



Chinese envoy Sun Weidong praises India's COVID-19 response  
page 9



India should withdraw from Kalapani: Nepal Minister Gyawali  
page 9



Despite lockdown, India sees record procurement of wheat  
page 11



U.S. strips Hong Kong of special trading status ahead of key vote  
page 14

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## NEARBY



Capital sees record 792 new COVID-19 cases

NEW DELHI

The Capital registered 792 new COVID-19 cases in the past 24 hours, taking the total to 15,257, said a government health bulletin released on Wednesday. This is the biggest single-day jump in the number of cases in the city so far. On May 22, Delhi had seen 660 new cases.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

Less chaos at airport after clear protocol on travel

NEW DELHI

With States coming out with a clear protocol on domestic air travel, the scene at Delhi airport on Wednesday was a lot less chaotic compared with the first day when there were many last-minute cancellations. Several passengers purchased full PPE kits being sold at kiosks in the terminal for ₹840.

CITY ▶ PAGE 2

Five persons on Shramik Special trains die in U.P.

LUCKNOW

Five migrant workers travelling on Shramik Special trains allegedly died of unspecified causes near Kanpur and Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh over the last 24 hours, the police said on Wednesday. The bodies have been sent for post-mortem.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 10

## Now, Trump offers to mediate between India and China

Beijing says situation is 'stable' and both sides will resolve the standoff bilaterally

SUHASINI HAIDAR  
SRIRAM LAKSHMAN  
NEW DELHI

U.S. President Donald Trump said on Wednesday that he had offered to help New Delhi and Beijing resolve their tensions at the Line of Actual Control (LAC). The offer came as a surprise on a day the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs appeared to soften its line on the standoff, suggesting the situation was "stable and controllable" now.

"We have informed both India and China that the United States is ready, willing and able to mediate or arbitrate their now raging border dispute. Thank you!" Mr. Trump tweeted.

Indian and Chinese troops have faced off at least four points along the LAC, including Pangong Tso (lake), Demchok and Galwan Valley in Ladakh and Naku La in Sikkim, where PLA soldiers are reported to have occupied tracts patrolled by Indian troops, pitching tents and building trenches.

Mr. Trump did not elaborate on his offer, which came as a surprise for several reasons. While the U.S. has offered to mediate between India and Pakistan on multiple occasions in the past, this is the first time an American official has offered to be the



High stakes: An Army truck crossing Chang La near Pangong Lake in Ladakh region in this file photo. ■ AP

third party between India and China publicly.

### China is a threat: Wells

His comments also appear to be at variance with the stand taken by senior U.S. State Department official Alice Wells, who squarely blamed China for the border tensions and called it a "threat" to all its neighbours.

Moreover, Mr. Trump's offer comes at a time when the U.S. and China themselves have tensions between them on several fronts. In addition to an uneasy trade situation, the U.S. has accused China of not being transparent with information in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. And just recently, U.S. National Security Adviser Robert O'Brien

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

said the U.S. could impose sanctions on both Beijing and Hong Kong, if China were to go ahead and impose a national security law on Hong Kong.

Neither the Ministry of External Affairs nor China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs responded to Mr. Trump's statement. India has, in the past, rejected all offers of third party mediation.

A senior Indian official, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said neither side would take the offer "seriously", although given the "optics", China would view it less favourably. Earlier on Wednesday, China said both sides would resolve the standoff bilaterally.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Amid impasse, commanders' meet begins

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The continuing tensions along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) are likely to top the agenda as the biannual Army Commanders Conference (ACC) began on Wednesday, with discussions led by the Army chief and the seven commanders, with a specific session devoted to each command over three days.

The sessions by the Northern and Eastern Commands would be of particular interest as they cover the border with China.

The ACC was originally scheduled for April, but was postponed owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, and is now scheduled to be held in two phases.

Several military officers say the issue has to be resolved at the diplomatic and political level as the two Armies are entrenched on the ground and the talks between the local commanders haven't made any headway.

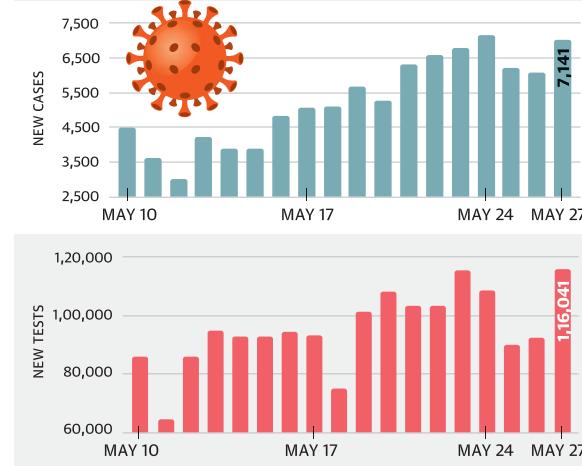
CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

## Govt. removes ₹4,500 ceiling on COVID-19 test

States can negotiate with approved labs and fix the price

### Mixed trend

The number of new COVID-19 cases witnessed a drop on Monday and Tuesday, before surging on Wednesday. In tandem with this trend, the number of tests conducted were also significantly lower on Monday and Tuesday, and increased on Wednesday



not be applicable now and, therefore, all State governments/Union Territory administrations are advised to negotiate with private labs and fix a mutually agreeable price for samples being sent by the government for private individuals desirous of testing," it said.

The direction came on Wednesday when India reported 6,387 new cases and 187 deaths were reported on Wednesday. The total number of cases stands at 1,51,767, including 83,004 active cases, 64,425 discharged and 4,337 deaths,

according to the Health Ministry. "Our recovery rate is 42.4%, with a fatality rate of 2.86%, whereas the world average is 6.36%," it said.

### Over 4,500 deaths

However, according to the State Health Departments, 7,148 new cases and 187 deaths were reported on Wednesday. The total number of cases was 1,57,996, including 85,725 active cases. The number of deaths stood at 4,532. As many as 67,739 patients have recovered from the infection.

The Health Ministry also said critical services for women, children and adolescents should be provided irrespective of their COVID-19 status, and under no circumstances should they be denied essential services.

India records over 2.5 crore pregnancies every year and has the largest adolescent and youth population. Hence, it is vital to continue the essential services to the vulnerable sections.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8  
MORE REPORTS ▶ PAGES 6, 8 & 10

## Adding firepower



New recruits: Two Light Combat Aircraft Tejas Mk-1 do a flypast to mark their induction into Squadron 18 of the IAF at the Sulur base, near Coimbatore, on Wednesday. The combat aircraft was manufactured by HAL, Bengaluru. ■ M. PERIASAMY

## Migrant workers jump off trains in Bihar to escape 14-day quarantine

They want govt. to allow them to isolate themselves at home

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
PATNA

Migrant workers returning to Bihar are jumping from trains to escape the 14-day mandatory quarantine.

On Tuesday, 350 migrants returning from Delhi and Patna pulled the alarm chain at two different places and jumped off the Shramik Special trains. The Railway Protection Force (RPF) personnel and villagers, however, caught 180 of them.

"They are jumping ahead of their destination. We convince those we manage to detain that it is necessary not only for them but also for their family members," said an RPF official at Danapur railway station near Patna.

A large number of mi-

grants from Delhi's Anand Vihar to Purnea in north-east Bihar deboarded near the Ranibagh railway crossing on Tuesday. While nearly 150 managed to escape, around 250 migrants were caught by the villagers who then informed the RPF personnel. They were taken to quarantine centres, but some more managed to flee.

### Some flee, some detained

In another incident, migrant workers stopped the Shramik Special from Chandigarh to Gaya in Saran district last week and 24 are believed to have escaped from the train, said an official.

A senior East Central Rail-

way official said this was happening often. "Sometimes they are caught, some-

time they manage to escape," he said.

Lakhs of migrant workers returning home are refusing to be quarantined near their homes.

"The government should allow us to quarantine ourselves at home. How can we be away from our family for 14 days after all the trouble we went through?" asked Mahendra Sahni from Muzaffarpur.

On Tuesday, some police-

men in Nalanda district were injured in a clash with inmates at a quarantine centre at Gurukul Vidyalaya in Katrahi. The enraged migrants were demanding better food and facilities. Similar protests and clashes have been reported from several other centres too.

It advises State against acquiring former CM's Poos Garden residence

MOHAMMED IMRANULLAH S.  
CHENNAI

Ending the uncertainty over inheritance of vast properties left behind by former Chief Minister Jayalalithaa, the Madras High Court on Wednesday declared her nephew J. Deepak and niece J. Deepa as Class II legal heirs entitled to all the properties left behind by their aunt.

The former AIADMK lead-

er, who faced a disproportionate assets case, died in testate on December 5, 2016.

The court made it clear that the State government could not acquire any of the properties without issuing notice to the legal heirs and paying them adequate compensation.

Justices N. Kirubakaran and Abdul Quddose allowed an application filed by Mr. Deepak and granted a Letter of Administration in favour of him and his sister. They also recorded the siblings' undertaking that a few properties, to be selected as per their discretion, would be allotted to create a public trust named after Jayalalithaa for welfare activities. Such a trust should be created within eight weeks of the date of receipt of the judgment, the judges said.

They rejected another case filed by AIADMK functionaries K. Pugazhenth and P. Janakiraman for appointing them as administrators of the properties left behind by their departed leader.

The Bench agreed with ad-

vocate S.L. Sudarsanam, repre-

senting Mr. Deepak, that rink outsiders could not be given Letters of Administration.

Authoring the verdict, Justice Kirubakaran advised the government to give up its decision to acquire Veda Nilayam, Jayalalithaa's bungalow at Poos Garden in Chennai, and convert it into a memorial. Since the bungalow, spread over 10 grounds in the posh locality, was reported to be worth over ₹100 crore, the judge felt it to be a waste of public money.

Recently the State promul-

gated an ordinance to take over the bungalow temporarily.

### 'Use money judiciously'

"Instead of acquiring the said property and paying a heavy compensation, the said amount could be utilized for development purposes... When there are so many essential amenities which are yet to be provided by the welfare state, public

money cannot be wasted on memorials," the court said.

It cautioned that if Jayalalithaa's residence was converted into a memorial, every other party that would come to power in the State might use public money to convert the residences of their leaders into memorials.

On the other hand, if the government persisted with its plan to acquire the Poos Garden bungalow by burning a hole in the exchequer, either the entire property or at least a part of it could be used as the official residence-cum-home office of the Chief Minister and the rest could be converted into a memorial, the court said.

The judges directed the government to provide round-the-clock security to Mr. Deepak and Ms. Deepa. Ordering them to bear the costs, they said any one of their aunt's properties could be liquidated to pay the cost.

## Jaya's nephew, niece entitled to her assets: HC



Veda Nilayam, the residence of the former Tamil Nadu CM, Jayalalithaa, at Poos Garden in Chennai. ■ B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

A ND-NDE

## Timings

DELHI

THURSDAY, MAY 28
RISE 05:25 SET 19:13
RISE 10:14 SET 00:00
FRIDAY, MAY 29
RISE 05:25 SET 19:14
RISE 11:17 SET 00:12
SATURDAY, MAY 30
RISE 05:25 SET 19:14
RISE 12:21 SET 00:54

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	46	28
Safdarjung	46	28
Palam	47	28

**Delhi Pali Today**  
47°C Heat wave to continue. Dusty and windy day with partly cloudy sky. Day will be hot and night will be little warm.

**Delhi Pali Tomorrow**  
42°C Fall in temperature. A cloudy and hot weather is likely. Spell of dust storm and thunder shower will occur.

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**THE HINDU**  
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Air quality of Delhi-NCR			
Delhi	156	Gurugram	156
Ghaziabad	166	Faridabad	245
Noida	184	Greater Noida	184
Good	Satisfactory	Moderate	
0-50	51-100	101-200	
Poor	Very poor	Severe	
201-300	301-400	>401	
AIR QUALITY INDEX AT 4 P.M. YESTERDAY (AVERAGE OF PAST 24 HOURS) SOURCE: CPCB			

## NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY

## E-Tendering Tender Notice No. 12/2020

Divisional Railway Manager (Engg.)

N.E. Railway Izatnagar For and behalf of President of India invites "OPEN"

e-tender through on Line (E-tendering) for the following work.

S.N.1:- Description of works :- Zone

No.1. MOP to LC No. 250 A (Both In,

Chaula colony, Bareilly city, colony

station front colony at Bareilly city.

Approx. value :- ₹ 23,19,658/- E.M.D.

Money:- ₹ 46,400/- Cost of Tender

Forms:- ₹ 3,000/- Completion time

period from the date of issue of acceptance letter : **30.06.2021**

S.N.2:- Description of works :- Zone

No.2. L.C.No.250 A (Ex) to L.C.

No.244 B (In) Station Colony, Loco

sheds Station Bareilly City. Approx.

value :- ₹ 20,53,196/- E.M.D Money:-

₹ 41,100/- Cost of Tenders :- Zone

Completion time/period from the date of issue of acceptance letter : **30.06.2021**

S.N.3:- Description of works :-Zone

No. 3. L.C. No. 244B to BPR (Both ex,

Loco Colony, station colony. S.E.

works/P. way/Sig./ADEN/Line

office/IZN, SMS Line, station colony.

CBJ Line plan &amp; colony/IZN. Approx.

value :- ₹ 38,31,947/- E.M.D Money:-

₹ 76,600/- Cost of Tenders :- Zone

Completion time/period from the date of issue of acceptance letter : **30.06.2021**

S.N.4:- Description of works :- Zone

no.5 Divisional office, BRI office etc

including office colony Izatnagar

Approx. value:- ₹ 24,52,160/- E.M.D.

Money:- ₹ 49,100/- Cost of Tender

Forms:- ₹ 3,000/- Completion

time/period from the date of issue of

acceptance letter : **30.06.2021**

S.N.5:- Description of works :- Zone

No. 6. Mech. Workshop. Including

workshop administrative building and

store Depot. Izatnagar. Approx. value

:- ₹ 37,26,847/- E.M.D. Money:- ₹

74,500/- Cost of Tender Forms:- ₹

3,000/- Completion time/period from

the date of issue of acceptance letter

: **30.06.2021**

S.N.6:- Description of works :- Zone

No. 7. Officers colony Road No.1 to 7

(Kaliwari) all inclusive at Izatnagar.

Approx. value:- ₹ 41,53,657/- E.M.D.

Money:- ₹ 83,100/- Cost of Tender

Forms:- ₹ 3,000/- Completion

time/period from the date of issue of

acceptance letter : **30.06.2021**

S.N.7:- Description of works :- Zone

No. 8. Kaliwari (Ex) to New model

colony &amp; DSL shed at Izatnagar.

Approx. value:- ₹ 37,66,111/- E.M.D.

Money:- ₹ 75,300/- Cost of Tender

Forms:- ₹ 3,000/- Completion

time/period from the date of issue of

acceptance letter : **30.06.2021**

S.N.8:- Description of works :- Zone

No. 10. Makrandpur (Ex) Ujjhayani

(In). Approx. value :- ₹ 28,73,703/-

E.M.D. Money:- ₹ 57,500/- Cost of

Tender Forms:- ₹ 3,000/- Completion

time/period from the date of issue of

acceptance letter : **30.06.2021**

S.N.9:- Description of works :- Zone

No. 11. Ujjayani to kasganj (Ex.Both).

Approx. value:- ₹ 27,34,182/- E.M.D.

Money:- ₹ 54,700/- Cost of

Tender Forms:- ₹ 3,000/- Completion

time/period from the date of issue of

acceptance letter : **30.06.2021**

S.N.10:- Description of works :- Zone

No. 12. Kasganj (In.) to MHA (Ex) up

to km.250/3. KSJ(in)up to km. 417/0 and

Jafri colony. Mat godam colony at

Kasganj. Approx. value:- ₹

41,07,870/- E.M.D. Money:- ₹ 82,200/-

Cost of Tender Forms:- ₹ 3,000/-

Completion time/period from the date

of issue of acceptance letter : **30.06.2021**

S.N.11:- Description of works :- Zone

No. 13. Kasganj Lxng.no.310 to

PTI (In.). upto km.204/0. Approx.

value:- ₹ 21,21,297/- E.M.D. Money:-

₹ 42,400/- Cost of Tender Forms:- ₹

3,000/- Completion time/period from

the date of issue of acceptance letter

: **30.06.2021**

S.N.12:- Description of works :- Zone

No. 14. PTI.(Ex.) to FGR (Ex). Approx.

value :- ₹ 37,48,981/- E.M.D Money:-

₹ 75,000/- Cost of Tender Forms:- ₹

3,000/- Completion time/period from

the date of issue of acceptance letter

: **30.06.2021**

S.N.13:- Description of works :- Zone

No-15 FOR (In.) 10 KLJ (Ex.) up to

Km.13/20 . Approx. value:- ₹

33,55,697/- E.M.D Money:- ₹ 67,100/-

Cost of Tender Forms:- ₹ 3,000/-

Completion time/period from the date

of issue of acceptance letter

: **30.06.2021**

S.N.14:- Description of works :- Zone

No-16. FGK (Ex.) Km.13/20 to ARL

(Ex.). Approx. value :- ₹ 44,33,775/-

E.M.D Money:- ₹ 88,700/- Cost of

Tender Forms:- ₹ 3,000/- Completion

time/period from the date of issue of

acceptance letter : **30.06.2021**

S.N.15:- Description of works :- Zone

No-18 MHA (In.) Km.253/0 to MSN

(Ex.). Approx. value :- ₹ 34,24,343/-

E.M.D Money:- ₹ 68,500/- Cost of

Tender Forms:- ₹ 3,000/- Completion

time/period from the date of issue of

acceptance letter : **30.06.2021**

S.N.16:- Description of works :- Zone

No. 20. MRT (Ex.) to Lxng.no.357(Ex)

to MTJ (Ex) including R.E. colony &amp;

Delhi. Lalit nagar officer's rest

house. Approx. value :- ₹ 34,43,222/-

E.M.D Money:- ₹ 68,900/- Cost of

Tender Forms:- ₹ 3,000/- Completion

time/period from the date of issue of

acceptance letter : **30.06.2021**

S.N.17:- Description of works :- Zone

No. 22 Bhojpura (Ex.) to Malaini (Ex.)

&amp; Phlibit (Ex.). Approx. value :- ₹

25,57,534/- E.M.D Money:- ₹ 51,400/-

Cost of Tender Forms:- ₹ 3,000/-

Completion time/period from the date

**IN BRIEF**

**Tablighis from Port Blair finally head home**

NEW DELHI  
Over 20 members of the Tablighi Jamaat from Andaman and Nicobar Islands, who were quarantined in Delhi, took a flight home on Wednesday. Sharfuddin (49) said they will reach Port Blair by Thursday evening. The members had been residing in quarantine centres for nearly two months, even after testing negative for the virus.

**IRS official found dead at his residence**

NEW DELHI  
A 57-year-old Indian Revenue Services (IRS) officer was found dead in his house in Chanakyapuri on Wednesday. The police got information that the victim was taken to Primus Hospital by his family where he was declared brought dead. A note has been recovered from the spot and further probe is under way.

**Gym owners appeal to PM to allow reopening**

NEW DELHI  
Representatives of over 5,000 gyms and fitness centres in the Capital have sought permission from Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to reopen from June 1 when the ongoing national lockdown concludes. As many as 100 gym owners met with the Chamber of Trade & Industry, which represents several traders' organisations in the city, over video conferencing here to discuss the issue.

**BJP asks for a migrants' welfare board**

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI  
The Delhi BJP on Wednesday demanded the setting up of a Migrant Workers' Welfare Board in the Capital on the lines of those in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Punjab.

In a letter to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri said that a board would have helped alleviate the plight of migrant workers.

"Clear information about their total number and areas of accommodation would have proved useful for the government, while providing them ration and sending them to their home States," Mr. Bidhuri wrote.

## Video shows patients lying on sidewalks

**CM thanks BJP for exposing deficiencies at GTB Hospital**

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi BJP on Wednesday released a video purportedly showing patients suffering from COVID-19 lying on sidewalks and being wheeled around Delhi government's GTB Hospital premises by their own family's members.

It argued that the govern-

# City sees record 792 new COVID-19 cases

Delhi govt. reports 15 more deaths, taking the total to 303

**STAFF REPORTER**

NEW DELHI

The Capital registered 792 new COVID-19 cases in the past 24 hours, taking the total to 15,257, according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government on Wednesday. This is the biggest single-day jump in cases in the city so far. On May 22, Delhi had seen 660 new cases in just 24 hours.

Also, 15 more deaths were reported on Wednesday, taking the total to 303. But all the deaths did not happen in the past 24 hours.

Of the 15,257 cases, 7,264 people have recovered and there are 7,690 active cases. A total of 1,84,362 COVID-19 tests have been conducted so far in the city.

The first case of COVID-19

### Virus spread

Total number of COVID-19 cases	15,257
Total deaths	303
New cases in the past 24 hours	792
New deaths	15

SOURCE: DELHI GOVERNMENT HEALTH BULLETIN

was reported in Delhi on March 2. Till April 30, only 3,515 cases were reported, but then 11,742 cases – or 76.96% of the total cases – were reported in just 27 days in May.

### Containment zone

After the Health and Family Welfare Department of the Delhi government on May 18 raised the issue of de-creas-

### DCP-rank officer infected

NEW DELHI

A DCP-rank officer in Delhi Police has tested positive for COVID-19, officials said on Wednesday. The officer is under home isolation. Contact tracing is being conducted and further steps will be taken accordingly, a senior police officer said.

ing number of containment zones in the city even though the number of COVID-19 cases was increasing, the number of such zones has increased from 73 on May 18 to 96 on Wednesday, 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.

# Safdarjung Hospital releases list of 52 virus-related deaths

Official figures show only 4 deaths at the hospital till May 13

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

NEW DELHI

Safdarjung Hospital has sent a list of 52 COVID-19 deaths, which occurred at the facility over the past two months, to the Death Audit Committee, said top Delhi government officials. The hospital had been issued multiple reminders to release the data.

The hospital's medical superintendent, Balvinder Singh, said that officials of the Delhi government are constantly changing their data collection teams due to which there has been "mis-communication" among its own staffers. The Delhi government's health bulletin showed that only four COVID-19 deaths happened at the hospital till May 13.

The Delhi government has been facing allegations of under-reporting fatalities. It has



said that all hospitals send death reports to an audit panel which sifts through the data and certifies as COVID-19 deaths only those that fulfill criteria mentioned in the Indian Council of Medical Research guidelines.

The Delhi government has maintained that the mismatch in death figures is due to audit of the data on deaths not sent earlier by hospitals.

Meanwhile, the Safdarjung Hospital has filed a police complaint with the Cyber Crime Cell over a viral audio clip of a conversation bet-

ween two unidentified men who claim that the death count due to COVID-19 at the hospital is much higher than being reported by the hospital. "This is totally fake, fabricated audio clip and is aimed at spreading panic," said a senior hospital official.

One of the men in the clip claims he is associated with the Safdarjung Hospital.

The hospital authorities added that the exact figures of admissions, in-patients, and the deceased are reported on a daily basis and that there is nothing to hide.

"We are a government hospital and have high standards of accountability. Such kind of messages break the morale of the staff who are working under great strain to provide the best care to the infected and other patients," added a hospital official.

**City riots: Jamia student sent to judicial custody for 30 days**

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**

NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Wednesday sent Jamia Millia Islamia student Asif Iqbal Tanha, booked under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, to judicial custody for 30 days in a case related to communal violence in north-east Delhi in February.

Additional Sessions Judge Dharmender Rana sent him to jail till June 25 after the police did not seek his further custody.

Tanha, a third-year student of BA in Persian language, was earlier arrested over the Jamia violence during a protest against the Citizenship Amendment Act in December last year. He was sent to judicial custody on till May 31.

The police had told the court that his custody was required in the north-east Delhi case to unearth the entire conspiracy. Advocate Sowjanya Shankaran, appearing for Mr. Tanha, said he was falsely implicated in the case.

## Assess capacity of COVID-19 helplines: HC to govts.

Court takes notice of video showing man struggling to get help for his mother

**STAFF REPORTER**

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has directed the Centre and the city government to assess the capacity of COVID-19 helplines to adequately deal with the call traffic.

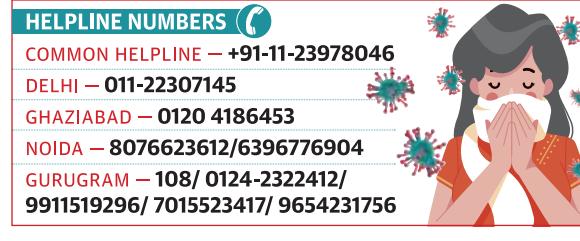
A Bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Rajnish Bhattacharjee gave the direction after taking suo moto cognizance of a video clip showing a man struggling to find a hospital bed for his COVID-19 positive mother due to unresponsive helpline numbers.

In the video, which has been widely circulated on social media, a man who identifies himself as Dharmendra

Bhardwaj says he is standing outside Max Patparganj Hospital, which told his mother to arrange for a ventilator and a bed in some other hospital after she tested positive for the virus. Mr. Bhardwaj claims he visited several hospitals, but to no avail, and that helpline number 1075 was unresponsive.

The HC remarked that the video recording raises serious issues of public concern in the present-day context.

Delhi government standing counsel Rahul Mehra submitted that some of the helpline numbers were found not to be functioning efficiently and instructions



have been issued to set the system in order. He added that the helpline number 1075 is managed by the Centre.

The Centre's counsel said that 1075 is an All-India helpline number and about three lakh calls have been received on the number.

The HC ordered the governments to "assess the adequacy of the helpline capacity and state whether the same is sufficient to deal with the present call traffic and the traffic expected in the foreseeable future".

The court has asked for a status report on June 3, the next date of hearing.

### TO ADVERTISE PLEASE CONTACT

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**THE HINDU**  
India's National Newspaper

## Two held after they fail to dispose of stolen phones

**CM thanks BJP for exposing deficiencies at GTB Hospital**

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Delhi BJP on Wednesday released a video purportedly showing patients suffering from COVID-19 lying on sidewalks and being wheeled around Delhi government's GTB Hospital premises by their own family's members.

It argued that the govern-

ment's claim of providing world-class healthcare facilities had been "exposed".

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal reacted to the video on Twitter, promising action and thanking the Opposition for exposing "deficiencies".

"This scene is an embarrassment to humankind where COVID patients are lying on the ground outside the hospital for 16 hours, somewhere a patient's family is taking a COVID patient on their own on the stretcher," Delhi BJP president Manoj Tiwari said.

Leader of Opposition Ramvir Singh Bidhuri urged the Chief Minister to "go and see" how the people of Delhi were dealing with the crisis on the ground and in hospitals.

He had also said that the a system was being set up that will inform a person about the nearest COVID hospital.

Mr. Kejriwal tweeted from the party's official handle: "I will get it fixed right now. Thank you very much for explaining our shortcomings. In this terrible tragedy, we all have to serve the people together. Wherever there is any deficiency in our system in Delhi, let us know so that we can fix it. [sic]"

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Interrogation revealed that the accused had two-three girlfriends and were in need of money.

The police said due to the ongoing lockdown, the accused were unable to sell off the stolen items.

They could not sell them due to lockdown

identified two persons. Later, the police conducted raids and arrested both the accused persons are from Sainik Nagar jhuggis, the officer said.

The victim has been identified as Naveen, a resident of Uttam Nagar. The incident happened on Friday at 5.03 a.m.

Naveen's father Hariraj (65), who called police, said he worked as a vegetable supplier. Naveen was riding his bicycle to Azadpur Mandi with his son when the incident happened.

They were hoping to dispose off the mobile phones after the lockdown ended. Twenty-one mobile phones and one tablet have been recovered from their possession. Both accused were released from jail last year, the police said.

During investigation, the police analysed the CCTV footage of the area and

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# One drowned, lakhs displaced as floods hit 11 Assam districts

Most rivers in State are in spate; body of drowned man recovered in Meghalaya

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI

A person drowned in western Assam's Goalpara district on Wednesday as the number of flood-hit districts in the State increased to 11, displacing 2.72 lakh people.

A belated report from Meghalaya said the body of a man who had drowned in an overflowing stream in East Khasi Hills district on May 23 had been recovered on Tuesday.

Officials of the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) said heavy, incessant rain has led to the flooding of 321 villages across 11 districts, up from seven on Tuesday.

"Most rivers are in spate but the Brahmaputra, Jia Bharali and Puthimari are



Women wade through a flooded street following incessant rain at Chamata in Nalbari district on Wednesday. ■PTI

flowing above the danger mark in Jorhat, Sonitpur and Kamrup districts respectively," an ASDMA spokesperson said, adding that 16,720 people have been shifted to 51 relief camps in three districts.

The other flood-affected people have made their own makeshift arrangements on

higher grounds, district officials said.

Goalpara continued to be the worst-affected district with 2.15 lakh people displaced and one person – gender not specified – killed by drowning in the Rongjuli area. Nalbari followed with 22,332 people affected, in-

cluding the inmates of the district jail.

ASDMA officials said the flood has so far damaged crop in 2,678 hectares and affected 44,331 domestic animals besides 9,350 domestic fowls. In central Assam's Dima Hasao district, landslides in three villages destroyed 18 houses, affecting 72 people. Elsewhere, three bridges were washed away and at least 240 km of roads were damaged, blocked or inundated.

#### CM meets Governor

Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal on Wednesday called on Governor Jagdish Mukhi to apprise him of the situation arising out of the dual challenge of combating COVID-19 and floods.

## South Bengal severely impacted by COVID-19 and Amphan

While the virus took away wages sent home by migrants, the cyclone has destroyed sharecroppers' paddy

SUVIJIT BAGCHI  
CHARMAHATPUR

For 31-year-old Halima Bibi, a landless sharecropper, survival over the next six months is dependent on help from neighbours and the government. Two of her financial lifelines have gone dry. The COVID-19 pandemic has snapped the allowance Ms. Halima used to receive from Kerala-based husband Alamin Mondal, while Cyclone Amphan ruined her other income source, the paddy spread over an acre in Charmahpur, a prosperous agrarian village in Nadia district.

West Bengal is the highest producer of rice in the coun-



Halima Bibi is one of over 1.5 million sharecroppers who have lost their entire produce due to Cyclone Amphan. ■

try with over half its land dedicated to rice cultivation and Ms. Halima is one of over 1.5 million sharecroppers who lost her entire produce.

"The cyclone came when I was about to remove the paddy from the field in [the next] three days," said the mother

of two teenage sons while dumping the moistened crop in front of her damaged house.

"Sob dhan-e kall beriye geche [The grain has come out of the paddy]," she explained. The soggy rabi crop will produce substandard

rice. "Most of it will go towards feeding the cow," she said. The monthly allowance of around ₹5,000 her husband used to dispatch from Kerala stopped coming from early March as the 35-year-old mason went out of work with the arrival of COVID-19.

#### Out of work

Mr. Mondal said over the phone from Kayamkulam town in Alappuzha, south Kerala, that he is confused whether to return to Nadia or not though many are boarding home-bound trains and buses. "I do not have any income and there is no job in Nadia. [Now] tell me, why should I return?"

But he is aware that his mud house by the Khorai river is damaged and the family is without any income. "I am getting some indications from the contractor – with whom I have been working for the last 15 years – that work may resume, which is the only hope left for us," said Mr. Mondal.

"With COVID-19 and Amphan, the area's economy is ruined," said Liakat Ali Jangi, the manager of Dhubulia Krishi Unnayan Samiti, a cooperative society with about 1,000 members. "Most of the farmers are now coming to the society to withdraw deposits from the [cooperative] bank and not to buy fertilizer, pesticides," he said.

"The Governor has tested negative for the illness," confirmed Ajay Varma, Press Officer to the Governor. "All the caretakers have also tested negative and shifted to guest rooms to break their possible contact with the af-

fecting area," he said.

The son of a vehicle cleaner residing on the campus

had tested positive two days ago, prompting sampling of others.

"Four of his family members, including the father, have tested positive. And another staff member

also tested positive," said Mr. Varma.

**Home quarantine**

The houses of the infected have been declared epicentres, and a containment area thrown around them. All residents within the area

voked by Sukhpal Singh Sra on the grounds that she being a Hindu got married to a Muslim and should be brought back," Gurvinder Singh Sangha, Superintendent of Police (Investigation) told *The Hindu* on Wednesday.

The police have registered a case against seven people, including Mr. Sra, and the woman's father, mother and other relatives under Sections 452 (house-trespass after preparation for hurt, assault or wrongful restraint), 148 (rioting, armed with deadly weapon) and 506 (punishment for criminal intimidation) of the IPC among others.

"We are investigating the matter and legal action as per the law would be taken. The couple has been provided protection," said Mr. Sangha.

On Tuesday, members of the right-wing outfits, including the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Bajrang Dal, staged a protest in Bathinda against the police case.

## BJP leader booked for attacking interfaith couple

The woman alleged that Sukhpal Singh Sra instigated her family members

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHANDIGARH

The Punjab police has booked a group of people, led by State BJP unit secretary Sukhpal Singh Sra, in Bathinda for allegedly attacking an interfaith couple with weapons.

The police said according to the complaint filed by the victim, a 21-year-old woman, she had willingly married a Muslim man but her family was against it. She alleged that the BJP leader instigated her family members, who earlier this week assaulted her in-laws and threw stones at their house.

"Victim's (woman) family was against the marriage. A few members of her family arrived at her in-laws' house and attacked them. The victim said her family was pro-

## OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

### DEATH

**M.R.KRANGANATHAN** (85), Retired Foreman (Non Supervisory), Maintenance Deptt, The Hind, Chennai, passed away on 27-05-2020.

Address:D-96,Hindu Colony,21st Cross Street, Nanganallur , Chennai 600061

Contact : 9841584863

### DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

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**MR. S. RAJAGOPAL (EIL & ADNOC)**

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DONATE EYES-GIFT SIGHT

# Himachal BJP chief resigns from post over 'health scam'

Rajeev Bindal says party has nothing to do with graft case

VIKAS VASUDEV

CHANDIGARH

Days after alleged corruption charges surrounding a deal in the Himachal Pradesh government's health department surfaced, the Bharatiya Janata Party's State chief Rajeev Bindal on Wednesday quit from his post on "moral high ground".

#### Letter to Nadda

Mr. Bindal, who was declared party chief in January this year, tendered his resignation to BJP national president J.P. Nadda. "...as I am the State president and we all want an investigation into the alleged corruption without any pressure. Hence, keeping in view the high moral values, I am quitting from the post... I

am only resigning on moral high ground," he wrote in his letter to the national party chief on May 27.

"A few days ago an audio of director health services went viral... following which the State government acted swiftly and he was booked and arrested. The vigilance bureau is investigating the matter. In between, a few people pointed fingers indirectly at the BJP. With full confidence I can say that the BJP has nothing to do with this episode. The BJP is absolutely clean," he wrote.

#### 'Blaming BJP is unjust'

Mr. Bindal added that pointing a finger at the BJP was unjust and also an insult to the services the State government has delivered

during the COVID-19 outbreak.

The State's Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau had on May 20 arrested the then director of health services, Ajay Kumar Gupta, and booked him under Section 7 (public servant taking gratification other than legal remuneration in respect of an official act) and Section 8 (taking gratification, in order, by corrupt or illegal means, to influence public servant) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988.

Mr. Gupta was arrested after an audio clip based on a telephone conversation surfaced in which he was purportedly heard demanding a bribe of ₹5 lakh against purchase being made by the health department.

ED files cases over seizure of drugs

DEVESHE K. PANDEY

NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate recently registered over 20 money-laundering cases in connection with the seizure of drugs by various enforcement agencies in Punjab. The findings may be incorporated in the reports to be shared with key Financial Action Task Force member nations to highlight the issue of narco-terrorism involving elements from Pakistan.

It is learnt that the agency is also initiating a probe into the seizure of 532 kg of heroin, worth about ₹2,700 crore in the international market, and 52 kg of a mixed narcotic substance by the Customs Department at the Integrated Check Post of Wagah-Attari border on June 29 last year.

## Parts of Raj Bhavan in Bhopal declared as containment area

Six residents of employees' quarters on campus test positive

SIDHARTH YADAV

BHOPAL

The Bhopal district administration on Wednesday declared part of the Madhya Pradesh Raj Bhavan as a containment area as six residents of the employees' quarters on campus have tested positive for COVID-19.

"The Governor has tested negative for the illness," confirmed Ajay Varma, Press Officer to the Governor. "All the caretakers have also tested negative and shifted to guest rooms to break their possible contact with the af-

fected area," he said.

The son of a vehicle cleaner

residing on the campus had tested positive two days ago, prompting sampling of others. "Four of his family members, including the father, have tested positive. And another staff member also tested positive," said Mr. Varma.

District officials have sanitised the campus. Whereas, a survey to detect influenza-like illnesses and severe acute respiratory infections will be undertaken in the area.

## Appeal for Identification



DD No. 11A Dated 20.05.2020 has been lodged at PS I.P. Estate, Delhi, and dead body 72 hours preserve in MAMC Morchari,

Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out information about this male but no clue has come to light so far. Any person having any information or clue about this male may kindly inform to the following.

SHO

P.S., I.P. Estate, Delhi

Ph. : 011-23370928,

09868856101

DP/118/CD/2020

No.RE/Tender/Civil/505

Dated: 26.05.2020

Name of Work: General repair and maintenance, White washing, distempering, etc. and execution of miscellaneous and Horticulture works in GM's new Camp Office at ITO and Officers Rest House at Tilak bridge, New Delhi.

1. Completion Period : 12 Months

2. Approximate Cost of the work: ₹ 29,18,849.21

3. Tender Cost: ₹ 30,000. (₹ Three Thousand Only).

4. Earnest money to be deposited: ₹ 58,400.00

5. Submission/Opening of tender: 18.06.2020 up to 15.00 hrs. for

submission of tender through www.ireps.gov.in and the Tender shall be opened online using IRPEPS portal any time after closing of tender.

6. Website particulars: www.ireps.gov.in (Where details have been uploaded).

7. Office address: Office of PCE/CORE, 1, Nawab Yusuf Road, Civil Lines Prayagraj.

NOTE: Only e-Bid shall be accepted against above tender.

DR CHIEF ENGINEER/CORE/PRAYAGRAJ





## The swarm

The locusts in western parts add a new dimension to other disasters facing India

Just last week, eastern India was battered by one of the most powerful cyclones in decades and now, even as hundreds of lives are lost every day to the coronavirus, another danger lurks on the nation's west. A burgeoning locust swarm in Rajasthan, Gujarat and even parts of Madhya Pradesh threatens to amplify into an agrarian disaster. The desert locust, as a species, is the bane of agriculture. Monitoring and tackling periodic outbreaks of the marauding insects are among the objectives of the Locust Warning Organization (LWO) in Jodhpur. There were 13 locust upsurges from 1964 to 1997, and after 2010 there was "no large scale breeding" reported. Once a significant outbreak starts, it lasts for about two years, and then there is a quietus for about eight years. LWO officials say that the swarm building up is potentially the "worst in decades".

It is a testimony to its devastating potential that an arcane piece of legislation, The East Punjab Agricultural Pests, Diseases and Noxious Weeds Act, 1949, has a provision whereby a District Collector can "...call upon any male person not below the age of 14 years resident in the district to render all possible assistance ..." and there is potential imprisonment for failure to abide by the law. Antiquated as it may sound, it is a reminder that humanity's oldest blights – plague, pestilence – will never truly be eliminated. The breeding locusts which threaten farming are an indirect fallout of the warming Indian Ocean, as some meteorologists suggest. Last year, there were fears that the monsoon may fall short because of an El Niño, or warming of the Equatorial Pacific. However there was an extreme flip. By July it was evident that a positive Indian Ocean Dipole, or relatively higher temperature in the western Indian Ocean, was in the works. This led to record-breaking rainfall in India – then a cause for cheer – as well as in eastern Africa. But moist African deserts precipitated locust breeding and favourable rain-bearing winds aided their transport towards India. On the other hand, coronavirus quarantines meant that routine coordination activities involving India, Pakistan and Afghanistan regarding spraying pesticides were halted. While it is some comfort that there is now limited standing crop in India, forecasts are for good rains in Rajasthan, and, paradoxically, conducive conditions for locust breeding during the sowing season. A less highlighted aspect of global warming is that it may link disparate disasters – floods, pandemics and pestilence – amplifying the potency of each. Improved science and technology is only making it clearer that man's follies transcend borders. This makes it necessary to abandon any territorial blame game and focus on policies that will ensure an equitable, sustainable future.

## Rising tide

China's effort to tighten grip on Hong Kong with tough laws may not help its cause

Protests and violence returned to Hong Kong on May 24. In scenes that became all-too-familiar through much of last year, police used water cannons, tear gas, and pepper spray, as a protest march descended into clashes between protesters and riot police. The weekend's march had originally been planned ahead of a debate in Hong Kong's Legislative Council (LegCo) on a new national anthem bill, which would punish anyone who insulted China's anthem with up to three years in prison. The protest assumed significance when two days before the march, China's central government stunned Hong Kong's pro-democracy parties by tabling a new national security bill, as the National People's Congress met in Beijing. The bill, expected to be passed when the NPC's annual session ends on Thursday, urges Hong Kong's legislature to pass national security laws "as soon as possible". Else, the bill leaves open the possibility that Beijing could bypass LegCo, declaring that the NPC is "authorized to draft laws" on security for Hong Kong. What has concerned pro-democracy activists in Hong Kong is a new provision for China's national security organs to "set up institutions" in the Special Administrative Region.

Under the Basic Law that has governed Hong Kong since 1997, the SAR has a high degree of autonomy "to enjoy executive, legislative and independent judicial power, including that of final adjudication"; only defence and foreign affairs are to be handled by Beijing. Article 23 of the law requires Hong Kong to pass national security legislation, but the law makes clear it is Hong Kong's legislature that enjoys the power to make and repeal laws – the bedrock of the "one country, two systems" model. In 2003, a national security bill allowing the shutting down of seditious newspapers and carrying out warrantless searches was withdrawn after protests. Beijing now argues that last year's protests, blamed on "external forces", underlined the need for a new law to curb "acts of secession and subversion". The timing of the move may reveal its motivations. Hong Kong's legislative elections are in September and the pro-Beijing camp fears losing control of LegCo, even if its unusual rules have stacked it with pro-Beijing lawmakers. Only half of the 70 seats are directly elected; the rest are nominated. Yet such is the rising tide of support for pro-democracy parties that Beijing worries it could lose the two-thirds majority needed for any amendments to the Basic Law. The pro-democracy camp swept November's district council elections, seen as a referendum on the youth-driven protests. A record 70% turnout won the pro-democracy candidates 390 of 452 seats. The elections demonstrated that public support for full democracy is growing. The new piece of legislation is aimed at tightening Beijing's grip over Hong Kong, but it may well end up having the opposite effect. Hong Kong cannot be won without its people.

# A moment to trust the teacher

The novel coronavirus crisis is the right time to create the energy for examination reform



KRISHNA KUMAR

**A** public examination in the middle of the novel coronavirus pandemic is hard to imagine. That is what the government of Tamil Nadu has decided. It will conduct the Grade X board examination from June 15. The announcement carries the usual reassurance that all arrangements have been made. Indeed, special arrangements have been made. These include sparse seating to meet the medical requirement of physical distancing between candidates. No more than 10 will sit in a room. To enable this to happen, the number of exam centres has been radically increased from over 3,000 to 12,690.

### A ritual

Nothing in the above paragraph can remind the reader that we are referring to 15-year-old children. In the discourse of public exams, children mutate into "candidates"; their names are replaced by roll numbers, schools become exam centres and teachers turn into invigilators. Every child knows how to behave in the examination hall. All examinations follow a strict ritual that has remained unchanged for over a century. A board exam has little to do with education or learning. The values it encourages children to imbibe are all negative. The prominent ones are fear of failing, sacrifice of joy and selfish competitiveness and submission to an opaque sys-

tem. The urgency felt by the Tamil Nadu government to take the Class X examination in the middle of a health emergency can only be understood as the expression of a mindset rather than reasoning. The annual exam is seen as the culmination of the academic calendar. The set pattern it follows ensures that the exam questions will have no intellectual substance. They all require rote memory. If there is any real purpose these exams can serve, it is to select a few who can proceed further and eliminate the rest. This objective is attained by dividing students into "pass"- "fail" categories and into divisions based on marks. .

### A middle path to consider

This standard argument does not fit the State of Tamil Nadu. The Class X result last year placed more than 95% of the total number of students who took the exam in the "pass" category. In several districts, the pass percentage was close to 99%. So, the exam does not fulfil the structural purpose that other States, especially the northern States, might have, such as reducing the numbers so that the limited infrastructure for the higher secondary or +2 stage proves sufficient. In Tamil Nadu, most children are likely to move on to Grade XI in the same school. This is the main ground for the recommendation made in the National Curriculum Framework (2005) for making the Grade X exam voluntary. This is a middle path that the Tamil Nadu government can consider this summer. Whenever schools reopen, children who want to take the board exam can do so. Others can carry on in the next grade.



All that the matriculate exam might achieve in Tamil Nadu is to sort students, on the basis of their marks, into different subject streams. This is hardly a worthwhile reason to risk the spread of the virus or to harass the young.

It is a matter of belief that marks attained in the Grade X Board exam are a reasonable basis for judging who should study what. One

might consider this as a valid argument if the exam papers and marking scheme of the Grade X exam had some substance. The questions are so uniformly inane, and quite a few so mechanically silly, that a good or bad score shows little more than preparedness for facing the exam. That is all that the exam judges: Here is a question asked in an earlier exam: "Why is world peace an essential one?" There is a fixed answer to it and the teacher's job is to ensure that the child gives just that answer rather than say that the question is poorly worded and is, in fact, a bit of nonsense.

### The meaning of 'refresh'

It is the job of teachers to ensure that every child is all set for the kind of questions that are asked. Teachers are rightly complaining that the notice period given for the June exam is much too short to "refresh" the children. By "refresh" they mean activate children's rote memory into perfor-

mance mode. Classes had to be suspended just when teachers had completed winding up the rote memory key. Three months later, the key has shed its tension. If you want the toy to dance out the programmed steps on the required date and time, give more time: that is what the teachers are saying. Considering their highly compromised professional and intellectual role, they are right. Had they enjoyed some real autonomy in teaching and assessment, they would have told the government not to worry about using exam scores to sort children into subject streams.

If you visit the website of Tamil Nadu's Directorate of Examinations and study last year's Class X results, you will come across this interesting statement. "The highest pass percentage was recorded in Tirupur district at 98.53 percent, followed by Ramanathapuram with 98.48 percent and Namakkal with 98.45 percent". When I read this statement, I wondered wherein lay its meaning or significance. The pass percentage of the three districts was almost identical. Moreover, it was so high that the small difference cannot be suspected to carry or convey a message that exam results often carry. No one can convincingly argue that the children and teachers of Namakkal are not as good as Ramanathapuram because the pass percentage of the latter is .03% more. The obvious fact is that all three districts have done well.

So, what exactly is the board asking us to notice by highlighting the micro difference in their pass percentages? A similar point can be made about the tag line claiming that "girls outshine boys" just because the girls' pass percentage

is slightly higher.

### Crisis and change

Some disasters teach lessons; the experience of going through a crisis can create the desire for reform. But it is hard to imagine that the novel coronavirus crisis will create energy for examination reform. A system so well-established as the board exam does not easily yield to pressure for improvement. The board system has successfully resisted the criticism and recommendations articulated by countless committees and individuals. Even a minor improvement in the exam system will demand an effort sustained over several years during which a regime may change and the officer-in-charge may get shifted or retire. If we do not wish to feel cynical, a good starting point for change is to think of an alternative name for the certificate a child gets after passing the Class X Board exam: "school leaving certificate". Once upon a time, the matriculate examination carried a lot of weight and only a handful proceeded towards further education. Today, the overwhelming majority of children do not want to leave the school after Class X. Tamil Nadu is among very few States left where the term 'school leaving certificate' is used. Ironically, these are the States with the highest rate of transition from Class X to XI. Let us hope a virulent virus will impel these States to drop an obsolete title. The next step will be to start trusting the teacher and nurture the growth of a school-based system of evaluation.

Krishna Kumar is a former Director of the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT)

# The echo of migrant footfalls and the silence on policy

There are four things that need to be done in the country in the wake of the pandemic crisis



SANJOY HAZARIKA

**W**hen we hear the word migration, we think of Kerala and West Asia, or the United States and the West. However, the number of Indians who have migrated over the past decades to these geographies is minuscule compared to the vastness of the movement within the country. A few years ago, I came across an estimate of over 300 million for the scale of internal migration in India. This is nearly three times the official figures which are being cited now. The number is high because migration also takes place within a State, not just between States or across international borders. The estimate for China at the time was similar.

Across the world, every year, people migrate for work, livelihoods, marriage, seeking refuge, business and even peace of mind.

### A number that is growing

Last December, an economist provided figures, based on the 2011 national census, showing that the number of internal migrants had grown by another 100 million. Or that a third of India's population – one in every three Indians – are migrants. The figures are even more daunting when one realises that many of them are from the poorer States of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and Odisha although Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana send substantial numbers while there are smaller groups from the

### Northeast.

Most of them are unskilled, semi-skilled labour or skilled labour.

Apart from anecdotal social and political science, the scale of the movement across India, within States, not just across inter-State borders is breathtaking.

According to World Bank economist, Supriyo De, "The number of internal migrants in India was 450 million as per the most recent 2011 Census. This is an increase of 45% over the 309 million recorded in 2001. This far exceeds the population growth rate of 18% across 2001-2011. Internal migrants as percentage of population increased from 30% in 2001 to 37% in 2011." The figure 450 million is more than double the population of Bangladesh, it is under half the population of Europe and more than that of the U.S. These are the people who with their blood, sweat, hands and tears, build this nation. And the central government, many State governments and many of us have let them down horribly.

They are the people who were given a four-hour warning of the first lockdown, which has been followed by successive extensions by the Centre. When they found no transport – train and bus – they chose to walk. They walked by day on the highways and they walked by night, they walked on broken roads to avoid police beatings and barricades, they tried to hitch rides on empty trucks and even cement dumpers. They rested by night, under the stars, sometimes on railway tracks. So fearful were they of sarkar and harm that would come to them and their loved ones if they were caught. That is the fear of and loathing for authority that ordinary people nourish in this country. But the



love of home was greater than both. Ultimately this desperate longing for home killed a number of them, one group of 14 most violently and tragically on a railway track. Frugal meals of rotis, some vegetables and fruit lay scattered after the dance of death along with their many sandals and clothes after being mowed down by a goods train as they slept the sleep of the exhausted and then the dead.

### Use of the military

It is important to dwell on this because of some extraordinary, publicly expressed opinions by some who have advocated the use of the armed forces to tackle such situations. The idea has been that the military should open up its sprawling and efficient networks, processes and personnel. Such views were being aired even as stand-offs were continuing to take place, and still continue, between Indian and Chinese troops in Sikkim and Ladakh, thousands of kilometres apart, underlining the core tasks of an army.

A former Navy chief, advocating the idea the armed forces should be at the heart of a massive relief operation, said that "the armed forces have tremendous resources, they have the organisation and can jump in blind folded and render instant succour." This is a laudable wish but spoken with casualness for the value of human life. It is not an issue of whether Army

personnel have personal protective equipment or not – if they do, and these may be to handle biological attacks, should the Army reveal its strategic arsenal and also expose itself to huge risks?

Such remarks reveal the usual knee jerk response to the use of the military during crises, as a first resort and not the last. Not only that it underlines a complete lack of comprehension of the complex dynamics of migration and why people leave or return. As the economist cited earlier, Sudipto De, said, "Internal migration, the movement of people within a country, results in a more efficient allocation of human resources to sectors and regions where they are better utilized."

We have seen too often, and for too long, the cynical use of the Army for dealing with issues arising out of political failure to engage early on in ethnic strife, leading to bloody confrontations and the loss of life of civilians, soldiers as well as armed non-state rebels. We are familiar with the painful history of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act and the way it has been used to tackle insurrections in the Northeast.

This is a time to decentralise political power and arm the States with greater decision-making capacity. India lives in the States, not in Delhi or State capitals. Our States need to be provided more funds; the Centre needs to sustain, support, emulate and reward/award those like Kerala which have done remarkably well in this crisis. It is not a time to concentrate more powers in an already hugely centralised and arbitrary dispensation.

There are four things which need to be done, as the flight home, the flight from nowhere,

has shown to a waiting, distressed country.

One, relearn sustainable economics at the feet of Mahatma Gandhi not the NITI Ayog or the Reserve Bank of India – India still lives in villages and small towns not cities.

Second: rebuild the rural economy based on building the household. That is the key and the target. Use the Swachh Bharat network to strengthen cottage industries which have been killed by huge industry (which cannot work at more than nominal capacity); give the latter incentives to buy from rural manufacturers and thus generate rural employment, not migration or distress, so that farm incomes are supplemented. Equip and empower artisans with better skills, design, capacity and technology, access to capital and markets.

### Have a plan

Three: formalise Work from Home and design a Migration Plan – support people to work in their States or near their cluster of villages so that they are not far from home especially after this wrenching experience where employers have dismissed and disowned them, governments have failed them and, for the most, non-governmental organisations and relief workers have come to their rescue

Four: Move funding from current planning which benefits corporates to States, panchayats and municipalities; in addition, increase allocation on health, women, children and education to 20% of the national Budget and release these funds to the States.

Sanjoy Hazarika is International Director, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI). The views expressed are personal.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

### Nehruvian ideology

As a tribute to Jawaharlal Nehru on his death anniversary, the article, "Continue India's tryst with Nehruvian ideology" (Editorial page, May 27) has showered lavish praise on independent India's first Prime Minister. While agreeing with many of his observations about Nehru's commitment to secularism, one finds that the writer's insinuation about Patel's secularist credentials seems unwarranted. Hindu nationalism was an essential component of the Independence movement. The nation has paid a heavy price for Nehru's failure to accommodate the

legitimate aspirations and concerns of Hindu nationalist leaders in the party who cooperated in the drafting of a secularist constitution. Blinded by ideological puritanism, and ignoring India's cultural history, Nehru erred in conflating Hindu nationalism as communalism, a folly that successive Congress regimes perpetuated. Treating secularism as an ideology and as a political slogan to woo certain constituencies, the Congress overstretched its meaning to gain anti-majority undertones. It may appear as counter-intuitive, Nehru's failure to

invest secularism with a broader and fair vision that treated all faiths equally sowed the seeds for the BJP's spectacular rise to power.

V.N. MUKUNDARAJAN,  
Thiruvananthapuram

While appreciating and acknowledging his calibre, charisma and administrative capabilities, it is a harsh and bitter reality that Nehru treated the Congress party as his personal fiefdom, stifled inner-party democracy and created a coterie around him. The resulting casualty has been the lack of transparency and inner-party democracy in the Grand Old Party of India,

which continues to be its perennial bane to this day. The former Prime Minister cannot absolve himself from the responsibility of finding an amicable solution to the Kashmir imbroglio at a time when India maintained cordial relations with the United States and the USSR. It is rather strange that the Congress which deviated from the Nehruvian ideology in terms of economic policy more than two decades back, swears by his legacy for political gains.

B. SURESH KUMAR,  
Coimbatore

Court steps in  
That the Supreme Court of India has finally turned its

focus toward the migrant worker crisis is cause for joy and hope. One hopes that the basic needs of the hapless are met immediately and a plan drawn up to

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:  
A sentence in the Editorial page article titled "Continue India's tryst with Nehruvian ideology" (May 27, 2020) read: "It is also important to note that Nehru was in the U.S. at this time [1947] and Patel was at the helm in India." It should have read: "It is also important to note that Nehru was in the U.S. and Patel was at the helm in India on October 17, 1949 when Article 370 was eventually adopted by the Constituent Assembly of India."

The first Editorial "For farms and farmers" (May 25, 2020) said: "Besides the Centre's PM-KISAN scheme that provides ₹6,000 to farm families owning less than five acres of land, Telangana, Odisha and Andhra Pradesh have similar cash transfer programmes for farmers." As rightly pointed out by a reader, the PM-KISAN scheme originally started out for small farm families owning less than two hectares of land. However, after the Lok Sabha polls, it was expanded to all land-owning farm households (with some exceptions) irrespective of the size of land holdings.

# Enjoying the fruits of their labour

Farmers deserve the freedom to market their produce at a place of their choice



M. VENKAIAH NAIDU



"Farmers are the cornerstone of food security of our country." Farmers harvest rice in a field on the outskirts of Bhubaneswar. ■ AP

Today, India is a leading producer of a variety of agricultural and allied produce and exporter of some of them. This is due to the relentless hard work and efforts of our farmers against the odds. They are the epitome of the *Nishkam Karma* philosophy taught by Krishna to Arjuna during the Kurukshetra War: "Karmany Vadhikaraste Ma Phaleshu Kada Chana" (Do your duty without expecting the fruits of your labour). Farmers toil day and night, through winter and summer, whether or not they get adequate returns. But they are not the masters of the price of their toil. As the son of a farmer, I have been witness to the trials and tribulations of farmers.

If any class of economic agents of our country has been denied the constitutional right of freedom of trade, it is farmers. They don't have the freedom of selling their produce even in their neighbourhood. Remunerative price is still a mirage for them. Their farm incomes are at the mercy of markets, middlemen and money lenders. For every rupee that a farmer makes, others in the supply chain get much more. Both farmers and consumers are the sufferers of the exploitative procurement and marketing of farm produce. Despite increasing public investments in irrigation and other infrastructure, the steadily rising institutional credit given to farmers, and minimum support price due to the efforts of various governments over the years, farmers are shackled when it comes to selling their produce.

#### Restrictions on farmers

This exploitation has its roots in the Bengal famine of 1943, World War II, and the droughts and food shortages of the 1960s. The Essential Commodities Act, 1955, and the Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) Acts of the States are the principle sources of violation of the rights of farmers to sell their produce at a price of their choice. These two laws severely restrict the options of farm-

ers to sell their produce. Farmers continue to be the victims of a buyers' market. This is the principal cause of their exploitation. Renowned farm scientist M.S. Swaminathan has for long argued for the right of farmers to sell their produce as they deem fit.

The country is still far from ensuring efficient value chains for farm produce for want of required infrastructure like cold storage, stocking facilities, and transport of perishable commodities. Often, farmers are forced to dump their produce on the roads or offer it to cattle.

Farmers are the cornerstone of food security of our country. We have come a long way from the ship-to-mouth existence under the PL480 programme of the U.S. to being the leading producer of many kinds of farm produce. But farmers have not got their due. All that they have been getting are platitudes on ceremonial occasions and in the legislatures during the customary debates on their plight. Farmers were assured that restrictions on the freedom of marketing would be removed, but that assurance was never kept. Despite that, farmers never stopped work and continued to feed the nation.

Given the economic disparities in the country, the interests of consumers need to be protected. But should that be at the cost of the producers of the very commodities that the consumers need? For various reasons, a balance in this regard could not be struck. The restrictive trade and marketing policies being practised with

respect to agricultural prices have substantially eroded the incomes of farmers. A study on agricultural policies in India by the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations-Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2018), co-authored by the renowned farm economist Ashok Gulati, was published with startling revelations. It concluded that the restrictions on agricultural marketing amounted to 'implicit taxation' on farmers to the tune of ₹45 lakh crore from 2000-01 to 2016-17. This comes to ₹2.56 lakh crore per year. No other country does this.

#### Much-awaited freedom

While all and sundry have reiterated over the years that something must be done for farmers, the first formal actionable announcement on doing away with restrictions on the marketing freedom of farmers came only now. Further to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's announcement of a ₹20 lakh crore stimulus to rev up the economy, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman unveiled the details of a package for the agriculture and allied sectors.

Apart from the approximately ₹4 lakh crore support package for farming and allied sectors, aimed at improving infrastructure and enhancing credit support, the most welcome feature of this package is the firm commitment to rewriting the Essential Commodities Act and the APMC laws. The revision of these restrictive laws is long overdue and

will remove the hurdles that farmers face in getting a remunerative price for their produce by giving them more options to sell. This long-awaited revision needs to be undertaken with care and responsibility so that no space or scope is left for farmers to be exploited yet again. And this rewrite should be done at the earliest. While allowing several buyers to directly access the produce from the farmers, a strong and effective network of Farm Producers' Organisations should be created to enhance the bargaining power of farmers. This will ensure that individual farmers are not exploited. An effective law on contract farming is also the need of the hour, to secure incomes of farmers besides enabling private investments. Dr. Gulati, in a recent article, termed this announcement as "a 1991 moment for agriculture". I can't agree more with him. It is a major reform.

Yet another unique feature of this package has been its comprehensiveness towards improving the incomes of farmers through a range of activities. A study by the National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management has revealed that of the 3,500 farmers' suicides examined, there was no farmer who had supplementary incomes from dairy or poultry. The huge support to animal husbandry and fisheries in the stimulus package underlines the need for diversifying the income sources of farmers.

I recall that in 1977, the entire country was declared as one food zone. This benefited both farmers and consumers. It is time to allow our farmers to sell their produce anywhere for their benefit. All stakeholders should be taken on board while revising restrictive agri-marketing laws.

During the pandemic, many are working from home. But farmers have no such option as they have to work in their fields. Despite the lockdown, they continue to sow wheat, paddy, pulses, etc. In fact, farm output is greater than what it was last year. Our farmers, the pride of our country, deserve the long-awaited freedom to market their produce at a place of their choice. It should become a reality at the earliest.

M. Venkaiah Naidu is the Vice-President of India

# Helping supply chains recover

Not a fiscal stimulus, but cutting government expenditure, removing price controls, and opening up trade will help



VIPIN P. VEETIL & KUMAR ANAND

supply chain must adapt. Firms may, for instance, choose to source inputs from suppliers in their geographical proximity to minimise the risk of future disruptions. This involves building productive capacity at new locations, all of which requires investments fuelled by savings. Furthermore, the investments must be guided by price signals. Within a market economy, the movement of prices provides the incentive and information needed to adapt and grow. As economist Ronald Coase put it, prices are bundles of information wrapped in an incentive. As the prices of some inputs rise, the buyers of these inputs look for alternate suppliers, and firms which did not hitherto produce the good have an incentive to do so. The key to economic recovery lies in millions of such adjustments through which firms locate new providers of inputs, new buyers of their output, and build factories at new locations.

#### Why stimulus packages won't help

Unfortunately, market adjustment processes are likely to be disrupted by government stimulus packages. Governments spend by printing money, raising debt, or increasing taxes. Irrespective of the way in which the expenditure is funded, resources are transferred from private entrepreneurs to government bureaucrats. When governments print money, they draw resources through inflation. Bureaucrats tend to be less efficient than profit-motivated firms in allocating scarce resources. Bureaucrats have little incentive or information to bring about the granular supply chain adjustments necessary to revive growth. As the stimulus package kicks in, economic efficiency is likely to decline and so are the chances of a timely recovery of output.

So what can the government do? The experience of West Germany after World War II has a useful lesson. Beginning mid-1944, Allied bombing disrupted the German supply chain by targeting bottleneck sectors like electric power generation. This destruction of the supply chain devastated the German economy. Per person food production fell to about half of its pre-war level. Two years later, this changed after Chancellor Ludwig Erhard lifted price controls and cut taxes. West German entrepreneurs re-established a thriving supply chain through which goods went from upstream sectors to final consumers. By 1950, per capita income in West Germany had reached its pre-war level.

The recent supply chain disruptions are likely to last long. The path to recovery lies in cutting government expenditure, removing price controls, and opening up trade.

Vipin P. Veetil is Assistant Professor at IIT-Madras and Kumar Anand is an economist based in Delhi

# Of firms and nations

In the post-COVID world, the relevance of Williamson's and Alesina's work will only deepen

CHIRANTAN CHATTERJEE

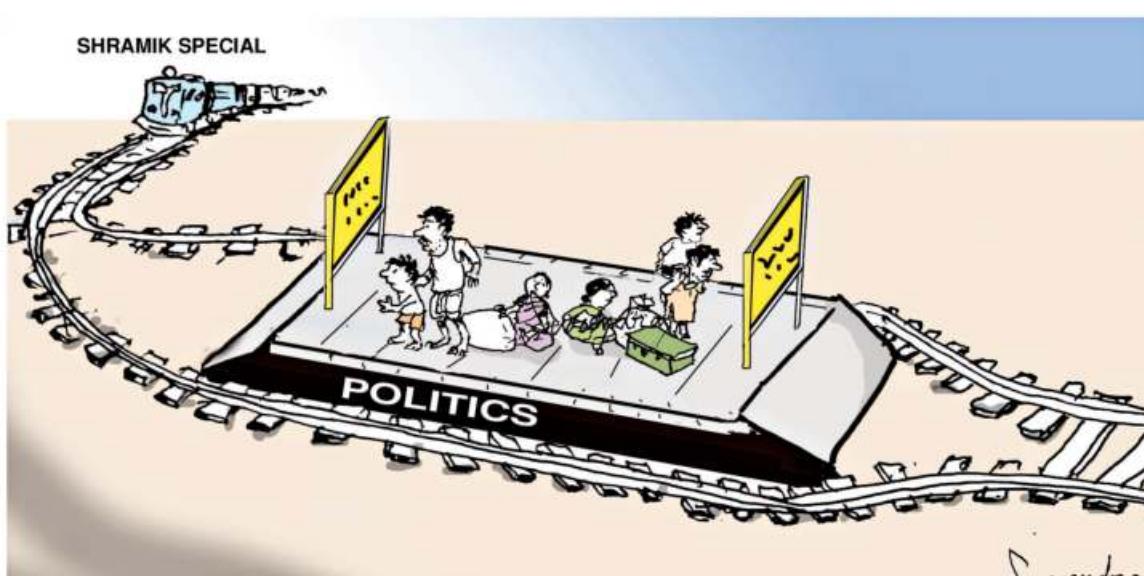
Within just a few days, economics has lost two leading lights. Oliver Williamson, the Nobel Laureate from the University of California, Berkeley, died at 87 on May 21. This was soon followed by the sudden demise of Alberto Alesina, Harvard political economist, aged 63. I didn't have the opportunity to be taught by either of them or to do research with them, but in the little work I do, in understanding how regulation impacts firm behaviour and competitive advantage, and how non-market factors here influence this relationship, Williamson and Alesina keep coming back with their influential work.

**The optimal size**  
Both Williamson and Alesina moved out of the shadows of their advisers over time to carve out their own niche. While this is a noteworthy point in following the scholarly trajectory of both, the other is how between them they spanned two key tenets of an economy. One examined the optimal size of a firm, and the other, the optimal size of a nation. Williamson, in fact, focused his entire body of work on a new unit of analysis. He posited that to understand the optimal size of firms, one needs to focus on transactions and contracts as the unit of analysis. These, he argued, ultimately influences how large or vertically integrated firms became.

Meanwhile, Alesina dealt with the question of what is the optimal size of nations. In his book, *The Size of Nations*, with his co-author Enrico Spolaore, Alesina argued that the optimal size of a country is determined by a trade-off between the benefits of size and the costs of heterogeneity. In a large country, per capita costs may be low, but the heterogeneous preferences of a large population make it hard to deliver services and formulate policy. Smaller countries may find it easier to respond to citizen preferences in a democratic way.

In a world where globalisation, inequality and technology were impacting, till recently, how nations and firms evolve, Alesina and Williamson left indelible imprints in advancing the fields of political economy and new institutional economics. Our current lives with a pandemic shock are going to further reshape firms and nations tomorrow, and the relevance of Williamson and Alesina tomorrow will only deepen.

Chirantan Chatterjee is a faculty member at IIM Ahmedabad and Visiting Fellow at Hoover Institution, Stanford University

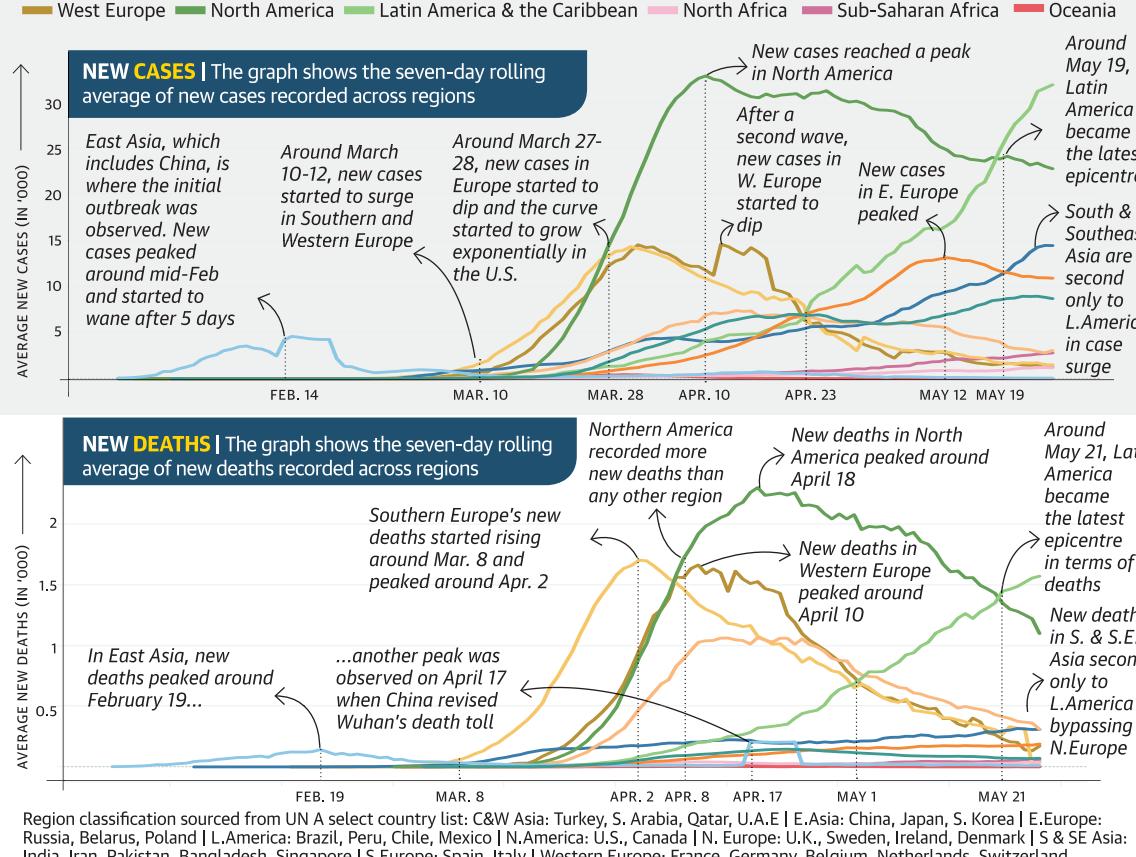


#### DATA POINT

## Continental shifts

Since its emergence in January, the COVID-19 outbreak's epicentre has gone through three major shifts. First, it moved from East Asia to the Southern and Western parts of Europe, then to North America, and then to Latin America and some parts of Asia. By The Hindu Data Team

**Key |** Central & West Asia ■ East Asia ■ South & Southeast Asia ■ East Europe ■ North Europe ■ South Europe  
■ West Europe ■ North America ■ Latin America & the Caribbean ■ North Africa ■ Sub-Saharan Africa ■ Oceania



#### The Hindu

#### FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO MAY 28, 1970

Peaceful polling in Ceylon

Polling in the whole of Ceylon to day (May 27), backed up by light security arrangements and an alerted Army, went off peacefully with no major incident reported from anywhere in the island. A record 85 per cent of the island's five and a half million voters were reported to have exercised their franchise in a highly disciplined manner in the keen tussle between Prime Minister Mr. Dudley Senanayake and the opposition leader Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike, to head the government for the next five years. It was officially stated about 50 young persons were put behind the bars during the last one month. They were believed to have connection with an alleged plot by "Che Guevara" type revolutionaries to disrupt the poll by sporadic terrorist raids on polling booths and police stations. Ruling Front and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party-led Opposition circles concede that it is a neck-and-neck race between them.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MAY 28, 1920

A scape-goat – of sorts  
(From an editorial)

If the majority report of the Hunter Committee is viewed in India with feelings of mingled indignation and despair, those feelings are not mitigated by the opinions expressed by the authoritative voices of the European community. One despairs of any harmonious co-operation in the future between the two races when on so vital a matter, with issues so clearly defined, the ordinary standards of judgment are cast to the winds and the worst passions of racial prejudice are called into play. An India which was led to believe that there is no half-way house between right and wrong has now to learn that circumstances alter cases, that what was sauce for the German goose is not necessarily sauce for the British gander. The prevailing opinion among the European community appears to be that General Dyer was butchered to make a seditionists' holiday. Their hearts, we are assured, go out to him in this hour of travail. An honest, conscientious soldier who did his duty and was cruel to be kind has been sacrificed to appease the clamor of Indian politicians. This view is echoed, as will be seen from a cable appearing elsewhere, by an expounder of the doctrines of the Prince of Peace who claims that General Dyer saved not only the Punjab but the whole of India. He protests against making of such a man a scape-goat.

## FROM PAGE ONE

## Trump offers to mediate between India and China

"At present, the situation in the border areas between China and India is generally stable and controllable," China's MoFA spokesperson Zhao Lijian said at a briefing.

"Between the two countries, we have good border related mechanism and communication channels. We are capable of resolving related issues properly through dialogue and consultation," he added.

"China and India communicate through established border-related mechanisms and diplomatic channels, including communication between local border troops, diplomatic departments and embassies of the two countries," he remarked, in responses at the briefing that appeared to signal a détente in the month-long standoff between the two armies.

Mr. Trump's comments were also surprising as the Centre has so far not said that the situation at the LAC was serious in any way, and (With inputs from Ananth Krishnan)

has stressed that "established mechanisms" were being applied to resolve the issue. In the only official statement made to date on the LAC tensions, the MEA spokesperson had accused Chinese troops of "hindering normal patrol patterns", although sources on the ground have said that PLA troops have moved in, in considerable numbers.

Attacking the government for not providing enough information on the situation along the LAC, the Congress party called the "stand-off" a matter of "serious national concern".

"The differing accounts in national and international media of escalation and continuing stalemate has caused anxiety among the people of India," said the opposition party's senior spokesperson Anand Sharma, even as he urged the government to "take the nation into confidence" on the issue.

(With inputs from Ananth Krishnan)

## Commanders' meet begins amid standoff

"The Army has matched Chinese ingress on the ground and we are prepared to sit there longer, if needed. It is now for diplomacy and political leadership to reach an understanding to sort out the issue," one officer said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Sources say deliberations are going on daily between the local commanders at different levels up to the rank of Major-General, but there has been no breakthrough. Given this, several officers say it is for diplomacy to work. The extent of the standoff across eastern Ladakh is unlike in the past, so it has to be taken up at the highest level, according to another officer.

Separately, in the first comments by a senior Minister, Minister of State for Road Transport and High-

## ICMR removes ₹4,500 cap on COVID-19 test

It has reiterated that pregnancy care management, newborn care and childhood illness management are among the essential services.

In its latest guidance note on the provision of Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child, Adolescent Health + Nutrition (RMNCAH+N) services during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry has said, "Any area exiting a 'containment/buffer zone' can start RMNCAH+N activities after a minimum gap of 14 days following de-listing, while an area entering a 'containment/buffer zone'

should restrict RMNCAH+N activities immediately and follow listed protocol."

The Health Ministry has said not-for-profit/private sector hospitals can be involved in the provision of non-COVID-19 essential services wherever the public sector capacity needs to be supported.

All facilities have been directed to follow a staggered approach, where adequate seating space for beneficiaries and caregivers with physical distancing is ensured and community-based activities should have limited participation (5-10 at a time," it said.

## A full lockdown is damaging; Rahul Gandhi

Mr. Gandhi's interaction with both the experts were centred on the question of exit strategy to get out of the lockdown. He posed this question to both the experts. The lockdown, he said, had brought about a psychological change. "When you classify the disease and then you say that we are going to have a lockdown, you change the psychology of the people, of the population, who are suddenly convinced that this is a very dangerous thing... you can't just blow open the doors," Mr. Gandhi said, speaking to Prof. Jha.

Mr. Gandhi claimed that he had been told unofficially by bureaucrats that the reasons testing figures were low was because it would "frighten the people". Prof. Jha agreed that while the lockdown helped in slowing down the spread of the virus, it could not be the goal unto itself. He also

said that the government should communicate to the public and be candid about it. He said that the projections that the virus would slow down in next few months were wrong. Till a vaccine was found, which could take up to 18 months, life will more or less remain the same as it was under the lockdown.

Mr. Gandhi said that during his interactions with the migrant labourers he understood that it was the uncertainty of what lay in the future that was frightening for them.

Mr. Gandhi claimed that he had been told unofficially by bureaucrats that the reasons testing figures were low was because it would "frighten the people".

Surveys show the pre-

## Kerala reports three 'community' cases

Fatalities in south continue with six deaths in T.N., six in Telangana; three in Karnataka and one in A.P.

### SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Telangana recorded six deaths and 107 COVID-19 cases on Wednesday, the highest in a day, with its total cases put at 2,098.

Three persons succumbed in Yadgir, Bidar, and Vijayapura, in Karnataka. One death and 134 fresh cases were reported in Andhra Pradesh.

COVID-19 cases continued to go up in Kerala with 40 more testing positive. All except three were ex-

### COVID-19

patriates and non-resident Keralites (NoRks) from other States. Among new cases, nine had come from abroad while 28 were NoRks.

Three persons were believed to have contracted the disease from the community.

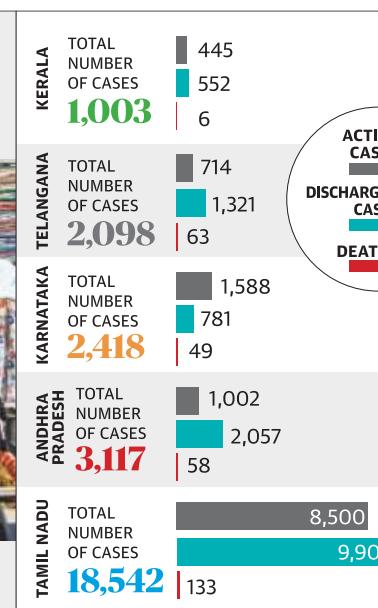
Kasaragod accounted for 10 cases, Palakkad eight, Alappuzha (7), Kollam (4), Pathanamthitta (3), Wayanad (3), Ernakulam (2), Kozhikode (2)

### Some respite

With the Andhra Pradesh government relaxing the lockdown norms, textile shops have started opening for business after a long gap



**So much to choose from:** Customers at a shop in One Town, Vijayawada, on Wednesday. ■ V. RAJU



and Kannur (1). Ten patients recovered from illness.

Currently, 445 patients were undergoing treatment in various hospitals. Of the 1,003 COVID-19 cases reported by the State so far, 542 had recovered.

The death of three more persons raised Karnataka's fatalities to 47. The State re-

corded 135 new COVID-19 cases on Wednesday, and the total stood at 2,418.

In Yadgir, a 69-year-old woman who returned from Maharashtra was brought dead to a designated hospital on May 20. Her samples tested positive on Wednesday.

While a 49-year-old male with severe acute respiratory

illness and uncontrolled diabetes died in Bidar, an 82-year-old man from Vijayapura, with fever, cough, chest pain and breathlessness, died on May 26.

Of the 135 new cases, 116 were inter-State travellers and two had international travel history.

Among new cases, Kal-

## Row over naming of flyover in Bengaluru

Oppn. against naming it after Savarkar

### SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT BENGALURU

The invitation extended by the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) for inauguration of the Yelahanka flyover sparked off a political controversy on Wednesday with the initial intimation indicating that it would be named after Hindutva ideologue V.D. Savarkar.

As opposition leaders, including two former Chief Ministers, took to Twitter to strongly criticise the move, the civic body was quick to re-issue another invitation. This time, the invitation mentioned just the inauguration of the flyover without naming it.

Former Chief Ministers H.D. Kumaraswamy and Sid-

daramaiah took to social media platforms to express their opposition to the move soon after the first intimation came. They demanded that the State government rescind its decision and name the flyover after a freedom fighter from Karnataka.

BBMP Commissioner B.H. Anil Kumar told *The Hindu* that though the civic body's council had passed a resolution naming the flyover after V.D. Savarkar, the government was yet to approve of the same.

K.A. Muneendra Kumar, BBMP's ruling party leader, claimed that he was confident of the government approving the council resolution.

## Kerala to conduct 3,000 tests daily

State does not have shortage of PCR test kits now, says Chief Minister

### SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala has decided to do more diagnostic PCR testing for COVID-19 and increase the number of tests per day to 3,000, as the influx of expatriates and non-resident Keralites from other parts of the country where disease transmission is intense has necessitated a better containment strategy.

On Tuesday, the expert committee headed by B. Ekbal, member, State Planning Board, pointed out at the review meeting convened by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan that community transmission could not be ruled out in the State now and that testing had to be augmented in a big way. He said it was highly likely that community transmission had already

happened in the State as several isolated cases had surfaced with no known source of infection.

On Wednesday, the Chief Minister said here that the State had been facing an acute shortage of PCR testing kits and RNA extraction kits in the initial stages of disease transmission. However, the State now had a stock of 88,781 PCR kits, 10,012 RNA

extraction kits, and 1,28,450 swabs. There were 14 labs in the public sector and six in the private sector. The State had the capacity to do up to 5,000 tests daily.

Public health experts have been pointing out for long that the State was not using PCR testing adequately in the second stage of disease containment.

### PCR sample testing

In the absence of reliable antibody tests, the State had started sentinel surveillance studies on April 23 using PCR to determine community transmission.

It collected 900 random naso/oropharyngeal samples every week from high-risk groups like health-care workers and those with high social exposure in all districts. This was

augmented to 3,000 samples a week on May 14.

In between, Kerala also did a one-time sample study (augmented sample survey) on April 26, when 3,000 samples were collected in a day from districts and sent for testing. However, till May 13, the average daily PCR samples tested remained at 800-1,000. It was only from May 14, when imported cases began to spike, that this was increased to 1,000-2,000 samples.

As on May 27, Kerala has tested 58,866 routine samples and 9,095 samples as part of sentinel surveillance. Even when it was said that Kerala was doing comparatively fewer tests, the State argued that its test numbers were proportionate to its active detected cases.

## Churches, mosques to open on June 1, says Yediyurappa

'Norms like social distancing will also be applicable to them'

### SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT BENGALURU

A day after the Karnataka government decided to reopen nearly 35,000 Muzrai temples from June 1, Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa on Wednesday said churches and mosques too would be allowed to reopen from that date.

Speaking to reporters, the Chief Minister said the norms applicable to temples such as social distancing would also be applicable to churches and mosques.

"Once we say temples can open, churches and mosques should also open. There will be no restrictions

on them. But the State government has been awaiting the Union government's permission for reopening," he said. "We want permission from Delhi. I have written a letter. The expectation is that mostly we will get permission."

On Tuesday, Muzrai Minister Kota Srinivas Poojary held a meeting with the Chief Minister and had announced that government-owned temples, which were closed for over two months owing to COVID-19 lockdown, would be reopened from June 1. Asked about the opening of hotels and restaurants, he said he had

written to the Prime Minister on that issue too.

Meanwhile, the High Court of Karnataka has issued Standard Operating Procedure for the High Court and the district courts for resuming partial functioning across the State from June 1. While the HC will hear urgent cases through videoconferencing in three forenoon sessions between 10.30 a.m. and 1.30 p.m., the final hearing cases will be taken up in the physical courts in the afternoon session from 2.30 p.m. to 4.45 p.m.

Only eight courts, two Division Benches and six Single Benches will be made available during sitting days in the High Court.

Unconnected to the gas leak, the company had already been classified as an environmental violator.

It had been operating the plant without an appropriate licence from the Centre and was doing so on

ly under approval by the State environmental body. In 2017, the Environment Ministry created a provision for such companies, who were "violators", to apply for permission for a chance at properly legalising their operations.

This would involve paying a fine and satisfying the Expert Appraisal Committee that they had established processes to run the plant complying with environment laws.

## Invasive mussel is spreading rapidly in Kerala's backwaters

Charru mussel has, in many places, replaced the Asian green mussel

sence of the Charru mussel in the Kadinaikulam, Paravur, Edava-Nadaya, Ashtamudi, Kayamkulam, Vembanad, Chettuvu and Ponnani estuaries/backwaters. Ashtamudi Lake, a Ramsar site in Kollam district, remains the worst-hit. With a population as high as 11,384 per sq metre here, it has replaced the Asian green mussel (*Perna viridis*) and the edible oyster *Magallana bilineata* (known locally as murunga).

Externally, the Charru mussel resembles the green and brown mussels (kallumekkai in Malayalam), but is much smaller in size. Its colour varies from black to brown, purple or dark green.

The rapid spread of the Charru mussel (*Mytella strigata*) may have been triggered by Cyclone Ockhi. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Kumar and Ravinesh R. of the Department of Aquatic Biology and Fisheries, University of Kerala, Graham Oliver of the National Museum of Wales, S. K. Tan of the National University of Singapore, and Kalesh Sadanandan of the Travancore Natural History Society.

In Ashtamudi Lake, the Charru mussel had established breeding populations in 2018 and 2019, acquiring the moniker 'varathan kakka' (alien mollusc).

The short-necked clam fisheries in the lake had obtained an eco label from the Marine Stewardship Council and about 3,000 people are dependent on fisheries here. In such a scenario, the fast-breeding Charru mussel could be seen as a 'pest,' the authors state.

"The potential of *Mytella strigata* to outcompete the lucrative clam fishery is a serious concern that urgently



needs to be addressed," they add. Though this smaller mussel is edible, the overall economic loss and impact on biodiversity is much bigger, it is pointed out.

In all probability, the mussel reached the Indian shores attached to ship hulls or as larval forms in ballast water discharges.

Cyclone Ockhi may have simply speeded up their invasion of inland waters.

In this scenario, there is an urgent need to identify the presence of the Charru mussel in other parts of India by locating the pathways of introduction, said Biju Kumar of the University of Kerala.

AN-ND-E

### IN BRIEF



Three-year-old falls into borewell in Telangana

MEDAK

A three-year-boy slipped into a borewell even as his mother

was watching in Telangana's

Medak district

# 'Differences mustn't shade ties'

India and China have kept in close touch since COVID-19 outbreak, says envoy

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

India and China have kept up "close communication and cooperation" since the COVID-19 outbreak, said China's Ambassador to India Sun Weidong, adding that he was "impressed" by India's handling of the pandemic thus far.

While he made no direct reference to the ongoing stand-off between the two Armies at the Line of Actual Control in Ladakh and Sikkim, Mr. Sun said that India and China should "never let the differences shadow the overall situation of bilateral cooperation", referring to the two countries as the "Dragon and Elephant dancing together".

"Our two leaders President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Narendra Modi have exchanged letters, and our foreign ministers made phone calls twice to strengthen our anti-epidemic cooperation," Sun Weidong, Chinese Ambassador to India said.

  
Our two leaders, President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, have exchanged letters, and our Foreign Ministers made phone calls twice to strengthen our anti-epidemic cooperation

SUN WEIDONG,  
CHINESE AMBASSADOR TO INDIA

cooperation," said Mr. Sun, speaking at an Internet seminar or webinar for "Indian Youth" on Wednesday.

He added that Indian companies had helped with supplies on 45 Indian cargo flights to China, while Chinese companies like Alibaba, Fosun, SANY Group had assisted India with masks, protective suits, medical gloves and ventilators.

#### 'Swift action'

When asked what he thought of India's response to the pandemic, Mr. Sun said he had been "impressed with several things", includ-

ing what he called "swift action" in placing a lockdown across the country on March 25, when confirmed cases of the infection were not very high.

Praising the "solidarity" and "cooperation" with which Indians had responded to lockdown restrictions, the Ambassador remarked that a "majority of the Indian people follow government instructions and advice to stay at home, and the overall social order has been stable since the lockdown".

Referring to the resolution by more than 100 countries at the World Health Assem-

bly this month that called for a full enquiry into the origins of the novel coronavirus, Mr. Sun said all countries should be "vigilant" about what he called "conspiracy theories" that China had concealed the pandemic or that the virus had originated from the Wuhan Institute of Virology.

India, which had backed the resolution at the World Health Assembly, has refused any public comment on the issue of the origin of the virus, stating that these issues must be dealt with only after the threat from the disease recedes.

"We did not cover up anything, and did not delay any efforts. Identifying the source of the virus is a serious and complex issue of science, which should be studied and explored by scientists and medical experts," Mr. Sun asserted, while addressing students on the webinar.

# 'India should pull out forces from Kalapani'

The 2019 map is a breach of the understanding reached in 1997, says Nepalese Foreign Minister

KALLO BHATTACHERJEE  
NEW DELHI

India should withdraw security forces from the Kalapani region and restore status quo, Nepalese Foreign Minister Pradeep Kumar Gyawali said on Wednesday.

He said a solution to the border dispute should be found urgently, even as Indian sources confirmed that they were closely monitoring the debates in Nepal's Parliament to provide a constitutional guarantee to the new map that shows the disputed region as part of Nepal's sovereign territory.



Pradeep Kumar Gyawali

"We want India to honour the letter and spirit of the [Sugauli] Treaty. The most appropriate way of doing this would be to withdraw security forces from Kalapani and hand over the above territories back to Nepal. We

merely reiterated that unilateral acts like road construction in Nepal's territory should not have been done, and the issue should be resolved through talks at the earliest," Mr. Gyawali said in an interview to *The Hindu*.

Mr. Gyawali said Nepal appreciated the ties it shares with India but was disappointed with the November 2019 political map of India that brought the issue back to the table. "The map is a breach of the 1997 understanding that both sides had reached during the Kathmandu visit of Prime Minis-

ter I.K. Gujral," he said. The comments from the senior Minister of the government of Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli came as the Nepalese government gave more time to the main Opposition Nepali Congress to discuss a proposed amendment to the Constitution. The move is being interpreted as a window of opportunity for diplomacy. However, Mr. Gyawali said the amendment was on track and expected to be fast-tracked in the coming days.

India has taken note of the parliamentary debates, with informed sources saying the South Block is "carefully following" the developments in Nepal. South Block's concerns about the Kalapani region is of particular significance as the Lipulekh pass in the region connects India with Tibet.

"Border issues are sensitive and require trust and confidence to be resolved to the mutual satisfaction," said a source, indicating a change in thinking. Earlier, officials had said India would consider discussion on the Kalapani issue after the COVID-19 pandemic was dealt with.

# Standing Committee on Home Affairs to meet on June 3

Lockdown and movement of migrants likely to be discussed

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Standing Committee on Home Affairs is scheduled to meet on June 3, the first time since Parliament was abruptly adjourned on March 23 followed by an extended lockdown.

The meeting has been convened by Chairman of the Standing Committee on Home Affairs Anand Sharma. Mr. Sharma has also written to the Rajya Sabha Chairman on Wednesday asking the House to provide for an alternate option of video conferencing for the members who are not able to join the meeting.

"I have written to Rajya Sabha Chairman Mr. Ven-



This is the first meeting of the panel since Parliament was adjourned on March 23.

kaiah Naidu that the members who are unable to reach Delhi because of various restrictions or other reasons should be allowed to join the meeting via video conference..." Mr. Sharma told *The Hindu*. Mr. Sharma did not reveal

the agenda of the meeting but said key officials of the Home Ministry would be asked to join the deliberations since the extended lockdown, the inter-State movement, the movement of migrant workers and other guidelines are all issued by it.

With the resumption of air and rail transport, Presiding officers of both Houses of Parliament, Venkaiah Naidu and Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, had met to review the facilities in the Parliament House to allow for the meeting of the standing committees. Nine such rooms have been identified in the Parliament House complex.

# SC tells Centre, PCI to respond to Jamiat plea

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday asked the Centre, the National Broadcasters Association (NBA) and the Press Council of India (PCI) to respond to a petition filed by Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind, which alleged that certain sections of the media communalised the Tablighi Jamat congregation by linking it to a spike in the spread of the COVID-19 infection.

A Bench led by Chief Justice Sharad A. Bobde implored the NBA. It asked what action could be taken against the media channels under Sections 19 and 20 of the Cable Television Networks Act, 1995. The court scheduled the case for hearing after two weeks.

# Key witness who had identified Kasab and braved bullets, dies

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
THANE

Harishchandra Shrivardhankar, a key witness who had identified terrorist Ajmal Kasab during the case trial, died at his house in Kalyan, his family members said on Wednesday. He was 70.

Shrivardhankar was hit by two bullets on the night of November 26, 2011, near Cama Hospital in south Mumbai when 10 Pakistani terrorists attacked Mumbai.

He had also hit Kasab's accomplice Abu Ismail with his office bag. "He died on Tuesday night," his family members said.

Shrivardhankar was the first key witness to identify Kasab before the special court and also testified against him. Kasab, the only terrorist among the 10 who was captured live by the police, was hanged in Pune's Yerwada jail in secret on November 21, 2012 after a court trial.

A few days back, Shrivardhankar was found lying on a footpath in Kalyan. His family members reportedly could not afford his medical treatment.

Former chief minister Devendra Fadnavis had checked on his condition and announced that the BJP would provide ₹10 lakh to help the family.

He is survived by his wife, two sons and daughters-in-law.

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DIPR/1953/Tender/2020

Estate Officer (i/c) TNJFU, Nagapattinam.

DIPR/1956/TENDER/2020

# 5 persons on Shramik Special trains die in U.P.

Reasons for the fatalities are not clear, according to police

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

LUCKNOW

Five migrant workers travelling back to their native districts on Shramik Special trains allegedly died of unspecified causes near Kanpur and Varanasi over the last 24 hours during their journey, the police said on Wednesday.

Ram Avadh Chauhan's body was deboarded at the Kanpur Central station on Tuesday, along with that of another unidentified passenger on the same train from Maharashtra, carrying migrant workers to Gorakhpur.

A third body was recovered at the Kanpur station from another train on Wednesday, said a Railway police inspector.

Two persons arrived dead at the Manduadith station in Varanasi on a train from Mumbai's LTT on Wednesday. The Superintendent of Police, Government Railway Police, Prayagraj, said Dasrath Prajapati, 30, of Jaunpur and Ram Ratan Goud, 63, of Azamgarh were found dead on the train. The bodies were sent for post-mortem examination.

## 'Due to the heat'

According to his family, Ram Avadh Chauhan's health had started deteriorating due to the heat. "He had taken off his clothes because his body had become very hot," said Kanhaiya Chauhan, his son.

Working as a mason in Maharashtra's Kalyan city, Ram Avadh, 45, with his two sons, wife, daughter and mother-in-law, travelled to Jhansi by bus. In Jhansi, they boarded a Gorakhpur-



**Final journey:** Officials carrying the body of one of the passengers found dead on a special train in Varanasi. •PTI

## NHRC notice to U.P. over man's death

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The National Human Rights Commission on Wednesday issued a notice to the Uttar Pradesh government over the death of a migrant worker due to starvation in Saharanpur while he was walking from Ludhiana to his home in Harnoi. The 19-year-old, Vipin Kumar, died after walking for six days, covering 350 km.

bound special train on Tuesday to their native place Azamgarh. During the journey, Ram Avadh, a diabetic, started feeling uneasy. Mr. Kanhaiya, a science student, said his father wanted the train to stop. The family members claim they pulled the chain, but the train did not stop. They also dialled the Railway helpline number, but allegedly got no help.

At the Kanpur station, the family, travelling in the S13 coach, got off. His father died 10 minutes after Mr. Kanhaiya went in search of help, he said. "He was frothing at the mouth and bleeding from the nose," Mr. Kanhaiya told *The Hindu* over the phone.

## No food provided

Mr. Kanhaiya alleged that while they received *puri sabzi* and a pouch of water each on the train from Jhansi, from 1 a.m. on Tuesday, when they had arrived in Jhansi on a bus, till around 11 a.m. on Wednesday, they were not served anything to eat at the Jhansi Paramedical College, where they spent the night. The last proper meal they had was on Monday evening at Guna in Madhya Pradesh.

"He [father] had not taken his medicine for diabetes since two days as he was not getting regular food," said Mr. Kanhaiya.

The other migrant worker who died on the same train was yet to be identified but a police inspector said he was in his fifties, while the third person who died on Wednesday was also unidentified and aged about 35.

# Video of baby with dead mother goes viral

In another incident, the body of a woman was deboarded at Mansi station

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

PATNA

Amid several videos showing the woes of migrant workers returning to Bihar these days, a chilling video went viral on social media on Wednesday. A baby is seen playfully tugging at a sheet partially covering his dead mother at the Muzaffarpur railway station in Bihar. The woman, said to be Arvina Khatun, 35, is seen lying dead on the platform, with two bags stuffed with her belongings kept away from her.

An older child, with a water bottle in hand, too, appears for a moment in the video. "The woman had reached the Muzaffarpur railway station on May 25 along with her two children,



The video of the child went viral on social media. •PTI

sister and brother-in-law. She was from Katihar district. Only the doctor can say how she died," Government Railway Police official Rama Kant Upadhyay told presspersons.

A local journalist in Mu-

zaffarpur told *The Hindu* that the woman and her two small children had arrived by a Shramik Special train on May 25 from Ahmedabad. She collapsed immediately upon reaching the station, possibly due to extreme heat, hunger and dehydration. The woman is said to have boarded the train on May 23.

Sharing the video on his Twitter handle, Sanjay Yadav, political adviser to Bihar's Leader of Opposition in the Assembly Tejaswi Yadav, said, "The little child does not know that the cloth he is playing with is the shroud of his dead mother. She died because she did not have food and water for four days. Who is responsible for

such deaths in trains? The Opposition should ask the hard questions or not?"

In another incident, the body of a woman was deboarded at the Mansi railway station in the State on Wednesday.

"Some people took out the dead body of a woman on platform number 3 of Mansi railway station from a train coming from Surat in Gujarat to Purnia in Bihar. Her name is Uresh Khatun and she was from Katihar district. The relatives of the dead woman said the woman was suffering from a heart ailment and had surgery on March 22, 2020," the Sonepur division of East Central Railway said in a statement.

Recovered patients more than active cases in Odisha

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Bhubaneswar

The people who have recovered from COVID-19 outnumbered the active patients in Odisha for the first time on Wednesday.

The State's recovery rate crossed 50%-mark when 79 more persons were discharged from hospitals, pushing the number of recoveries to 812.

The total number of positive cases stood at 1,593 with detection of 76 new cases in different districts. While 74 of the new cases were detected in quarantine centres, two were from the local community. According to the State Health & Family Welfare Department, the number of active cases stood at 774. Only seven have died of COVID-19 in the State so far, the fatality rate being negligible.

The State has been detecting more number of cases during the current month with many of the migrant workers returning from other States testing positive. In fact, 95% of the cases detected in the State were from quarantine centres set up at gram panchayat level for institutional quarantine of the returnees.

For the past several days, the number of recoveries was almost matching the number of new cases. Among the recovered were an 85-year-old woman with frail health and 20 children below 14 years of age.

Meanwhile, the State government decided to resume work on the Puri heritage corridor project and Ekamra Kshetra project in Bhubaneswar by maintaining social distancing.

# Mamata apprehensive of return of migrants to State

Around 25% of them have tested positive, says CM

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said that she is worried about the return of migrant workers to the State as many of them have tested positive for COVID-19.

"There is no need to panic or to worry. But I am worried. Many of those who are coming now are COVID positive," Ms. Banerjee said. She also blamed the Railways for planning without consulting the State.

"We came up with a plan by which everyone would have come back in a few days in a phased manner. But, we got to know many



trains were coming from Maharashtra. I spoke to the Maharashtra government [and] they said they were informed at 2 a.m. the previous night. If the Railway Ministry had consulted us then it would have been better. We are hearing reports of 2-3 people sharing one seat in trains and not follow-

ing social distancing," she said.

According to her, around 25% of those returning have tested positive.

"As many as 36 trains will enter the State ... Railways has no responsibility," she said. Since everyone cannot be quarantined institutionally, Ms. Banerjee asked the District Magistrates to create a block-wise task force for every district. While people returning from Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Delhi, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra will be institutionally quarantined in local schools, people without symptoms coming from other States can be on self-quarantine.

**GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU HIGHWAYS DEPARTMENT (CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE) CIRCLE, VILLUPURAM**

**TENDER NOTICE**

T.N.No.04/2020-21/HDO/Dated:26.05.2020

For and on behalf of the Governor of Tamil Nadu Percentage tender through online only will be received upto 02.07.2020, 13.30 hours by the Superintending Engineer (H) C&M, Villupuram Circle for CRIDP 2020-21 Works, (Package No.17 to 20) pertaining to Perambalur (H) C&M Division.

Details of works, approximate value of works, EMD, availability of tender documents and all other details are available from 29.05.2020 onwards in the Government website <https://tntenders.gov.in>. If any changes / corrections in the tender, it will be published in the above Government website only.

**SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER (H) C&M CIRCLE, VILLUPURAM**

DIPR/1925/TENDER/2020

**GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU HIGHWAYS DEPARTMENT TIRUPUR HIGHWAYS, (Construction & Maintenance) CIRCLE**

**TENDER NOTICE**

T.N. No. 02 /2020-21/HDO, dated 26.05.2020

For and on behalf of the Governor of Tamil Nadu, Percentage tender through online only will be received upto 03.07.2020, 15.00 hours by the Superintending Engineer (H), C&M, Tirupur Circle for CRIDP 2020-21 Works, (Package No.21 to 37) pertaining Dharapuram (H) C&M Division.

Details of works, approximate value of works, EMD, availability of tender documents and all other details are available from 01.06.2020 onwards in the Government website <https://tntenders.gov.in>. If any Changes/Corrections in the tender, it will be published in the above Government website only.

**Superintending Engineer (H), C&M, Circle, Tirupur.**

DIPR/1965/Tender/2020

**GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU HIGHWAYS DEPARTMENT (CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE) CIRCLE, SALEM**

**TENDER NOTICE**

TENDER NOTICE NO.01/2020-2021/HDO/DATED: 22.05.2020

For and on behalf of the Governor of Tamilnadu, Percentage tender through online only will be received upto 30.06.2020 - 15.00 hours by the Superintending Engineer, (H) C&M, Salem Circle for CRIDP 2020-21 works, (Package No. 1 to 23) pertaining Salem (H) C&M Division.

Details of works, approximate value of works, EMD, availability of tender documents and all other details are available from 30.05.2020 onwards in the Government website <https://tntenders.gov.in>. If any Changes/Corrections in the tender, it will be published in the above Government website only.

**SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER (H) C&M CIRCLE, SALEM**

DIPR/1915/TENDER/2020

**GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU HIGHWAYS DEPARTMENT Tirunelveli (H) NABARD and Rural Roads Circle**

**TENDER NOTICE**

Tender Notice No.03/2020-2021/D1/Dated: 27.05.2020

For and on behalf of Governor of Tamilnadu sealed Item Wise rate Tenders Two Cover System through online only will be received by the Superintending Engineer (H), NABARD and Rural Roads, Tirunelveli circle for the works approved in G.O.No.(Ms) No.57 Highways and Minor Ports (HW1) Department dated. 20.03.2020 for Construction / Reconstruction of One Bridge work under NABARD Loan assistance in RIDP XXV-40 Bridges for the year 2019-20 in Paramakudi (H) NABARD and Rural Roads Division.

Details such as Name of works, approximate value of works, EMD, documents to be uploaded, critical dates and all other details related to the works are available from 01.06.2020 onwards in the Government website <https://tntenders.gov.in> if any changes / corrections / amendments etc related to this tender arises, it will be published on the above Government website only.

**Superintending Engineer (H)**  
**NABARD and Rural Roads, Tirunelveli - 2.**

DIPR/1964/Tender/2020

**GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU HIGHWAYS DEPARTMENT (CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE) CIRCLE, VILLUPURAM**

**TENDER NOTICE**

T.N.No.02/2020-21/HDO/Dated:22.05.2020

For and on behalf of the Governor of Tamil Nadu Percentage tender through online only will be received upto 02.07.2020, 13.30 hours by the Superintending Engineer (H) C&M, Villupuram Circle for CRIDP 2020-21 Works, (Package No.1 to 11) pertaining to Ariyalur (H) C&M Division.

Details of works, approximate value of works, EMD, availability of tender documents and all other details are available from 29.05.2020 onwards in the Government website <https://tntenders.gov.in>. If any changes / corrections in the tender, it will be published in the above Government website only.

**SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER (H) C&M CIRCLE, VILLUPURAM**

DIPR/1919/TENDER/2020

**GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU HIGHWAYS DEPARTMENT Madurai (Construction and Maintenance) Circle**

**TENDER NOTICE**

Tender Notice No.04/2020-2021/HDO/Dated: 27.05.2020

For and on behalf of the Governor of Tamilnadu, Percentage tender through online only will be received upto 02.07.2020 - 14.00 hours by the Superintending Engineer (H) C&M, Madurai Circle under CRIDP 2020-21, (Package No.47 and Package No.48) pertaining Dindigul (H) C&M Division.

Details of works, approximate value of works, EMD, availability of tender documents and all other details are available from 29.05.2020 onwards in the Government website <https://tntenders.gov.in>. If any Changes/Corrections in the tender, it will be published in the above Government website only.

**SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER (H) C&M, Madurai Circle**

DIPR/1945/Tender/2020

**GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU HIGHWAYS DEPARTMENT (CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE) CIRCLE, SALEM**

**TENDER NOTICE**

TENDER NOTICE NO.02/2020-2021/HDO/DATED: 23.05.2020

For and on behalf of the Governor of Tamilnadu, Percentage tender through online only will be received upto 30.06.2020 - 15.00 hours by the Superintending Engineer, (H) C&M, Salem Circle for CRIDP 2020-21 works, (Package No. 24 to 45) pertaining Edappady (H) C&M Division.

Details of works, approximate value of works, EMD, availability of tender documents and all other details are available from 30.05.2020 onwards in the Government website <https://tntenders.gov.in>. If any Changes/Corrections in the tender, it will be published in the above Government website only.

**SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER (H) C&M CIRCLE, SALEM**

DIPR/1916/TENDER/2020

**GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU HIGHWAYS DEPARTMENT Trichy Highways (Construction and Maintenance) Circle**

**TENDER NOTICE**

T.N.No.05/2020-21/HDO / Dated: 26.05.2020

For and on behalf of Governor of Tamil Nadu, Percentage tender through online only will be received upto 04.07.2020, 15.00 hours by the Superintending Engineer (H) C&M, Trichy Circle, TVS Tollgate, Pudukkottai Road, Trichy - 20 for CRIDP 2020-21 works (Package No.26 to 37) pertaining Nagapattinam (H) C&M Division.

Details of works, approximate value of works, EMD, availability of tender documents and all other details are available from 01.06.2020 onwards in the Government website <https://tntenders.gov.in>. If any changes / corrections in the tender, it will be published in the above Government website only.

**Superintending Engineer (H), C&M Circle, Trichy - 20**

DIPR/1938/Tender/2020

**GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU HIGHWAYS DEPARTMENT Chennai Construction and Maintenance Circle**

**TENDER NOTICE**

Tender Notice No. 4/2020-21/HDO, dated 27.05.2020

For and on behalf of the Governor of Tamil Nadu, Percentage tender through online only will be received upto 03.07.2020, 2.00 PM by the Superintending Engineer (H) C&M, Chennai Circle for works under CRIDP Scheme 2020-21 (Package No. 50 to 53) pertaining to Thiruvallur & Vellore Division

Details of works, approximate value of works, EMD, availability of tender documents and all other details will be available from 01.06.2020 onwards in the Government website <https://tntenders.gov.in>. If any Changes/Corrections in the tender, it will be published in the above Government website only.

**Superintending Engineer (H) C&M, Chennai Circle**

DIPR/1940/TENDER/2020

**GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU HIGHWAYS DEPARTMENT COIMBATORE (CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE) CIRCLE**

**TENDER NOTICE**

T.N. No. 2 / 2020-21 / HDO, Dated 27.05.2020

For and on behalf of the Governor of Tamil Nadu, Percentage tender through online only will be received up to 01.07.2020, 15.00 hours by the Superintending Engineer (H), C&M, Coimbatore Circle for CRIDP 2020-21 Works, (Package No.13 to 27) pertaining Udhagai (H) C&M Division.

Details of works, approximate value of works, EMD, availability of tender documents and all other details are available in the Government website <https://tntenders.gov.in>. From 29.05.2020. If any Changes/Corrections in the tender, it will be published in the above Government website only.

**Superintending Engineer (H), C&M, Coimbatore Circle**

DIPR/1944/TENDER/2020

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Se



**The return of wonder**

Tishani Doshi

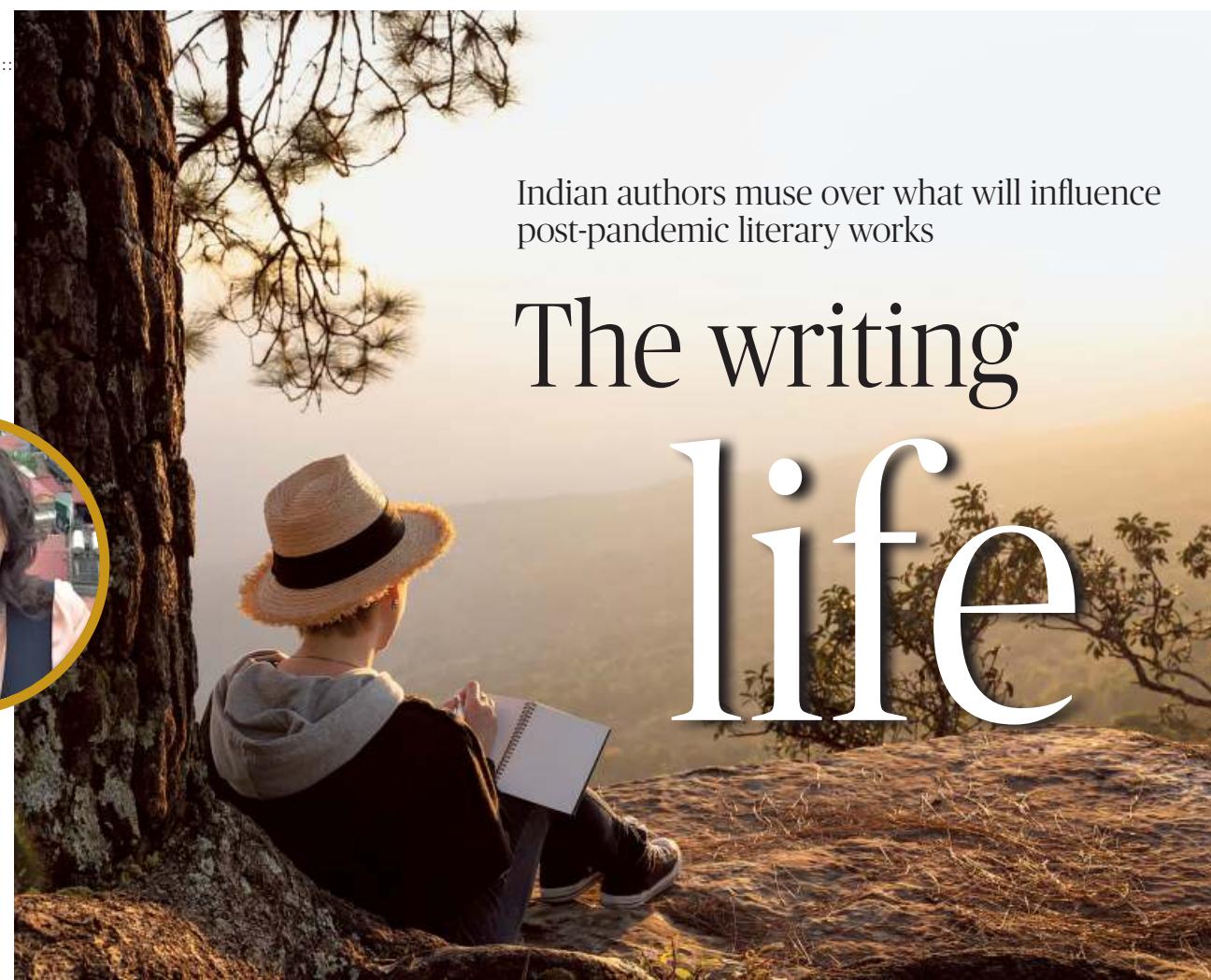
Throughout this lockdown, I have been veering madly between being pessimistic and optimistic about how we will emerge from this. As a poet, I'm used to holding the light and dark, to taking the bombardments on the chin, but also, to drawing beauty from the world around as an act of resistance.

On my best days, I like to think that we will emerge from this pandemic as a society that's more tender and equitable. That somehow this reset button will slow things down to make us prioritise what kind of environments we want to live in.

Some of us might begin to grow our own vegetables and become obsessed with soil. Empathy will be manifold. People will get involved in communities in inventive ways. Artists will continue to create. Pets will become paramount company. We may go back to wearing hats and gloves and cover all our skin to create protective sheaths for our bodies. We will be more discreet with touch. Species will recover.

People might not get paid outrageous amounts of money to play with a bat and ball in a stadium that is empty, but instead, it might be decided on the evaluation scale, that healthcare workers, teachers, and transportation workers deserve more. The notion of celebrity might get an overhaul. Carbon footprints will shrink, and once again, when a child sees an aeroplane in the sky, it might be cause for such excitement that they have to run into the street to marvel at this metal bird in the sky. In short, wonder, may be reinstated.

Most days though, I understand that until there's a vaccine, there are going to be huge restrictions on movement, privacy and freedom. People will die alone and away from loved ones. There will be increased government surveillance through the use of health apps. There will be a lot of fear. All around the world there will be greater patrolling of borders, an increase in nationalism, economic recession, debt, unemployment, displacement. It will be sad, and the only solace will be our gods and the Internet.

Tishani Doshi is the author of the novel, *Small Days and Nights*

TEAM METROPLUS

**S**tories based on pandemics and their aftermath have opened the chapters of many a literary masterpiece. The outbreak of COVID-19 boosted sales of books like Stephen King's *The Stand*, Margaret Atwood's *The Year of the Flood* and Ling Ma's

*Severance*. In the past, from Homer and Shakespeare to Albert Camus, Daniel Defoe, Thomas Mann, Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Jose Saramago have written about epidemics in famous works that have stood the test of time. Indian literary greats such as Rabindranath Tagore, Premchand, Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai and Nirala have also written poems, stories and

novels about the effects of epidemics that affected people. In the same way, the word and the world will reflect the ripple effect of COVID-19 and the lockdown. *MetroPlus* speaks to popular authors who emphasise that this too shall pass, and though the world as we know it will certainly change, stories and storytellers will continue to enthral us.

**Online holds the key**

Perumal Murugan

I have attended so many literary meets, despite not stepping outdoors. I even inaugurated a literature festival from home. Over the past several years, I have been hosting Koodu literary meetings in the terrace of my home in Namakkal. It is attended by students, teachers, readers... we discuss books, have read-ups, and book introductions by guests. It is a monthly event, and so far, we have had around 60, with 70 people attending each of them. Over two months in lockdown, we have already had 28 Koodu meetings on Zoom. Three of my students facilitate them and we meet for 40 minutes every evening. Even those who did not come for any of our previous meetings are attending these.

I expect a lot of changes post the lockdown, most of them to do with how we meet people. Book release functions and literature festivals will be held online. Although I enjoy travelling to these functions, I end up spending a day or two on travel alone, which can get exhausting. So, having them online may be better in a lot of ways.

Literature is changing too. I am seeing an upsurge of online literary magazines in Tamil. Print will be back, but for now, even the chiefly print ones, such as *Kalachuvadu*, have gone completely online in the last two months. Tamil writers are putting out their stories on social media, and this trend has given rise to micro-stories that are 50 to 100 words long; these are much smaller than short-stories that can run up to 500 words.

A lot of changes are set to happen, and it is best we make up our minds accordingly.

Tamil writer Perumal Murugan's latest book is *Amma***Privileges of class**

Annie Zaidi

The exterior world directly impacts the inner landscape, and therefore the literature writers produce. My work – especially fiction and drama writing – has been shaped through research, being in unfamiliar locations, spending time with strangers.

How we'll write post the COVID-19 pandemic depends on how long it lasts, whether the lockdowns will continue intermittently and how strict the rules will be. Human beings tend to forget experiences that do not scar them. For the elite and the middle class, this is still an intermission, and it has not yet changed them in fundamental ways. They are waiting to return to life as they knew it, and will, I suspect, argue for familiar privileges to be restored, even at



the cost of the environment and the health of the lower-income majority. This schism in the individual and national soul, playing out as political and social choice, will be noticed and will be written about.

The power of the state, police and policymakers and even 'office bearers' in housing societies, has never been so intimately felt. The true meaning of wealth and of solidarity has never been so clear.

Literature will reflect what has been forced into the foreground – the fear of intimate social contact, of controlled and monitored sexual choices, and the chafing against self-interest that masquerades as benevolent protection.

Dystopian fiction might take a backseat. I hope it will. Perhaps some Utopian fiction will be written, now that we are thinking about how to live, and have the time to imagine what a decent human civilisation looks like.

Annie Zaidi's new book is *Prelude to a Riot***Books will survive**

Khyrunnisa A

Writers are always looking for material to write about, and the pandemic has offered that in abundance. Everyone's falling over one another to put their musings, views and doomsday prophecies on paper. Let me amend that to 'online'.

COVID-19 has ensured that digital activity is the new normal. Writing has traditionally been considered a reclusive pursuit. But the new challenges of

marketing forced writers out of their private spaces to interact with audiences at public events. The pandemic effected an ideal environment for creativity to flourish by practically ordering writers to return to their ivory towers, but few obeyed its dictates, preferring instead to consolidate a strong virtual presence. The 'experience economy' has been a significant contributor to national economies over the last two decades. The expression refers to the economy generated when



people gather at places for live events like concerts, public functions, sports tournaments and so on. These have been put on hold and will be the last to come back after the pandemic. Online events can never have the joy and energy of actual events. The inventiveness of man has never been in doubt, and people will adapt to changing circumstances. People won't have much disposable income. But books have overcome greater threats to their existence, and as long as there are writers and readers, they will survive.

Khyrunnisa A is the author of *Tongue in Cheek*

(With inputs from Akila Kannadasan, Deepa Alexander, Harikumar JS, Saraswathy Nagarajan and Sunalini Mathew)

# Starting from scratch

From contactless travel to immunity passports and open-dated stay packages, the Indian tourism and hospitality sector is exploring a range of options to breathe life into a stalled business



NAHLA NAINAR

Not too long ago, we were grumbling about overtourism. In 2020, thanks to COVID-19, the travel and hospitality industry seems to have receded into the background; Indian tourism, in particular, has descended into the red due to the ban on domestic and international air travel in summer, when it is the peak of business.

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) estimates that Indian commercial airlines are likely to suffer losses of \$11.2 billion due to the temporary grounding of operations. But India is not alone. Nearly every country exposed to the virus is facing a similar conundrum: figuring out a way to ease back into solvency. "The travel sector will have to reinvent itself in what will be a 'new normal', requiring a meaningful transformation," says Tiffany Misrahi, vice-president of policy, World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), UK, adding, "We expect to see significant transformations around health secu-

rity and hygiene, sustainability, digitisation, the future of work and in terms of consumer demands and expectations."

**Health concerns**

WTTC is devising the new Safe Travels protocols, following close consultation with its members as well as industry associations like Airports Council International (ACI), Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) and IATA, to bring confidence back and set clear expectations of what travellers may experience in their next trip. Contactless travel, especially by air, could perhaps be the most significant change. In a report titled *The Rise of Sanitised Travel*, airline marketing strategy firm Simpliflying highlights at least 70 areas in which the flight experience is going to change.

Among the new requirements would be an 'immunity passport' for passengers, which confirms the presence of COVID-19 antibodies. Instant health checks inside the airport will become common and travel agents

will have to issue seating to optimise in-flight distancing. More importantly, without a vaccination, long-distance travel could be difficult. On the other hand, some countries like Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia, where the recorded number of COVID-19 infections are low, have also created the Baltic Travel Bubble that allows one

another's citizens to travel without the need for quarantine.

"It is too early to talk about resuming business after the lockdown, because tourism depends on business activity that gives extra cash flow in hand," says Pronab Sarkar, president, Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) in Delhi. "The travel industry

will have to keep this in mind before it can restart."

At a webinar organised recently by Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) to discuss the rebooting of the Indian travel industry, Dipak Deva, managing director, Sita, TCI and Distant Frontiers, suggested that the Government should consider supporting stores that had issued vouchers for booking a holiday in the future.

Catering to the new normal, The Leela group of hotels is currently offering bookings at its properties in Delhi, Gurugram, Chennai, Bengaluru, Udaipur, Mumbai and Goa through its 'Memorable Moments' programme that will be valid till September 30, 2020, with guaranteed upgrades and meal credits of ₹1,000 per day, as it reopens for business after lockdown. However, pre-booking may not work for mid-budget and business properties, feels Amitava Roy, CEO, The Great Indian Hotels and Resorts. "Travellers are unsure if they will be able to have a vacation after six months. One or two places have sold holidays like this, but you need to be sure about the arrangements being in place at the time you advertise," he says.

Intra-industry unity is important at this time as a lot of livelihoods are at stake, believes Vinod Kannan, chief commercial officer, Vistaire Airlines. "This pandemic has brought the whole world together and is helping everyone appreciate things that we may otherwise take for granted," he says, adding, "This would also bring about positive changes in the travel behaviour of passengers and make them appreciate the efforts that airlines, airports and other relevant stakeholders are putting in for their comfort."



**No contact** Tourism and hospitality businesses are looking at a new normal • S SIVA SARAVANAN AND GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

# Take a virtual dip



While staying home and indulging in virtual travel, explore the ocean pools or ocean baths that dot the Australian coastline. These pools allow one to experience the public seawater in a pool built out into the ocean, or carved directly into the coastal rock. According to an IANS report, there are about 100 along the New South Wales coast, from Yamba in the North, to Bermagui in the South, with 35 in Sydney alone. The concept of ocean pools grew popular in the late 19th Century. Competitive swimming was becoming popular and people wanted a place where they would be protected from the pounding surf and unpredictable currents. Many ocean pools were built by surf clubs or community groups. Newcastle is home to the oldest ocean pool on the East coast of Australia, the Bogey Hole, which was hand-carved by convicts in 1819. It also boasts the largest ocean pool in the southern hemisphere, the Merewether Baths.

# IN OUR BACKYARD

# Heralding summer

The Amaltas, or Indian laburnum is a spot of sunshine on already sunny days

ABHISHEK GULSHAN

Its drooping clusters of bright fragrant yellow flowers with five petals and characteristic cylindrical fruits, the Amaltas is known by so many names – Indian Laburnum, Golden Shower, Purging Fistula, Pudding-pipe tree, Girmala, Rajbrikh, Alash, Kiar, Kirwara, Ali – showing us how common and loved it is. It is both the national tree and the national flower of Thailand and is also the state flower of Kerala.

The Amaltas (*Cassia fistula linn*), native to South-East Asia is one of the most widespread trees in India and South-East Asia, with their presence both in cities as well as in moist and dry forests. The tree is mostly known to be ornamental and few know of its benefits as a medicinal plant, and one that's loved by some mammals, bees, and butterflies (it plays host to the Lemon Emigrant).

This middle-sized deciduous tree is leafless only for a brief time, between March and May. The new leaves are glossy, a trait that they lose on maturing, and are mostly bright green, though sometimes a rich copper too. It flowers from April to June, partly along-

side the emergence of new leaves, but it's not uncommon to find the Amaltas in flower as late as September.

The bark is yellowish at first, slowly coarsens with age and turning dark grey. The naturalist in me made me open one of the seed pods that ripen in April, only to discover the seeds in small compartments surrounded by a strong smelling pulp, which was sweet to taste.

Considering the fruit's hard exterior (someone jokingly threw it at me once!) what bewildered me, when I was a young naturalist, was how the seeds were dispersed. The answer came much later, when I read British forestry expert Robert Scott Troup's book *Silviculture of Indian Trees* (published in 1921). He had carried out an interesting experiment in 1911, around pollination of the Amaltas and jackals in the vicinity. He merely collected ripe fruit pods from the tree and placed them at a plot picked randomly. These were discovered by a pack of jackals a week later, who were found trying to get to the sweet pulp inside the pod.

With the natural reproduction of the tree being somewhat of a mystery, Troup went to the length of stating that

"the reproduction of Amaltas is effected mainly, and perhaps entirely, through the agency of animals like monkeys, jackals, bears, pigs and a few others, that break open the pods to eat the pulp and thus scatter the seeds or swallow them and disseminate them via their excreta."

Troup worked at what was then the Imperial Forest Research Institute and College at Dehradun (now Forest Research Institute, Dehradun). Later in 1920, he returned to England to join the University of Oxford as the Chair of Forestry. His book, in three volumes, containing detailed silviculture accounts of several important trees of the Indian Subcontinent.

Considering the dearth of jackals in the city, I have only observed Neelgais feeding on the leaves of the tree, but not the fruit. I've observed several specimens of this tree (Aravalli Biodiversity Park, Vasant Kunj) with chew and nibble marks around the lower end of the bark near the roots, suggesting porcupine presence. The bark is used to make dye and the pulp in the fruit pod also serves as a strong purgative agent, which also helps animals that feed on it. A medicinal preparation with the roots of the tree is used to cure leprosy and skin diseases and the leaves are used to get rid of ulcers, in traditional medicine.

Many years ago, when I had spoken to villagers on the outskirts of Delhi, they told me that they place these seed-pods in the house to keep bedbugs and insects at bay, though we have no scientific evidence of this.

*The writer is the founder of NINOX - Owl About Nature, a nature-awareness initiative. He is the Delhi-NCR reviewer for Ebird, a Cornell University initiative, monitoring rare sightings of birds. He formerly led a programme of WWF India.*

Dripping yellow The Amaltas blooms through summer

• SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA



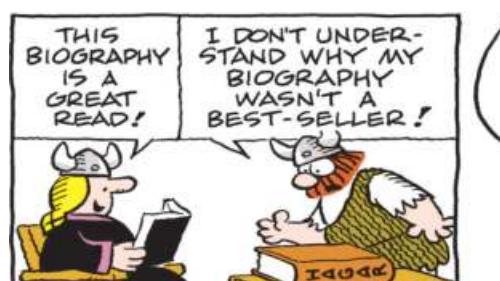
## POOCHE CAFE



## PEANUTS



## HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



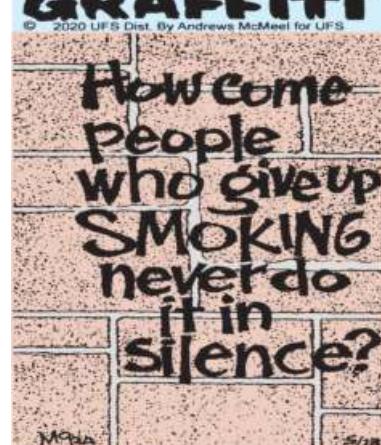
## CALVIN AND HOBBES



## TIGER



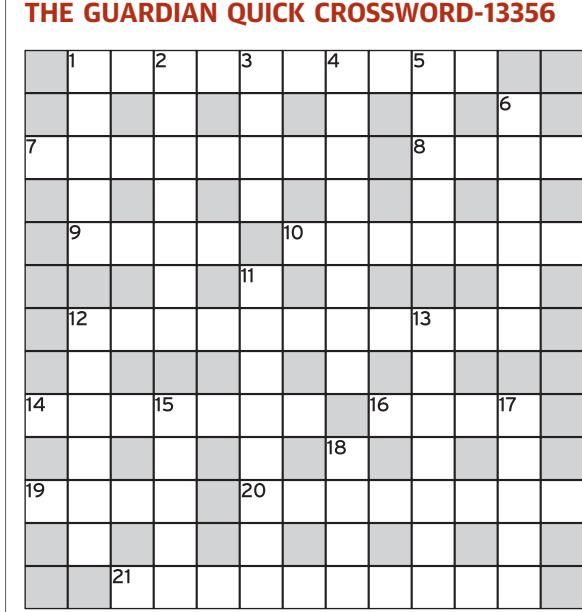
## GRAFFITI



## HEALTH CAPSULES



## THE GUARDIAN QUICK CROSSWORD-13356

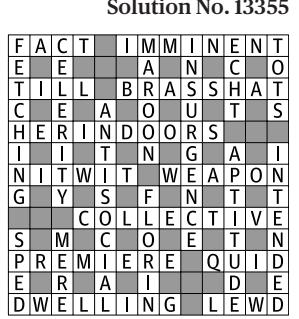


To play The Guardian Quick Crossword, The Hindu Cryptic crossword, Sudoku & other puzzles online, scan the QR code.

- 11 Conversation (8)  
12 Don (6)  
13 Feast (7)  
15 Make broader (5)  
17 Indulged to the full (5)  
18 Food fish (4)

The solution will appear on May 30, 2020.

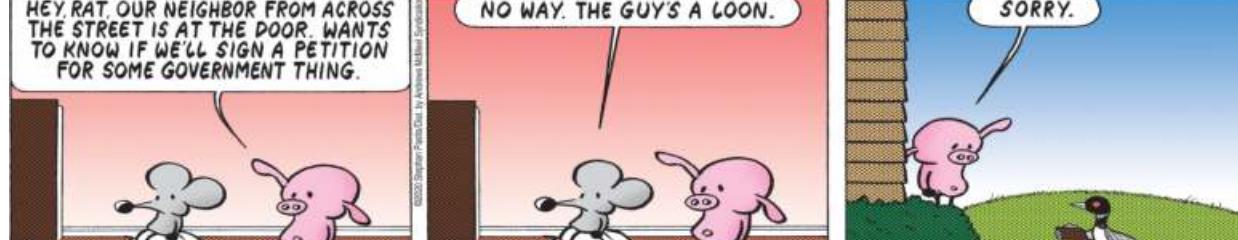
Solution No. 13356



## WUMO



## PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



# This Delhi doctor's message went viral

Dr. Ambarish Satwik typed out a message to his colony residents WhatsApp group, and it got forwarded many times over



SUNALINI MATHEW

At about the same time that Dr. Ambarish Satwik's largely medical messaging was taking place this week, there was another, put out by Kent for their *atta* and bread maker. It enunciated the classism that many RWA groups have reflected over the past few weeks, in keeping domestic workers away from their jobs.

While the primary aim of Dr. Satwik's seven-point WhatsApp message, shared on his Gulmohar Park residents group, was not to tackle the discriminatory practice, it was in part, meant to remind people to avoid being prejudiced against someone who got the COVID-19 virus.

"You can't stigmatise this particular family; you can't stop walking down a particular street," he says, of a person being detected with the virus in his locality.

"There was a lot of misinformation and speculation about what to do next," he says, of discussions everywhere, including on family WhatsApp groups.

While the phone-typed message itself was over 1,000 words long, it was just meant as a neighbourhood note, and Dr. Satwik had no idea it would go viral. "It was meant to just give the residents the lay of the land: what to expect and what they should do," he says, following the initial panic of the pandemic and later that of the colony finding one of their own with the virus.

He's understanding of the panic: "You'd expect stuff like this – nobody quite knows where this is going, what the chances of acquiring the infection are, so you try to theorise." His patients though, have been resigned to the situation, "submitting themselves to treatment".

Dr. Satwik, who works as a vascular and endovascular surgeon in Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, is part of a family of physicians. For doctors, things haven't been easy, despite the fact that he says Ganga Ram has been especially proactive with precautions to make it COVID compliant, to prevent as much as possible, the chances of cross infection.

They've retrofitted air-conditioning, and been actively fogging and

## The main takeaways from his WhatsApp message

- Community transmission of COVID-19 is properly underway and the epidemic is just about taking off in Delhi.
- There is no evidence whatsoever that any medicine or therapeutic intervention can prevent or treat COVID-19 infection.
- In the absence of a drug or a vaccine, most of us are going to get infected over the next few weeks / months... That said, COVID-19 isn't the plague or Ebola. In about 80% cases this infection would be completely harmless. Even in the elderly, getting COVID-19 isn't the equivalent of getting a death sentence.
- About 70% of us will have to get infected for the community to acquire herd immunity.
- No matter who you are and how old you are, do not step out without a mask. A simple mask is good enough, an N95 is even better, but please do not use N95 masks or Vogmask with exhaust valves... Make sure the mask covers your nose and mouth. It's instructive to note that even if you're in the presence of a COVID-19 infected individual and they're masked and not coughing and you are yourself masked, the probability of you getting the

infection is minuscule.

- Learn optimal mask hygiene. Consider the outer surface of your mask contaminated and carrying the virus if you've been in close proximity of other people. Do not touch the outer surface of the mask. Remove the mask by disengaging the earloops without touching the outer surface and discard it (if disposable) or wash it immediately on return.
- Treat every individual you meet as an asymptomatic COVID-19 carrier. Treat every surface you touch as potentially contaminated. That is the meaning of community transmission. Carry a sanitiser on your person. Frequently sanitise your hands after touching surfaces or objects... Avoid stepping out, as much as possible, particularly for non-essential activities. Give Delhi's healthcare apparatus a fighting chance.

fumigating the premises, but it's not just another day at the office. Pandemics are always different. One should just process this rationally, be stoic about it and trudge along. I don't think any of us will abandon out post," he says of his family, his mother a pathologist, his father a general physician, and his partner, a gynaecologist.

His hope is that our leadership spend broadcast time on messaging, talking of the risk increasing even as the lockdown eases up.

It may help in containing the spread of COVID-19, the panic associated with it, and in its de-stigmatisation.

While he's been a part of the editorial working group of the previously-in-house, now peer-reviewed *Current Medicine Research and Practice*, for about 10 years now, he rarely writes for a lay audience on medical themes. In 2007, Penguin published his book *Perineum: Nether Parts of the Empire*, a work of historical fiction. He has also written on the cultural and political subjects for several publications, including for *The Hindu Business Line*.



# After Twitter fact-check, Trump threatens to shut social media

President says Twitter is interfering in the 2020 election and stifling free speech

**SRIRAM LAKSHMAN**

U.S. President Donald Trump threatened to "strongly regulate" or "shut down" social media platforms after Twitter identified two of his tweets as making unsubstantiated claims.

"Republicans feel that Social Media Platforms totally silence conservatives voices. We will strongly regulate, or close them down, before we can ever allow this to happen. We saw what they attempted to do, and failed, in 2016. We can't let a more sophisticated version of that happen again. Just like we can't let large scale Mail-In Ballots take root in our Country. It would be a free for all on cheating, forgery and the theft of Ballots. Whoever cheated the most would win. Likewise, Social Media. Clean up your act, NOW!!!" Mr. Trump wrote on Wednesday.

In a first, Twitter, on Tuesday, had posted a fact check below two of Mr. Trump's tweets about mail-in ballots. Twitter's action has potentially large ramifications given the U.S. is months away from a general election and Mr. Trump uses the site several times a day to communicate with his more than 80 million followers.

"There is NO WAY (ZERO!) that Mail-In Ballots will be anything less than substantially fraudulent. Mail boxes will be robbed, ballots will be forged & even illegally printed out & fraudulently signed," Mr. Trump tweeted, singling out the Governor of California [Gavin Newsom].

The Governor of California is sending Ballots to millions of people, anyone liv-



**Talking tough:** U.S. President Donald Trump during an event in the Rose Garden at the White House on Tuesday. ■ REUTERS

ing in the state, no matter who they are or how they got there, will get one. That will be followed up with professionals telling all of these people, many of whom have never even thought of voting before, how, and for whom, to vote. This will be a Rigged Election. No way!" the President wrote.

#### 'Get the facts'

Twitter reacted with a link that said, "Get the facts about mail-in ballots" that linked to a page titled,

"Trump makes unsubstantiated claim that mail-in ballots will lead to voter fraud." The page included details on the President's false claims and links to articles from publications, including the *Washington Post* and CNN.

Twitter had announced last year that it would, in some cases, tag notices onto tweets from the verified accounts of government offi-

cials, elected representatives and those running for office who had more than 10,000 followers. Mr. Trump has repeatedly made baseless claims on voting by mail and had threatened, earlier in May, to cut federal funding to some states over the issue. On Sunday, several Republican groups had sued California after Mr. Newsom said everyone eligible to vote would be sent an absentee ballot to encourage mail voting due to the pandemic.

#### 'Political bias'

Mr. Trump, reacted by saying Twitter was "interfering" in the 2020 election and "completely stifling free speech" and that as President, he would "not allow it to happen".

His campaign manager, Brad Parscale, accused Twitter of political bias and said the company was trying to interfere with Mr. Trump's

outreach to voters. "We always knew that Silicon Valley would pull out all the stops to obstruct and interfere with President Trump getting his message through to voters. Partnering with the biased fake news media 'fact checkers' is only a smoke screen Twitter is using to try to lend their obvious political tactics some false credibility. There are many reasons the Trump campaign pulled all our advertising from Twitter months ago, and their clear political bias is one of them," Mr. Parscale said in a statement.

However, Twitter had said

last year that it was not per-

mitting political ads and that

"political message reach

should be earned, not

bought."

Also on Tuesday, Mr. Trump tweeted unsubstantiated claims about television show host and former Republican politician Joe Scarborough, suggesting Mr. Scarborough had a role in the 2001 death of a former employee, Lori Klausutis.

Klausutis's death was caused by a cardiac condition and did not involve foul play, as per the authorities at the time. In a May 21 letter published by the *New York Times*, Klausutis's widow, Timothy Klausutis, had requested Twitter CEO Josh Dorsey to take down similar tweets from Mr. Trump from April and May this year.

A Twitter spokesperson said the company was "deeply sorry" about the "pain" caused by the statements but said the tweets would remain, as per several U.S. news outlets who reported the reaction.

# Hong Kong body will play an advisory role'

The city's government will retain enforcement powers, says key Chinese official

**AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
BEIJING**

A proposed security law could allow Chinese mainland authorities to set up shop in Hong Kong, but their powers would likely be restricted to intelligence gathering and an advisory role, a member of China's top political advisory body said Wednesday.

China's rubber-stamp Parliament is expected to approve on Thursday a proposal to draft a national security law for the semi-autonomous city, which has sparked fresh protests over fears the financial hub will lose its unique freedoms.

#### British-era agency

Daniel Fung, Hong Kong member of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, said the idea is to establish a security agency similar to one that existed when the city was a British colony. "I would expect the powers and duties of this



**On high alert:** Riot police standing guard as a woman tries to cross the street in Hong Kong on Wednesday. ■ AP

agency to be restricted to intelligence gathering, and playing an advisory role," Mr. Fung said, while noting its exact functions will have to be set out under the legislation that will be passed at a later date.

Enforcement of laws, he added, should remain with the Hong Kong government under the proposal, which would ban secession, subversion, terrorism and foreign interfe-

rence. Hong Kong has its own legal system and a degree of autonomy through the "One Country, Two Systems" arrangement under which Britain handed Hong Kong back to China in 1997.

Under the city's mini-constitution, local police are responsible for law enforcement but mainland police officials are allowed to operate within the territory. Activists fear the new proposals

will end this firewall.

Last year's mass unrest against the government was triggered by a now-scraped proposal to allow extraditions to the mainland, which many worried would leave Hong Kong citizens at the mercy of China's opaque justice system.

#### No transfer of suspects

Mr. Fung, however, said he did not see that happening under the new proposal.

"We do not expect the transfer of suspects to the mainland for trial," he said.

Mainland Chinese authorities could join Hong Kong police to investigate criminal suspects under the planned security law, pro-Beijing politician Maria Tam had earlier said. But according to Ms. Tam, who advises China's Parliament on Hong Kong's Constitution, police from outside the city would need approval from local authorities to conduct investigations.

## France to stop use of HCQ for COVID-19 treatment

**REUTERS  
PARIS**

France, Italy and Belgium acted to halt the use of hydroxychloroquine to treat patients suffering from COVID-19, amid questions about the safety of the generic anti-malaria drug.

France on Wednesday cancelled a decree allowing hospital doctors to dispense the medicine, while the Italian Medicine Agency (AIFA) suspended authorisation to use hydroxychloroquine for COVID-19 outside clinical trials.

Belgium's medicine agency warned against using the drug to treat the virus any

more except within ongoing clinical registered trials. It said trials aiming to evaluate the drug should also take potential risks into consideration.

The moves by three of the countries hardest hit by coronavirus infections and deaths follow a World Health Organization decision on Monday to pause a large trial of hydroxychloroquine due to safety concerns.

Hours before Beijing will hold a key vote on a controversial new security law on Hong Kong, Mr. Pompeo sent a notice to Congress that China was not living up to obligations from before it regained control of the territory from Britain in 1997. "I certified to Congress today that Hong Kong does not

## U.S. strips Hong Kong of special trading status

**AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
WASHINGTON**

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo declared on Wednesday that Hong Kong no longer enjoys the autonomy promised by Beijing, stripping the financial hub of its special status under U.S.

continue to warrant treatment under United States laws in the same manner as U.S. laws were applied to Hong Kong before July 1997," Mr. Pompeo said in a statement. "No reasonable person can assert today that Hong Kong maintains a high degree of autonomy from China, given facts on the ground."

Under a law passed last year by Congress aimed at supporting Hong Kong's pro-democracy movement, the administration has to certify that the territory is still autonomous to enjoy its separate status with the U.S. for trading purposes.

## EU unveils €750 billion economy rescue plan

Bloc will borrow funds from the market and disburse them in loans and grants

**REUTERS  
BRUSSELS**

The European Union (EU)'s executive unveiled a €750 billion plan on Wednesday to prop up economies hammered by the coronavirus crisis, hoping to end months of squabbling over how to fund a recovery that has exposed fault-lines across the 27-nation bloc.

Under the proposal, which could still be blocked by more frugal northern nations, the European Commission would borrow the funds from the market and then disburse two-thirds in grants and the rest in loans to cushion the unprecedented slump expected this year due to the coronavirus lockdowns.

#### Worst-affected nations

Much of the money will go to Italy and Spain, the EU nations worst affected by the pandemic. EU leaders agree



European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. ■ AP

that, if they fail to rescue economies now in freefall, they risk something worse than their divisive debt crisis of a decade ago, which fanned euroscepticism and threatened to pull the eurozone apart.

But fiscally conservative northern countries have resisted pressure from a "Club Med" group to take on mutual debt to protect the EU's single market of 450 million people from being splintered by divergent economic growth and wealth levels.

"We either all go it alone, leaving countries, regions and people behind and accepting a union of haves and have-nots, or we walk that road together..." said European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen.

The euro rose as she laid out in the European Parliament details of the Commission's plan, entitled "Europe's Mo-

ment: Repair and Prepare for the Next Generation".

The grants, although controversial, are needed because Italy, Spain, Greece, France and Portugal already have high debt and rely heavily on tourism, which was halted by the pandemic.

The recovery fund package comes in addition to the EU's long-term budget for 2021-27, which the Commission proposed should be set

at €1.100 trillion (\$1.21 trillion).

#### Germany welcomes plan

The 500 billion euros in grants is in line with the wishes of the EU's two biggest economies, France and Germany, which came up with a grants-only proposal last week. France, Germany, Italy and others welcomed the Commission plan.

The more frugal nations would rather see the recovery package comprise only loans, and the Netherlands – among the most resistant to mutualised debt and grants – responded cautiously to the proposals. The plan has to be approved by all 27 member states and the European Parliament.

The borrowing will ultimately have to be repaid, meaning higher national contributions to the EU budget in the future or new taxes assigned to the bloc.

Responding to the report "Sri Lanka will not tolerate targeting of war heroes: Gotabaya Rajapaksa" published on May 20 in *The Hindu*, the office of the President of Sri Lanka, Gotabaya Rajapaksa, has said the article did not reflect "the real situation".

The President's Media Division, in a written response, pointed to its reference to several Sri Lankan soldiers, especially top officers, being accused of human rights violations during and soon after the war, and said:

"In any armed conflict, maintaining human rights of an individual is akin to preventing muddy puddles during rain." Due to the "volatile" nature of warfare, International Humanitarian Laws are "not a set of clear-cut rules in black and white that one may tick off against."

"Instead, it must take into consideration the principles of distinction and legitimate targeting, military necessity and proportionality.

to judge a military operation for its action," the statement said, adding that no official documentation had "proven allegations" of war crimes.

On the reference to Mr. Rajapaksa recently pardoning a soldier convicted for the murder of eight Tamil civilians, the statement said, the President had used his powers according to the Constitution. "After taking 13 years to sentence Ratnayake, the court still held reasonable doubts. Sri Lanka pardoned, without trial, 14,500 arrested or surrendered LTTE cadres. Amongst them were those who too had committed similar or worse acts as the one Ratnayake was embroiled. Therefore, for Sri Lanka to pardon Ratnayake also is not unreasonable or unethical," said the statement.

The reference in the report to Sri Lanka's Army Commander as "a general accused of war crimes" is "very unfair", the statement said, noting that the allegations are "unsubstantiated and arbitrary". The National Ranaviru [War heroes] Day is "not just a day to salute the fallen soldier, but to celebrate the peace that their supreme sacrifice ushered into the country". Pointing to the report's description of the LTTE as a "rebel" outfit, the statement said it was a "terrorist" group. Further, contesting the reference to an estimated 40,000 casualties during the final phase of the war, the statement said the figure, cited in past UN reports, was a "guess" and "not an estimate".

Denying that militarisation was "a lingering concern in post-war Sri Lanka" as mentioned in the news report, the statement said there were "a number of instances where closely bonded relations between the security forces and people in the area had surfaced."

## INTERVIEW | M. TAYLOR FRAVEL

# 'Changing balance across the LAC is the trigger for stand-off'

Even though road construction activity lies on the Indian side, China likely views it as challenging its position, says expert on defence and military strategy

**ANANTH KRISHNAN**

The spark for the current stand-off with China, with ongoing face-off situations in the Galwan River valley, Pangong Lake and other areas, is the increasing infrastructure competition along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), says M. Taylor Fravel, a leading expert on the Chinese military and defence strategy, who is Professor of Political Science and Director of the MIT Security Studies Program. He is the author of *Active Defense: China's Military Strategy Since 1949* (2019) and *Strong Borders, Secure Nation: Conflict and Cooperation in China's Territorial Disputes* (2008). While construction activity near Galwan river and Pangong lake lies on the India side of the LAC, China is likely responding to what it sees as a challenge to its position. Edited excerpts:

On May 26 at the National People's Congress, Xi Jinping called on the People's Liberation Army to be battle-ready. Is this unusual?

■ Xi Jinping's use of the phrase "battle-readiness" (*beizhan*) is not unusual. It is

perhaps better rendered in English as 'combat readiness'. The phrase is commonly used along with the characters for training (*xunlian*) to in the phrase 'training and combat readiness', which was the phrase Xi used at this year's National People's Congress, as well as last year's. 'Training and

combat readiness' frequently appear in the PLA's official newspaper, the *Liberation Army Daily*, with more than 1,100 mentions in 2019 and 1,300 in 2018. Moreover, it is natural for any commander in chief – Indian, American, or Chinese – to call on his or her armed forces to be combat-ready, as that is the basic requirement for any military to achieve its missions.

China has been more silent than it was during Doklam. What explains this?

■ China has been more silent during the current border stand-off because the situation today along the LAC differs in important ways from Doklam in 2017. Then, India crossed an international boundary to challenge Chinese troops in an area dis-

signed to communicate its resolve to defend what it views as its territory in the Doklam Bowl. When Indian troops returned across the border to Indian territory, the situation eased and was eventually resolved. Today, however, China appears to be asserting itself along the LAC in the western sector. This is more similar to the 2013 and 2014 border stand-offs between China and India. Perhaps paradoxically, fewer and less vocal or public statements allow China to use troop movements and posture to signal its opposition to Indian activities on the LAC while leaving flexibility for a resolution that would likely entail Chinese troops returning to their original positions. By contrast, in Doklam, China lacks a road similar to the DSBDBO that runs paral-

lel to the LAC, and that can facilitate the lateral movement of troops along the Chinese side of the LAC. Specifically, China appears to be responding to increased activity and road-building near the Galwan River and Pangong Lake. Even though this construction activity lies on the India side of the LAC, China likely views it as challenging their position on and perhaps the stability of the LAC. Strategic considerations may also be involved. China could be responding to the deterioration of China-India ties amid the coronavirus pandemic. China may feel it has to take a hard line everywhere it sees its sovereignty being challenged – especially if Beijing fears others may view it as a weak or distracted by the coronavirus and its economic after-

shocks. This is true not only regarding the border with India today, but also Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the South China Sea.

Are such incidents likely to recur as India plays catch-up on infrastructure? Would resuming the LAC clarification process help?

■ The lack of a formal agreement regarding the location of the LAC will ensure that future incidents and crises are bound to recur. Thus, reaching such a formal agreement – even if the underlying territorial dispute cannot be resolved – is more necessary than ever before. Narendra Modi and Xi Jinping are both strong leaders who should have the capacity to reach such an agreement.

## MARKET WATCH

	27-05-2020	% CHANGE
Sensex	31,605	-3.25
US Dollar	75.71	-0.07
Brent oil	34.37	-3.94

## NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	326.65	11.05
Asian Paints	1619.45	-10.40
Axis Bank	387.00	45.70
Bajaj Auto	2580.55	15.70
Bajaj Finserv	4258.05	160.80
Bajaj Finance	1936.45	107.45
Bharti Airtel	563.10	3.85
BPLC	329.45	16.30
Britannia Ind	3220.30	56.45
Cipla	633.05	5.35
Coal India	130.80	3.55
Dr Reddy's Lab	3883.00	18.70
Eicher Motors	14966.95	161.85
GAIL (India)	88.60	0.45
Grasim Ind	566.65	34.00
HCL Tech.	530.95	6.95
HDFC	1570.40	68.25
HDFC Bank	903.65	51.25
Hero MotoCorp	2175.65	62.00
Hindalco	133.30	4.20
Hind Unilever	1998.10	20.30
ICICI Bank	318.85	26.15
IndusInd Bank	368.95	20.75
Bharti Infralet	216.70	8.55
Infosys	705.45	24.90
Indian Oil Corp	77.55	0.40
ITC	192.15	0.45
JSW Steel	184.80	8.55
Kotak Bank	1217.55	64.35
L&T	850.85	25.30
M&M	432.50	3.35
Maruti Suzuki	5244.40	-1.75
Nestle India Ltd.	1671.50	61.35
NTPC	94.70	1.70
ONGC	77.95	0.95
PowerGrid Corp	157.15	-0.20
Reliance Ind	1445.55	21.50
State Bank	158.60	7.20
Shree Cement	20477.55	-189.75
Sun Pharma	450.90	-8.25
Tata Motors	84.55	1.45
Tata Steel	287.95	7.50
TCS	2005.30	62.30
Tech Mahindra	523.75	3.30
Titan	885.85	-6.90
UltraTech Cement	3727.40	-58.60
UPL	387.80	20.75
Vedanta	87.90	0.00
Wipro	201.25	12.45
Zee Entertainment	164.45	-0.75

## EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	75.52	75.83
Euro	83.10	83.45
British Pound	93.91	93.50
Japanese Yen (100)	70.14	70.44
Chinese Yuan	10.56	10.60
Swiss Franc	77.92	78.25
Singapore Dollar	53.34	53.57
Canadian Dollar	54.94	55.20
Malaysian Ringgit	17.36	17.45
Australian Dollar	50.35	50.57

Source: Indian Bank

## Profit of Tube Investments at ₹74 crore

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI

Tube Investments of India Ltd. (TIIL) has posted a standalone net profit after tax of ₹74 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 2020, including an exceptional item of ₹22 crore.

TII had recorded a net profit of ₹55 crore in the year-earlier period.

Total revenue from operations slipped to ₹935 crore from ₹1,224 crore due to a contraction in the auto industry.

For the year ended March 2020, higher profitability and lower capital employed enabled the sustainability of return on capital employed to 23%.

During the quarter, TIIL implemented a voluntary retirement scheme at a cost of ₹22 crore and the same was considered as an exceptional item resulting in profit before tax (after exceptional items) of ₹86 crore.

The board has planned to raise ₹200 crore by way of issue of privately placed, secured non-convertible debentures.

## Tata Power plans to add 700 MW in renewable energy

Enhances renewables portfolio by 7% to 3,833 MW

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI

Tata Power has enhanced its renewable portfolio by 7% to 3,883 mega watts (MW) and plans to add 700 MW in the near future to take the capacity to 4,600 MW.

More than a third of Tata Power's portfolio comes from clean energy. Of the 3,383 MW, 932 MW comes from wind and 1,705 MW comes from solar alone.

"The company's renewable energy portfolio stands at 3,883 MW, a 7% increase from the corresponding quarter last year," said a company statement.

"We, at Tata Power, have constantly strived to proliferate the company's renewable energy portfolio with

## Loans to MSMEs may get 'risk-free' tag

On FinMin nudge to RBI, banks may not need to set aside capital; Centre expecting less than 15% NPAs

## MANOJ SAHA

MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is likely to allow banks to assign zero risk weight for loans that will be extended to the micro, medium and small enterprises (MSMEs) under the ₹20 lakh crore economic package announced by the government earlier this month.

The Finance Ministry had requested the central bank to make these loans risk free, following an interaction with banks.

As a part of the package, a ₹3 lakh crore loan for the MSME sector was announced. This will be guaranteed by the National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company Limited (NCGTC) in the form of a Guaranteed Emergency Credit Line (GECLine).

However, such loans would attract a risk weight of



The move is aimed at nudging lenders to extend credit as they have turned risk averse and are reluctant to lend. ■REUTERS

a minimum 20% since these don't come with direct government guarantee. This facility is similar to the loans that are guaranteed by the Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE).

After banks highlighted the issue with the government, the Finance Ministry

asked the RBI to waive the requirement of assigning a risk weight to the loans, sources said.

"The RBI is likely to waive the requirement of risk weight," a source said. "The Finance Ministry is expected to issue detailed guidelines on this credit guarantee loan issue," the source added.

Sources also said that the government had factored in less than 15% non-performing assets from this ₹3 lakh crore of loans.

"The government has said that it has made [available] a corpus of ₹41,600 crore for the scheme, which is spread over the next few years. This means the government is factoring in less than 15% non-performing assets, as of now," said an official of a public sector bank.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, who met chief executives of public sector banks last week, said banks had been asked to extend loans automatically to eligible borrowers without fear of the '3Cs' – CBI, CVC and CAG.

The tenure of loan under this scheme will be four years, with a moratorium period of one year on the principal amount. The NCGTC will not charge any guarantee fee.

The interest rate under the scheme is 9.25% if the loan is extended by banks and financial institutions,

and 14% if by NBFCs.

## NTPC eyes majority stake in Delhi distribution cos.

Plans to enter distribution business

## PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

Power giant NTPC has evinced interest in buying 51% stake in Anil Dhirubhai Ambani Group's (ADAG) two utilities in Delhi, BSES Rajdhani Power Ltd. (BRPL) and BSES Yamuna Power Ltd. (BYPL).

In a letter written to Delhi Electricity Regulatory Commission (DERC) on May 26, 2020, the power giant said, "NTPC has decided to foray into power distribution sector and is keen on acquiring the distribution assets (BRPL and BYPL). We have learnt from media reports that ADAG wants to divest its



stake in BRPL and BYPL."

"NTPC is keen to explore the opportunities for acquiring 51 per cent stake in BRPL and BYPL, which are on sale, provided that the equity sale is done through a transparent process".

## SBI customers to SMS 'yes' for moratorium

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

State Bank of India's (SBI's) customers will be able to avail loan repayment moratorium facility by simply responding to an SMS from the bank, the lender said.

The bank will send an SMS to customers, who have given standing instructions, to which they have to respond with a 'yes' within five days of the communication if they want to avail the facility.

The bank also said it would extend the moratorium by another three months for all 85 lakh eligible customers without waiting for their request.

## REUTERS

NEW DELHI

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) is looking into allegations that Alphabet Inc's Google is abusing its market position to unfairly promote its mobile payments app in the country, five sources familiar with the case told Reuters.

The complaint was filed in February and the CCI has kept the identity of the complainant confidential, the first source with direct knowledge of the case said.

The complaint alleges the U.S. tech giant more prominently showcases its Google Pay app inside its Android app store in India, giving it an unfair advantage over

apps of competitors, which hurts consumers, the source added.

Google did not respond to a request for comment. Two of the sources said the watchdog informed Google about the case being filed a few days ago and the compa-

## Sensex rises 1,000 points as banking stocks shine

Axis Bank leads pack with 13.46% gain

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Indian equity benchmarks rose over 3% on Wednesday, with the benchmark Sensex gaining more than 1,000 points during intraday trade, as banking and financial stocks witnessed huge buying interest ahead of the derivatives expiry on Thursday.

The 30-share Sensex gained 995.92 points, or 3.25%, to close at 31,605.22. During the day, it touched a high of 31,660.60, up 1,051 points, over the previous day's close of 30,609.30.

Incidentally, the top eight gainers in the Sensex pack were all lender entities, with Axis Bank heading the pack with a gain of 13.46%.

It was followed by ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank, IndusInd Bank, Bajaj Finance, Kotak Mahindra Bank, State Bank

of India and HDFC.

The broader Nifty settled the day at 9,314.95, up 285.90 points or 3.17%. The India VIX index fell nearly 1% to trade around 31 levels; it was trading around 40 a month ago.

A positive trend in most leading Asian markets also acted as catalyst even as investor sentiment received a boost with foreign entities turning net buyers in the current month after two consecutive months of selling.

While provisional data showed that foreign portfolio investors were net sellers at ₹335 crore on Wednesday, they have been net buyers at ₹12,741 crore in the current month – a sharp upswing compared to the cumulative selling of nearly ₹69,000 crore in the previous two months.

## Google faces antitrust case in India

Plaint says it promotes payments app in its Android store, giving it unfair edge

## REUTERS

NEW DELHI

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The complaint alleges the U.S. tech giant more prominently showcases its Google Pay app inside its Android app store in India, giving it an unfair advantage over

apps of competitors, which hurts consumers, the source added.

**Allegation under review** A source said the case filing is currently being reviewed by senior CCI members. Typically, in such cases, Google will appear before the watchdog, which will then decide on the way forward.

The CCI can direct its investigations unit to conduct a wider probe into the allegations, or dismiss the case if it finds no merit in it.

"It is at a consideration stage," the source said.

The Commission did not respond to a request for comment.

Mirabai Chanu recommended for Khel Ratna



Mirabai Chanu. ■ FILE PHOTO

**Y.B. SARANGI**

KOLKATA

The Indian Weightlifting Federation (IWF) has nominated former World champion S. Mirabai Chanu for the Arjuna Award.

Mirabai, who won the World title in 2017, is one of the rare athletes who bagged the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna Award in 2018 even before getting the Arjuna Award.

After winning the 2018 CWG gold, she claimed gold medals in three Olympic qualifying events – EGAT Cup, Commonwealth championships and Qatar Cup – last year.

The IWF has also recommended the names of 2018 Commonwealth Games gold medallists R.V. Rahul and Punam Yadav for the Arjuna Award.

#### IN BRIEF



Batra is Olympic Channel Commission member

NEW DELHI

The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) president Narinder Batra has been appointed as a member of the Olympic Channel Commission. In a letter to International Olympic Committee president Thomas Bach, Batra, who became an IOC member in June last year, expressed his gratitude after being selected for the role.

#### Serie A's meeting with Italian Government today

MILAN

Serie A's hopes of following Germany and Spain back onto the pitch will be decided on Thursday during a meeting with the Italian government which will determine the fate of the season in football-mad Italy. Sports Minister Vincenzo Spadafora will tell Italian football federation and Lega Serie A bosses if the health conditions are right to return after nearly three months. AFP



Favre backtracks on Dortmund exit

BERLIN

Swiss coach Lucien Favre on Wednesday back-tracked on comments he made hinting he would leave Borussia Dortmund at the end of the season after defeat by Bayern Munich left his team seven points adrift of the champions in the Bundesliga title race with six games left. "I am not thinking of giving up at all," Favre, who is under contract until 2021, insisted on Wednesday. AFP

#### Premier League to resume contact training

LONDON

Premier League clubs voted unanimously on Wednesday to resume contact training as the English top-flight took a significant step towards a possible restart in June. Clubs returned to training in small and socially distanced groups last week but they have now moved to stage two of the "return to training protocol".

#### IOA forms grant and affiliation committee

NEW DELHI

The Indian Olympic Association on Wednesday constituted an 11-member committee, led by Athletics Federation of India president Adille Sumariwala, to monitor annual grant and affiliation fee of its members for the 2020-2021 cycle. PTI

# Fate of T20 World Cup uncertain

ICC likely to delay decision on event; push for postponement from some quarters

**AMOL KARHADKAR**

MUMBAI

The International Cricket Council (ICC) Board is likely to adopt a wait-and-watch approach when discussing the fate of the T20 World Cup, scheduled to be played in Australia in October-November.

The COVID-19 outbreak has thrown sports calendars into disarray, and cricket is no exception. The future of the marquee event – set to feature 16 teams – hangs in the balance. There have been murmurs of a postponement, either to 2021 or 2022, but the ICC was quick to clarify on Wednesday that it is going ahead with preparations.

#### Clarification

"The ICC has not taken a decision to postpone the T20 World Cup and preparations are ongoing for the event in Australia this year as per plan. The topic is on the agenda for the ICC Board meeting [on Thursday] and a decision will be made in due course," stated an ICC spokesperson.



No clarity: The wait for the West Indies, which won the World T20 title in 2016, and other teams continues as no decision has been taken on this year's edition. ■ FILE PHOTO: K.R. DEEPAK

*The Hindu* understands that despite a few constituents of the 18-member Board pushing for rescheduling the event, the ICC is likely to wait for a while, considering multiple factors.

With the National Rugby League in Australia likely to receive the go-ahead, with limited spectators in the stands, the ICC would like to

monitor developments and delay its decision till the last minute.

Besides, the fact that the ICC is set to have a new chief in the annual meeting in the next couple of months also means that outgoing chairman Shashank Manohar would be hesitant to impose his decisions on the new regime.

Should Cricket Australia express its inability on Thursday to conduct the event, the ICC will have to schedule it in either 2021 or 2022. India is set to host next year's T20 World Cup, but is involved in a conflict with the ICC over securing tax benefits from the government. The ICC does not have an event scheduled in 2022.

## Also on the agenda

The other important issues that will come up for discussion when the ICC Board meets on Thursday:

#### Chairman election

The procedure and timelines for electing Shashank Manohar's successor as ICC chairman will be formalised.

At the moment, England's Colin Graves and Singapore's Imran Khawaja are the contenders, with BCCI president Sourav Ganguly a rank outsider.

#### Standoff with BCCI

The ICC had set a deadline of May 18 for the BCCI to obtain an assurance from the Central government on tax exemptions for the 2021 T20 World Cup.

The BCCI has sought an extension, citing the pandemic; it will be interesting to see if the ICC takes the event away from the BCCI.

# India's Australia Test series from Dec. 3'

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**

MELBOURNE

Cricket Australia has locked in four venues for the financially crucial Test series against India and the first match is tentatively set for a December 3 start in Brisbane. Two Australian media outlets – 7news.com.au and Sydney Morning Herald 7news.com.au reported.

(SMH) – reported that the schedule has been finalised.

"Cricket Australia (CA), on Wednesday, ticked off on the Test series beginning in Brisbane on Dec. 3 before heading to Adelaide from Dec. 11 and Melbourne and Sydney for the Boxing Day (Dec. 26) and New Year Tests (Jan. 3)," 7news.com.au reported.

# KKR does its bit for Amphan affected

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

KOLKATA

Indian Premier League franchise Kolkata Knight Riders has extended its support to the West Bengal Government in the aftermath of Cyclone Amphan.

Apart from committing to contribute to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund, KKR has pledged to work with the local authorities of Kolkata and plant 5000 trees in the city.

Besides, KKR has decided to send out Sahayata Vahan vehicles "to go around West

Bengal and help affected people in satellite towns and districts. Ration and essential hygiene items to be distributed to the needy across four most affected regions – Kolkata, North and South 24 Parganas and East Medinipur."

KKR has said that its trained volunteers would follow social distancing norms to avoid the spread of COVID-19. They will use all necessary safety equipment, such as masks, gloves and sanitisers, while serving in the cyclone-affected areas.

# BWF extends Tokyo Olympic qualification period into 2021

Ranking points accumulated during original phase will count

**RAYAN ROZARIO**

COIMBATORE

Badminton World Federation (BWF), on Wednesday, announced an extended qualification period of 17 weeks in 2021 for the Tokyo Olympics.

Crucially, it stated that all ranking points earned at tournaments during the original Olympic qualification period (29 April 2019 to 26 April 2020) will also count.

#### Select tournaments

BWF was unable to complete the last six weeks of its one-year qualifying period in 2020 due to COVID-19 and the extended period, slated from week 1 to 17 in 2021, will include a select number of tournaments that were postponed, cancelled or suspended.

Efforts will be made to

hold these events next year in the same corresponding week from 2020.

If not, another date will be sanctioned within week 1-17, subject to approval.

BWF clarified that tournaments rescheduled for the end of 2020, as per the revised calendar announced last week, will not count towards qualification. Only the 2021 editions of each tournament will.

For example, the rescheduled India Open, set to be held from December 8 to 13, will not count, but the 2021 edition, if held in its usual slot in March, will.

#### Limited impact

"Although we aim to resume international tournaments towards the end of 2020, we have chosen to resume the Olympic and Paralympic

qualification process only in 2021 to ensure that travel restrictions and other related impacts of COVID-19 are limited," a press release quoted Thomas Lund, the BWF Secretary-General, as saying.

For the Paralympics, only one tournament within the original Paralympic qualification period was cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic – the Spanish Para Badminton International 2020 – and it has now been included in the adjusted qualification system within a period from January 1 to March 28, 2021.

#### Revised calendar

A revised BWF tournament calendar for 2021 with the actual dates for these eligible tournaments will be revealed later.

## SAI opens training at Patiala

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

NEW DELHI

Olympic-bound athletes cloistered at the National Institute of Sports, Patiala and the Centre of Excellence, Bengaluru, finally got the go-ahead to resume training starting Wednesday.

A day after opening its stadia in Delhi to trainees, the Sports Authority of India cleared sporting activities for elite athletes, subject to ministry, SAI and NSF Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

While Patiala has athletes and weightlifters, Bengaluru has the men's and women's hockey teams and a few athletes.

However, only elite athletes either already qualified for the Olympics or part of the national camp and on the verge of qualifying would begin in the initial stage.

# Kimmich nets the winner

Bayern beats Dortmund in Der Klassiker



Telling contribution: Bayern skipper Neuer acknowledged the importance of Kimmich's goal. ■ AFP

**AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE**

BERLIN

Joshua Kimmich described his winning goal as "brutally important" after Bayern Munich took a huge step towards an eighth straight Bundesliga title with a 1-0 win at Borussia Dortmund to leave it seven points clear at the top with just six games left.

Kimmich's brilliant effort came just before half-time behind closed doors at Signal Iduna Park as host Dortmund missed the chance to turn up the heat on the Ba-

varians without the backing of its huge support.

"It was brutally important: I looked around to see if everyone understood how important it was," Kimmich said of his deft chip.

**The results:** Borussia Dortmund 0 lost to Bayern Munich 1 (Kimmich 43); Bayer Leverkusen 0 lost to Wolfsburg 4 (Pongracic 43, 75, Arnold 64, Steffen 68).

Eintracht Frankfurt 3 (Silva 35, Kamada 79, Chandler 82) drew with Freiburg 3 (Grifo 28, Petersen 67, Holer 69); Werder Bremen 0 drew with Borussia Monchengladbach 0.

# Carlsen meets Nakamura in semifinals

**RAKESH RAO**

NEW DELHI

For the second time in three days, Magnus Carlsen dismissed Wesley So's challenge 2.5-0.5 and set up a semifinal-clash with Hikaru Nakamura in the \$150,000 Lindores Abbey Rapid Challenge.

Carlsen won both games with black and, in between, drew with white, in the second of the best-of-four mini-match.

Later, Sergey Karjakin rallied from 1-2 to win 3-2 over Russian teammate Daniil Dubov and draw level after two mini-matches.

Much like the all-China encounter involving Ling Diren and Wu Yangyi, the Karjakin-Dubov match will also be decided following a third mini-match.

**The results:** Quarterfinal (second mini-match): Carlsen (Nor) bt So (USA) 2.5-0.5; Karjakin (Rus) bt Dubov (Rus) 3-2.

# Netaji's volleyball club bears the brunt of Amphan's wrath

Bijoyee Sangha suffers extensive damage

**AMITABHA DAS SHARMA**

KOLKATA

The volleyball club that was established by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose 90 years ago suffered extensive damage in the havoc wreaked by cyclone Amphan.

The Bijoyee Sangha was established in 1930 by Bose at the historic Shradhananda Park after he became the general secretary of the Indian National Congress. As Bose became the key figure in the country's quest for freedom, the club hosted many important political personalities and meetings apart from promoting sports.

"As kids we grew up listening about how the club became central to the freedom movement after Netaji established it with the aim to attract the local youth to sports," said Prasenjit Dutta, a former senior national player who currently coaches at Bijoyee Sangha.

"As Netaji's stature grew in the national freedom movement, the club hosted leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and many others whenever they came for meetings at the Shradhananda Park.

"The club is surrounded by some very old trees and three huge trees, which were more than 50 years old, were brought down by

the cyclone. The trees fell on the courts uprooting posts and electrical connections. It also caused enough damage to the club building. We may have lost some valuable documents and memorabilia that were preserved in the club," said Dutta.

Ashutosh Roy Chowdhury, who did pioneering work in getting women to play volleyball in the mid-60s, is still an active member at the age of 93. "He ignored his frail health conditions and came down to the club personally to see the damage caused by the cyclone," said Dutta reflecting the attachment of the club members.

"The club is surrounded by some very old trees and three huge trees, which were more than 50 years old, were brought down by

# Hitting the right notes for success

Adil harnesses music for realisation of mission in his tennis journey

**KAMESH SRINIVASAN**

NEW DELHI

Excellence is rarely achieved in a hurry. The transition from juniors to the professional circuit is a mystery for many, but patience and the belief in the process help the kids find their way.

One of the brightest juniors in the country, Adil Kalyanpur, who did well to compete in the UK under-14 tennis championship in Wimbledon and later qualified for the French Open under-18 wild-card event, had the dream experience of training at the Rafael Nadal Academy in Spain for a few minutes.

But bogged down by a string of

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