

Timings**DELHI**

SUNDAY, MAY. 31
● RISE 05:25 SET 19:15
● RISE 13:25 SET 01:34
MONDAY, JUN. 01
● RISE 05:24 SET 19:15
● RISE 14:29 SET 02:10
TUESDAY, JUN. 02
● RISE 05:24 SET 19:16
● RISE 15:34 SET 02:48

Delhi Weather max min
Delhi City 35 22
Safdarjang 35 22
Palam 36 22**Delhi Palam Today**
36°C A comfortable morning turns warm day with cloudy sky. Spell of duststorm and thundershower to occur.**Delhi Palam Tomorrow**
38°C Rise in day temperature. Day will be cloudy and very warm. Duststorm or thunderstorm with light rain may occur.
© Copyright Skymet Weather 2019 All rights reserved.**Air Quality of Delhi-NCR**

Delhi	78	Gurugram	69
Ghaziabad	69	Faridabad	83
Noida	101	Greater Noida	74
Good	51-100	Satisfactory	101-200
Poor	201-300	Very Poor	301-400
		Severe	>400

Air Quality Index at 4 p.m. yesterday (Average of past 24 hours) | Source: CPCB

IN BRIEF**Court grants relief to accused in riots case**NEW DELHI
A Delhi court on Saturday granted interim bail for 10 days to former Congress councillor Ishrat Jahan, who has been booked under the stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, to get married. She has been booked under the anti-terror law in a case related to north-east Delhi riots in February. PTI**Office of the Executive Engineer Delhi Water Supply Maintenance Unit, Uttar Pradesh, Jal Nigam R-1, Raj Nagar, Near Hira Chauraha, Ghaziabad (U.P.) Pin 201002**
Short Term E-Tender Notice No. 507/NHvda/100 Dtd. 27-05-2020
Online percentage rate short term e-tender for "Chemically repair of joints and surface of pipe line from Shamsher Escape (12.6 Km) to Hindon Bridge (14.60 km) under 200 cusec & 270 cusec Delhi Water Supply Maintenance Scheme & Repair of Surface of viaduct & cleaning of big jhunds, bushes, wood plants from shamsher escape (12.60 km) to Hindon bridge (14.60 km) under 200 cusec & 270 cusec Delhi Water Supply Maintenance Schme" is hereby invited in two bid system on behalf of M.D., U.P. Jal Nigam from the contractors having requisite work experience and financial capability. Tender document shall be available at e-procurement website <http://etender.up.nic.in> latest by 05-06-2020. Interested contractors may view & download and upload their bids, duly filled online latest by 18-06-2020 up to 01.30 P.M. Technical & Financial Evaluation cum technical Bid (Pre-Qualification Bid) of E-tender shall be opened on 18-06-2020 at 03.00 P.M.

'Cannot wait and depend on govt. any more'

Migrant workers pin their hopes on special trains to return home, buy tickets with borrowed money from neighbours, kin

SHINJINI GHOSH
NEW DELHI

Nearly a month since the government started ferrying back workers to their home States, several groups of migrant workers, who were unable to take those trains, on Friday said that they had borrowed money and bought tickets for the special trains as they could not "wait and depend" on the government any longer for their travel back home.



Migrants being screened before boarding a bus to New Delhi railway station. • SANDEEP SAXENA

With destinations being States like Bihar, West Bengal, Chattisgarh and Assam, the workers, waiting at the New Delhi railway station said that money lent by neighbours and family members back home were what they accumulated to buy tickets which cost them up to ₹4,000 each.

Uncertain situation

Asidul, a daily wager, hailing from West Bengal's Cooch Behar district said, "It has been more than two months that we have been out of

work and stranded in this city. How much longer can we wait? Currently, the situation is so uncertain and we do not know when normalcy will be restored. It was a difficult task to arrange for money as we are a group of six travelling, but we did not really have any other option."

Asidul and his family, had been living in Greater Noida's Kasna village where they were construction workers. "We hired a tempo and reached the station. Consid-

ering that we have already waited for so long, how can we depend on the government any further? In the end, the poor are always left on their own with nobody to care for them," he said.

Sairabanu, 17, who used to work in Model Town area, said, "Our tickets cost ₹3,700 each. We do not have a single penny left. In such a situation, it is best to somehow reach home to our families.

Tree transplantation policy may get Cabinet nod soon

'80% of affected trees in any project to be transplanted'

NIKHIL M BABU
NEW DELHIThe Delhi government has prepared a Tree Transplantation Policy 2020, under which for any project, 80% of trees affected by the developmental activities at a particular site has to be transplanted. "This is the first time the Delhi government is coming up with a transplantation policy and the Cabinet is expected to give nod to the draft policy next week," a government source told *The Hindu*.

There is no mandatory condition for the number of trees to be transplanted as per current rules in Delhi. The existing policy of planting 10 saplings for each tree being felled will continue, and also 10 saplings will have to be planted for each tree being transplanted too, according to the new policy.

Also, the government will come out with a list of empanelled technical agencies, which will be doing the transplantation.

Exception to the 80% transplantation rule will be given in projects where less than 10 trees are felled and



Ten saplings will have to be planted for each tree being transplanted, according to the new policy. • FILE PHOTO: SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

also in "exceptional cases" where a government committee gives permission.

A dedicated 'Tree Transplantation Cell' will also be established. For projects in which 100 or more trees have been transplanted, a social audit at the end of one year of completion of transplantation will be done to establish survival rate.

Experts not happy

But experts are critical about the policy. "What we need is a tree preservation policy and not tree transplantation policy. Tree transplantation is expensive and survival rate is problematic," said Kanchi Kohli, senior researcher at the Centre for Policy Research.

"Projects should be redesigned keeping the tree colony in mind and to protect them," she said.

Under the new policy, a 'Site Tree Report' has to be prepared at the time of project feasibility assessment, which will have preliminary assessment of the number of trees to be transplanted.

The technical agency will help the applicant in preparing a 'Tree Preservation Plan' with priority for on-site preservation. If retaining the trees at their original locations is not feasible, then priority will be to transplant the affected trees within the project site. If this is also not possible, then transplanting to another location will be considered.

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER PWD (R&B) CONST. DIVN. NO. II, JAMMU

EXTENSION-IST

Subject :Rendering of service for providing of structural design of RCC as per Indian Standard Codes of practice for const. of office complex of SC ST Backward Classes Development Corporation Ltd, at Muthi, Jammu.

Reference:-Short e-NIT No. 03 of 2020-21/Div-2 dated 12-05-2020.

Due to Nil response, the following changes to the critical dates of above said work are hereby with immediate effect:-

Please read	Instead of
Bid submission end date 04-06-2020 (1800 hours)	Bid submission end date 27-05-2020 (1800 hours)
Bid opening date 05-06-2020 (1400hours)	Bid opening date 28-05-2020 (1400hours)

All other terms and conditions remains same.

DIP No:DIP/J-963/20

THE HINDU

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The Managing Director, TTDCL, Swetmatala, Agartala, Tripura invites percentage rate e-Tender, from eligible Bidders/Firms/Agencies for Construction and Development of Tourism Infrastructure at Jamui Hills and Highest Peak, North Tripura District, Tripura, vide DNT No 34/MD/TTDCL/JMP-PROJECT/3rd Call/2020-21 dated 27-05-2020 & Development of Tourism Infrastructure at Neemahal, Sepahijala District, Tripura, Vide DNT No 29/MD/TTDCL/NML-PROJECT/3rd Call/2020- 21, dated 27-05-2020, & Development of Tourism Infrastructure at Matabarai, Gomati District, Tripura, Vide DNT No 30/MD/TTDCL/MTB-PROJECT/2nd Call/2020-21, dated 28-05-2020.For more details, kindly visit <https://tripuratenders.gov.in> or contact to this office through e-mail.

ICA/C/425/20

**Jharkhand State Watershed Mission-State Level Nodal Agency
Rural Development Department, Govt. of Jharkhand**
4th Floor, FFP Building, Dhurwa, Ranchi - 834004 • Phone: 0651-2401974
Email: rddjharkhand.slna@gmail.com

Advt. No. JJY-01

Date:

Invitation for Expression of Interest (EoI) for providing services of flood flow management through Single Bank Account based Electronic Fund Management System for Jharkhand Jalchajan Yojana (JJY) under Jharkhand State Watershed Mission, Rural Development Department, Govt. of Jharkhand, Ranchi.

A proposal of 1.5 lakh Ha treatable area with a budget of Rs. 300 Crores (@ Rs. 2000/- per Ha) covering 28 projects in 24 districts of Jharkhand state has been approved by Govt. of Jharkhand The project period will be for 5 years. It may be extended for further one year.

The JSWM-SLNA invites proposals from Public & Private sector Bank to develop and operate Single Bank Account based Electronic Fund Management System for the said scheme. The proposal should furnish details of the branch network in the state including the district headquarters, availability of ready-made tools to deploy such a system, experience in designing and operating similar systems for other clients including Government and Public Sector clients during last 5 years, strategy for deployment and timelines for execution, grievance redressal procedures, timeline and other added features of such system and time assurance, availability of system.

Selection will be on the basis of analysis done of bids and suitability for the task. The agencies may be asked to make presentation. Non-participation in presentation may lead to summary rejection of the bids. Parties shortlisted on the basis of this EoI will be invited to furnish financial bids.

Terms of Reference (ToR) will be available at the office of Jharkhand State Watershed Mission F.F.P. Building, 1st floor, Dhurwa, Ranchi.

The Chief Executive Officer, JSWM-SLNA reserves all the rights to reject the received bids or cancel the process without giving any reason to the bidder.

Pre Bid Meeting will be held on 10.06.2020; 3.00 PM by Video conferencing.

Last date of submission of sealed bids: 12.06.2020 by 3.00 PM

Place of Submission: JSWM, F.F.P. Building, 1st Floor, Dhurwa, Ranchi - 834004Sd/-
(R. Thanga Pandian)
Chief Executive Officer
Jharkhand State Watershed Mission

PR 228799 (Rural Development) 20-21 (D)

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Delhi govt. issues directions for 'better management' of bodies

Head of hospitals will be responsible for timely disposal

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI
The Delhi government on Saturday issued directions for "better management" of bodies of COVID-19 positive or suspect persons, and fixed responsibility for their timely disposal on the heads of hospitals. The government also fixed time limits for various steps.



mation/burial in consultation with the kin and area civic body in next 24 hours," the order added.

In case of unidentified bodies, Delhi Police should complete all legal formalities within 72 hours of death and dispose of the body in the next 24 hours as per the protocol, the order stated.

Out of State

"If the address of the deceased is outside Delhi, the medical director shall send a notice to resident commissioner of the State/Union Territory to contact within 48 hours. If no reply is received, the shall be cremated by the hospital in the next 24 hours," read the order.

Seventh COVID-19 death in Gautam Buddha Nagar

Total cases in district stands at 405

COVID-19

A 58-year-old man died of COVID-19 in Uttar Pradesh's Gautam Buddha Nagar on Saturday, taking the death toll in the district to seven, the government-run hospital where he was admitted said.

He was the first patient aged under 60 in the district who died of the virus.

Gautam Buddha Nagar, adjoining Delhi, also detected 18 fresh COVID-19 cases on Saturday, taking the number of total cases in the district to 405, officials said.

The number of active patients, however, stood at 105, they added. The man from Noida, was admitted to the COVID ICU of Government

Gurugram reports record 157 cases in a single day

GURUGRAM
In the highest single-day jump, Gurugram — which is one of Haryana's worst-hit districts — reported 157 new COVID-19 cases. The total number of virus cases in the district now stands at 677, according to the health department bulletin.

Institute of Medical Sciences (GIMS) in Greater Noida on Thursday. He had pneumonia with acute respiratory distress syndrome, said GIMS Director.

Negligible bookings over the past two months; owners fret about future



Operators who have availed the loan moratorium scheme doubt they will be able to pay back the money even six months after the lockdown is lifted. ■ MANOJ KUMAR

three months, but doubts that he will be able to pay back the money even six months after the lockdown is lifted. "After the moratorium period, I need to pay a huge interest along with the instalments. It would have been better had the government increased the loan tenure and not imposed the interest," said Mr. Hada.

Mr. Yadav said that most of his vehicles were on loan with instalments ranging between ₹17,000 and ₹26,000 per month.

The company has 500 drivers, meaning around 2,500 people have been affected. The only solution is to "learn to live with the situation"; no one can afford to sit at home for long, said Mr. Yadav. "It is a turbulent time for the transport and hospitality industries. The government has not announced any package for us," he rued, adding that a lot of uncertainty prevailed as the companies were allowed to open but the borders were sealed.

Running a bus tours and travels agency, Satbir too has been hit hard by the lockdown. He mostly catered to companies in Noida ferrying their employees, but there has been no business for almost two months now.

"It is a wait-and-watch situation. Nothing much can be done. It is difficult to even switch to new business in these times," he said.

Mr. Yadav has been partially paying salaries to his drivers but said that he will not be able to keep it up if the situation persists.

"A couple of buses have gone back to work, but with the industries not running at full capacity, the demand

With monthly loan instal-



Residents of Sant Ravidas Nagar in north-west Delhi waiting to collect ration on Saturday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Delhi's drug market shut till June 4

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Drug Traders' Association (DDTA) has decided to shut down India's largest wholesale drug market in Bhagirath Palace, Chandni Chowk, till at least June 4.

14 cases so far

A total of 13 traders and one staff have tested positive for COVID-19 in the past two weeks.

The market has about 1,500 wholesale drugs and medical equipment shops.

"In the past two weeks, we have had 14 people test positive. We are unable to maintain social distancing in such a busy market," said DDTA secretary Ashish Grover.

"The AC Market in Central Bank Building has at least 4-5 positive cases so it was closed on Saturday till June 4. The other parts of the market housed in Omkar Bhawan, Milaap Bhawan and rest of the drug market in Bhagirath Palace will be closed from June 1 onwards," he said.

He added that the shutting of the market is essential for the safety of the people.

1,163 new cases, 18 deaths in city

Medical director of Lok Nayak Hospital infected; technical staff of hospital dies

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Capital reported 1,163 new COVID-19 cases in the past 24 hours, taking the total number of cases to 18,549, according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government on Saturday.

This is the biggest single-day jump in the number of cases in the city so far and the third consecutive day of over 1,000 cases. Also, 18 more deaths were reported taking the total to 416. But all the deaths did not happen in the past 24 hours.

Of the total cases, 8,075 people have recovered and there are 10,058 active cases.

Meanwhile, the number of containment zones in the city have increased from 73 on May 18 to 103 on Saturday, according to the bulletin.

A containment zone has a stricter form of the lockdown and people are not allowed to enter or leave the sealed off areas.

Meanwhile, a technical

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GURUGRAM — 108 / 0124-2322412/
9911519296 / 7015523417/ 9654231756



spokesperson added.

The DJB has written to the Delhi government for compensation for the employee's family.

More cases

Three more employees at the New Delhi Municipal Corporation (NDMC) tested positive for COVID-19 on Saturday, taking the total number of positive cases to 20, according to officials.

The NDMC headquarters was sealed on Thursday and a total of 11 employees have tested positive till now.

Also, multiple officials of the General Administration Department (GAD) at the Delhi Secretariat have tested positive for COVID-19, according to officials.

Meanwhile, the Delhi government has decided to make all 1,500 beds of GTB Hospital a COVID-19 treatment facility, instead of 500 beds as decided on Friday, according to a fresh order issued on Saturday.

TO ADVERTISE PLEASE CONTACT

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THE HINDU
India's National Newspaper

Court extends interim bail of Ashu Khan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Saturday extended by 45 days the interim bail of local leader Ashu Khan who was arrested for allegedly rioting and instigating a mob during anti-CAA protests here on December 15 last year.

Additional District Judge Vipin Kumar Rai granted the interim relief to Khan in two cases related to the violent protests at Jamia Nagar and New Friends Colony on furnishing a bail bond of ₹2 lakh. The court directed him not to tamper with evidence or leave the country without its permission. Mr. Khan was earlier granted interim bail in the case in April.

Lockdown is driving Gurugram cab, bus operators out of business

Negligible bookings over the past two months; owners fret about future

ASHOK KUMAR

GURUGRAM

Anil Hada, a Wazirabad-based cab operator, owns 27 taxis and has been in the business for almost two decades. Hit hard by the lockdown, he is now planning to switch trade and open a grocery store.

Mr. Hada, in his 40s, said his business has been on a decline since 2014 when cab aggregators such as Ola and Uber entered the market. He mostly hires out taxis to automobile firms in Manesar. Even before the lockdown, he lost almost half his business due to the economic slowdown.

He claimed to have received just five bookings over the past two months. The earnings have not been enough to meet expenses such as loan instalments on ten taxis, amounting to ₹3.5 lakh per month, and salaries of drivers.

"My business involves the risk of accidents, fear of challans and police action. It is not worth it anymore. I see my father running a grocery shop. He leads a relaxed life. I too will open a grocery shop if the situation persists," said Mr. Hada.

He brought his son into his business a few years back but now regrets it.

Mr. Hada recalled the good old days of the business when loan instalments and salaries of drivers were low, and bookings were in abundance. Over time, expenses have gone up even as bookings have dipped.

Moratorium scheme
Apart from automobile firms, he gets bookings for routes where Ola and Uber do not play.

Mr. Hada has availed the loan moratorium scheme, now extended for another



Operators who have availed the loan moratorium scheme doubt they will be able to pay back the money even six months after the lockdown is lifted. ■ MANOJ KUMAR

is very low. Now, it is all at the mercy of the Almighty," said Mr. Satbir. He had been running a few buses to cater to foreign and domestic tourists as well, but tourism has completely stopped.

"It may take several months, if not years, for the tourists to return," lamented Mr. Satbir, who runs Bright Tours and Travels from Sector 12.

Amid the lockdown, the cab operators have also been hit by a flurry of e-challans for speeding by Delhi Police.

Mr. Hada claimed he had received as many as 270 challans worth ₹5.70 lakh in April for speeding of his cabs from November 2019 till March this year. "Since most of the drivers have now left, I need to pay these on my own. It has been an additional financial burden when the income is nil. Many operators have received these challans worth lakhs," said Mr. Hada.

Mr. Satbir too said he had received challans for speeding of the buses plying to neighbouring States.

Not just the big cab and bus operators, independent cab drivers too are struggling to survive.

Brijender, who is attached to Ola, said he had returned to work in the first week of May after the "Janata Curfew" on March 24.

He would earlier make ₹2,500-₹3,000 per day, but now earned just ₹1,000-₹1,500 per day. "I hope for more passengers after June 1 since more relaxations are expected," said Brijender.

Mr. Yadav said that the independent drivers attached to his company were hit even harder since they could not afford to pay the EMIs for the vehicle loan.

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CM YK

Democratic, liberal ethos being undermined: Gehlot

Modi govt. is disrupting communal harmony, says CM

MOHAMMED IQBAL

JAIPUR
Describing the first year of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's second term as the worst for the majority of common people in the country, Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Saturday said the democratic and liberal ethos of India as an inclusive society had been completely undermined in the BJP government.



Ashok Gehlot. ■ FILE PHOTO

NDA, he added.

The Chief Minister said Mr. Modi's tenure would be remembered as the time when lakhs of people lost everything and faced unbearable hardships during the COVID-19 lockdown. "The government remained a mute spectator to the suffering of people. The nation saw a most insensitive government [which was] least bothered about lives or livelihood of crores of Indians," he said.

Commenting on the operations of Shramik Special trains ferrying the migrant workers, Mr. Gehlot said as many as 40 trains had been delayed, one took nine days to reach its destination and 80 deaths had been reported so far. He said Railways Minister Piyush Goyal should be divested of his portfolio, as such a mess was never heard of before. "Let him concentrate on fundraising for the BJP," he said.

"Trial and error"
"Even after six years of trial and error on the economic front, we still see no silver lining how the government is going to revive the economy, provide jobs and look after the people, who have no money and no work," he said. A thriving economy under the UPA had been completely destroyed by the

would be remembered as one of those periods in Indian history when people suffered the most and faced unbearable hardships.

'Trial and error'

"Even after six years of trial and error on the economic front, we still see no silver lining how the government is going to revive the economy, provide jobs and look after the people, who have no money and no work," he said. A thriving economy under the UPA had been completely destroyed by the

Modi govt. is disrupting communal harmony, says CM

VIKAS VASUDEVA

CHANDIGARH

Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh said his government is willing to forego the portion of fiscal deficit enhancement offered by the Centre but would not compromise with the farmers' interest. He also asked Mr. Badal and Union Minister and Akali leader Harsimrat Kaur Badal to quit the NDA. He pointed out that it was the Centre that directed the States to withdraw free power, and also failed to come to the rescue of the State during the COVID crisis and lockdown.

Though experts have advised against opening of the hospitality industry and malls, Captain Amarinder said the State would take into account the Central government guidelines for Lockdown 5.0.

The Chief Minister announced this after an on-

After Leh, Jharkhand flies back 180 workers from Andamans

State govt. paid for tickets; they will be sent home on buses

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

RANCHI

Altogether 180 migrant workers reached Jharkhand from Andaman and Nicobar Islands on Saturday by a State-sponsored chartered flight, expressing relief from over two-month-long hardships due to lockdown.

Migrants were flown back home from Andaman & Nicobar a day after 60 stranded workers returned from Leh by a service flight arranged by the State government. "The expenses of both the flights are borne by the Hemant Soren government," an official statement said. The returnees will be sent by buses to their respective districts after health test, officials said.

The migrants said they were given food and shelter by the Andaman administration, NGOs and fellow natives, settled in the island for several decades.

Migrant workers were flown back home in char-



Migrants wearing face shields and masks leaving Birsa Munda International Airport in Ranchi on Saturday. ■ PTI

tered flights by the Jharkhand government after Mr. Soren wrote to Union Home Minister Amit Shah on May 21, seeking permission to operate flights to bring back stranded workers from Andaman-Nicobar Islands, Ladakh and the north-east as they could not be ferried by buses or trains.

Sought govt. help
These returnees had requested the government to make arrangement for their return. After emerging from Ran-

chi's Birsa Munda Airport, a labourer said, "Many of us worked in road construction projects."

Another labourer said,

"We were staying in South Andaman and got food from the administration, NGOs and some people from Jharkhand who have stayed there for a long time."

Water & Sanitation Minister Mithilesh Thakur, who reached the airport to welcome the migrants, said another flight would take off from Andamans on Sunday.

Punjab extends lockdown till June 30

State to take Centre's guidelines into account, says CM

VIKAS VASUDEVA

CHANDIGARH

Punjabi Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Saturday announced a 4-week extension in the lockdown in the State, till June 30, with certain more relaxations, subject to the guidelines of the Central government.

Captain Amarinder said during a Facebook live session that the threat of COVID was not over yet, and if necessary, he would continue to take tough measures to save the lives of Punjabis. Making it clear that the extension of the lockdown in Punjab would be conditional to strict adherence to safety

protocols, including physical distancing and wearing of masks, the Chief Minister also ordered distribution of free masks to the poor.

He said non-reporting to health authorities by those returning to the State, especially from abroad, was a big challenge. He said that 9,560 had been traced and tested, and some positive cases had been found among these.

Punjab recorded 36 fresh cases on May 30 and reported two deaths, taking the tally to 44, according to an official statement. The number of positive cases has reached 2,233.

COVID-19 victims won't be revealed, govt. assures HC

CORRESPONDENT

CUTTACK

The Odisha government has assured the Orissa High Court that necessary steps would be taken to ensure that identity of any person, found infected with the corona virus in the State, is not disclosed in any government communications or in any media platforms, including the social media.

State Advocate-General A.K. Parija gave this assurance to the High Court following the Thursday's direction in this regard from a Division Bench headed by Chief Justice Mohammad

Rafiq. The High Court had asked the government to ensure that identities of persons, testing positive to COVID-19 in any centre, are not disclosed.

This direction from the High Court came during adjudication of a PIL filed by advocate Ananga Kumar Ottta, who had alleged that several cases have been reported in the State where identities of the persons testing positive for COVID-19 have been publicised or disclosed in intra-departmental communications.

The HC has directed to list this matter on June 4.

Seven injured in Odisha accident

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Bhubaneswar

At least seven persons were injured on Saturday when a bus carrying migrant workers from Kerala to West Bengal overturned in Odisha's Balasore district. The accident took place at 6.30 a.m. when the driver lost control over the bus at a bridge on NH-16, according to Parash Rout, Inspector-in-Charge of Industrial Police Station, Balasore. There were 30 persons in the bus, including 28 migrant workers and two drivers.

Don't scrap free power to farmers, warn Akalis

Amarinder denies any such move

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHANDIGARH

The Shiromani Akali Dal on Saturday warned the Congress government in Punjab against any move to scrap free power facility to farmers even as the Chief Minister ruled out any such plan.

SAD held a meeting of its core committee and announced to launch a mass movement if the government scraps free power for agriculture directly or indirectly. The meeting, chaired by party president Sukhbir Singh Badal, passed a resolu-

tion on the issue.

Chief Minister Amarinder Singh said his government is willing to forego the portion of fiscal deficit enhancement offered by the Centre but would not compromise with the farmers' interest. He also asked Mr. Badal and Union Minister and Akali leader Harsimrat Kaur Badal to quit the NDA. He pointed out that it was the Centre that directed the States to withdraw free power, and also failed to come to the rescue of the State during the COVID crisis and lockdown.

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29 / 165cm, MBBS (MMC-Chennai), Now MD III Year (Anesthesia) KMC Manipal. Ct:9942085205.

TAMIL VISWAKARMA Girl MS/27/170 Seeks MD/MS Hindu Groom from same or other caste. 9444563880 / 9448137781, 05636923

MUDALIAR 23, BE MBA 160cm Good looking, well settled family seeks suitable groom CNB 7200866346/ 8775514465

ENGLISH

MS- SURGERY Final Year, aspiring M.Ch, 25 years, Pretty, 5.8' Rohini/ Rishabam, Saiva Pillai seek DM/ M.Ch pursuing Hand surgery less than 30 years Vegetarian Groom. Caste no bar. Fwd BPH. rwwt2019@gmail.com

HINDU 32/152, B.E. upper middle class. Divorce seeks suitable groom. Caste no bar. No. Ct: 9489935653

25/175, M.S. U.S. Fair. Affluent, seeks handsome PG well settled boy. No bar. Ct: 9489935653

MALAYALAM

NEED ALLIANCE for a Nair Girl 24/ 5'6" M.E.(ECE). Star Rohini with one dosham from well educated Nair Boys employed in Central/State Gov/MNC. Please contact 9487759679 or shashvakkyle@gmail.com.

TAMIL

RC Nadar, BE, MBA, IT Chennai, 32/ 166cm seeks suitable groom. Religion no bar. Ct: 735823457

GOTV DOCTOR,29,CHRISTIAN AD Need Doctor or Equivalent Govt job. Contact: 9941016954

RC CHRISTIAN 30yrs 64/162 Engineering Graduate Non-IT Working Corporate Co. at Chennai Seeks RC/CSI Non-IT Engineering Graduate Employed Groom settled at Chennai Cast No Bar 9445931257

KERALITE HINDU, 44, MCA Working in USA seeks suitable qualified Hindu groom (pre.tsouthindians).Caste no bar,issues divorce accepted. 9526646677, sneeramkamal@yahoo.com

DOCTOR

NADAR CHRISTIAN Rich MSQG Bride Seeking Fair Doctor Groom Contact: 90871 0084

HINDU SC PR Kongu 1984 MBBS DCH Doctor, working in Govt hospital seeks suitable Groom. Ct:9443680973

TAMIL

BRIDES WANTED

COSMOPOLITAN

HINDU, 58, divorce, handsome, healthy, looks young, decent, officer, well educated & settled in Chennai. Seeks unemployed bride. Widower/divorcee poor may also apply. Caste & religion nobar. Apply with latest pictures. Ct: podhi303@gmail.com

DOCTOR

HOMOSEXUAL, AFFLUENT orthopaedic surgeon having own hospital in Nagercoil, 31 years, divorcee, no children. Looking for doctor, good looking girl with good manners willing to settle in Nagercoil. We are Nanthi Natural vellalar. Profiles from any related castes, call us at 944313142 or mail to director@kkoh.in

MUDALIAR 28 /B.E.MBA (France) own Arts & Crafts College Supreme Elite Family seeks Bride 9444401000

SOZHIYA VELLALAR/CASTE NO BAR, 29, 180 cms, Doctor, pursuing Masters. Father is a Doctor, Family is affluent. Looking for an amiable and well educated match from any community. Contact: 9366448344

INTERCASTE, 26, 180 cms, Businessman, M.E. Lives in Karaikudi. Father is a Businessman. Family is affluent. Looking for an amiable and well educated match from any community. Contact: 6366448346

NAIR, 26, 160 cms, Software Engineer, Masters. Lives in USA. Father is a CEO. Looking for a likeminded and well educated match from the same community. Contact: 6366448346

REDDY, 24, 165 cms, Masters from a reputed Institute. Lives in Chennai. Father is a Businessman. Family is affluent. Looking for an amiable and well educated match from the same community. Contact: 6366448345

YERIKA PILLAI (Kaaraiher), 29yrs, 165cm, E.C.E., Seeking a suitable groom. Ct: 9842774997

Call for Free Consultation at your Home ☎ 99629 76000

www.elitematrimony.com

TAMIL

HINDU NADAR 55/167 Kattai, B.Com, First Marriage, Business (Finance) Good Physique, Singer, Yoga Trainer, Runner, No Bad Habits, Wealthy & Noble Family. Seeks First Marriage/Divorced (No Child) Below 47 Years. Working/Housewife Degree & Above from Decent Family Kind. Bride. No Brokers. Ct: 8136448354

HINDU Ad 28 Kongu Parayar BE, M.Tech, Ph.D seeks educated professional Bride. Ct:7868984541/ 6637663072

VANNIYAR 38/182/MBA Pharmacist in a famous Hospital 4 Lakhs & PA no bar ct. 9346425317

HINDU AD Handsome Guy ,Engineer, 2L, 20 /Month. Exp Veg Bride From Any Marital Status. Ct: 957132288/ 8300170769

MUDALIYAR 28 /B.E.MBA (France) own Arts & Crafts College Supreme Elite Family seeks Bride 9444401000

MUDALIYAR AGE 29 Income Rs. 35,000/- pm. Own House in Chennai Seeks Bride in same caste. Ct: 81220 10111.

CASTE NOBAR bride wanted for groom 38/164cm, Rs.65000pm, MNC, Bangalore, contact 9982024560/ 9884138321, chockalingam@gmail.com

Hindu, 29, Uthiram,Simman,BE/SWE/ MNC Chennai /10L per annum (F-Chettiar, M-Mudaliar) seeks BE/ MBBS veg bride 9442567067.

MUDHALIYAR 28 /B.E.M.S (Own Engg.colleges,Arts & Science, B.Ed & Nursing College Only Son- 9884130060

TELUGU BRAHMINS,39, Associate Project Manager HCL Technologies Madurai, seeks anybrahmin girl, 9487851429

WANTED ALLIANCE upto 37 years for highly cultured & qualified, well settled Iyer boy, Bangalore, Haritham, Panavasur, 9916353133, 9982028845

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 17.30 HRS)

Forecast for Sunday: Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning/hail/squall/gusty winds likely at isolated places over Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Gilgit-Baltistan and Muzaffarabad. Heavy/very heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Assam, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Konkan & Goa, Kerala and Lakshadweep

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	
Agartala	29	30.2	22.0	Kozhikode	5.8...	34.0...	25.8	
Ahmedabad	—	41.7	29.7	Kurnool	13.4...	36.9...	23.8	
Aizawl	6	23.7	17.0	Lucknow	1...	35.3...	25.0	
Allahabad	—	40.5	28.6	Madurai	—	37.8...	26.2	
Bangalore	0.2	31.1	20.8	Mangaluru	—	35.0...	25.0	
Bhopal	—	41.5	29.0	Mumbai	—	35.7...	29.2	
Bhubaneswar	—	34.2	20.9	Mysuru	—	34.0...	21.2	
Chandigarh	20.2	32.8	24.4	New Delhi	3.5...	34.8...	22.2	
Chennai	—	38.7	29.6	Patna	—	36.4...	27.2	
Coimbatore	—	33.9	25.0	Pond Blair	—	22...	27.7...	25.2
Dehradoon	—	29.1	21.2	Puducherry	—	36.4...	29.2	
Gangtok	5.6	20.6	13.8	Pune	—	38.5...	25.0	
Goa	—	36.8	27.8	Raipur	2.4...	42.6...	23.5	
Guwahati	—	32.7	22.0	Ranchi	—	35.9...	23.0	
Hubballi	—	36.0	23.0	Shillong	0.3...	31.2...	25.5	
Hyderabad	—	39.7	29.2	Shimla	0.9...	21.3...	13.4	
Imphal	8.7	25.6	19.0	Srinagar	1...	22.2...	11.2	
Jaipur	11.4	35.2	21.6	Thiruvananthapuram	40.9...	32.7...	24.8	
Kochi	0.2	32.0	26.2	Tiruchi	—	39.3...	27.8	
Kohima	—	24.2	14.4	Vijayawada	—	39.3...	29.4	
Kolkata	—	36.4	27.9	Visakhapatnam	—	33.8...	26.4	

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO ₂	NO _x	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	—	.20	.17	...43	...71	■■■■■
Bangalore	7	.33	.31	—	...94	■■■■■
Chennai	3	.25	.94	...128	—	■■■■■
Delhi	2	35	104	73	...93	■■■■■
Hyderabad	14	.17	.12	...36	...74	■■■■■
Kolkata	.5	.8	.13	...24	...60	■■■■■
Lucknow	3	.29	.78	...157	—	■■■■■
Mumbai	.5	.9	.18	...19	...86	■■■■■
Pune	24	.8	.59	...30	...28	■■■■■
Visakhapatnam	—	.64	.32	—	—	■■■■■

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Nanded, Guj recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 221 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Shillong, Meghalaya recorded a healthy AQI score of 22

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.

NO_x: 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

Hold exams, but make sure students are safe: Thackeray

Have to think of using technology to overcome the crisis, CM tells vice-chancellors

ALOK DESHPANDE

MUMBAI

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Saturday directed the Higher and Technical Education Department to conduct final year examinations in Maharashtra while ensuring the safety of students.

Mr. Thackeray held a video-conference with vice-chancellors of all non-agricultural universities in the State to discuss the issue of pending final year examinations.

Technical and Higher Education Minister Uday Samant, Minister of State Prajakta Tanpure, chief secretary Ajoy Mehta and other senior officials also took part in the video conference.

"It is clear that the examination cannot be held in July. The situation in cities is changing with every passing day. We have to think about



New normal: The seating arrangements for students taking university exams will change drastically to ensure physical distancing and safety guidelines are followed. ■ FILE PHOTO

using technology to overcome the crisis. We will think of options. Examinations will be conducted ensuring the highest level of safety standards. In addition, options of giving average marks or grades or checking the legality of optional examination for those who want

to improve their grades can also be looked into," said Mr. Thackeray.

Mr. Samant had, in a recent letter to University Grant Commission (UGC), sought permission to cancel final year examinations in the State in the wake of novel coronavirus pandemic.

HC seeks report on procedures migrants need to follow to leave

Judges were hearing PIL on the plight of workers

SONAM SAIGAL

MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court has directed the Maharashtra government to file a report, by June 2, listing the entire procedure that a migrant worker is required to follow to be eligible to leave the State.

A Division Bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice K.K. Tated was hearing a bunch of public interest litigations (PIL) filed by Centre of Indian Trade Unions and others.

The PIL raises concerns about the migrant workers who have submitted applications to leave the State by Shramik Special trains and buses during the continuance of the lockdown.

It says they have been left in the dark on the status of their applications and that till such time they can board the trains/buses to leave for their native places, they have to live in cramped and unhygienic shelters, without being provided food and other essentials.

Additional Solicitor General Anil Singh, appearing for the Union of India, informed the court that the Supreme Court is seized of the issue of migrant workers and a detailed order was passed



Long wait, long journey: People from Mizoram waiting outside Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus in Mumbai on Saturday. They will be first taken to Pune and from there by special train to Silchar in Assam where they will board buses to their respective hometowns in Mizoram. ■ VIVEK BENDRE

on May 28 on their plight.

The Bench said, "At this stage, neither are we empowered nor do we wish to make any order contrary to the spirit of the order of the Supreme Court. However, having regard to the peculiar local conditions, we consider it fit and proper to call upon the State to file a report indicating therein how the plight of the migrant workers, who have been assembling at the railway stations/bus stands in Mumbai and places around it, are being addressed."

The court added that, "In fact, we have come across photographs in newspapers showing congregation of migrant workers not only on railway platforms but also on the streets adjoining the railway stations. Such congregation, if allowed, would run counter to the object, for which the lockdown has been imposed."

The Bench directed the State to file a report by June 2 indicating the whole procedure that a migrant worker is required to follow to be eligible to leave, the likely time within which he could board a train/bus, the nature of shelter he is provided with during the waiting period as well as provisions made for sustenance.

Labourers have returned to their home States just with their clothes. They may come back after some time. At present we have enough labour force to supply to our industries," he said, speaking to reporters.

"But if labourers from other States return, they will need to register their names here," said Mr. Desai, who is a senior Shiv Seva leader.

The Minister also visited a special hospital for COVID-19 patients being set up at Chikalthana and a testing laboratory at Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University here. "The laboratory will also study how front line warriors can be saved from getting infected while serving coronavirus patients," Mr. Desai said. He also ordered fever clinics be set up, an official said.

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FROM PAGE ONE

Restrictions eased; malls, religious places to open

In Phase III, dates of their opening would be decided based on the assessment of the situations. Shramik Special trains and a limited number of domestic flights and trains would continue to run.

"All activities that were prohibited earlier will be opened up in areas outside the containment zones in a phased manner with the stipulation of following Standard Operating Procedures to be prescribed by the Health Ministry," said the statement.

Religious places, hotels, restaurants and shopping malls would be permitted to open from June 8 and the Health Ministry would issue the SOPs.

The decision to reopen schools and educational institutes will be taken in the second phase in July. Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla wrote a letter to all the Chief Secretaries on Saturday asking them to send feedback on consultation held with parents and other stakeholders so that a "timely decision" can be taken for opening of educational institutions. He said the new guidelines have been issued after suggestions were received from the States following a videoconference with the Cabinet Secretary on May 28.

The State governments, based on assessments, may prohibit certain activities

outside the containment zones or impose restrictions as deemed necessary. Persons above 65 years of age, those with comorbidities, pregnant women, and children below the age of 10 have been advised to stay at home, except for meeting essential requirements and for health purposes, the MHA said.

The authorities have been advised to encourage the use of the Aarogya Setu app. Wearing of face masks and maintaining social distancing was compulsory at all public and workplaces.

The National Directives for COVID-19 management had been reiterated and work from home as far as possible was advised. It prescribed staggered work hours, frequent sanitisation and social distancing at workplaces. The number of people in marriage functions cannot exceed 50 and for funerals and last rites the number had been capped at 20. Spitting in public places would be a punishable offence. Any kind of violation of lockdown measures would be punishable under the DM Act, 2005.

The maximum containment zones are in 13 cities/regions - Mumbai, Chennai, Delhi / New Delhi, Ahmedabad, Thane, Pune, Hyderabad, Kolkata / Howrah, Indore, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Chengalpatu and Tiruvallur.

'Standoff will be resolved through diplomacy'

Except for a few statements from the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and one message from Army chief Gen. Manoj Naravane, the government had maintained silence on the ground situation.

The MEA had said that the issues would be resolved according to five agreements on border management signed by India and China between 1993 and 2013.

Mr. Singh did not respond to a direct question on whether Chinese troops crossed over into Indian territory. Instead he said there were differing perceptions on the alignment of the LAC due to which both sides patrolled across the LAC till their lines of perception.

The country "should be assured that we will not allow India's dignity to be hurt under any circumstances," he said.

The government has so far not said why the tense situation came about and why were the bilateral mechanisms activated other than the two acknowledged May 5 and 9 incidents which, the Army said, were locally resolved.

Movement of troops
However, sources said that beginning early May, Chinese troops moved inside Indian territory with vehicles and equipment at several points along the LAC, in-

cluding Pangong Tso, several points in Galwan Nallah area and Demchok in eastern Ladakh and Naku La in Sikkim, where PLA soldiers also blocked Indian patrols and pitched tents.

In response, India, too, moved troops forward and also redeployed additional troops to the Ladakh region.

Satellite images

Satellite images put out by Open Source Intelligence handles on Twitter show construction and build-up by Chinese troops at several points both inside Indian held territory and also on their side close to the LAC.

Images by open source intelligence expert Detresa, an analyst with Shadow-Break Intl, show Chinese units moving upwards from the base area at finger 4-5 of Pangong Tso.

India holds up to Finger 4 area of the 135-km-long Pangong Tso but claims up to Finger 8 while China claims up to Finger 2. Similarly, images show large-scale activity by Chinese troops at Gogra and Hot Springs sectors too.

Images dated May 22, put out by an analyst with the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, an independent think tank based in Canberra, show about 80 tents set up by Chinese soldiers along the Galwan river.

They also show vehicles and other structures.

Seven Air India staff among 58 cases in Kerala

Six die in Telangana, A.P. adds 131 cases, Karnataka tally goes up by 141

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The number of COVID-19 cases in Telangana stood at 2,499 as 74 more people tested positive for coronavirus on Saturday. Six more patients died taking the toll to 77. Of the 74 new cases, 60

COVID-19

were among people from the State, nine migrants and five deportees.

With six more persons dying in Chennai on Friday and Saturday, the total number of COVID-19-related deaths in Tamil Nadu has increased to 160.

Kerala reported 58 more COVID-19 positive cases on Saturday, taking the State's total case load to 1,208 cases.

These include seven cases reported among employees of Air India.

Of the 58 new cases, while

17 are people who had come from abroad, 31 cases were found in people who had returned from other States. A healthcare worker was found COVID-19 positive in Palakkad district while two other persons were found to have contracted the infection from a known source of infection.

The total number of active COVID-19 cases in the State was 624, all of whom were undergoing treatment. Till date, 575 had recovered from the disease.

Andhra Pradesh reported 131 fresh cases in 24 hours until Saturday. Of the total, 70 were locals and 61 were migrant returnees, a Health Department bulletin said on Saturday. No deaths were reported.

The overall tally was 3,461 and excluding cases pertaining to migrant returnees and foreign returnees the local cases were 2,944. The tally of

Back to business

Shopping malls will be allowed to open from June 8 as per Centre's new guidelines



All set: A worker cleaning the escalator at a mall in Bengaluru's Rajajinagar on Saturday. ■ K. MURALI KUMAR

foreign returnees remained 111 and all the patients were under treatment while cases of migrant returnees increased to 406. Again, 189 of them have recovered. Meanwhile, 55 persons recovered during the past day and the total recoveries rose to 2,281.

There were 1,120 active cases and among local cases, 792 were active cases and 2,092 were discharged, putting the recovery rate at 71%.

In Karnataka, after a relatively low number of COVID-19 cases reported over the past few days, 33 new cases were

primary contacts of patients.

Of the 141 new cases reported on Saturday, 90 were inter-state passengers. Meanwhile, 103 patients were discharged across the State. With this, the total number of discharges stand at 997.

The total number of COVID-19-related deaths across Tamil Nadu increased to 160, with six more persons dying in Chennai on Friday and Saturday.

The total number of positive cases in the city stood at 13,980. The case count steadily increased in Chengalpatu district, with 94 more cases being reported.

The recovery rate was around 56%. As on date, a total of 12,000 people had been discharged from hospital after treatment, while active cases stood at 9,021.

Of the 938 fresh cases, 856 were in 26 districts, while the remaining 82 were persons who had returned from other States and countries.

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

Border vigil



Restricted entry: Police personnel standing guard at the Walayar checkpoint in Kerala's Palakkad district bordering Tamil Nadu on Saturday. The district has seen a sudden spurt in COVID-19 cases. ■ K. K. MUSTAFAH

Kerala issues data security guidelines

High Court observation prompts move

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

the pandemic would behave in the State.

However, the Opposition had dragged the government to the High Court, accusing it of having used the outbreak as a cover to allow the U.S.-based firm to "harvest and monetise" the medical information of the State's population.

The government order seemed to address some of the points raised by the High Court when it considered the Opposition's plea.

It insisted that agencies and departments should collect sensitive personal data of citizens only with their legally recorded informed consent.

HC questions SEC's appointment

Selection of V. Kanagaraj is objectionable, says court

V. RAGHAVENDRA
VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh High Court has termed the appointment of Justice (retired) V. Kanagaraj as State Election Commissioner (SEC) "objectionable".

The appointment was made in accordance with Section 200 of the Andhra Pradesh Panchayat Raj Act, 1994, instead of Article 243K (I) of the Constitution, the court said.

The government order seemed to address some of the points raised by the High Court when it considered the Opposition's plea.

It insisted that agencies and departments should collect sensitive personal data of citizens only with their legally recorded informed consent.

The court said the State should revisit the definitions of Section 2(39) and 2(40) and the provisions of Section 200 of the Panchayat Raj Act and take a decision in accordance with the spirit of the Constitution as expeditiously as possible.

The ordinance could not

move by the State against the High Court order on the A.P. Panchayat Raj (Second Amendment) Ordinance (No.5 of 2020). The petitioner's advocate, N. Srinivasa Rao, has appealed to the court not to pass any order without giving notice.

The court said the State should revisit the definitions of Section 2(39) and 2(40) and the provisions of Section 200 of the Panchayat Raj Act and take a decision in accordance with the spirit of the Constitution as expeditiously as possible.

The ordinance could not

take away the vested right of Nimmagadda Ramesh Kumar without the completion of the tenure (five years) for which he was appointed.

It was actuated by fraud

on the power of the Constitution and did not pass the test of rationality under Article 14, the judges said.

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A year of bold decisions, says Nadda

Modi government has introduced a culture of change in governance, says BJP president

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI
BJP president J.P. Nadda on Saturday acknowledged that India faced the twin challenges of combating COVID-19 and the economic pain engendered by the long lockdown, and noted that the Union government's prescription of self-reliance however, was not a return to the licence quota raj.

Addressing a press conference on the first anniversary of the second successive term of the BJP-led government, he said, "The concept of *aatmanirbharta* or self-reliance expounded by Modi [Prime Minister Narendra Modi] is not about going back in time to the license quota raj or anything nega-


The concept of *aatmanirbharta* or self-reliance expounded by Modi, is not about going back in time to the license quota raj ... It is about encouraging our industry and is a progressive policy

J.P. NADDA, BJP

tive. It is about encouraging our industry and is a progressive policy."

The last one year "will be known for many bold decisions", and the government's timely actions to deal with coronavirus had ensured that the situation remained in control when many big and powerful countries found themselves "helpless", he said.

The Modi government had introduced a culture of change in governance, of "doing the right thing because it is right," and not procrastinate due to political expediency, he said.

Mr. Nadda lambasted Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for his criticism of the government's handling of the COVID-19 situation. He said Mr. Gandhi's understanding of these issues was limited and that his

statements were not aimed at addressing the crisis but were about politics. "Rahul Gandhi doesn't understand these issues deeply. His understanding and study of issues is limited. That is why he makes confusing remarks by sometimes questioning the lockdown and sometimes demanding why it was not being extended. His statements were for political ends and all about politics, and they have got nothing to do with addressing coronavirus issues."

Mr. Nadda recounted that BJP workers had been on the ground doing relief work during the entire lockdown.

He noted that the COVID-19 testing in India had reached 1.6 lakh a day from

10,000 earlier, and the country was manufacturing over 4.5 lakh personal protective equipment (PPE) kits.

Key decisions

Mr. Nadda cited the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, annulment of Article 370, strengthening of laws against terror laws and those against crimes against children and bank mergers among the government's key decisions. He said the COVID-19 situation would have an impact on elections campaigns. The BJP had been using technological tools to organise its activities.

The Bihar Assembly election in October-November is the first major one to be held soon.

Disappointment and diabolical pain: Cong.

Party releases pamphlet highlighting 'six myths' about promises made by the BJP government

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI
Describing the second term of the Modi government as 0.2 for its reported "failures", the Congress on Friday said its first anniversary was marked by "disappointment, disastrous management and diabolical pain".

The party also released a digital pamphlet, *Helpless People, Heartless Government* to highlight the government's "policy failures". In the presentation, the party came up with a set of "six myths" about what the government had promised and what it delivered.

The party demanded that a virtual session of Parliament be convened immediately to discuss the press-


When Pradhan Sewak becomes an autocratic emperor, the first casualty is democracy. As we pointed out, democracy is under attack by the Modi government...

RANDEEP SURJEWALA, Congress

ing issues and the due process be set in motion to convene meetings of parliamentary committees. Be it demonetisation, GST or COVID lockdown, the Congress alleged that all decisions were "Modi-made disasters that results in human tragedy".

At an online press conference, Congress general secretary K.C. Venugopal and chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala alleged that the

government had been at war with its own people.

Referring to reports on 80 migrant workers losing their lives while travelling on Shramik Special trains, Mr. Surjewala demanded the resignation of Railway Minister Piyush Goyal.

"It is inflicting wounds on Mother India ... This government is trying to fill the coffers of the select rich and is exploiting the poor and inflicting pain on them." The

two leaders said that while the people were feeling helpless, the government had turned out to be heartless.

Responding to BJP president J.P. Nadda's accusation that the Congress was indulging in politics, Mr. Venugopal said that far from indulging in politics, party leaders such as Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi were giving regular suggestions. "Being a responsible Opposition [party], it is our duty to raise the problems faced by the common people..." he said.

"When Pradhan Sewak becomes an autocratic emperor, the first casualty is democracy. As we pointed out, democracy is under attack by the Modi government which got elected through

the democratic process. Subjugation of Parliament has become the norm. Sadly and tragically, the Indian Parliament has been sidestepped in the garb or guise of coronavirus or COVID-19 pandemic," Mr. Surjewala said.

He alleged that grassroots institutions such as panchayats, zilla parishads, municipal councils and corporations had virtually been non-functional and the subordinate judiciary had been non-functional for almost 60 days now.

"While the country has got poorer, the BJP has seen a dramatic rise in its fortunes. The BJP's income increased from ₹970 crore in 2014-2015 to ₹2,410 crore in 2019-2020," the party noted.

PM CARES not within the ambit of RTI Act: PMO

Fund is not public authority, says reply

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ

NEW DELHI
The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) has refused to disclose details on the creation and operation of the PM CARES Fund, telling an RTI applicant that the fund is "not a public authority" within the ambit of the RTI Act, 2005.

The Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations (PM CARES) Fund accepts donations and provides relief during the COVID-19 pandemic, and other similar emergencies.

Another RTI request on the issue, filed by activist Vikrant Togad, had also been refused in April citing a Supreme Court (SC) observation that "indiscriminate and impractical demands under RTI Act for disclosure of all and sundry information would be counterproductive".


The fund was set up to accept donations for relief measures during the pandemic.

RTI Act, 2005. However, relevant information in respect of PM CARES Fund may be seen on the Website pmcaresfund.gov.in, the reply said.

The meeting, scheduled for June 3, is slated to discuss the "situation arising out of the lockdown due to the COVID-19 outbreak and its handling by the Ministry".

Mr. Sharma told *The Hindu*, "It is most unfortunate. If the Prime Minister of India can have summits with leaders of other countries, with Chief Ministers via videoconference, if the Rajasthan As-

RS says 'no' to joining virtual meeting of House panel

'It is most unfortunate,' says panel chairman Anand Sharma

SOBHANA K. NAIR

NEW DELHI
The Rajya Sabha Secretariat has denied permission for members of the Standing Committee on Home Affairs to join a meeting of the panel through videoconference.

The same was conveyed to committee chairperson and Congress leader Anand Sharma by the office of House Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu.

The meeting, scheduled for June 3, is slated to discuss the "situation arising out of the lockdown due to the COVID-19 outbreak and its handling by the Ministry".

Mr. Sharma told *The Hindu*, "It is most unfortunate. If the Prime Minister of India can have summits with leaders of other countries, with Chief Ministers via videoconference, if the Rajasthan As-

sembly could have a virtual session, then why not allow the Indian Parliamentarians to use it? After all we are supposed to be an IT [information Technology] super power."

DMK MP and former IT Minister Dayanidhi Maran, a member of the panel, has written a letter to Mr. Sharma expressing concern over members being asked to travel to Delhi to attend the meeting.

"If I travel to Delhi, not only would I be exposing myself to the COVID-19 virus, but I would also be forced to enter into quarantine or isolation for a 14-day period on return to Chennai as per the current SOP, which would affect my parliamentary duties in my constituency," he wrote.

A call will be taken on Monday, after speaking to all the members, whether to hold a meeting as scheduled or not, Mr. Sharma said.

Sources said both Houses were exploring the possibility of using videoconference. The rules dictated that parliamentary committee meetings were confidential.

The reason videoconference meetings were not being allowed was because it violated the principle of confidentiality, as there was no guarantee of a member sitting alone at such events, the sources said.

Eight States, UTs yet to lift foodgrains

Centre asks for list of beneficiaries by July 15

SOBHANA K. NAIR

NEW DELHI
Eight States have so far not lifted any foodgrains allocated by the Centre under the Atma Nirbhar Bharat package, which aims to ensure free supply of foodgrains to all migrants who are not covered under the Food Security Act for the next two months.

As part of the scheme, which targets around 8 crore migrant workers who do not have ration cards, the beneficiaries are supposed to get free supply of 5 kg of either rice or wheat and 1 kg of chana or pulses.

Till Thursday, out of the 8 lakh metric tonne (LMT) allocated under the scheme only 2.06 LMT had been lifted by the State governments, as per the statistics available with the Ministry of Food and Public Distribution. Eight States and Union Territories have so far not lifted any foodgrains under the scheme: Delhi, Chandigarh, Assam, Madhya Pra-

desh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and West Bengal.

Another six States – Tamil Nadu, Haryana, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Uttarakhand and Arunachal Pradesh – have picked up less than 40% of the foodgrains.

The Centre has laid the onus of identification of the migrant workers and deciding the mechanism for allocating the foodgrains on the States. Speaking to reporters over a videoconference on Friday, Food Minister Ram Vilas Paswan said, "We are not raising any ifs and buts, it is up to the States to come up with a policy and distribute the grains. By July 15, they should submit a list of beneficiaries whom these grains have been distributed to".

Separately, Delhi and West Bengal were yet to lift the foodgrains allocated for the month of May under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGAY). Mr. Paswan said,

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IMPORTANT DATES

Starting Date of Online Application

Closing Date of Online Application

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14th March 2020

30th June 2020

Two COVID-19 cases in CPWD office

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI
Two officials of the Central

(CPWD) headquarters at Nirman Bhawan tested positive for COVID-19. While a member of the clerical staff of the

Additional Director General (ADG) tested positive on May 22, a PS of the ADG (HR) tested positive on Friday.

CSIR - NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF OCEANOGRAPHY
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विज्ञापन संख्या: REC-1/2020 / Advertisement No: REC-1/2020

राष्ट्रीय सुमुद्र विज्ञान संस्थान को निम्नलिखित तकनीकी पदों के लिए युवा एवं ऊर्जावान कार्यक्रमों की आवश्यकता है।

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वेतन-मान: सातवें

Six dead in Assam floods

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

A person drowned in the Kamrup area of Nagaon district of central Assam, taking the flood-related death toll in the State to six in less than a week even as more than 4,000 people went back home from relief camps on Saturday.

Officials of the Assam State Disaster Management Authority said the floodwaters had been receding since May 28 with the number of affected districts down from 11 to six.

The number of affected people also came down from 3.81 lakh to 3.72 lakh in a span of 24 hours with Goalpara in western Assam continuing to be the worst hit. Some 1.59 lakh people remained displaced in the district, followed by 1.07 lakh in Nagaon district and 94,445 in Hojai. "One person drowned in the Kamrup area of Nagaon," an ASDMA spokesperson said.

Mrutunjay Mohapatra, Director-General, IMD, said conditions were still not right for the onset.

Skymet had forecast that the monsoon would reach Kerala on May 28 with an error margin of two days. The IMD had announced June 5 as the onset date, though

Skymet says monsoon is in; IMD waits

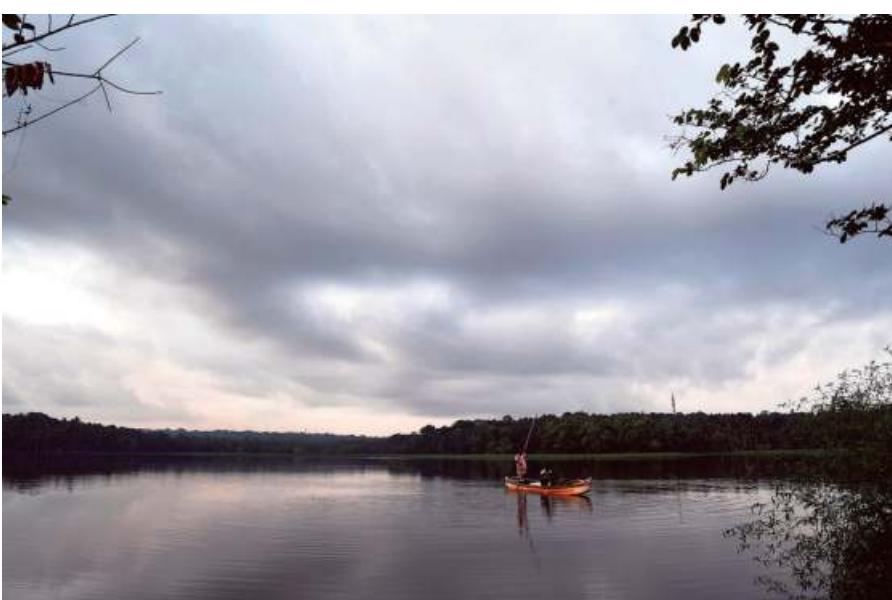
Private weather agency says all stipulations met; official forecaster says conditions are not yet ripe

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The southwest monsoon has arrived in Kerala ahead of its normal onset date of June 1, private agency Skymet Weather announced on Saturday, but the India Meteorological Department said conditions were not yet ripe for the start of the season on mainland India.

Jatin Singh, chief executive officer, Skymet Weather, said all conditions such as rainfall, outwave longwave radiation (OLR) value and wind speed had been met to declare the onset over Kerala.

Mrutunjay Mohapatra, Director-General, IMD, said conditions were still not right for the onset.



On the threshold: Leaden skies over the Vellayani Lake in Thiruvananthapuram on Saturday. The IMD has said that the southwest monsoon is likely to set in over Kerala soon. ■ S. GOPAKUMAR

earlier this week, it said a cyclonic circulation in the Bay of Bengal would help advance the date and the rains could reach Kerala on June 1.

"#JUSTIN Southwest #Monsoon2020 finally arrived on the mainland of India, #Monsoon arrived on Kerala before the actual onset date. All the onset conditions including rainfall, OLR

value, wind speed, are met. Finally, the 4-month long festival begins for Indian. #HappyMonsoon (sic)," the private forecaster tweeted.

Three parameters

The IMD says there are three major conditions to declare the onset.

The first is if after May 10, 60% of the 14 weather stations – Minicoy, Amini, Thiruvananthapuram, Punalur, Kollam, Alappuzha, Kottayam, Kochi, Thrissur, Kozhikode, Thalassery, Kannur, Kudlu and Mangalore – report rainfall of 2.5 mm or more for two consecutive days, the onset over Kerala will be declared on the second day.

The second is the depth of the westerlies should be maintained up to 600 hectopascals (hPa) and the third is the OLR should be below 200 watt per square metre (wm⁻²).

Delhi HC raps Telegram on Jagran e-paper row

'Reveal users sharing content illegally'

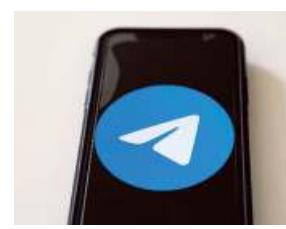
STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Saturday directed the messaging app Telegram to disclose the identity of users who are running channels on its platform to illegally share the e-paper version of the *Dainik Jagran* newspaper on a daily basis.

The High Court also directed Telegram to take down the channels which were indulging in copyright infringement activities against Jagran Prakashan Ltd., the publishers of *Dainik Jagran*, within 48 hours.

Jagran Prakashan had moved the High Court complaining that Telegram, a Dubai-based company, has allowed its users to create various channels without disclosing their identity.

Some of the users, Jagran Prakashan said, have created channels on which e-papers



The app has been told to take down channels that violate copyright.

of the *Dainik Jagran* are being uploaded in PDF format on a daily basis. It said Telegram with the help of these channels is not only permitting availability of current editions of the e-paper but also previous editions.

Jagran Prakashan said this feature is available only to subscribers. It contended that Telegram through the channels was not only causing "serious financial loss" but also violating its trademark rights as well as copyright in the e-newspaper.

Bar Council slams former judge Lokur

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Bar Council of India (BCI) on Saturday said some former judges and senior advocates are in a conspiracy to weaken and browbeat the Supreme Court through a "sustained and synchronised attack" on the institution.

The BCI, in a statement signed by its chairman Manan Kumar Mishra, names former Supreme Court judge, Justice Madan B. Lokur. "It is painful to see that only a few days after two advocates made unfair and unhealthy remarks against our apex court, Mr. Justice Madan Lokur also joined this bandwagon fully knowing that such idle talk lead to undermining the authority of judiciary as a whole," the BCI said.

Justice Lokur has been vocal about the court's intervention in the migrant workers' crisis.

Nepali Congress backs Oli govt. in vote on new map

NC support crucial to ensure passage in Parliament

KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE
NEW DELHI

The government of Nepal on Saturday secured crucial support of the main opposition party, the Nepali Congress (NC) to grant constitutional status to the updated map of the country that claims the disputed territory of Kalapani. A leading figure of the NC confirmed that the party has decided to back the move of Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli and help in passing the amendment next week.

"Nepali Congress party today has decided to vote for constitution amendment regarding the new map," said Dr. Minendra Rijal, a member of parliament, speaking to *The Hindu* on the phone from Kathmandu.

Earlier reports had suggested that NC would support the government while



K.P. Sharma Oli
urging it to resolve differences with India through diplomatic means.

Several groups from among the Madhesi community of the Terai region, however, maintained that they were unlikely to support the amendment as it includes only the agenda of the revised map and does not address the issues relevant to people living in the plains of Nepal bordering Indian States of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

However, Madhesi opposition is unlikely to significantly alter the outcome as the Nepal Communist Party of Prime Minister Oli can get the amendment passed easily with the support of the NC, led by former Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba.

The map once constitutionally guaranteed will also figure in text books and other state symbols and official documents, currency notes. Experts said parliament's stamp for the new map will alter the status quo from the Nepalese side and make a future solution difficult.

Nepal has accused India of unilateral actions like building roads in the disputed Kalapani territory. Foreign Minister Pradeep Kumar Gyawali has urged India to withdraw troops from Kalapani-Lipulekh region and restore status quo.

Ministry highlights 'Vande Bharat'

It lists India's response to COVID-19 crisis among the achievements in one year

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

Highlighting India's response to the coronavirus pandemic worldwide at the top of its list of "achievements" in the first year of the NDA government's second term, the External Affairs Ministry on Saturday said India had played a "leading" role globally. A document released on Saturday comes a few weeks ahead of India's election to the non-permanent seat at the UN Security Council for 2021-22.

Equipment exports
According to the list released by the Ministry, India supplied COVID-19 related medical supplies to 154 countries, deployed "rapid response teams" (RRTs) in different countries, and held more than 100 "virtual diplomatic meetings".

The achievements listed the government's "Vande Bharat mission" for its



Evacuation mission: Indians being brought back on naval ships from the Maldives earlier in May. ■ PTI

"mammoth coordinating efforts" to bring home more than 40,000 Indians on 230 commercial flights and naval ships.

More than 3,00,000 Indians, who have been stranded in various parts of the world because of the travel restrictions imposed by the government as part of its lockdown, have registered with the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), where a special COVID-19 Emergency fund was created. India had contributed \$10 million to the fund.

home, at their own cost, on special flights in the next few months.

"Corona-era Diplomacy was activated", the MEA's list said, referring to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's video conference with leaders of the SAARC, where a special COVID-19 Emergency fund was created. India had contributed \$10 million to the fund.

In June, the UN General Assembly will hold elections for the five non-permanent member seats in the Security Council for 2021-2022, where India is assured a place as the sole contender for the Asia-Pacific seat.

BJP to offer homeopathic drug to Howrah residents

BISHWANATH GHOSH
KOLKATA

In West Bengal, where homeopathy enjoys a respectable status and where Assembly elections are due next year, the BJP in Howrah will distribute free of cost a homeopathic drug to boost immunity in the fight against COVID-19.

On Saturday, a party worker went around the streets of Howrah in a battery-run rickshaw, announcing the free distribution of Arsenicum album 30 – the

homeopathic drug – at the local party office on Sunday.

The man could be heard announcing repeatedly in Bengali: "The drug is being sold in the market for ₹100, ₹150, ₹200. In fact, now it is not even available in stores.

But we BJP workers, who have been trying hard to fight the pandemic, are going to give it you for free so that people in the neighbourhood stay fit and healthy." He cautioned that the drug was not meant to treat COVID-19.

India's recovery rate improves to 47%

City and regional clusters formed in a hub-and-spoke model to ramp up testing

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

India's COVID-19 recovery rate improved to 47.4% on Saturday from 38.29% on May 18.

The Union Health Ministry stated that to scale up testing and enhance reach across the country, city/regional clusters have been established in a hub-and-spoke model.

"Institutes and labs which have the capacity and expertise for both sample collection, handling/processing (BSL-2 facility) and testing (RT-PCR) serve as the hubs and they [will] involve a number of laboratories which have RT-PCR machines and the requisite manpower as their extended testing facilities," a senior health official said.

The Ministry added that the hubs are the government labs approved by the Ministries and so far 19 city/regional clusters had been established.



Safety first: Workers in PPE preparing to cremate a patient who died of COVID-19 in Karad on Saturday. ■ PTI

These are in Delhi/NCR, Ahmedabad, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Banaras, Palampur among other areas.

"Clusters on the other hand will now be scaled up in next four weeks to reach remote corners of the country," the Ministry said.

Meanwhile during the past 24 hours, a total of 11,264 COVID-19 patients have recovered, according to the Ministry.

"This is the highest num-

ber of recovered patients recorded in a day. Thus, so far, a total of 82,369 patients have been cured of COVID-19. This has resulted in a recovery rate of 47.40% among COVID-19 patients, an increase of 4.51% in the recovery rate from the previous day's recovery rate of 42.89%," it said.

India recorded 7,964 new COVID-19 cases – the highest so far – and 265 deaths in the last 24 hours. Total number of cases in the country now

stands at 1,73,763 and 4,971 deaths.

Data from State health departments put the total number of cases in the country at 1,76,840 with 87,362 active cases. The nationwide toll was 5,028.

The country has seen a steady rise in the average number of cases per day over the last month.

The average number of new cases per day for the six-day period of May 8-14 was 3,675. This figure stands at 6,738 for the period May 22-28. The average number of deaths per day for the two periods is 116 and 164 respectively.

Doubling time which in the past 14 days was 13.3, has improved to 15.4 in the last three days. The fatality rate is 2.86%, added the Ministry.

The Ministry added that cumulatively 36,12,242 tests have been done so far for COVID-19, whereas, 1,26,842 samples were tested on Friday.

CSIR chief flays HCQ trial suspension

He also condemns study in *Lancet*

JACOB KOSHY
NEW DELHI

The head of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) – India's largest chain of industrial laboratories – and two other scientists have castigated an influential study published in the *Lancet*, which purported to show hydroxychloroquine (HCQ), a prominent antimalarial, as being unhelpful and harmful to COVID-19 patients.

The letter signed by Shekhar Mande, Director-General, CSIR; Anurag Agrawal, physician and Director, Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology – a CSIR institute – as well as Rajeeva Karandikar, Director, Chennai Mathematical Institute, says the World Health Organization's decision to suspend trials of the drug was a "knee-jerk" reaction.

"The observational data is sloppy, and the statistics underlying them is faulty. There is no doubt that it will not stand the test of time. You can't compare apples with oranges," Mr. Mande told *The Hindu*.

The study, "Hydroxychloroquine or chloroquine with or without a macrolide for treatment of COVID-19: a multinational registry analysis", was published online on May 22. It studied records from 96,032 patients hospitalised between December 20, 2019, and April 14, 2020, and sought to investigate whether COVID-19 positive patients on HCQ combined with an antibiotic, choloroquine (CQ, an older version of HCQ), and CQ with an anti-



The study concluded that the drug regimens increased in-hospital death and frequency of arrhythmias.

biotic, benefited over those who were on other treatments. 'Benefit' here was defined as either having improved in-hospital survival or less likely to suffer from irregular heartbeat, a side effect associated with HCQ.

The study concluded that the drug regimens increased in-hospital death by 33-45% and increased frequency of ventricular arrhythmias by several degrees. On May 25, the WHO cited this study and said it had "temporarily suspended" clinical trials of hydroxychloroquine as a potential treatment for COVID-19. This trial was part of a so-called solidarity trial being overseen by the WHO where four drug combinations – all of them developed for other diseases but showing promise for COVID-19 treatment – were being tested at four hundred hospitals in 35 countries. France, Italy and Belgium have also halted HCQ trials.

A WHO pause doesn't stop a country – even India – from conducting any form of trial, Mr. Mande said.

SUDOKU

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George Floyd protests flare in U.S. cities

Arrest of ex-police officer fails to allay public anger; a 19-year-old protester shot dead in Detroit

REUTERS
MINNEAPOLIS

The white former Minneapolis police officer shown in video footage using his knee to pin an unarmed black man's neck to the street was charged with murder on Friday in the man's death, an incident that has unleashed four nights of violent protests.

Derek Chauvin, who was dismissed from the police department with three fellow officers the day after the fatal encounter, was arrested on third-degree murder and manslaughter charges for his role in Monday's death of 46-year-old George Floyd.

Graphic video footage taken by an onlooker's cell phone and widely circulated on the Internet shows Floyd – with Chauvin's knee pressed into his neck – gasping for air and repeatedly groaning, "Please, I can't breathe," while a crowd of bystanders shouted at police to let him up.

After several minutes, Floyd gradually grows unresponsive and ceases to move. He was pronounced dead at a local hospital a short time later. The video reignited an outpouring of rage that civil rights activists said has long simmered in Minneapolis and cities across the country over persistent racial bias in the criminal justice system.

Public anger

The charges brought by Hennepin County prosecutors came after a third night of arson, looting and vandalism in which protesters set fire to a police station, and the National Guard was deployed to help restore order in Minnesota's largest city.

Authorities had hoped Chauvin's arrest would allay public anger and avert continued unrest. But defying an



Anger on the streets: Flowers, signs and balloons are left on Friday near a makeshift memorial to George Floyd near the spot where he died while in custody of police in Minneapolis, Minnesota. • AFP

8 p.m. curfew imposed by Mayor Jacob Frey, about 500 demonstrators clashed anew on Friday evening with riot police outside the battered Third Precinct building. Another group of protesters later converged near the city's Fifth Precinct station until police arrived and fired tear gas and plastic bullets to break up that gathering. A nearby bank and post office were set on fire.

Still, Friday night's crowds were far smaller and more widely dispersed than the night before. Law enforcement kept a mostly low profile, a strategy seemingly calculated to reduce the risk of violent confrontations. Among the larger cities with protests on Friday were Los Angeles, Denver, Houston, Atlanta and Louisville.

A 19-year-old man protest-

ing in Detroit was shot dead on Friday night by a suspect who pulled up to demonstrators in a sport utility vehicle and fired gunshots into the crowd, then fled, local media reported.

Few if any other serious injuries or deaths have been reported in connection with the protests. In Washington, police and Secret Service agents were out in force around the White House before dozens of demonstrators gathered across the street in Lafayette Square chanting, "I can't breathe."

Thousands of protesters filled the streets of New York City's Brooklyn borough near the Barclays Center indoor arena. Police armed with batons and pepper spray made scores of arrests in sometimes violent clashes.

Biden calls for rooting out 'systemic racism'

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON

Joe Biden lamented the "open wound" of the nation's systemic racism on Friday as he responded to the police killing of a black man in Minnesota.

"The original sin of this country still stains our nation today," Mr. Biden, the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee, said in remarks broadcast from his home in Wilmington, Delaware. "It's time for us to take a hard look at uncomfortable truths."

As the country endures another spasm of racial unrest, the central premise of Mr. Biden's campaign is being tested. Mr. Biden is responding by positioning himself as an empathetic counter to Mr. Trump. Mr. Biden said he spoke with Floyd's family and demanded justice for his death while calling for "real police reform".

"This is no time for incendiary tweets. This is no time to encourage violence," Mr. Biden said. "[We need] leadership that will bring everyone to the table so we can take measures to root out systemic racism." Later appearing on PBS, he said, "I think this President has stoked racism."

Trump cuts ties with WHO as COVID-19 grips Latin America

The U.S. is by far the health agency's biggest contributor

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump said he is severing ties with the World Health Organization (WHO) over its handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, as the death toll from the disease spiked again in the U.S. and Brazil.

The virus, which has killed more than 3,64,000 people and devastated the global economy, is progressing at different speeds across the globe, with Europe continuing to open up from lockdown on Saturday after seeing its number of infections steadily fall.



lion last year. The President told reporters the U.S. would be redirecting WHO funds "to other worldwide and deserving urgent global public health needs".

COVID-19

Italy's iconic Leaning Tower of Pisa reopened, while Parisians flocked to parks open for the first time in months. But countries in Latin America are bracing for difficult weeks ahead, especially Brazil, where the death toll shot up by 1,124 on Friday and there was a record number of new infections.

The unprecedented challenge of the pandemic has put pressure on the WHO, and Mr. Trump's decision to end hundreds of millions of dollars in funding comes when the UN agency needs it most.

Mr. Trump initially suspended funding to the WHO last month, accusing it of not doing enough to curb the early spread of the virus and being too lenient with China, where the virus emerged late last year. On Friday, he made that decision permanent in a major blow for the agency's finances, as the U.S. is by far its biggest contributor, pumping in \$400 million.

The move sparked a fierce backlash on Saturday, with German Health Minister Jens Spahn saying the "disappointing" decision was a setback for global health.

Richard Horton, editor of *The Lancet* medical journal, said it was "madness and terrifying both at the same time". "The U.S. government has gone rogue at a time of humanitarian emergency," he tweeted.

Nearly six million people have been confirmed to have contracted COVID-19 across the world, and a vaccine remains elusive.

As the disease spreads across South America, the poor have been hit hard in countries like Brazil, which now has the second highest number of cases in the world after the U.S.

"In 26 years, I've never seen so many people living in fear, so many people going hungry," said Alcione Albaranesi, founder of charity

Amigos do Bem, which distributes supplies to communities in the impoverished Sertao region of Brazil's northeast.

"Everything has ground to a stop. But hunger doesn't stop." Chile also logged another record number of deaths on Friday, pushing its total to almost 1,000.

Positive signs

In European countries that seem on the other side of their outbreak peak, there has been pressure to lift crippling lockdowns despite experts warning of a possible second wave of infections. Tourism-dependent Greece said it will restart its two main airports for arrivals from 29 countries from June 15. But some European nations hard hit by the virus are not on the list, including France, Spain, Britain and Italy.

In Austria, hotels and cinemas were allowed to take in customers again on Friday under special guidelines, provided masks are worn. "It is very important that things return to normal, because I am a person who lives alone and is very interested in culture," film buff Rotraud Turanitz said at Vienna's Admiral Kino cinema.

Hotels and shopping centres in Ukraine's capital Kiev also reopened on Saturday. Turkey too has moved ahead with easing its restrictions as mosques opened for the first time in months.

And Denmark said it would reopen its border to visitors from Germany, Norway and Iceland from June 15, although Britain and the rest of the EU will have to wait a few more months.

Abdullah ready for dialogue with Taliban

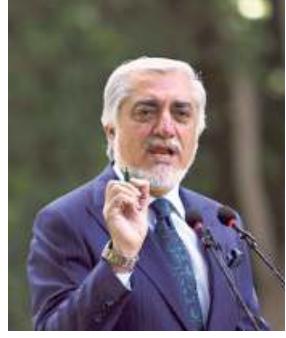
He heads the council for peace talks

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
KABUL

A top Afghan official appointed to lead the much-awaited peace talks with the Taliban said Saturday his team was ready to start dialogue with the insurgents "at any moment".

Abdullah Abdullah, who heads a council to represent the government in negotiations, said an ongoing lull in violence triggered by a surprise ceasefire offered by the insurgents had set the tone for launching discussions.

"The announcement of the ceasefire, a reduction in violence and the exchange of prisoners have paved the way for a good beginning," Mr. Abdullah said at



Abdullah Abdullah,
chairman of Afghanistan's
council for peace talks. • AP

ELSEWHERE



Too early to open up,
advisers warn U.K. govt.

LONDON
Two scientific advisers to the British government, Jeremy Farrar and John Edmunds, have warned that COVID-19 is still spreading too fast in the country to lift the lockdown, with one describing it as a political decision. England's lockdown will ease slightly on Monday. • AFP

U.S. move on Iran sanctions condemned

LONDON
Britain, France and Germany on Saturday strongly condemned a U.S. decision to end sanctions waivers for companies from nations that remain in a nuclear accord with Iran. They allowed European, Chinese and Russian companies to work on the conversion of a heavy water reactor in Arak, in western Iran. • AFP

CM YK

FB stays neutral even as Twitter confronts U.S. President

The two companies have diverged over the past year on issues linked to political discussion and advertising

MIKE ISAAC
CECILIA KANG
SAN FRANCISCO

Earlier this week, as Twitter executives waded into a confrontation with President Donald Trump, Mark Zuckerberg, chief executive of Facebook, took a very different tack: he kept his head down. On Tuesday, Twitter added a fact-check link to one of Mr. Trump's tweets criticising mail-in voting. The company said the President violated rules regarding voter suppression. Mr. Trump posted the same words on Facebook, which has similar rules around voter suppression. But Facebook didn't do anything when the same post was added to its service.

Jack Dorsey, chief executive of Twitter, took to his site not long after to say Twitter would not back down, presenting a stark contrast to Mr. Zuckerberg, who, in an interview a day earlier, said Facebook wasn't going to judge Mr. Trump's posts. "We've been pretty clear on our policy that we think that it wouldn't be right for us to do fact checks for politicians," Mr. Zuckerberg said. "I think in general, private companies probably shouldn't be – or especially these platform companies – shouldn't be in the position of doing that."

No interference

Mr. Zuckerberg's reminder that Facebook would not interfere with posts from Mr. Trump – even if they violate rules that would apply to other people – was in part the product of his longtime belief that his company should avoid getting into the political fray and let its three billion users have their say.

His assurance that his company would not be an "arbiter of truth" in political discussion was also indicative of an aggressive effort over the last year or so to court Republicans in Washington and conservative voices in the media. The goal: to keep regulators off his giant Internet company's back. By staying on the sidelines as Twitter does battle with Mr. Trump and his allies, Mr. Zuckerberg could gain unlikely Republican friends to stave off regulatory intervention into his business, which lawmakers around the world have threatened for more than a year. Many people in the tech industry believe regulators are the one existential risk to Mr. Zuckerberg's business. But Mr. Zuckerberg's hands-off approach to Mr. Trump's increasingly incendiary behaviour on social media runs the risk of alienating some users who think the rules about what can be posted to Facebook should be applied equally to everyone, including world leaders.

In truth, Facebook's and Twitter's rules are not that different. Both companies have said they would take down posts, even from a President, if they contained threats and incitement to violence or attempts to suppress voter turnout or



Contrasting takes: Twitter chief Jack Dorsey and, right, Facebook head Mark Zuckerberg. • AP

that the territory no longer warranted U.S. economic privileges. "We will take action to revoke Hong Kong's preferential treatment as a separate customs and travel territory from the rest of China," Mr. Trump said, adding that Washington would also impose sanctions on individuals seen as responsible for "smothering – absolutely smothering – Hong Kong's freedom". Mr. Trump said that China's move was a tragedy for the world, but he gave no timetable.

China's Parliament earlier this month approved a decision to create laws for Hong Kong to curb sedition, secession, terrorism and foreign interference. Mainland security and intelligence agents may be stationed in the city for the first time.

Police units on patrol there spotted a suspect with a suspicious object that looked like a pistol. They called upon him to stop and began to chase after him on foot, during the chase officers also opened fire at the suspect," police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld said. Mr. Rosenfeld said the suspect, a Palestinian resident of east Jerusalem, was dead. Palestinian officials said he had

Israeli police shoot dead 'unarmed' Palestinian man

They suspected he was carrying a gun

REUTERS
JERUSALEM

Israeli police officers shot a Palestinian they suspected was carrying a weapon in Jerusalem's Old City on Saturday, a spokesman said, but the man was later found to have been unarmed, Israeli media reported.

"Police units on patrol there spotted a suspect with a suspicious object that looked like a pistol. They called upon him to stop and began to chase after him on foot, during the chase officers also opened fire at the suspect," police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld said. Mr. Rosenfeld said the suspect, a Palestinian resident of east Jerusalem, was dead. Palestinian officials said he had

mental health issues. Police did not confirm to reporters whether the man had been carrying a weapon. Israel's Channel 13 News said earlier that he was unarmed. The secretary general of the Palestine Liberation Organization Saeb Erekat condemned the incident on Twitter.

Police did not confirm to reporters whether the man had been carrying a weapon. Israel's Channel 13 News said earlier that he was unarmed. The secretary general of the Palestine Liberation Organization Saeb Erekat condemned the incident on Twitter.

Merkel not to attend G7 meet in U.S.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

German Chancellor Angela Merkel will not attend an in-person summit of G7 leaders that U.S. President Donald Trump has suggested he will host despite concerns over the COVID-19 pandemic, the Politico website quoted her spokeswoman as saying on Friday.

Leaders from the Group of Seven, which the United States heads this year, had been scheduled to meet by video-conference in late June. Mr. Trump last week, however, indicated that he could hold the huge gathering after all, "primarily at the White House" but also potentially parts of it at Camp David. Ms. Merkel has declined. "As of today, considering the overall pandemic situation, she cannot agree to her personal participation, to a journey to Washington," said German government spokesman Steffen Seibert.

CM YK

Govt. blocks WeTransfer

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The government has ordered internet service providers (ISPs) to block computer file-sharing website WeTransfer due to security reasons. The order issued by the Department of Telecom (DoT) on May 18 directed all ISPs to block two download links on the Dutch website WeTransfer and also the entire website www.wetransfer.com.

"The compliance be submitted immediately failing which shall, inter alia, invite initiation of actions under licence conditions," the DoT order e-mailed to several ISPs said.

According to sources, the DoT has received reference from the Ministry of Electronics and IT to block the website and two download links immediately.

The exact reason for blocking of the website could not be ascertained.

However, an official, on the condition of anonymity, said "most probably due to security reasons."

Query sent to the DoT elicited no response.

New PoA norms from August 1: SEBI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

SEBI has extended to August 1, the date for implementing norms concerning power of attorney (PoA) given by clients to trading members (TM) or clearing members (CM).

In February, SEBI had specified guidelines with regard to margin obligations to be given by way of pledge and re-pledge in the depository system.

COVID-19 setback to business could be serious: Infosys

Financials may be hit due to negative impact on economies of U.S., U.K., EU

MINI TEJASWI
BENGALURU

The COVID-19 pandemic has its footprints all over Infosys's annual report of fiscal 2020 that was released on Saturday.

The economic slowdown or other factors affecting the economic health of the U.S., the U.K., the EU and Australia are expected to cast a gloom on the financials of the Indian IT services giant.

Infosys, on account of its revenues being concentrated in a few geographies, expects to see a serious impact.

"In fiscal 2020, 61.5%, 24.1% and 11.8% of our revenues were derived from projects in North America, Europe and the rest of the world, respectively," the report said.

In fiscal 2020, it derived 31.5% of its revenues from the financial services and in-



During the fiscal, Infosys's employee count rose 6.09% over the previous fiscal, the report said. ■REUTERS

surance industry. "Instability and uneven growth in the global economy has had an adverse impact on the growth of the IT industry in the past and may continue to impact it in the future. This instability also impacts our business and results of operations and may continue to do so in the future," the report added. If the economies of the U.S., U.K. or the EU

weaken or growth remains uneven – including as a result of the uncertainty surrounding Brexit – Infosys believes its clients may reduce or postpone their technology spending significantly. This may, in turn, lower the demand for its services, negatively impacting its revenues and profitability.

Meanwhile, during the fiscal, its employee count rose

6.09% over the previous fiscal, the report said. Infosys had 2,42,371 employees, of which 228,449 were professionals, involved in service delivery to clients. During the previous year, it had grown over 11%.

During the year, Nandan M. Nilekani voluntarily chose not to receive any remuneration for his services rendered to the company.

As an independent director, Biocon's executive chairperson Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw received \$150,000. During the fiscal ended March 31, CEO Salil Parekh received total remuneration of \$6 million, which was 27% higher than his previous year's total remuneration of \$4.8 million.

COO Pravin Rao's total remuneration also rose to \$2.2 million from \$1.7 million last year, a 29% rise.



be used as a turning point to [become] a more profitable, resilient industry," he said.

Some of the main problems with the airlines sector is the low entry barrier as airlines require paid-up capital of just \$7 million to start and the renewal of an AOP does not involve any test of financial fitness.

"Airlines without cash, that are technically bankrupt, continue to expand. The operating environment in India is characterised by high costs and poor planning. Due to their inability to control costs in FY19 SG [SpiceJet], G8 [GoAir], UK [Vistara] and 15 [AirAsia India] combined lost an average of \$5/passenger," he said.

Stating that COVID has provided a pause for reflection, he said the last three months has delivered negative outcomes that were previously unthinkable.

'Airline sector was already weak, COVID-19 exposed it'

Industry experts call for structural, regulatory changes

LALATENDU MISHRA
MUMBAI

With five of India's six airlines operating with weak balance sheets that are compounding their problems in the time of COVID-19, industry experts have called for immediate structural and regulatory changes that could reverse their fortunes.

They were speaking at a webinar organised by leading aviation consulting firm CAPA India. "The main issue with Indian airlines is their low-yield and high-cost structure. We would look for a higher yield market [to make airlines sustain]. The next 4 to 6 months are crucial as to who [which airline] will be around," said Jeffrey Goh, CEO, Star Alliance.

He said despite the setback, India must invest in improving aviation related infrastructure. Stressing that Indian aviation had been suffering on account of profitless growth, punctuated by regular crises every 5-7 years.

"The sector was already weak. COVID simply exposed just how vulnerable the industry is. [This] must

Hyundai exports 5,000 units in May

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

South Korean car maker Hyundai Motor India Ltd. has exported more than 5,000 cars in May 2020.

"We have once again made a humble beginning towards normalcy by exporting more than 5,000 units in May 2020. This is a testimony of Hyundai's resilient efforts towards localisation and to accentuate economic recovery," said S.S. Kim, MD & CEO, Hyundai Motor India. The first shipment left Chennai Port on May 26.

IDBI Bank in black after 13 quarters

Makes a strong pitch for exiting PCA restrictions; asset quality improves

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

IDBI Bank has reported a net profit of ₹135 crore for the quarter ended March 31, 2020 compared to a net loss of ₹4,918 crore in the year-earlier period.

The lender posted a net profit after a gap of 13 quarters as additions to non-performing assets fell sharply during the quarter.

"First time NPAs reduced to ₹727 crore in Q4-2020 from the ₹1,781 crore in Q4-2019," the bank said.

"The profit would have been higher but for the recoveries which were adver-

sely affected during March due to COVID-19 impact," said Rakesh Sharma, MD & CEO, IDBI Bank in an interaction with the media.

The net NPA ratio improved to 4.19% as on March 31, 2020 against 10.11% as on March 31, 2019 and 5.25% as on December 31, 2019. The gross NPA ratio stood at

27.53% as on March 31, 2020 against 27.47% as on March 31, 2019 and 28.72% as on December 31, 2019.

"All the parameters have shown improvement. Net NPAs have also come down and aging provisions are evenly spread so that there is no extra burden," he said.

Improved CAR

Tier 1 capital and capital adequacy ratio (CAR), which was at 10.57% and 13.31% respectively as on March 31, 2020, have improved as against 9.14% and 11.58% as on March 31, 2019.

"The bank has achieved

all PCA parameters for exit, except RoA," the lender said.

While there is an overall write-back in provision of ₹1,511 crore during the quarter compared with the ₹7,233 crore provided during the fourth quarter of the previous year, a ₹247-crore provision was made against standard assets as per Reserve Bank of India (RBI) norms for moratorium accounts which are in default.

While the central bank had allowed the lenders to make the provision in two quarters, IDBI Bank had made the entire provision in the January-March quarter.

Draft e-com policy for comments soon: DPIIT

'Country should have a clear policy'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) will very soon put a draft e-commerce policy in the public domain to seek views and comments, a top government official said on Saturday.

DPIIT Secretary Guruprasad Mohapatra said e-commerce is a fast emerging sector and it is difficult to predict where it will go in the next couple of years.

The country does not have an e-commerce policy and the department is currently working on this, he added. Several foreign e-commerce firms have raised concerns over some points in the draft pertaining to data. It is now recognised that the country should have a definite, clear and coherent policy, which is keeping in tune with the requirement of the society and service providers, he noted.

"Secondly, there are a lot of counterfeit and inferior products and violation of various safety standards. How can these be taken care of, how can consumer rights be protected...? We have now finalised a (draft) e-commerce policy; very soon, we will put [it] in the public domain. At the time, we will request all of you to give comments on how to improve on the content of the draft e-commerce policy," he added.



of privacy can be protected; how the e-commerce data is being leveraged for other purposes, other commercial benefits accrue to the e-commerce data holder; how citizens like you and me can have access to those benefits.

"Secondly, there are a lot of counterfeit and inferior products and violation of various safety standards. How can these be taken care of, how can consumer rights be protected...? We have now finalised a (draft) e-commerce policy; very soon, we will put [it] in the public domain. At the time, we will request all of you to give comments on how to improve on the content of the draft e-commerce policy," he added.

Yes Bank to reclassify promoter group as public stakeholders

Madhu Kapur Group agrees to change in classification

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Yes Bank on Saturday said there will be reclassification of shareholding as the Madhu Kapur Group has consented to be categorised as public stakeholders.

"This is to inform that the bank has received a letter dated May 28, 2020 from Madhu Ashok Kapur; Shagun Kapur Gogoi; Gaurav Ashok Kapur and Mags Finvest Private Limited (collectively referred to as Madhu Kapur Group) consenting to reclassify their shareholding in the bank as 'non-promoter shareholders' (i.e. public shareholders)," Yes Bank said in a regulatory filing.

"The bank would take further necessary action to give effect to this," it added.

Yes Bank was co-founded by Rana Kapoor along with Ms. Madhu Kapur's late husband Ashok Kapur in 2004.



Following the ouster of Mr. Rana Kapoor, who is in police custody on alleged charges of corruption and financial mismanagement, among other charges, Yes Bank is now led by State Bank of India alongside many private lenders.

As on March 31, 2020, Ms. Madhu Kapur held 1.12% in Yes Bank, while Mags Finvest had 0.30%, according to data on the BSE.

Acquires Dish TV stake

Meanwhile, Yes Bank said it had acquired over 24% stake in Dish TV India following invocation of pledged shares due to debt default by the DTH service provider and other group firms.

Further, the bank said there was default/breach of terms of credit facilities sanctioned by it to Essel Business Excellence Services, Essel Corporate Resources, Living Entertainment Enterprises, Last Mile Online, Pan India Network Infravest, RPW Projects Private, Mumtaz WTR and Pan India Infra-projects.

These companies are a part of the Subhash Chandra-led Essel Group.

Dish TV is a direct to home (DTH) entertainment service provider.

The company reported a consolidated total income of ₹6,218.28 crore as on March 31, 2019.

SAINIK SCHOOL BIJAPUR, (KA) NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Tender notification on prescribed form are invited from reputed firms for supply of Manpower for Security related duties. Last date for submission of offline form is 27 Jun 2020. For downloading tender form and more details visit our website www.ssbj.in or www.eprocure.gov.in.

Sd/-
Principal



RITES LIMITED

(A Govt. of India Enterprise) CIN No: L74899DL1974G01007227

Notice Inviting e-Tenders
The Group General Manager (Civil), RITES Ltd, Bhubaneswar, invites on behalf of M/s. MCL, KANHA area, Talcher, online percentage rate bids, on two packet system for the following work:

NIT No.: RITES/BBSR/MCL/KANHA/TLHR/OT-03/2020, Dated.30.05.2020; Name of Work: "EARTHWORK IN FORMATION, CONSTRUCTION OF RUB WITH APPROACHES, RETAINING WALL & DRAINS, SUPPLY OF PWY MATERIALS, SUPPLIES OF BALLAST, TRACK LINKING WORKS, AND ALLIED WORKS FOR CONSTRUCTION OF 2*RAILLINE, AT KANHA AREA, UNDER TALCHER COAL FIELDS OF MCL". Estimated cost: ₹129,459,116/-, EMD: ₹ 12.95 Lakhs. Completion period: 08 (Eight) months, Last time and date of submission of bid : 15:00 Hrs (IST) of 22.06.2020

The bid forms and other details can be obtained from the website: [https://etenders.gov.in/eprocure/app](http://etenders.gov.in/eprocure/app). Addendum/Corrigendum, if any, shall be hoisted online only.

कार्यालय नगर निगम जयपुर

(पंचायत दीनांकालय उपायाचार भवन, लालकोटी, जयपुर)

क्रमांक: एफ०१/प्रा.गृ.जननि/2020/184-190 दिनांक: 26.5.2020

जस्ता/2020/16

ई-निविदा सूचना रद्दाकारी: - 01-07-2019-20

नगर निगम जयपुर के लिए स्वतंत्रता, कर्मवाल एवं सम्मान आंदोलन से ई-निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है। निविदा प्रपत्र, विस्तृत सूचना एवं शोध अभियान से ई-निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है।

निविदा प्रपत्र, विस्तृत सूचना एवं शोध अभियान से ई-निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है।

राज. संवाद/सी/396/2020-21 ग्र. देखी जा सकती है।

उपर्युक्त जयपुर नगर निगम जयपुर

गण्डी ब्लॉक, स्वस्था भवन, तिळ मार्ग, जयपुर-302005, India

Phone No : 0141-2228066, 2228066 CIN: U24223RJ2015G0C35067, Website: www.rmsc.health.rajasthan.gov.in, E-mail: edpmrc@gmail.com

F0/73/RMSCL/Proc/S&S(Non Drug)/NIB/05

Can coronavirus spread through airborne transmission of aerosols?

A study measured the size distribution, travel distance and velocity of droplets when a person coughs or speaks

R. PRASAD

Direct contact with an infected person, droplet transmission and contact with contaminated surfaces are some of the most common routes of transmission suggested for novel coronavirus. But a Perspective piece published in *Science* by a team led by Kimberly A. Prather seems to suggest that a "large proportion of the spread of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) appears to be occurring through airborne transmission of aerosols produced by asymptomatic individuals during breathing and speaking". Dr. Prather is from the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, University of California San Diego, La Jolla, California.

In the case of 2002 SARS, airborne transmission was reported by several studies. It was retrospectively explained as the route of spread in the case of Hong Kong's Prince of Wales Hospital, and health care facilities in Toronto.

In the case of SARS-CoV-2, it is said that "aerosols can ac-



Buoyant aerosol: Smaller droplets, less than five microns, evaporate faster than they settle, hence, get carried away by air to longer distances. ■ GETTY IMAGES

cumulate, remain infectious in indoor air for hours, and be easily inhaled deep into the lungs". Yet, there has not been any study to confirm this.

Viability in aerosols

A Correspondence published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* suggested that SARS-CoV-2 remained viable in aerosols for as long as three hours, though with time there

was a reduction in the amount of infectious virus. But the equipment used to generate aerosol may not mimic natural conditions of cough. "This is a high-powered machine that does not reflect normal human cough conditions. Further, the finding of COVID-19 virus in aerosol particles up to 3 hours does not reflect a clinical setting in which aerosol-generating procedures are per-

formed—that is, this was an experimentally induced aerosol-generating procedure," WHO cautioned.

But a team led by Daniel Bonn from the Institute of Physics, University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands, has in a paper published in *The Lancet Respiratory Medicine* studied droplet production when a person coughs and speaks and also measured the droplet size distribution, travel distance and velocity, and the airborne time in relation to the level of air ventilation.

Droplet sizes

They used a laser to determine the droplet sizes in a single cough and during speech. When a healthy volunteer coughed, they found both large droplets (100-1,000 microns) and small droplets (1-10 microns) being produced. But smaller droplets were more prevalent than the larger ones. During speech, the smaller droplets were the only ones produced.

They then used another laser system to track droplets

for speed and trajectory when a person coughed. Larger droplets (500 microns) did not travel long and fell to the ground in about one second.

Based on this information, they estimate that smaller droplets (5 microns) will remain in the air for nine minutes before settling on the ground.

Next, they used specially designed spray nozzle to disperse small droplets into the air, reproducing the effect of coughing. The droplets produced were on average 5 micron in diameter. In the case of a room with no ventilation, the droplets took five minutes to reduce by half. While in a well-ventilated room it reduced by half in just 30 seconds, and 1.4 minutes in a poorly ventilated room.

Borne by air

The team led by Dr. Prather note that while larger droplets settle faster than they evaporate, the smaller ones (aerosols), which are less than five microns, evaporate faster than they settle. As a result,

they are buoyant and can get carried away by air to longer distances.

A study published in *Nature* found higher concentration of the viral RNA in aerosols in the toilet areas used by patients in two Wuhan hospitals but low concentration in isolation wards and ventilated rooms. Though the researchers did not establish infectivity of the virus, they did find that small droplets expelled during normal breathing and talking can remain in the air and can infect others when inhaled. They proposed that novel coronavirus "may have the potential to be transmitted through aerosols".

But WHO has cautioned that "detection of RNA in environmental samples based on PCR-based assays is not indicative of viable virus that could be transmissible. Further studies are needed to determine whether it is possible to detect COVID-19 virus in air samples from patient rooms where no procedures or support treatments that generate aerosols are ongoing".



Fallout: COVID-19 will take away at least six months from the productive life of PhD students. ■ GETTY IMAGES

Plight of doctoral students during the pandemic

This crisis will most severely affect those who have just finished, or are finishing, their PhD degrees

T. PRADEEP

In the establishment of advanced research, the ones most affected due to the COVID-19 crisis are fresh PhD scholars and those who are on the verge of completing their doctoral research. This cream of our scientific establishment, after years of dedicated and consistent hard work, find that their opportunities have disappeared suddenly.

In the unfolding saga of human crisis threatening the existence of millions, it is important to bring up the issue of these young scholars, lest their plight never gets heard.

Research fellowships

It takes five years to finish a PhD degree in one of the top Indian institutions, and student fellowships are available generally during this period. Students enter the PhD programme after clearing competitive examinations such as GATE or CSIR/UGC NET or with INSPIRE and PMRF fellowships, the latter being awarded generally to top rankers. Doctoral fellows in national institutions get a fellowship of Rs.31,000 per month for the first two years and Rs.35,000 per month for the remaining three years or till they submit their theses, whichever is earlier. There are other schemes with different fellowship amounts, too.

Research fellows after completing the PhD programme often go for post-doctoral fellowships (PDF) for higher studies and independent research, which make them eligible for faculty/staff scientist position in academia or industry. Typically, three years of PDF experience is expected for a faculty job. It is common to go abroad for such assignments although domestic opportunities are increasing.

No support from parent labs

During the COVID-19 crisis, those who have completed their degrees, even if they have postdoctoral offers, are stuck. Universities abroad have been closed as well. They have no support from parent laboratories, as advisors have no additional money and institutional resources are limited. There are other battles to fight for the institutions within their meagre resources. These unique challenges faced by the young PhDs have left them in the lurch.

Those who are finishing their degrees might still be receiving their fellowships, although they may not be in the institutions due to the ongoing lockdown. However, their work suffers and it will certainly take more time to finish the degrees and that too without any fellowship.

Even more worrisome is the situation of existing postdocs and those who are caught in-between postdoctoral assignments. Many have come back from China and other such places and are unable to go back. They do not have new assignments, and even if they do, there is no way to proceed with them. They too remain unpaid.

There are four students after PhD in my lab, with valid postdoctoral offers but unable to take them up. There are four more finishing their PhD theses and who have exceeded the fellowship period. They are exploring postdoctoral opportunities, but COVID-19 has crushed research funding in many places. With funds drying up, they are likely to stay back for several more months. Fortunately, these students are being supported, but many advisors do not have that an option to support their students.

The COVID-19 crisis will take away at least six months from the productive life of PhD students irrespective of the stage they are in their degree. The most severely affected will be those who have just finished or are finishing their degrees and those currently in their postdoctoral period with uncertain funding.

About 20% of all PhD students belong to this category. This number is estimated to be about 3,000 in the premier institutions. The total must be at least twice that, if you consider the students in the top State universities and other laboratories put together.

Measures needed

What then can be done to support them? The government must come to their rescue in this period of crisis. The government may do well by extending the fellowship for six more months for all eligible scholars and those who have just completed their tenures.

Those who have completed their PhD within the past year, and without jobs or adequate support may be provided with urgent funding for the same period. Postdoctoral fellows, graduated from institutions of national importance and currently jobless, may be provided with quick assistance for six months, if they can work with eligible institutions. It is estimated that a package of Rs.200 crores (0.001% of GDP) be allocated to help the young scientific talent pool of the country. Immediate financial support at such a crucial time would provide them immense relief.

Surely, we will live with COVID-19 for some more time. What can our young scientists do to ensure that they can self-support afterwards? This crisis must be used to skill themselves beyond their areas of research – scientific editing, online tutoring, business incubation, development of computational skillsets, taking up online courses and conferences for revisiting fundamentals as well as to gain advanced knowledge. Our industry leaders should also provide new opportunities for this talent pool.

(T. Pradeep is an institute professor at IIT Madras.)

Monoclonal antibody to block coronavirus infection identified

The team had isolated the SARS virus during the outbreak of 2002

ASWATHI PACHA

When the news of the pandemic reached a team of researchers in the Netherlands, their first reaction was to go back and look at frozen antibodies that recognised the 2002 Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV), which they had stored in the early 2000s during the outbreak. And surprisingly one of the antibodies was found to recognise the infection due to the novel coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2. Further study showed that it can help block infection in cultured human cells.



Useful discovery: The antibody could help block infection in cultured human cells. ■ Utrecht University

by viruses from the *Sarbecovirus* subgenus," the team writes.

Frank Grosveld, co-lead author of the study from Erasmus Medical Center explained to *The Hindu* in an email what a human monoclonal antibody is and the group's previous work on it.

"We set out to make antibodies against SARS, MERS, and HCoV-OC43 [another coronavirus] with the aim to get antibodies that would recognise all three coronaviruses. Parts of the proteins of these viruses are highly conserved (which means they are very similar) and we hoped to get antibodies that recognise these conserved parts. And indeed we found such antibodies [details of which were published some time ago]." He adds that the newly identified antibody was found among previously identified

ones that did not recognise all three viruses and were put in the freezer.

"With new infections it is a race between the body making new antibodies versus the virus replicating, destroying cells and doing its damage. The antibodies that are made in humans or in the mice can be isolated by several tricks. The classic one is to fuse the B-cells with leukemic cells to make them immortal," explains Dr. Grosveld.

"The fused B-cells called hybridomas are grown individually and tested whether they make an antibody that would recognise the target. Because they come from single B-cells hybridomas, they make only one specific antibody which is called a monoclonal antibody. When a monoclonal-like [antibody] that we have generated is given to patients it does its work immediately, that is, much faster that the body could make its own antibodies," he adds.

Dr. Grosveld said that the team is currently testing the antibody in animal models and also collaborating with a pharmaceutical company to develop the antibody further. "On the more academic side we are studying how the antibody acts on the protein that the virus uses to infect cells."

SHUBASHREE DESIKAN

At the time of writing this the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 worldwide has touched 57,04,736 which includes 3,57,736 deaths, according to the World Health Organization's update of May 29. Naturally, researchers are racing to find an animal model that would be suitable to study this disease. Animal models will be useful in testing therapeutic such as vaccines and antivirals before they are tested on humans. A study published in *Nature* and two in *Science* have looked at a range of animals from this perspective.

It emerges that only some of these, namely, hamsters, cats, ferrets and non-human primates, are suitable to study various aspects of the infection.

Susceptible animals

A group from China (Jiangzhou Shi and coworkers, in *Science*) studied the susceptibility of ferrets, dogs, pigs, chicken, ducks and cats to infection by SARS-CoV-2 – the virus that causes the disease COVID-19. According to their study, while the virus replicates poorly in dogs, pigs, chicken and ducks, it actually replicated well in the upper respiratory tracts of ferrets and cats. They also found that cats transmitted the infection among themselves.

Hong Kong spread

In Hong Kong, two-four superspreading events where the source was known were observed, where the threshold was six-eight secondary cases. "Based on these estimates we inferred that approximately 20% of SARS-CoV-2 infections are responsible for 80% of all transmission events in Hong Kong," a preprint posted in *Research Square* on May 21 says.

The Hong Kong team led by Peng Wu from the University of Hong Kong concludes, "[the] number of individual secondary cases was significantly higher within social settings such as bars and restaurants compared to family or work exposures. This is certainly due to the greater numbers of contacts expected in such settings".

Israel study

Another preprint posted in *medRxiv* server on May 22 found that 1-10% of infected individuals in Israel had caused 80% of secondary infections. A team of researchers led by Adi Stern from Tel Aviv University sequenced 212 SARS-CoV-2 isolates and traced the origins and spread of the virus. They inferred multiple independent introductions into Israel, followed by local transmission.

Over 70% of virus introductions into Israel were from the U.S. while the remaining were mainly from Europe. Yet, only about 27% of infected people were returning to Israel from the U.S. "Vast majority of introductions are from the U.S. (70%), exceeding their relative proportion in incoming

A few infected people account for larger virus spread

Superspread events, associated with more than eight secondary cases, form a main feature of the spread

R. PRASAD

Three separate studies using very different methods and patient cohorts have found that a small percentage of people who have been infected with novel coronavirus account for a large proportion of novel coronavirus spread, much above the expected average. These are called "superspreading events" (SSEs). For SARS-CoV-2, with a basic reproductive number (the number of people an infected person can infect) of around three, more than eight or 10 secondary cases have been suggested to constitute a superspreading event. For MERS, superspreading events have reportedly involved up to 82 secondary cases.

There has been much discussion about the number of people an infected person can spread the virus to, which is called the reproduction number or R_0 . But additionally, the dispersion factor (k) is

also important. "In real life, some people infect many others and others don't spread the disease at all," Jamie Lloyd-Smith from the University of California, Los Angeles told *Science*. Dr. Lloyd-Smith says: "The consistent pattern is that the most common number is zero. Most people do not transmit." The lower the dispersion factor is, the more transmission comes from a small number of people, *Science* says.

Superspreading events Some well-known superspreading events include a choir practice in a church in Mount Vernon, Washington, in which 61 people participated. One person who had apparently had non-specific symptoms ended up infecting 53 choir members after singing together for 150 minutes, the CDC found.

The other well-known superspreading events include the church outbreak in South

Korea and Singapore, outbreak in a dormitory for migrant workers in Singapore leading to 800 cases, and Zumba classes in South Korea causing 65 cases. Similar cases have been reported from cruise ships, prisons, old-age homes, meatpacking plants and ski resorts. Back home, a tourist from Italy was found to have infected over a dozen people in Jaipur, while a family that returned to Kerala from Italy infected many. Other examples of superspreading events include the religious congregation by Tablighi Jamaat in Delhi and Koyambedu market in Chennai.

Many studies utilising global datasets have estimated even greater potential for SARS-CoV-2 superspreading and suggest that as little as 10% of cases could account for 80% of all transmission events in Hong Kong," a preprint posted in *Research Square* on May 21 says.

The Hong Kong team led by Peng Wu from the University of Hong Kong concludes, "[the] number of individual secondary cases was significantly higher within social settings such as bars and

restaurants compared to family or work exposures. This is certainly due to the greater numbers of contacts expected in such settings".

Israel study

The authors conclude that SARS-CoV-2 transmission dynamics were driven by an "extremely high level of viral superspreading". Assuming that contact reporting was complete, the "phylogenetic analysis indicates that between 5-9% of infections are responsible for 80% of secondary infections". And if contact reporting is assumed to be low, then even lower percentage of 1-5% of infections would be "responsible for this 80% of secondary infections".

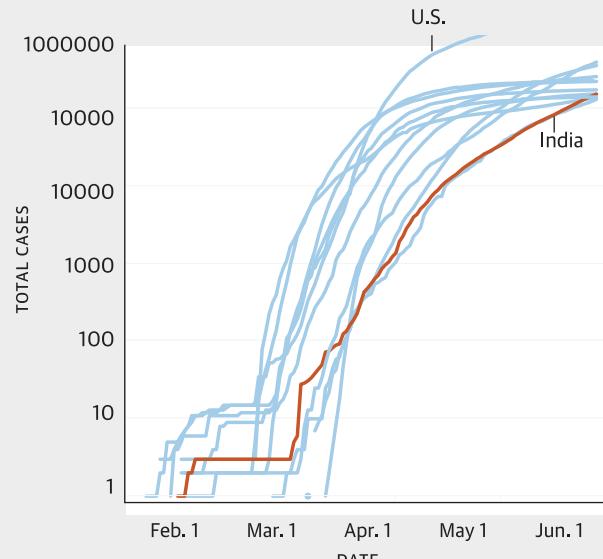
"Our results suggest that superspreading events are a main feature of SARS-CoV-2 spread, suggesting that focused measures to reduce contacts of select individuals/social events could dramatically mitigate viral spread," the preprint says.

Surely, we will live with COVID-19 for some more time. What can our young scientists do to ensure that they can self-support afterwards? This crisis must be used to skill themselves beyond their areas of research – scientific editing, online tutoring, business incubation, development of computational skillsets, taking up online courses and conferences for revisiting fundamentals as well as to gain advanced knowledge. Our industry leaders should also provide new opportunities for this talent pool.

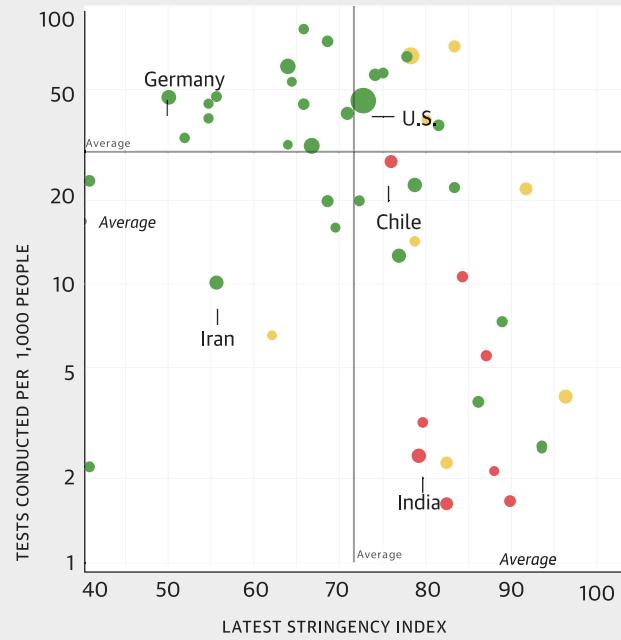
(T. Pradeep is an institute professor at IIT Madras.)

No option but to test more

I A STEADY RISE Even though, India had fewer infections than many countries in March and April, cases have steadily risen every day to pitchfork the country to be among the top 10 countries with most number of cases. With more than 1.75 lakh cases, India's case trajectory has also been on a steady upswing unlike the U.S. and countries in Europe, where the case increase has slowed down distinctly. See chart below for the steady rise in cases in India (among countries with more than 1,00,000 cases)



II TESTING IMPACT One way to determine whether the lockdown had an impact on arresting the case rise is to check the "doubling time" for each country. The chart plots the stringency index* for each country against total tests conducted per 1,000 people. Countries with doubling time greater than 35 days are marked in green, between 15 and 35 days in orange, and below 15 days in red. Size of the circles corresponds to the total cases

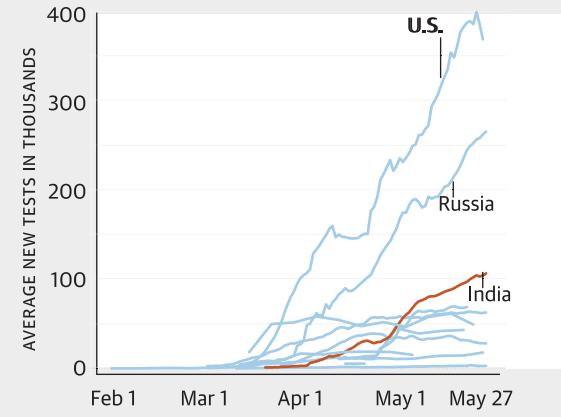


The graph shows that most countries which have a high testing rate have a much slower doubling time (>35 days or between 15-35 days). Even countries such as the U.S. with a high number of cases have registered a slower doubling time. In contrast, countries with a lower test rate still have faster doubling times, irrespective of higher stringency - which is borne out in India's case as well. India - where cases are doubling in 13.5 days, continues to have among the most stringent lockdowns (index: 79.2) and a low testing rate (2.4 of every 1,000 people tested). Clearly, testing is the key variable in reducing the case load growth rate as this comparative exercise across countries shows

Nearly six million people have been infected by COVID-19 resulting in more than 3.65 lakh deaths across the world. Most countries have implemented lockdowns for physical distancing to arrest the spread of the virus, but data collected over three months of the pandemic show that early testing, isolation and treatment are the surest way of reducing the impact of the pandemic irrespective of the scale of the lockdown. How does India fare in comparison with other countries and how do Indian States stack up on the testing front? An overview, using graphs, by Vignesh Radhakrishnan, Naresh Singaravelu, Sumant Sen and Srinivasan Ramani

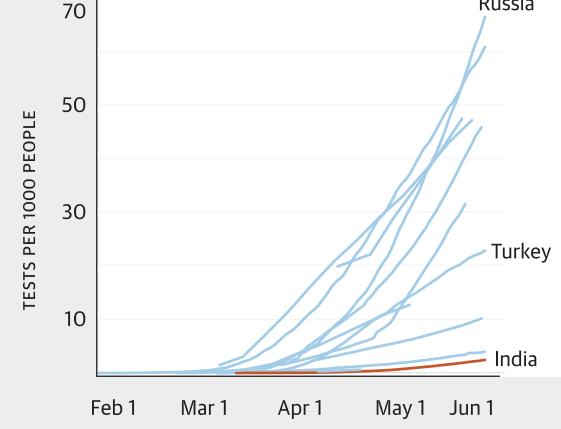
III TESTING MORE In terms of total number of tests conducted, India ranks third worldwide. More than 1,00,000 tests were conducted in the last seven days. Only the U.S. (3.7 lakh tests) and Russia (2.66 lakh) have conducted more tests overall in the last week. It is clear that India has been ramping up its test rate in overall terms

Seven-day rolling average of new tests conducted for countries with >1 lakh cases



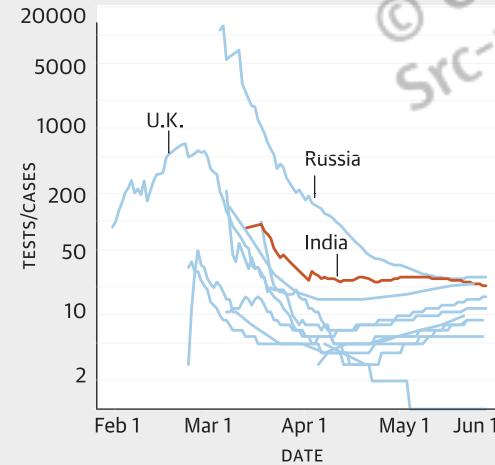
IV TEST RATIOS But in terms of tests per 1,000 people - a better way to find out what is the proportion of people who are being tested, India ranks relatively low among countries with the most cases. This is understandable, considering India's high population compared to these countries

Tests conducted per 1,000 people



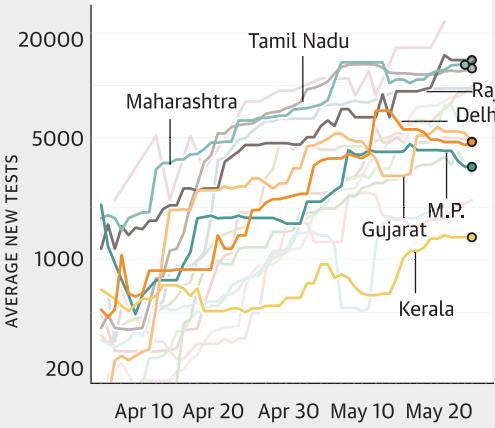
V TEST STRATEGY Tests conducted for each identified case is a better metric to find out how India compares globally. Among countries with the highest case load, India's tests per case have reduced slightly, which means it conducts fewer tests to detect a case as infections have increased

Tests conducted per confirmed case



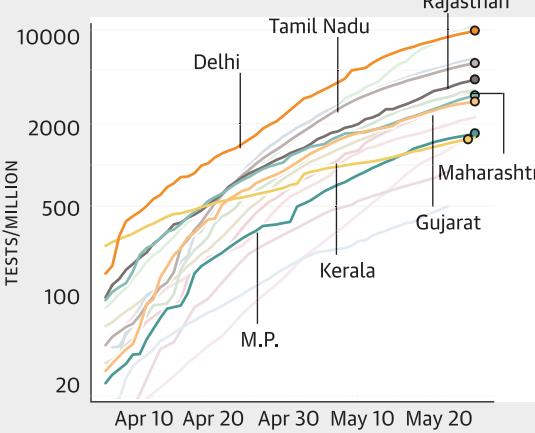
VI AVERAGE TESTS IN STATES This graph looks at the rolling average number of tests conducted (every seven days) since April 1. Interestingly Kerala, which had reduced its case load significantly has conducted the fewest tests on an average among major States.

Seven-day rolling average of new tests conducted in Indian States with at least 1,000 cases



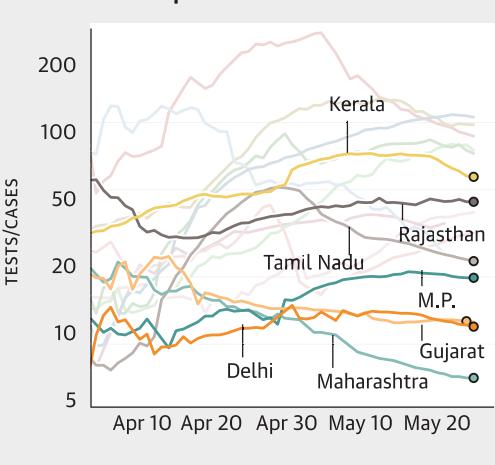
VII TESTS PER MILLION However, when testing rate is considered with respect to population, Kerala had a high test rate initially, which slowed down over time. Testing at a high rate early helped the State reduce its case load significantly before the influx of migrants from abroad and other States

Tests conducted per million people

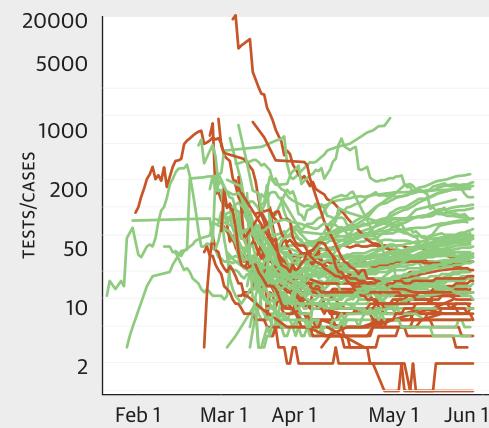


VIII TESTS PER CASE Kerala's relatively better performance is highlighted in this graph that compares tests per case over time. Maharashtra, Gujarat, Delhi and M.P. fare among the worse off States in this metric with relatively higher cases and lower tests per confirmed case

Tests conducted per confirmed case

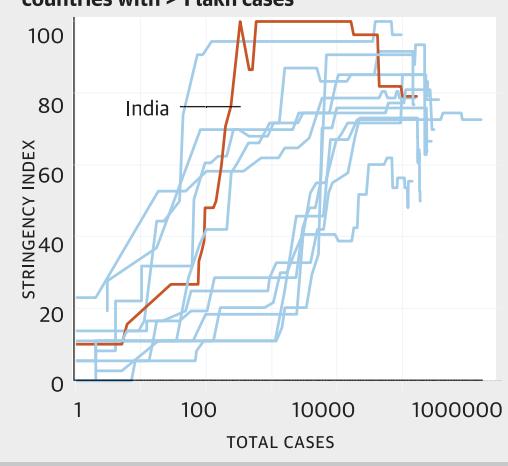


IX TESTS PER CASE WORLDWIDE Countries affected by the virus are divided into two groups (lower - marked in green, and higher case loads - marked in red). Evidently most countries that have tested more over time have reduced their case loads significantly when compared to those that have not tested enough



X STRINGENCY IMPACT Despite having among the most stringent lockdowns, cases in India have continued to rise steadily and fast. Clearly, the lockdown has not had as major an impact as high testing rates have, for other countries that have managed to flatten the infection curves

Stringency index vs total cases for countries with > 1 lakh cases



LAST WORD A high test rate has emerged as the sureshot way of reducing the impact of the pandemic across the world. Lockdowns have helped in physical distancing, but a sure way of limiting the growth of the infection spread has been to test significantly, isolate infected patients and to treat them. Within India, States like Kerala had tested at a high rate relative to their population initially (despite following the same ICMR guidelines as a protocol for identifying test cases). Kerala managed to do so by maximising contact tracing and local surveillance. This early testing strategy helped the State to reduce the total number of infections over time. Other States/UTs such as Maharashtra, Gujarat, Delhi, Tamil Nadu and Madhya Pradesh have meanwhile experienced higher case loads despite increased testing over time, after having missed the bus early. Only a significant increase in testing and isolation of positive cases will help, short of other possibilities such as increased immunity or the availability of a vaccine. In Kerala's case, a new influx of migrants from other States and countries has made it imperative for the State to also focus on ramped up testing to address the new wave of infections

* Doubling time - Time taken for cases to double in the last 10 days. Stringency index is calculated based on 17 indicators including school closures, restrictions of movement etc. Index was created by Oxford University. Data sources: Johns Hopkins University, India's State health departments

Why is the locust surge posing a threat to agriculture in India?

What explains the attack this year? How can the country combat the insect invasion?

out.

JACOB KOSHY

The story so far: India is gearing up for what could be one of its worst locust invasions in decades. Outbreaks of the insect attack have been reported from Gujarat, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. On Thursday, May 28, the Delhi government issued an advisory to farmers to spray pesticides and keep a possible attack at bay. Last year, Gujarat and Rajasthan had reported infestations. But it could be worse this year because of a chain of climate events, administrative laxity in several countries and the difficult circumstances brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. Experts have warned of huge crop losses if the swarms are not stopped by June when the monsoons will lead to a new season of sowing rice, sugarcane, cotton and other crops.

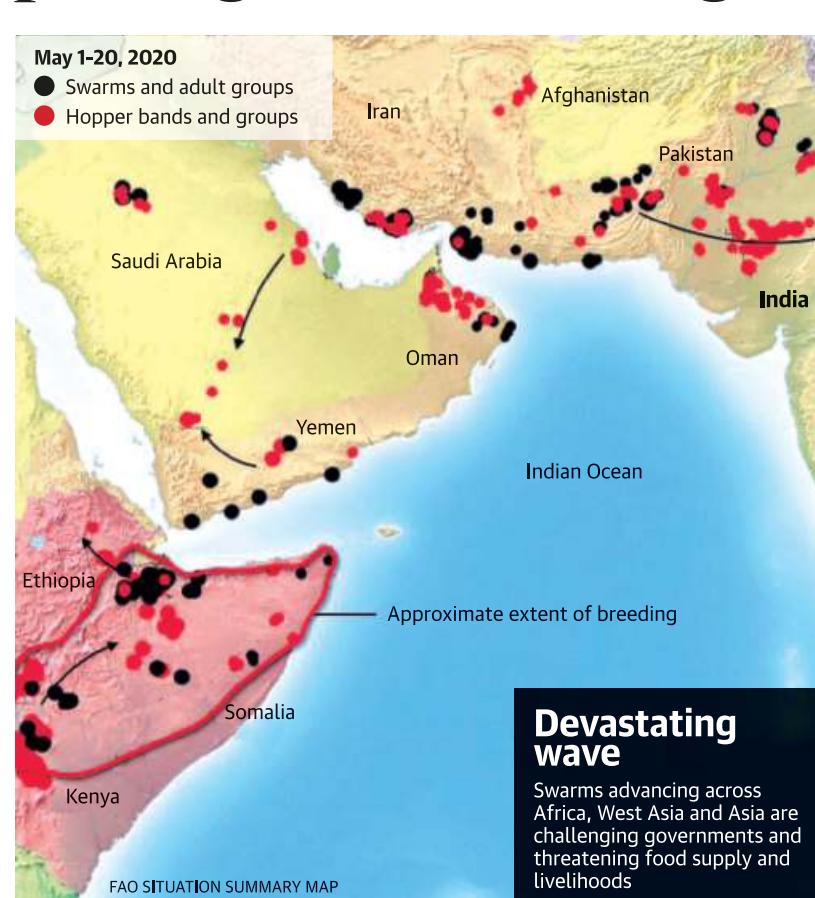
When was the last big outbreak? The last big infestation was in 2010. There were 13 locust plagues between 1964 and 1997. From 1997 to 2010, there were five outbreaks that were controlled. From 2010 to 2018, there were no major swarms or breeding reported, according to the Locust Warning Organization (LWO), in Jodhpur. In 2019, Gujarat and Rajasthan reported a significant surge in locust infestations. Nearly 3.5 lakh hectares of cumin, rapeseed and mustard were damaged and officials had then said that it was the worst attack since 1993. This was partly due to an unusually long monsoon but also because pest-control operations were inadequate; therefore, nascent populations of the insect had not been wiped

Who keeps an eye on the locusts?

As a result of the 1926-1931/1932 locust plague, India, under the British Raj at the time, began research into the desert locust, beginning in 1931. It then led to the establishment, in 1939, of a permanent Locust Warning Organization (LWO), with a station in Karachi (undivided India). Its main job was to keep an eye for a specific sub-species of the insect, the desert locust, that sprang into the region from the Thar desert. There is a wealth of scientific and newspaper reports that point to locust attacks being a major scourge to the colonial administration and hence the references to it as a "plague" which is how they continue to be recorded to the present. There were serious outbreaks in 1812, 1821, 1843-44, 1863-67, 1869-73, 1876-81, 1889-98, 1900-1907, 1912-1920. A particularly bad season in 1926-1931 prompted the imperial administration to establish the Karachi warning centre and after Independence, India established its own centre at Jodhpur, Rajasthan, as a part of the Directorate of Plant Protection Quarantine and Storage, under the Ministry of Agriculture.

What is the climate link to the infestation?

A pattern of warming in the Indian Ocean may be a trigger. A phenomenon called the Indian Ocean Dipole, in which the western and eastern parts of the ocean, warm differentially, tend to have an outsized impact in bringing excessive rains to India and West Asia. A "positive" dipole is when the western part is hotter by a degree or more than the eastern. Last year saw one of the



strongest positive dipoles in the Indian neighbourhood which brought on a difference of more than two degrees.

The Indian Ocean Dipole was so strong that it over-rode concerns of a drought in India last June and brought torrential rainfall – the most India has seen in decades. It also lasted nearly a month more than what is normal. This extended rainfall continued in several parts of West Asia, Oman, Yemen and in the Horn of Africa – Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya – so much so that the dry

soil became heavily moisture laden, facilitating the formation of several locust swarms. While this dipole was beginning to take shape by late 2018 – and locust outbreaks were growing in Africa – it increased last year. Due to favourable winds, it helped swarms to fly and breed in traditional grounds in Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), a specialised agency of the United Nations has been sending alerts on developing swarms. Somalia an-

demic became heavily moisture laden, facilitating the formation of several locust swarms. While this dipole was beginning to take shape by late 2018 – and locust outbreaks were growing in Africa – it increased last year. Due to favourable winds, it helped swarms to fly and breed in traditional grounds in Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), a specialised agency of the United Nations has been sending alerts on developing swarms. Somalia an-

How are locust invasions dealt with?

A locust attack has to be dealt with by spraying pest control and plant protection chemicals. According to the FAO's locust situation bulletin of May 27, adult locusts were forming groups and small swarms in spring breeding areas in Baluchistan, Indus Valley (Pakistan) and southern coast and parts of Sistan-Baluchistan. These infestations are likely to move to the summer breeding areas along India-Pakistan from Cholistan to Tharparkar.

In India, existing groups of swarms have continued to move east and to the central States of Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. Much of these movements were associated with the strong wester-

ly winds of Cyclone Amphan. Several successive waves of invasions are likely until July in Rajasthan, with eastward surges across northern India as far as Bihar and Odisha followed by westward movements and a return to Rajasthan on the changing winds associated with the monsoon. These movements will cease as swarms begin to become less mobile. The swarms are less likely to reach Nepal, and Bangladesh and south India, according to experts.

Is adequate action being taken? Indian officials, last year and this year too, have blamed Pakistan for not spraying adequate pesticide to stem the nascent population. It has been part of the protocol for many years, for entomologists from India and Pakistan to conduct border meetings and divide pest control responsibilities. While the lack of funds and inadequate monitoring have been a problem for many years, as the FAO has frequently pointed out, the novel coronavirus pandemic this year has caused unusual focus on natural disasters such as cyclones as well as locust attacks.

While locusts are unlikely to be a threat in urban centres as they do not have much to feed on, the national lockdown has made the availability of pesticide as well as its transportation difficult. With labour also not being available easily due to the lockdown, this could affect spraying operations and, as a result, allow locusts to cause significant damage.

Experience shows that a locust plague usually follows a one to two year cycle after which there is a lull for eight to nine years. However, strong Indian Ocean Dipoles are expected to become more frequent whetted by an overall trend of warming oceans. This phenomenon could trigger regular locust infestations.



ILLUSTRATION: KANNAN SUNDAR

GURKHA REGIMENTS

Military bonding beyond borders

The border dispute with Nepal turns the spotlight on the Gurkha regiments, which have been a pillar of India's national security for decades

ATUL ANEJA

The blow-back from remarks by the Army chief, Manoj Naravane, implying that Nepal was raising imaginary border claims with India at China's behest could hit a vital pillar of India's national security – the seven prized Gurkha regiments comprising battle-hardened troops, with a proven record of loyalty and valour.

Speaking at an online seminar on May 15, Gen. Naravane raised eyebrows when he asserted that Nepal's objections to India's construction of a link road to the Lipulekh Pass may be "at the behest of someone else". "There is reason to believe that they might have raised this issue at the behest of someone else and that is very much a possibility," the Army chief had said, in an ob-

vious reference to China.

The General's remarks raised a firestorm in Nepal, where tensions with India were already high following Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's inauguration of an 80-km stretch of a "pilgrim" road earlier in May. The entire road would provide easier access to Indian worshippers bound for Kailash-Mansarovar in China via the Lipulekh Pass. Mount Kailash is about 96 km away from the Pass.

Following the road inauguration, the India-Nepal dispute over the status of Lipulekh has flared. Indian maps have shown Lipulekh as an Indian territory, with the area to the east of the Pass, belonging to Nepal. Nepal, on the contrary, claims that the Lipulekh Pass is part of its territory, located in its Dharchula district of Sudur-

pashchim Pradesh. Nepal PM K.P. Sharma Oli stoked the fires of nationalism to a new high, by delivering a defiant speech in Parliament, slamming India not only over territorial claims, but also for spiralling COVID-19 infections in his country.

Growing bitterness

Amid the growing bitterness, the Nepalese Army, which has historically enjoyed unique and privileged ties with India, has refrained from reacting to Gen. Naravane's statement. Spokesperson of the Nepal Army, Brig. General Bigyan Dev Pandey, refusing to respond to General Naravane's comments, spotlighted that the controversy fell in the "political" and not the military domain.

But, on the contrary, Nepal's Defence Minister Ishwor Pokhrel, who is also Deputy Prime Minister, has slammed the Indian Army chief's utterance. Gen. Naravane's comments, he said, had hurt the sentiments of Nepalese Gurkhas, who have a long tradition of sacrifice for India, he said on May 25.

"With this, the Indian Chief of the Army Staff has also hurt the sentiments of the Nepali Gurkha Army personnel who lay down their lives to protect India," Mr. Pokhrel said in an interview. He added the Nepal Army "would

definitely play its role in the right time, as per the directives of the government based on our Constitution... If needed, it will fight".

Amid the cross-fire between the Army Chief and the Nepalese political leadership lies the danger that the controversy may breed alienation among segments of at least 40 Gurkha battalions, mainly comprising Nepali soldiers who are the Indian Army's pride. That would be a major Indian concern as New Delhi cannot afford any dissonance in the strong and reliable relationship with Gurkha troops, which as been tested and forged in the line of fire, for more than two centuries.

Recruited by the British

Ties between British-India and Nepali Gurkhas, who originate from the mountainous region of Gurkha, go deep, and can be traced to the famous Treaty of Sugauli, signed at the end of the Anglo-Nepalese war. That was in 1816, when troops of the British East India Company discovered that despite losing the war, the Nepali Gurkhas had fought with exceptional valour and grit, worthy of recruitment in the British-Indian forces. Consequently, the first battalion of the Gurkha Regiment was raised.

The gamble of the Massachusetts-born General of the

East India Company, David Ochterlony, the force behind the induction of the Gurkhas in the military based on our Constitution... If needed, it will fight".

There is not a single military campaign launched by independent India where the battalions of the seven Gurkha regiments have not left their indelible mark

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During the 1971 Indo-Pak war, a Gurkha battalion pioneered amphibious operations. Amid the Indian Peace Keeping Force operations in Sri Lanka, two Gurkha battalions participated in combat with distinction, but Lt. Colonel Inder Bal Singh Bawa, one of the battalion commanders, was injured and later died, along with many of the unit's officers and troops. Col. Bawa was later decorated with an MVC.

Speaking of the Gurkhas,

rocity of these khukri-wielding fighters. "Rommel enjoyed touring the front lines. We would go deep into the desert to explore. One time we came across 14 German soldiers who seemed asleep. When we got closer we saw each had his throat cut. Nearby we found a khukri – the knife of the British Gurkha soldiers. I still have that knife," recalled Rudolf Schneider, a former Afrika Korps soldier, who was also Rommel's driver, as reported by *The Independent* newspaper. Gurkhas have fought in the Falklands war and served the British in Hong Kong, Cyprus, Sierra Leone and East Timor.

Ties with Indian Army
After India gained Independence, six Gurkha regiments were transferred from the British to the Indian Army as part of a tripartite agreement between Nepal, India and Britain. A seventh regiment was raised after Independence. Currently, there roughly are 32,000 Gurkhas who make up the 40 battalions serving in the seven regiments in the Indian Army. There is not a single military campaign launched by independent India, where the battalions have not left their indelible mark. In recent decades, many retired Indian Army officers would recall the sheer tenacity, courage and combat skills of Gurkha

troops at the dizzy heights of the Siachen Glacier in Ladakh.

Resolutely defending Bila-fond La, one of the "gates" leading to the glacier, the third battalion of the fourth Gurkha Rifles regiment blunted repeated assaults by the Pakistani troops, all at a height of 20,000 feet. In the battle fought on September 20-24, 1987, 13 Gurkha troops were killed and 23 wounded. For their bravery, the unit earned 3 Maha Vir Chakras (MVC) and 5 Vir Chakras.

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Speaking of the Gurkhas, Sam Manekshaw, India's first field Marshall, who himself belonged to the eighth Gurkha Rifles regiment, once famously said: "If anyone tells you he is never afraid, he is a liar or he is a Gurkha."

In focus

■ East India Company General David Ochterlony was the force behind the induction of the Gurkhas in the military

■ The Gurkhas had fought in the Gurkha-Sikh War, Anglo-Sikh wars, and the Afghan wars

■ During the 1971 Indo-Pak war, a Gurkha battalion pioneered an amphibious operation

BENNY GANTZ

The General in the government

Netanyahu's strongest rival has buried the hatchet and joined hands with him

GARIMELLA SUBRAMANIAM

Benny Gantz, a relative neophyte in Israeli politics who vowed during three inconclusive elections not to serve under a criminally indicted Prime Minister, was sworn in on May 17 as Benjamin Netanyahu's Deputy Premier. Under the deal he agreed in April, which supporters have derided as a betrayal of trust, the former Army Chief of Staff will swap roles after 18 months with the country's longest-serving leader.

Mr. Netanyahu had previously resorted to a relentless smear campaign against his opponent, calling Mr. Gantz a traitor because he was willing to take the support of Israel's Arab parties to dislodge him. The latter has, however, justified his U-turn in terms of having to save the country from COVID-19 and to avert a fourth general election.

'The Prince'
Mr. Gantz is best remembered for the 2014 military campaign he spearheaded against Hamas. The son of Holocaust survivors, he was drafted to the Israeli Defence Forces in 1977. His rise through the military ranks was quick – he became a Brigadier General at 39 and Major General at 42. Soldiers called him "the Prince".

In December 2018, three years after retiring as Chief of Staff, Mr. Gantz launched the Hosen L'Yisrael, or Israel Resilience Party, pledging to enhance national se-



ILLUSTRATION: R. RAJESH

choose his successor.

In a dramatic about-turn in 24 hours, Mr. Gantz nominated himself as the Speaker and announced his backing for the so-called unity government with his arch-rival. Commentators ascribe the abrupt shift to the resistance within Blue and White legislative factions to cohabiting with the Arab parties, forcing Mr. Gantz to either collaborate with Mr. Netanyahu or risk a fourth election.

West Bank settlements
Crucially, Israel's highly contentious proposal to annex settlements in the occupied West Bank is the only aspect, besides the response to the pandemic, where the coalition deal gives Mr. Netanyahu a free hand. The Joint List and Israel's traditional left supporters have criticised such a stance as complete capitulation on the part of Mr. Gantz.

It perhaps also explains his silence right through his electoral campaigns on statehood for the Palestinians. More broadly, it points to the limitations of the catch-all appeal of the party and Mr. Gantz's political approach, given Israel's highly fragmented polity.

It may hence prove especially hard for him to resurrect his reputation as a rallying force for the country's opposition. Such an opportunity may yet arise when the courts pronounce on Mr. Netanyahu's criminal trials in the coming months.

curity and the rule of law. Resilience merged with two other parties in February 2019, marking the beginning of the centrist Blue and White coalition, just weeks before the first of the three general elections that started in April.

In poll campaigns, Mr. Gantz channelled popular antipathy to Mr. Netanyahu's record in office, exemplified by the attacks on the judiciary and investigation agencies in the wake of ongoing criminal corruption cases. Last year, he supported the creation of a "contiguous Palestinian entity" on 65% of the West Bank and called for a freeze on building settlements outside the major settlement blocs.

No majority
Blue and White emerged the largest combine in the September election, but without a clear majority. During coalition talks after the March 2 election, Israel's Arab parties, the Joint List,

decided to back the alliance and held out hopes of harmony between the nation's diverse religious communities. This momentum enabled Mr. Gantz to rally support among smaller opposition parties to legislate term limits for the Prime Minister – Mr. Netanyahu is now serving a fourth consecutive term. Another measure Mr. Gantz proposed sought to strip indicted politicians of eligibility to run for high office. All of these have, for the moment, been put on ice.

In an evident acknowledgement of his growing strength, President Reuven Rivlin invited Mr. Gantz to form the government. In a bid to kick-start the new legislature, the latter secured a judicial injunction in late March to expedite the election of the Knesset Speaker. The process was nonetheless circumvented, as the incumbent resigned his post, rather than heed the court's ruling to hold an election to

it may hence prove especially hard for him to resurrect his reputation as a rallying force for the country's opposition. Such an opportunity may yet arise when the courts pronounce on Mr. Netanyahu's criminal trials in the coming months.

BOTANIC GARDEN

The sorrow of fallen trees

Cyclone Amphan has turned Kolkata's famed Botanic Garden into a 'graveyard'

BISHWANATH GHOSH

There are places that one associates with Calcutta – or Kolkata – but in reality they are not situated in the city. Take Howrah Station, for example. The red-brick train terminus lies across the River Hooghly in the district of Howrah, and is connected to the city by the iconic Howrah Bridge. Then there is the historic botanical garden – named after Jagadish Chandra Bose as recently as in 2009 – which also lies across the river in Howrah.

The garden dates back to the time when the British were still traders in India. It was set up in 1878 – thirty years after Robert Clive won the Battle of Plassey and consolidated East India Company's hold over Bengal – by Robert Kyd, a lieutenant-colonel in the British Army.

Kyd died in 1793, aged 47. He had wanted the garden, which had over 4,000 plants by now, to be his final resting place but he was instead buried in Calcutta, at the South Park Street Cemetery. Over the years, the garden grew into a botanist's delight with trees from all corners of the world taking root here.

Today, the botanical garden is counting 'dead bodies'. On May 20, Cyclone Amphan tore through its 273-acre spread – containing 15,000 plants belonging to 1,300 species – felling hundreds of trees. "There are so many dead bodies you can't imagine. It is a painful sight. Until the other day these trees were with us, but now they are gone," says Dr. Kanad Das, the garden's joint director and head of office.

Only a botanist – or sensitive souls who consider plants as living beings – will refer to a fallen tree as a dead body. They recognise that trees take time to grow. People who plant a sapling don't always live to see it fully grown. And the longer a tree lives, it becomes like the planet's 'family gold', passed on from generation to generation. The demise of a tree that is a century or two old is, therefore, no less than catastrophic. And in the botanical garden, do-

zens of them, that had withstood countless storms, were toppled by Amphan.

The Great Banyan

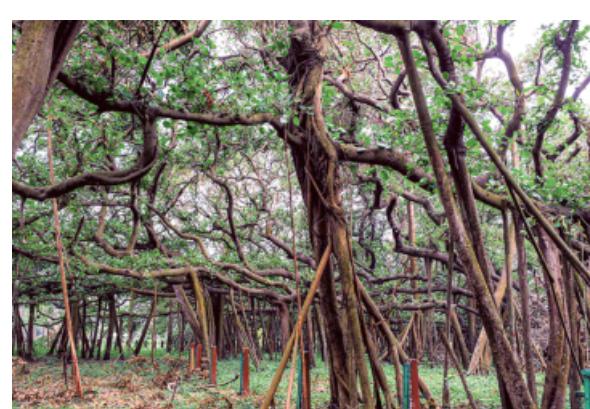
Had the cyclone been slightly longer in duration and stronger in force, it would also have wiped out the garden's biggest asset: the Great Banyan, which pre-dates the establishment of the garden. It survived two cyclones in the 19th century and in 1925, its decayed main trunk was removed, but it continued to grow. According to Dr. Das, 15 to 20% of the tree was damaged by Amphan. "We may be able to salvage 5% of the part that is damaged."

But many of its contemporaries are gone for good. Like the African baobab, brought from Madagascar. The tree has a lifespan of 6,000 years and can hold up to 500 litres of water. Then the numerous mahogany trees, some of them brought from the West Indies in 1795 by William Rox-

burgh, the botanist who, after Kyd's death, moved from Madras to take charge of the garden as its first full-time superintendent.

The mahogany trees, when they fell, also crushed several species of bamboo. Amphan's other victims include the 'mad tree', whose leaves were differently shaped from one another, and a mountain rose from Venezuela. "The cyclone has done to the garden what COVID-19 has done to Italy and Spain," says Dr. Das.

More 'bodies' are likely to be discovered once the damage-assessment takes place in full swing. The garden, which comes under the Ministry of Environment and Forests, is short of staff at the moment because the area around it has been declared a containment zone due to the spread of COVID-19. "It won't be proper on my part to ask them (staff) to join duty when restrictions are in place," says Dr. Das. As of now, two small teams are examining the extent of damage. They are at a loss because they are unable to figure out where to begin: Everybody is in a state of daze. "It's a hotch-potch at the moment," says Dr. Das. Lucky are those who have ticked the garden in their list of must-visit places. For when it reopens, it will no longer look the same. It's like the botanical equivalent of the Taj Mahal being wiped off the face of earth. For it to look the way it did until May 20, it could take another 200 years.



Rohit Sharma nominated for Khel Ratna



Rohit Sharma. ■ FILE PHOTO

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

The Board of Control for Cricket in India has nominated Rohit Sharma for the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna while Ishant Sharma, Shikhar Dhawan and Deepti Sharma have been recommended for the Arjuna Award.

If Rohit gets the Khel Ratna, he will become the fourth cricketer, after Sachin Tendulkar, Mahendra Singh Dhoni and Virat Kohli, to win the coveted award.

Federer tops Forbes list, Kohli 66th

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW YORK

Virat Kohli is the only Indian, and lone cricketer, in the Forbes' list of world's highest-paid athletes with total earnings of \$26 million, jumping to the 66th spot from 100 in the previous list. Roger Federer topped the list for the first time with earnings of \$106.3 million. He was fifth last year.



Virat Kohli. ■ FILE PHOTO

'Chance for cricketers to get fitter, stronger'

India bowling coach Arun stresses the need for a camp and some practice matches

S. DINAKAR
CHENNAI

The challenge before everyone is to make the most of what is available during these unprecedented times of COVID-19. In the lockdowns caused by the coronavirus pandemic, India's bowling coach B. Arun sees possibilities.

"It's a testing situation. But in this difficult period, I also see an opportunity," he told *The Hindu* on Saturday.

Arun elaborated, "You see international cricketers, including pacemen, rarely get such a long break."

"So here is the chance for them to get fitter and stronger and recover from injuries and niggles."

Arun said the Indian team's strength and conditioning coach Nick Webb and physio Nitin Patel have been performing a marvelous job to give the bowlers



The mastermind: Arun has been instrumental in putting together a high-quality pace attack. ■ FILE PHOTO: K.R. DEEPAK

diverse fitness routines through the internet based on the equipment available.

With the government giving permission to international cricketers to practise

so far the government has not given its nod for players to practise together as a team.

Arun, who has put together a high-quality pace attack, said, "Once the government says 'yes', we need six to eight weeks together as a team.

"There has to be a camp, then we need to have practice matches and hopefully we would have some domestic matches by then."

"Match fitness and being sharp and ready for international cricket are crucial."

Arun said, "The team-management has been in constant touch with the boys through video conferencing. They are in good spirits and raring to go."

Immediate focus

Looking at the campaigns ahead, Arun said, "Our immediate focus is on the next

game we play. And every team is tough to beat in its backyard. But the Test series in Australia, later this year, will be a big challenge. We are confident."

Arun termed the Test series setback in New Zealand an aberration, and added: "We are not looking at the past. We are looking ahead."

And dwelling on the contentious issue of the ban on use of saliva for shining the ball owing to COVID-19 concerns, Arun said, "We are allowed to use sweat. So we will work on that."

"And during the camp we will also figure out ways to shine the ball without saliva. If the ICC permits artificial substance to shine the ball, it should be the same for everyone."

For Arun, optimism is the key word.

IN BRIEF



Bremen gets the better of Schalke

BERLIN

Schalke lost by a solitary goal to visitor Werder Bremen in the Bundesliga.

The results: Hertha Berlin 2 (Dilrosun 23, Piatek 90+3) bt Augsburg 0; Mainz 0 lost to Hoffenheim 1 (Bebe 43); Schalke 0 lost to Werder Bremen 1 (Bittencourt 32); Wolfsburg 1 (Mbaba 58) lost to Eintracht Frankfurt 2 (Silva 27+pen, Kamada 85); Freiburg 0 lost to Bayer Leverkusen 1 (Havertz 54). AFP

Windies ready for 'bio-secure' tour of England

ST. JOHN'S

West Indies cricket chiefs have given approval for a Test tour of England where the team will stay in a "bio-secure environment". "The Cricket West Indies (CWI) Board gave approval in principle for the proposed upcoming West Indies Test tour of England," said a CWI statement on Friday. The ECB has proposed the Tests start on July 8, 16 and 24. AFP



de Kock, Ngidi dominate CSA award nominations

JOHANNESBURG

Quinton de Kock and Lungi Ngidi dominated the nominations for the 2019/20 Cricket South Africa (CSA) men's international awards. Marizanne Kapp and Laura Wolvaardt won four nods each among women. PTI

LaLiga clubs can start full training from tomorrow

MADRID

Clubs in Spain's top two football divisions can hold full training sessions from Monday for the first time since returning to activity after action was halted in March, organiser LaLiga has said. The top flight will resume on June 11 without fans, with Sevilla taking on Real Betis, and with matches potentially to be played every day until the season ends on July 19. AFP

NBA reportedly eyeing a July 31 return

NEW YORK

NBA commissioner Adam Silver told team owners, on a conference call with the board of governors, he's targeting a July 31 return to play, *The Los Angeles Times* reported, although the format for completing the season remains unclear. Currently, players are being allowed into team facilities to conduct solo

Anand back in India

VIENNA

Formula One's truncated coronavirus-hit season will finally get underway with the Austrian Grand Prix on July 5, the Austrian government announced on Saturday. The Spielberg circuit has also been given the green light to stage a second race the following weekend. AFP

Chess star Anand back home

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