



A.P. HC reinstates State Election Commissioner Ramesh Kumar
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Former Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Ajit Jogi passes away
page 11



Rajasthan farmers help officials in night-long anti-locust operations
page 11



U.S. President warns of stern action as unrest spreads in Minneapolis
page 14

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NEARBY



Chaos as movement across border stopped

GURUGRAM
Commuters headed towards Gurugram on NH-48 had a harrowing time on Friday morning with Gurugram Police ensuring strict implementation of restrictions on cross-border movement, allowing only those with valid passes.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

'JNU student and activist charged under UAPA'

NEW DELHI
Natasha Narwal, a JNU student and activist associated with women's student collective Pinjra Tod, was arrested on Friday under the stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act for her alleged role in the communal riots in north-east Delhi in February, a senior police officer said on Friday.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

Jharkhand flies its workers back from Leh

BHUBANESWAR
The Jharkhand government on Friday arranged to have 60 migrant workers stranded in Leh flown back to Ranchi, making it the first State to use flights to help its stranded citizens return home during the lockdown in the wake of the SC's order.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 10

GDP growth slows to a 11-year low of 4.2%, Q4 slumps to 3.1%

Agriculture, govt. spending help redeem January-March economic performance

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Economic growth slowed to a 11-year low of 4.2% in 2019-20, according to provisional estimates released by the National Statistical Office on Friday.

The final quarter of the fiscal year, the January-March period, saw the expansion in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) slump to 3.1%, reflecting the impact of the first week of the nationwide COVID-19 lockdown, which began on March 25.

Fourth-quarter growth, while the slowest in 44 quarters, however, was still faster than the 2.2% pace predicted by most economists and ratings analysts.

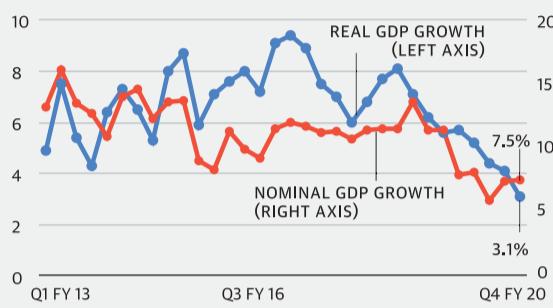
"Agriculture and government expenditure have been the saviours," said Devendra Pant, chief economist at the Fitch Group's India Ratings.

Agricultural output and the mining sector picked up steam in the fourth quarter, growing at rates of 5.9% and 5.2% respectively, even while manufacturing contracted further, with output shrinking by 1.4%. Public administration, defence and other services grew at 10.1%.

Although the budget estimate for GDP growth in 2019-2020 had been pegged at 8.5%, the NSO's previous estimates had pushed the

Downward spiral

India's real GDP growth rate slowed to 3.1% for the fourth quarter of FY 2020. Nominal GDP growth rate, at 7.5%, saw a marginal improvement compared to the previous quarter



projection down to 5%. On Friday, the NSO also revised downward its estimates for the first three quarters, and pegged its growth estimate for the full year at 4.2%. GDP expanded by 6.1% in 2018-19.

Demand weakening

"The most disturbing news is that the three components of demand have fallen – consumption demand has slowed, while investments and exports are both in negative territory," said D.K. Srivastava, chief policy advisor for Ernst and Young India and a member of the Advisory Council to the 15th Finance Commission.

He also expressed concern about the data from the Controller General of Ac-

counts (CGA) showing that the Centre's fiscal position worsened. "CGA's data indicates that the Centre's gross tax revenues have contracted by 3.4% in 2019-20. This is unprecedented. Fiscal deficit has increased to 4.6% of GDP, well above the revised estimate of 3.8%," he added.

"Please note that this has all happened in the year prior to COVID," remarked Dr. Srivastava. "In the five years before the 2008 crisis, we maintained an 8% GDP growth, so the capacity to endure and recover was stronger. Now we are faced with a weaker economy and much weaker public finances and fiscal capacity."

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Core sector output shrinks 38% in April

The lockdown resulted in core sector output contracting 38% in April 2020 compared to the same month in the previous year, according to Commerce Ministry data released on Friday.

This is the second straight month in negative territory for the index of eight core sector industries, after a 9% fall in March 2020. ▶ PAGE 15

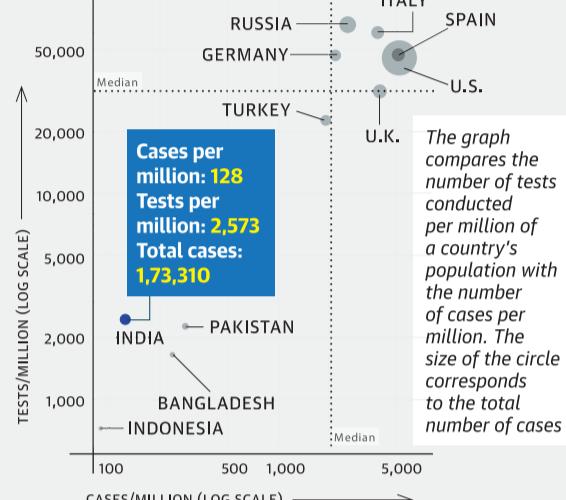
GST Council to meet in mid-June

The Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council is likely to meet in mid-June after repeated demands from the States anxious for their GST compensation dues pending since December. However, information on GST revenue since March – which may see a sharp fall due to the lockdown – is likely to be withheld at least until July. ▶ PAGE 15

In proportion

While India ranks ninth in the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases, the infections as a proportion of its population are much lower compared to countries with the most cases. However, testing rates in India are also very low, ruling out any reason for relief

1,00,000



vour of running metro trains as most routes fall in the containment zones in cities.

In the new set of relaxations planned, all kinds of religious places will be allowed to open, but malls and restaurants are expected to remain shut.

The lockdown, imposed first in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic on March 24, has been extended four times. The ongoing phase is in force till May 31.

The Centre is not in fa-

Chengalpattu and Thiruvallur (Tamil Nadu).

The State governments will be given more autonomy in implementing the MHA's guidelines issued under the Disaster Management Act, 2005. "States can improvise to make them more stringent, but they cannot dilute the provisions," said the official.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

MORE REPORTS ▶ PAGES 8 & 10

We will decide our present, future, PM tells nation

NISTULA HEBBAR
NEW DELHI

Marking the first anniversary of his second successive full majority government at the Centre, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in a letter addressed to all Indians, reminded them not only of the

bold decisions taken by his government in the last year, but, in a reference to the raging COVID-19 pandemic, exhorted them to "remember that the present and future of 130 crore will never be dictated by an adversity".

"We will decide our present and future," Mr. Modi said.

He recapped the many decisions taken by his second successive government in its first year, describing the vote as one for continuity of the work his government had done between 2014-19 and

squarely addressed the way his government was handling the COVID-19 pandemic. Mr. Modi said when the pandemic broke, everyone assumed that India would flounder in its handling.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Delhi records 1,000-plus cases second day in a row

Biggest single-day jump with 1,106 new COVID-19 infections

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

As many as 1,106 new COVID-19 cases were reported in Delhi in the past 24 hours, taking the total number of cases to 17,386, according to the Delhi government's health bulletin released on Friday. This is the biggest single-day jump in the number of cases in the city so far and the second consecutive day of more than 1,000 cases being recorded. Of the total cases, 7,846 people have recovered and there are 9,142 active cases.

The total number of deaths also rose to 398 with 82 more fatalities being reported, 13 of them happening in the past 24 hours. Health Minister Satyendar Jain said at a press conference that the rest of the 69 deaths took place in the last 34 days. "The 52 deaths from Safdarjung hospital are



Nursing staff at LNJP Hospital in New Delhi on Friday.
■ R.V. MOORTHY

very old... they submitted it to us two days ago and we have added it after auditing," he said.

Do not panic'
Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said of the total novel coronavirus patients in Delhi, the recovery rate is about 50%. "There is no need for us to panic. Around 80% to 90% of infected people are recovering in

home quarantine," he said at the same press conference Mr. Jain addressed.

The Health Minister said there are more than 5,000 beds for COVID-19 treatment in Delhi. "The number of patients currently on ventilator is 28. We have more than 300 dedicated ventilators available currently in Delhi. Our aim is to double the number of beds in the coming days," he said.

On Friday, 18 more people from a Delhi government-run night shelter on the AIIMS premises tested positive for COVID-19, taking the total number of cases from the shelter to 42. "Around 50 people are quarantined at the night shelter and the government is in the process of moving them to a nearby school," said a Delhi government official.

SEE ALSO ▶ PAGES 2 & 3

Trump did not talk to Modi on China'

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

The government on Friday rejected U.S. President Donald Trump's claim that he had spoken to Prime Minister Narendra Modi about the situation on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China, or that the two leaders spoke at all.

Government sources said India would not accept Mr. Trump's offer to mediate on the stand-off at the LAC, and this was conveyed by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh to his American counterpart on Friday. "There has been no recent contact between PM Modi and President Trump. The last conversation between them was on 4 April 2020 on Hydroxychloroquine [HCQ]," said sources in the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).

DETAILS ON ▶ PAGE 9

Long ride home



On anything that moves: A migrant worker heads out with his belongings on a rickshaw for Amroha in U.P. from Narela, Delhi, on Friday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

Assam MLA granted bail in sedition case

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

The Gauhati High Court on Friday granted bail to All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) lawmaker Aminul Islam, who was lodged in central Assam's Nagaon jail more than a month ago on sedition and other charges, including circulation of a provocative video related to COVID-19 quarantine on so-

cial media.

District officials said he is likely to be released on Saturday after the bail order is received.

Mr. Islam, MLA from the Dhang Assembly constituency, was booked under four sections of the Indian Penal Code, including I24A dealing with sedition and I53A related to promoting or attempting to promote communal

disorder. He was arrested at 1 a.m. on April 7 after the district police informed and sought the permission of Assembly Speaker Hiten Nath Goswami.

Nagaon's Superintendent of Police Gaurav Abhijit Dilip had said Mr. Islam confessed to having made and forwarded an audio clip containing objectionable statements.

Mr. Islam's mobile phone was seized for ascertaining whom the audio clip was forwarded to.

A voice in the clip, said to be his, was heard saying people were being kept in quarantine centres to be killed. This was in reference to some of the Nizamuddin event attendees who tested COVID-19 positive after returning to Assam.

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A voice in the clip, said to be his

Crematoriums in city increase capacity

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Civic bodies here have increased the capacity to cremate bodies from about 45 per day to about 95 per day by allowing the use of wood pyres at five crematoriums, a senior SDMC official said on Friday.

Prior to this, the civic bodies were using only CNG furnaces to dispose of the bodies of COVID-19 patients. A total of seven such furnaces at the Nigambodh Ghat and Punjabi Bagh crematoriums could dispose of 18 and 24 bodies every day respectively, officials said. Apart from this, bodies were also disposed of at burial grounds at Bahadurshah Zafar Marg, Mangolpuri and Madanpur Khadar.

Keeping in view the rise in COVID-19 cases, the civic bodies decided to allow cremation on wood pyres at Punjabi Bagh, Nigambodh Ghat, Panchkuiyan Road, Karkardooma cremation grounds as well as at the Lodhi Road Crematorium, the official said.

'Taking steps to avoid piling up of bodies at mortuaries'

Delhi government informs High Court

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI



tions are to be carried out.

The court, which initiated the case suo moto, said that this situation should not be repeated. It also asked the Delhi government and the civic bodies to submit a status report by the next date of hearing on June 2.

It further said that 28 bodies were disposed of on Thursday and by Saturday the remaining 35 bodies will be cremated. Only those bodies will be retained where post-mortem or investiga-

tions are to be carried out.

The court, which initiated the case suo moto, said that this situation should not be repeated. It also asked the Delhi government and the civic bodies to submit a status report by the next date of hearing on June 2.

After two resident doctors each from the Cardiology and Ophthalmology Departments tested positive for COVID-19 at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) here earlier this week, 11 staff members have tested positive on Friday taking the total number of cases testing positive for the virus in three days to 62, a senior health official said.

He added that so far, 205 AIIMS staffers have tested positive for the virus since March 15 and 150 have been discharged.

AIIMS Medical Superintendent D.K. Sharma, said: "All precautionary and safety measures for our health-

AIIMS reports 62 fresh COVID-19 cases in 3 days

205 staffers have tested positive for virus since March 15'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI



tary Srinivas Rajkumar said that since March the association has been writing and fighting for improving safety of hostel premises, sanitation, provision of stay and proper quarantine protocol and adequate testing without any satisfactory response.

"Even issues about quality of N95 masks provided and other components of PPE have not been addressed. The N95 masks provided in many regions of hospital doesn't meet even the Health Ministry's safety standards, forget international standards," he said. He added that it is not the virus that the staff is worried about but the apathy of the government and AIIMS administration.

Lack of communication between AIIMS, govt.: HC

AIIMS not accessible to common man'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Advocate Anand Varma, who appeared for AIIMS, countered saying AIIMS admits any person who reports at the emergency and is found COVID-19-positive, and in case the person requires hospitalisation, and home quarantine is not sufficient to deal with his condition.

The government, in its affidavit, stated that due to the inability to contact the AIIMS authorities at the relevant time, patients were shifted to Lok Nayak Hospital and Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital. AIIMS disputed this position and stated that nobody from the Delhi government contacted any of its officer.

The court said the issue can be resolved by both AIIMS and the Delhi government nominating nodal officers.

Five hotels to be extensions for private hospitals

This will increase number of beds that are available for COVID-19 patients, says Delhi government

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

identified COVID private hospital," read an order issued by the Health and Family Welfare Department.

Hospitals can admit COVID-19 patients in the extensions as per the medical condition of the infected person. "In case a patient's condition turns severe while staying at the extension, he/she shall be transferred/admitted to the attached private hospital," the order stated.

"Hotel Crown Plaza, Okhla Phase-I; Hotel Surya, New Friends Colony; Hotel Siddharth, Rajendra Place; Hotel Jivitesh, Pusa Road; and Hotel Sheraton, Saket District Centre, have been requisitioned by the District Magistrate and given to attached hospitals for converting them into extended COVID hospital wherein the medical services shall be provided by the attached

and ₹4,000 per day per person for the other hotels," the order said.

COVID-19

The linked hospital will be paid a maximum of ₹5,000 per patient per day for their medical services, inclusive of all consumables, services of doctors, nurses, paramedical staff and nursing staff. "Investigation charges, if any, shall be charged by the linked hospital as per their scheduled rates, and for oxygen support the linked hospital is allowed to charge at the hotel ₹2,000 per bed per day. The medical services provided by the attached

hospital at their facility shall be charged at their respective schedule rates," the order said.

All charges will be collected by the linked hospital and they will make payment to the hotels.

Two more hospitals

Two more hospitals, Deep Chand Bandhu Hospital and Satyavadi Raja Harish Chander Hospital, have been declared designated COVID-19 treatment facilities by the Delhi government. "Medical superintendents of the hospitals are directed to convert their hospital by June 2," read an order issued by the Delhi government.

There are 200 beds each

in the two hospitals.

The government also declared GTB Hospital as a designated COVID-19 treatment facility. But only 500 beds of the hospital will be reserved for COVID-19 patients.

The government has also stated that infected people who are eligible for home quarantine can quarantine themselves in 10 hotels in the city on payment basis. Five of the 10 hotels are in Aerocity: Holiday Inn, Hotel Pride Plaza, Aloft Hotel, IBIS Hotel and JW Marriott. The other hotels are Sheraton Hotel in Saket, ITC Welcome in Dwarka, Taj Vivanta in Dwarka, Suryaa Hotel in New Friends Colony, and Hotel Le Meridian.



Vehicles make their way through a waterlogged road during a spell of rain in Delhi on Friday evening. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Thunderstorms bring relief from searing heat

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Air quality of Delhi-NCR					
Delhi	101	Gurugram	100		
Ghaziabad	89	Faridabad	118		
Noida	96	Greater Noida	116		
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

ween 42% and 88%.

The city recorded overnight rainfall of 5.2 mm with no shower between 8.30 a.m. and 5 p.m. though. Several parts of the city received rainfall after 5 p.m. on Friday.

The Met Department has forecast that the temperatures will stay in check for the next few days and will gradually rise to reach the 40 degrees Celsius mark again on June 2.



Punjab Government
led by Chief Minister
Capt. Amarinder Singh
greet people
on his Birth Anniversary

PSPCL Punjab State Power Corporation Limited
(Regd. Office: PSPCL Head Office, The Mall, Patiala-147001)
(Office of Controller of Stores & Disposal (South), F-1, Shakti Vihar, PSPCL,
Patiala, Ph No. 0175-2207571 E-mail Id: cosands@gmail.com
Corporate Identity No. U40109PB2010SGC033813 website: www.pspcl.in)

FORWARD E-AUCTION NOTICE
The On-Line Forward E-auction for the sale of various types of Scrap Material of PSPCL on "As-Is-Where Is" and "As-Is-What's" basis will be conducted as under-

Auction Notice No.	Name of Office	Date of E-Auction	Material
EA/05/LDH-20	Disposal Committee (North)	18-06-2020	Damaged Distribution & Power T/Fs, HT/LT Alum Coils scrap, AC/RS, PVC/XLPE Cables scrap, Central Store material, Try/TRW material, Machinery, Vehicles and other misc. items etc. and Scrap material related to Thermal/ Hydro Plants & Civil Mtc. etc.
EA/03/PTA-20	Disposal Committee (South)	19-06-2020	PVC/XLPE Cables scrap, Central Store material, Try/TRW material, Machinery, Vehicles and other misc. items etc. and Scrap material related to Thermal/ Hydro Plants & Civil Mtc. etc.
EA/06/LDH-20	Disposal Committee (North)	25-06-2020	
EA/04/PTA-20	Disposal Committee (South)	26-06-2020	

Note:-
It is informed that in case E-AUCTION process is not completed due to any reason, no corrigendum will be published in newspapers. Details regarding corrigendum may be seen on official, PSPCL website www.pspcl.in
For more details on registration procedure and detailed terms & conditions of e-auction, please log on to PSPCL website www.pspcl.in OR https://www.indiaengineering.com/pspcl
File No. C176/2020
Controller of Stores & Disposal (South), F-1, Shakti Vihar, Patiala.
DPR PB 991-C

IN BRIEF

Earthquake tremors felt in the Capital

NEW DELHI
Tremors were felt across Delhi-NCR on Friday after a 4.5 magnitude earthquake hit Rohtak in Haryana at 9.08 p.m. No report of any damage or injury was reported. A series of mild tremors have been felt in the Capital over the past few weeks.

'De-seal Jahangirpuri B, C blocks'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Complaining of inadequate availability of ration and difficulties being faced by residents of Jahangirpuri blocks B and C, which have been sealed for nearly two months due to COVID-19, area councillor Poonam Baghadi on Friday appealed to Chief Minister Kejriwal to de-seal the blocks.

In a letter to the CM, Ms. Baghadi said that in other areas where there were a larger number of cases, only single streets were being blocked and not entire blocks. She added that residents have not been helped with ration or medicines by the government.

Appealing for the areas to be de-sealed, Ms. Baghadi said that the number of cases in the blocks had drastically come down and that it was "unjust" to treat them differently.

Chaos along border as Haryana enforces curbs on movement

Police out in force in the morning but by evening traffic was moving unhindered

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GURUGRAM

Commuters headed towards Gurugram on National Highway-48 had a harrowing time on Friday morning with Gurugram Police ensuring strict implementation of restrictions on cross-border movement, allowing only those with valid passes.

Chaos and confusion prevailed on the border near Ambience Mall for hours.

The Delhi Police also put up barricades on the Gurugram-Delhi carriageway of the national highway in the morning choking the traffic. However, the barricades put up by the Delhi Police were unmanned and no checking was being carried out.

Gurugram Police, however, scaled up checking of vehicles at the Delhi-Gurugram border after Haryana Home Minister Anil Vij issued fresh orders on Thursday to seal the State's border with Delhi. The Minister issued the order in the wake of the sudden spike in COVID-19 cases in the bordering districts – Gurugram, Faridabad, Sonipat and Jhajjar – which reported 11,19,827 and six COVID-19 cases respectively in the past week.

Sub-Inspector Vijay Singh, deployed at the Delhi-Guru-



Traffic jam on the Delhi-Gurugram road on Friday. ■ MANOJ KUMAR

gram border near Ambience Mall, said a large number of workers employed in garments units in Udyog Vihar and those working with different private companies in Gurugram were not allowed to cross the border as they did not have valid passes.

The checking of the vehicles led to one-km-long congestion on the national highway. "Traffic restrictions have been strictly imposed on Gurugram-Delhi borders in view of COVID-19. Only essential services and movement pass holders will be allowed as per MHA guidelines

and Delhi High Court orders," said a tweet from the official handle of the Gurugram Police.

COVID-19

Yugal Karkhur, a consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon at Vivekanand Argya Kendra in Sector 12, said it took him around one-and-a-half-hour to cross the border in the morning. He said the restrictions were eased over the past one week and traffic flow was smooth, but the police put up barricades on

Friday allowing only one vehicle at a time.

"Those not allowed to cross the border were forced to return causing complete chaos," said Mr. Karkhur.

However, the traffic restrictions went for a toss in the afternoon and the vehicles were being allowed entry to Gurugram without any checking.

'Over 80% cases show mild to no symptoms'

Delhi govt. promotes home isolation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

With the rising number of COVID-19 cases in the city, the Delhi government stressed on Friday that over 80% of the patients were asymptomatic or showed mild symptoms.

Home isolation has been advised for such patients and the government on Friday released a 15-minute video about the protocol.

"More than 80% of patients are either asymptomatic or show mild symptoms such as fever or cough. Such patients do not need to get admitted into the hospital. They can stay home and look after themselves," Mr. Kejriwal said.

"We have made these guidelines to explain to patients what to do during home isolation and what precautions to take. One thing to keep in mind is – do not panic. Most people recover from the infection easily," he said.

Tweeting the guidelines

HELPLINE NUMBERS

COMMON HELPLINE +91-11-23978046

DELHI – 011-22307145

GAZIABAD – 0120 4186453

NOIDA – 8076623612/6396776904

GURUGRAM – 108/ 0124-2322412/

991519296/ 7015523417/ 9654231756

Virus spread

Total number of COVID-19 cases 17,386

Total deaths 398

New cases in the past 24 hours 1,106

New deaths 82*

*ALL THE DEATHS DID NOT HAPPEN IN THE PAST 24 HOURS

SOURCE: DELHI GOVERNMENT HEALTH BULLETIN

Nine new cases in G.B. Nagar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

A 90-year-old man who had tested positive for COVID-19 died in Uttar Pradesh's Gautam Buddha Nagar, becoming the sixth COVID-19 linked fatality, officials said on Friday.

"He died of acute respiratory infection with severe sepsis on May 27. He was a known patient of diabetes, hypertension and coronary artery disease," District Surveillance Officer Sunil Dohare said.

Meanwhile, nine more cases were recorded in the district, taking the total to 387. Three U.P. Police constables are among those that tested positive for the virus. Around 30 people who came in contact with the officers have been quarantined. Also, 28 patients were discharged on Friday after recovery.

TO ADVERTISE PLEASE CONTACT

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THE HINDU

India's National Newspaper

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in
Indian Oil Corporation Limited

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DP/9240/2020

Vehicle of
BJP MP's
father stolen

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

East Delhi BJP MP Gautam Gambhir's father's car was allegedly stolen from outside his house in central Delhi's Rajinder Nagar, the police said on Friday.

The victim, Deepak Gambhir, told the police that he owned an SUV. On Thursday at 3.30 p.m., the car was parked in front of the house but was not there the next day, an officer said.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Central) Sanjay Bhattacharya said a case has been registered and investigation is underway.

The police claim to have CCTV footage of the theft. "We are analysing the CCTV footage of the area to identify the culprits and trace the route taken by them," the police said.

Ensure maintenance of night shelters'

HC tells DUSIB to accredit NGOs, social workers for supervision

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The High Court has asked the Delhi government and Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB) to put in place a system wherein sufficient checks and vigilance is maintained with regard to maintenance of facilities at the night shelters around AIIMS and those managed by DUSIB.

Ms. Narwal is reported to be the seventh person to have been booked under the UAPA in the case. Ms. Kalita has reportedly been arrested by Crime Branch for her alleged role in violence happened during an

deo recording submitted by social worker, Rachna Malik, of the shortcomings at the night shelters including lack of water and visitors log book.

Ms. Malik also informed the court that consequent to the passing of the previous order, the authorities had swung into action and they have cleaned the toilets and made available all the toilets for the occupants, which was not the case earlier. She also

stated that water dispensers have been installed so that the occupants do not have to fend for themselves to get drinking water.

The court was hearing a PIL regarding the condition of outstation patients, who are staying at the night shelter near AIIMS.

It directed DUSIB to accredit NGOs and individual social workers, who are associated with the night shelters to supervise them.

They then targeted another person in a nearby area, who suffered bullet injuries on his shoulder. After hearing

the gunshots, the beat officer rushed to the spot and nabbed Bharat, the officer said. Saif is on the run.

The victims were rushed to a nearby hospital where Rashid was declared brought dead while the other is stable. A murder case has been lodged. A pistol and two live cartridges were recovered.

Man shot dead in Jafrabad; one arrested

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

A 17-year-old youth was shot dead while another was injured allegedly by two people in north-east Delhi's Jafrabad, the police said on Friday.

A senior officer said the deceased has been identified as Rashid Mirza from Brahmputra, and accused have been

identified as Bharat and Saif.

The police said the incident was a result of personal enmity. The incident took place on Thursday at 7 p.m. when the accused fired at Rashid and fled the spot.

They then targeted another person in a nearby area, who suffered bullet injuries on his shoulder. After hearing

MODERN COACH FACTORY, RAEBARELI					
E-Tender Notice No. 01/2020-21 (Open) of DyCE/MC/FRLB Deputy Chief Engineer/I/MC/FRLB, for and on behalf of The President of India invites E-Tenders for following works.					
S. N.	Name of work	Tender No.	Approx Cost in (Rs.)	Earliest Money (Rs.)	Cost of Tender document (Rs.)
1.	Construction, Installation, commissioning operation and maintenance of solid waste management system in Township of MCF/ Raebareli for five years, i.e. 2020-21, 2021-22, 2022-23, 2023-24 & 2024-25	01/ 2020-21	3,72,19,743.31	3,36,100.00	10,000/-

Date of opening of Tender - 22.06.2020. Completion Period of work - 60 Months - Tender's shall be able to submit their original/revised bids up to closing date and time only. Manual offers are not allowed for this tender and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. • Earnest Money Deposit & Tender Document Cost will be Accepted separately only online payment through net banking in I/o FA&CA/MC/FRLB or Gate Way Payment through IREPS Portal. Manual payments through Demand Draft, Banker's Cheque, Deposit Receipts & FDR etc. are not allowed. • For detail, please log on Indian RailwaysIREPS website www.reps.gov.in. Deputy Chief Engineer-I
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

MODERN COACH FACTORY, RAEBARELI				
On behalf of the President of India, Dy. Chief Mechanical Engineer/Frl-I, Modern Coach Factory Raebareli is inviting open e-tender-(No.-M-200/MCF/RBL/FUR-ACTIVITIES/LWLRM/2020-21 Date-28.05.2020) based on single packet system online through India Railway portal www.reps.gov.in for following work-				
Description of work	Approx. Value (Rs.)	EMD (Rs.)		
Works contract for interior Mechanical Furnishings & Fittings in LHB type power car (LWLRRM) coaches with FIAT Bogies as per scope of work for financial year 2020-21.	₹ 54,88,553.28	₹ 1,09,800.00		
Cost of Tender document : Rs. 5,000.00				
Quantity of work : 40 LWLRRM				
Work completion period : 12 Months or earlier,				
• E-Tender submitted through online up to 15:00hrs. on 24.06.2020. Manual offer will not be considered. • E-Tender shall be opened on 24.06.2020 at 15:30 through online on http://www.reps.gov.in • Detailed E-Notice and Terms & conditions are available at Indian Railway IRPS website - http://www.reps.gov.in Dy. Chief Mech. Engr./Furnishing-II SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE				

MODERN COACH FACTORY, RAEBARELI				
e-Advertised Tender Notice No. 02/ET/2020-21 Dated 28.05.2020				
SN	Tender No.	Short Description	Qty.	Due Date
01	05201116	End Fitting (PG-36)	8178 Nos	15.06.2020
02	06201016	PU Based wet on Paint for Exterior Painting of Coaches	490 Set	15.06.2020
03	06190036B	Epoxy Based Elastified Top Coat (2 Components)	617 Set	12.06.2020
04	05201010	500 KVA, 750 Volt, 3-Phase, Diesel Alternator	175 Set	19.06.2020
05	03201074	Inter-Coach Gangway with Flexible interior	342 Set	22.06.2020
06	05201115	Set of Switch Plate Assembly Along with Mobile Charging Socket	200 Set	25.06.2020
07	03201011	Supply and Apply of Water Purifier System	500 Nos	11.06.2020

CORIGENDUM NO. 01

01 E-Tender No. 01/ET/2020-21 Dated 14.05.2020 03191128 & Due date may be read as 10.06.2020 instead of 27.05.2020

CORIGENDUM NO. 02

01 E-Tender No. 01/ET/2020-21 Dated 14.05.2020 05021019 & Due date may be read as 08.06.2020 instead of 22.05.2020

02 E-Tender No. 01/ET/2020-21 Dated 14.05.2020 05020002 & Due date may be read as 16.06.2020 instead of 26.05.2020

03 E-Tender No. 01/ET/2020-21 Dated 14.05.2020 03190075A & Due date may be read as 15.06.2020 instead of 28.05.2020

04 E-Tender No. 01/ET/2020-21 Dated 14.05.2020 030210173 & Due date may be read as 18.06.2020 instead of 28.05.2020

05 E-Tender No. 01/ET/2020-21 Dated 14.05.2020 04201002 & Due date may be read as 09.06.2020 instead of 26.05.2020

06 E-Tender No. 01/ET/2020-21 Dated 14.05.2020 04190371A & Due date may be read as 10.06.2020 instead of 26.05.2020

07 E-Tender No. 16/ET/2019-20 Dated 16.03.2020 12190482 & Due date may be read as 08.06.2020 instead of 20.03.2020

08 E-Tender No. 01/ET/2020-21 Dated 14.05.2020 03191188 & Due date may be read as 10.06.2020 instead of 27.05.2020

09 E-Tender No. 01/ET/2020-21 Dated 14.05.2020 06201029 & Due date may be read as 10.06.2020 instead of 27.05.2020

Website Address : www.reps.gov.in & www.mcf.indianrailways.gov.in

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE



TENDER NOTICE				
SR. No.	NAME OF BOARD/CORP./AUTH	NAME OF WORK NOTICE TENDER	OPENING DATE CLOSING DATE (TIME)	AMOUNT / EMD (APPROX.) IN RUPEES
1	PRISONS DEPARTMENT HARYANA	SUPPLY DIETARY ARTICLES	CLOSING DATE 09.06.2020	3 CRORE
2	FISHERIES DEPARTMENT PANCHKULA	CONSTRUCTION OF C.C. LINING OF STOCK POND NO. 1 AT GOVT FISH SEED FARM, LISANA, DISTT. REWARI + 3	30.05.2020 09.06.2020	30.22 LACS
3	DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH ROHTAK	E-TENDER NOTICE FOR "OUTSOURCING OF SUPPORT SERVICES AND ADDITIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES" FOR HEALTH INSTITUTIONS (SWCH/PHC LEVEL) OF DISTT. ROHTAK	CLOSING DATE 12.06.2020	16.50 LACS
4	DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH KAITHAL	OUTSOURCING OF CLEANING AND SANITATION, HOUSEKEEPING (GDA) AND ADDITIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES FOR ALL THE SWCH/PHC LEVEL, GULAKIYA, RAJAMBALA & OTHER WORKS	29.05.2020 17.06.2020	11.26 CRORE
5	PWD B&R AMBALA CANTT	CONST. OF ADMINISTRATIVE BLOCK IN SDO (CIVIL) COMPLEX AT AMBALA CANTT IN AMBALA DISTRICT, (PDG, DECORATION WORKS WITH PLASTER AND SOLAR LIGHTING) + 3 OTHER WORKS	02.06.2020 16.06.2020	64.19 LACS
6	PANCHAYATI RAJ AMBALA	PDG. E.I. IN KNOWLEDGE CENTER ATTA, MAHAWATI, RAKSHERA (BLOCK SAMALKAH) CHHAJPUR KALAN, JHAMBA (BLOCK SANOLI KHURANA) SONIPAT (RE-CALL) + 3 OTHER WORKS	28.05.2020 04.06.2020	12 LACS
7	PWD B&R ROHTAK	CONSTRUCTION OF TEACHERS HOUSES 1300 SFT (G+6) TYPE-II PT. B D SHARMA UNIVERSITY OF HEALTH SCIENCES, ROHTAK.	27.05.2020 19.06.2020	3004.09 Lacs

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION KINDLY VISIT : www.haryanaepprocurement.gov.in or www.etenders.hry.nic.in

PRDH-81082



SR. No.	NAME OF BOARD/CORP./AUTH	NAME OF WORK NOTICE TENDER	OPENING DATE CLOSING DATE (TIME)	AMOUNT / EMD (APPROX.) IN RUPEES	WEBSITE OF THE BOARD CORP./AUTH	NODAL OFFICER/CONTACT DETAILS/EMAIL
1	DHBVN FATEHABAD	E-TENDERS ARE INVITED FOR PROVIDING 1 NO. VEHICLE FOR SDO CITY S/DIVN, FATEHABAD UNDER OP DIVISION FATEHABAD NIT NO. 02/ENOP/FTBD/ 2020-21	28.05.2020 11.06.2020	3.60 LACS	www.dhbvn.org.in	9812201244 xenopfatehabad@dhbvn.org.in
2	DHBVN FATEHABAD	E-TENDERS ARE INVITED FOR PROVIDING 1 NO. VEHICLE FOR SDO S/U S/DIVN, FATEHABAD UNDER OP DIVISION FATEHABAD NIT NO. 03/XENOP/FTBD/ 2020-21	28.05.2020 11.06.2020	3.98 LACS	www.dhbvn.org.in	9812201244 xenopfatehabad@dhbvn.org.in
3	DHBVN FATEHABAD	E-TENDERS ARE INVITED FOR PROVIDING 1 NO. VEHICLE FOR SDO CITY S/DIVN, RATIA UNDER OP DIVISION FATEHABAD NIT NO. 04/XENOP/FTBD/ 2020-21	28.05.2020 11.06.2020	3.60 LACS	www.dhbvn.org.in	9812201244 xenopfatehabad@dhbvn.org.in
4	DHBVN FATEHABAD	E-TENDERS ARE INVITED FOR PROVIDING 1 NO. VEHICLE FOR SDO S/U S/DIVN, RATIA UNDER OP DIVISION FATEHABAD NIT NO. 05/ENOP/FTBD/ 2020-21	28.05.2020 11.06.2020	3.98 LACS	www.dhbvn.org.in	9812201244 xenopfatehabad@dhbvn.org.in
5	DHBVN FATEHABAD	E-TENDERS ARE INVITED FOR PROVIDING 1 NO. VEHICLE FOR SDO S/DIVN, BHATTU UNDER OP DIVISION FATEHABAD NIT NO. 06/ENOP/FTBD/ 2020-21	28.05.2020 11.06.2020	3.98 LACS	www.dhbvn.org.in	9812201244 xenopfatehabad@dhbvn.org.in
6	DHBVN FATEHABAD	E-TENDERS ARE INVITED FOR PROVIDING 1 NO. VEHICLE FOR XEN 'OP DIVISION FATEHABAD NIT NO. 07/XENOP/FTBD/ 2020-21	28.05.2020 11.06.2020	3.75 LACS	www.dhbvn.org.in	9812201244 xenopfatehabad@dhbvn.org.in
7	DHBVN FATEHABAD	E-TENDERS ARE INVITED FOR PROVIDING 1 NO. VEHICLE FOR THE SE/O/CIRCLE FATEHABAD NIT NO. 08/XENOP/FTBD/ 2020-21	28.05.2020 11.06.2020	4.75 LACS	www.dhbvn.org.in	9812201244 xenopfatehabad@dhbvn.org.in
8						

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.00 HRS)

Forecast for Saturday: Heavy to very heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Kerala, Mahe, Lakshadweep, coastal and south interior Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Karaikal.

CITY RAIN MAX MIN CITY RAIN MAX MIN

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	...30.9	24.0	13.0	Kozhikode	13.8	33.2	24.4
Ahmedabad	...42.4	28.6	19.0	Kurnool	...42.6	30.2	19.0
Aizawl	9	23.3	16.9	Lucknow	...35.9	26.2	19.0
Allahabad	...38.4	27.0	19.0	Madurai	63	32.8	23.0
Bengaluru	4.2	33.0	20.6	Mangaluru	...34.8	27.4	19.0
Bhopal	...43.0	29.6	19.0	Mumbai	...35.2	27.6	19.0
Bhubaneswar	...33.3	19.2	13.0	Mysuru	...31.9	22.0	13.0
Chandigarh	...32.0	25.1	19.0	New Delhi	1.3	36.7	22.6
Chennai	...40.0	28.6	19.0	Patna	...34.9	25.3	19.0
Coimbatore	35	32.7	21.0	Port Blair	18.1	33.0	24.8
Dehradoon	1	31.4	21.6	Puducherry	...38.4	27.8	19.0
Gangtok	...22.9	14.5	10.0	Pune	...38.3	23.9	19.0
Goa	...35.4	27.5	19.0	Raipur	...45.5	27.6	19.0
Guwahati	...33.2	22.6	19.0	Ranchi	1.6	34.4	21.0
Hubballi	...36.0	23.0	19.0	Shillong	10.1	23.3	19.0
Hyderabad	43.0	30.7	19.0	Shimla	8.9	28.8	14.9
Imphal	23.5	24.0	18.1	Srinagar	...25.0	30.0	19.0
Jaipur	...44.0	32.0	19.0	Thiruvananthapuram	1.3	32.3	24.4
Kochi	0.8	32.4	25.2	Tiruchi	0.2	38.9	25.5
Kohima	3.4	23.0	14.7	Vijayawada	...42.0	30.2	19.0
Kolkata	3.6	34.7	24.4	Visakhapatnam	...35.1	30.0	19.0

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing Yesterday

CITIES	SO ₂	NO _x	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad22	.16	44	83	■■■■■	■■■■■
Bengaluru	6	33	34	88	■■■■■	■■■■■
Chennai27	.84	121	—	■■■■■	■■■■■
Delhi	19	31	128	43	■■■■■	■■■■■
Hyderabad	7	.47	16	50	95	■■■■■
Kolkata6	.9	10	23	49	■■■■■
Lucknow2	.24	.46	123	—	■■■■■
Mumbai11	.10	12	60	■■■■■	■■■■■
Pune	28	.41	.52	74	35	■■■■■
Visakhapatnam	10	.17	.28	32	75	■■■■■

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

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

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

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

'No palkhi procession, but wari tradition will be maintained'

Padukas will be carried by road or air to Pandharpur on June 30: Ajit Pawar

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE
PUNE

With COVID-19 cases rising in Pune, Satara and Solapur districts, authorities on Friday decided to cancel the annual pilgrimage made on foot by lakhs of warkaris (devotees) to the temple town of Pandharpur carrying palkhis (palanquins) bearing the padukas (footprints) of saints Dnyaneshwar and Tukaram.

In a bid to uphold the 800-year-old tradition of Ashadhi Wari, the State government, represented by Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, said the padukas would be carried by road or air to Pandharpur in Solapur district on June 30.

Meeting with authorities

Mr. Pawar made the announcement after a meeting with district authorities of Pune, Satara and Solapur and members of the Vitthal-Ruk-



Ajit Pawar

mini Temple trust committee in Pandharpur, and trustees in Alandi and Dehu.

Mr. Pawar said, "The State government is eager that this time-honoured tradition not be discontinued owing to the present crisis. Members of other communities, too, have restricted religious activities to indoors. Keeping this ideal in times of the present medical emergency, we have taken this decision in a

bid to preserve the tradition of Ashadhi Wari and avoid crowding to keep the contagion in check."

He said as the monsoon will be in full swing by the end of June, district authorities and the trustees will decide on the mode of transport to take the padukas to Pandharpur. Each year, lakhs of warkaris, from Maharashtra and neighbouring States, traverse 230-odd km from Alandi and Dehu on June 13, but with the palkhi processions cancelled, Mr. Tilak said the padukas would remain in Alandi till June 30.

The wari was scheduled to start from Alandi and Dehu on June 13, but with the palkhi processions cancelled, Mr. Tilak said the padukas would remain in Alandi till June 30.

"In order to contain the spread of COVID-19 in the State, as Punjab has registered only 2.8% positive cases among 72,468 samples, there is a need to reduce domestic flights, especially from Mumbai and Ahmed-

abad where higher numbers of COVID-19 cases have been reported," said Mr. Sidhu while presiding over a meeting of the health department.

"Most of the cases reported in Punjab have a travel history from other States and countries. So to prevent community spread, there is a need to put focus on passengers, especially coming from the high-risk States and countries," said Mr. Sidhu in a statement.

The Minister also issued instructions at the meeting to ensure maximum sampling of passengers.

'Scale down flights from Mumbai, Ahmedabad'

2 cities are virus hotspots: Minister

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

Punjab Health Minister Balbir Singh Sidhu on Friday said there was a need to reduce domestic flights, especially from Mumbai and Ahmedabad.

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UTTAR HARYANA BIJLI VITRAN NIGAM CORRIGENDUM-VI NOTICE

SR. NO.	LETTER/ MEMO. NO. & DATE	NAME OF DEPARTMENT/ BOARD/ CORP/ AUTH	OLD REFERENCE/ NIT/TENDER NO.	NATURE OF CORRIGENDUM	WEBSITE OF THE DEPT/ BOARD/ CORP/ AUTH	NODAL OFFICER/ CONTACT DETAILS/ EMAIL
1.	Ch-44/ XENIR-AP- DRPF-114/ RT-DAS/ NIT-30 dated 27.05.2020	Chief Technology Officer	NIT No.30/IPDS/RT- DAS/2020. Appointment of an agency for implementing the Real Time Data Acquisition System (RT-DAS) Solution in UHBVN & DHBVN	Date extended	www.uhbvn.org.in 9317554907 seiprojects@uhbvn.org.in	PRDN-B1064

Didn't cap N95 prices to prevent mass buying'

Centre files affidavit in High Court

SONAM SAIGAL
MUMBAI

The Centre on Friday informed the Bombay High Court in an affidavit that it decided not to regulate the price of N95 masks to prevent mass buying of the protective gear used by healthcare workers.

A Division Bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice K.K. Tated was hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) filed by activist

Anjali Damania and journalist Sucheta Dalal through senior advocate Mihir Desai.

The petitioner will file a rejoinder on June 1. The matter has been posted for hearing on June 2.

Mr. Desai had told the court there was a shortage of masks owing to the lockdown and rise in cases. He said the price of the masks has to be capped to make sure they are not hoarded by black marketeers.

The Kamtope police have booked a doctor and a food delivery man, both residents of Kamtope, for allegedly posting memes on social media ridiculing former chief minister Devendra Fadnavis.

The complaint was filed by Ravindra Joshi (54), a civil contractor and president of BJP's Kamtope Taluka Mandal. Mr. Joshi said on May 10 the duo shared the memes in reply to a post put up on a Facebook page dedicated to the former chief minister.

Dr. Dhananjay Kshirsagar and Tushar Deshmukh have been booked under Sections 505(2) (statements creating or promoting enmity, hatred or ill-will between classes), 500 (defamation) and 188 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant) of the Indian Penal Code. "No arrests have been made. The accused have been issued a notice," said an officer.

Meanwhile, the Navi Mumbai police closed applications for Shramik Special trains on Friday night, saying arrangements for migrant workers still keen to go home would be made by clubbing them with people from other areas.

Hussain Indorewala of

Two booked for posting memes on Fadnavis

RAINA ASSAINAR
NAVI MUMBAI

The Kamtope police have booked a doctor and a food delivery man, both residents of Kamtope, for allegedly posting memes on social media ridiculing former chief minister Devendra Fadnavis.

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Hussain Indorewala of

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- Vocabulary & Interview preparation - Answering common interview questions, building effective presentations.

Awful silence

India must publicly clarify the seriousness of the situation with China along the LAC

Nearly a month after the first skirmishes on the LAC between Indian and Chinese soldiers were reported, the situation on the ground still appears to be tense. While there has been no official explanation of what has happened there since May 5, the day the first clash at Pangong Tso (lake) was reported, there is enough information to conclude that this is the most serious such stand-off India and China have seen in years. As reported by *The Hindu*, sources say that the number of Chinese soldiers, the aggression with which they have dealt with Indian soldiers, as well as the number of points of conflict, indicate strategised action by Chinese commanders. While both governments have been careful to keep the tone of their comments sober, the fact that both sides have repeatedly mentioned that talks are on is also proof of an ongoing situation. A full de-escalation will entail soldiers being able to return to their normal LAC patrols, something military officers say will probably need a high-level political intervention and for the Indian side, an insistence that Chinese soldiers, who appear to have been the aggressors, return to positions they previously held.

In the midst of these sensitive negotiations, the interventions by the U.S. come as inopportune distractions. The first comment, last week, by a then senior State Department official, accusing China of being an aggressor on several fronts and posing a "threat" to its neighbours, was followed by President Donald Trump's offer, this week, to mediate between Delhi and Beijing. Neither comment appears to have been made in consultation with India. India has made it clear that it will not accept Mr. Trump's offer and has denied his claim that he spoke to Prime Minister Modi on the issue. The government's first priority now must be to end the current stand-off, and then for its senior officials to enter serious talks on LAC demarcation. Given all the new infrastructure being built by India, it may also be necessary to negotiate new border management protocols that were last updated in 2013. The government must also investigate how a big build-up of Chinese soldiers was not acted upon earlier. Beyond this, it must make a full assessment of just what China's final aims are: is the summer conflagration meant to deflect attention from Beijing's current problems over the coronavirus pandemic, to deter India from its infrastructural push for roads and bridges to connect its northern frontiers all the way to the Karakoram pass, or to "remind" New Delhi of its geographical vulnerabilities as it contemplates a closer maritime relationship in the Indo-Pacific with the U.S.? In all three scenarios, the first steps for the government would be to publicly clarify the seriousness of the situation at the LAC, and to build consensus around its plans for a firm pushback and an assertion of its position along the disputed line.

Belated, but welcome

After taking note of pandemic-induced crisis, SC must now enforce rights of the vulnerable

It is a matter of relief that the Supreme Court has at last taken cognisance of the plight of millions of inter-State workers looking for transport home and relief from the unrelenting misery unleashed on them by the lockdown. A three-judge Bench has initiated *suo motu* proceedings based on media reports and representations from senior advocates, observing that there have been inadequacies and lapses on the part of the Centre and States in dealing with the crisis faced by workers. It need not have come to this. This could have taken place seven or eight weeks earlier, when petitions were filed before the top court on behalf of those left in the lurch across India after the Centre announced a lockdown, with just four hours' notice. With a kind of self-effacement and self-abnegation not in keeping with its institutional history, the Court had then accepted the government's sweeping claim that there were no migrants on the roads any more, and that the initial exodus of workers from cities to their home States had been set off by "fake news" to the effect that the lockdown would last for months. In an unfortunately limited intervention, the Court merely advised the police to treat the workers on the roads with kindness and directed the media to highlight the Centre's version of the developments.

The Court's reluctance to intervene may have stemmed from a belief in letting the executive handle the fallout of an unprecedented global crisis, but, in the process, it abandoned its primary responsibility of protecting fundamental rights, especially of those most vulnerable. Such was the resultant dismay that retired judges called it out for apparent abdication of its duty. A former High Court judge even said the ghost of ADM *Jabalpur* was lingering, in an unflattering reference to an Emergency-era judgment, now mercifully overruled, that held that personal liberty was not absolute during a state of emergency. Whether it was shamed into taking cognisance of the issue or it felt that the situation is ripe for intervention, one should now expect the Court to take a more critical look at the government's lapses, and emulate the stellar role that High Courts are playing in holding administrations accountable. The top court must now find out if the Centre, which imposed a stringent lockdown to buy time for preparing the health infrastructure, had discharged its responsibilities. It may even lay down guidelines for planning, coordination and establishment of a mechanism to address the economic and humanitarian consequences of such actions in future. The government should also do more than asking its law officers to fulminate against activists, denounce the media and question the patriotism of those critical of its actions. A national tragedy requires a more statesmanlike response.

A moment for civilisational introspection

There is a collective culpability in the social crime during the lockdown — of the dispossession of India's working poor



HARSH MANDER

The traumatic months of the national lockdown lay bare many troubling truths about the profound estrangement of people of privilege from the working poor. They reveal a society in which the privileged are extraordinarily comfortable with inequality, and wanting in elementary empathy and solidarity. They confirm that the veneer of modernity and the progressive, egalitarian values of the Constitution remain — in the prophetic words of Babasaheb Ambedkar — no deeper than a coat of paint.

An exile of the poor

In this writer's book, *Looking Away: Inequality, Prejudice and Indifference in New India*, I described the Indian rich and middle-class to be among the most uncaring in the world, mired still in the cruelties of caste and class, with a singular capacity to look at injustice and suffering and just turn their faces away. I wrote of the exile of the poor from our conscience and our consciousness. The lockdown disclosed precisely how absolute and unforgiving is this exile.

For any young person growing up in middle-class homes, the poor are visible at every turn, but only in their instrumentality as people who exist to service our every need. They never know them as classmates, as colleagues or competitors at work, or as friends in a playground or cinema theatre.

When the COVID-19 infection hit us, we saw the working poor suddenly as dangerous potential spreaders. We wanted them sud-

denly at bay. We ignored that it was not the poor who endangered us, but we endangered the poor when they came into contact with us. After all, it was people who could afford flight tickets who brought the novel coronavirus into India.

We welcomed the strategy of a lockdown — possibly, the harshest and largest in the world, with the smallest relief package. We felt safe, locked in our homes. Deprived of domestic help, we were inconvenienced, but adjusted willingly for our own safety. We adjusted also to working from home, secure that our salaries and savings would tide us through. With running water on tap, we washed our hands regularly. We were untroubled because our health insurance would pay for treatment in expensive private hospitals. We grappled with boredom and occasional depression, but it was a time also to rebuild our bonds with our families.

We were indifferent that the lockdown fell like a meteor on the lives of millions of the working poor. They had fully functional lives before, mostly without state support. After possibly some years in poorly resourced schools, they travelled far to escape the dead end poverty and caste oppression of the countryside. The cities were uniformly unwelcoming to them. The state made no arrangements for affordable decent housing or to protect their rights as workers. Instead it was consistently hostile to them, rendering illegal and demolishing their slum shanties or roadside vending. Still, millions of them survived and overcame, working hard to build, clean, maintain and sustain the cities, and raise the lives of their families despite an unjust, uncaring state.

The lockdown by design had nothing to offer them except to destroy overnight the lives they



had resiliently built for themselves. After all, the safety of physical distancing and handwashing were impossible for them in their grimy, crowded shanties or rough streets. With their livelihoods bombed out by state policy, in their ruins they were suddenly forced to endure the very hunger they escaped when they had moved to the city. Despite this, we in the middle-classes readily demonstrated our support for the lockdown, cheerily banging utensils or lighting lamps and candles as instructed.

It is sobering to be mindful that most men and women trudging or cycling home in dangerous journeys, dying on railway tracks or of hunger and exhaustion on trains without food and water, are between 15 and 30 years old. But for the accident of their birth, they could instead have been in high school or university, studying online, or working from the safety of their homes, fighting boredom with an overdose of Netflix.

A bias

The brazen class bias of state policies did not trouble us at all. All government servants and most employees in the formal private sector were secure that they would be paid full salaries under the lockdown. The poor had to make do with slim financial handouts not more than two days' wages, an appeal from the Prime Minister to employers to pay wag-

es, and lining up for hours for cooked meals each day. Being thrust into massive deprivation and forced to survive the indignity of occasional charity seemed in the fitness of things for the poor. It seemed also in the fitness of things that while we could quarantine in the comfort of our homes or in hired hotel rooms, the poor were forced into crowded dormitories with clogged bathrooms and inedible food, which they regarded as jails.

But nowhere was the cruelty of the ruling classes on display more than in the treatment of migrant workers who wished to return home. For people stranded overseas, students in hostels, and pilgrims, the state organised special flights and buses. For migrants, there was first a complete sealing of borders and cancellation of trains and buses. As millions began to trudge or cycle hundreds of kilometres with small children in tow, many dying in accidents or of exhaustion on the way, the government finally announced a small number of trains.

Migrants had to pay, until massive outrage forced a reluctant backtrack. But a complicated maze of bureaucratic requirements were thrust in place. One had to apply online, and also get official clearances. Getting a seat was like a lottery and information came online. Workers without smartphones fell back on the very contractors who had let them down to negotiate them through this tangle. Trains were often cancelled, or rerouted, and there was no food and water along the way. People died of dehydration and hunger while travelling.

Buses were little better. Private enterprise and corruption thrived and migrants were charged thousands even to travel on bus rooftops. After perilous journeys on crowded buses or trucks, packed

in ways which could only spread the contagion exponentially, there were instances where several were drenched in unsafe disinfectants. Officials at many checkpoints demanded bribes, and workers sometimes paid more for travel than air tickets. Migrants, until recently providers for family in the village, had to ask them for money to be able to come home, and they mounted vast new debts.

Governments and business did not help them because they did not care, and because they did not want them to move. They did not see them as human beings in their fullness of the agency and humanity, but only as a factor of production, labour which should be obediently available on call whenever they were able to restart their enterprises.

When the Union government finally decided to restore flights, the Minister said that health certificates before travel and quarantine after were not 'practical' (although some State governments insisted on quarantine). But what was deemed not practical for resourceful and networked air travellers was made mandatory for pauperised workers without social capital.

This should be a moment for civilisational introspection. In coming months, as hunger spreads, jobs crumble, children are pulled out of school into labour, and poor people die without hospital beds and ventilators, will we acknowledge our collective culpability in the social crime of the radical dis-possession of our people, in an ultimately vain bid to keep just ourselves safe? Will we recognize the abject collapse of our moral centre? Will we at last learn lessons of solidarity, equality and justice?

Harsh Mander is a human rights worker, writer and teacher

Anchoring ties with Canberra the virtual way

The India-Australia summit next week is not directed only by the turbulent geopolitics of the region



AMITABH MATTOO

In August 1950, one of Australia's most celebrated jurists, Sir Owen Dixon (who sought to mediate a settlement on Kashmir) wrote to his daughter, Anne, in Melbourne that Delhi was "a place I hope and trust that I shall never again see." Nearly 70 years later, as the Prime Ministers of India and Australia, Narendra Modi and Scott Morrison, prepare for next week's virtual summit (June 4), it is not because of any such reservation about India's capital. Today, New Delhi ranks extremely high on Australia's diplomatic radar; the new High Commissioner Barry O'Farrell's appointment is reflective of how far we have moved from Sir Owen's time. A former Premier of New South Wales and a celebrated public figure, Mr. O'Farrell has already made his presence felt in India through the increasingly ubiquitous world of webinars in his colourful Indian waistcoats.

Almost all of Australia's recent Prime Ministers, including Julia Gillard, Tony Abbott and Malcolm Turnbull have visited India. Mr. Morrison's visit to India, in January, was postponed because of the devastating bushfires in Australia, and now because of the COVID-19 pandemic. When Mr. Modi tra-

velled to Australia in 2014, 28 years after Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's visit, in 1986, he electrified the country with his presence, including business leaders from the country in a panel discussion.

It is tempting to view the virtual summit only in the context of the turbulent geopolitics of the region. In reality, New Delhi's relations with Canberra have acquired such spread and depth today that even without the undeniable belligerence of an increasingly inscrutable China, the summit would still have had salience and similar gravitas.

Relations with much potential

The idea of the Australia-India relationship has well and truly arrived; and while Australia's population is roughly the same as the National Capital Region, the potential for a shared partnership extends well beyond Mr. Modi and Mr. Morrison trying to deconstruct the inscrutable mind of China's supreme leader, Xi Jinping, or the manner in which the World Health Organization has acted amid the spread of the pandemic.

Virtual summits are no longer a novelty. Mr. Modi convened a multilateral summit to bring South Asia together to face the pandemic, and he spoke online with G-20 leaders on similar issues. But India's first bilateral summit is with Australia; and it is no longer surprising. The convergence of interests and values has been patently obvious; but the time has also come to translate that potential into reality.

Donald Trump's offer to mediate. It is always wiser to settle the burning issues with China amicably and individually without bringing in an outsider or introducing irritants. It is better to strengthen ties with China with a sobriety of mind (Page 1, "Working with China to resolve LAC issue peacefully, says MEA", May 29).

MANOHARAN MUTHUSWAMY, Ramanathapuram, Tamil Nadu

■ The stand-off is another addition to the long list of border disputes between the great nations, but could be the worst. The decision to continue infrastructure development is welcome news, but the fact that there is a silence on the ground reality is disturbing. If there



The two countries have sought to reconstruct their increasingly turbulent regional geography into the Indo-Pacific and while grudgingly in the past, and often in fits and starts, seen the Quad (with Japan and the United States) as the most potent instrument to promote cooperation; not surprisingly, causing apprehensions in Beijing.

It is expected that the 'Mutual Logistics Support Agreement' will be signed during the summit that should enhance defence cooperation and ease the conduct of large-scale joint military exercises. Last April, Australia and India conducted AUSINDEX, their largest bilateral naval exercise, and there are further developments on the anvil, including Australia's permanent inclusion in the Malabar exercise with Japan. In addition, it may be prudent too for New Delhi and Canberra to elevate the 'two plus two' format for talks from the Secretary level to the level of Foreign and Defence Ministers.

But beyond the realpolitik of strategy, is the managing of cooperation in areas that matter to the lives of the people of the two nations: health, food and education.

Mr. Morrison has emerged as a statesman (during the COVID-19 pandemic) by bringing in the national opposition and reaching out to state leaders in the most effective and efficient display of cooperative federalism. So much so that the Australian writer Richard Flanagan suggested, in *The New York Times* (May 18, 2020), that polarising ideologies in Australia were killed by the coronavirus given the united national response.

Pandemic control lessons

Australia is one of the few countries that has managed to combat COVID-19 so far through "controlled adaptation" by which the coronavirus has been suppressed to very low levels. Two of the leaders of this great Australia-wide effort are Indian-born scientists. Shiju Kapur, of the University of Melbourne, led a community of academics to produce a path-breaking report, "Roadmap to recovery", while S.S. Vasani is leading efforts to develop a vaccine in a Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) facility in Geelong, near Melbourne. There is much that the two Prime Ministers can share on this front.

In terms of health and safe food as well the supply chains that facilitate their delivery, there are important lessons to be learnt. One of Australia's richest businessmen, Anthony Pratt of Pratt Industries, and first patron of the Australia-India Leadership Dialogue, recently described the promise of DTC-

CPG (direct to consumer; consumer packaged goods) which could transform global supply chains. Here too there is much room for collaboration and new thinking.

Higher education

The recovery of Australia's universities, most of which are publicly funded and many rank among the top in the world, is still in question, but they are proving to be resilient and pioneers in distance and online learning. Australian universities could well open earlier than most and emerge as a safer destination for quality education than their European or Ivy league counterparts.

Till a few weeks ago, the prospect of teaching online a course on Contemporary India to Australian Students from the University of Melbourne seemed daunting to this writer. But with slides of Ambedkar, Gandhi and even snippets from the movies of Satyajit Ray, the enormous potential of online learning became obvious; the students were excited intellectually by both the robustness of Indian democracy, and the diversity of its experience as a federation. Although the course was on India, the enormous potential of young Australians and Indians working and building fresh order in a turbulent world became starkly obvious. The virtual summit, in this sense, could not have been better timed.

Amitabh Mattoo is Chair of the Australia-India Leadership Dialogue and was the founding Director of The Australia India Institute

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have jobs left. Since COVID-19 is likely to stay with us for a while, some changes in our lifestyle are necessary to minimise the chances of getting infected. Masks should be provided or be made easily accessible to all. The 20-second hand washing technique should be inculcated as a habit in everyday life. Also, one should avoid touching one's face as far as possible. These new traits should be ingrained in children since they could become carriers once they go back to school. Such simple measures can go a long way in protecting every person.

AKASHI NARAIN, New Delhi

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.

Border staredown

China is at it again. While it has become its wont to browbeat India, India may not be the India of 1962 just as China may not be what it was that year. There is advice that India should tone down its rhetoric but build up its capabilities steadily and quietly. This is not at all bad advice. War is not a desired option for either India or China and is fraught with danger for both sides. The loss of army personnel and properties is undesirable and every effort must be made to pursue peace.

K.V. SEETHARAMIAH, Hassan, Karnataka

■ India has done well in not heeding to U.S. President

Donald Trump's offer to mediate. It is always wiser to settle the burning issues with China amicably and individually without bringing in an outsider or introducing irritants. It is better to strengthen ties with China with a sobriety of mind (Page 1, "Working with China to resolve LAC issue peacefully, says MEA", May 29).

AKSHAY KRISHNAN, Thiruvananthapuram

■ India and China must step up dialogue and look for ways and means to de-escalate the growing tensions in areas along the Line of Actual Control, especially in the Galwan Valley in Ladakh. Whether China is attempting to thwart India's border infrastructure construction in a benign stand-off or is making plans to throttle India's new economic aspirations, it has done it the wrong way. An over-ambitious China is constantly

resorting to threat and coercion to enforce its territorial claims on its land and maritime borders with countries across the Indian and Pacific Oceans. China's ambitions may possibly be linked to its belief that the U.S. is going to be weakened by the pandemic. India and China must be level-headed, especially New Delhi, and focus on regional cross-border cooperation. Regional economic integration can be a solution to both territorial disputes and irregular cross-border movements.

VENU G.S., Kalluvathukkal, Kollam, Kerala

Diplomates? It is amusing that a former diplomat has used the word 'territorial nationalism'

(Editorial page, "For a reset in India-Nepal relations", May 29). One wonders what he means by this. Next he says India should be "a generous partner". Can he please explain these phrases? When one country depicts Indian territory as its own in its map, how can India be expected to be quiet? There is a limit to sharing precious real estate.

R. MURALIDHARAN, Trichy, Tamil Nadu

Life after COVID-19 We all need to come to terms with the fact that once the national lockdown is lifted, we will all have to go back to work (OpEd page, "Parley - Can India's workforce have a safe return to business?", May 29) — provided we still

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Knocked down by the virus, flattened by the winds

Cyclone Amphan has claimed 98 lives in West Bengal, wiped out thousands of homes, broken embankments and destroyed swathes of agricultural land. **Suvanjit Bagchi and Shiv Sahay Singh** report on the trail of destruction it has caused in a State that is already grappling with the COVID-19 crisis

The doors of the robust sedan started rattling. The windows of the car began rattling too, tugging at the frames that held them. The wind speed was 110 km/hour. All around us, mighty trees swayed violently and some already lay fallen like toothpicks. Branches flew like dangerous missiles in the leafiest neighbourhood in south Kolkata, Southern Avenue. It was 6.20 p.m. on May 20. The storm was brewing.

After we clicked a couple of photographs, the driver sounded a word of caution: "The back wheel is mildly floating in the air." We clambered out and fled the scene. Outside, the sky had changed dramatically. Darkness had descended and the wind howled.

Over the next several hours, super cyclone Amphan went on a rampage. It surged through the city, carelessly sweeping aside trees, lamp posts, vehicles, and even robust brick-and-mortar structures. "It took away my house. But my brother's house across the road was still standing," said Moktar Ali, a fish vendor at Minakhan market in South 24 Parganas.

One of the earliest emergency calls to the Bangla Sanskriti Mancha, a group that works mainly with migrant workers, came from Selima Khatun of Hasnabad village in North 24 Parganas. The phone rang at around 7 p.m. on May 21, a full day after the storm had unleashed its anger. "Save us," she pleaded. "We are about 100 people on the roof of the mosque. As far as I can see, everything is under water. All our houses are inundated. Our pets have been swept away to the sea."

The Mancha received hundreds of such calls after the cyclone. The president of the group, Samirul Islam, said it is impossible to guess the extent of the damage as neither the government nor the media could reach the epicentre of the cyclone, Sagar Island, about 100 km south of Kolkata. He said a man named Vineet called him to say that the islands in Patharpratima in South 24 Parganas had "disappeared". "No news channel could reach there, so no news is coming from there," Vineet told Islam over the phone. "We don't know if Sagar Island exists any more. The jetty at Kachuberia in Sagar has been pulled into the sea. It's been two days, but no outside support has come yet." Subhas Bhandari from Mousuni Island said fog had surrounded the entire island and caused panic among the people. "We could taste salt on our skin," he said.

'We need to rebuild from scratch'
People from all walks of life – a lone man sitting on a sinking island in the Bay of Bengal, a weatherman monitoring the situation from the Regional Meteorological Centre at Alipore in Kolkata, and even Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee – described Cyclone Amphan with the same words: "I have never seen such a cyclone in my life". There is no historical record of a cyclone with a wind speed as high as 185 km/hour making landfall on the coast of Bengal in recent times. It was not only the intensity of the storm that made the event significant but also its duration. The wall cloud stayed for almost five to six hours. The only comparison that the people of coastal Bengal and the authorities could make was with Cyclone Aila which struck in 2009, but with a speed of 120 km/hour. In anticipation of Amphan, 5 lakh people were evacuated to cyclone shelters. Of them, 3 lakh alone were from South 24 Parganas district.

But while destruction caused by the storm has been vast, the number of deaths in West Bengal has been relatively low. Banerjee said 98 people died in the cyclone, of which 19 lost their lives in Kolkata. And in some ecologically fragile places, casualties have been very low. Amphan ripped through Ghoramara, the smallest and most vulnerable island in the Sundarbans, with a population of 5,000 inhabitants, only claiming two goats. They died when a wall collapsed on them.

A few hours after the cyclone, Banerjee sat at the State Secretariat and summed up the scale and nature of the tempest via video conference. South and North 24 Parganas are "finished" and "99% of south Bengal are destroyed," she said, looking at updates on her mobile phone. "We need to rebuild Bengal from scratch."

Acres and acres of agricultural land in the State were flooded. Tarak Ghosh, a small farmer, pulled out wet paddy from a field which, until a week ago, was glowing under the sun. It was just the beginning of the harvest of the Rabi crop. "It is all gone now," he said. West Bengal, the leading State in paddy production, had suffered a great blow. By one estimate, about 1.5 million sharecroppers of south Bengal had lost their produce. Vegetables and cash crops like sesame, jute and fruits had simply disappeared. "Farmers are coming to withdraw deposits, not to buy pesticides and fertilizers. This is a bad sign at the peak of the harvesting season," said Liaqat Ali Jangi, a middle-level farmer and manager.



Cyclone Amphan broke embankments in Purbadarogapur village in Lakshminarayanpur gram panchayat in Partharpratima block of South 24 Parganas, West Bengal, causing saline water to gush into fields and destroy crops. (Below): Inundated moong dal fields in the village. ■ RAJEEV BHATT



er of a farmers' cooperative, Dhubulia Krishi Unnayan Samiti, which has about 1,000 members, in Nadia district.

"We voted for Mohua Moitra of the Trinamool Congress. Yet, when we lost our jobs and then after COVID-19 struck, she never visited the area. She is on television talking about big issues but we are dying due to issues like joblessness and crop failure," said Rahim Baksh Mollah of Charmahatpur. The district leaders of Trinamool did not deny that their MLAs and MPs were busy on social media during the lockdown. "They have left the politics to Didi," said a Nadia district leader of the Trinamool, on condition of anonymity.

Battered capital

People in Kolkata also had a harrowing time during the storm as the wind speed peaked between 112 km/hour at 6 p.m. and 133 km/hour at 7.33 p.m. on May 20. Most people remained indoors and held on to the doors and windows of their homes to prevent water from entering inside. All they could hear was the wind and the torrential rain. There was little or no visibility. By evening, as the cyclone became more and more fierce, large parts of the city plunged into darkness. Two iconic structures in the city, Howrah Bridge and Victoria Memorial, were invisible.

After a long night of battling with the cyclone, millions in south Bengal, including Kolkata, woke up to destruction that was of a scale they had never imagined. The city was completely battered. Trees and poles lay uprooted in every lane in every neighbourhood.

Over the next few days, Kolkata had not only the monumental task of restoring essential infrastructure services, but also power and electric supply, disrupted by the storm and the fallen trees. There was an outpouring of anger on the streets. Protests broke out in several neighbourhoods, and the Army was called in.

Six days after Amphan, at the Region-

al Meteorological Centre in Kolkata, Sanjib Bandyopadhyay, the Deputy Director General of Meteorology, was still trying to pull all stops to get the Internet at his office fixed. "We should be your top priority," he told the staff member at the Internet service provider over phone. "The Chief Minister is visiting districts and we cannot provide updates." The staff member retorted, "Like you there are several top priorities for us. In fact, you are priority number 132."

Bandyopadhyay was the man of the hour. He had been issuing all the necessary alerts about the cyclone for several days before it made landfall. On May 20, at about 4 p.m., he told the press that the landfall process of the cyclone had commenced near Sagar Island at 2.30 p.m. and that the cyclone was moving towards the north and north-east.

Bandyopadhyay explained that it was the first time that the India Meteorological Department (IMD) had issued an advisory for people to stay inside their homes. "This was not the COVID-19 advisory," he clarified. "The administration also ensured that the people remained indoors." Weather officials said they gave regular advisories in their bulletin that the damage will be caused by three factors: gale winds, rainfall, and storm surge. The IMD's focus, they said, was on getting the prediction of intensity and track of the cyclone right. The officials said they got it right, just like they did with earlier cyclones such as Bulbul, Fani and Hudhud.

Close to Kolkata, destruction was visible in Howrah district. The 230-year-old Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose Indian Botanic Garden, set up by the British to pioneer botanical research in India, had turned into a graveyard of trees. At least a thousand trees, including some notable and rare species, were

destroyed, said Kanad Das, scientist, Botanical Survey of India, and in-charge of the Botanic Garden. A Dutch cemetery, around the same age as the garden, was destroyed in Hooghly-Chinsurah. The impact of the storm was felt as far as in the Bardhaman and Birbhum districts of south Bengal.

Broken embankments

Seven days after the cyclone, drinking water pouches reached Deulbari Debipuri village in Kultali block of South 24 Parganas district. About 3 km of the embankment of the village on the Matla River had been washed away. Thousands of acres of agricultural land stood ravaged by the saline waters. Hundreds of fish had died and innumerable houses had turned into heaps of rubble. "I have nothing left except the gamcha I am wearing," said Jiarul Laskar, whose house had turned into dust.

In the afternoon, just after the high tide, Basanti Naskar risked the waters of the Matla. She swam for several hours in the deep waters surrounding the broken embankments with a fishing net, trying to catch fish spawns. Basanti and her husband Basudev used to have a pond with fish, and grew rice and vegetables. The sale of fish, rice and vegetables was enough to support them. But after the cyclone, the only way to survive was to catch prawn seeds in the water. "For a thousand seeds, we get ₹200," Basanti said.

While gale winds ravaged Deulbari, there was more suffering to follow when the embankments broke and seawater flowed into the villages. The embankments of several villages in Hasnabad, Hingalganj and Minakhan in North 24 Parganas, and Patharpratima, Namkhana, Bansanti, and Gosaba in South 24 Parganas suffered extensive damage. These villages are now getting flooded

everyday in the high tide.

The many woes of the migrants

The cyclone could not have come at a worse time for rural Bengal, which is not only grappling with the spread of COVID-19 but also trying to quarantine thousands of migrant workers who have returned home. On the road to the Achintyapur gram panchayat in Patharpratima block of South 24 Parganas, amidst broken houses and trees lie a pile of boxes and hundreds of bicycles and motorcycles. The boxes, some of them made of aluminium, contain television sets and refrigerators. This luggage belongs to the migrant workers, mostly from Haryana and Delhi, who have returned home for good. The migrants said it was becoming impossible for them to stay in Haryana and Delhi, so they packed their bags and came home – only to face the storm.

Dulal Sith, the panchayat pradhan, said about 3,000 migrants, or about 10% of the gram panchayat, have returned to the village. Along with other officials, he admitted that the cyclone evacuees and those who had been in quarantine had to be kept under one roof as there was no other option on May 20. In many coastal areas and remote islands, cyclone shelters were being used as quarantine shelters. When people had to be evacuated before the cyclone, the authorities brought both categories of people under one roof.

In the adjoining gram panchayat of Lakhjanardanpur, the fate of the farmers has swung between two cyclones, Amphan and Bulbul. This area of the Sundarbans yields a good crop of yellow lentils (moong dal). Sowing was delayed when Cyclone Bulbul struck West Bengal on November 9, 2019. Before the harvest could be reaped, Amphan landed washing away thousands of acres of

plantation. Roopkumar Sardar, a migrant labourer, had taken about two bighas of land on lease paying ₹45,000 for two seasons. A few days after the cyclone, he and his wife Sutapa and mother Phoolmani worked in the fields of Purbadarogapur village. "The lentil pods I have been collecting from the submerged fields can only be fed to the cattle. I will have to go out of the village to work, maybe to Kolkata, maybe somewhere else outside, to repay the ₹45,000," Sardar said. In several parts of south Bengal, migrant workers who returned before the lockdown took land on lease, hoping to cultivate crops for a couple of seasons before the situation improved. Their hopes have been destroyed by the cyclone.

If yellow lentils have been destroyed at Lakhjanardanpur gram panchayat, at Mousuni Island, Amphan has destroyed the alternative livelihood of tourism.

Over the past few years, locals on the island have been investing in seaside homes which they called "resorts". Of the 42 homes that came up, not even one stands now. Rebuilding them is going to take a long time. Keshav Maity, a villager of G Plot, said the roofs of houses, made of asbestos and tiles, flew like cardboard pieces when Amphan struck.

Mousuni and G Plot, the areas closer to the sea, also witnessed a unique phenomenon. Trees that did not get uprooted have dried. The leaves have turned yellow. The villagers said this could be because of the saline fog that formed when the cyclone made landfall.

A comprehensive mitigation plan

In almost every village of coastal Bengal, particularly in the Sundarbans, villagers kept making references to Cyclone Aila. "The wind speed was stronger this time but during Aila, there were more embankment breaches," they said.

"Amphan will not be the last cyclone for the Sundarbans," said Tuhin Ghosh, Professor and Director of the School of Oceanographic Studies, Jadavpur University. Data from the IMD show that between 1901 and 2012, the Sundarbans saw 367 depressions, 68 storms and 77 cyclones. Between 1999 and 2019, the number of prominent cyclones in Bay of Bengal was 32.

"The need of the hour should be to formulate a comprehensive policy for mitigation through risk minimisation, resilience-building and preparedness to respond to such events," Professor Ghosh said. West Bengal should follow the example of Odisha, he said, where, after the super cyclone of 1999, the State has been on a learning curve.

Experts believe that historical weather events like Cyclones Aila and Amphan give us an opportunity to evaluate the State's preparedness as well as the fragility of our urban infrastructure. "The suffering of today should bring in some wisdom if not gain for the future," Professor Ghosh said.



FROM PAGE ONE

GDP growth slows to 11-year low of 4.2%

"Going forward, with private expenditure growth dwindling due to shut down and labour migration; investment demand contracting due to weak consumption demand and stretched corporate balance sheets; government expenditure will again be the growth engine in 2020-21," said Dr. Pant. Although weak commodity prices and import demand would also provide some support to growth, the economy would contract this year for the first time since 1980, he said.

Congress reaction
The Congress on Friday said the low GDP growth in the last quarter of 2019-20 is 'a

Lockdown 5.0 to be strictly implemented in 13 cities

Markets were allowed to open in the fourth phase. Schools, colleges and other educational institutions will continue to remain shut.

"The lockdown has been relaxed considerably in the fourth phase. People will have to internalise that social distancing and personal hygiene are a way of life now. Lockdown will not be imposed ruthlessly like before, but people will be told that is for their safety," said

We will decide our present, future: PM

But, Mr. Modi said the country displayed its unity and resolve in all spheres in dealing with the disease outbreak.

"In a crisis of this magnitude, it can certainly not be claimed that no one suffered any inconvenience or discomfort. Our labourers, migrant workers, artisans and craftsmen in small scale industries, hawkers and such fellow countrymen have undergone tremendous suffering," he wrote.

"However, we have to take care to ensure that inconveniences that we are facing do not turn into disasters. Hence it is very important for every Indian to follow rules and guidelines. We have displayed patience so far and we should continue to do so," he wrote a day before Lockdown 4 is to end, adding that it was a "long battle" against COVID-19, but that "victory was our collective resolve."

The Prime Minister also took the opportunity to comment on the spirit behind many of the bold decisions that his government had taken or had to react to.

"(The dilution of) Article 370 furthered the spirit of national unity and integration. The Ram Mandir judgement, delivered unanimously by the Honourable Supreme Court of India, brought an amicable end to

telling commentary on its economic management' by the BJP government and its misplaced priorities.

In a series of tweets, former Finance Minister P. Chidambaram said the GDP numbers do not fully capture the impact of the four stages of lockdown that started on March 25.

"We had forecast that GDP for Q4 will touch a new low at below 4%. It has turned out to be worse at 3.1%. Remember, this is pre-lockdown. Of the 91 days of Q4, lockdown applied to only 7 days. It is a telling commentary on the economic management of the BJP government," Mr. Chidambaram said.

Karnataka cases swell as 248 test positive

Maharashtra impact weighs heavily on case tally in the State; Kerala, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh register 1 death each

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala reported another COVID-19 death on Friday, taking the toll to eight. It also recorded 62 positive cases, of which 56 were cases imported from outside the State. A 50-year-old woman from Chickballapur, Karnataka and one individual in Andhra Pradesh also passed away.

Besides the imported cas-

COVID-19

es, the new ones in Kerala included that of two cabin crew of Air India who had come on a flight to Thiruvananthapuram; two remand prisoners at Neyyattinkara special sub-jail; one health-care worker in Palakkad; and one person in Ernakulam who is believed to have acquired the infection through contact with a known/un-



Crowded roads: Normal traffic was observed on the city roads during the lockdown relaxation time in Vijayawada on Friday. ■ V. RAJU

known source.

Kerala's latest COVID-19 death was that of a 65-year-old person from Thiruvalla who had returned from Sharjah and was being treated at

Government Medical College Hospital, Kottayam.

The Chief Minister, Pinarayi Vijayan, said on Friday that the rising case graph should not be a cause for

concern as Kerala had devised its containment strategy, fully aware that there would be an exponential increase in cases when the lockdown was eased.

Of the 62 new positive cases, 33 were expatriates and 23 were from other States.

grant

new ones. Patients discharged stood at 2,226 and active cases at 1,044. The death toll was 60 after one person died during the 24-hour period.

874 cases in T.N.

Continuing its trajectory of rising cases of the COVID-19, Tamil Nadu reported 874 cases on Friday and the overall tally breached the 20,000-mark. There was a massive surge in Chennai, with a highest single-day spike of 618 cases. Discharged cases were 765, taking the total number of people discharged to 11,313.

The State's case total rose to 20,246, and it had crossed the 10,000-mark on May 15. With Chennai continuously reporting a high number of COVID-19 cases, its overall tally climbed to 13,362.

(With inputs from Bengaluru, Chennai & Vijayawada Bureaus)

Karnataka BJP MLAs hold 'dinner meeting'

Discontent in ruling party building up

STAFF REPORTER
BENGALURU

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa is yet again facing rebellion in his ranks. A "dinner meeting" held by a section of MLAs from North Karnataka on Thursday points to simmering discontent in the ruling BJP bubbling up once more.

The impending elections to the Rajya Sabha and the Legislative Council in June seem to be the triggers that have brought the politicking back. The Chief Minister had earlier hinted at Ministerial expansion post elections.

Ministerial aspirants

Over 13 BJP MLAs met at senior MLA and Ministerial aspirant Umesh Katti's Bengaluru residence on Thursday.



B.S. Yediyurappa

Most of those who attended the meeting have also been Ministerial aspirants.

While Mr. Katti and Basanagouda Patil Yatnal, senior MLA, tried to downplay the significance of the meeting and called it a "casual dinner", Mr. Yatnal conceded that he was upset with the Chief Minister, but denied that it was linked to his Ministerial aspiration.

HC asks A.P. govt. to reinstate Ramesh Kumar

Ordinance through which poll panel chief's term was cut short struck down

STAFF REPORTER
VIJAYAWADA



N. Ramesh Kumar

In a setback to Andhra Pradesh government, the High Court on Friday struck down the Andhra Pradesh Panchayat Raj (Second Amendment) Ordinance (No. 5 of 2020) and the consequential GOs 617, 618 and 619 through which it cut short the term of the State Election Commissioner (SEC) from five to three years, resulting in the expulsion of Nimmagadda Ramesh Kumar from the post.

A two-judge Bench, comprising Chief Justice J.K. Maheshwari and Justice M. Satyanarayana Murthy, directed the government to reinstate Mr. Ramesh Kumar with immediate effect.

This leads to the exit of V. Kanagaraj, a retired judge of the Madras High Court, who was appointed as SEC soon after Mr. Ramesh Kumar was forced to demit office.

as provided for a High Court judge.

The crux of the matter was Mr. Ramesh Kumar's decision to postpone elections to urban and rural local bodies just a few days before polling on the ground that the COVID-19 pandemic would flare up if the elections were held as per schedule. This prompted YSR Congress Party leaders and Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy himself to attribute motives to the decision.

Mr. Ramesh Kumar then approached the High Court.

Opposition hails ruling

The State government is learnt to have decided to challenge the judgment in the Supreme Court. A senior advocate representing the government confirmed it, suggesting that the circumstances existed for such an action.

The court also agreed with Mr. Ramesh Kumar's view that the impugned ordinance was in violation of Article 243-K, which states that a SEC could not be removed, except in the same manner

the TDP, the BJP, the CPI(M), the CPI and the JSP – have welcomed the verdict. TDP Polit Bureau member and Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council Yana-mala Ramakrishnudu said the government should honour the verdict.

BJP Rajya Sabha member G.V.L. Narasimha Rao and State vice-president S. Vishnuvardhan Reddy hailed the verdict. Mr. Rao said the government should realise that hasty decisions would result in humiliation.

CPI(M) State secretary P. Madhu said the government's comments against the SEC were not appropriate. CPI State secretary K. Ramakrishna said the verdict was laudable. The government should start the process of elections to the local bodies afresh, he said.

The JSP said the verdict strengthened people's faith in democracy.

Nascent Arabian Sea cyclone may delay monsoon arrival

A strong system could delay onset over Kerala next week

JACOB KOSHY

NEW DELHI

Uncertainty clouds the monsoon's arrival over Kerala. While the official date this year remains the June 5, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Thursday evening that "conditions were favourable for onset" on June 1.

The uncertainty is primarily due to a prominent weather model that hints at the development of a cyclone in the Arabian Sea after May 31; the strength and trajectory of this weather system could, in the worst case scenario, delay the monsoon's progress.

He quoted a Sanskrit shloka that translated to "if we have action and duty on one hand, then success is assured on the other" signing off as "Pradhan Sevak" or "chief servitor."

"One model – of the Euro-

pean Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasting – is showing a cyclone as developing in the Arabian Sea. However, our own models are showing that it wouldn't be that intense and would likely become a Deep Depression, at most," said Madhavan Rajeevan, Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences.

"It could mean a few days delay if it's too strong. Once the monsoon season sets in, there's a certain uncertainty too in all weather models," he added.

Three categories

Storms that develop in the sea begin as 'Low Pressures' and graduate to Depres-

sions, Deep Depressions and then onto three categories of cyclone. The most recent being the Super Cyclone Amphan in the Bay of Bengal.

Another depression is likely to form in the Arabian Sea over the weekend but will turn towards Oman and not significantly influence the monsoon.

While such depressions are normal during the advent of monsoon and usually aid the monsoon's advent and progress in India, a particularly strong storm can hinder the monsoon. Last year, cyclone Vayu that formed in the Arabian Sea stalled the monsoon after it entered Kerala on June 8.



A mound erected around the mangrove cover by GMR to deposit the dredged material in Kakinada.

GMR told to stop dredging in Kakinada

Dismantle bund close to mudflat

T. APPALA NAIDU

KAKINADA

The Forest Department has directed GMR Energy Limited to stop dredging activity in the Kumbabhishekham mudflat with immediate effect. It has also ordered the removal of the bund around the mangrove cover adjacent to the company's 220 MW barge-mounted power plant on the Kakinada coast.

The action comes in response to a report published in these columns on May 22 detailing the threat to the mudflat and the mangrove cover and destruction of the prime habitat of birds – endangered Great knots (*Calidris tenuirostris*), and Indian skimmers (*Rynchops albicollis*), which are listed as a vulnerable species.

The dredging was being carried out by GMR Energy Limited to shift existing installations.

On May 27, District Forest Officer (East Godavari-Territorial) Nandani Salaria and Andhra Pradesh Pollution Control Board (APPCB)-Kakinada Executive Engineer A. Rama Rao Naidu conducted a site inspection on

the directions of East Godavari Collector D. Muralidhar Reddy.

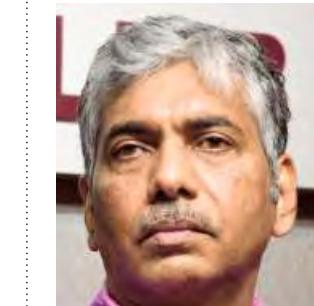
"On the site, a bund has been erected on the mudflat front. The inflow of water and sand being dredged from the mudflat into the mangrove cover has been recorded. The GMR authorities have been directed to stop the dredging activity and remove the bund by June 1," Ms. Salaria said.

Campaign by activists

"The bund is an immediate threat, impacting the soil topography and salinity on the site being levelled with the dredged material," Ms. Salaria added. Mr. Rama Rao Naidu said the APPCB is investigating the issue.

Former Union Power Secretary E.A.S. Sarma, wetland expert K. Murthy Rao, and conservation biologist J. Eswar Narayana have documented the destruction of the Kumbabhishekham mudflat due to the dredging, and sought the intervention of the State and the Ministry of Environment and Forests and Climate Change in the matter.

IN BRIEF



HC declines to stay probe against Jacob Thomas

KOCHI

The Kerala High Court on Friday declined to stay further investigation into a corruption case registered by the Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau (VACB) against Jacob Thomas, IPS, in connection with the purchase of 50 acres of farmland in Tamil Nadu in 2001.

Karnataka cancels 53 flights in one day

BENGALURU

A day after the Karnataka government decided to request the Civil Aviation Ministry to reduce the number of flights from high-risk areas to the State, 53 arrivals and departures were cancelled at the Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) as on Friday evening. Twenty-six flights scheduled to land from Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Ahmedabad, Delhi and other cities were cancelled.

'Take steps to sell ore mined before SC order'

BENGALURU

Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa on Friday directed officials of the Mines and Geology Department to hold discussions with the Comptroller and Auditor General for the sale of 800 million tonnes of iron ore that had been extracted before the Supreme Court ruling on cancellation of the 'C' class mining leases. He also told them to get the Environment Ministry's nod for exploration of iron ore deposits in forest areas of the State.

KCR hints at 'surprise' package for farmers

Telangana CM inaugurates Kondapochammam, the 10th lift reservoir in the Kaleshwaram project

R. AVADHANI

MURKOK

Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao (KCR) said on Friday that with the abundant availability of Godavari water under different projects across the State, Telangana is going to produce crops worth ₹1 lakh crore every year.

He also announced that a new scheme for the farming community is in the offing, it would be unveiled in a week or 10 days, and "the entire nation will be surprised by the scheme".

Speaking to media after releasing water to Kondapochammam at this mandal headquarters town along with spiritual guru Chinna Jeeyar, Mr. Rao termed the



Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao at the release of Godavari water in Siddipet district on Friday. ■ MOHD ARIF

Kaleshwaram project an engineering miracle with multi-stage lifting of about 80 tmcft of water.

"This is a historical moment. Before the formation of State, everyone ridiculed

sagar is the 10th lift reservoir where water is being lifted up to 618 metres. Two more reservoirs – Seethammam and Sammakkasagar, with the capacity of 35 tmcft and 7.5 tmcft, respectively – are coming up," Mr. Rao said.

"Telangana has provided 63% of the national food grains and this was revealed by D.V. Prasad, Food Corporation of India (FCI)", he added.

"I am thanking and bowing my head to all the oustees for the Kaleshwaram barrage to Kondapochammam, who sacrificed their lands for the construction of reservoirs. Three villages – Mamidyal, Bahilampur and Thenadarpally – got submerged in this project. Reha-

'Trump did not talk to Modi on China'

Ministry of External Affairs rejects U.S. President's claim that he discussed border tensions with PM

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The government on Friday rejected U.S. President Donald Trump's claim that he had spoken to Prime Minister Narendra Modi about the situation on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China, or that the two leaders spoke at all.

Government sources said India would not accept Mr. Trump's offer to mediate on the stand-off at the LAC, and this was conveyed by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh to his American counterpart on Friday. "There has been no recent contact between PM Modi and President Trump. The last conversation between them was on April 2020 on Hydroxychloroquine [HCQ]," said sources in the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).



Narendra Modi and Donald Trump at a bilateral meeting in New York on September 24, 2019. ■ REUTERS

According to Defence Ministry sources, Mr. Singh, who discussed issues around COVID-19 and the defence partnership with U.S. Defense Secretary Mark Esper during a telephone call on

Friday, used the occasion to convey India's firm commitment to resolving issues with China bilaterally, "through the established mechanisms that exist between India and China."

Mr. Singh is understood to have also stressed that the resolution of the month-long stand-off at different points along the LAC in Ladakh and Sikkim could "take some time" but that India and China had in the past managed to resolve border issues without mediation by others.

Taken by surprise'

Government officials told *The Hindu* that they were taken by surprise by the U.S. President's comments, particularly his reference to Mr. Modi's "mood" when Mr. Trump claimed to have spoken to him. "I can tell you, I did speak to Prime Minister Modi. He's not - he's not in a good mood about what's going on with China," Mr. Trump told reporters at White House on Thursday (Friday morning India time).

When asked by reporters about his offer of mediation on the "raging border dispute" between India and China, made first in a tweet on Thursday, Mr. Trump said he would be willing to broker talks between the two countries if "it would help".

"I would do that. You know, I would do that. If they, if they thought it would help if I were the mediator or the arbiter, I would do that. So, we'll see," Mr. Trump told a correspondent from *PTI* news agency who asked him about his tweet.

However, the MEA sources reiterated that the Ministry's official spokesperson Anurag Srivastava "made it clear" on Thursday that India was "directly in touch with the Chinese through established mechanisms and diplomatic contacts."

Rahul asks govt. to tell nation what's happening with China

'Silence on border situation is fuelling massive speculation'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Friday asked the government to "come clean" on the reported border tension with China and inform the nation what exactly is happening.



Rahul Gandhi

dia-China issue, we would like to see some more transparency on what is going on. It becomes very difficult for us to have a position without understanding the facts. I think the Government should make clear to the people of India, what exactly is happening on the border. We are hearing different stories. So, I don't want to go into conjecture but it is important that the Government of India makes it clear what is happening on the border," he had said.

Last Tuesday, Mr. Gandhi said he expected the government to be transparent about the border tensions with China and Nepal but refused to make any specific comment. "I think on the In-

dia and offered to mediate between India and China, something that was both denied and rejected by India.

His tweet came a day after United States President Donald Trump claimed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi was 'not in a good mood' over the border row

Donald Trump's gaffe on call with PM Modi is not a first, but a pattern

While officials acknowledge breach of protocol by the American President, they point out that the India-U.S. relationship remains strong nonetheless

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

Government officials have dismissed U.S. President Donald Trump's claim that he spoke with Prime Minister Narendra Modi about the situation at the Line of Actual Control with China, as untrue. While this is the first time Mr. Trump has been accused by New Delhi of fabricating a conversation entirely, it is not the first time Mr. Trump has run into controversies by revealing details of conversations with the PM, including their most recent conversation on April 4 on hydroxychloroquine (HCQ), the drug Mr. Trump favours as a cure for COVID-19.

In its readout of the call of

the same day, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) made no mention of hydroxychloroquine, noting instead that the two leaders had spoken about the pandemic, its impact on the global economy, and even on the "significance of practices such as Yoga and Ayurveda" during his earlier indiscretion. Once the government lifted its ban, as it did not just for the U.S., but for more than a hundred other countries, Mr. Trump showered India and PM Modi with praise. The impression he left by revealing his conversation with the PM was that the U.S. had browbeaten the Indian government into threatening HCQ supplies.

Even as India reconsidered its decision, Mr. Trump spoke again, this time appearing to threaten New

Delhi if it did not release the drug to the U.S.

"If [PM Modi] doesn't allow it [HCQ] to come out, that would be OK, but of course there may be retaliation," Mr. Trump said, adding insult to his earlier indiscretion. Once the government lifted its ban, as it did not just for the U.S., but for more than a hundred other countries, Mr. Trump showered India and PM Modi with praise. The impression he left by revealing his conversation with the PM was that the U.S. had browbeaten the Indian government into threatening HCQ supplies.

The diplomatic dissidence over HCQ resembled Mr. Trump's comments in 2018 about Indian tariffs on

American Harley Davidson bikes, where he even mimicked PM Modi in remarks to the press. "The PM, who I think is a fantastic man, called me the other day. He said we are lowering [tariffs] to 50%," Mr. Trump announced, adding that he still wanted the tariffs to be reduced to "zero". What had made his comments more problematic was that at the time PM Modi had made the call, India had not officially announced the decision to cut tariffs on imported motorcycles, which made Mr. Trump's delivery of the comments even more cause for discomfort.

Just weeks before the HCQ

NEWS ANALYSIS

fracas this year, Mr. Trump had been in India for a bilateral visit, his first as U.S. President. While the country focused on preparations for the unprecedented joint rally planned at the Sardar Patel stadium, Mr. Trump stunned all with his account of another conversation with PM Modi.

"PM Modi said we will have millions and millions of people. He thinks we will have 5-7 million just from the airport to the new stadium," said Mr. Trump, speaking to the press on February 12, a day after the visit was announced. At a rally in Colorado Springs a few days later, Mr. Trump upped his estimate of the

crowd in Ahmedabad to "6-10 million people". The assertion cast a bluntness on Indian officials making arrangements, who explained that given Ahmedabad's entire estimated population was 7 million people, Mr. Trump was unlikely to receive the crowds he imagined. Eventually, however, Mr. Trump said he was very pleased with the more than 1 lakh people who attended the joint rally at the stadium and the "hundreds of thousands of everyday citizens who came out and lined the streets in a stunning display of Indian culture and kindness".

While Mr. Trump has caught the government by surprise with his offer to mediate between India and China

na this year, last year, it was his offer to mediate between India and Pakistan that grabbed the headlines. A few weeks after PM Modi met with President Trump at the G-20 summit in Osaka, Mr. Trump met with Pakistan PM Imran Khan at the White House and announced he would "love to be a mediator" on Kashmir.

MEA officials say they have come to expect the unexpected when Mr. Trump speaks, and acknowledge that his habit of discussing publicly conversations held with a world leader are a breach of protocol. However, they point out that despite the comments, the India-U.S. relationship remains strong, and Mr. Trump and Mr. Modi remain on the best of terms.

back on offers of mediation, thus Mr. Trump's comments were denied by the government in no uncertain terms after a furore in Parliament. No lasting damage was done by the comment or the denial, however, and less than two months later, Mr. Trump and Mr. Modi stood together at a joint rally in Houston.

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+ Tension unlikely to escalate, say former diplomats

'Both nations do not want conflict; trust has been created'

ANANTH KRISHNAN
CHENNAI

The ongoing border tensions with China along several points along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) are unlikely to escalate into a conflict with China, two former senior Indian officials said on Friday.

"The most important thing is to not view every single border skirmish as the beginning of another war," said M.K. Narayanan, former National Security Adviser who has also served as the Special Representative on the boundary talks. "We should be careful in not being driven by, I'm sorry to say, what the media and many people are



M.K. Narayanan, left, and Vijay Gokhale

saying." Mr. Narayanan said the problem with China was because "we have an undefined and undemarcated border" with differing perceptions of the LAC. "Both sides have by and large tried to follow the political parameters and guiding principles we agreed to in 2005. Until such time as the border is finally demarcated, we will face some kind of problem or the other. It is true

once we strengthen infrastructure on the border it may seem to the other side, that we are more or less saying we have demarcated the border without formal concurrence, so therefore this may well be the reason why there is a certain amount of skirmishing."

Vijay Gokhale, who was Foreign Secretary until January 2020 and is a former ambassador to China, said the communica-

tions between the two leaders through the informal summits in Wuhan in 2018 and in Chennai in 2019 had helped build trust. Relations had been strained in 2017 during the Doklam stand-off.

Informal communication
"I have seen media reports which suggest because something is happening on the LAC, there is somehow a breakdown in informal communication that the two leaders have. I beg to differ on this. Whenever leaders talk, the chances of mishaps are minimised," he said. "I believe after 2017, the two summits have created a certain degree of understanding and trust. It doesn't mean we have solved every problem. Two leaders together can't solve every problem in two meetings,

but I believe the trust they have created will prevent a mishap from happening."

Both former officials were speaking at a webinar organised by the Chennai International Centre.

Mr. Narayanan said he was of the view that neither China nor India wanted conflict. "Both sides tend to play, in our case chess and for the Chinese wei-qi [or Go, a strategy game]. And between the two, we are caught in a hotspot in many ways. It is too much to call this a military stand-off. It is true both sides have strengthened their troops. The last thing we want is a conflict and I am fairly certain while China wants the rest of Asia to feel they are superior to India, I do not think it will be through firing guns across the border."

Not our job to make unnecessary political statements: Nepal Army

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Nepal Army on Friday said it was not its job to make "unnecessary political statements". It was responding to reports that its chief, Gen. P.C. Thapa, had declined to follow the orders of Prime Minister K.P.S. Oli to respond to Indian Army chief Gen. Manoj Naravane's recent comments on the border issue. Gen. Naravane had said Nepal may have raised the issue "at the behest of someone else".

NOTICE INVITING E-TENDERS
Calicut International Airport invites e-tenders for granting following licenses:
1. License for Advertisement Rights in the entire Airport State.
2. License for Airport Entry Ticket for Terminal Building" at Calicut International Airport.
3. License for SITC and Operate Automated Vehicle Parking Management System (Limited Tender from empanelled agencies only) at Calicut International Airport.
For details & corrigendum, extension etc. please visit:
<https://etender.ai.aero/rj/portal and www.aaai.aero/or www.airportsindia.org.in>

Major Suman Gawani chosen for UN award

She served in peacekeeping mission

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Major Suman Gawani of the Indian Army, who served as a women peacekeeper with the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) in 2019, has been selected for the prestigious United Nations Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award, the Army said.

Major Gawani received the award from the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres during an online ceremony at the UN Headquarters, New York, on Friday on the occasion of International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers, the Army said in a statement.

"The officer encouraged participation in joint military patrols to maintain gender balance, irrespective of the hardships under extreme field conditions," the Army said, adding she also strived to integrate gender perspective into the planning and military activity in the mission.

She was selected to attend a specialised training on Conflict Related Sexual Violence (CRSV) at Nairobi, and participated in various UN forums to demonstrate how a gender perspective can help in protecting civilians, especially from conflict-related sexual violence, the Army stated.

The explosives-laden vehicle, which the security forces were able to spot in advance, belonged to Hidayatullah Malik, an active Hizb-ul-Mujahideen militant, from Shoaib's Sharatpura. Police sources said Malik joined the militant ranks in July last year.

Police suspect that Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) militant Muhammad Ismail, who had a role in the 2019 Pulwama attack that killed 40 CRPF jawans, played a role in the foiled car attack plan in Pulwama on Thursday. The car owner is a local militant from south Kashmir.

Car used in foiled Pulwama attack was owned by Hizb militant'

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

A senior police officer told *The Hindu* that Ismail, also known as Fauji Baba, Lambu and Adnan, "may have provided the expertise to formulate the improvised explosive devices".

"Ismail is an IED expert and his role is under scanner. There are very few hands in the militant ranks to handle such huge quantity of explosives," the officer said.

Inspector General of Police (IGP), Kashmir, Vijay Kumar, said 40 to 45 kg of explosives, hidden in a blue drum and fitted to the hatch of the Santro, "may have been hidden given the impact on the car when the explosives were defused by a special team".

Police sources said the nature of the explosives and where they were ferried from was not known yet.

The explosives-laden vehicle, which the security forces were able to spot in advance, belonged to Hidayatullah Malik, an active Hizb-ul-Mujahideen militant, from Shoaib's Sharatpura.

Police sources said Malik joined the militant ranks in July last year.

Major Suman Gawani

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GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH AGRICULTURE & COOPERATION (AGRI.III) DEPARTMENT NOTIFICATION

Dated: 29-05-2020.

Government of Andhra Pradesh invites applications for the post of Vice-Chancellor, Acharya N.G.Ranga Agricultural University, Guntur for placing before the search committee constituted vide G.O.Ms.No.60, dated 28.05.2020 of Agriculture & Cooperation Department.

Persons of the highest level of competence, integrity and institutional commitment are to be appointed as Vice-Chancellor. Persons with distinguished academics with a minimum of 10 years of actual working experience as Professor in a University system in Agricultural Sciences (Agriculture, Agricultural Engineering & Technology and Home Science) or 10 years of experience in equivalent position in a reputed research and / or academic administration, may apply. The selection process will involve both public notification talent search. Further details can be seen in www.anagrau.ac.in or www.apscbhe.org.

Application with detailed bio-data highlighting achievements, academic and administrative experience and prescribed proforma as annexed, may be sent within 21 days from the date of notification by registered post to the following address:-

The Special Chief Secretary to Government (Agri), Agriculture and Cooperation (Agri.III) Department, Room No.188, "Ground Floor", "Building No.4", A.P. Secretariat, Velagapudi-522238.

Sd/- Poonam Malakondaiah, I.A.S., Special Chief Secretary to Government Agriculture and Cooperation Department

DIPR 85PP/CL, Dt: 29-05-2020

Interested prospective bidders may visit Govt. of Odisha website portal <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>

A-85:

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER, ANANDAPUR BARRAGE PROJECT, SALAPADA.

(E-mail id: cceabp-eicwr.od@nic.in / laobp-eicwr.od@nic.in)

E-procurement Notice No. CCEABP-01 of 2020-21

Chief Construction Engineer, A.B.Project, Salapada

Chief Construction Engineer

'States show variations in testing contacts'

Kerala tested an average of 40 contacts per confirmed positive case, and Maharashtra only eight

JACOB KOSHY
NEW DELHI

States that are grappling with the highest burden of COVID-19 are those that least tested the contacts of persons who were confirmed positive, suggests data from an analysis of nearly 1,00,000 individuals tested for the SARS-CoV2 coronavirus and published by a core group of Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) scientists and independent epidemiologists leading India's COVID-19 testing.

A large proportion of both – those tested and those found positive – were asymptomatic family contacts.

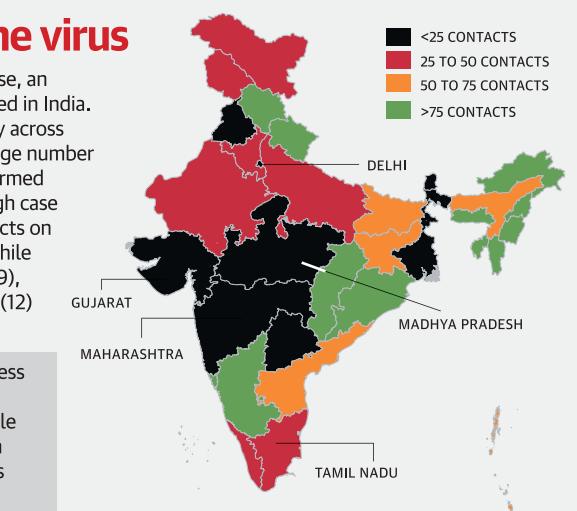
Kerala, which is among the States that have contained the initial surge of the pandemic, tested an average of 40 contacts per confirmed positive case. On the other hand, Maharashtra, which on Friday had 38,948 active cases and 1,982 deaths, had tested only eight contacts per positive case. Gujarat, which had 6,599 cases and 960 deaths, only tested 12 contacts per confirmed positive case.

'Wide variations'

On the trail of the virus

For every confirmed COVID-19 case, an average of 20 contacts were tested in India. However, this figure varied widely across the States. Map depicts the average number of contacts tested for every confirmed case. Among the States with a high case load, Tamil Nadu tested 44 contacts on an average per confirmed case, while Maharashtra (8 contacts), Delhi (9), Gujarat (12) and Madhya Pradesh (12) tested relatively fewer contacts.

Seven States or UTs each traced less than 25 contacts and between 25 and 50 contacts respectively, while five States or UTs traced between 50 and 75 contacts. 12 States/UTs traced more than 75 contacts.



"States demonstrated wide variations in contacts tested per case. It represents the robustness of contact tracing. While exposure to different contacts could vary per case, the reason for this variation needs to be further explored to improve tracing and testing strategies," says the paper, published on Friday in the *Indian Journal for Medical Research*.

According to the paper, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Goa, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand were among

the States that had tested greater than the 75th percentile of contacts.

Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Delhi were among those with less than 50th percentile of the contacts tested.

Testing contacts and isolating suspects is a critical aspect of restricting fatalities and ensuring that infections don't spread rapidly.

For the analysis, the researchers studied individuals who had tested positive between January

22-April 30. Cases in India started to measurably pick up only after March 5, and by March 23, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had declared a lockdown.

Highest proportion

The proportion of positive cases was highest among symptomatic and asymptomatic contacts, two-thirds higher than among those with severe acute respiratory infections, or those with an international travel history, or among healthcare workers.

The attack rate (based on the number of positive cases in a category) per million by age was highest among those aged 50-69 years (63.3%) and was lowest among those under 10 years (6.1%). The attack rate, or fraction of a population testing positive, was higher among males (41.6%) than females (24.3%). The secondary attack rate (based on positive cases among contacts of primary cases) was 6%.

Tests for COVID-19 were conducted in 99% of 736 districts in the country, and 71% of these districts reported positive cases.

Cough and fever

"The patient doubling time figure for the State is now 15.7 days from the 11 days in the previous week, while the recovery rate stands at 43.38%", said State Surveillance Officer, Dr. Pradeep Awate.

He clarified that of the 116 deaths reported, 46 had occurred in the last couple of days while the remaining fatalities are from the period between May 16 and May 26.

"About 65% of the deaths reported had high-risk comorbidities such as diabetes, hypertension, asthma

ma and heart disease," said Dr. Awate.

1,447 cases in Mumbai

Mumbai city alone reported 1,447 of the new cases, as its tally crossed the 36,000 mark to reach 36,932 cases. Of these, 19,745 were active ones. As many as 38 of the deaths reported were from Mumbai, to take the city's death toll to 1,173.

Jalgaon district reported 17 deaths, to take its tally to 69. Dhule district reported seven fatalities as its toll climbed to 16, despite the district having only 49 active cases. Nashik district's death toll has risen to 60, with five deaths being reported from Malegaon, a virus hotspot.

"The SC has held that in the judicial commission, the Law Minister is also a member, and therefore, the appointees from that office may not be fair and objective when litigation comes against them... If this is the reason, which it is, then I have serious reservation as a student of law," he said.

"Now, if the mere association of the Law Minister leads to doubts of the objectivity of appointment, then it is a very loaded question... All of us report to the PM as he is the head of the government," he said.

Law Minister rakes up SC's NJAC verdict

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Expressing 'serious reservation' on the 2015 Supreme Court ruling that had quashed the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) in favour of the present Collegium system, Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad on Friday wondered why the government and the PM cannot be trusted "to appoint [a] fair and objective judge if he can be trusted with the country's nuclear button".

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Cong. hits out at Solicitor General for remarks in SC

Tushar Mehta's arguments spark a row



Kapil Sibal

Reports of 'lost' trains fake, says Railways

'Only four of 3,840 trains run since May 1 have taken over three days to reach their destinations'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Railway Board Chairman V.K. Yadav on Friday termed reports of Shramik Special trains "getting lost" as "fake news," and said only four trains of a total of 3,840 run so far since May 1 have taken more than 72 hours to reach their destinations.

He said only 1.8% of all such trains run so far, or 71 trains, were diverted and even that only between May 20 and 24, as 90% of the Shramik Special trains run in the four days were bound for Uttar Pradesh and Bihar and this had led to network congestion.

Among the destination States of the diverted trains were Bihar (5), Uttar Pradesh (16), Jharkhand (2) and Assam and Manipur (1 each).

Among the originating States were Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka, Rajasthan.

The statement comes amid severe criticism of the Indian Railways for Shramik



Journey begins: A migrant worker, along with his children, before boarding a train at Egmore station. ■ B. VELANKANNI RAJ

Special trains taking longer routes and lack of proper food and drink.

"In normal times, catering is done by IRCTC via contractors," said Mr. Yadav.

"In the beginning, many of them didn't want to distribute food inside the trains due to coronavirus... Initially, we started keeping food packets as per the number of

passengers in the train... some issues came up in sharing the food, which is understandable..." These incidents happened in some 2-3% of the trains. "These are not normal times... whatever lessons we learnt, we used them to improve services."

He stressed that 90% of the trains, in fact, were running at greater speeds than

Mizos give food to Assam flood victims from train

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

A group of Mizos has won hearts after a video showed them distributing food packets to flood victims in Assam on their way to Mizoram by a special train from Bengaluru.

The video went viral after one Emanuel Ralte had posted it on Facebook on

Thursday.

The people they lobbed food packets to are believed to be from western Assam's Goalpara district. Displaced by floods, they have been taking shelter on higher ground along the railway track. The video also drew the attention of Mizoram CM Zoramthanga, who praised them.

the normal Mail Express trains, and there was a delay of a couple of hours in about 10% of them.

To a query on the incidents of death on board such trains, Mr. Yadav said the Railways was compiling a list of people who died on the Shramik Special trains from the State governments.

"The set protocol is that

local State police investigate the deaths, including the reason for the death. We have seen reports that people died due to starvation. We have analysed them and there was no shortage of food and drinks on these trains."

Till May 28, Mr. Yadav said, 3,840 Shramik Specials operated ferrying a total of 52 lakh passengers.

"The reported spat yesterday between the Solicitor General and a former minister is a new low in the rapidly declining quality of Court room discourse. The Solicitor general has no purpose or right to interrogate a Senior Counsel wishing to assist the court in a matter of overarching public interest as to his contribution to the cause," former Law Minister Ashwani Kumar said in a statement.

"A law officer, as an officer of the Court cannot seek to diminish another officer of the Court in the exercise of his professional rights nor was the Counsel right in dishing out a monetary sum as his contribution, consistent with the finer traditions of charity," he stated.

Decision questioned

Mr. Kumar questioned the top court's decision not to allow Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala to argue in the Supreme Court dealing with the plight of migrants epitomized by the images in the public domain said : Journalists are vultures and High Courts are running parallel governments. This is politics not law!"

Mr. Surjewala also targeted the Solicitor General for the arguments made in the court and questioned the court's 'silence' over the reconstitution of a Bench of the Gujarat High Court.

'Avoid travel by train unless it is essential'

Cases of deaths were due to pre-existing medical conditions, says Railway Minister Piyush Goyal

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

In the wake of some deaths on the Shramik Special trains, Railway Minister Piyush Goyal on Friday said the "few unfortunate cases" were related to pre-existing medical conditions.

Mr. Goyal put up a Twitter post appealing to people "suffering from serious ailments, pregnant women and those above 65 years and below 10 years" to travel on Shramik Special trains only if



Piyush Goyal

people who are availing this service have pre-existing medical conditions which ag-

gravates the risk they face during the COVID-19 pandemic," Mr. Goyal's post said.

"...Ministry of Railways makes an appeal that persons with co-morbidities (for example - hypertension, diabetes, cardio-vascular diseases, cancer, immune deficiency conditions), pregnant women, children below the age of 10 years and persons above 65 years of age may avoid travel by rail, except when it is essential," the post said.

As of May 28, the railways had operationalised 3,736 Shramik Specials across the country, transporting around 50 lakh passengers to their home States.

'Rozgar Setu' for skilled workers in M.P.

State is the first to devise such a work plan for returned workers, says CM

STAFF REPORTER
BHOPAL

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has announced the launch of the 'Rozgar Setu' scheme, saying it would help secure employment for skilled workers who have returned.

"The State is the first to devise such a work plan. We are surveying skilled workers who were employed at industries elsewhere, but have now returned," said Mr. Chouhan. "We are identifying the skills they possess."

Stating that the attempt was to provide work to the maximum number of re-



Shivraj Singh Chouhan

turns skilled workers, he said, "After such workers requiring employment are identified, the government will contact factory, workshop owners and contractors overseeing infrastructure projects such as road and bridge construction."

He added, "We will bring our skilled brothers and sisters on a platform and connect them with those needing them. The State government will act as a setu [bridge] between workers and employers so that both are benefited."

This would fulfil the manpower requirement of indus-

try yojana' under which rural areas would be surveyed to help prepare land records.

Land ownership records

"The rural population will be given land ownership records as proof of their right over plots of land. This scheme is like a gift for them," he added.

In current financial year,

the scheme will cover 10,553 revenue villages of 10 districts, such as Morena, Sheopur and Bhopal, in the first phase. The budgeted expenditure in realising the scheme is ₹97.97 crore in three years.

Moreover, Mr. Chouhan hailed the Centre's 'Swami-

First State to use flights to help stranded migrants

STAFF REPORTER
BHUBANESWAR

The Jharkhand government on Friday arranged to have 60 migrant workers stranded in Leh flown back to Ranchi, making it the first State to use flights to help its stranded citizens return home during the lockdown in the wake of the Supreme Court's order.

"All our 60 migrant workers flew down to Delhi from Leh and they undertook further air journey from New Delhi to Ranchi," Chief Mi-



Airlift: Sixty migrant workers flew down to Delhi from Leh and from there to Ranchi. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

nister Hemant Soren said, welcoming the arriving workers at Birsa Munda Airport. "This has marked the first formal step towards bringing back stranded workers by flights," he added.

them in returning home.

According to an official at the Chief Minister's office, Mr. Soren had urged the administration of the Union Territory of Ladakh to provide assistance while the State Control Room got in touch with the workers and got them registered on the State's portal.

All 60 workers were transported by the BRO to Leh and put up in a transit camp. The journey cost Jharkhand about ₹8 lakh. As of now 4.5 lakh of 8 lakh registered workers have returned to Jharkhand.

Mr. Soren has directed officials to fly back stranded workers from the Andaman and northeastern States too.



Instapick

#DressUpFridays: Ever since the lockdown began, there has hardly been a difference between weekdays and weekends. Lucy Walsh (@dressupfriday) decided to shake things up and motivate everyone to get out of their fashion funk with this online movement. She is encouraging people to pull out the most extravagant outfit they own, style it, do their hair and make-up and post it on Instagram.



Talking point

Lifting the lockdown: With the number of coronavirus infections steadily rising in some regions, the Central government has put the onus on States and Union Territories to come up with guidelines. As domestic flights begin to operate and businesses and offices open again, at least partially from Monday, it remains to be seen if the curve will flatten any time soon in the country.

Pick of the week

Concerts, stand-up and other online events you just can't miss.

The event preview and calendar will resume in a few weeks.



Virtual wellness

Jindal Naturecure Institute, a Bengaluru-based Naturopathy hospital, has launched a series of initiatives, including advising patients through webinars. Till May 31, free virtual yoga sessions will be shared at 8 am on their Facebook page @JindalNatureCure. The ongoing **Mitra Yoga Fest** online features guided meditation by Divya Srinivasan, Yogasana by Stewart Gilchrist and a discourse on the science of Kundalini by Rita Hraiz. Till May 31, at ₹2,500 for a full pass and ₹1,400 for a day pass. Details: mitrayogafest.com



Time to dance

Disney+ Hotstar's latest is an online competition for all ages, titled **Home Dancer**. The bi-weekly show, hosted by Karan Wahi, premiered on May 25, and allows viewers to vote for their favourite entries. A cash prize of ₹4 lakh is up for grabs each week. To participate, log in to their mobile app. **Bellydancing** seems to be the flavour of the season, with multiple online classes available. And from June 1 to 21, an online dance festival highlights the genre, with proceeds going to the NGO Goonj, to support migrant workers. Details on insider.in



Concerts from your couch

Through the quarantine, independent artists have kept us entertained. **Hungama Artist Aloud's Indian Independent Music Awards** aims to identify and highlight the best of the lot across 25 categories including pop, rock, hip-hop and folk. Registrations open on July 1. Details: artistaloud.com. The **One India Virtual Concert** tomorrow at 5 pm features *The Voice* winner Sumit Saini and standup comic Maran Desai, among others. The event will raise funds for workers in the event management industry. @IEPAInitiatives on Facebook.



Celebrities on YouTube

Known for his dark and twisted movies, such as *Lost Highway* and *Mulholland Drive*, director **David Lynch** has now taken to reporting the Los Angeles weather. The surprisingly soothing videos are shot in what looks like a home office/bunker. Subscribe to 'David Lynch Theatre' on YouTube. The outspoken **Jameela Jamil** takes her body positive activism to the video sharing platform through her new channel, launched earlier this week. It will focus largely on her work with I Weigh and feature interviews and more.



Learn a skill

Curly hair does not need hair spas or chemical intervention, says stylist Vinita Makija. An avid proponent of the Curly Girl Method, she is hosting a **curl care webinar** tomorrow at 5 pm. Learn basic techniques, get personalised homemade product recommendations and free follow-up advice as well. At ₹400 on insider.in. Join the **Skrap and Eco Femme** team for a DIY workshop, where you can learn how to stitch a fully functional, reusable cloth pad. At ₹350. Details on @skrap.zerowaste on Instagram.



Read on

Harry Potter author **JK Rowling** announced the release of a new book, **The Ickabog**. Clarifying that it is not an extension of her hugely popular series on the wizarding world, she added that a chapter would be shared online each weekday till June 10. Now on theickabog.com. **Suzanne Collins** gives us a prequel to *The Hunger Games* in **The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes**. The story looks at the life of Coriolanus Snow – Katniss Everdeen's nemesis – and what led him to be the way he is. At ₹683 for the Kindle version on amazon.in.



#LockdownWithWeekend

Today, on our Instagram Live series, join actor **Richa Chadha** as she talks about the roles that influenced her work. In conversation with Namrata Joshi, on @the_hindu at 8 pm. On Sunday, columnist and wellness expert Vasudha Rai speaks to **Sandeep Agarwalla** and **Dr Naresh Perumbuduri** of Ananda in the Himalayas. They will share essential morning rituals, yogic kriyas and simple breathing and meditation techniques to practise during the lockdown and beyond. On @thehinduweekend Instagram at 5 pm.

From comedy to music and summer camps to workshops, organisers and ticketing platforms are adapting to the world of virtual shows

A series of unlikely events

ADITYA MANI JHA

The coronavirus forced practically every single business in the country to rethink their plans, but it's fair to say that event organisers faced a singular challenge. Whether it is ticketing platforms or on-ground event planners, everybody was forced to adapt to the new normal and reinvent their businesses accordingly. If you open any online ticketing platform right now, you'll see a variety of things you wouldn't necessarily associate with these brands – dozens of classes (for music, dance, theatre, hip-hop), kids' activities (including 'virtual summer camps'), not to mention paid online versions of their regular programming: stand-up comedy acts, musical concerts...

BookMyShow and Paytm Insider are two of the most popular platforms for these shows. Online stand-up comedy events

can be priced anywhere in the ₹199 to 499 range (tickets for the *Roast of Danish Sait* on Insider are priced at ₹299). Zoom classes are pricier, generally ₹500 and above per session (BookMyShow offers a four-hour master-class by acting teacher Atul Satyajit Koushik for ₹499). The better-known the artiste, the higher the price to access the event – an all-new Vir Das comedy show, shot during lockdown, costs ₹499 on BookMyShow.

Adapting to the times According to Shreyas Srinivasan, founder-CEO of Paytm Insider, "Apart from the hour-long video format, which includes music, comedy and so on, there's also content that involves recurring engagements. This content works like your standard gym-class package, where the number of sessions



pre-decided." He also says that the interaction between fans online and the artiste represents a clean break from the experience that a Netflix would provide. "This is more of a community experience, and we need more of that during this time," he explains.

Others, like BookMyShow, are adjusting to the fact that their consumers have never spent more time online. Albert Almeida, COO, BookMyShow, says, "We recently launched our content discovery platform, Watch Guide, which helps users look at all forms of content

available online across streaming platforms. It customises content selection and views based on your past transactions and search behaviour."

The B2B counterparts of these companies have also readjusted their products slightly. Jai Mundra, founder and managing director of experiential marketing agency Beep Experience, says, "Although we continue to create employee engagement for a number of corporate companies, there's obviously an additional focus on areas like health and awareness, webinars with motivation

and speakers and so on. For example, Wipro has partnered with us for a digital calendar for their employees.

These engagements could be a digital treasure hunt, an online *antakshari* or a motivational session with a famous author." He acknowledged that there's no returning to the way things were "for six months minimum" because even live events are unlikely to be resumed until then.

Creating engagement The way one builds online engagement is completely different from the dynamics of planning, marketing and managing an on-ground show. In some

cases, the online medium offers some much-needed breathing space – without sacrificing accessibility or potential for growth. The Jaipur Literature Festival, for instance, has been doing live conversations with authors like Margaret Atwood, Orhan Pamuk, Gloria Steinem and so on, as part of its 'Brave New World' series of online events.

According to Sanjoy Roy, managing director of Teamwork Arts, the series was planned pre-Covid, but the plans were accelerated once the lockdown started. And one of the things that he was clear on was that the digital format needed a new approach, different from the regular panel discussion

even with their cost difference, both are priced well above the usual medical-grade masks available at chemist shops that retail for ₹20. As time passes, we will see many more designers come up with their versions – many of them have already produced masks for charity, or even for their workers.

The sustainability argument Medical-grade masks are usually of the use-and-throw variety, whereas designer masks are designed to be reusable, reducing waste. Designers can also reclaim their fabric waste to make them. The level of skill required to stitch masks is also considerably lower than that required to stitch, for example, a lehenga. Could this new fashion category not be seen as an opportunity to generate employment?

Ultimately, we need to examine why the idea of 'designer masks' upsets us. Are we against them simply because they are 'designed' by a fashion designer, or because we resent what they stand for? If our fashion designers – whose collections often tell the stories of entire cultures – think making masks is required, then is it not possible that we are resistant, simply not ready to accept the emergence of a 'new normal'?

Are we scared of the constant state of being cautious that they represent? In this case, wouldn't we actually want face masks with a bit of pizzazz to brighten the scenery around us? Or do we simply not like it that some designers have had the foresight to 'design' them before we actually start wanting them?

The author is a fashion commentator and Communications Director at The House of Angadi



Put a label on it (clockwise from left) The making process, variants from India Circus and JJ Valaya



by Namrata Joshipura will have a filter for safety, yet will also be 'designed' as per her aesthetics. "I'm not competing with anyone making medical-grade masks, neither am I marketing them as anything else than what they are," says the designer, who is also an avid runner and has often been seen wearing face masks for the past two years or so on her social media. "I'm not trying to monetise a global pandemic; I'm responding to a demand that will arise in the times to come, when people may not want to wear medical-grade masks in social situations." Soon to be launched on her website, her masks will be priced between ₹2,500 and ₹3,500.

By contrast, designer Krksna Mehta's label, India Circus, is offering printed face masks at ₹199. His website mentions that these are reusable, as are Joshipura's. And

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with four to six authors at a time. "For this [Brave New World] we thought, 'Let's do a deep dive'. It should be one-on-one, mostly, like Esther Duflo and Abhijit Banerjee talking to each other. If you look at the Atwood or the Elf Shafak videos or any of the other outliers with a huge number of views – these might be the same people who've spoken at Jaipur, but this content is very different. It is far more intimate, far more reflective."

The change in approach Roy speaks of is also reflected in the many ways artists are going about their business. According to comedian Kautuk Srivastava (a featured artist on Paytm Insider), stand-up comedy has been uniquely affected by the ongoing hiatus on live events. "Stand-up is the only art form that requires an audience to practise," says the comic, who has also written a young adult novel titled *Red Card*. "Writers and painters can practice their art during lockdown. But in order to create a joke, a finished product that you might see in a YouTube clip, you have to test it with audiences several times, changing it if necessary." Stand-up has a lot to do with the atmosphere of the space you're in. With made-for-online comedic content, however, Sri-vastava says, "your lines have to be cleaner; you can't have a banter-like rhythm to it".

As online events grow in scale and engagements, it is clear that this period may well end up making structural changes to the way we create and consume things.



Homebound, but in high spirits

As weekends at home become the norm, home-delivered cocktails and big brand campaigns for premium spirits could help bring the party indoors

ANOOHI VISHAL

If life gives you lemons, make limoncello. If you are handed tomatoes, sip on a Bloody Mary. Mumbai-based Mallika Sarkar may have taken this to heart while celebrating her lockdown birthday recently. Physically distanced from friends but not socially isolated, she organised the party over Zoom – and ordered a batch of premixed cocktails (sans alcohol) from the bar Social, popular with her set in pre-Covid times. The mixes were delivered to her and each of her friends individually, and the fiery Bloody Marys (with alcohol added from home bars) got the party going.

The way young, metropolitan India was used to socialising has been turned upside down in the last few months. Yet despite the closure of restaurants and bars, alcohol still remains a big part of our lives: whether it is to deal with the stress in Covid-19 times, to wind down for the day, or meet friends, albeit virtually.

Living room mixologists

In India, liquor sales may have been hit during lockdown, but now all eyes are on home bars to rev up spirits. Literally. Brands, retailers, professional bartenders and influencers are focussing on ways to engage with consumers at home. Consumers, for their part, are moving on from plain vanilla drinks, to paying more attention to what is in their glass – not just the quality of spirits (which is invariably better at home when people are likely to drink in a more discerning way than while bar-hopping on a



(Clockwise from above) Nitin Tiwari, SocialMixers, The Terra, Siddharth Wadia and Payal Nijhawan

budget) but also the mixers, garnishes and the ice that go into their drinks.

Globally, in pandemic-hit capitals such as New York, one category that has been cheering up otherwise beleaguered restaurants is high-quality-to-go cocktails. Authorities in the Big Apple allowed restaurants serving food to also home-deliver cocktails, wine and spirits in March, and since then, homebound customers seem to be going all out for well-balanced Negronis, Martinis and Manhattans.

Research firm, Nielsen, reported that the category of home-delivered



premixed cocktails had shot up by over 75% by the end of March. In fact, chef Sujan Sarkar, whose restaurant, Rooh, in Chicago has been delivering three-course menus successfully (commanding a higher \$45 per meal price than many takeaways), says that customers are even demanding things like square ice cubes to enhance their drinking experience.

Local flavours

In India, the cocktail culture had been growing steadily in the last few years, but was still nowhere close to what you'd find in other global cities like London or Singapore. Despite the emerging cult of the Negroni, sales were led by weekend binge-drinking, claustrophobic events, or over-priced shots. The culture of small cocktail bars where people could converse and savour well-made drinks was hardly pervasive even in more alcohol-friendly markets such as Delhi-NCR, Mumbai, Bengaluru and Chandigarh, with mixes made using seasonal ingredients and prepared in individual outlet kitchens.

Then there is Masque, the luxury restaurant in Mumbai, which is delivering two delicious mixes made by chef Prateek Sadhu, to be ordered alongside food. These include Limetter, a cordial made with smoked sweet lime (add gin or vodka at home), and The Terra, made from turmeric, ginger and honey. Both have been doing very well.

In Delhi, bars like Sidecar are offering bael (wood apple) and elderflower-spritzers delivered in serves of four to six people, with instructions on how to blend these with alcohol at home. As celebrity mixologist Nitin Tiwari, of Together At 12th in Gurugram, points out, "Bottled premixers and pre-batched

blushments are luring millennial customers with artisanal premixes sans spirits (because delivery of alcohol-laced cocktails is not permitted in India). Social recently launched SocialMixers in Mumbai, Bengaluru and Chandigarh, with mixes made using seasonal ingredients and prepared in individual outlet kitchens.

While earlier, the average budget for a three-day music festival, attracting 2,000 to 3,000 people per day, could be as much as ₹50 lakh by a liquor brand, now these kinds of approaches have been recalibrated to focus on in-home consumption. "The biggest shift is to move our resources to engage with consumers on digital and at retail stores," says Siddharth Wadia, of Brown-Forman Worldwide LLC. Social media sessions where consumers can interact with global brand ambassadors, learn to make cocktails using kitchen ingredients, and participate in online quizzes are some ways in which campaigns are happening. "We are seeing consumers more inclined to experiment and go deeper into knowing what they are drinking. Our initiatives such as Grant's Triple Wood Trivia Nights online and Monkey Kitchen Cocktails [with Monkey Shoulder] have been very successful," says Payal Nijhawan, Head of Marketing, William Grant & Sons India, with brands such as Glenfiddich and Grant's.

Meanwhile, liquor brands are hoping to up the game on their luxury portfolios; the rationale being that people at home invariably consume higher quality of alcohol (albeit in more limited quantities).

In pre-Covid days, the majority of marketing spends for big brands were directed at eyeball-grabbing, high-energy events such as music or fashion festivals – enabling consumption within bars – but now the accent has shifted to online engagements that educate the customer on the legacy, taste profile and other attributes of the spirit and brand.



JACK DANIEL'S OLD NO. 7

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While earlier, the average budget for a three-day music festival, attracting 2,000 to 3,000 people per day, could be as much as ₹50 lakh by a liquor brand, now these kinds of approaches have been recalibrated to focus on in-home consumption. "The biggest shift is to move our resources to engage with consumers on digital and at retail stores," says Siddharth Wadia, of Brown-Forman Worldwide LLC. Social media sessions where consumers can interact with global brand ambassadors, learn to make cocktails using kitchen ingredients, and participate in online quizzes are some ways in which campaigns are happening. "We are seeing consumers more inclined to experiment and go deeper into knowing what they are drinking. Our initiatives such as Grant's Triple Wood Trivia Nights online and Monkey Kitchen Cocktails [with Monkey Shoulder] have been very successful," says Payal Nijhawan, Head of Marketing, William Grant & Sons India, with brands such as Glenfiddich and Grant's.

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Meanwhile

Trump order targets social networks

Administration to look into ways of holding social media platforms liable for the content they carry

SRI RAM LAKSHMAN

A day after U.S. President Donald Trump lashed out at Twitter for fact-checking two of his tweets on mail-in ballots, he signed an executive order (EO) asking his administration to look into ways of holding platforms liable for more of the content they carry.

Specifically, the EO asks the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to re-examine how protections granted under a particular statute – Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act (1996) – ought to apply.

Section 230, on the back of which several American tech companies like Facebook and Twitter have grown, allows social media sites to carry third party content without being liable for all of it. There are some exceptions around federal criminal law, sex trafficking and intellectual property. It, therefore, draws a distinction between platforms on the one hand and publishers or speakers on the other.

Significantly, the statute says a platform shall not be



Rage of the oppressed: Protesters gathering in front of a liquor store that was set afire in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on Thursday. ■ AFP

liable for actions taken in "good faith" to restrict material that is, "obscene, lewd, lascivious, filthy, excessively violent, harassing, or otherwise objectionable, whether or not such material is constitutionally protected".

Thursday's order also directs federal government agencies to review the

amount of advertising dollars spent on online platforms. It asks the FCC to take action on "deceptive acts" affecting commerce, such as when sites "restrict speech in ways that do not align with those entities' public representations about those practices". Twitter called Mr.

Trump's approach "politicised".

Reactionary order'
"This EO is a reactionary and politicised approach to a landmark law. #Section230 protects American innovation and freedom of expression, and it's underpinned by democratic values. At-

tempts to unilaterally erode it threaten the future of online speech and Internet freedoms," a statement from Twitter said.

Mr. Trump and other Republicans have said U.S. tech companies have a liberal bias and social media sites tend to censor conservative views. There is support on the other side of the aisle for scaling back or revoking current protections, but for different reasons – such as unmoderated content encouraging misinformation and promoting violence. Presumptive Democratic presidential nominee told the *New York Times* earlier this year Section 230 should be revoked because internet companies, such as Facebook, were not merely tech companies, but propagating falsehoods. Asked by a reporter if he would consider deleting his Twitter account, Mr. Trump said on Thursday that he used social media to refute fake news. "I would do that [delete his Twitter account] in a heartbeat if I had fair – if we had a fair press in this country, I would do that in a heartbeat."

Troops deployed after protests over black man's death

George Floyd died due to alleged police brutality this week

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
REUTERS
MINNEAPOLIS

Hundreds of troops deployed to the streets of Minneapolis and St. Paul early Friday after a third night of rioting over police brutality against African Americans left hundreds of shops damaged and a police station on fire. Black leaders continued to express outrage over the videotaped death of George Floyd, 46, while handcuffed on the ground and in custody of Minneapolis police on Monday. He died after one officer kneeled on his neck for more than five minutes.

"People are angry, they are frustrated because this is not the first police killing they have seen around the country," Al Sharpton, a prominent black rights activist, told MSNBC.

Damage to property
Overnight demonstrators broke through law enforcement barriers to overtake the Minneapolis police station where the four officers blamed for Floyd's death were based. A fire broke out and soon became an inferno that engulfed the structure.

The State's National Guard announced the 500 troops were being deployed on Friday morning for peacekeeping amid signs that the anger was nowhere near dissipating. "Our troops are trained to protect life, preserve property and ensure people's right to peacefully demonstrate," said Major General Jon Jensen of the Minnesota National Guard.

Protests broke out in several cities across the country, including New York, where dozens of protesters were arrested; Phoenix, Memphis, and Denver. Officers gave no explanation as they escorted CNN reporter Omar Jimenez and his camera crew away. His crew had just shown a protester being taken into custody when about half a dozen police officers in gas masks surrounded Mr. Jimenez. The journalists were released about an hour after being arrested. "What gave me one bit of comfort was that it happened on live TV," Mr. Jimenez told viewers after he was released. "You don't have to doubt my story. It's not filtered in any way; you saw it with your own eyes."

The striking footage of the arrest could add to racial tensions in the city and across the country over the death of an unarmed black man in police custody.

Pressure mounted on Minnesota officials to arrest the four officers blamed for Floyd's death. A video shows that after being detained on a minor, non-violent charge of using a counterfeit banknote, he was handcuffed, pinned to the ground and one officer held his knee tightly to Floyd's neck for more than five minutes until he went limp.

Floyd's family demanded the officer be arrested for murder, but local and federal law enforcement officials



Guarding the streets: Law enforcement officers amassed along a street in Minneapolis early on Friday. ■ AP

said on Thursday they still needed to investigate the case thoroughly.

Reporter held, released

Also, police in Minneapolis released a CNN reporter who was led off in handcuffs while reporting live on television early on Friday following a third night of violent protests in the city over the death of an unarmed black man in police custody.

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Twitter conceals President's tweet for 'glorifying violence'

SRI RAM LAKSHMAN



President Donald Trump speaking to reporters on Thursday. ■ Reuters

Hours after U.S. President Donald Trump signed an executive order seeking to bring greater regulation to social media companies, Twitter continued its moderation of Mr. Trump's tweets.

The social media platform, on Friday, covered one of the President's tweets with a notice for vio-

lating its rules about "glorifying violence." The tweet could, however, be viewed on clicking the notice; Twitter felt it was in the public's interest that the tweet be accessible, as per the notice. "These THUGS are honoring the memory of George Floyd, and I won't let that happen. Just spoke to Governor Tim Walz and told him that the Military is with him all the way. Any

difficulty and we will as-

sume control but, when the looting starts, the shooting starts. Thank you!" Mr. Trump's tweet said about riots that had broken out in Minneapolis over the killing of George Floyd, an unarmed African American, by a white police officer.

Twitter separately tweeted a link to its policy on glorification of violence. "This Tweet violates our

policies regarding the glorification of violence based on the historical context of the last line, its connection to violence, and the risk it could inspire similar actions today," the company said.

The White House defended Mr. Trump, saying he did not glorify violence and it retweeted the President's tweet, which Twitter covered with the same notice.

U.K. moots '5G club' to keep out Huawei

City's pro-Beijing government warns that punitive measures could backfire

REUTERS
HONG KONG

Hong Kong told the United States to keep out of the debate over national security legislation being imposed by China, and warned that withdrawal of the financial hub's special status under U.S. law could backfire on the U.S. economy.

The former British colony has been racked by civil unrest amid fears Beijing is curbing the high degree of autonomy it has enjoyed under a "one country, two systems" formula adopted when it returned to Chinese rule in 1997. "Any sanctions are a double-edged sword that will not only harm the interests of Hong Kong but also significantly those of the U.S.," Hong Kong's pro-Beijing government said late on Thursday.

From 2009 to 2018, the

U.S. trade surplus of \$297 billion with Hong Kong was the biggest among all Washington's trading partners, and 1,300 U.S. firms were based in the city, it said.

New law
Beijing says the new legislation, likely to come into force before September, will tackle secession, subversion,

terrorism and foreign interference in the city. It could also see Chinese intelligence agencies set up bases in Hong Kong.

In the latest assertion of Beijing's authority over the territory, China's Ministry of Public Security (MPS) said it would "direct and support Hong Kong police to stop violence and restore order".

The city's police have been independent from China and the MPS has no enforcement powers in the city.

Reacting to U.S. efforts to call a UN Security Council meeting over Hong Kong, China's Foreign Ministry reiterated that Hong Kong was an internal affair and no country had the right to interfere. It said China had lodged solemn representations to countries condemning its plans and was determined to take countermeasures against any U.S. actions.

In Washington, Mr. Trump's top economic adviser, Larry Kudlow, said Hong Kong, which has enjoyed special privileges under U.S. law on the basis of its high degree of autonomy, may now need to be treated like China on trade and other financial matters.

Taiwan President visits dissident publisher

Tsai reiterates support for protesters

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
TAIPEI

Taiwan president Tsai Ing-wen visited a bookstore run by a prominent Hong Kong dissident on Friday, repeating promises of humanitarian support and sanctuary for those fighting for democracy in the finance hub.

"We thank Lam Wing-kee for your insistence on Hong Kong's human rights, freedom and democracy. I welcome you on behalf of the Taiwanese people," Ms. Tsai told the publisher. Mr. Lam and four other Hong Kong booksellers who published salacious titles about China's leadership vanished at the end of 2015, reappearing months later in police custody in mainland China.

He fled to self-ruled, democratic Taiwan last year.

Repeating a pledge that has angered Beijing, Ms. Tsai said her government was working on a "humanitarian assistance action plan" that will provide support for other Hong Kongers who flee to the island.

Chinese media slam U.S. President over border comments

Washington believes the combined strength of Beijing and New Delhi could impair its interests, says *The Global Times*

ANANTH KRISHNAN

China's State media on Friday said U.S. President Donald Trump was trying to "drive a wedge between China and India" over his offer to mediate amid the ongoing border tensions.

On Friday, Mr. Trump reiterated the offer, first made on Twitter, telling reporters he had spoken to Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "They have a big conflict India and China... India is not happy and probably China is not happy," he said. "I can tell you; I did speak to Prime Minister Modi. He is not in a good mood about what is going on with China." India denied there had been a conversation, saying the two leaders last spoke on April 4.

The *Global Times*, a Communist Party-run newspaper, said in a commentary that "a conflicting China-India relationship serves [U.S.] interests". "Washington believes the combined strength of

Beijing and New Delhi could impair its interests in Asia and beyond. An opportunist U.S. has never given up its attempt to drive a wedge between China and India... the Trump administration emphasises India as a major pillar in its much-touted Indo-Pacific concept."

The newspaper mocked Mr. Trump for his knowledge about India and China. "It seems Trump finally knows that China and India, the two largest Asian powers, share borders. Early this year, A

in the Galwan Valley region". Noting that Doklam was "successfully solved with concerted efforts and wisdom," it said, "the latest dispute can be solved bilaterally by China and India". "The two countries should keep alert on the U.S., which exploits every chance to create waves that jeopardise regional peace and order."

Bilateral discussions
On Thursday, Indian officials said both sides remained "engaged" through diplomatic and military channels in New Delhi and Beijing and at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in order to resolve the situation along the boundaries in Ladakh and Sikkim. Indicating that India would not accept Mr. Trump's offer to mediate, officials said the matter was being discussed bilaterally.

Rising tensions
China-U.S. ties have plunged to a nadir amid rising tensions over a growing number of issues, from China's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic and trade ties to Hong

Kong and Taiwan. On Thursday, speaking at the conclusion of the annual National People's Congress (NPC) in Beijing, China's Premier Li Keqiang called on China and the U.S. to manage their differences and "discard a 'Cold War' mentality".

The tensions with the U.S. were the focus during the NPC in Beijing, with Mr. Li and Foreign Minister Wang Yi both not mentioning India in their annual press conferences. Defence Minister and People's Liberation Army General Wei Fenghe warned during the NPC that relations with the U.S. were entering a "high-risk period".

"The U.S. has intensified suppression and containment of our side since the outbreak, and China-U.S. strategic confrontation has entered a high-risk period," said General Wei. "We must strengthen our fighting spirit, be daring to fight and be good at fighting, and use fighting to promote stability."

Iraq PM is an American agent, says IS

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BAGHDAD

The Islamic State (IS) group in an audio message blasted Iraq's new Prime Minister, al-Qurayshi, released late Thursday, as "an American agent," and criticised the closure of Islam's holiest shrine in the Saudi holy city of Mecca to limit the spread of COVID-19.

In the message allegedly read by the group's chief spokesman Abu Hamza al-Qurayshi, released late Thursday, al-Qurayshi asked why mosques are being closed and people being prevented from praying at the Grand Mosque in Mecca.

Iraq's new Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi, a former intelligence chief backed by Washington, took office earlier this month after he played a part for years in the war against IS. The group was declared defeated in Iraq in 2017.



Joy along border: Children playing cricket by the Pangong Lake, near the India-China border in Ladakh, in July 2011. ■ AP

Very Stable Genius, a book written by two *Washington Post* journalists, revealed that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi was shocked and concerned when Mr. Trump told him India and China did not share a border," it said.

The commentary described the current standoffs as "reminiscent of the 2017 Doklam stalemate", which it blamed on India for "illegally construct[ing] defence facilities across the border into Chinese territory

ELSEWHERE



U.S. vows action against espionage by students

WASHINGTON
The United States will take action to prevent alleged espionage by Chinese students, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said.

Asked about a report in *The New York Times* that Mr. Trump was considering throwing out thousands of graduate students, Pompeo said Thursday that Chinese students "shouldn't be here in our schools spying."

25 arrested in Russia over protests

MOSCOW
Police in Moscow and St. Petersburg detained 25 people who came out to protest on Friday, in violation of city coronavirus restrictions, against the arrest of a prominent Russian journalist, a rights group said. An Opposition Moscow city council member was among those detained.

AP

CM YK

MARKET WATCH

	PRICE	CHANGE
Sensex	32,424	0.69
US Dollar	75.62	0.18
Brent oil	34.68	-0.06

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	323.80	-8.00
Asian Paints	1683.10	39.50
Axisc Bank	384.95	-6.00
Bajaj Auto	2710.50	110.50
Bajaj Finserv	4404.90	118.95
Bajaj Finance	1953.65	5.95
Bharti Airtel	552.60	-10.15
BPCL	342.80	16.35
Britannia Ind	3378.85	55.60
Cipla	648.15	59.80
Coal India	141.30	7.40
Dr Reddys Lab	4071.25	183.50
Eicher Motors	16548.45	311.95
GAIL (India)	92.35	3.25
Grasim Ind	589.20	12.70
HCL Tech	550.25	7.60
HDFC	1658.90	35.20
HDFC Bank	951.65	6.40
Hero MotoCorp	2360.85	62.75
Hindalco	138.85	0.45
Hind Unilever	2057.35	47.40
ICICI Bank	331.95	5.10
IndusInd Bank	393.65	6.80
Bharti Infratech	229.95	6.10
Infosys	691.00	-16.40
Indian Oil Corp	83.20	5.50
ITC	197.35	6.70
JSW Steel	184.20	9.05
Kotak Bank	1224.00	-5.45
L&T	932.25	26.75
M&M	436.35	-4.05
Maruti Suzuki	5610.80	142.45
Nestle India Ltd.	17540.80	551.65
NTPC	97.85	2.15
ONGC	83.20	4.35
PowerGrid Corp	157.55	0.30
Reliance Ind	1464.40	-7.85
State Bank	161.30	3.10
Shree Cement	20857.30	48.40
Sun Pharma	474.25	15.15
Tata Motors	87.00	0.00
Tata Steel	295.20	-0.30
TCS	1972.35	-31.95
Tech Mahindra	530.45	0.75
Titan	890.00	-9.45
UltraTech Cement	3904.85	59.65
UPL	405.85	14.75
Vedanta	92.20	2.25
Wipro	212.80	13.45
Zee Entertainment	183.55	2.85

GST Council likely to meet in mid-June

Tax revenue details withheld till July, officials say no point in disclosing now as returns filing extended

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ
NEW DELHI

The Goods and Services Tax Council is likely to meet in mid-June after repeated demands from States anxious for their GST compensation dues which have been pending since December.

However, information on GST revenue since March – which is likely to see a sharp fall due to the lockdown – is being withheld at least until July, according to senior officials at the Finance Ministry.

GST revenue data is usually released monthly. However, the last release was for March collections, based on February transactions, which fell 8% from the previous year. "The deadline to file GST returns has been extended to June 30 because of the lockdown, so what is the point of sharing data before that?" said a senior official.



The Centre may not favour hiking GST rates on non-essential items despite falling revenues, said a source. ■ S. RAMESHKURUP

Discussing the GST Council meet, another top source at the Ministry indicated that the Centre may not be in favour of hiking GST rates on non-essential items despite the falling revenues.

"After the lockdown is lifted, consumption has to be increased on all fronts, not just on essential items. The

whole economy has to kick-start. Demand from all sides for [all] goods has to be induced," said the source. "Besides, who are we to decide what is non-essential? However, it is up to the Council to take a final decision."

The same Ministry official added that as the Centre needed to bring down its

Madras HC notice to Franklin Templeton, SEBI PIL filed against closure of 6 schemes

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The Madras High Court has issued notices to the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) along with Franklin Templeton Mutual Fund and its top officials after a public interest litigation (PIL) was filed by a Chennai-based group against the abrupt winding up of six debt schemes by the fund house last month.

The court, on May 26, passed an interim order while directing SEBI to file a status report. The PIL has been filed by the Chennai Financial Markets Accountability (CFMA).

CFMA also plans to get more unit holders of the affected schemes through an

online petition, which it then plans to file with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) as the parent entity Franklin Templeton Investments is based in the U.S. The PIL alleged that while the fund house had said that recovery of the money could take around five years, the approximate quantum of loss to the investors would be ₹22,400 crore.

Responding to an email query by *The Hindu*, a spokesperson for Franklin Templeton MF said the fund house is examining the matter and will take appropriate steps as may be required. An email query sent to SEBI remained unanswered till the time of going to press.

Some of the options that TRAI has recommended include switching to a 11-digit mobile number, reallocation of mobile numbering resources surrendered by operators who have shut shop and prefixing zero for all mobile calls made from fixed line. The regulator said adequate availability of numbering resources is

borrowing costs in these difficult times, savings scheme interest rates may have to be rationalised. Drawing a comparison to onion prices, which need to benefit both farmers and consumers, the source said rates on savings schemes had to be balanced with the cost of borrowing.

With banks having parked ₹7.5-8 lakh crore with the Reserve Bank of India, concerns have been raised about banks' appetite to lend at a time when the Centre has been trying to increase credit access and liquidity in the economy. However, the source said approximately ₹4 lakh crore of this amount was for loans that had already been sanctioned, but not yet disbursed.

Timing of disbursements
There is a disbursal-sanction mismatch, because some

borrowers only want to take the money when the lockdown is lifted, the official said, explaining why the money had been parked with the RBI for the duration. The Finance Ministry is also attempting a balancing act between the needs of businesses and their employees, and is engaging with the Labour Ministry regarding pay cuts and job losses during the lockdown.

With regard to the economic stimulus package, the senior official said it was not possible to discuss the 'quantifiable objectives' of the package until the lockdown is lifted. The possibility of further cash transfers has not been closed, and all options are still open.

However, there is no move to go down the deficit monetisation route at this stage, said the official.

Fiscal deficit at 4.6% for FY20 as revenue sags

Budget estimate was 3.8%

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The country's fiscal deficit widened to 4.6% of the gross domestic product (GDP) in 2019-20 mainly on account of poor revenue realisation, according to official data.

The deficit, which signifies the gap between government revenue and expenditure, is higher than the revised estimate of 3.8% for the fiscal.



Revenue receipts during the year worked out to be only 90% of the revised estimate.

In absolute terms, total receipts of the government were ₹17.5 lakh crore against the estimate of ₹19.31 lakh crore.

The data showed the government's total expenditure was ₹26.86 lakh crore, lower than the ₹26.98 lakh crore projected earlier.

Core sector output contracts 38% in April

Cement, steel production plummet

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

dia stands at 1,177.02 million with a tele-density of 87.45% at the end of January 2020.

"As a result, we find ourselves in a situation where we need to review the utilisation of the numbering resources and make some policy decisions to ensure that adequate resources are available for sustainable growth of the telecommunication services," said.

TRAI said that some serious problems are anticipated with a change in the mobile number from 10 to 11 digits, and the move should be resorted to only if all the efforts to continue with the 10-digit numbering are exhausted.

threatened because of an increase in the range of services and massive growth in the number of connections, especially in the mobile segment. The ongoing plan implemented in 2003, was developed keeping in mind the projections till the year 2033. The total number of telephone subscribers in India

is

'Air passenger demand to plummet 47% in 2020'

Revenues likely to fall \$11 bn: IATA CEO

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Air passenger demand is expected to fall 47% in 2020, with revenue reducing by \$11 billion compared to last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, said Alexandre de Juniac, Director General and CEO, IATA at a webinar held by CAPA India on Friday.

He said about 3 million jobs, including those dependent on aviation, such as travel and tourism, are also at risk. "Indian carriers, like many airlines around the world, are in survival mode," he added.

Stating that there should be viable airlines around after this crisis, he said, "It is particularly disappointing that the package of economic relief unveiled earlier this month contained nothing

for airlines in the form of direct financial relief. Compare that to the \$123 billion in government financial aid that has been announced around the world, including \$26 billion in the Asia Pacific region."

"The Indian government [must] help airlines with measures that [help] raise equity financing rather than increasing debt. This needs to be done urgently before it is too late," he added.



V. Sumantran
Sumantran joins IndiGo board

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The board of directors of InterGlobe Aviation Ltd. (IndiGo) has appointed Venkataraman Sumantran as an independent director for a period of five years.

Dr. Sumantran, with experience of over 35 years, having worked in the U.S., Europe and Asia, has been an industry leader, technocrat, academic and an author. He is currently CMD of Celeris Technologies. He has expertise in multiple domains, including automotive, mobility, digital transformation, aerospace and technology.

He is also an adjunct professor at MIT-MISI.

Until 2014, he served as the executive vice-chairman of Hindujia Automotive, U.K. and vice-chairman of Ashok Leyland Ltd. Between 2001 and 2005, he was executive director of Tata Motors Ltd. and CEO of the car business where he worked closely with Ratan Tata.

He had also worked with the General Motors for 16 years starting at the R&D Centre in Detroit and subsequently as director, advanced engineering at GM-Europe. M. Damodaran, chairman, IndiGo, said, "his intellectual prowess, analytical bent of mind, objectivity, wide-ranging experience and deep understanding of the aviation sector, will considerably strengthen the board."

Sundaram
Finance net at ₹131 crore

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Sundaram Finance Ltd. (SFL) has registered a net profit of ₹130.89 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 2020. The firm had recorded a net profit of ₹675 crore a year earlier.

The net profit of the previous year included a one-time income of ₹522 crore on account of sale of shares in Royal Sundaram. Hence, the profit numbers are not comparable on a like-to-like basis, the company said in a statement. For the period under review, revenue from operations rose 7% to ₹942 crore. The board recommended a final dividend of ₹3 a share.

"We live in a time of great uncertainty and the overall outlook for the economy is not promising. The first half of the year is likely to be muted, but a major thrust on infrastructure spending and a favourable monsoon could revive sentiment in the later part of the year," said T.T. Srinivasaraghavan, MD, Sundaram Finance. For the full year, gross receivables stood at ₹35,088 crore against ₹33,447 crore.

Capgemini's Delaporte to take over as Wipro CEO and MD

Frenchman had spent 25 years with the consulting firm



Thierry Delaporte

based in Paris and report to chairman Rishad Premji. The company's current CEO and MD Abidali Neemuchwala will relinquish his position on June 6.

Commenting on the appointment, Peter Bendor-Samuel, CEO, Everest Group,

said, "[Mr.] Thierry is an interesting choice for Wipro, signalling its move to be a true multinational and global player. [Mr.] Thierry faces many challenges as he assumes Wipro leadership; the biggest amongst them is to get Wipro back to industry-leading growth. To achieve this, he must increase accountability, and streamline decision making."

Phil Fersht, CEO and chief analyst at London-based HFS Research, said, "He is an ambitious business leader with a strong finance background. He will bring strong operational and fiscal discipline to Wipro and has a lot of energy and leadership capabilities."

Sundaram Clayton profit surges 23.4%

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Sundaram Clayton Ltd. (SCL) has reported a 23.43% increase in its standalone net profit for the fourth quarter ended March 2020 to ₹62.05 crore.

During the year under review, the total income contracted to ₹395 crore from ₹456 crore, while total expenditure stood at ₹324 crore (₹410 crore).

Mentioning that all plants and offices had to be shut down due to COVID-19, SCL said that it resumed operations at its manufacturing units and all offices partially after obtaining the necessary approvals.

The company had paid an interim dividend of ₹31 per share during March 2020.



suppresses a protein (TMPRSS2) that the COVID-19 virus uses to enter human lung cells," the company said in statement.

