the highest active cases, followed by Malappuram, 521, Alappuzha, 372,

Kannur, 334, Ernakulam, 329, and Palakkad, 328.

Two more deaths were recorded on Sunday, raising the tally to 31. Two persons who died on July 5 and July 7 in Thrissur and Alappuzha were found to have tested positive.

In Karnataka with 2,627

new cases, the total touched 38,843. As many as 274 of the total 684 deaths in the State were from Bengaluru.

Dr. V. Ravi, Head of Neuro Virology at NIMHANS, who is on the State's COVID-19 expert committee said: "Scientifically, a minimum three-week lockdown is essential

to cut down the level of transmission."

Prof. Gridhara K Babu, member of Karnataka's COVID-19 technical advisory committee was also of the view that a three-week lockdown was required for any "meaningful" effect. This would be an opportunity for the BBMP to gear up and prepare for the worst, he said.

The number of patients who tested positive for COVID-19 in Tamil Nadu exceeded 4,000 yet again on Sunday after staying relatively low for two days.

In all, 4,244 new cases were recorded taking the total number of positive cases to 1,38,470. Also, 3,617 people were discharged from various facilities after treatment their tally rising to 89,532.

The Directorate of Public Health said the number of active cases in Tamil Nadu was now 46,969.

(With inputs from Vijayawada, Hyderabad, Thiruvananthapuram and Chennai bureaus)

Diplomatic baggage to come under the scanner

Gold seizure in Kerala prompts the decision

S. ANIL RADHAKRISHNAN
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

With 'diplomatic bags' turning a safe route to smuggle gold into the country, baggage arriving from abroad through the diplomatic channel will be subjected to increased surveillance by law enforcers.

The seizure of 30 kg of gold sent through diplomatic channel to an officer of the Consulate of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) via the Thiruvananthapuram International Airport and the presence of the Consulates of the UAE, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Russia, and Germany in Kerala have put the authorities on further alert.

The diplomatic channel was reportedly used for gold smuggling six times this year via the airport by the same team that imported gold from Dubai and landed in Customs net. The inquiry by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) will reveal if the diplomatic channel was



Tension continues: Police caned protesting Youth Congress and Yuva Morcha activists in Kochi on Sunday. ■ H. VISHU

misused for smuggling gold through other airports too, sources said.

Diplomatic bags reach only the Consulates of the UAE and Maldives in Thiruvananthapuram through the scheduled airlines. The protocols of the Union Ministry of External Affairs and procedures of the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) are followed for handling such bags.

In the case of the Honorary Consulates of Germany and Russia in the State capital, sources said the needs are taken care of by the Consulates of the respective countries in Bengaluru and Chennai.

Laid-out procedures Diplomatic bags should have visible external marks of their character and may contain only diplomatic docu-

ments or articles intended for official use. These bags should also bear the name and address of the consignee and that of the sender.

Heavier diplomatic bags are carried as baggage on the aircraft while the diplomatic mail of the missions abroad is taken in the cabin as 'Diplom'. In case an aircraft meets with an accident, there are laid-out procedures to destroy them as they may contain classified and sensitive documents.

The diplomatic bags are sealed at the embassies and missions and will have to be collected from the designated Customs officer by the designated embassy officer. Mails are sent in advance on the diplomatic bag and there will be no clearing agent, sources said.

A diplomatic bag of any classification, whether it is carried by a courier or sent as cargo, cannot be opened under any circumstances by security personnel. "Misusing the diplomatic channel for smuggling is the work of orchestrated minds and a serious look is needed to plug the loopholes," sources said.

Residents oppose funeral of patients near their village

Protest after 'hill poramboke' land is picked for the purpose

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
ONGOLE

Mild tension prevailed at Anangi, a remote village near Maddipadu in Prakasam district in Andhra Pradesh, on Sunday as the residents opposed the authorities who went there to select a site for the disposal of bodies of COVID-19 patients.

The villagers staged a noisy protest during the Gram Sabha meeting held by a team of officials led by Revenue Division Officer Prabar Reddy, which had identified a 'hill poramboke' land for the purpose.

Gram Sabha meeting

The Grama Sabha meeting was held on the directions of Prakasam Collector Pola Bhaskar to allay the fears of the people pertaining to the

issue. The officials explained that all infection prevention control protocols would be duly followed while disposing the bodies.

The health workers would wear personal protective equipment (PPE) during the process and the bodies would be packed in leak-proof plastic bags. However, the explanations failed in convincing the villagers. The villagers feared that the drinking water source would get polluted if the bodies of the COVID-19 patients were cremated at the selected site.

A posse of police led by Ongole Deputy Superintendent of Police K.V.V.N.V. Prasad ensured that the meeting passed off smoothly.

Residents of more than

100 villages consume the water from the Obul Reddy Gundalakamma reservoir nearby, the villagers said, adding that the cremation of bodies might trigger the spread of the virus.

Fear of virus

"The positive cases would go up in geometric proportion in Maddipadu mandal which has reported 22 positive cases till date, if the bodies of COVID-19 patients were brought here for the funeral," the residents said.

In a similar incident earlier, officials could not perform the funerals at another isolated 'hill poramboke' site selected near Yerrajerla.

Villagers opposed the move to dispose the bodies of COVID-19 patients close to a site selected for the YSR housing scheme.

No need for physical presence of surety: HC

This is due to pandemic restrictions

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

The Karnataka High Court has waived the legal requirement of physical presence of surety for the execution of conditions of bail for the time being, given the restrictions imposed on the entry of people into the court premises because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The court said advocates representing the accused could produce the bail bonds and an affidavit signed by the surety, along with true copies of authentic ID documents such as PAN and Aadhaar cards, aside from address proof, a recent photo, and documents with details of property held by the surety.

A Division Bench comprising Chief Justice Abhay Shreenivas Oka and Justice Vishwajith Shetty



A Division Bench passed the order on a PIL petition.

passed the order on a PIL petition, initiated suo motu by the court for finding a solution to legal and technical difficulties faced in the conduct of proceedings on account of the COVID-19 restrictions.

Also, the advocates will have to identify the signature of the surety by signing below it, mentioning their registration/enrolment number issued by the Karnataka State Bar Council.

IN BRIEF



Tirumala sees a dip in number of devotees

TIRUMALA About 15.35% of the devotees who booked tickets did not turn up for darshan at Tirumala since the reopening of the temple on June 11 after the lockdown was lifted. TTD Executive Officer Anil Kumar Singhal on Sunday said no devotees who visited the temple in the past month had tested positive for COVID-19.

T.V. presenter allegedly attacked by group

HYDERABAD Television show presenter Naveen Kumar Chintapandu, popularly known as Teenmaar Mallanna, on Sunday alleged that he was attacked by supporters of Armoor TRS MLA A. Jeevan Reddy while he was going to the Armoor police station in compliance of the notice served on him.

NATGRID gets access to data from police stations

All State police are mandated to file FIRs in the CCTNS. "At present, security agencies directly contact an airline or a telephone company if they are on a suspect's trail. The data is

shared through international servers. The NAT-GRID will ensure that such information is shared through a secure platform," said a senior government official.

KPAC artistes don role of mask-makers for a living



Artistes making masks in Kayamkulam.

SAM PAUL A.
ALAPPUZZHA

The Kerala People's Arts Club, better known as KPAC, is synonymous with the long-term legacy of popular Malayalam theatre. Its revolutionary plays helped create social awareness and popularised communist ideology in Kerala.

Until March, the KPAC aud-

itorium at Kayamkulam used to witness intense drama practice by 45 artists of two troupes. But, with COVID-19 bringing the curtain down on stage performances, albeit temporarily, artists and staff have turned to mask-making to eke out a living.

A. Shahjahan, secretary, KPAC said that they have turned to mask-making for

sustenance. "The profit from the sale of masks will be distributed to the artists, staff and former artists in need of financial assistance before Onam," Mr. Shahjahan said.

Twelve artists and staff living in and around Kayamkulam are engaged in mask-making. They have produced around 12,000 masks. Rates of masks range from ₹7 to ₹25.

APPEAL

7 years old Prathika needs your support to bring a new hope to her life. She suffers from Relapse B-Cell Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia. She requires Rs. 20,00,000/- towards Haploidentical Bone Marrow Transplantation at Meenakshi Mission Hospital & Research Centre, Madurai. Donations sent by Ch.D.D. favouring Meenakshi Mission Hospital & Research Centre, Madurai will be acknowledged. The donations sent through Ch.D.D./NEFT Transfer (Syndicate Bank, Nungambakam Branch, A/c No.60182010063310, IFSC No. SYNB0006018) favouring WOMEN'S WELFARE SYNDICATE is exempted under 80G IT. Please give us your e-mail ID.

All correspondence is done through WWS, Regd. Public Charitable Trust, Flat No.GF 1, Cordel Apartments, O.No.13, N.No.29, Pycrofts Garden Lane, Chennai - 600006. Ph: 044-42137401/28235324 E Mail ID: womenswelfareindia@gmail.com Website: www.womenswelfareindia.org

WWS

FIR against banned outfit member

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
CHANDIGARH

The Haryana Police on Sunday registered a second FIR against Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, a U.S.-based member of the banned pro-Khalistan outfit 'Sikhs for Justice', on charges of sedition and secession.

The Ministry of Home Affairs has designated Pannun a terrorist for actively running a secessionist campaign against India and motivating Sikh youth from Punjab to join militancy.

A Haryana Police spokesperson said they have got blocked all the websites allegedly created by Pannun and launched in the past one week. The FIR has been registered at Kurukshetra. The complainant has alleged that Pannun has been blaming the State government and people for being inimical to the interests of Sikhs and Punjab.

Maken, Surjewala rush to Jaipur

Pilot remains incommunicado in Delhi; party seniors refuse to comment

SOBHANA K. NAIR
SANDEEP PHUKAN
NEW DELHI

Congress communications in-charge Randeep Surjewala and senior leader Ajay Maken were dispatched by the party to resolve the explosive political situation in Jaipur, while deputy Chief Minister Sachin Pilot continues to remain in Delhi.

The *Hindu* has learnt that both Mr. Surjewala and Mr. Maken tried to reach out to Mr. Pilot but he did not respond to either calls or text messages.

Grim prognosis

According to sources, Mr. Surjewala, who had earlier been sent by the party as an observer during the Rajya Sabha elections for a week, had reported back to the leadership that if the issues are not resolved between Mr. Pilot and Rajasthan CM Ashok Gehlot, there could be a split



Fault lines: Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot with Deputy CM Sachin Pilot. • FILE PHOTO

in the State unit of the party.

Following this, Mr. Pilot had a one-on-one meeting with former Congress president Rahul Gandhi. He clearly conveyed to Mr. Gandhi that it was getting uncomfortable for him working with Mr. Gehlot.

"He complained that even in his own constituency, he was unable to get any work

done because of Mr. Gehlot's intervention," a senior party official said.

Last week Mr. Pilot once again spoke to Congress treasurer Ahmed Patel.

It is also reliably learnt that Mr. Patel tried to broker peace between Mr. Gehlot and Mr. Pilot but with little success. Party insiders claim that the situation is grim,

with at least 20 legislators including Mr. Pilot likely to walk away.

Silence prevails

As the uncertainty continued, a majority of senior leaders refused to comment about the events in Rajasthan barring Rajya Sabha MPs Kapil Sibal and Abhishek Manu Singhvi.

Mr. Singhvi said both Mr. Gehlot and Mr. Pilot are seasoned leaders and have to demonstrate the "perspicacity and maturity" and that the turbulence should be short-lived and solutions lasting and deep.

"Time for sobriety, restraint & balance in all quarters. Rajasthan, apart from being my home State, is jewel of Congress crown," he tweeted. He said that there were no issues that were not solvable across the table. He also advised the BJP to stop fishing in troubled waters.

I am worried for our party, says Kapil Sibal

Comment comes amid the political turmoil in Rajasthan

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Against the backdrop of the political turmoil going on in Rajasthan, Rajya Sabha member and Congress spokesperson Kapil Sibal tweeted on Sunday that he was worried for the party.

So far, the Congress has been maintaining a radio silence even as speculation is going on about a possible rebellion led by Deputy Chief Minister Sachin Pilot. Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot has called for a meeting of party MLAs and Independent legislators who are supporting his government.

Mr. Sibal tweeted, "Worried for our party. Will we wake up only after the horses have bolted from our stables?"

He refused to elaborate. "I



Will we wake up only after the horses have bolted from our stables?
KAPIL SIBAL
Congress spokesperson

do not wish to add anything more," Mr. Sibal told *The Hindu*.

The differences between Mr. Pilot and Mr. Gehlot

have been brewing for a while now, but sources say the tipping point for Mr. Pilot was the investigation ordered by the Rajasthan police into "poaching" of MLAs and a notice sent to him to record his statement. The police have sent a notice to Mr. Gehlot too.

Last week, Mr. Pilot reached out to Congress treasurer and senior leader Ahmed Patel to sort out the issues and some efforts were made but they remained inconclusive.

"His [Mr. Pilot's] main grouse is that the Congress had won in Rajasthan due to his efforts but he was not rewarded for it. Instead, the bureaucracy doesn't pay heed to him even in his own constituency," a senior Congress leader said.

Separatist leader held in Kashmir

Leader of banned JeI also arrested

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

Separatist Tehreek-e-Hurriyat (TeH) chairman Muhammad Ashraf Sehrai and a leader of the banned Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI) leader were arrested in Kashmir on Sunday morning.

Mr. Sehrai, who is the second senior Hurriyat leader after Syed Ali Geelani who resigned recently, was arrested from his residence at Barzulla Baghat here around 6 a.m.

"A police party from the Saddar Police Station, Srinagar, took him along in the morning," a family member said.

Booked under PSA

Mr. Sehrai has been booked under the Public Safety Act, news agency PTI quoted the Director-General of Police as saying. According to the family, Mr. Sehrai had been under house arrest since August 5, 2019.

Mr. Sehrai, close to Mr. Geelani, was likely to play a



Muhammad Ashraf Sehrai

significant role in the Hurriyat Conference that is battling a leadership crisis.

Mr. Sehrai's son Junaid Sehrai, who was a 'commander' of the Hizbul Mujahideen, was killed in May this year in an encounter in Srinagar.

Police sources said that a banned Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI) leader, Mushtaq Ahmad Soaf, from Anantnag's Kokeranag has also been arrested.

He was earlier arrested in February 2019 and released this year. The JeI was banned last year in J&K.

Neutralise killers of Bari, says BJP

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

Top BJP leadership, including national general secretary Ram Madhav, vice-president Avinash Rai Khanna and Union Minister Jiten Singh, on Sunday visited the residence of slain BJP leader Wasim Bari, who was killed by militants along with his father and brother on July 8.

"The party is extremely grieved over the killing of BJP youth leader Bari. The nation in general and the BJP in particular stand with the family members of Bari in this hour of grief. I demand that the government of J&K trace the killers and neutralise them soon," Mr. Madhav said, interacting with the media in Bandipora.

Mr. Madhav also demanded adequate security cover to all the political workers in the Kashmir Valley.

'NC, PDP hesitant'

Taking a dig at the regional parties, Mr. Madhav said the National Conference (NC) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) had failed to represent the aspirations of people in the current situation.

"Though political activities have resumed in the Valley, the NC and PDP are hesitating to come forward to represent the people. These parties are enjoying themselves on Twitter and are shying away to address the daily issues of common people," Mr. Madhav said.

Pakistani militant among 3 killed in Kashmir

Incriminating material, arms and ammunition also recovered from the encounter site, say police

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

Three militants were killed in a day-long operation in north Kashmir's Baramulla on Sunday.

"Three unidentified militants were killed in the Sopore encounter. Incriminating material, including arms and ammunition, was recovered from the encounter site," Inspector General of Police Kashmir Vijay Kumar said.

Pakistani militant Usman of the Lashkar-e-Taiba was among the killed militants.



Taken down: A gunfight ensued after militants opened fire on a search party in Baramulla on Sunday. • FILE PHOTO

He was involved in a recent attack at Sopore, in which one CRPF jawan and one civilian were killed. It's a big success for police and the security forces," the IGP said later.

The gunfight between the

rhino habitat's water bodies. There was no addition to the 41 animals that died over a month.

In Tinsukia district, operations to douse the flame atop a natural gas well of Oil India Limited were affected by the flooding of the site at Baghjan. The operations had resumed after the water level subsided a week ago,

and the fire-fighters are expected to kill the fire by July 15.

Heavy rain lashed several parts of Arunachal Pradesh during the last 24 hours, causing landslides and flash floods. Officials said there was no loss of life but many places have been cut off and some vital bridges were under threat.

Govt. against virtual meetings of House panels

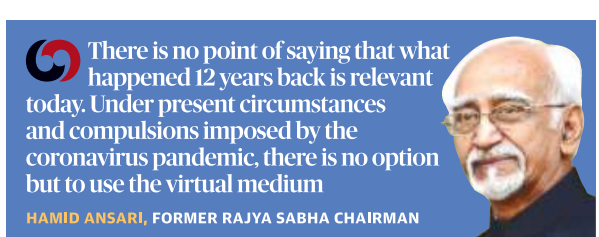
However, under the UPA-1 in 2008, the then RS Chairman had backed confidentiality norms

SOBHANA K. NAIR
NEW DELHI

The government has refused to allow virtual meetings of parliamentary standing committees despite repeated demands from the Opposition parties, citing confidentiality norms. In 2008, during Congress-led UPA-1, then Rajya Sabha Chairman Hamid Ansari had also weighed in in favour of maintaining secrecy of these meetings.

The latest demand came from Congress leader and Chairman of the standing committee on science and technology Jairam Ramesh last Tuesday. The committee met on Friday.

The question that Mr. Ansari dealt with, was whether



There is no point of saying that what happened 12 years back is relevant today. Under present circumstances and compulsions imposed by the coronavirus pandemic, there is no option but to use the virtual medium
HAMID ANSARI, FORMER RAJYA SABHA CHAIRMAN

There should be a public telecast of the standing committee meetings, just the way Parliamentary sessions are broadcast. The matter came up before the General Purpose Committee (GPC) that is headed by Rajya Sabha Chairman. It consists of Deputy Chairman, chairman of all committees that are headed by Rajya Sabha members, leaders of political parties with five or more members

each in the Rajya Sabha. The GPC had opposed dispensing with the confidentiality of the committee meetings on the ground that in-camera meetings give members freedom to speak outside their party lines.

Other than Mr. Ramesh, three chairpersons of department related standing committees - Shashi Tharoor (Information and Tech-

nology), Anand Sharma (Home Affairs) and B. Mahtab (Labour) - have earlier made similar demands but were declined.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Mr. Ansari said, "In circumstances of today there is no option but to embrace technology. The British Parliament is just one of the Parliaments around the world, Mr. Ansari said, which has been meeting regularly via the video conferencing. "There is no point of saying that what happened 12 years back is relevant today. Under present circumstances and compulsions imposed by the coronavirus pandemic, there is no option but to use the virtual medium," he said.

From the first week of July,

physical meetings of the standing committees have begun. Last week alone, three meetings of standing committees were held in Parliament premises adhering to social distancing norms.

Presently, there are no provisions in the Rules of Procedure for holding virtual sittings of the parliamentary committees or allowing the committees to take evidence of official or non-official witnesses or experts through virtual meeting. The government has maintained that the rules have to be amended by the Rules Committee of both Houses of Parliament. This however, can be done only when Parliament meets.

4 dead in Assam flood, landslips

Number of affected people doubles overnight to 12.97 lakh across 24 districts

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

Floods and rain-induced landslips killed four people in Assam on Sunday, taking the death toll to 70 since May 22.

Officials of the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) said the fresh wave of flood had affected 12.97 lakh - more than double the figure 24 hours ago - across 24 of the State's 33 districts.

"Two people drowned in Kamrup and Kaliabor areas of central Assam's Nagaon district while two more, both males, were buried alive by landslide in Sonapur area of Kamrup (Metropolitan) district early morning," an ASDMA spokesperson said.

So far, 44 people have drowned or were washed away and 26 died in landslides. Officials said 2,101 people had taken shelter in 118 relief camps across 12 of the worst-affected districts. Rescue workers evacuated 2,339 of them to safety.

Western Assam's Barpeta



In distress: People shifting paddy to dry places after their village on the outskirts of Guwahati was inundated on Sunday. • RITU RAJ KONWAR

NATGRID to get info of suspects from FIRs

It doesn't breach federal system: official

VIJAITA SINGH
NEW DELHI

The MoU between the National Intelligence Grid (NATGRID) and the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) to access the centralised online database on FIRs and stolen vehicles, will enable the NATGRID get information about details of a suspect as mentioned in the FIR such as his/her father's name, telephone number and other details, officials said.

Asked if the MoU infringes on the federal system of the Constitution, since the NCRB under the Union government is only a repository and the data pertaining to FIRs of a particular police station are a State subject, the official said, "It does not violate any legal provisions as FIRs are shared with all the police stations."

Airline concerns

Earlier the Civil Aviation Ministry and airline companies had raised concerns in providing information to yet another agency - NATGRID. The airlines contended that they already provide information to the Bureau of Immigration and the Customs authorities.

"The deliberations with the airlines are still on and once NATGRID is operational, all agencies will have to route their requests through the secured platform," said the official.

However, the State police will not be part of NATGRID and they could directly contact the airlines or railways for information, the official said.



At least 10 central agencies will be able to access data on a secured platform.

The project in the pipeline for a decade and envisaged first under then Home Minister P. Chidambaram in 2009, has got a renewed push under Home Minister Amit Shah.

Initiated at a budget of ₹2,800 crore, it will be a medium for at least 10 Central agencies such as the Intelligence Bureau and the Research and Analysis Wing to access data on a secured platform. The data will be procured by NATGRID from 21 organisations such as the telecom, tax records, bank, immigration etc.

Automated system

Another official claimed that the information accessed by one agency through the grid will not be accessible to any other agency. "It will be an automated system and the request will land directly with the concerned department. No two agencies would know about the request generated by the other."

The official said NATGRID will act as a link between intelligence and investigation agencies.

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NOTICE INVITING TENDER
Sealed Tenders are invited for the following items:

Sl.No.	Description
1	Purchase of Slant Bed CNC Lathe Machine as per Tender No. 6000014397/164/Medial dated 13.07.2020
2	Purchase of Gummy Bags as per Tender No. 6000014866/201/Packing dated 13.07.2020
3	Supply, Installation and Integration of 9 CCTV cameras & Upgradation, Renovation of existing CCTV surveillance system as per Tender No. 000014808/193/Security dated 13.07.2020

For further details the interested bidders may visit the Mint website http://igmhyderabad.spmcil.com. The bidders may also download the tender document from 13.07.2020 onwards. Further Amendment/Corrigendum, if any, to this tender will be notified in the Mint website only. Sd/-
CHIEF GENERAL MANAGER

**OFFICE OF ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER
PHED, JAIPUR REGION-I, JAIPUR**
Jyoti Nagar, Sahakar Marg, Jaipur-302005
phone:0141-2740170(e-mail:ace1.jpr.phed@rajasthan.gov.in

No. F.25/AC/PHE/Ar Sihar/NIT-4/R0 Risk&Cost/2020-21/1657-74 Date: 08-07-2020
(e-NIT No.04/2020-21)

On behalf of the Governor of Rajasthan NIT No. 04/2020-21 online tender costing Rs. 702.46 lacs is hereby invited from eligible bidders for "Balance work Providing, Installation & commissioning of 113 Nos. Reserve Osmosis plants including operation and maintenance for a period of seven years after installation in various water quality affected villages of Rajasthan in districts Dausa, Jhunjhunu, Sikar (Region Jaipur-I) on risk and cost", on Rate Contract basis as per criteria mentioned in the detailed NIT/ tender document available on websites: www.rajwater.gov.in, https://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in and https://sppp.rajasthan.gov.in. Tenders are to be submitted online in electronic format on website https://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in as per prescribed schedule.

NIT No.	NIB No.	URN No.
04/2020-21	PHE 2021A1828	PHE 2021 WLRC 03222

SAVE WATER-SAVE LIFE

(R.C. Mishra)
Addl. Chief Engineer
PHED, Jaipur Region-I, Jaipur

DIPR/C/512

Experts question basis of COVID-19 drug

Biocon's Itolizumab appears to have been tested on too few patients to reliably conclude on its benefits

JACOB KOSHY
NEW DELHI

Biocon Ltd's psoriasis drug, Itolizumab, re-purposed for COVID-19 and headlined as a "breakthrough drug" for treating the moderately sick and the severely ill, appears to have been tested on too few patients to reliably conclude on its benefits, according to a review by *The Hindu* of data presented by the company to the Drug Controller General and comments by independent experts who have seen the data.

To test the drug's efficacy at preventing deaths or improving health outcome, the company recruited 30 patients across four hospitals, 20 of whom were given it along with the "standard of care treatment" and 10 were given only standard of care. In the set of patients that got the drug, nobody died. Of the 10 who didn't get the drug, three died. That nobody on the drug died was significant proof of the its success, said company officials.

On July 11, Biocon an-



Under treatment: Patients at a COVID-19 care centre near Akshardham in New Delhi on Sunday. •PTI

nounced that it had received the regulator's approval to use the drug for emergency use in cases where the infection caused a cytokine storm, namely an uncontrolled attempt by the immune system to neutralise the virus that often ended up damaging the lungs and other organs and even death.

With such a small sample size it would be "unwise" to conclude that it was indeed the drug that was saving the patients, said S.P. Kalantri, a physician at the Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences, Sevagram. "Given that it's such a small sample,

10 here and 20 there, even if one patient had died in the set that got the drug, it would have changed the picture. So it isn't yet valid to call the results statistically significant. We can't rule out the effect of chance [basis this study]."

An official from Biocon said the trial was designed employing a method called the Simon's Two-Stage Design, an approach in executing phase-2 clinical trials (where the efficacy of a drug is tested). "If we were able to show two or more deaths in the control arm [the group without the drug], then a

trial as small as 30 patients could yield results that were clinically significant," said Dr. Sandeep Athalye, chief medical officer, Biocon Biologics.

Given that the drug had been in use since 2013 and tested on at least 500 for psoriasis, its safety was not in doubt. "The 20 who got the drug have been discharged and are at home today within 30 days. We reported this level of improvement to the regulator and that's probably why this drug has been approved for emergency use." Other criteria such as improvement in oxygen levels and reduced inflammation were also much significantly convincing to several doctors who used the drug on their patients, he said.

The evaluation also rests on Itolizumab being added to the "best standard of care" which Dr. Athalye said "slightly varied" across hospitals. "In general this consisted of hydroxychloroquine, ritonavir (antivirals), oxygen therapy, antibiotics,

heparin [to avoid clotting] and some got methylprednisolone [a corticosteroid]."

Dr. Kalantri said given that HCQ and antivirals had been conclusively shown to not benefit patients with moderate or severe manifestations of the disease, and dexamethasone (a steroid) was conclusively shown to improve patient mortality in the recovery trial conducted in the U.K., the latter should have been used as comparator. "Given that the benefits of dexamethasone are now proven, it would be unethical to not give it to someone who needs it."

Dr. Athalye countered that when the trial began, in May, the benefits of dexamethasone hadn't been demonstrated (the results were published on June 16). Secondly, the said drug interacted with HCQ on which most patients were on. "So people avoided giving those two together. Because of this interaction, it's generally employed in the later stages when on ventilator and not early."

Aishwarya, daughter have tested positive: Abhishek

Four Bachchan family homes declared containment zones

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

A day after veteran Bollywood actor Amitabh Bachchan and son Abhishek tested positive for COVID-19, the latter's wife and actor Aishwarya Rai-Bachchan and their daughter, too, have tested positive.

In a tweet on Sunday evening, Mr. Abhishek Bachchan said: "Aishwarya and Aaradhya have also tested COVID-19 positive. They will be self quarantining at home. The BMC has been updated of their situation and are doing the needful. The rest of the family including my mother have tested negative. Thank you all for your wishes and prayers."

Updating the health status of his father and himself, he said: "My father and I remain in hospital till the doctors decide otherwise. Everyone please remain cautious and safe. Please follow all rules!"



Virus alert: Corporation workers sanitising the area outside Jalsa, the residence of Amitabh Bachchan. •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

On Sunday, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation declared all four bungalows of the Bachchan family – Jalsa, Pratiksha, Janak and Vatsa – as containment zones. Those were sanitised and all maids and employees tested for COVID-19.

The civic body added that as per the guidelines, the process of collecting data on people who had come in contact with the Bachchan family and testing them or directing them to go in to quarantine has begun.

16 Raj Bhavan staffers positive

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Sixteen personnel at Raj Bhavan in south Mumbai have contracted COVID-19, a civic official said on Sunday.

Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari tested negative. "I am perfectly alright, and not in self-isolation," he said in a statement.

'Varavara Rao's health a concern'

Family seeks proper treatment for him

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

Family members of poet Varavara Rao have raised grave concerns about his failing health and appealed to the Maharashtra government and the Centre to provide him immediate medical treatment at a super-speciality hospital.

Addressing an online press meet on Sunday, Mr. Rao's nephew and writer N. Venugopal Rao said their concern now was not about his false implication in the Bhima-Koregaon case or him being repeatedly denied bail, but about his tottering health. "We make only one demand: Don't kill him in jail," he appealed.



Varavara Rao

Mr. Varavara Rao's 72-year old wife, Hemalatha, said the poet's health had been a cause of worry for over a month now. His latest call from Taloja Jail in Mumbai has increased their fears. "We have lost our courage with yesterday's call. He was incoherent, and talking about the death of his long gone parents."

Romila Thapar, others write to Maharashtra govt., NIA

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Five eminent persons, including Historian Romila Thapar, have appealed to the Maharashtra government and the National Investigation Agency to ensure that Telugu poet P. Varavara Rao, who is lodged in Navi Mumbai's Taloja jail in connection with the Elagaar Parishad case, gets immediate medical care.

"To knowingly risk the life of a person in state cus-

tody by refusing medical treatment would amount to encounter," they said in a statement.

Mr. Rao, now 81, was arrested in 2018.

In a petition signed by Ms. Thapar, economists Prabhat Patnaik and Devaki Jain, sociologist Satish Deshpande and activist Maja Daruwala said that his treatment was abruptly terminated and he was taken to jail. It is a life threatening situation at his age.

'Monitor illegal transport of cattle'

Centre tells States to act against those posting provocative content on social media

S. VIJAY KUMAR
CHENNAI

The Union government has alerted States to intensify vigil and curb the illegal transport/slaughter of cow progeny. Pointing to instances where cow vigilantes intercepted vehicles transporting cattle leading to communal violence, the Centre also called for extensive monitoring of communally provocative content on social media and action against them.

In a note based on intelligence inputs sent last week, the Centre said there was a spurt in instances relating to illegal transport/slaughter of



The Centre said there was a spurt in illegal transport/slaughter in May and June.

cow progeny in May and June.

There were instance of cow vigilantes intercepting

the vehicles leading to communal incidents in some States. Besides, cattle smugglers had attacked police teams during interception or routine vehicular check, the note said.

Communal ambience

Apprehending an increase in illegal transportation in view of an "upcoming religious festival" next month, the Centre said cow being highly emotive to one religion, any instance of interception and resultant violence would aggravate the communal ambience already stressed over the Citizenship (Amend-

ment) Act and COVID-19.

Though the police were taking prompt action against hate mongers and blocking or deleting provocative social media posts, there was a need for extensive monitoring of such posts and immediate legal action against the perpetrators, it said. Pro-active involvement of Community Liaison Groups to pacify the passions on such occasions would also be beneficial, it was suggested.

Cow slaughter has been banned in many States and Karnataka recently said it plans to impose a blanket ban on it.

2 Dubey aides remanded in judicial custody

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Two aides of slain Uttar Pradesh gangster Vikas Dubey were remanded in judicial custody till July 21 by the Thane magistrate court on Sunday.

Arvind, alias Guddan Ramvilas Trivedi, and Sushilkumar, alias Sonu Suresh Tiwari, were detained by the Maharashtra Anti Terrorism Squad on Saturday from Thane.

An ATS official said the Kanpur police have reached Maharashtra and would move court tomorrow for their transit bail.

Police officer arrested in Dubey case moves SC

K.K. Sharma says he fears for his life

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A police officer, who was arrested by the Uttar Pradesh STF for tipping off Vikas Dubey about the July 3 police raid, has moved the Supreme Court for security and transfer of investigation of the case to the CBI.

Eight policemen were killed by Dubey and his henchmen at Bikru village. Dubey was shot dead a week later by the STF on July 10.

Sub-inspector K.K. Sharma and his wife apprehend that the STF may "eliminate" him.

Mr. Sharma pointed to the spate of police encounters. "The petitioner and his wife apprehend danger to their life and liberty in view of the extra-judicial killing of Vikas Dubey and other alleged accused persons after being arrested by numerous teams of police of State of U.P.," the petition said.

It said the petitioners are of the "firm view that the investigation would not be conducted in a lawful, fair, reasonable and transparent manner since the offences include the alleged killing of eight police personnel".

Disabled are entitled to same benefits of SC/ST quota: SC

Upholding HC order, Bench says they are socially backward

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court, in a significant decision, confirmed that persons with disabilities are also socially backward and entitled to the same benefits of relaxation as Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe candidates in public employment and education.

A three-judge Bench led by Justice Rohinton Nariman upheld a 2012 judgment of the Delhi High Court in Anamol Bhandari (minor) through his father/Natural

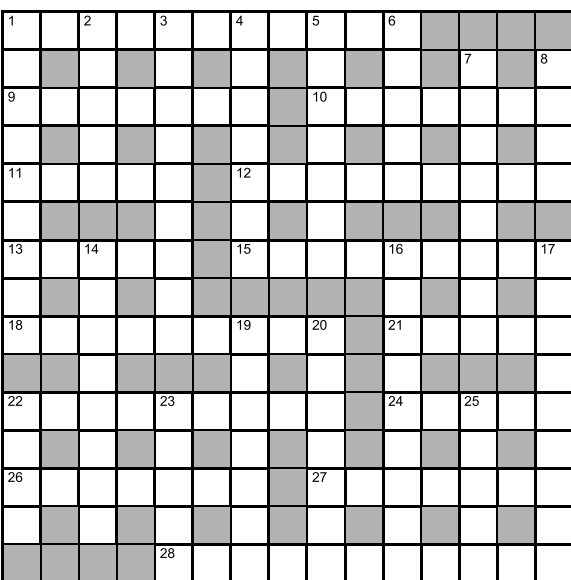


Guardian v. Delhi Technological University. "In Anamol Bhandari, the High Court has correctly held that people suffering from disabilities are also socially backward, and are therefore, at the very least, enti-

led to the same benefits as given to the Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe candidates," the Supreme Court held in a judgment on July 8. The decision by the Justice Nariman Bench came on a petition by Aryan Raj, a special needs person represented by senior advocate Colin Gonsalves, and advocate Rajan Mani, against the Government College of Arts, Chandigarh. The college denied Mr. Raj relaxation in minimum marks in the Painting and Applied Art course.

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- 15 Roy, do trim up the sleeping room (9)
- 18 Rogue German woman cleaner ignores utensils at first (9)
- 21 The first woman with Poles levels things up (5)
- 22 Act smartly! Act briefly! Sly man's planning disaster (9)
- 24 Event manager Chief Minister initially backs soundly (5)
- 26 Old coins India re-minted (7)
- 27 Nartaki's top dance executed – it's full of subtlety (7)
- 28 How one goes to the hospital in a bad way (11)

DOWN

- 1 Four start off in artificial playing area (9)
- 2 Detached, brief view on group that's incomplete (5)
- 3 Once honest young boy set out all details (9)
- 4 Got back to problem among animals put up (7)
- 5 Where you may write at least theoretically (2,5)
- 6 Fruit in Nicaragua validated (5)
- 7 Core group gets drunk with last of lube oil (8)
- 8 Depression as study time is short (4)
- 14 Bragging about a snake bite (8)
- 16 Ungainly eglantine rooted out (9)
- 17 Agreed, not one tried differently with a youth in the recent past (9)
- 19 Trifle with search for plaything (3,4)
- 20 Crow heartily and with passion for European nation (7)
- 22 Commanding Officer's agreement in Moscow for tailpiece (4)
- 23 Company head disturbs four in Greek island (5)
- 25 Plants taking part in terrific activity (5)

- ACROSS
- 1 Friend's attention to record about partner lasting 365 days (3-4-4)
- 9 Publisher gobbled up by very French companies (7)
- 10 Plain song wafting into ripe movement (7)
- 11 Hope Cherans heartily produce musical composition (5)
- 12 Hang around to get poem? (4,5)
- 13 Old city's restriction relating to city (5)

SUDOKU

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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

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Solution to puzzle 12985

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

EDUCATION PLUS

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The online and blended learning models now being adopted by higher educational institutes are likely to endure even after the pandemic, feels Coursera's Raghav Gupta

MADHUMITHA SRINIVASAN

With tectonic shifts in the way learning is currently being perceived owing to the pandemic, ed-tech is the buzz word in the education sector. While several new players are catching on to the trend of online learning, established ones like Coursera are seeing their business model being validated. With 7.9 million learners, India is Coursera's second-largest market after the U.S.

While there are challenges, Raghav Gupta, Managing Director-India and APAC, Coursera, feels that change is imminent as educational institutions transition to online/blended learning models. "For many institutes, what started as a short-term response to a crisis will likely become an enduring digital transformation of higher education. In India, the government's decision on online learning programmes speaks volumes about the gradual integration of online learning in the Indian education system," he says, as he shares his thoughts on online learning and the way ahead for India. Excerpts:

How effective is online learning?

Online learning can genuinely transform lives and bridge the opportunity divide by democratising education and providing learners with the currency that connects them to career outcomes and offering a richer and more applied learning experience and em-



Tracking the transformation

Online learning strongly complements the existing system and can help educational institutions scale up and broaden their reach.

Online learning strongly complements the existing system and can help educational institutions scale up and broaden their reach. For professionals to continue learning throughout their careers and to gain the latest skill set in the dynamic job market, online learning is the go-to solution.

We have seen a steep rise in the uptake of online courses by stu-

dents and professionals alike. Enterprises, too, are turning to online learning platforms to help employees successfully transition to remote working, increase digital readiness, and improve mental wellbeing during this particularly stressful time.

How do online certifications add value to traditional academic learning?

The future of learning and the future of work is converging. There is a growing acceptance of online education credentials among enterprises, particularly for new-age skills like Data Science, Artificial Intelligence,

and more. But traditional models of education are insufficient to prepare people with the skills they need to thrive throughout the course of their working lives. Today, more and more employers are looking to up-skill their workforce and are accepting online certificates.

How well is India equipped to transition from traditional classrooms to online learning?

The majority of educational institutions in India follow the traditional teaching methodology of face-to-face class-



room learning. However, campuses have already integrated the technological components of online learning in their curricula. High-quality, relevant and curated content is readily available through online learning platforms to support this transition towards blended learning. This means that, in

the near future, even on-campus programmes will have a substantive online component. The one-size-fits-all model will give way to a far more adaptive and personalised learning experience that will enable anyone, anywhere to embrace lifelong learning.

What are some of the challenges you identify?

While online and blended learning seem to have gained acceptance in the country, Internet penetration and bandwidth issues still seem to be the nagging challenges that online education platforms will need to face. While, on the one hand, India is preparing to

Open access

Coursera has opened up its platform for students to learn and earn certificates for free until July 31. Students will gain access to Coursera's 3,800 courses, 150 Guided Projects, 400 Specialisations, and 11 Professional Certificates. Once enrolled, they will have until September 30, 2020, to complete the programmes. After that, students will continue to have free access to Guided Projects – a hands-on learning experience that develops job-relevant skills.

welcome 5G, many parts of the country still have limited access to high-speed Internet. To allow for digital and blended learning, India will need to build a smarter and connected society

What are some of the trends you have noticed in the Indian market?

Business, Technology, and Data Science are the most popular domains among learners in India and across the globe. These continue to be significant economic and innovation drivers and are also the most in-demand career skills. At a competency level, we've seen tremendous interest in deep learning, machine learning, data science, data management as well as soft skills like management training.

What are Coursera's plans in India?

We are currently focused on helping universities deliver education through Coursera for Campus platform, providing skill-building opportunities and tools to the unemployed, and assisting enterprises with skill-building initiatives.

We endeavour to expand our course catalogue by launching new Degrees, MasterTrack™ Certificates, Courses, Specialisations, and Guided Projects to help learners gain the necessary skills in the dynamic job scenario. Additionally, we are rolling out a number of new tools to provide learners with a transformative learning experience.



VALUE ADD

NIMESH VED

If there is one subject or activity or theme that we could pursue at school, what do you suggest it be? This is a question I have faced couple of times, or more, during recent years. One that, on each occasion, has got me to think. Answers to some questions change, as we travel on the road to life and evolve. Today, my vote would go to exposure.

How will it pan out?

Students should visit villages, towns and cities located in different parts of our country. Visit homes at these places and interact with people who live different lives from those their own; who wear clothes different from what the students are familiar with; who show their love and affection in a different manner... The students can also be active participants and learn new languages, eat (and cook) food that they may not have come across previously or celebrate festivals and sing songs in a new manner. And much more. We could create platforms that enable our students to learn in this manner as opposed to from books or videos. These platforms can also be independent of schools.

Why is this needed?

We are increasingly living in our small worlds where we primarily interact with people

Life beyond barriers

Once lockdown measures come to an end, can we look at getting to know our country and people better? How will this help us grow?

who are similar to us in more ways than one. This also begins from early years. Not only do we know less and less of the worlds around us but also believe, more and more, that our world is better. The scene has altered little in the recent years. And, if anything, it has gone from bad to worse.

How will this help?
This exposure has the poten-

tial to help us – in myriad ways – to know our country and ourselves better. It could influence us to do away with the boundaries we have created, the us and them, based on geographies, dietary preferences, religions, sects, gender, castes and more. These, like other invisible boundaries, are ingrained deep within us. We need to know these 'other people' so that we get rid of our insecurity and hatred. And possibly make friends. To move beyond some of the labels we have created, which make little sense or carry a negative connotation and yet are widely accepted. To get rid of the upper hand many of us believe we have vis-a-vis others. Living in a city, for example, does not make one superior to someone based in a village. Both cities and villages, with their people, make up our country. Ditto for our physical attributes – skin colour, height...

It could help us celebrate our diversity. A diversity that is, to put gently, mindboggling. Wise women and men before us, too, have said it is only because five fingers are different from each other that the hand is able to do all that it does. We are getting more and more sure as individuals and as a society. Surety of a kind which only comes with ignorance. These exposures can help create space for doubt.

Email: nimesh.explore@gmail.com

Do you feel uncertain about a career option? Do you lack the freedom to choose a subject that you want to pursue? Do you feel low on self-confidence? Are you constantly doubting yourself? A Q&A column to assuage your doubts



OFF THE EDGE

NANDINI RAMAN

I am in my second year B.Sc. Plant Biology and Biotechnology. What are the options available for higher studies and career prospects? - Elizabeth

Dear Liz,

Higher study option would be a Master's in the same course, followed by M.Phil. and Ph.D, later on. Typical career choices are to work in the laboratories, farming industry, classrooms as well as medical facilities. There is also the possibility of being a plant biochemist, food scientist, a food science technician, an agricultural manager or applying for a teaching position. Biotechnology is also a rewarding and a promising career option. The compensation of a bio-technologist working in a research organisation or a public sector industry is set according to government standards. Graduates can seek employment in chemical industries, agricultural sectors, pharmaceutical and manufacturing industries. Opt for teaching jobs in universities and colleges, seek employment in research laboratories (run by government or private sector), job opportunities in private sectors such as food processing and agro-based industries, pharmaceutical farms and aquaculture and so on. Environmental experts are employed in different government agencies and private institutions too. Bio-technologists can also be science writers in media houses.

I am in my third year B.Com, and am also a Certified Management Accountant (CMA) Intermediate student. I don't know whether I ought to pursue a Master's? If so, should I choose M.Com. or MBA. I primarily want to land a government sector job. - Saloni

Dear Saloni,

A master's is always handy. Both have their merits. What is it that you would enjoy? An M.Com provides high-level knowledge and understanding of Commerce, Accounting, Eco-

nomics and Management subjects. After that, one can get a job in the government or private sector, with an attractive salary and high career growth. A MBA, on the other hand, is an internationally recognised degree designed to develop the skills required for careers in business and management. I would recommend that you identify and shortlist the government job that attracts you and then choose the course, as most positions have an entrance exam as a pre-requisite. You will need to work very hard on cracking that to make your entry with or without the course. Best wishes.

I am pursuing my first year B.Tech in Bengaluru. I am passionate about social issues, politics, and the defence sector. My aim is to eventually join the IPS. Should I start my preparation now? I am partially interested in software. Do I need to attend courses related to coding, web development, and so on, or seminars related to social issues? - Abhishek Kallollikar

Dear Abhishek,

Yes, given how tough the course curriculum and the entrance exams are, now is a good time to start your preparation. I think you need to strike a balance between the social issues, volunteering opportunities, contributing to causes close to you and making a difference and building and strengthening your technical knowledge base (though this is not a criteria for IPS specifically). Focus on enhancing your attitude and building a positive approach, especially your mental strength. Sharpen your memory, work on your physical fitness, exhibit an overall composed personality, learn and focus on management skills, decision making and healthy conflict resolution whilst being logically compassionate and empathetic. Wishing you the best.

Disclaimer: This column is not a substitute for long-term therapy. It is merely a guiding voice. Some issues may need medical intervention.

The writer is a practising counsellor and a trainer. She has worked extensively with students and young adults across a range of issues.

Send your questions to eduplus.thehindu@gmail.com The subject line should be: 'Off the edge'.

SAVE THE DATE

Diploma in Culinary Arts

Indian School of Hospitality offers a Diploma in Culinary Arts in partnership with Singapore's At-Sunrice Global Chef Academy. Nine months in India will be followed by three months of training in Singapore, followed by six months of industry exposure.

INSTITUTE: Indian School of Hospitality
ELIGIBILITY: Those who have completed class XII or equivalent and graduates, professionals and postgraduate students who want pursue a career in culinary arts.

APPLICATION: Online
DEADLINE: August 1
<http://ish.edu.in/how-to-apply.html>

Biomedical Engineering Scholarship

The University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, offers the Biomedical Engineering Celebration Award for India for one-year full-time MSc programmes in the Department of Biomedical Engineering. Only one scholarship is available.

REWARDS AND PRIZES: Value of £6000
ELIGIBILITY: An Indian citizen, applying for a full-time postgraduate course.
DEADLINE: August 31
<https://bit.ly/38Gm7V4>

PhD courses

Nitte (Deemed to be University) invites online applications from eligible candidates for part-time or full-time Ph.D courses in the faculty of Medical, Dental, Pharmacy, Nursing, Physiotherapy, Allied Health Sciences and Biological Sciences. Admissions will be based on an online All India Entrance Test (AIET) on August 10, 2020, and an interview/presentation will be held through video conferencing.

INSTITUTE: Nitte (Deemed to be University)
REWARDS AND PRIZES: Fellowships of ₹15,000 per month as per University guidelines.
APPLICATION: Online
DEADLINE: July 20
www.nitte.edu.in

Certificate in Data Science and Analytics

Shiv Nadar University launches a new online certificate programme in Data Sciences and Analytics for Business (DSAB) to provide hands-on-training about the relevant domain knowledge and the technical skills to help companies solve business challenges using insights from data. The intensive 14-week programme, will commence from the third week of July.

INSTITUTE: Shiv Nadar University
ELIGIBILITY: Students with a Bachelor's Degree or equivalent or enrolled in any recognised undergraduate degree programme with at least 50% marks or equivalent CGPA and having Mathematics in 10+2 board. Candidates will also have to qualify a personal interview for final selection.

APPLICATION: Online
<https://sme.snu.edu.in/DSAB>

Sophie's choice of colleges

SWETA AKUNDI

While for a majority of India, lockdown officially began on March 24, the country's 17-18-year-olds – the batch of 2020 – have been living in a quasi-lockdown state since the beginning of this year, preparing for the 'board year'.

In any other year, by this time, students would have been ready to start a new chapter of their lives. The top scorers faces would have been up on billboards and parents would have gone through variations of the 'Top 10 Colleges' lists, choosing campuses based on 'Only the best for our child'.

This year has been anything but normal. And with the pandemic shifting perspectives, the criteria for what makes for 'a good college' has changed vastly. It is no longer just about the best placement rate, but also about how hygienic the dorms are, and how strict its safety standards are.

"The pandemic did not give us any warning," says Madurai-based Divya Hinduja, mother to 17-year old Kunal. Interested in data sciences, Kunal managed to get admission in City University of Hong Kong. But with no end of the pandemic in sight, Divya rethought the idea of Kunal going abroad. "I turned around on that because the pandemic taught us that anything can happen anytime," she says.

All through last year, it was Divya backing Kunal's desire to study abroad. "After the pandemic, I said anywhere in India is okay beta, but

As this batch of Class XII looks for college options, the criteria for the best institution is no longer just a good placement rate, but also how hygienic, healthy, and safe the campus and hostels are

not abroad. Just in case anything like this springs up again, it will be difficult for us to meet, and I will be completely petrified," she says.

Her decision was strengthened after understanding what her friends, whose kids were studying abroad, were going through. For the first few months, students were stuck away from home. Now, under a new directive by the Trump government in USA, students whose classes have moved online will be stripped

of their visa and be required to go back to their countries.

Open campuses

While Divya is willing to send Kunal to any good college in India, some parents are rethinking their top college choice based on their locations. Cities such as Mumbai, Delhi and Chennai have an air of fear lingering over them, given their newfound reputation as places with the highest number of COVID-19 cases.

In Dehradun, Preeti Gulati

does not wish for her daughter Samridhi to even move away from their hometown. The 17-year-old was already battling certain health issues and the pandemic further ensured that she stayed put.

"At least they have online classes; if they didn't, we would have considered taking a one-year break," says Preeti, adding that she selected the best computer science institute in the city. "Plus, if she stays with us, we can keep a better eye on her nutrition and immunity."

Divya, on the other hand, says the infrastructure of the college matters more than its location: "Most colleges are not in the centre of the city but on the outskirts."

On Divya's checklist is a hostel with spacious rooms for a maximum of two people, so that social distancing can be maintained. The academic buildings as well shouldn't be overcrowded, and should follow a strict hygiene protocol. She will also be checking who the caterers for the hostel are, and "whether or not the cooks wear gloves and masks while cooking and sanitise themselves before entering

Heath and hygiene Are the top scorers when it comes to choosing a college this year
• GETTYIMAGES/ISTOCK

the kitchen."

Samridhi and her parents too made a trip to her college to register and check the safety standards of the campus. "We checked how airy and well-ventilated the classrooms were, how much sunlight they got, how green the campus was. The desks are such that only one person sits on one bench," says Preeti.

"Whoever entered had to sanitise themselves at the gates and there was a thermal screening check," she adds.

Learn to live with it

What do you do when your own city is one of the most infected areas in India? Does home still feel safe? "There is at least one COVID-19 positive case in almost every housing society here. In our own society, there are a couple," says Ranjita Mandal, a Panvel (Navi Mumbai) resident.

Her daughter, Sudipa, has been preparing for engineering entrance exams since last year. But the pandemic keeps pushing the date for JEE and NEET further – as things stand, they are supposed to be held in September.

"I wish they could take just one test and be done with it. But there are so many private colleges with their own (now-online) entrance exams... we don't know when this will end and we will be able to select a college," says Ranjita.

With the looming uncertainty regarding admissions, Ranjita finds that it doesn't pay to worry too much about campus hygiene and health.

"As long as she gets into a good college – that is our priority. Because even if the admission is done, I'm sure they will conduct classes online, at least for this year. Maybe they can do just theory this year. So is does not matter where the college is, as long as it is good for her in the long run," she says.

Preeti agrees, "We don't know when there will be a cure, but we can't always keep our children restricted. Once they go to college they need to take care of themselves. As they say, you have to learn to live with it."



THE
CREAKING
TREE

A glossary of new Zoom language



SHOVON CHOWDHURY

Thanks to the COVID-19 crisis, work habits and philosophies have transformed radically. Zoom meetings are a big part of this change. A whole new vocabulary is developing to describe Zoom etiquette and behaviour. As part of ongoing efforts by *The Hindu* to keep you on the cutting edge of the public discourse, here is a handy glossary.

● **Bheja Vu:** The feeling that all the points that people are making in this meeting were already made in yesterday's meeting.

● **Involuntary Mutation:** When you deliver one of the best speeches of your life, full of insight and inspiration, providing clarity on a wide variety of issues, for a period of at least 15 minutes, without realising that your microphone is still on mute.

● **Preparation Anxiety:** The concern that your clothing conveys the impression that you are not taking the meeting seriously enough. You can minimise this anxiety by wearing a crisply ironed shirt and a tie, but this can be also lead to perceptions of Abnormal Formality.

● **Abnormal Formality:** The tendency to overdress for Zoom meetings, leaving others with feelings of rage, inadequacy and resentment that your laundry services during this time of crisis are much better than everyone else's.

● **The Doggler Effect:** When your dog barks continuously throughout the duration of your call.

● **Mutually Assured Meeting Destruction:** When the connection is poor, both of you have meetings at the same time, and you end up shouting simultaneously in the same room.

● **Pantomiming:** When you are struck dumb by the realisation, halfway through the meeting, that you are

not wearing pants.

● **Advanced Pottery:** A high level Zoom skill. Refers to the ability to complete a bowel movement during the course of the meeting, without revealing this to others.

● **Cereal Killing:** The act of chewing cornflakes very carefully so that others are not disturbed by the noise. If your camera is on, your spoon movements will need to be quick.

● **Juvenile Retention:** When your child refuses to leave the room while you are in a meeting. May involve musical instruments.

● **Perfeuphoria:** The realisation that you no longer have to buy deodorant.

● **Patriot Shame:** The feeling that arises within you when you want to stop using Zoom because some people say it's Chinese, in order to support our troops on the border, but are unable to figure out how to use Microsoft Teams.

● **Stubble Fallacy:** The mistaken belief that if the lighting is dim enough, no one will be able to make out that you have not shaved for the last three days.

● **Porn Scorn:** The reaction of your colleagues when you watch porn during a meeting without realising that your screen sharing is on.

● **Hair Supremacy:** The sense of satisfaction that you get when you realise that you are the only one in the meeting who has recently had a haircut.

● **Snortle:** The mildly amused noise you make, quickly suppressed, combining a snigger and a chortle, when you notice that your boss has positioned his camera in such a way that you can see right up his nose.

● **Skin Depth Analysis:** Post meeting judgemental remarks about your physique and complexion, made by others, after you take a shower during a Zoom meeting and forget to turn off your camera.

We hope this was useful. Please share this knowledge with others, and use it well.

No new words were invented in Shovon Chowdhury's most recent novel, *Murder With Bengali Characteristics*.

CONVERSATIONS WITH SELF

A tragedy to learn from

We must not treat fear as an adversary and allow it to punish us



TT SRINATH

It is hard to accept that a tragedy can actually teach us something positive. After or even as we are experiencing COVID-19, the fact is that the world will never be the same again.

I ask myself as I read and hear about people dying – both elderly and even the young – if their death is really in vain? Or is there a lesson that we can take from death that has been forced on them?

Every life is being touched at some point by tragedy; it could be a building collapse, a broken relationship or a sudden disability. Life seems to be at a constant risk, and if we forget this we might be unprepared for challenges that existence may have in store for us. We are therefore being forced to attempt to make some sense of what is happening, to overcome our fears and look at re-building our lives.

I am realising, with pain

undoubtedly, that I have to first accept 'what is'. I do not want to treat my fear as some kind of adversary and allow it to punish me.

People around the world are struggling, like I am. With every death we read about here in our country or elsewhere, each of us is dying, a little. The whole world is becoming one.

The lesson to embrace this is the need for patience and the certainty that everything in life is temporary.

If this is true and the world is no more a safe place, at least for now, I am telling myself to take advantage of this sudden change, spend my time doing things I have always wanted to do, but for which I always lacked courage.

I wish for myself and for all those like me that we work towards lifting ourselves out of the emotional rubble that has been forced upon us and build our own life, a life we dreamed of, but never dared to create.

The writer is an organisational and behavioural consultant. He can be contacted at ttsrinath@gmail.com



SOMA BASU

Over the past 15-plus weeks, how many times in a day have you furiously wiped down surfaces with disinfectants? The COVID-19 fear factor has turned scientists to research on products with nano technology, that is based on the application of group of few atoms. They are looking for a solution aimed at a surface coating that bonds to the material with long-term protection against germs (bacteria, viruses, fungi, protozoa).

What are these surface protectors?

They are substances that use metals such as silver and copper or biomolecules such as neem extract known for their anti-microbial activity, or cationic (i.e. positively charged) polymers in combination with chemical compounds (like ammonia plus nitrogen) that can be used as a long-lasting protective coating. The compound can be sprayed on metal, glass, wood, stone, fabric, leather, and other materials; the effect can last from a

Tiny particles, big solutions

Nano-coated materials could be the anti-virus weapons of the future

week to 90 days depending on the type of surface.

Are they out in the market?

Until the pandemic, there were products for anti-bacterial application, but now the focus has shifted to viruses. For instance, Prof Ashwini Kumar Agrawal, the Head of Textile and Fibre Engineering Department at IIT Delhi, developed N9 blue nano silver in 2013, with a much higher potency than other metals and polymers to catch and kill bacteria. He has now evaluated antiviral properties and re-formulated the compound to work

against COVID-19. He says different kinds of silver (yellow and brown) have been patented by countries including the US, China, and Australia to establish the uniqueness of the metal for surface hygiene. "But the N9 blue silver can be 100 times more effective with the longest lasting protection."

Institutions (particularly the IITs) across the country are in different stages of developing these nanoparticles as surface coatings. All are awaiting validation against viruses, through field trials before they can legally mass manufacture. The re-

Surface protection

Nanotechnology is looking at providing virus protection via sprays
• SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



quired certification needs to ideally go through Government-approved labs (like ICMR, CSIR, NABL or NIV) that are currently all engaged only in research on medicinal drugs and vaccines.

But are there nano-products that are available?

There are some products that have been tested by private labs either in India or abroad. For instance, Delhi-based start-up, GermCops has launched a disinfection service with a US manufactured and EPA-certified water-based anti-microbial product which, it is claimed, when sprayed over metallic, non-metallic, tiled and glass surfaces gives protection up to 120 days with a 99.9% killing rate in the first 10 days. Dr Pankaj Goyal, the founder, says the product is good for homes that have had a COVID-19 positive patient home-quarantined. She is speaking to the Delhi Transport Corporation to disinfect 1,000 buses. However, the testing has been conducted in a private lab.

IIT Delhi's samples were sent in April to the microbiological testing laboratory, MSL in UK. The reports are expected only by the end of the year. "The battery of lab tests will confirm the efficacy of the compound in dry state, how fast and for how long

it can continue to kill the virus and if it is non-toxic and safe to use," says Prof Agrawal.

While Prof Agrawal's N9 blue silver comes under the Government of India's Nano Mission project funded by the Department of Science & Technology, another by IIT Madras, funded by the Defence Research Development Organisation, has developed a nano-coated filter for PPE kits, masks, and gloves that can be used by frontline health-care workers. The coating filters sub-micron-sized dust particles in the air. However, its practical application is also subject to field testing and is therefore, pending.

Are long-lasting surface protectors in use anywhere else in the world?

Following findings from the Diamond Princess cruise ship that the novel coronavirus can last on surfaces up to 17 days, the development of a new disinfectant technology arose. While anti-viral coatings are undergoing clinical tests in several countries, three months ago, scientists from Haifa's Institute of Technology, in Israel, claimed to have developed anti-viral polymers that could kill the novel coronavirus without getting diminished.

Researchers in Hong Kong University of Science & Technology also developed a new antimicrobial coating known as MAP-1 that can kill most bacteria and viruses – including the coronavirus – for up to 90 days.

Prof Agrawal says many countries are engaged in developing heat-sensitive polymers that respond to contamination from touch or droplets, from the time of previous epidemics of SARS. Many of those formulations have been modified during the current pandemic and sold under different brand names in Japan, Singapore, and the US. However, the surface protectors currently available in international markets are pocket-pinching.

DEEPA ALEXANDER

"I'm indulging in a bit of fantasy travel and documenting my photographs at the moment," says Simon Reeve over phone from London where he is in lockdown. "It's difficult to say how travel will play out post-pandemic," he adds.

But until the world opens up again to the wanderer, Reeve, author of books on international terrorism, history and travelogues, and two other presenters will give us exotic places to discover from the safety of our homes.

Sony BBC Earth's *Couch Travel Anthology* will take viewers to well-known and not-so-known countries across the globe and go beyond the tropes of happy tourist sites to discover the mystique of these places.

The journeyman

This is nothing out of the ordinary for Reeve, 48, who has made a career travelling to dangerous destinations.

He has found himself folding his 6'3" frame into the back of a gun-mounted open truck while rebel gangs challenged each other on the war-torn streets of Mogadishu, hunted with the bushmen of the Kalahari, cried at the sight of Rohingya camps, ziplined into Myanmar from Manipur, and roamed the forgotten citadels of Central Asia.

He has visited nearly 130 countries, made 22 travel programmes for television, authored three best-sellers among his many books, and received a One World Broadcasting Trust award and the Ness Award in 2012 from the Royal Geographic Society.

Alongside Reeve, *Couch Travel Anthology* is presented by British comedian and actor Sue Perkins and stand-up comic-actor Romesh Ranganathan. "For *Couch Travel Anthology* I chose some of the places, the producer chose others. It includes an incredible variety of places," says Reeve.

Travelling with a cameraman, producer, director and a local guide, Reeve admits that it sometimes takes three weeks



We are the world Simon Reeve (bottom) with the whistling villagers of Kuskoj and the throat singers of Tuva • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

DOING IT HIS WAY

Simon Reeve, who did not come from privilege, spent his childhood holidays in Dorset and travelled abroad only in his late teens. He worked odd jobs at supermarkets and charity shops, researching when he had the chance. While he worked at the post room of *The Sunday Times*, he caught the eye of the then editor who moved him to the newsroom. Reeve has never looked back since, honing his education to become an expert in terrorism with his first book *The New Jackals* on the al-Qaeda, years before they became known across the world. Post-9/11, he worked as a TV analyst and made his debut with BBC's *Holidays in the Danger Zone* in 2003. He continues to present places that have fallen off the map, with an unrelenting enthusiasm to showcase lesser-known facts.

On the road to everywhere

BBC Earth's *Couch Travel Anthology* taps into the wanderlust of Simon Reeve, Sue Perkins and Romesh Ranganathan to bring unconventional stories from across the world

to film an hour of television.

"It takes longer if I need to strike a rapport. That's where local guides or fixers help. They sort out permits, translate and help curate the travel; they enrich your experience," he says.

Reeve admits that travelling to present unknown facets of a

country takes many visits and an eye for experiences that fall through the gaps.

"Travellers like to tick off how many countries they have been to. But you could go to places like India or Brazil 20 times and still find new experiences. I've been to India nine times and found dramatically different stories, and not in just terms of geography or culture. Finding extraordinary human beings is the real beauty of travelling. There are seven billion people on the planet and all their stories can be beautiful," he adds.

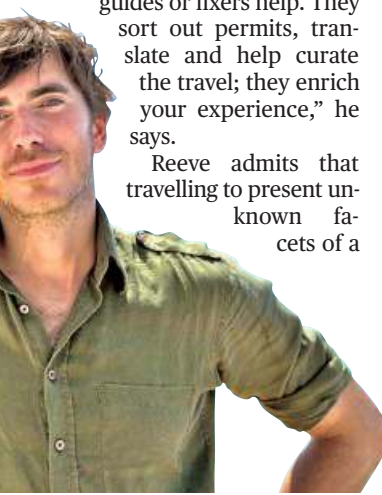
Reeve adds travelling enables him to see the world in shades of light and dark. "Writing doesn't come easy to me, I've had to shed sweat and blood for my books," he says.

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Reeve adds travelling enables him to see the world in shades of light and dark. "Writing doesn't come easy to me, I've had to shed sweat and blood for my books," he says.

"I have had an incredible education through travel. I love my job but I'm away for five months a year. I miss my nine-year-old son then. One day I hope to be able to stand on a hill and share the view with him."

Couch Travel Anthology is on SONY BBC Earth on July 13 at 10pm



PRADEEP KUMAR

That climate change, and those who deny it, pose a threat bigger than a pandemic to our ecology and the sustenance of human life on Earth is a fact. Yet the subject gets little to no representation in popular mass mediums like films.

What mainstream Indian cinema overlooks for its perceived lack of 'entertainment' quotient, a team of graduates from the National Institute of Design (NID), Ahmedabad, took up as a challenge. They produced *Wade*, a 10-minute long animated short, that is now making people at virtual film festivals around the world sit up and take notice.

Co-directed by Kolkata-based Ghost Animation founders Upamanyu Bhattacharyya, 28, and Kalp Sanghvi, 26, *Wade* recently won the City of Anancy award at the Anney International Animated Film Festival, and has been selected for the Animayo International Film Festival of Animation



Much-needed message *Wade* is a product of over three-and-a-half years of hard work • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Wading through a nightmare

Kolkata-based animators Upamanyu Bhattacharyya and Kalp Sanghvi's shortfilm is a grim reminder of the dangers of climate change



in Spain, which is a qualifying festival for the Academy Awards. It has also been selected for the prestigious Palm Springs International ShortFest and Kraków Film Festival, among others.

"It started with a news article we came across in 2016 about the

Ghoramara Island in the Sundarbans [Delta]. It was drowning and hundreds of families had been displaced," says Kalp, over the phone from Kolkata. "Kolkata, the city we grew up in, is less than a 100 kilometres north of Ghoramara, and it is likely that it too will start drowning in the future. The thought scared us and it sparked the idea for *Wade*," he adds.

The horrors of ignorance

There is no talkie portion in *Wade*. The film's protagonists are poor people, who, as Upamanyu says, "do not contribute to climate change" and yet are the first victims.

The action follows a family of climate change refugees. In a dystopian future where the Sundarbans are completely under water and Kolkata has turned into a floating city, the refugees are frowned upon. The locals hate their presence; there are banners

and posters asking them to go back! But there is more danger lurking in the shallow waters of Kolkata. Climate change not only forced humans to migrate but also the Bengal tigers, and now after years of preying upon vulnerable refugees, the tigers have evolved into ruthless man-eaters.

"The more you look around, the inevitability is what stands out. Our cities' infrastructure is not ready to handle mass migration forced by climate change. The situation would be similar to what we have come up with in *Wade*," remarks Upamanyu, over the phone from Italy, after he opted to stay put following the suspension of international flights since lockdown. He has previously worked with filmmaker Mani Ratnam to design the animated title sequence for *OK Kanmani* as well as on the storyboard for *Kaattru Veliyidai*.

Wade is a product of over three-and-a-half years of hard

work, says Kalp. The duo had an able team, most of whom were also NID graduates.

The film was also partly crowd-funded. "There were at least 30 artists who worked on processes like sound, animation, and background art," adds Kalp, who worked with director Umesh Shukla for the title credits of the Amitabh Bachchan-starrer *102 Not Out*.

Producing *Wade* has been a learning curve for the duo, who say that this experience puts them in good stead as they seek to branch out into ambitious feature film length animated projects.

Upamanyu is working on another animated short *Ten*, a dark comedy, and an animated feature film set in Ahmedabad called *City of Threads*. Kalp is working on an animated series called *Rajbari: The Ancestral House* and producing another animated short about tiger conservation called *Remains* with the Wildlife Trust of India.

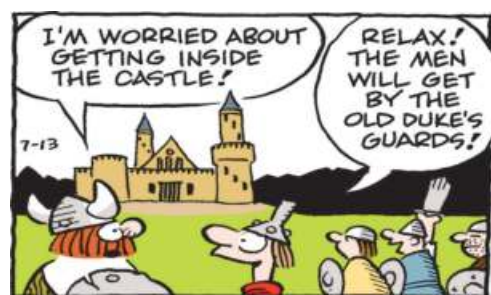
POOCH CAFE



PEANUTS



HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



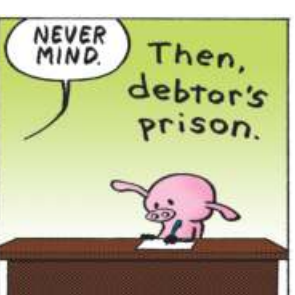
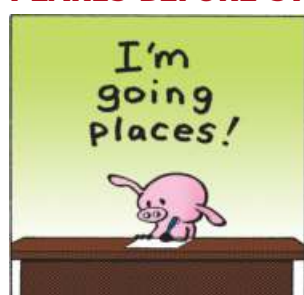
CALVIN AND HOBBS



TIGER



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



Trump dons a mask in public, finally

Move comes even as the U.S. records another daily high of 66,528 confirmed COVID-19 cases

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BETHESDA

U.S. President Donald Trump finally yielded to pressure and wore a face mask in public for the first time on Saturday as the U.S. posted another daily record for COVID-19 cases, while Disney World reopened in a state hit hard by the pandemic.

White House experts leading the national fight against the contagion have recommended wearing face coverings in public to prevent transmission of the illness.

But Mr. Trump had repeatedly avoided wearing a mask, even after staffers at the White House tested positive for the virus and as more aides have taken to wearing them.

WHO's call for testing

Hours after the World Health Organization (WHO) urged countries to step up control measures to rein in the disease, Mr. Trump donned a dark mask bearing the presidential seal as he visited wounded military veterans at the Walter Reed military hospital in a suburb outside Washington.

"I've never been against masks but I do believe they



Giving in: U.S. President Donald Trump during a visit to the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland, on Saturday. • AP

have a time and a place," he told reporters as he left the White House.

Mr. Trump is trailing Democrat Joe Biden in the polls ahead of a November election and surveys show most Americans are unhappy with how he has handled the public health crisis.

But the President has continued to praise his own response to the pandemic despite a cascade of figures showing the extent of the disease's spread across the

United States. The country posted yet another daily record of confirmed cases on Saturday night, with 66,528 new infections, while the death toll rose by almost 800 to nearly 1,35,000.

Disney park reopens

In Florida, where nearly one in six of those new infections were recorded, the Walt Disney World theme park partially reopened after four months of shutdown prompted by the virus.

Hundreds of people queued to enter the park in Orlando, some sporting Mickey ears but all wearing face masks, with social distancing and other hygiene precautions also in place.

Days earlier, top U.S. infectious disease expert Anthony Fauci said that Florida had begun reopening before meeting the criteria that would have enabled it to do so safely.

The COVID-19 pandemic has infected nearly 13 million

people, killed over 5,60,000 and triggered massive economic damage since the disease was first detected in China late last year. The United States is the country worst hit by the illness, followed by Brazil – which surpassed 70,000 deaths on Friday.

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus called on countries to adopt an aggressive approach to tackling the virus, citing successful mitigation efforts in Italy, South Korea and elsewhere.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu admitted a decision to allow bars and other businesses to reopen may have come "too soon" after his country reported a record 1,500 new infections on Friday.

Australian authorities said they would slash by half the number of people allowed to return from overseas each day after a fresh surge in cases that saw a lockdown imposed on Melbourne, the country's second-largest city. In Hong Kong, a spike has marked a setback for the city after daily life had largely returned to normal, with restaurants and bars resuming regular business and cultural attractions reopening.

China, Iran close to reaching trade and military partnership

This undercuts U.S. efforts to isolate the Tehran government

FARNAZ FASSIHI
STEVEN LEE MYERS

Iran and China have quietly drafted a sweeping economic and security partnership that would clear the way for billions of dollars of Chinese investments in energy and other sectors, undercutting the Donald Trump administration's efforts to isolate the Iranian government because of its nuclear and military ambitions.

The partnership, detailed in an 18-page proposed agreement obtained by *The New York Times*, would vastly expand Chinese presence in banking, telecommunications, ports, railways and dozens of other projects. In exchange, China would receive a regular – and, according to an Iranian official and an oil trader, heavily discounted – supply of Iranian oil over the next 25 years.

Joint military training

The document also describes deepening military cooperation, potentially giving China a foothold in a region that has been a strategic preoccupation of the United States for decades. It calls for joint training and exer-



cises, joint research and weapons development and intelligence sharing – all to fight "the lopsided battle with terrorism, drug and human trafficking and cross-border crimes." The partnership – first proposed by China's leader, Xi Jinping, during a visit to Iran in 2016 – was approved by President Hassan Rouhani's Cabinet in June, Iran's Foreign Minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, said last week. If put into effect as detailed, the partnership would create new and potentially dangerous flashpoints in the deteriorating relationship between China and the U.S.

It represents a major blow to the Trump administration's aggressive policy toward Iran since abandoning the nuclear deal reached in 2015 by President Barack Obama and the leaders of six

other nations after two years of gruelling negotiations.

Renewed U.S. sanctions, including the threat to cut off access to the international banking system for any company that does business in Iran, have succeeded in suffocating the Iranian economy by scaring away badly needed foreign trade and investment. But Tehran's desperation has pushed it into the arms of China, which has the technology and appetite for oil that Iran needs. Iran has been one of the world's largest oil producers, but its exports, Tehran's largest source of revenue, have plunged since the Trump administration began imposing sanctions in 2018; China gets about 75% of its oil from abroad and is the world's largest importer, at more than 10 million barrels a day last year. NY TIMES

Misaligned radar led to Ukrainian jet's downing in January, says Iran

Tehran presents preliminary report on the plane incident

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
TEHRAN

Iran said that the misalignment of an air defence unit's radar system was the key "human error" that led to the accidental downing of a Ukrainian passenger plane in January.

"A failure occurred due to a human error in following the procedure" for aligning the radar, causing a "107-degree error" in the system, the Iranian Civil Aviation Organisation (CAO) said in a report late on Saturday.

This error "initiated a hazard chain" that saw further errors committed in the minutes before the plane was shot down, said the CAO document, presented as a "factual report" and not as



People near the site of the crash in Shahedshahr, Iran, in January. • AP

January 8, at a time of heightened U.S.-Iranian tensions. The Islamic republic admitted several days later that its forces accidentally shot down the Kiev-bound plane, killing all 176 people on board. The CAO said that, despite the erroneous information available to the radar system operator on the aircraft's trajectory, he could have identified his target as an airliner, but instead there was a "wrong identification".

The report also noted that the first of the two missiles launched at the aircraft was fired by a defence unit operator who had acted "without receiving any response from the Coordination Center" on which he depended.

the final report on the accident investigation. Flight 752, a Ukraine International Airlines jetliner, was struck by two missiles and crashed shortly after taking off from Tehran's main airport on Ja-

Stone remains a convicted felon, says Mueller

Former Special Counsel pens a rare op-ed defending his probe as being of 'paramount importance'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

Donald Trump may have commuted Roger Stone's prison sentence but the President's long-time ally remains a convicted criminal, former Special Counsel Robert Mueller said on Saturday.

Mr. Stone, 67, had been set to begin serving a 40-month prison term on Tuesday after his conviction on seven felony charges originally brought by Mr. Mueller as part of the Russia collusion probe.

Multiple charges

The charges include tampering with a witness and obstructing the House investigation into whether the Trump campaign conspired with Russia to help him win the 2016 election.

In an op-ed piece in *The*



Key prosecutor: Former Special Counsel Robert Mueller headed the investigation that led to Trump ally Roger Stone's conviction. • AFP

Washington Post on Saturday, Mr. Mueller defended his probe as being of "paramount importance," dismissing White House claims that he was out to get Mr. Trump and those who worked with him. "Stone was prosecuted and convicted because he committed federal crimes.

He remains a convicted felon, and rightly so," Mr. Mueller wrote as Democrats – and two Republican Senators – piled on Mr. Trump for again intervening in the justice system to help an ally.

Senator Mitt Romney, who infuriated Mr. Trump when he became the only

Republican to vote to convict the President in his impeachment trial, pulled no punches on Saturday. "Unprecedented, historic corruption: an American President commutes the sentence of a person convicted by a jury of lying to shield that very President," he tweeted.

'A mistake'

Another Republican Senator, Pat Toomey, also criticised Mr. Trump but in milder terms, saying that as Mr. Stone has been duly convicted it was "a mistake" to commute his sentence.

Most Republicans have remained largely mute on the matter, while Democratic critics led by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi unanimously condemned Mr. Trump. "President Trump's decision to commute the sentence of

top campaign advisor Roger Stone, who could directly implicate him in criminal misconduct, is an act of staggering corruption," she tweeted. Ms. Pelosi called for legislation "to ensure that no President can pardon or commute the sentence of an individual who is engaged in a cover-up campaign to shield that President from criminal prosecution."

Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden weighed in without mentioning Mr. Stone by name. "I've said it before, and I'll say it again: Donald Trump is the most corrupt President in modern American history," he tweeted. "Every day that he remains in office, he further threatens the future of our democracy. We have to vote him out this November," wrote Mr. Biden.

ELSEWHERE



Pope 'pained' by Turkey's move on Hagia Sophia

VATICAN CITY
Pope Francis said on Sunday he was hurt by Turkey's decision to make Istanbul's Hagia Sophia museum a mosque, the latest religious leader to condemn the move. "My thoughts go to Istanbul. I think of Santa Sophia and I am very pained," he said during his weekly blessing in St. Peter's Square. AFP

Hong Kong poll sees five lakh 'protest' votes

HONG KONG
Hundreds of thousands of Hong Kong citizens queued to cast ballots over the weekend in what the Chinese-ruled city's Opposition camp says is a symbolic protest vote against tough national security laws directly imposed by Beijing. Organisers said 500,000 people had voted by late afternoon on Sunday, in the city of 7.5 million. REUTERS

Spain holds first regional polls since pandemic

MADRID
The first regional elections in Spain since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic got under way on Sunday in the northern regions of Galicia and the Basque country, with voters wary of new spikes in infections. People who have tested positive for COVID-19 are not permitted to vote, excluding 420 electors from a total of about 4.5 million across the two regions. AFP

Sri Lanka cancels rallies over new virus wave

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's ruling party on Sunday called off its rallies ahead of upcoming parliamentary elections and delayed the international airport's reopening over a surge in virus cases.

The country lifted its COVID-19 lockdown in late June after declaring there was no longer any community spread of the virus. But a swathe of cases emerged last

week, including an outbreak at a drug rehabilitation centre last week that saw 253 patients test positive in a single night. "All public meetings where the President and the Prime Minister were due to attend today, tomorrow and the day after have been cancelled," President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's Sri Lanka Podujana Peramunaparty said in a statement.

Mr. Gotabaya Rajapaksa's brother Mahinda is the country's Prime Minister. The party said all their candidates were also told to call off upcoming gatherings ahead of the August 5 poll.

Airport to remain closed

Aviation Minister Prasanna Ranatunga said on Sunday the international airport, which authorities had planned to reopen on August 1, would remain closed.

"We have decided in the interest of safety and well-

being of our citizens to put off the reopening of airports," he said.

A repatriation programme that has brought home some 12,000 Sri Lankans from overseas so far would also be suspended, Mr. Ranatunga added. The elections were to be held on April 25, but were postponed twice before being rescheduled for August. The country has reported 2,605 cases with 11 deaths so far.

'Kapoor haveli' faces demolition threat

Its owner, a jeweller in Peshawar, plans to build a commercial complex at the site

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
PESHAWAR

The historic ancestral home of the Hindi film industry's showman, late Raj Kapoor, in Pakistan's Peshawar city is facing demolition threat as the current owner of the house is adamant on building a commercial complex on the site, which is worth crores.

In 2018, the Pakistan government had decided to convert the 'Kapoor haveli' in Qissa Khwani Bazar in Peshawar in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province into a museum, heeding to a request by Raj Kapoor's son Rishi Kapoor. Rishi Kapoor died recently in Mumbai.

Poor condition

The 'haveli' has turned into a ghost building, residents of the area said. Due to its dilapidated condition, the building can collapse anytime, they said. The state of the



The showman's birthplace: A view of the 'Kapoor haveli' in Peshawar on Sunday. • PTI

building is deteriorating with each passing day due to ecological impacts, torrential rains, earthquakes and wind storms.

The 'haveli' is currently owned by Haji Muhammad Israr, a wealthy jeweller in the city. The provincial government wanted to buy it, keeping in view its historic importance and conserve it in its original shape for tourists. Mr. Israr, however,

wants to demolish the building and construct a new commercial building at this prime location.

There are reports that the provincial government has failed to convert the building into a museum due to differences with its owner over its price. Mr. Israr has denied that he has had any issue with the government over the price of the property, estimated to be over Pakistani

Rs. 5 crore. He says he simply wanted to demolish it and construct a huge commercial market at the site.

"It is a matter of concern that the 'Kapoor haveli' which we consider as the pride of our city is in dilapidated condition and is fast heading to the disappearance because of being ignored," said Mujeeb-ur-Rehman, a resident of Dhaki Nalbandi where the palatial house is located. Shakeel Waheedullah, Secretary Cultural Heritage Council Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, expressed regret over the dilapidated condition of the house.

The 'Kapoor haveli' was built by Bhasheshwar Nath Kapoor, the grandfather of Hindi film industry pioneer Prithviraj Kapoor and father of Raj Kapoor.

The Kapoor family, originally from Peshawar, migrated to India after the Partition in 1947.

Across

1. Not restricted or limited (9)

Down

2. Crosswords, Sudoku, etc (7)

3. Available on the internet and accessible on computers, tabs and mobile phones (6)

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ASK US

AARATI KRISHNAN

Q. I am a 43-year old corporate lawyer drawing a monthly salary of ₹1.3 lakh. Due to personal reasons, I could not invest until now. How much should I be investing every month and also in what vehicles, for me to retire at 65? I have an eight-year-old son.

SINDHU JOSEPH

A. It is never too late to start investing. To gauge how much you need to invest, you'll have to make a basic financial plan first. This involves listing out your main financial goals with the timeline by which you'd like to achieve them. You will need to assess your return targets and risk appetite. Finally, you create individual portfolios towards each financial goal. Given the details you've mentioned, you will perhaps need to create a corpus for your son's higher education about 10 years from now and a corpus for your retirement, 22 years from now. This apart, you will need insurance and an emergency fund to take care of unexpected contingencies.

We suggest you first take a basic term life cover to take care of your son's needs in your absence. Do sign up for a health insurance cover for a minimum of ₹10 lakh too, if you don't already have one. You must also set aside enough savings in a bank FD towards an emergency fund to cover 9 months of your living expenses to take care of any period of interrupted income or profession in future.

Having done this, you can plan out your long-term investments towards your son's education and retirement goals. For your son's education, do estimate the sum you'll need 10 years hence (after factoring in inflation at 7-8%), for an undergraduate and post-graduate degree using online or offline help. You can invest in hybrid aggressive equity mutual funds (via systematic investment) or in a combination of multi-cap equity and debt funds to get to this goal.

For your retirement, make an estimate of the monthly expenses you will need in today's rupees to live comfortably. To arrive at the size of retirement corpus, you will need to adjust this for inflation over the next 22 years and then multiply the annual amount by a factor of 20 or 25 times. This will be your retirement goal. The size of this corpus will decide how much you will need to invest every month.

Given that you have 20-odd years to go, you can invest in equity fund SIPs with a PPF component to get to your retirement goal. Start investing ₹1.5 lakh a year in PPF right away and invest the rest via SIPs in multi-cap and index funds. You can use online calculators for the above estimates. You may also need the help of a full-fledged financial advisor to map out your investment plan and to select the right products. Do remember that financial planning is not a one-off exercise and needs constant monitoring and course corrections along the way.

Q. I am 33 and a dentist with an academic job and a private set up. My monthly earnings are about ₹40,000. I am married and have a child. I am yet to start financial planning. How much should I save every month?

SRINIDHI BHAT

A. The first step in financial planning, as detailed above, would be to map out your key financial goals today with the timelines by which you would like to achieve them.

If you have dependants who contribute to the family's spending, you also need to take both a term life and a health insurance cover to tide you and your family over unexpected events. You will also need to save 9 months' of living expenses in a bank FD to meet any unforeseen emergencies that interrupt your income or work.

In our view, while real estate can be one of your investments, it cannot be the only one, given that returns from this asset are very location-specific and that land can be quite illiquid as an investment. It is best to maintain a diversified basket of investments across real estate, stocks, bonds, FDs and gold. Both your stock and bond investments can be routed through mutual funds.

Kindly start by investing ₹1.5 lakh a year in PPF which can contribute to your retirement planning and help in tax savings. You can start SIPs in hybrid equity or multi-cap equity funds towards your longer term goals such as child's education. Financial planning is an ongoing process for which you may need the services of a qualified financial advisor, to help you quantify goals, decide on the asset allocation and choose the right products.

Readers can send in queries on personal finance and investing to moneywise@thehindu.co.in. Our experts who write on personal finance will answer these queries. Moneywise will not give specific recommendations for investment in a particular mutual fund scheme, share or fixed deposit.

MIND YOUR MONEY

Stay focussed on your INVESTMENTS

There are many imponderables in life but they should not deflect us from achieving our life goals



GAURAV MASHRUWALA

If Goods and Services Tax (GST) rate on international airfare rises, how many of us will cancel our foreign vacation with family?

Similarly, if the government reduces GST on hiring of banquet halls in hotels, how many of us will hurry into getting our son or daughter married even though they are pursuing higher education to take benefit of the lower GST?

Though it is true that the GST rates do impact our lives and also the cost of living, that is something which is not in our control.

Equally true is the fact that many financial goals of our life have to be fulfilled, even if something beyond our control, such as a rise or fall in GST rates, occurs.

Financial responsibilities

Some of these goals could be in form of our family financial responsibilities such as funding the education of our children, getting them married, our retirement and the like.

There could also be certain dreams and aspirations such as going on a foreign vacation with family and purchasing a bigger car.

A lot of these do not change simply because either GST or, for that matter, most other taxes and levies in the country increase or decrease. Yet, we keep focussing on GST rates and other taxes. Several times, as financial planner, I encounter individuals who procrastinate, delaying financial planning and investment deci-

sions because the Union Budget is in the offing or the GST Council will be holding a meeting to decide on the rates. These are just excuses to avoid the discipline that we have to impose on ourselves with regard to financial planning. However, it is detrimental to our wealth creation.

The best way to deal with any kind of wealth creation and achieve our financial goals is to plan and invest. So, instead of referring to GST as Goods and Services Tax, the goal must be Goal Savings Target.

Deciding on financial goals, calculating the amount and allocating funds are all steps in bringing about focus. Focus also helps us optimally utilise resources

First, make a list of all financial responsibilities and dreams.

This can be called 'My GDP - My Goals and Dreams Plan.' Prioritise them. This will help in getting focus and ease allocation of funds for each goal. Decide the amount that will be needed to fulfil those financial goals. There are enough calculators available on Web that will help in calculating the monthly amount needed to meet those financial goals. In case there are some inhibitions in making calculations, take the help of a qualified person.

Set priorities

It is not always possible to have enough surplus every month to invest towards our future goals. The moment goals are prioritised, it is

easier to take a decision. Goals that are high priority need allocation of money first, and so on and so forth.

Another benefit of listing and prioritising financial goals is to decide where to invest. Options could be investing in the stock markets, gold, fixed deposits, bonds or real estate. Also, consideration can be given to whether the investment be made directly or should mutual funds be considered as a vehicle. There could be a few other investment vehicles available that can be considered. Lastly, deciding on financial goals, calculating the amount, allocating funds are all steps in bringing about focus.

Focus always helps in optimum utilisation of resources. Making 'MY - GST' will help bring focus so that 'our financial resources' viz. income from 'our routine earning' and returns generated from 'our investment' help in achieving 'My GDP'.

Family support

As a practitioner, it is very common to get a comment from a family member, housewives and older children saying "I also want to contribute towards a particular financial goal that the family is investing for."

As individuals, we want to know the end goal and also belong to an activity where the end result is known. Thereafter, every time there is some saving and investing, there is a sense of achievement as it lends clarity to our purpose.

Giving direction to our investments gets us focussed; choosing an investment vehicle and asset class becomes easy; we refrain from copying others or relying on any rumours; and, there is family support.

(The author is a financial planner and the author of Yogic Wealth)

THINK INVESTOR

Is there a safe investment?

With uncertainties rising, investors are anxious about the safety of their money

VENKATESH BANGARUSWAMY

In tune with current times, Claudius in the Shakespearean play, Hamlet, would, have, perhaps, said: "When anxieties come, they come not in single spies, but in battalions!" With uncertainty in employment on one side and volatile financial markets on the other, it is natural that we are overanxious about the world around us.

It is in this backdrop that we address a reader's question: How safe are bank deposits in these uncertain times? In this article, we show there are no safe investments and that your investment decision involves risk trade-offs.

Default risk

A safe investment is not one that will protect your nominal capital. Rather, it is one that will help you accumulate money at a required rate with zero risk.

Suppose you have to earn 4% compounded annual return to achieve your goal eight years hence, the safest investment would be a cumulative bank deposit with zero default risk. Unfortunately, all banks carry default risk, though low. That means there is a no safe investment! You should, therefore, look for investments with a minimal risk.

You may be aware that the Reserve Bank of India has identified SBI, ICICI Bank and HDFC Bank as domestic systemically important banks. While these



No safe haven: Investors cannot avoid risk. It all comes down to what risks one is comfortable with.

banks may reduce your anxiety levels on a default risk, you may not fancy the interest rates they offer.

There is an alternative. In the Budget, the government increased insurance cover that banks offer on deposits (including savings account) from ₹1 lakh to ₹5 lakh.

You can, therefore, spread your deposits across banks such that the maturity amount of your cumulative deposits does not exceed ₹5 lakh in any one bank. Of course, it will be cumbersome to monitor deposits across multiple banks.

Reinvestment risk

What about direct investment in government bonds? True, such investments do not have default risk, but they expose you to high reinvestment risk.

To understand this risk, consider a five-year cumulative bank deposit for ₹10,000 at 5.5% interest per annum. In the first year, you earn ₹550 as interest income, which the bank adds to your deposit amount.

In the second year, you will earn 5.5% on ₹10,550. But if the bank were to credit the interest to your savings account, you have to reinvest ₹550 at 5.5 per cent every year. Why?

To earn 5.5% compounded return on your initial investment, you should reinvest your interest income at 5.5% every year. But you could face problems finding investment opportunities every year, especially, if the RBI were to cut interest rates.

So, the risk you run today is that you may be forced to reinvest the yearly interest income

at a lower rate in the future. This reinvestment risk is very high for government bonds because you will receive interest every half year.

It all comes down to trade-offs. Suppose, you want to accumulate money for 7 years, you can invest in a recurring (or cumulative) deposit that matures in 7 years. It may be difficult to find a government bond with the same maturity.

You could invest in an open-end bond fund and redeem your units after 7 years. Suffice it to know such funds cannot provide fixed returns because they offer net asset value (NAV)-based returns.

So, if your anxiety levels are high, consider keeping your deposits with the three systematically important banks. If your anxiety levels are not-so-high, then consider other public sector banks in addition to these three systematically important banks. And if you want to get a somewhat higher interest rate, you may have to consider private-sector banks.

Remember this: You cannot avoid any risk. It all comes down to what risks you are comfortable with - zero default risk, high reinvestment risk (government bonds) or low default risk, zero reinvestment risk (recurring and cumulative bank deposits).

(The author offers training programmes for individuals to manage their personal investments)

BLACKBOARD: SWITCHING OUT AND IN

On to greener pastures

Moving from one MF scheme to another

K. BHARAT KUMAR

What is switching?

■ In the context of mutual fund investments, 'switching out' is the act of moving your investments from one mutual fund scheme to another within the same fund house - switching in - without having to see your money move in and out of your bank account.

How does it work?

■ You can switch or move your investments from one scheme to another when both schemes are managed by the same asset management company. Website mutualfundssahihai.com says that to switch funds, the investor needs to fill up and sign a switch form specifying the number of units to be switched from the source scheme and the name of the destination scheme. Online platforms allow you to do this switch with just a click, by choosing your source scheme and destination scheme.

Is it like a sale and purchase?

■ When you switch between schemes, the source scheme views your moving out as a redemption or sale of units in that scheme.

The destination scheme is where you purchase units, technically.

Will there be tax



■ GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

implications?

■ Even though you don't sell and buy units in the normal sense, it is tantamount to selling units in your source scheme.

Capital gains tax will hence apply on your gains on 'sale' of units in the source scheme. The applicable rate will depend on how long you have held those units.

Are there exit load expenses?

■ Yes. Whatever exit load charges were applicable - had you sold and encashed units in the source scheme - would apply when you switch out.

Can you switch from a scheme in one fund house to a scheme in another?

■ No. It is not possible to move investments between two schemes belonging to two different fund houses, using the switch option.

LOOSE CHANGE

RAVIKANTH



"Let me guess. Your child has started collecting currencies as a hobby, right?"

PERSONAL LOAN - RATES AND CHARGES

Name of Lender	Interest rate (%)	EMI (Rs)	EMI (Rs)	Processing fee (% of loan amount)
		Loan amount 5 lakh	Loan amount 1 lakh	
		Tenure - 5 years		
State Bank of India	9.60-13.85	10,525-11,595	2,105-2,319	Upto 1.5% (Maximum Rs 15,000)
Citi Bank	9.99-16.49	10,621-12,290	2,124-2,458	Upto 3%
HDFC Bank	10.75- 21.30	10,809-13,611	2,162-2,722	Rs 2,999-25,000
Bank of Baroda	10.10-15.10	10,648-11,921	2,130-2,384	Rs 1,000-10,000
Axis Bank	12.00-24.00	11,122-14,384	2,224-2,877	1.5%-2%
ICICI Bank	11.25-22.00	10,934-13,809	2,187-2,762	Upto 2.25%
Bank of Maharashtra	9.70-10.70	10,550-10,797	2,110-2,159	1% (Minimum Rs 1000)
Canara Bank	10.20-13.90	10,673-11,608	2,135-2,322	Upto 1% (Maximum Rs 5,000)
Punjab National Bank	8.80-11.65	10,331-11,034	2,066-2,207	Upto 1%
Indian Bank	9.20-13.65	10,428-11,544	2,086-2,309	Upto Rs 255 for pensioners; 0.512% for other borrowers (Minimum Rs 512)
Union Bank of India	8.90-13.00	10,355-11,377	2,071-2,275	Upto 0.5% (Maximum Rs 7,500)

Rates and charges as on July 8, 2020

Source: Paisabazaar.com

NEW CAR LOAN-RATES AND CHARGES

Name of Bank	Interest rate (%)	EMI (Rs)	Processing fee (% of loan amount)
		Loan amount 5 lakh	
		Tenure-5 years	
Bank of Baroda	7.10-9.10	9,924-10,403	0.50% (Rs 2,500-10,000)
Punjab & Sind Bank	7.10-7.45	9,924-10,007	Nil
Punjab National Bank	7.15-7.65	9,936-10,055	Up to 0.25% (Max: 1,500) For Insta Vehicle Loan: Rs 1,000
Canara Bank	7.30-9.90	9,972-10,599	0.25% (Rs 1,000-5,000)
Bank of India	7.35-7.95	9,983-10,126	Up to 0.25% (Max: 5,000) For Rural Areas: Rs 1,500-20,000
UCO Bank	7.45-7.70	10,007-10,067	Up to 1% (Max: Rs 1,500)
Indian Bank	7.55-8.15	10,031-10,174	Up to 0.230% (Max: Rs 10,236)
State Bank of India	7.70-11.20*	10,067-10,921	Up to 0.50% For Green Car Loan: Rs 1,000-Rs 1,500
HDFC Bank	8.80-10.00	10,331-10,624	1% (Rs 5,000-Rs 10,000)
Lakshmi Vilas Bank	8.80	10,331	0.50% (Rs 1,000-Rs 10,000)
Federal Bank	8.90	10,355	Rs 1,500-Rs 2,500
Axis Bank	9.05-11.30	10,391-10,946	Rs 3,500-5,500

*Additional concession of 0.25% on application via YONO. Further concession of 0.20% on purchase of EVs.

Rates and charges as on July 8, 2020

Source: Paisabazaar.com

TV PICKS
Premier League: Star Sports 1 & SS Select 1 (SD & HD) 12.20 a.m. (Tuesday)
Serie A: Sony Ten 2 (SD & HD), 1.10 a.m. (Tuesday)



Chetan Chauhan tests positive for COVID-19
NEW DELHI
Former India cricketer and Uttar Pradesh cabinet minister Chetan Chauhan has tested positive for COVID-19. The development of Chauhan testing positive for the virus emerged late on Saturday from the tweets of former India players Akash Chopra and R.P. Singh, who wished him a speedy recovery. The 72-year-old underwent COVID-19 test on Friday and has been reportedly admitted to the Sanjay Gandhi PGI hospital in Lucknow. PTI

Vidit Gujrathi to lead India in chess Olympiad
CHENNAI
Vidit Gujrathi (right, with Anand) was on Sunday named captain of the Indian team that will take part in the Online Chess Olympiad 2020, scheduled to begin on July 22. The India No.2 was nominated skipper in consultation with teammate Viswanathan Anand and the AICF selection committee. PTI

Another poor weekend for Daruvala
Jehan Daruvala had yet another poor weekend in the FIA Formula 2 championship race at Spielberg, finishing 12th and ninth in the two races on Saturday and Sunday. The India, part of the Red Bull Racing F1 team's junior driver programme, is yet to score a point in the championship after four races even as teammate Yuki Tsunoda got a second-place finish in the first race on Saturday.

Blackwood steers West Indies home in thriller

Chase, Dowrich and Holder play the support cast after the England pacers rattle the top-order with quick wickets

WI IN ENGLAND

REUTERS
SOUTHAMPTON
Jermaine Blackwood's fighting 95 in the second innings helped West Indies seal a four-wicket win over England on a gripping final day of the first Test at the Ageas Bowl on Sunday.

Chasing 200 to win, West Indies lost three early wickets but Blackwood shared a 73-run stand with Roston Chase (37) to revive its hopes before skipper Jason Holder and John Campbell steadied the ship to guide the visitors home.

West Indies took a 1-0 lead in the three-match series, with the second and third Tests to be held in Manchester without fans in the stadium due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Archer strikes

When the pursuit began, Barbados-born paceman Jofra Archer dismissed Kraigg Brathwaite for four with a moving ball that the opener edged onto the stumps and



Taking charge: Jermaine Blackwood handled the England bowlers with aplomb as West Indies drew first blood. - GETTY IMAGES

trapped Shamarh Brooks in front with a beauty.

After Mark Wood bowled Shai Hope for nine to leave West Indies in trouble at 27

for three, Chase and Blackwood set about repairing the damage.

Archer, who tormented the batsmen with his pace and

bounce, had Chase caught behind with a fine delivery, but

Dowrich provided solid support as the West Indies edged towards its target.

SCOREBOARD

England — 1st innings: 204.

West Indies — 1st innings: 318.

England — 2nd innings: Rory Burns c Campbell b Chase 42, Dom Sibley c Dowrich b Gabriel 50, Joe Denly c Holder b Chase 29, Zak Crawley c & b Joseph 76, Ben Stokes c Hope b Holder 46, Ollie Pope b Gabriel 12, Jos Buttler b Joseph 9, Dom Bess b Gabriel 3, Jofra Archer c Dowrich b Gabriel 23, Mark Wood c Dowrich b Gabriel 2, James Anderson (not out) 4; Extras (b-4, lb-10, nb-3): 17; Total (in 111.2 overs): 313.

West Indies bowling: Roach 22-8-50-0, Gabriel 21-2-4-75-5, Holder 22-8-49-1, Chase 25-6-71-2, Joseph 18-2-45-2, Brathwaite 3-0-9-0.

West Indies — 2nd innings (Target: 200): Kraigg Brathwaite b Archer 4, John Campbell (not out) 8, Shai Hope b Wood 9, Shamarh Brooks lbw b Archer 0, Roston Chase c Buttler b Archer 37, Jermaine Blackwood c Anderson b Stokes 95, Shane Dowrich c Buttler b Stokes 20, Jason Holder (not out) 14; Extras (lb-7, w-5, nb-1): 13; Total (for six wickets in 64.2 overs): 200.

Fall of wickets: 1-7, 2-7, 3-27, 4-100, 5-168, 6-189.

England bowling: Anderson 15-3-42-0, Archer 17-3-45-3, Wood 12-0-36-1, Bess 10-2-31-0, Stokes 10-2-1-39-2.

Man-of-the-Match: Gabriel.

West Indies won by four wickets to take a 1-0 lead in three-match series.

Second Test: July 16 to 20, Manchester.

Earlier, England was bowled out for 313 in its second innings after resuming on 284 for eight, with the overnight pair of Archer and Wood failing to offer much resistance.

Wood edged paceman Shannon Gabriel to wicket-keeper Dowrich and Archer became Gabriel's fifth victim

of the innings as he edged a short-pitched ball to the 'keeper on 23.

Gabriel scalps five

Gabriel finished with figures of five for 75 — his sixth five-wicket haul in Tests — while Chase and Alzarri Joseph picked up two wickets apiece.

Lagno pips Yifan to title

P.K. AJITH KUMAR
KOZHIKODE
Kateryna Lagno of Russia won the third Grand Prix leg of the FIDE Chess.com women's Speed Chess in dramatic fashion on Sunday. In the final, she scored a 6.5-5.5 win over China's Hou Yifan, who lost the final game after being in a superior position. The Chinese was unlucky as she let her mouse slip, leading to a blunder that her opponent cashed in on.

This was after the World No. 1 had staged a gallant comeback from 2-5 down to make it 5-5.

Rijiju to hold online meet

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI
Union Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju will hold discussions with sports ministers of all states and union territories from July 14 to figure a way forward as sporting activities begin to resume amid the gradual lifting of the COVID-19 lockdown.

Hamilton zips to 85th career victory

STYRIAN GP

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
SPELBERG
A dominant Lewis Hamilton secured his first win of the season and the 85th of his career with a perfectly-judged victory from pole in Sunday's Styrian Grand Prix.

Valtteri Bottas, who won the curtain-raising race last week, finished 13.7 seconds adrift in second to deliver first Mercedes one-two in Austria since 2015 with Max Verstappen in third.

Bottas leads the championship ahead of Hamilton with Lando Norris third.

FAST FACTS

- Mercedes' first 1-2 at Red Bull Ring since 2015
- Hamilton's 85th career win, and only his second at Spielberg. The earlier triumph came in 2016
- The Briton has now won at least one race in all of his 14 seasons in Formula One
- This is the second time a Leclerc and Vettel collision has caused the team a double Did Not Finish — the other coming at the Brazilian GP in 2019

COMPILED BY ANIRUDH VELAMURI

The results: 1. Hamilton (Mercedes) 1h22m50.683s; 2. Bottas (Mercedes) +13.719s; 3. Verstappen (Red Bull) +33.698s; 4. Albon (Red Bull) +44.400s; 5. Norris (McLaren) +1m 01.470s; 6. Perez (Racing Point) +1m 02.387s; 7. Stroll (Racing Point) +1m 02.453s; 8. Ricciardo (Renault) +1m 02.591s; 9. Sainz Jr. (McLaren) +1 lap; 10. Kvyat (Alpha Tauri) +1 lap; 11. Raikkonen (Alfa Romeo) +1 lap; 12. Magnussen (Haas) +1 lap; 13. Grosjean (Haas) +1 lap; 14. Giovinazzi (Alfa Romeo) +1 lap; 15. Gasly (AlphaTauri) +1 lap; 16. Russell (Williams) +2 laps; 17. Latif (Williams) +2 laps.

Did Not Finish: Ocon (Renault), Leclerc (Ferrari), and Vettel (Ferrari).

Standings (top-5): Drivers: 1. Bottas 43; 2. Hamilton 37; 3. Norris 26; 4. Leclerc 18; 5. Perez 16.

Constructors: 1. Mercedes 80; 2. McLaren 39; 3. Red Bull 27; 4. Racing Point 22; 5. Ferrari 19.

Next race: Hungarian GP, July 19.

Ronaldo to Juventus' rescue

Barcelona manages a win; Sheffield stuns Chelsea

EURO LEAGUES

REUTERS
TURIN

Cristiano Ronaldo converted two penalties, both awarded for handball and the second in the last minute, as Serie A leader Juventus twice hit back to draw 2-2 with Atalanta to move closer to a ninth successive title on Saturday.

The win took Juventus eight points clear of second-placed Lazio, which lost 2-1 at Sassuolo, with six matches to play.

In the LaLiga, Lionel Messi notched a 20th assist of

the season, to go with his 22 goals, to help a lacklustre Barcelona secure a 1-0 win away to Real Valladolid and maintain the pressure on leader Real Madrid.

Chilean midfielder Arturo Vidal struck the winner in the 15th minute.

David McGoldrick scored twice for Sheffield United as it upset Chelsea with a 3-0 win in the Premier League at Bramall Lane.

The results: Serie A: Lazio 1 (Alberto 33) lost to Sassuolo 2 (Raspadori 52, Caputo 90+2); Brescia 0 lost to Roma 3 (Fazio 48, Kalinic 62, Zaniolo 74); Ju-

ventus 2 (Ronaldo 55-pen, 90-pen) drew with Atalanta 2 (Zapata 16, Malinovskyi 81).

LaLiga: Espanyol 0 lost to Eibar 2 (Exposito 25-pen, 36); Osasuna 2 (Gallego 23, Arnaiz 90+) bt Celta Vigo 1 (Lorenzo 10); Valladolid 0 lost to Barcelona 1 (Vidal 15); Atletico Madrid 1 (Costa 74) bt Real Betis 0.

Premier League: Aston Villa 2 (Trezeguet 45+4, 59) bt Crystal Palace 0; Wolves 3 (Jimenez 45+2-pen, Dendoncker 46, Jota 74) bt Everton 0; Sheffield United 3 (McGoldrick 18, 77, McBurnie 33) bt Chelsea 0; Brighton 0 lost to Manchester City 5 (Sterling 21, 53, 81, Jesus 44, Bernardo Silva 56).

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