



BSP president Mayawati blames Congress for exodus of migrants
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Army deployed in cyclone-ravaged Bengal for restoration work
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RBI should tell govt. to take fiscal measures, says P. Chidambaram
page 7



South America named virus epicentre as Trump seeks U.S. reopening
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NEARBY



FIR against Daati Maharaj for lockdown violation
NEW DELHI
The Delhi police on Saturday registered a case against self-styled godman Daati Maharaj and his accomplices for allegedly violating social distancing norms while performing a ceremony at a temple in Maidaan Garhi area. The police found some photographs of the ceremony at Shanidham Mandir in Asola.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

Fire in COVID-19 hospital in south Delhi, 8 rescued

NEW DELHI
A fire broke out on the third floor of a private hospital designated for COVID-19 patients in south Delhi on Saturday evening, fire officials said. Eight patients were rescued by the firemen. A Delhi Fire Service official said the information regarding the blaze was received at 5.54 p.m. and it was brought under control within two hours.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

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Railways to run 2,600 Shramik Specials over the next 10 days

It will benefit 36 lakh migrants; 50% of converted isolation coaches to be used

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The Railways on Saturday said it would run an additional 2,600 Shramik Special trains in the next 10 days as per the needs of the State governments.

This is likely to benefit 36 lakh stranded migrants across the country, Railway Board Chairman V. K. Yadav said.

Noting that since May 1, 2,600 such trains had been run, carrying about 35 lakh passengers, Mr. Yadav said the Railways would continue to run such trains as long as they were needed.

As per data shared by the Railways, of the 2,600 trains run so far, a maximum of 1,246, or 48.5%, terminated in Uttar Pradesh, and 804, or 31.3%, terminated in Bihar.

Four crore migrants
As per the last Census figures, more than 4 crore people migrate for work in the country, Punya Salila Srivastava, Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Home Affairs, said during the briefing.

She said that in addition to those travelling on the Shramik Specials, more than 40 lakh migrants had travelled on inter-State buses.

Mr. Yadav said the Rail-



Uncertain future: Stranded students and migrant workers arriving at the Palace Ground in Bengaluru on Saturday to board a special train to their home State. ■ K. MURALI KUMAR

Workers left without food, water on stranded trains

SIDDHARTH YADAV BHOJPAL

Passengers in at least two Shramik Specials were forced to drink water from toilets as their trains remained stuck for hours at stations without basic facilities in Maharashtra.

In a domino effect, congestion at stations in Uttar Pradesh choked tracks further south, delaying several trains a day after the

Railways announced a doubling of their frequency.

"Even fetching toilet tap water became difficult after a point. People were fighting over it. Forget food, we wanted water. Sharir me paani nahi gaya tha, kamzoori aa rahi thi (With dehydration, we felt weak)," said Lav Kumar Sahni, 18, on a train bound for Ballia in U.P.

CHOKED TRACKS ▶ PAGE 8

International flights could take off by mid-June: Puri

Operations may resume if situation improves, says Minister

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said on Saturday that commercial international flight operations could start as early as the middle of June if the situation improves and the "virus behaves in a predictable manner".

He said the Centre was in touch with the State governments to solve the problems faced by passengers, who are also "taxpayers", in reaching airports and said "keeping the lockdown in continuation is not the answer".

He said India went into a lockdown straight and revealed that in one of the meetings, he had argued that "if the lockdown is going to come into effect on day X, I need two-day notice for the U.S." so that Air India planes could come back.

Ambitious goal

"As an optimist, I would say why wait till August or September; if situation eases or improves, if the virus behaves in a predictable manner, we get used to the idea to co-exist with the virus and make arrangements... Let us say we have an ambitious goal, why not start in middle of June, end-June or July?"



On guard: A CISF jawan checking the temperature of an airport employee in Hyderabad on Saturday. ■ NAGAR GOPAL

know you will say lockdown is till May 31...nothing is written in stone...we are starting the domestic flights from May 25, we are prepared," he said.

In a live chat on Facebook, Mr. Puri said pricing of tickets is a commercial matter between an airline and the consumer, and the government's role was limited to issuing advisories.

He said airlines have to carry on with "minimum economic viability" and as he keeps getting suggestions and complaints on the issue, he asked a Member of Parliament in a lighter vein whether the "airline operation should be handed over to the Delhi langar society".

Air India requires ₹600 crore cash infusion every month and India was cur-

rently running Vande Bharat flights to evacuate stranded passengers from 50 countries. He said if private airlines are used for the Vande Bharat mission, then the price of tickets would be capped.

In the wake of the pandemic, all domestic and international flights were suspended on March 23, a day before the first phase of the lockdown was imposed.

Mr. Puri said 33% of domestic flights would start operating from May 25 and a meeting was under way with the State governments to decide the quarantine process. Some States have insisted on mandatory 14-day institutional quarantine for all incoming passengers.

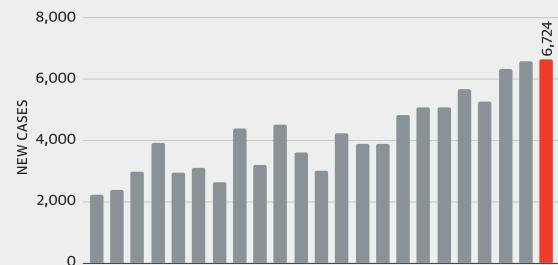
CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 6

Spike continues

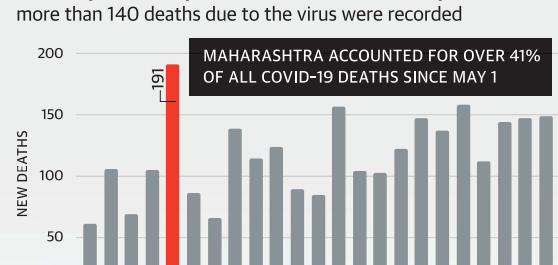
The highest single-day jump in COVID-19 cases – 6,724 – was recorded on Saturday, taking the confirmed cases to 1,31,310

ACTIVE CASES	DEATHS	RECOVERIES
73,068	3,868	54,374

■ NEW CASES | The chart depicts the number of new cases recorded since May 1. Saturday was the third consecutive day when more than 6,000 new COVID-19 cases were recorded



■ DEATHS | The chart depicts the number of deaths recorded since May 1. Saturday was the third consecutive day on which more than 140 deaths due to the virus were recorded



Cases are doubling in India every 13.1 days if figures for last week are considered. Only Brazil has a quicker doubling time of 11.54 days, with overall cases close to 3.31 lakh

DATA AS OF 10 P.M. ON SATURDAY



MORE REPORTS ON PAGE 8

'Thrashing' of lawyer: panel seeks report

STAFF REPORTER BHOPAL

The Madhya Pradesh Human Rights Commission has sought a report from the Betul Collector and the Superintendent of Police in two weeks on the reported thrashing of a lawyer by the police, who later told him that they mistook him for a Muslim because he sported a beard.

Commission Chairman Narendra Kumar Jain on Friday took cognisance of the incident on March 23, when Deepak Bunde, who is a diabetic, was on his way to hospital. Only prohibitory orders were in force then, ahead of the lockdown. After the incident, Mr. Bunde, who suffered bruises and was left with a bleeding ear, went to hospital, where he was treated and a medical report was prepared. The Betul police had on Wednesday told *The Hindu* that the thrashing never took place, and there were no witnesses.

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An SSB officer received Mr. Pathak, a security guard by profession, at the New Delhi railway station on Saturday and took him and his wife in a cab to Vishal. "I am happy meeting my son but saddened to see him extremely weak," the relieved father told *The Hindu*.

Vishal's saga became an Instagram story for Ms. Kumari, drawing the attention of an Azamgarh resident named Snehlata Singh, who got in touch and posted the story on Twitter tagging Arun Bothra, an Odisha-cadre IPS officer who in turn called his batchmate Sanjay Kumar, Inspector General of Sashastra Seema Bal's Bihar sector.

The SSB IG alerted his officers in Samastipur, who arranged to put Vishal's father Santosh Pathak and mother on a special train running from Bihar to Delhi on Friday.

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No child's play



Rough ride: A mother pushing her child's tricycle towards the U.P. border near Anand Vihar on Saturday afternoon. ■ R. V. MOORTHY

Capital reports 23 COVID-19 deaths, biggest jump in a day

City also records second-highest number of cases in 24 hours

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

Delhi on Saturday recorded the biggest jump in number of COVID-19 deaths in a day with 23 fatalities, taking the total to 231. All the deaths, however, did not happen over a span of 24 hours.

The Delhi government's health bulletin also reported 591 novel coronavirus infections in the Capital in the past 24 hours, taking the total number of cases to 12,910. This is the second-highest number of cases reported in a day in the city.

Of the 12,910 cases, 6,267 people have recovered and there are 6,412 active cases.

The first case of COVID-19 was reported in the city on March 2 and around May 8,



People walking to Patparganj Industrial Area on Saturday. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

it was reported that the number of deaths reported by the Delhi government is less than the fatality figures from hospitals.

According to the Delhi government, all hospitals send death reports to an audit committee appointed by

Gear up for more cases: Health Ministry

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

India must gear up for at least two more months of COVID-19, a summary of a meeting on Saturday involving top officials from the Health Ministry.

"Health care infrastructure needs to be ramped up for the next two months with focus on isolation beds with oxygen, ventilators and ICU beds," said a PIB press note.

About 70% of India's cases are emerging from 11 "municipal areas" in seven States: Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal and Rajasthan, the Ministry said in a statement.

DETAILS ON ▶ PAGE 8

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 6

Boy living in a park reunited with family

Vishal was thrown out by the landlord while his parents were away in Bihar



Vishal meeting his parents after two months in Dwarka. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

in May first week why he doesn't go home. "He told me he was thrown out of his house and has been staying at public places. His parents had gone to Bihar's Samastipur a few days before lockdown and got stuck there," she said. A potter's family living near the park was providing him meals for chores in return, she told her.

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A woman named Yogita Kumari (25), who lives in Dwarka Sector 1, was feeding dogs in a park in Sector 7

CM YK

A ND NE

Timings

DELHI

SUNDAY, MAY. 24
RISE 05:27 SET 19:11
RISE 06:32 SET 20:45
MONDAY, MAY. 25
RISE 05:26 SET 19:11
RISE 07:21 SET 21:42
TUESDAY, MAY. 26
RISE 05:26 SET 19:12
RISE 08:14 SET 22:36

Delhi Weather

	max	min
Delhi City	45	26
Safdarjung	45	26
Palam	46	28

Delhi Pali Today
46°C Heat wave to continue A sunny sky is expected. Morning will be comfortable. Night will be slight warm.Delhi Pali Tomorrow
47°C Heat wave with moderate warm and dusty winds to prevail during the day. Night will be slight warm.© Copyright Skymet Weather 2019
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Air Quality of Delhi-NCR		
Delhi	181	Gurugram 132
Ghaziabad	247	Faridabad 278
Noida	196	Greater Noida 232
■ Good	■ Satisfactory	■ Moderate
■ Poor	■ Very Poor	■ Severe
201-300	301-400	>400
Air Quality Index at 4 p.m. yesterday (Average of past 24 hours) Source: CPCB		

Two women activists held over riots

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Two women with Pinjra Tod, women's rights collective, have been arrested in connection with north-east riots, the police said on Saturday.

A senior police officer said that the women have been identified as Natasha and Divyangan. "The women were protesting at Jafarbad metro station and incited violence. They were also a part of several sit-in protests," the officer said.

The Delhi Police have made over 1,300 arrests in connection with north-east riots so far.

As community rebuilds itself, wounds turn into scars

Residents of north-east Delhi are slowly repairing their lives and property that were destroyed during riots that broke out three months ago

JATIN ANAND
NEW DELHI

Three months after violence ripped through north-east Delhi, residents of the area are managing to survive thanks to the charity of outsiders and sustained efforts of the locals.

Riots had engulfed Shiv Vihar, Chand Bagh, Bhajanpura, Jafarbad, Mustafabad and Karawal Nagar on February 23 and lasted for over 48 hours. The communal clashes claimed over 50 lives and injured hundreds more in some of the most brutal acts of violence ever witnessed in the city.

The burial has given the family some closure.

For others, however, the wait continues.

Karawal Nagar resident Maltub Alam said he has still not received the mortal remains of his younger brother Shahbaz. "I have been told that I will get the remains after the lockdown ends," he said. Both Mr. Kassar and Mr. Alam's remains were fished out of drains in the area.

On May 22, as locals observed the day of Jamat-Ul-Vida – when the holy month of Ramzan is bid farewell, para-military personnel marched silently down the main road adjacent to Brijpuri and Old Mustafabad.

Vegetable, sweets and fruit vendors are back on the streets but complained that business has not returned to the levels seen before the riots. The lockdown has

made the situation worse.



Joint effort: Locals prepare packets of chicken biryani to distribute to the needy in north-east Delhi's Chaman Park. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

Shops selling dry fruits and groceries operated with their shutters half-drawn and there were hardly any customers.

Praying at home

The palpable silence in the area was broken by a call to prayers from neighbourhood Mosques, some that still bear scars from the clashes.

"We have been offering prayers at home and will do the same on Id too. Clerics across the world, not just in

India, have asked that Muslims do so," said Mohammad Qasim, a resident of Shiv Vihar, preparing to offer prayers after a call to Azaan from Madeena Masjid, which was almost destroyed during the riots.

"I used to drive for a living but my car was burned during the violence. I will see what job I can get after the lockdown ends," he said.

Restrictions may have been eased but work is still hard to come by. "We pray at home like the law says. Most

of us try to stay at home as much as possible. It is not like there is any work anyway. Things are peaceful now, but it is not like we have forgotten what happened or even will," said Mohammad Sabahuddin, a welder at Shiv Vihar.

"The restrictions and lack of labour has affected all businesses. If there had been no lockdown then mosques like Madeena Masjid would have been renovated by now," he added.

Down the road towards

Work in progress



PWD workers pave a footpath in New Delhi on a hot and humid Saturday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

Fight against pollution in city takes a hit

Multiple govt. projects have suffered delays or missed deadlines due to lockdown

NIKHIL M BABU
NEW DELHI

The quality of water of Yamuna, along the Delhi stretch, has improved during the nationwide lockdown and so has the air quality. However, multiple projects by the Delhi government to control and detect air, water, and noise pollution in the city have been delayed and many have missed deadlines, according to officials.

The projects that have been either delayed or missed the deadlines are construction of a smog tower in the city to reduce air pollution, installation of 26 noise monitoring stations, and multiple works by the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) to treat sewer flowing into the Yamuna.

Smog tower

To control air pollution, the Supreme Court on January 13 had ordered the Delhi government to build a 'smog tower' by April 13. But construction work is yet to start, according to officials.

"A piece of land for the construction of the smog tower has been identified and now an MoU will be signed with IIT Bombay for the construction. It will take about nine months after signing the document to complete the project," a Delhi government official said.

Lockdown due to CO



Currently, 35% of the sewage generated in the city is not being treated and a large part of it ends up in the Yamuna.

■ FILE PHOTO: V.V. KRISHNAN

VID-19 has affected the progress of the work, officials said. Multiple projects being done by the DJB to reduce pollution in the Yamuna have been affected too.

The Interceptor Sewer Project (ISP), which has been in the pipeline since 2006 and delayed multiple times, has missed yet another deadline of March 31, 2020.

Sewage treatment

Currently, 35% of the sewage generated in the city is not being treated and a large part of it ends up in the Yamuna. About 748 MGD (million gallons per day) of sewage is generated in the city every day and only 490 MGD is treated, according to officials.

The DJB is likely to send revised deadlines to the monitoring committee, according to officials. But there is no clarity on these deadlines at the moment. When contacted, DJB CEO Nikhil

Kumar did not offer a comment.

To monitor noise pollution, the NGT had ordered the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) to set up "sufficient" noise monitoring stations by January 31, 2020.

Following this, the Delhi government invited tender for setting up a Real Time Ambient Noise Monitoring Station Network (NMS), that will have 26 noise monitoring stations. But the installation work is yet to start, officials said.

Twenty-six noise monitors from France are stuck at the Mumbai airport for more than a month due to the lockdown, according to officials.

Currently, noise levels exceed accepted levels in many areas in the city, officials said.

Govt. road map

"These are extraordinary times and there are chances of works getting delayed. But as we limp back to a new reality, the government should review their plans and come up with a clear road map. If you want to prevent the smog in the winters, this is the time to work and accelerate," said Anumita Roychowdhury, head of the 'Clean Air' programme at the Centre for Science and Environment, Delhi.

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As community rebuilds itself, wounds turn into scars

the Shiv Vihar tiraha (intersection) the Auliya Masjid, which was set ablaze, now has an iron gate.

A group of local social workers said Korans will be distributed at the site on Id.

"There is one Muezzin who stays at the mosque and gives the call to prayers and that is it. Some had tried to go to the mosques but we persuaded them not to," said Sultan Mirza, a resident of Old Mustafabad and a local social worker.

"The market remains shut and only a few shops open after 4 p.m.; 90% of the residents are not in favour of opening the shops. We have been distributing dry ration to families - both Hindu and Muslim - who were affected by the riots," he added.

Food for the needy

On a bylane in Mustafabad, Mohammad Abbas, a local restaurateur, was busy supervising the preparation of chicken korma when his attention was required by one of his employees pounding green chillies. "Only some of this food is for sale," he said, after attending to the employee.

"We distribute 500 packets every day. Sometimes we serve chicken biryani and korma, and on other days its poori-subzi. This is for everyone, there is no religious divide. Only someone who is destitute will get in line after all. We give tokens and then distribute the food. The only requirement is a separate line for men and women," he added.

The people who came here to unleash the violence

three months ago did what they could to the area and left. But we stay here. It is our job to get it back up on its feet," he said.

A few minutes later, a serpentine queue formed at a street corner in Chaman Park. All eyes were on a small non-descript house located between two temples.

Inside, the family members and staff of a scrap dealer are hurriedly packing chicken biryani and korma in disposable packets. They have been distributing packed food to the needy for the past two months, especially during Ramzan.

"We have been doing this for the last two months. We have a committee of 25 people and we pool the money for these arrangements. Ours is probably the only community kitchen where roti is being provided to the destitute," said Rahees Malik, a scrap dealer and president of the Chaman Park RWA.

"We distribute 500 packets every day. Sometimes we serve chicken biryani and korma, and on other days its poori-subzi. This is for everyone, there is no religious divide. Only someone who is destitute will get in line after all. We give tokens and then distribute the food. The only requirement is a separate line for men and women," he added.

Students and teachers have highlighted issues like poor Internet access and lack of study material. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT dents, especially those who are visually impaired, to ask them about their Internet accessibility. In a separate letter to HoDs, the Dean of Examinations also wrote that mechanisms to address technological constraints would be developed. However, this has not been elaborated on so far. Messages, calls and questionnaires sent to the Dean of Examinations and the University Registrar went unanswered.

Trishita Shandilya, a final-year MA sociology student at DSE, residing in Guwahati, said that while Internet connectivity was not an issue for her. However, given the "flood season" was starting there, electricity cuts were frequent and posed a major issue.

Lack of consultations Scores of surveys undertaken by student organisations have all returned an overwhelmingly negative response to the conduct of these examinations. Students have highlighted issues of poor Internet access, technological concerns, mental anxiety and household chores.

The sociology department and Delhi University Students' Union (DUSU) have proposed alternative modes of evaluation to help award degrees to students. Some of these involve not considering the final-semester marks in the overall marks, or taking an average of previous semesters marks along with a component assigned to internal assessments among other solutions.

Within the number of petitions, statements and letters from different quarters and social media campaigns pile up, many groups have pointed to the lack of time given for consultations to begin with. On May 6, the university constituted a 15-member 'Working Group' to look into these matters and review the preparedness to conduct examinations.

Within a week of forming this committee, the university issued a notification announcing that it would be conducting online exams for students in the final semester across institutions in the university. Only two days were given for inviting suggestions on these questions on May 11, after which the notification were issued on May 14.

A mockery of DU examinations'

Teachers, students oppose university's decision to hold at-home open book exams

SIDHARTH RAVI
NEW DELHI

Delhi University's recent decision to hold open book examinations at home for the final semester – in view of the lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic – has invited widespread opposition from students and teachers as well as individual departments.

Stakeholders have argued that the move, pushed through without consultations, would at best be a mockery of examinations and at worst exclusionary, and a blow to students who were already disadvantaged.

Several stakeholders also raised questions about the university's

23 cases reported from govt. night shelter in city

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

As many as 23 people from a Delhi government-run night shelter on AIIMS premises have tested positive for COVID-19, authorities said.

"The night shelter has been sanitised and about 50 people who came in contact with them are quarantined at the night shelter," an official said. The official said people used common bathrooms and this could have led to the spread of the disease.

The night shelter is run by the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB). A DUSIB official said that the caretaker of the night shelter has also tested positive. "Most of the people are from outside Delhi and have come for treatment at AIIMS," the official said.

"On Monday, two people from the shelter first tested positive after they went to another hospital in Karol Bagh for treatment. More people were tested and 21 of them tested positive on Thursday," the official said.



Cemetery staff bury the teen on Saturday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

ASI helps bury teenager's body

The girl was rescued by the policeman after receiving a call around a month ago

HEMANI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI

On April 26, Assistant Sub Inspector Hemraj Singh, posted in Dayalpur police station, was assigned a call about a girl that was spotted wandering the streets of Brijwari in north-east Delhi.

He was able to get the teenager medically tested and she was then sent to a shelter. Two days later, the medical report confirmed that the girl was COVID-19 positive. On May 21, the ASI was informed that the girl had died.

On Friday, Mr. Singh, who had spent the last month trying to trace the girl's family, helped bury the teenager at a cemetery on Bahadurshah Zafar Marg. She has become the first unclaimed body to be buried at the cemetery.

The officer took her mortal remains from the Lok Nayak Hospital mortuary to the cemetery in an ambulance. The resources for a proper burial were pooled by Mr. Singh and the staff at the cemetery.

Recalling how and why he took it upon himself to perform the last rites, he said that the PCR call on April 26 had stated: "Ek mahila logon ke darwazain khathkata ra-

back positive. "The shelter home staff first sent her to a facility in Najafgarh and when her condition worsened, they sent her to LNJP Hospital on May 4... On May 21, I received a call that she had passed away," he said.

Looking for family
While she was in hospital, Mr. Singh had prepared a missing report, put her information on the central system, and alerted Aligarh control room for any information on her family. But nothing came of his efforts.

"Sabse dukh ki baat yahi hai ki uske ghar wale nahin mil paaye (The saddest part is that her family could not be found)," the officer said.

Two days later, Mr. Singh was informed that her COVID-19 test report had come

On Friday, Mr. Singh collected the body and brought

The shelter home staff first sent the girl to a facility in Najafgarh. When her condition worsened, they sent her to Lok Nayak Hospital on May 4... On May 21, I received a call that the teenager had passed away

HEMRAJ SINGH
Assistant Sub Inspector

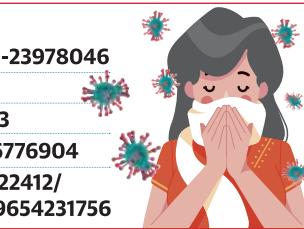
her to the cemetery where he had already spoken with third-generation grave diger Mohammed Shamim and another staff Waseem.

"It's the first time an unclaimed body has been brought to the Kabristan," Mr. Shamim.

The cemetery staff said that when the driver of the excavator tractor was informed about the body being unclaimed, he also refused to take any money.

"The policeman gave a little money from his own pocket," he added.

Mr. Singh said that he took the responsibility of burying the girl as he "felt responsible as he was the investigating officer in the case" and also because "no one else was taking responsibility".



Maruti Suzuki employee tests positive

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GURUGRAM

An employee of Maruti Suzuki's Manesar plant here has tested positive for COVID-19. There is a possibility of a second case, details of which are being sought, said a statement issued by the company.

As per the statement, the last attendance of the employee, who has tested positive for the deadly virus, was registered on May 15 at the plant with normal health after which the area where he lives was declared a containment zone. He did not join work thereafter.

The company has informed the district administration. The employee has been admitted to a hospital and is stable. The company is providing all medical help and assistance to him as per government guidelines.

"The company has undertaken a contact tracing exercise... all employees who could have come in contact have been advised to stay in home isolation. There is no impact on the business operations of the company," a statement said.

13 new containment zones in just one week

There are 86 such zones now in the city

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

After the Health and Family Welfare Department of the Delhi government raised the issue of decreasing number of containment zones even though COVID-19 cases were increasing in the city, the number of such zones has increased from 73 on May 18 to 86 on Saturday, according to the health bulletin released by the Delhi government.

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

The Federation of Resident Doctors' Association India, which is spearheading the protest, said that candlelight demonstrations were also held at various hospitals to highlight the issue.

BJP hits out at Kejriwal over Sikkim advertisement

Lieutenant-Governor suspends senior officer from Directorate of Civil Defence HQ

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The BJP on Saturday attacked Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal over an advertisement by the Delhi government that shows Sikkim as a separate country.

Delhi BJP chief Manoj Tiwari accused Mr. Kejriwal of "speaking the language of China" through the advertisement published in newspaper.

ers for recruitment in the Civil Defense Corps by the Delhi government.

Later on Saturday, a senior officer from the Directorate of Civil Defence HQ was suspended with immediate effect by L-G Anil Baijal in response to the issue.

Mr. Baijal took to Twitter to announce that action had been taken against a senior officer for the advertisement,

while Mr. Kejriwal said it had been withdrawn.

"The Chief Minister is speaking the language of China. Kejriwal is losing his mental balance... Occupying a constitutional post, he is saying Sikkim is a different country. Does the Delhi government not remember that Sikkim is also an integral State of India? How can he be so ignorant?" Mr. Tiwari said.

Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Legislative Assembly, Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, in a letter, demanded a reply from Mr. Kejriwal on the issue. "I was saddened to see the advertisement... It is a known fact that Sikkim is an integral part of our country. The Chief Minister should answer how such an objectionable advertisement was issued by his government," he said.

Fire in COVID-19 hospital, 8 rescued

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A fire broke out on the third floor of a private hospital designated for COVID-19 patients, in south Delhi on Saturday evening, fire officials said. They also said that eight patients were rescued.

A senior Delhi Fire Service (DFS) official said that all office premises, residence and commercial places must get electronics like air conditioners serviced before switching them on, to prevent fire accidents.

consists of basement, ground and three upper floors.

The official said that the information regarding the blaze was received at 5.54 p.m. and it was brought under control within two hours, while the cooling-off operation continued. The cause of fire is suspected to be a short circuit, they said.

"A total of eight fire tenders were rushed to the hospital, opposite IIT, that patients were also admitted. This is a reserve hospital for COVID-19 patients. They were successfully rescued," he said adding that the eight patients included five men and three women.

Sharing an advisory, DFS Director Atul Garg said that all office premises, residence and commercial places must get electronics like air conditioners serviced before switching them on, to prevent fire accidents.

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THE HINDU
India's National Newspaper

+ FIR against Daati Maharaj for flouting lockdown norms

He violated social distancing norms while performing ceremony at a temple

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi police, on Saturday, registered a case against self-styled godman Daati Maharaj and his accomplices for allegedly violating social distancing norms during a ceremony at a temple in Delhi's Maidan Garhi area.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (South) Atul Kumar Thakur said that the police found out that some photographs of a ceremony at Shani Mandir in Asola have been circulated on social media wherein social distancing norms were not followed and a religious congregation was

organised in contravention of the lockdown guidelines.

"During preliminary enquiry, it was revealed that around 7.30 p.m. on Friday, chief priest of Shani Mandir, Daati Maharaj, along

Garhi police station on Saturday.

In 2018, a woman lodged a complaint at Fatehpur Beri police station, alleging rape and unnatural sex against the god-man, who is the founder of Delhi-based Shree Shanidham Trust.

The police said that as Daati Maharaj and those visible in the photographs with him violated government guidelines on lockdown, prima facie, they have been found to have committed an offence and a case under Section 188 and 34 of the Indian Penal Code, 54 B of the DDMA and Section 3 of the Epidemic Diseases Act has been registered at Maidan

The police had on June 22 questioned the accused, who was charged with raping a disciple at his ashrams in Delhi and Rajasthan. He was later charge-sheeted.

Man held for duping IAF officer on e-commerce site

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

An IAF officer has been duped of ₹75,000 by a 24-year-old who posed as a CISF constable and promised to buy an old furniture from him on an e-commerce website, the police said on Saturday.

The accused, Ajruddin, a resident of Mewat district of Haryana, has been arrested.

The IAF officer told the

police that the accused said he was unable to make the payment or collect the furniture in person. "The officer sent his sister-in-law's number to the accused. The accused sent a UPI link for payment, but instead of money being credited, it was debited from her account on multiple occasions," Anyesh Roy, DCP (Cyber), said. Ajruddin and his accomplices were nabbed from Mewat earlier this week.

NGT seeks report over plea on 'illegal' factories

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has sought a report from the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) over a plea alleging illegal operation of dyeing factories in Bawana, Narela and Mayapuri, among other areas.

Terming a May 20 report furnished by the DPCC as "deficient", a Bench headed by NGT chief, Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel, sought an ac-

tion-taken report from the pollution control body. "We find that even the revised report is deficient in that, while it gives the conclusion about the status of compliance, the data on which such conclusion is based is not available. It is thus not possible to check up the correctness of the conclusion mentioned in the report. It is desirable that such data is also furnished," the Bench said.

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ARREST

Quarantine must for those coming to Punjab: CM

State govt. talking to nations looking to shift their manufacturing base from China, says Amarinder

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHANDIGARH

The Punjab government on Saturday announced compulsory home quarantine for 14 days for all those coming to the State, including on domestic flights, trains and buses.

"Screening of those entering the State would be done at all entry points, as well as railway stations and airports, and those found symptomatic would be sent into institutional quarantine, while the others would have to undergo mandatory 2-week home quarantine," said Chief Minister Amarinder Singh.

The Chief Minister, during a Facebook live programme, said, "there is likelihood of



Workers resting under a flyover in Jalandhar on Saturday while waiting for a train to reach their native places. ■ PTI

infection coming here from Punjabis returning from other countries and States, but the State is taking no chances and has made elaborate arrangements for their testing and quarantine. Five flights have come today, and a total of 20,000 people are

expected to come from other countries on 88 flights, while 60,000 are expected from other States."

Capt. Amarinder thanked the labourers who had stayed back to contribute to the State's economic strength. Of those migrants

who had applied for online registration, nearly half had started working in the industry, he said. He added that of the total 2.56 lakh industrial units in the State, 1.5 lakh have resumed operations.

He said the State government is reaching out to embassies of various nations looking to shift their manufacturing business out of China. "The State is in talks with various embassies and offering them support in terms of land, infrastructure and other facilities. With an eye on the post-COVID revival of the State's economy, the government has written to embassies of various countries in this regard and is engaged in talks with Japan, Korean and

Taiwanese embassies," he said.

16 new cases

Punjab recorded 16 fresh COVID-19 cases on Saturday, taking the tally to 2,045, according to a statement. The Health department said the major chunk of new cases, four and three, were reported from Amritsar and Patiala districts. The active cases are 136 and 1,870 patients have so far recovered, it added.

In Chandigarh, six fresh cases surfaced, taking the tally to 225. A statement from Chandigarh office of Unique Identification Authority of India said its operations have been resumed at its Aadhaar Seva Kendra.

More area under cotton crop this season

Punjab, Haryana govts. have discouraged farmers from growing rice, say officials

VIKAS VASUDEVA

CHANDIGARH

Farmers in Punjab and Haryana have sown more cotton this kharif season as against the corresponding period last year on account of a possible labour shortage in future. Both governments have discouraged farmers from growing rice, officials told *The Hindu*.

Agriculture Department Director Sutantar Airi said,

"Cotton has already been sown in nearly 3.6 lakh hectare, which is around 10,000 hectare more than the corresponding period of last year."

In Haryana, farmers had sown cotton in 5.11 lakh hectares till May 19. Last year, the area under cotton cultivation up to the same period was 4.2 lakh hectares, according to the government data.

"Cotton is a less labour intensive crop than paddy (rice). Farmers are currently sowing cotton as they are apprehensive about the return of the migrant labour by June-July," said Rakesh Rath, former president of India Cotton Association Limited.

In Punjab and Haryana, Bt cotton is sown in over 95% of the total area under cotton cultivation, the remaining 5% usually has indigenous (desi) cotton varieties.

Farmers are preferring cotton wherever its feasible... the area under cotton cultivation will increase this season," said Gun Parkash, Bharatiya Kisan Union's Haryana unit president

Haryana Agriculture Department Joint Director Jagraj Dandi said, "The government is discouraging sowing of water-guzzling rice and going for diversification. Labour shortage is another reason."

Heatwave conditions prevail in Odisha

Titlagarh is hottest at 45.5°C; yellow warning issued

STAFF REPORTER

BHUBANESWAR

The Bhubaneswar Meteorological Centre on Saturday issued yellow warning for heatwave conditions advising people in the interior pockets to avoid heat exposure.

As many as 13 observation stations, mostly in western Odisha, recorded temperature above 41 degrees Celsius on Saturday.

The maximum daytime

temperature at Titlagarh, the hottest place in the State, was 45.5 degrees C. Bhawaniapatna with 44.2, Talcher (43.8) and Balangir (43.5) closely followed.

"Weather has been dry over Odisha. Maximum temperatures have risen over interior Odisha while no large change is observed over coastal Odisha," said the BMC.

Similar, heatwave condition is likely to prevail over

some parts of the districts of Bolangir, Kalahandi, Subarnapur, Boudh and Angul, warned the Met department.

The heatwave warning has been issued till next Wednesday.

People with moderate health concerns or vulnerable groups such as infants, elderly and those with chronic disease should avoid heat, the BMC warned.

First COVID-19 case in Sikkim

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

GANGTOK

Sikkim reported its first COVID-19 case on Saturday as a 25-year-old student who recently returned from Delhi tested positive, a senior official said. The student's sample was sent to the North Bengal Medical College and Hospital in Siliguri and the report came back positive, the Health Department Director General-cum-Secretary said.

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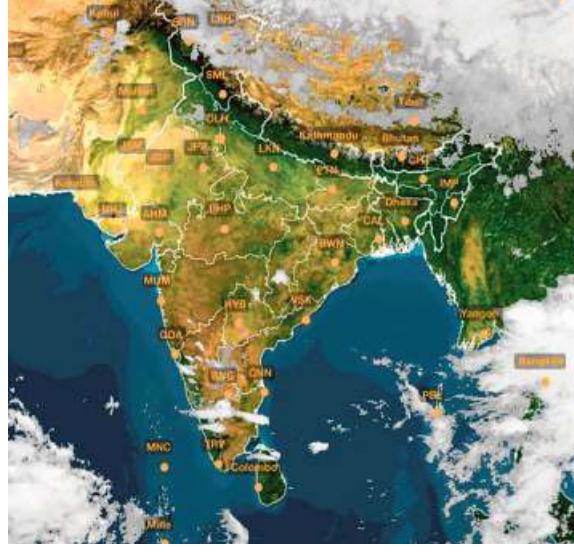
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WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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

Forecast for Sunday: Thunderstorms accompanied by lightning likely at isolated places over Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Gilgit-Baltistan and Muzaffarabad; heavy to extremely heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Assam and Meghalaya

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	... -36.2	27.2	27.2	Zohikode	... -34.8	27.8	27.8
Ahmedabad	-43.2	27.6	27.6	Kurnool	-44.5	29.9	29.9
Aizawl	21.6	26.6	17.2	Lucknow	-39.5	27.2	27.2
Allahabad	-43.4	27.6	27.6	Madurai	0.6	41.2	27.2
Bengaluru	-35.6	22.9	22.9	Mangaluru	-35.1	27.0	27.0
Bhopal	-43.8	28.7	28.7	Mumbai	-36.6	26.5	26.5
Bhubaneswar	-35.4	26.9	26.9	Mysuru	-35.0	22.0	22.0
Chandigarh	-42.1	23.5	23.5	New Delhi	-44.7	26.2	26.2
Chennai	-38.8	29.4	29.4	Patna	-33.0	25.6	25.6
Coimbatore	-35.7	26.0	26.0	Poorn Blair	-... -27.2	27.2	27.2
Dehradun	-38.7	21.5	21.5	Puducherry	-36.0	28.8	28.8
Gangtok	4.3	18.5	16.0	Pune	-41.0	22.5	22.5
Goa	-34.9	27.3	27.3	Raipur	-44.2	22.8	22.8
Guwahati	38.5	27.0	22.0	Ranchi	-39.9	24.4	24.4
Hubballi	-37.0	23.0	23.0	Shillong	12.1	24.6	24.6
Hyderabad	-42.8	26.5	26.5	Shimla	-33.0	23.4	23.4
Impal	23.9	30.9	20.4	Srinagar	-28.4	10.6	10.6
Jaipur	-43.6	32.2	32.2	Thiruvananthapuram	3.6	32.9	26.8
Kochi	1.6	33.2	27.0	Tiruchi	-40.0	29.1	29.1
Kohima	1.6	25.8	17.0	Vijayawada	-42.0	29.4	29.4
Kolkata	1.2	27.6	27.6	Visakhapatnam	-35.0	30.0	30.0

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

Yesterday

In

CITIES	SO ₂	NO _x	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	... -29	22	... 49	... 82	... 22	GREEN
Bengaluru	... 6	34	... 88	... 76	... 22	GREEN
Chennai	... 3	24	... 46	... 77	... 22	GREEN
Delhi	28	69	... 61	... 225	... 261	RED
Hyderabad	... 5	73	... 32	... 137	... 22	ORANGE
Kolkata	... 3	10	... 2	... 68	... 22	ORANGE
Lucknow	... 4	20	... 55	... 195	... 22	ORANGE
Mumbai	25	13	... 12	... 21	... 72	GREEN
Pune	28	10	... 57	... 35	... 34	GREEN
Visakhapatnam	10.8	26	... 76	... 76	... 22	GREEN

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

Accept modifications in daily life, office routine: Supriya Sule

'Coronavirus is not going away soon; we cannot sit at home for ever'

ALOK DESHPANDE
MUMBAI

People must be prepared to live with novel coronavirus at least for the next two years and have to start making adequate changes to their behaviour, Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) MP Supriya Sule said on Saturday and hinted that the State government might consider opening up more activities from June 1.

The government, she added, might consider including agriculture-related works in the employment guarantee scheme to ensure that monetary benefits reach the rural areas ahead of the kharif season.

"The disease is not going away in an instant. We have to learn of ways to live with it for at least the next two years. We have to start thinking about adjustments, modifications and changes in our work, routine, and offices from now itself. We



A new normal: Supriya Sule, Nationalist Congress Party leader and MP from Baramati, bats for extensive campaigns on precautions against novel coronavirus. ■ FILE PHOTO

cannot sit at home for ever. The roadblocks in the economy will force us to go hungry, if that happens," said Ms. Sule, in an online interaction with a group of select reporters on Saturday.

Businesses will have to modify their operations with innovative ideas such as reducing staff presence by introducing three shifts, changing office timings or

should be congratulated. Someone in the country had to take this decision and move forward," she said.

When asked about Maharashtra, the MP from Baramati said she has taken the decision to restart economic activities in Pune district. "There could be similar changes in rest of the State after May 31," she said.

"I too have to lead by example, by being present for my work at my office. The government will have to run campaigns informing people about precautions to be taken, changes to be made in real life and precautions to be taken," she said.

Referring to the steps taken by Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in opening up activities in Delhi, Ms. Sule said, "There are two views about it. One group is praising it while the other is terming it as a disaster waiting to happen. But he has taken a risk for which he



Extending help: Maharashtra government has struggled to pay the outstanding loan of farmers as the economy has taken a hit due to the nationwide lockdown. ■ FILE PHOTO

State to guarantee farm loans for those yet to get waiver

Move will benefit over 11 lakh farmers

ALOK DESHPANDE
MUMBAI

In a first, the Maharashtra government will be the guarantor for farmers who could not benefit from the Mahatma Jyotirao Phule crop loan waiver scheme due to the outbreak of the novel coronavirus pandemic.

This will help farmers avail crop loans for the upcoming kharif season.

The move is expected to benefit over 11 lakh farmers across the State. A Government Resolution to give effect to this loan guarantee was issued on Friday, and conveyed to district central co-operative banks, commercial and rural banks.

According to official data, around 19 lakh farmers in the State had benefited from the government scheme by March 31, with loans worth ₹12,000 crore being waived.

"The government cannot immediately pay off the loans for these farmers. The crop loan waiver scheme was meant to make farmers' account nil and prepare them to take new loans. Therefore, the State government has taken this decision," said a Cooperation department official.

The government has given clear directions to banks to mention pending loan as "to be paid by the government" and to not consider the farmers as defaulters. "We have given instructions to make loans available for them for the kharif 2020 season," said the official.

Shortly after assuming office in December last year, the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government had announced the Mahatma Jyotirao Phule crop loan waiver scheme which was to benefit 32 lakh farmers.

As the economy took a hard hit due to the nationwide lockdown, the State struggled to pay the outstanding loan amount of ₹8,100 crore to the remaining 11.12 lakh farmers.

Why seek dignified treatment of violators: HC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NAGPUR

The Nagpur Bench of Bombay High Court disposed of a petition raising concerns over enforcement of the lockdown by the police in Maharashtra noting that even educated citizens are not following the required norms.

The petition was filed by a Nagpur resident Sandip Nair raising concerns over the 'humiliating' manner in which the police are punishing violators.

The petitioner also argued that making a humiliating spectacle of the lockdown

violators is a serious infringement of human rights and fundamental rights.

A Division Bench of Justice Ravi Deshpande and Justice Amit Borkar noted that the police has made repeat requests, in a dignified manner, with folded hands, even offering roses at times, to avoid registration of offences and imposition of penalties so that people follow lockdown restrictions.

"In spite of this, if well-educated people claiming to

be respected and dignified citizens start, and continue to, violate norms meant for their own safety and security, then should this court take cognisance or entertain a petition complaining that people are not being treated in a dignified manner?" the Bench asked.

The HC also took note of the affidavit filed by Nagpur police commissioner assuring that all personnel have been instructed to avoid imposing such punishments.

J.B. Pardiwala and I.J. Vora that there were around 22.5 lakh migrant workers in Gujarat as per the labour department's data.

Under Sections 14 and 15, contractors are required to pay travel and displacement allowances to workers.

The court was hearing a PIL filed by Anand Yagnik alongwith a suo motu petition (a petition initiated by the HC on its own) and other

pleas seeking a direction to the government to provide free transport facility to migrant workers stranded due to coronavirus lockdown.

Of the 22.5 lakh migrant workers, 11.5 lakh are employed in and around Surat alone, the government said.

By May 31, only 1.5 lakh migrant labourers would be left behind in Surat, of whom 1.15 lakh had already returned to work, it said.

The court was hearing a PIL filed by Anand Yagnik alongwith a suo motu petition (a petition initiated by the HC on its own) and other

have died of COVID-19, the company said on Saturday.

The deceased were part of the company's production and packaging departments,

a spokesperson said.

Earlier this month, at least 26 employees of the pharmaceutical firm's manufacturing unit in Dholka had tested positive for the deadly virus. "The company is saddened by the loss of three of its employees due to COVID-19," the spokesperson said.

REDACTED

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR, OFFICE OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER JAKLARMA (FINANCIAL COMMISSIONER (REVENUE) JK)

J&K Rail Head Complex Jammu, 190001 (Nov-April) / Amar Niwas, Tankipora Srinagar, 190001 (May-Oct)

Phone No. (Srinagar) 0194-2459372 - Fax: 0194-2473838 (Jammu) : 0191-2470212 Fax: 0191-2471221

E-mail Address : jaklarma.rv@gmail.com

Subject:- Request for Proposal (RFP) for Modernization of Land Records in the

Government Territory of Jammu & Kashmir under DLIRMP

Corrigendum-6 Abbreviated e-tender (REF NO. 01/CEO/Jaklarma/2020)

In light of lockdown amid covid-19 Pandemic and requests received from prospective bidders

for the last date of submission of complete proposal together with evaluation of pre-qualification and technical and financial bids have been further extended and the dates fixed are

given as under

S.No Key Activities Extended Date / Time / Venue

1 Proposal Due Date for Submission 31.05.2020 (16:00 IST) (Sunday) the bidders

will submit scanned copy of EMD with the EFP

Rs. 40.00 Lakh (Rupees Forty lakh only in the

amount) as a Demand Draft or in the form of

Nationalized / Scheduled Bank in India in favour of

FROM PAGE ONE

Railways to run 2,600 Shramik Specials

"We have a train operation protocol... we are monitoring 24x7 and taking decisions on every train," Mr. Yadav explained. "We diverted some trains... if we run trains on the same route, no train will be able to reach; it is better to run trains on routes which have less traffic. This procedure is followed even in normal times," he added.

Asked about the impact on Railways revenues, Mr. Yadav said while freight loading was at 70% compared to the same time last year, passenger revenues had been zero for the past two months. "We are trying to restore passenger services and return to normalcy... For the 200 trains that are to run June 1 onwards, till now 17 lakh passengers have booked tickets."

International flights could take off by mid-June: Puri

On being asked on the need for testing everyone for COVID-19 before they are allowed to fly, Mr. Puri said it was not a practical solution.

"If you have an Aarogya Setu app and you are clear, do you want another test? India is conducting around 1 lakh per day...if you do not have any symptoms or did not come in contact with a COVID-19 positive person then what is the use of test? The test result will come in 7 hours...you take the test and wait for the result and then wait for another two hours before the boarding?" asked Mr. Puri. He said the Aarogya Setu app was preferable but airlines have not made it mandatory.

"If you check several boxes, can give a self declaration...Why will the State want to quarantine you after these facts. It is a new situation, States will get used to it. Within next day or two we will have clarity," the Minister said.

He said food will not be allowed on domestic flights.

"All domestic sectors are

Tension along LAC continues with China

This is a big concern at this point, as these run close to the 255 km Darbuk-Shyok-Daulat Beg Oldi (DSBDO) road, a vital link for the military.

According to the sources, at each of these points, the PLA has stationed troops, dug in tents and even bunkers. The situation has been escalating since initial incursions in mid-April, after Indian and Chinese soldiers exchanged blows and inflicted injuries.

Another worry, said an officer previously posted in the area, is the fact that skirmishes took place at so many points, indicating a more coordinated push by the PLA.

"Normally stand-offs happen in a local area, but are

resolved at the local level," a former Northern Army Commander, (who also asked not to be named), told *The Hindu*, adding that the current situation, which indicates planning at a "higher level in China" must be resolved at the diplomatic and political level.

The Ministry of External Affairs declined to comment on reports of the Chinese incursions.

"Established mechanisms are used to resolve such situations," the MEA spokesperson said, when asked if national Security Advisor (NSA) Ajit Doval, or External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar had been in contact with Chinese Foreign Minister and State Councilor Wang Yi.

'Thrashing' of lawyer: panel seeks report

Further, they have denied Mr. Bunde a certified copy of the footage from the scene of the incident under the Right to Information Act, 2005, claiming he did not mention the purpose in his query, which was rejected under Section 8 of the Act, which provides for exceptions to disclosures.

This runs contrary to a policeman's remarks to *The Hindu*, who visited Mr. Bunde on May 17 to record a statement, "He looks like a Muslim. It was a confussion... He had a long beard. Sometimes, such incidents happen."

"I made it clear that so-

metimes the police make mistakes, and for that we apologise. But he didn't listen. And he went ahead with the statement."

Further, the lawyer had reportedly recorded the conversation with policemen on the day.

"The police, whenever there are Hindu-Muslim riots, always side with the Hindus, even Muslims know about this. But this incident happened; it was a mistake. We are left with no words," one of the policemen is heard saying in the recording, now public and based on which the police suspended one of them.

"I made it clear that so-

8 fatalities and a rise in Kerala cases mark course of COVID-19

13 people in the State got the infection from 'known or unknown sources'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The southern States focused on travellers who had arrived from outside to check for COVID-19 infection, while Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Karnataka each reported one death on Saturday. Tamil Nadu reported five deaths.

Responding to a query on a letter by the West Bengal government asking that all migrant trains to the State be suspended till May 26 in the wake of cyclone Amphan, Mr. Yadav said: "The Chief Secretary wrote to me that restoration work is under way and they will tell us soon when they will be able to receive the trains. As soon as they give us clearance, we will run trains."

Kerala had a fresh increase in cases with 62 persons, including 49 expatriates and Non-Resident Keralites (NRKs) from other States testing positive. The other 13 were cases who had "contact" with known or unknown sources of infection. These include seven healthcare workers.

Eighteen persons who came from abroad, includ-

ing the Gulf nations, Singa-

COVID-19

pore and Maldives tested positive, as did 31 persons from other States, primarily, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu. Three persons were reported to have recovered.

As of Saturday, 275 COVID-19 patients were undergoing treatment in various hospitals and Kerala's overall case tally stood at 794 cases, with 515 having recovered. Kerala had 88,640 arrivals from abroad and from other States.

Nearly 7,000 people were added to the COVID-19 sur-

Leading the way
The Kerala government is taking all measures to send migrant workers, who are stranded during the nationwide lockdown, to their respective States



To safety: A police officer taking migrants to a relief camp in Thiruvananthapuram. Officials said trains would be arranged for them to go back home. ■ S. GOPAKUMAR

veillance list, taking the total number under quarantine to 91,084. So far, samples from 52,771 persons had been tested, of which 51,045 were negative.

The death of one person in Krishna district of Andhra Pradesh raised the toll to 56, representing 2.06% of total cases. With 47 fresh cases, the State case tally touched 2,714 including 153 migrants and 48 who recovered during the past day. Five cases were linked to Koyambudu in Chennai. The Health Department said.

Karnataka found over 200 cases of COVID-19 on Saturday, and its total cases rose to 1,959. The day's count was

216. The death reported on Saturday was that of a 32-year old man from Bengaluru Urban, admitted in hospital on May 19 with breathing difficulty. Of 216 cases, 186 had travelled to Maharashtra.

The death in Telangana marked the fifth consecutive day of fatalities. The State toll was 49 and positive cases 1,813, with 1,068 discharged.

Four people from Kuwait and 15 migrant workers from Maharashtra tested positive. In all, 119 migrants tested positive.

Toll climbs to 103 in T.N.

On a day when cases of coronavirus disease breached the

15,000-mark in Tamil Nadu, and Chennai recorded its highest single-day spike, the toll rose to 103 with the death of five more people in the State.

The tally rose by 759 new cases of COVID-19 to 15,509 on Saturday. Chennai reported 625 cases, taking its total to 9,989. Another 363 persons were discharged from hospitals. With this, a total of 7,491 persons were discharged, while the State had 7,915 active cases.

All five deaths were in Chennai. The State's mortality rate stood at 0.66%.

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

No order on the entry of migrants into the State



A file photo of migrant workers waiting for medical check up at a hospital in Belagavi.

issued special permits.

This is significant as the Kuganoli checkpoint is the lone entry point for 20 districts of middle and south Karnataka.

Officers who are stopping migrants from Maharashtra say they are doing so based on the "oral instructions" of senior officers. "This has been mentioned more than once. But there is neither a separate order nor a guideline," a district officer said.

However, Inspector-General of Police (Northern Range) Raghavendra Suhas argued that there was no need for specific written orders to regulate the movement of travellers from Maharashtra or any other State since the e-pass issued by the Deputy Commissioner of

the receiving State was mandatory. "The DC issues the passes as per the guidelines of quarantine and other rules," he said. However, travellers caught at the checkpoint complained that e-

passes were not being issued.

Deputy Commissioner S.B. Bommanahalli said,

"We are allowing travellers who have passes. We are issuing passes based on our capacity to absorb migrants who can be quarantined in institutions such as hotels and hostels."

Another officer from the Health Department said lack of written orders was leading to confusion. "Since Monday, we have been receiving so many calls from the border districts seeking a clarification on the movement of migrants," he admitted.

The State government, in its reply, said as the entire data had been transferred to the government-owned cloud web space in Amazon Web Services, managed and

controlled by the Centre for Development of Imaging Technology (C-DIT), the backup data should be destroyed.

The company also sought to withdraw a clarification petition filed before the High Court in this regard.

No data shared

The State government had in an affidavit said no data had been shared with Sprinklr after it was transferred to the C-DIT cloud space by April 20 and that the company did not have access to the system.

The government had also said the Director of the Kerala State IT Mission (KSITM) and the Registrar of C-DIT had been directed to ensure that all data collected and collated were anonymised before these were shared with any third party service provider or used with any software for processing.

The government pointed out that it was yet to receive any positive reply from the Union Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology to its letter seeking to provide details of the information system application available with the National Informatics Centre or other agencies so that it could meet the functional requirements of the COVID-19-related activities.

The Congress has arranged transport for students from Wayanad and other parts of Kerala, who were stuck in the Madhya Pradesh capital due to the COVID-19-induced lockdown, a party leader has said. "One such bus carrying students left for Kerala on Saturday," Madhya Pradesh Congress media cell in-charge Jitu Patwari said on Saturday.

'Smaller films can opt for direct-to-digital premiere'

They may face sub-optimal showcasing when cinemas reopen, says Kerala Film Producers Association

G. KRISHNAKUMAR
KOCHI

Producers of small and medium-budget movies can opt for a direct-to-digital premiere to recover their investments following the uncertainty over the reopening of cinemas amid the pandemic, according to the Kerala Film Producers Association (KFPA).

The producers' body is of the view that such movies may face a sub-optimal showcasing when cinemas reopen in view of the considerable backlog of movies awaiting release. "The OTT

(over-the-top) release will not be feasible for big-budget movies, taking into account the gaps in the return on investment compared to a theatrical release," said B. Rakesh, treasurer of the KFPA, on Saturday. "Smaller films will be in a better position to recover the investment while going for a direct release on the digital platform," he added.

"The direct OTT release of smaller movies will not have a major dent on the prospects of the exhibitors. Majority of the producers agree that the cinematic expe-

rience of a theatrical release cannot be replaced by the digital platforms," said Mr. Rakesh.

G. Suresh Kumar, former president, KFPA, said there had been no official confirmation yet on the direct-to-digital release of Malayalam movies, except for *Sufiyum Sujathayum*. "It seems discussions are being carried out by intermediaries on behalf of the producers who are ready for a direct digital release. The intermediaries will also claim a share of the pie once the OTT deal is secured," he said.

Mr. Rakesh said the Kerala Film Chamber of Commerce had convened a meeting of producers, distributors, and exhibitors on May 27 to chalk out the way forward and to seek relief from the government to tide over the COVID-19 crisis.

On the financial impact of the COVID-19 outbreak, Mr. Rakesh said movies worth more than ₹350 crore in investment had been affected. "Nearly 20 movies are ready for release when the cinemas open. Twenty-five to 30 films are in various stages of post-production," he said.

Mr. Rakesh said the Kerala Film Chamber of Commerce had convened a meeting of producers, distributors, and exhibitors on May 27 to chalk out the way forward and to seek relief from the government to tide over the COVID-19 crisis.

Pinarayi on Twitter: 'We shall overcome'

He took part in #AskTheCM series

STAFF REPORTER
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Focusing on the role of the participatory, decentralised Kerala model in the State's resistance against COVID-19, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan affirms that the State will overcome the current crisis in a united manner.

He was interacting with citizens as part of the first edition of Twitter India's #AskTheCM series, in which Chief Ministers from various States will take questions regarding steps to control the pandemic.

Mr. Vijayan answered various pertinent questions regarding the early detection and steps to control COVID-19, return of Non-Resident Keralites (NRKs), labour issues, climate change-related issues being faced by the State, interventions in the agriculture sec-



Pinarayi Vijayan

tor, and precautions being taken for easing the lockdown and during the SSLC examination. Several questions were on the finer aspects of the Kerala model, which has gained much appreciation from world over for arresting the spread of COVID-19. He spoke at length on the steps taken by each department and the coordination between them that enabled efficient tracking.

BJP warns A.P. government against 'sale of TTD assets'

STAFF REPORTER
VIJAYAWADA

BJP Andhra Pradesh president Kanna Lakshminarayana has demanded that the State government withdraw the decision to sell properties belonging to the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) and "stop its anti-Hindu acts".

In a letter to Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy

on Saturday, Mr. Lakshminarayana said the TTD had recently initiated proceedings for selling 23 properties in Tamil Nadu and two teams had been constituted for auctioning them after a resolution to that effect was passed by the TTD Trust Board. He said it was a step towards liquidating the assets of all Hindu temples in the State.

IN BRIEF



Tirumala laddus will be available throughout A.P.

TIRUMALA

The famed laddus of the Lord Venkateswara temple at Tirumala will be available to devotees at all the district headquarters in Andhra Pradesh from May 25. Devotees can purchase the laddus at TTD kalyana mandapams at a subsidised price of ₹25 as against the original cost of ₹50.

Protest over razing of iconic tower in A.P.
VIZIANAGARAM

The unexpected demolition of the Three Lamps Tower, located near Sri Pyditala Ammavari temple in Vizianagramam of Andhra Pradesh, sparked widespread agitations in the Fort City on Saturday. The structure, believed to be built in the early 1860s, was an iconic symbol of the city. Municipal authorities reportedly demolished it as part of a road widening exercise.

Congress arranges buses for stranded students

BHOPAL

The Congress has arranged transport for students from Wayanad and other parts of Kerala, who were stuck in the Madhya Pradesh capital due to the COVID-19-induced lockdown, a party leader has said. "One such bus carrying students left for Kerala on Saturday," Madhya Pradesh Congress media cell in-charge Jitu Patwari said on Saturday.



Jayasurya and Aditi Rao Hydari in a promotional poster of *Sufiyum Sujathayum*. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



Migrant workers' families resting at a bus shelter at Anand Vihar in Delhi on Saturday, before resuming their walk towards their homes in U.P. and Bihar. •R.V. MOORTHY

Mayawati blames exodus of migrants on Congress

BSP leader urges BJP not to follow in the party's footsteps

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Congress is responsible for the plight of migrant workers in the entire country, Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) leader Mayawati said on Saturday.

The BSP stayed away from a meeting of 22 Opposition parties hosted on Friday by the Congress to discuss the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic fallout.

"The Congress is the real culprit in the plight of crores of migrant workers in the entire country due to the coronavirus lockdown. Had it provided enough employment opportunities, no

worker would have left his home State. There would have been no exodus today," she wrote on Twitter.

Referring to the video of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi interacting with migrants in Delhi, Ms. Mayawati said that instead of indulging in theatrics, "it would have been better had the Congress told how many people it had genuinely helped..."

She also urged the BJP not to follow in the footsteps of the Congress. "If the BJP government, instead of following in the footsteps of the Congress, arranges livelihood for these returning

workers and makes them self-reliant in their villages, perhaps they will never have to face such a crisis again," she said.

Meanwhile, Congress general secretary in charge of Uttar Pradesh Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said that the party had so far helped nearly 67 lakh people. She said Congress workers had worked tirelessly in the last 60 days to arrange ration, cooked food and medicines for those who were stranded or walking home. Rattled by the good work of her party, the BJP government arrested party State president Ajay Kumar Lallu, she said.

The documentary also shows Mr. Gandhi promising help to the workers, who are later seen being transported to their village near Jhansi in vans and cars. Upon reaching their homes, the workers and their families thank Mr. Gandhi.

At the end, Mr. Gandhi is heard saying: "My migrant labourer brothers and sisters, you are the strength of this country ... The whole country wants justice for you. It is everyone's responsibility to strengthen the power of this country."

RBI should tell govt. to take fiscal steps: Chidambaram

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Congress leader P. Chidambaram on Saturday hit out at the government following the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) statement that growth in 2020-21 is headed towards negative territory.

In a series of tweets, Mr. Chidambaram questioned

RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das on why, knowing well that demand had collapsed, the bank was "infusing more liquidity".

"He should bluntly tell the government 'Do your duty, take fiscal measures,'" Mr. Chidambaram tweeted.

In a jibe at the government, he asked if, after the

RBI statement, the government would still laud itself for a "package that has fiscal stimulus of less than 1% of GDP?"

Economy already in red'
"RSS should be ashamed of how the government has dragged the economy into negative growth territory,"

said Mr. Chidambaram. Critical economic parameters were in the red even before the country went into a lockdown, the Congress claimed.

Excessive supply side measures and very few demand-driven initiatives had completely derailed the economy, the party said.

Details of 2.90 crore job seekers on dark net

Leaked data mentions two popular job sites

IN BRIEF



Will sit on dharna over farmers' dues: Chautala

CHANDIGARH
Indian National Lok Dal MLA Abhay Singh Chautala on Saturday said he would sit on 'dharna' if the Manohar Lal government does not clear outstanding payments to farmers for procuring their wheat and mustard crop.

Two paramilitary men found dead in Tripura

AGARTALA
Two members of paramilitary forces were found dead in Tripura in the past two days, in suspected suicides. While Swapan Tripura, a member of Tripura State Rifles was found hanging from a tree in Sepahijala, BSF officer Birbal Yadav, 47, was found hanging from the ceiling of an outpost building at Madhab Nagar. The police have started a probe in both cases.

Ex-footballer says he was detained in Srinagar

SRINAGAR
Former Indian footballer Mehrajuddin Wadoo on Saturday alleged that he was detained for two hours in Srinagar during the lockdown, when he was heading to see his ailing mother. Mr. Wadoo, who represented the national team from 2005 to 2011, alleged that a constable abused him after he was stopped.

GAUTAM S. MENGLE
MUMBAI

Personal details of about 2.90 crore Indian job seekers have been found dumped on the dark net, raising concerns among cyber crime agencies and experts in India over a massive data breach.

The data leak was uncovered on Friday by Cyble, Inc., a U.S.-based cyber intelligence firm founded by global cybersecurity expert Beenu Arora.

On Saturday morning, Cyble posted an update on its official blog that the names, addresses and contact numbers belonged to job seekers from cities such as Mumbai, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Pune and Bengaluru. The data is available for free download in a 2.3-gigabyte compressed file, according to the blogpost.

Screenshots of the leaked data, which are in *The Hindu's* possession, mention two well-known job portals: Naukri and Times Jobs.

The blogpost said, "This breach includes sensitive information such as email, phone, home address, qualification, work experience, etc. Cybercriminals are always on the lookout for



The breach appears to have occurred from a resume aggregator service.

such personal information to conduct various nefarious activities such as identity thefts, scams, and corporate espionage."

Mr. Arora told *The Hindu* that while Cyble hasn't been able to attribute the source of the leak yet, they can say with a high degree of confidence that the leak appears to have occurred from a resume aggregator service.

Mr. Arora said, "A Russian-speaking threat actor is responsible for the leak, and it is likely that the data has been floating on the dark web for some time, unnoticed ... it's possible that the leak was made to get attention and rapport in the dark web markets. This reminds us of the same strategy recently deployed by Shiny-Hunters, a known cybercriminal responsible for Tokopedia, Unacademy, Wishbone, Mathway, and other leaks."

J&K resumes recruitment for govt. jobs

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

The recruitment process for over 80,000 posts halted on August 9 last year – the day the Centre revoked J&K's special status – has resumed in the Union Territory for all domiciles, including eligible non-locals and Pakistani refugees as per the amended domicile laws.

Lieutenant Governor Girish Chandra Murmu on Friday evening chaired a high level meeting "to review the progress made for accelerated recruitment at various levels in the government with particular focus on Class-IV and Class-III vacancies".

A government spokesman said the Accelerated Recruitment Committee (ARC) submitted its preliminary proposals for recruitment to over 10,000 posts.

"Weightage would be given in forthcoming recruitment to Class-IV vacancies to widows, destitute, divorced women and single mothers and candidates of those families from where there is no family member (parents or siblings) in government job. The Domicile Certificate would be required after a candidate gets selected to a particular post," the spokesman said.

Cong. releases film on Rahul's interaction

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Saturday released a documentary film on Rahul Gandhi's interaction with a group of migrant labourers last week, demanding justice for such workers who are walking hundreds of kilometres to their homes amid the COVID-19 lockdown.

At the end of the documentary, Mr. Gandhi says the government should immediately give ₹7,500 to the 13 crore needy families through direct cash transfer. Mr. Gandhi had interacted with a group of migrant labourers near the Sukhdev Vihar flyover in Delhi last Saturday.

The documentary also shows Mr. Gandhi promising help to the workers, who are later seen being transported to their village near Jhansi in vans and cars. Upon reaching their homes, the workers and their families thank Mr. Gandhi.

At the end, Mr. Gandhi is heard saying: "My migrant labourer brothers and sisters, you are the strength of this country ... The whole country wants justice for you. It is everyone's responsibility to strengthen the power of this country."

Mamata pegs cyclone damage at ₹1 lakh crore, toll rises to 86



Amphan impact: Mangled remains of a car seen in the aftermath of Cyclone Amphan in Kolkata on Saturday. •PTI

Over 70% people in Bengal directly affected, says CM

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

The death toll in West Bengal due to cyclone Amphan has risen to 86 and the State has suffered a loss of about ₹1 lakh crore, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said on Saturday.

"More than 86 persons have died. 70% people are directly affected, 30% are indirectly affected," Ms. Banerjee told journalists at the State Secretariat. On

the restoration of essential infrastructure and services, the Chief Minister said that the situation was more than a national disaster and the State government was doing all it could. Ms. Banerjee explained that because of the COVID-19 outbreak only 25-30% of the workers were working. She said that about 1,000 teams were working on the ground, adding that the State had requested help from Jharkhand and Odisha.

"This is not the time to do politics. Those who are trying to provoke people are wrong," she said. The Chief Minister touched on the issue of return of migrants to the State and said that the migrants could return after May 27. The State government had written to the Railways to suspend the trains till May 26. The Chief Minister urged the migrants to give an undertaking that they would make their homes their quarantine centres.

Earlier, the Chief Minister held an administrative meeting at Namkhana in the badly hit South 24 Parganas and spoke to the dis-

trict authorities. She directed that any damage to 'katcha' houses should be treated as "fully damaged".

Ms. Banerjee said that 10 lakh houses had been damaged in South 24 Parganas district alone. She also met the officials of the Calcutta Electric Supply Corporation, a private company, at their office in central Kolkata accompanied by the Police Commissioner and requested them to work at full capacity.

Separately on Saturday, BJP State president Dilip Ghosh asserted that he had been stopped from visiting the cyclone ravaged areas of South 24 Parganas. BJP supporters accompanying Mr. Ghosh are reported to have had an altercation with the police. Mr. Ghosh alleged said that while Trinamool Congress leaders were visiting cyclone affected areas, the rule had changed for BJP leaders.

Minister Subrata Mukherjee said the State was "not a rich government and thus everything cannot be corrected in a day".

Appeal for Eid

The Chief Minister urged people to maintain social distancing and stay away from religious gatherings on the occasion of Eid-ul Fitr. "The Disaster Management Act bans any religious gathering. The minority brothers and sisters are respecting the Act. I appeal to everyone that in these exceptional times people should pray from home," she said, adding that she was pained by the circumstances that had prevented people from celebrating religious festivals.

Separately on Saturday, BJP State president Dilip Ghosh asserted that he had been stopped from visiting the cyclone ravaged areas of South 24 Parganas. BJP supporters accompanying Mr. Ghosh are reported to have had an altercation with the police. Mr. Ghosh alleged said that while Trinamool Congress leaders were visiting cyclone affected areas, the rule had changed for BJP leaders.

Odisha sends help to battered Bengal

Centre releases ₹500 cr. for Odisha

STAFF REPORTER
BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha government has sent 500 personnel of the Odisha Disaster Rapid Action Force (ODRAF) and the Odisha Fire Service to West Bengal ravaged by Super Cyclone Amphan.

They left for West Bengal on Saturday and would begin road clearance on Sunday morning, said Pradeep Kumar Jena, Managing Director of the Odisha State Disaster Management Authority.

"Cyclone Amphan is one of the worst disasters to hit West Bengal. The people of Odisha stand by West Bengal during this unprecedented crisis. Odisha has sent a team of 500 members, including 300 fire personnel & 10 ODRAF teams to assist in relief & rescue operations," Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik wrote on Twitter.

The Odisha government said the State had not lost a single human life to the cyclone.

According to a damage assessment report finalised on Saturday, the districts of Balasore, Bhadrak, Kendrapada, Jagatsinghpur, Mayurbhanj, Cuttack, Jajpur, Keonjhar, Khordha and Puri were affected. More than



A fisherman in Puri displaying his catch after Cyclone Amphan receded.

2 lakh people were shifted to shelters. Balasore, Bhadrak, Kendrapada and Jagatsinghpur districts were severely affected. A population of 44,44,896 was affected in 9,833 villages in these 10 districts.

"About 500 houses have been fully damaged. Crops have been damaged on about one lakh hectares. The assessment is...expected to be completed by Tuesday," said Mr. Jena. Electricity supply has been restored to 85% of the consumers and 90% of the total mobile phone sites have been made functional.

The Ministry of Home Affairs released ₹500 crore for Odisha, as announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi after he undertook an aerial survey of the affected districts on Friday.

Amid protests, Army deployed in Bengal

Assistance sought to restore services

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

The Army was deployed in Kolkata and neighbouring districts of West Bengal on Saturday for restoration of essential infrastructure and services in the wake of the destruction caused by Cyclone Amphan, a defence official said.

The West Bengal government had sought help from the force after protests erupted in certain parts of Kolkata and suburbs over the power and water crisis.

Five columns of the Army were deployed in different parts of the city and North and South 24 Parganas districts. These three parts of the State reported the maximum damage due to the cyclone.

The government added that drinking water and drainage infrastructure were being restored fast.

(With inputs from PTI)

CUCET-2020 (www.cucetexam.in)

Central Universities Common Entrance Test (CUCET-2020) is being conducted for admission to different Programmes of 14 Central Universities (Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Haryana, Jammu, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kashmir, Kerala, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, South Bihar, Tamil Nadu) and 4 State Universities (Baba Ghulam Shah Badshah University (Rajouri), Bengaluru Dr B R Ambedkar School of Economics, Khaliqote University (Berhampur), Sardar Patel University of Police, Security & Criminal Justice (Jodhpur))

IMPORTANT DATES

**Application Form Last Date Extended
06 June, 2020**

Media Partner

BENGALURU DR. B. R. AMBEDKAR SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS UNIVERSITY
Rajaji Hall, Central College Campus, Bangalore University, Bengaluru-560 001
Website: www.base.ac.in

DIPR/DDU/123/2020-21

Examination Date to be Notified Later

Coordinating University for CUCET-2020
CENTRAL UNIVERSITY OF RAJASTHAN
NH-8, Bandarsindri, Ajmer-305817, Raj.
Website: www.curaj.ac.in

Mizoram govt. gives industry status to sports

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

The Mizoram Cabinet has granted industry status to sports, a move aimed at generating employment. Chief Minister Zoramthanga said the government followed the policy in many countries for the approval.

"We seek to invest more in sports for the generation

of employment and increasing value. The industry status should help us meet the requirements of sportspersons and others involved in the sector," he said.

Sports Minister Robert Romaria Royte said the Sports and Youth Services department had advised the State government to grant the status.

Rajasthan Medical Services Corporation Limited, Jaipur
Gandhi Block, Swasthya Bhawan, Tilak Marg, C-Scheme, Jaipur-302005
Ph. No. 0141-2223887, Fax: 0141-2228065
CIN : U2423RJ2011SC05067
No. F-8(1) RMSC/EPM/M-4/20-21/4

Gear up for more cases: Health Ministry

Ramp up isolation beds with oxygen, ventilators, ICU support, it says as India sees 6,724 new patients

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

India must gear up for at least two more months of COVID-19, a summary of a meeting on Saturday involving top officials from the Health Ministry suggests.

"Health care infrastructure needs to be ramped up for the next two months with focus on isolation beds with oxygen, ventilators and ICU beds," a PIB press note summarising the meeting notes.

Municipal pockets

About 70% of India's cases are emerging from 11 "municipal areas" in seven States: Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal and Rajasthan, the Ministry said in a statement.

The major challenge lies in those corporations having shorter doubling time, higher mortality rate and a higher confirmation rate than the



The fight is on: A municipal worker disinfecting a locality in Delhi on Saturday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

national average." This was part of a meeting convened by Secretary, Health Ministry, Preeti Sudan, in which the Health and Urban Development Secretaries, Municipal Commissioners and offi-

cials from these 11 areas had participated.

On Saturday, India posted yet another record high of 6,654 confirmed cases taking the number of confirmed cases, according to the Mi-

nistry, to 1,25,101, a few thousand below Iran. There were 3,720 deaths as of Saturday with 137 since Friday. The Mi-

nistry said 1,15,000 tests were conducted from Friday-Saturday and 2.8 million

tests across the nation. It said 51,784 have so far recovered.

However, according to the State Health departments, 6,724 tested positive on Saturday, taking the total tally to 1,31,310. Active cases stand at 73,068, while the total death toll is 3,868.

Testing needed to be increased in certain municipal areas to ensure early case detection and a reduction in the fatality rate, the Ministry said. There were also lacunae in sample collection, establishing partnerships with private hospitals to increase bed capacity, disinfection of positive areas and management of camps for migrant labourers.

Mumbai would soon start a public portal displaying bed availability with unique ID numbers for each bed and a GPS-backed ambulance tracking system, the PIB said.

Shramik Specials stalled for hours on choked tracks

Passengers were forced to drink water from the toilets'

SIDHARTH YADAV
BHOPAL

Railways Minister Piyush Goyal's announcement on May 19 that the number of Shramik trains would be doubled to 400 a day over the next two days has overwhelmed routes to Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, where 80% of the trains are headed.

There was congestion on the Itarsi-Jabalpur route in Madhya Pradesh as the North Central Railway (NCR) wasn't accepting more trains as there was congestion near Prayagraj, said an official of the Bhusawal Division.

On another train bound for Rewa in Madhya Pradesh from Sindhudurg in Maharashtra, which barely moved

milk trains were stuck between Bhusaval and Khandwa, 130 km apart.

Eighteen-year-old Lav Kumar Sahni who left Goa on May 21, remained stuck in a train on the Bhusawal Division of Central Railway for hours. Though the train left Bodwad station at 1 a.m. on Saturday, the 1,300 passengers got their first meal of biscuits and water near Nagpur around 11 a.m. after more than a day, the workers said.

On another train bound for Rewa in Madhya Pradesh from Sindhudurg in Maharashtra, which barely moved

for 18-20 hours on Friday, Vimlesh Chitram, 43, said, "There was nothing to eat or drink in the train. I was anyway starving without work. It would have been better to die back there than board this train."

Mr. Chitram claimed many passengers on the train began drinking water from the taps in the train's toilets.

"It was only after several phone calls and pressure, the Railways provided them food," said Mohammed Saqleen, a social worker in Odisha, who has been coordinating food arrangements for the train passengers.

'Corona fee' on liquor helps Delhi fill its coffers



High demand: Despite the 70% special fee, customers queued up in large numbers in New Delhi to stock up. ■ PTI

opened 160 vends. More vends are set to open. In May, the government also levied a 70% special fee on the MRP of all brands of alcohol.

According to Excise Department records, over ₹100 crore was generated from the 'special corona fee' on

such products between May 12 and 21.

The government also increased the VAT on petrol and diesel to 30% from 27% and 16.75%. This has also helped to increase the revenue. But the revenue collection is still less, compared with the same time in 2019.

Existing liquor shops situated in areas other than containment zones, shopping malls and food aggregators can undertake home delivery of liquor between 7 a.m. and 6 p.m.

The government has introduced a Special COVID Fee by amending the relevant excise rules and increased the MRPs of all types of foreign liquor and beer by 50% of the MRP prevailing last year (2019-20), the State Excise Department said in a statement. The revenue generated would be used to meet the expenses incurred by the State government in the treatment of COVID-19 patients, it said.

The delivery charge has been fixed at ₹100 for orders up to ₹1,000 and thereafter ₹25 for every additional ₹500 in order value. The delivery charge should not exceed ₹300, it said.

The Odisha government on Saturday imposed a 50% 'Special COVID Fee' on the maximum retail price of liquor while allowing home delivery of alcohol in the State from Sunday.

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Dengue, JE strike as Assam battles COVID-19

Farm sector hit hard with floods and cases of African swine fever in pigs across 10 districts



State of worry: A road got washed away in Nagaon district of Assam after Borpani river breached its banks. ■ PTI

have been three cases of Japanese encephalitis with two having been discharged while one woman is stable but with multiple infections," NHM State director Lakshmanan S. told *The Hindu*.

"Districts from different parts of Assam have so far reported 14 cases of dengue and 79 cases of acute encephalitis syndrome. There

launched the Assam Community Surveillance programme on May 7 to screen people for diseases associated with the pre-monsoon and monsoon seasons. The programme was initially planned for all but five of the State's 33 districts where COVID-19 cases had not been reported.

"This drive has been affected with almost all dis-

Proof of HCQ's efficacy will be available in July

A trial of drug in 2,000 health workers is under way

JACOB KOSHY
NEW DELHI

Proof of whether hydroxychloroquine (HCQ), the controversial anti-malarial drug, can stave off COVID-19 infection will be available by July, a senior scientist of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), leading a large trial of the drug in healthcare workers, told *The Hindu*.

In the largest Indian study of its kind, 2,000 doctors, nurses, paramedical workers, lab technicians and sanitary workers at five Indian hospitals are part of this trial, which began in May.

The aim of the observational study is to check if at all, and to what extent, a regimen of HCQ will shield these healthcare workers, who work in dedicated COVID-19 hospitals and therefore at a high risk of contracting the novel coronavirus. The participants were first confirmed negative.

'Ideal situation'

Ideally the efficacy of a drug ought to be measured through a double-blind randomised clinical trial.

"That's the ideal situation," said Suman Kanungo, scientist, ICMR-National Institute for Cholera and Enteric Diseases, who is coordinating the study. However, the ICMR "settled" for an observational study because it would be "unethical" to deny someone the medicine if



The ICMR has not recommended HCQ for the general public. ■ AFP

there was even a slight beneficial effect and secondly, because participants were already on the medicine the trial organisers could not find a control group.

While not recommended for the public as a preventive, the ICMR's default position, since March 21, has been to allow the use of HCQ in people at a high risk of contracting the virus. These include asymptomatic healthcare workers involved in the care of suspected or confirmed COVID-19 cases and asymptomatic household contacts of laboratory confirmed cases.

"There are mixed results from all over and the process of establishing efficacy is ongoing. At some point, we will do a meta-analysis that will examine all studies to determine the effect. In the meantime, the drug is being prescribed with adequate safeguards. Remember, this is not an antiviral. It doesn't kill the virus, only modulates the immune system (to mount a measured response to the virus). The cardiac problems have been observed when HCQ is given in a combination with azithromycin. In our study, we are using it as a single dose drug," he added.

Maharashtra's tally crosses 47,000

Toll from COVID-19 climbs to 1,577

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Maharashtra recorded 2,608 fresh COVID-19 cases on Saturday, the second highest single-day surge, pushing the tally to 47,190.

The State also recorded 60 deaths, taking the death toll to 1,577. Almost 61% of Maharashtra's cases and 60% of fatalities have been contributed by Mumbai.

Extending beyond Mumbai, the entire Mumbai Metropolitan Region including Navi Mumbai, Thane and Mira-Bhayandar has emerged as a hotspot with almost 36,000 cases and more than 1,000 deaths reported from the wider region.

The 60 deaths reported on Saturday, 40 were from Mumbai, one from Vasai-Virar, one from Thane, 14 from Pune, two from Solapur, one from Satara and one from Nanded. State

health officials, however, clarified that 42 of these deaths were from the last 24 hours while the rest were reported over the past fortnight.

Of the latest victims, 41 were men while 19 were women. Almost 60% had comorbid conditions like diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, which made their recovery difficult. Doctors

say that one of the crucial problems is that many of these patients have uncontrolled blood sugar levels, blood pressure and other parameters as they have not been taking medication or their condition is yet to be diagnosed. When the novel coronavirus attacks such patients, they deteriorate rapidly.

State officials said that the recovery rate was also showing improvement. On Saturday, 821 patients across Maharashtra went home.



With 396 cases, Gujarat count jumps to 13,669

AHMEDABAD: Gujarat's COVID-19 case tally jumped to 13,669 on Saturday with 396 new cases, while fatalities increased to 829 with 27 new deaths reported during the day. As many as 289 patients got discharged on Saturday.

The number of patients on ventilator support as on Saturday was 73, up from 63 on Friday. Ahmedabad's COVID-19 count climbed to 10,001 with 277 new cases.

Odisha registers 80 new cases, tally reaches 1,269

Bhubaneswar: Odisha registered 80 new COVID-19 cases taking the State's tally to 1,269 on Saturday. Of these, 497 persons have recovered. So far, seven patients have died.

As many as 71 of the 80 new patients are staying in institutional quarantine centres. Since May 3, as many as 2,37,698 people returned to the State, where COVID-19 has been reported from 26 of the 30 districts.

Tension in U.P. village over Ambedkar statue

BAHDONI: A statue of Dalit icon B.R. Ambedkar was found damaged in Lakshmana village in Uttar Pradesh's Bhadohi district on Saturday, the police said. The 6-foot statue, installed in Dalit Basti of the village under the Aurai police station limits, was found damaged on Saturday morning. Additional SP Ravindra Verma said. The incident led to tension in the area as people started gathering.

Air travellers to Goa get two options

MUMBAI: Domestic air passengers landing in Goa will be given two options – of getting tested for COVID-19 by paying ₹2,000 or a 14-day home quarantine stamp. Hours after the Goa Health Minister suggested that travellers need to carry a COVID-19 negative certificate, a State committee changed it and offered them the options. On Saturday, Goa reported one more COVID-19 case, taking the total active cases to 39.

SUDOKU



Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

9	7	1	3	6	5	4	2	8
5	2	3	7	8	4	6	9	1
6	8	4	2	9	1	7	5	3
1	6	8	5	7	2	9	3	4
4	9	7	1	3	8	2	6	5
3	5	2	6	4	9	8	1	7
8	3	6	9	1	7	5	4	2
2	4	9	8	5	3	1	7	6
7	1	5	4	2	6	3	8	9

CMYK

Latin America is the new epicentre: WHO

Brazil, with 3,30,000 cases and 21,000 deaths, emerges as the worst-hit country in the region

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WASHINGTON

South America is "a new epicentre" of the COVID-19 pandemic, the World Health Organization (WHO) has declared, as U.S. President Donald Trump intensified his push to reopen the reeling American economy.

Brazil led the surge across South America, its death toll passing 21,000 on Friday from 3,30,000 infections, the third-highest caseload of any country in a pandemic that has infected 5.2 million globally and killed more than 338,000.

COVID-19

Experts have hailed the impact of lockdown measures for slowing the spread of the COVID-19 disease, but Mr. Trump has long prioritised the needs of the economy over public health concerns – renewing his attacks on Friday on local officials for refusing to allow businesses to reopen.

Blow to U.S. economy
His concerns about the economy were thrown into stark relief late on Friday when car-rental giant Hertz filed for bankruptcy for its North American operations – yet another sign of the virus and lockdown laying waste to the U.S. economy, which has already shed almost 40 million jobs.

In Europe, where rates of infections and deaths are stabilising in many countries, governments are moving away from enforced national lockdowns towards advisory measures involving social distancing.

"In a sense, South America has become a new epicentre for the disease," WHO emergencies director Mike



In quarantine: COVID-19 patients being treated at the municipal field hospital in Manaus, Brazil, earlier this month. •AP

Ryan said on Friday, singling out Brazil. Unlike in Europe and the United States, where the elderly were hardest-hit, a significant number of deaths in Brazil have been younger people, who are often driven by poverty to work despite the threat of infection.

As the toll mounted, grave-diggers at a cemetery outside the commercial hub Sao Paulo were scrambling to keep up. "We've been working 12-hour days, burying them one after the other," said one worker at Vila Formosa, wearing a white protective suit, mask and face shield.

Elsewhere in Latin America, Peru was also struggling with an intense outbreak – the country of 32 million having registered more than 1,10,000 cases and 3,100 deaths.

Trump's reopening call
The figures, though disastrous for region, are dwarfed

by the 96,000 deaths suffered so far in the United States, which has registered 1.6 million infections. However, Mr. Trump is facing an uphill re-election battle later this year and is ramping up pressure on State and local governments, telling them on Friday to restart religious services immediately by reclassifying churches, synagogues and mosques as "essential services".

"In America, we need more prayer, not less," said Mr. Trump, who counts religious conservatives as a core of his electoral base.

The administration also renewed attacks on city officials, suggesting lockdown measures in Los Angeles were illegal.

"We are not guided by politics in this we are guided by science, we are guided by collaboration," said Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti.

The U.S. also pushed on Friday to restart the sporting calendar.

No new cases in China for the first time

REUTERS

SHANGHAI

China recorded no new confirmed COVID-19 cases on the mainland for May 22, the first time it had seen no daily rise in the number of cases since the pandemic began in the central city of Wuhan late last year.

The National Health Commission (NHC) said in a statement on Saturday that this compared to four new cases on the previous day. It said, however, there were two new suspected cases:

an imported one in Shanghai and locally transmitted case in the northeastern province of Jilin. New asymptomatic cases of the coronavirus fell to 28 from 35 a day earlier, the NHC said.

China has seen a sharp fall in locally transmitted COVID-19 cases since March as major restrictions on people movement helped it to take control of the epidemic in many parts of the country. However, it has continued to see an influx of imported cases, mainly involving Chinese nationals returning from abroad, while new clusters of infections in the northeastern border provinces of Jilin and Heilongjiang have emerged in recent weeks.

Wuhan also reported this month its first cluster of infections since a lockdown on the city ended on April 8. The number of confirmed cases in the mainland stood at 82,971 and the death toll remained unchanged at 4,634.

Anti-viral drug is effective: study

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WASHINGTON

Anti-viral drug remdesivir cuts recovery times in COVID-19 patients, according to the full results of a trial published on Friday night, three weeks after America's top infectious diseases expert said the study showed the medication has "clear-cut" benefits. Complete results from the research, which was carried out by the U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, were published by medical periodical the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

China suggests shift in BRI approach amid debt concerns

'We will focus on quality in the joint pursuit of the BRI'

ANANTH KRISHNAN

China has hinted at a shift in how it will pursue its signature Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) amid growing concerns about debt repayments from many partner countries because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We will focus on quality in the joint pursuit of the BRI," said the annual government work report delivered on Friday by China's Premier Li Keqiang at the start of the National People's Congress (NPC), or Parliament.

Since 2018, the BRI has had a dedicated sub-section in the NPC report, which is China's most important policy document. The BRI was written into the Communist Party of China's Constitution in 2017, underlining its special status.

The report in 2018 did not mention "quality", merely saying China "will promote the joint pursuit of the BRI". It also mentioned then China would seek to advance infrastructure connectivity, which was omitted this year. The NPC report is usually carefully assessed to garner changes in emphasis in Chinese policymaking. The report this year said China would focus on "achieving shared growth through consultation and collaboration" and would "work with BRI partners for mutually beneficial outcomes".

In recent weeks, China has faced calls from countries in Asia and Africa to delay or waive debt repayments. Song Wei, deputy director at the Ministry of Commerce's Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation,



In recent weeks, China has faced calls from countries in Asia and Africa to delay or waive debt repayments. A map of the One Belt, One Road initiative. •GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

acknowledged last month that China was weighing how to respond to such calls.

"What China could do to help is bring projects funded by loans back to life and realise sustainable profits, instead of measures as simple as offering write-offs," he said in an article in the Communist Party-run *Global Times*. "As always, China is open to talk with debtors on the basis of equality and mutual benefit."

The suggested repayments could be solved "by multiple financial or other approaches, such as China adding grants to help bring projects back to life, conducting debt-to-equity swaps, or hiring Chinese firms to assist operation".

According to AidData, a research lab at the College of William & Mary, China's grants and loans totalled \$354.4 billion between 2000 and 2014, of which 23% was grants while the rest were commercial loans at market or close-to-market rates.

The world's debt to China grew 10 times between 2000 and 2017, with developing countries owing \$380 billion to China, the Kiel Institute for the World Economy in Germany said in a report last year.

U.S. holds talks on conducting nuclear tests

ELSEWHERE



U.K. government rejects calls to sack Cummings

LONDON
The British government on Saturday rejected calls to sack top adviser Dominic Cummings over allegations he broke COVID-19 lockdown rules by travelling across the country while displaying symptoms of the disease. Under lockdown rules brought in on March 23, anyone with symptoms must self-isolate in their own homes. •REUTERS

Palestinians report first virus death in Gaza

GAZA
A woman has died in Gaza Strip after contracting COVID-19, the Palestinian enclave's first fatality from the global pandemic, the Health Ministry said on Saturday. It said the 77-year-old woman had suffered from a prior chronic illness and had travelled to Gaza through Egypt on May 19. She had been quarantined since then, the Ministry said. •REUTERS



For the departed: A prayer meet for the victims of Friday's crash, at a church in Peshawar on Saturday. •REUTERS

2 survivors, 97 deaths after Pak. plane crash

No fatalities in residential area where aircraft went down; PM forms inquiry team

REUTERS

KARACHI

The flight data recorder from the Pakistani airliner that crashed into a residential neighbourhood of Karachi has been found, an official said on Saturday, as the death toll rose to 97. There were two survivors from onboard the aircraft, while no fatalities were reported in the densely populated area of the city where the aircraft crash-landed on Friday.

Pakistan International Airlines flight PK 8303, an Airbus A320, was flying from Lahore to Karachi with 99 people on board when it went down in mid-afternoon while trying a second landing attempt.

Black box found

"The black box had been found late yesterday, we are handing it over to the inquiry board," PIA spokesman Abdullah Khan said. He said that included both the flight data recorder and cockpit voice recorder. The airline's chief executive, Arshad Ma-

lik, said on Friday the last message received from the pilot indicated there was a technical problem. Another senior civil aviation official said it appeared the plane had been unable to lower its landing gear for the first approach.

Seconds before the crash, the pilot told air traffic controllers he had lost power from both engines, according to a recording posted on liveatc.net, a respected aviation monitoring website.

Pakistan's Prime Minister,

Imran Khan, announced soon after the crash that there would be an inquiry, and a four-member team was constituted on Friday night, according to a notification from the government's aviation division.

The team includes three members of the Aircraft Accident and Investigation Board and one from the Pakistan Air Force's safety board. The team will issue a preliminary statement within a month, the notification says. A statement from the

provincial Health Minister's office on Saturday put the death toll at 97, with no confirmed deaths on the ground.

Army and civil administration personnel were clearing through the debris in the Karachi neighbourhood on Saturday and assisting residents whose homes had been damaged.

Clearing operations on

"Rescue Op in progress ... 25 affected houses cleared, their residents accommodated at various places with assistance of Civil Administration," the Army said on Twitter. Pakistan only last week resumed domestic flights it had suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with many people travelling for the Muslim holiday of Id, expected to fall on Sunday or Monday in the country.

Friday's crash is the worst air disaster in Pakistan since 2012, when a Bhoja Air passenger aircraft, a Boeing 737, crashed in Islamabad, killing 127 people.

China could set up intel agency in Hong Kong

It could be similar to British-era branch

REUTERS

BEIJING

China's new national security legislation may be used to establish an intelligence agency in Hong Kong similar to the colonial-era Special Branch, the territory's former leader, Leung Chun-ying, said on Saturday. China's Parliament, the National People's Congress, announced on Thursday a draft decision on "establishing and improving a legal system and enforcement mechanism for Hong Kong to safeguard national security".

Mr. Leung's comments could give weight to concern among some Hong Kongers and Western governments that national security legislation will herald a new era of political surveillance and law enforcement controlled from the mainland. Washington called the law a "death knell" for the city's autonomy. "There is a possibility ... of the central people's government autho-



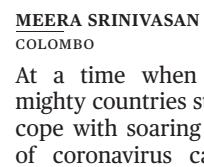
At a pro-democracy demonstration in Hong Kong last year. •AP

rising Hong Kong law enforcement bodies, such as the police, to enforce the law," said Mr. Leung.

Hong Kong already has an elite 700 officer-strong Security Wing that serving and retired police say has been increasingly replicating the work of the colonial-era Special Branch, including monitoring of some political and student activists. Senior wing officials liaise with mainland security and intelligence services.

'Targeted and tough control measures helped Sri Lanka arrest virus spread'

Senior health official Anil Jasinghe says early efforts ensured 'a low death rate'



MEERA SRINIVASAN
COLOMBO
At a time when big and mighty countries struggle to cope with soaring numbers of coronavirus cases and consequent deaths, the official figures from 21-million strong Sri Lanka stand out – 1,070 cases, 660 recoveries and nine deaths as of Saturday evening.

Behind those promising numbers are early thinking and swift action, according to Dr. Anil Jasinghe, Director General of Health Services in Sri Lanka. The senior public health official, helming Sri Lanka's pandemic response, along with the Army Commander who heads a task force on COVID-19, says it is

"targeted and tough" control measures, rather than a generic template "based on literature", that helped the island nation arrest the pandemic's spread.

Data published by the World Health Organization shows that Sri Lanka remains among the least affected countries in South Asia, along with Nepal, Bhutan and Myanmar that have recorded under 1,000 positive cases so far. "We have managed this because we planned in advance," Dr. Jasinghe notes, in an interview to *The Hindu* at the Ministry of Health.

Passengers arriving from international locations were taken to quarantine centres, or in some cases, were

home-quarantined. With the military stepping in, extensive contact tracing began.

Twelve government hospitals across the island were identified to set up special isolation wards for suspected patients. The wards grew to over 30 in the following weeks as numbers increased – largely originating from a cluster of Sri Lankans who had arrived from Italy between March 1 and 9.

After the early isolation

wards, an entire hospital each in the "vulnerable" districts of Colombo, neighbouring Gampaha, the southern Kalutara and Puttalam in the North Western Province, were readied for suspects. Where there was no hospital, an available large building was swiftly modified and equipped for the purpose – like the former Voice of America building in Puttalam. Soon, these hospitals became treatment centres, with the staff "groomed" for the job, Dr. Jasinghe says. This was in addition to the well-known Infectious Diseases Hospital in Colombo.

In his views, aggressive contract tracing, early quarantine measures and a strict curfew – over 60,000 violators arrested so far – helped "put a wall" between the vi-

rus and the country's elderly, and ensured "a low death rate" of about 0.8%. "Otherwise, with a rapidly ageing population, we would have been finished."

Testing algorithm

However, Sri Lanka didn't wait for its first case to begin preparing. Well ahead of the March 10, Sri Lanka had set up its first PCR testing facility, with advice from Hong Kong-based Sri Lankan origin pathologist Professor Malalik Peiris, known for first isolating the SARS virus. "I think Pune and Sri Lanka were the only two places to have it at that time." By the time the first case of a Sri Lankan national was reported here, the country had four such labs. And now 20, including four private, labs conduct PCR testing. But Dr. Jasinghe re-

plies sceptical of the widely endorsed "test, test, test" strategy.

"Some people say that to lobby, or just based on literature. But we can't just test like that in our context. So, we followed an algorithm," he explains. In addition to suspected patients from the 30 hospitals and those reporting likely COVID-19 symptoms to outpatient departments elsewhere, tests were conducted at random, among persons among "high-risk populations" such as residents of shanties, drug addicts, and autorickshaw drivers.

"There was some negligence on their part, but we were quick in tracing their contacts including the families of those who went on leave and everyone was quarantined," he adds. The Navy cluster, according to official sources, remains the only live cluster at the moment.

Navy cluster

Meanwhile, over 600 cases of the total infections in Sri Lanka have been traced to the Navy. Dr. Jasinghe says they contracted the infection while chasing "drug peddlers", and soon the infection spread like "bushfire" within their living quarters.

"There was some negligence on their part, but we were quick in tracing their contacts including the families of those who went on leave and everyone was quarantined," he adds. The Navy cluster, according to official sources, remains the only live cluster at the moment.

ITC eyes full local sourcing for agarbattis

LALATENDU MISHRA

ITC Ltd. has opted for 100% local sourcing of bamboo sticks which are used in its agarbattis.

ITC's Mangaldeep brand has a significant share in the ₹7,400 crore agarbatti market of India which has been seen CAGR of 9% for the last two years.

A bulk of the bamboo sticks currently used in agarbattis are imported into India mainly from China and Vietnam. The imports are worth ₹450 crore to ₹500 crore a year according to industry officials.

Also a large portion of raw agarbattis (agarbattis without fragrance) are imported into the country by most manufacturers.

Ravi Rayavaram, Chief Executive, Agarbatti and Matches Business, ITC, said, "Our initiatives will support the creation of livelihoods in the country."

He said the company was taking further steps in promoting localisation of the agarbatti value chain.

It has started to procure Indian made agarbatti bamboo sticks from the northeastern India. The company has also planted the species of bamboo required for agarbatti sticks in the northeast to secure a local source of raw material for stick making.

"The stick-making value chain in the country has enormous potential to generate superior incomes for bamboo farmers and to generate livelihoods at various stages in the stick-making value chain across nurseries, plantations, harvesting, logistics, stick manufacturing," it said.

It plans to target procuring its entire requirement of agarbatti sticks from within the country over the next 12-18 months.

Extend loans without fear of 3Cs: FM

Banks urged to allow credit flow to eligible borrowers without dreading action by CBI, CVC or CAG

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday said banks had been asked to extend loans automatically to eligible borrowers without 'fear of 3Cs - CBI, CVC and CAG'.

She said clear instructions had been given in a meeting with CEOs and MDs of public sector banks and financial institutions on Friday that the banks should not be scared to extend loans as 100% guarantee is being given by the government.

In case of default, the individual bank or official will not be hauled up, she said in a conversation with BJP leader Nalin Kohli, uploaded on the party's social media platforms. "Yesterday, I reiterated that by saying if a decision goes wrong, and if there is a loss, the government has given 100% guarantee now. It is not at all going to be on the



Anyone eligible for additional term loan or working capital must be given the funds, says the Minister. ■ NAGARA GOPAL

individual official and on the bank, and therefore without fear they should take this automatic route in the sense, everybody eligible for additional term loan and additional working capital should be given," she said.

As part of the ₹20.97 lakh crore economic package, the government announced the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) worth ₹3 lakh crore for the

MSME sector, hit hard by the COVID-19 crisis.

It is being said that the genuine bonafide decisions in the banking sector are being impacted because of the worry of undue harassment by 3Cs - Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) and Comptroller and Audit General (CAG).

The Finance Ministry has taken several steps to allay

those fears including withdrawing some of the notifications which were causing fear among bankers, she said.

"... concerns these banks have had in their minds earlier, may have even now are absolutely well-founded. In fact, through my last 7-8 months, I have [reiterated] at least three different times with the banks to say that the fear of the 3Cs should not be in their minds," she said.

When asked about criticism about leaving many critical sectors including hospitality, auto and civil aviation out of the economic package, Ms. Sitharaman said the government has not taken a sectoral approach but a holistic approach.

"Except agriculture and the power sectors where reforms would be undertaken, other than that, I have not come up with any sectoral reference. What has now be-

come to be called as the MSME package, includes MSME, and also aims at touching others (sectors) too... So the sectors that you are referring to can also be benefited through this," she said.

It is based on the understanding that any enterprise "with a certain exposure to the bank and with a certain invested capital, or with a certain turnover if they need additional term loan, additional working capital in order to buy their own material to restart, in order to be able to pay some fixed cost, it can take that route."

She expressed hope that from June 1, liquidity would start flowing from banks without any new collateral.

During the meeting with bankers, the Minister said it was emphasised that loans should be sanctioned in a simple manner and if possible, digitally to avoid any physical contact.



The pandemic has thrown a challenge to the sector in which human interaction is a necessity. ■ MOHAMMED YOUSUF

Virus set to redefine direct selling industry

Workforce of 5 mn faces shift to online

LALATENDU MISHRA

MUMBAI

India's direct selling industry, providing livelihood to about five million people, is reinventing itself to deal with the adverse impact of COVID-19 pandemic.

It is trying to achieve a balance between human interactions, which is the bedrock of direct selling and online sales, to overcome the crisis.

Anshu Budhraja, CEO, Amway India, said "While we are expecting a short-term to mid-term impact, we are positive about coming out of this stronger than ever.

"COVID-19 has proved to be a catalyst for a smooth transition of our business from the offline to the online. We foresee continued digital transformations at every level of our operations," he said.

tie-up with new vendors for product deliveries at home," he said.

The firm is hoping to stabilise business in the next 45 days and expects to reach 80-90% of pre-lockdown business by July.

"We firmly believe that a new consumer will emerge in the post-COVID-19 era, which will drive new business models while setting the foundation for innovative products and services," he added.

Gautam Bali, MD, Vestige Marketing Pvt. Ltd., said, "At the heart of coping with this crisis is social distancing with everything else becoming secondary. Therefore, human interactions are going to undergo a change, and with it, interpersonal activities are going to get reformed."

Since the direct selling industry is based on community networking, it will have to overcome this unexpected impediment like no other industry.

"There are over five million people employed and earning livelihoods from this industry in India, and it will be of paramount importance for them to continue doing so despite the disruption caused by the current pandemic," Mr. Bali said.

CPCL plans to raise ₹1,000 crore via bonds

Sees lower production, inventory loss

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI

Chennai Petroleum Corp Ltd plans to raise up to ₹1,000 crore through issue of domestic bonds during the current fiscal to meet its financing needs.

The CPCL board has approved a resolution pertaining to the raising of funds through private placement, towards balancing the short term/long term (borrowing) mix, it said in a regulatory filing.

The proposed bond issue would be within the overall borrowing limit of ₹10,000 crore approved by shareholders on August 21, 2019.

As of March 2020, the company had a borrowing of ₹2,953 crore.

On Wednesday, CPCL had reported widening of net loss in the fourth quarter ended March 2020 to ₹1,638 crore, from ₹29 crore a year earlier, on lower crude production and inventory losses. In the period, revenue from operations dipped to ₹1,769 crore from ₹12,765 crore. Due to the losses, the board has not recommended any dividend.

Average gross refining margin for the April-March period is a negative ₹1.18 per barrel compared with ₹3.70 per barrel a year earlier.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

BENGALURU

The pandemic has brought the global auto industry - which was already suffering a slowdown since 2018 - to a complete standstill and the recovery will take at least four to five years, said Bosch in India on Friday.

Bosch Ltd. MD Soumitra Bhattacharya said the industry had gone back by three to four years already due to the slowdown in the economy and Covid-19 has pushed it back by another 1.5 to 2 years. "The whole industry has been affected, and we are not an exception and the

Bosch's March quarter revenue fell 18% to ₹2,236 crore while profit plunged 80% to ₹81 crore

recovery will take long time," he said. Mobility currently accounts for 80% of the company's revenues. "We are affected, short-term, with all four segments of the auto industry having seen declines. However, the long-term outlook is good and we will bounce back. We are confident of growing our share further in the mobility space," he said.

Bosch reported a 24% decline in its mobility business in 2019-20. Its domestic sales dropped 26% and exports fell 6%. Within the mobility segment, electric powertrain solutions too dipped 30% due to the slowdown in the auto sector.

Bosch's March-ended quarter revenues were down 18% to ₹2,236 crore while profit plunged 80% to ₹81 crore.

"The decline is due to the reduced turnover following the slowdown and the impact of the pandemic during the last few days of the quarter," the company said.

INTERVIEW | SANJAY SRIVASTAVA

'Dual advantage to benefit India in 2020, post-COVID'

Country attractive as manufacturing location and as market

LALATENDU MISHRA

When most manufacturing firms across India had to close down factories during the lockdown, integrated industrial ecosystems such as Mahindra World City (MWC) remained operational, enabling units operating there to manufacture as also export. Sanjay Srivastava, business head, Mahindra World City (Jaipur) Ltd. and director, ORIGINS, explains in an interview. Excerpts:

What is the current status of operations?

■ The Mahindra World Cities in Chennai and Jaipur are already home to over 150 companies spanning diverse sectors.

Of these, over 120 companies were operational during pre-COVID-19 times. Companies providing essential products and services continued to remain operational right through the lockdown supporting Indian and global supply chains and markets.

Companies, which were then allowed in subsequent phases as per norms and were willing to resume operations during the lockdown, were able to do so quickly, many of them in under three working days and all, in less than a week.

Currently, almost 70% of the operational companies at MWC Chennai and MWC Jaipur have already restarted operations.

How can Indian industrial ecosystems stay ahead of the curve and remain globally competitive?

■ India has implemented a bold and expeditious lockdown to flatten the curve in the country and save lives. This has also meant a significant drop in economic activity in the short term. India then allowed phased restart

In India, integrated industrial destinations that have ensured continuity of operations through the lockdown will gain prominence, says Mahindra World City's business head



of industrial activities, striking a careful balance between generating livelihoods and saving lives.

What has been the impact of COVID-19 on MWC?

■ A combination of strategic location advantages; robust infrastructure and processes; support from State industrial bodies and local authorities; and committed support teams have ensured that our customers could remain operational in a hassle-free environment with access to 24/7 support services.

Moreover, residents at MWC, Chennai, the Mahindra Group's first integrated city developed under PPP mode in India, were able to enjoy all the benefits of a self-contained integrated city with key social amenities operational - grocery store, hospital and super-market.

Your comments on unlocking manufacturing ecosystem pan India?

■ India has followed a calibrated approach to tackle the phased restart and unlocking of the economy.

Considering the complexities involved, India's journey has been progressive despite the glitches and some roadblocks as we moved on this path.

There are still challenges to be navigated. We have a long way to go, but that's the new normal.

Zaggle, Visa tie up for SME payments

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Zaggle, a financial technology start-up, has announced a partnership with Visa to launch payment solutions for SMEs and start-ups.

"This new partnership will concentrate on creating solutions specific to SMEs and start-ups to improve productivity, efficiency and automate processes and reduce costs along with focusing on easy and faster credit through a unique card which will have forex, pre-paid along with credit," according to the company.

Raj N. Phani, founder, Zaggle, said, "This partnership will help us expand our services and client base who need to improve automation and digitise spends to bring in more transparency."

SRM Tech names Anand Kashyap CEO

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI

SRM Technologies, a part of SRM Group, has appointed Anand Kashyap as its chief executive officer. As CEO, he will lead all strategic and growth initiatives at SRM Tech and its subsidiaries, including TechTrendsIT and GTSSMinds.

As part of the strategic roadmap, SRM Technologies would 'strive to be an indispensable partner for companies as they reshape their business in the digital era, using its framework of Envision-Enhance-Empower-Enable', with special focus on North America, Asia-Pacific and Japan, the company said in a statement.

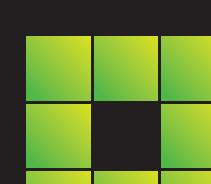
An IT industry veteran of 20 years, he has held leadership roles at Dell Services and Wipro Tech.

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NDE

Phase-1 trial: Adenovirus COVID-19 vaccine found safe, induces immune responses

The vaccine was found to elicit neutralising antibodies and specific T-cell responses

R. PRASAD

A phase-1 trial using a single dose of a vaccine (Ad5-nCoV) was found to be safe, well-tolerated, and able to generate immune responses against novel coronavirus. The vaccine uses a recombinant adenovirus type-5 vector that carries the genetic material that codes for spike glycoprotein of the virus. The adenovirus is a weakened common cold virus.

The trial was carried out in 108 participants aged 18-60 years in Wuhan, China, and had 36 participants each in the low, middle and high-dose groups.

The trial did not involve randomisation of participants and did not have a control arm. The results are based on short duration of follow-up. The results were published in the journal *The Lancet*.

Vaccine safety

The most common adverse reaction was pain at the injection site, fever, headache and muscle pain. Most adverse reactions reported were mild or moderate in severity. No serious adverse event was noted within 28 days post-vaccination.

In animals studies, seven out of eight ferrets were protected when challenged by the virus 21 days after immunisation with the vaccine.

The vaccine was found to elicit neutralising antibodies, which



On target: The vaccine uses an adenovirus vector that carries the genetic material that codes for spike glycoprotein of the virus. ■ GETTY IMAGES

peaked at day 28 post-vaccination, while rapid specific T-cell responses peaked at day 14 after vaccination.

The antibody response to the vaccine in the high-dose group was slightly greater than that in the middle-dose and low-dose groups.

Immune response

After 28 days, most participants had a fourfold increase in binding antibodies. Meanwhile, 18 (50%) participants in the low-dose group, 18 (50%) in the middle-dose group, and 27

(75%) in the high-dose group showed neutralising antibodies against the virus.

The vaccine also stimulated a rapid T cell response in the majority of volunteers, which was greater in those given the higher- and middle-doses of the vaccine, with levels peaking at 14 days after vaccination. But 28 days after vaccination, the majority of recipients showed either a positive T cell response or had detectable neutralising antibodies against the virus.

The pre-existing immunity to adenovirus type-5 vector used in the vaccine, regardless of the vaccine doses, could reduce the immune responses (both neutralising antibodies and T-cell response) to the virus. It also lowers the peak of the responses, particularly for neutralising antibodies immunity.

Recipients aged 45-60 years seemed to have lower seroconversion of neutralising antibody compared with the younger recipients.

In the study, 44%-56% of participants had high pre-existing immunity to adenovirus type-5, and had a less positive neutralising antibody and T-cell response to the vaccine, they note.

Phase-2 trials

The researchers will be testing the low- and middle-dose vaccine in phase-2 trials. "We selected doses for the phase-2 study mainly on the basis of the safety profile of the candidate vaccines shown in the participants within seven days and 14 days post-vaccination" they note.

The phase-2 trial will be a randomised, double-blinded, placebo-controlled trial. The vaccine will be tested on 500 healthy adults – 250 volunteers will get the middle dose, 125 will get the low dose, and 125 will receive a placebo. The trial will include participants over 60 years and will be carried out in Wuhan.

Blood clots in the lung may be a major cause of COVID-19 deaths

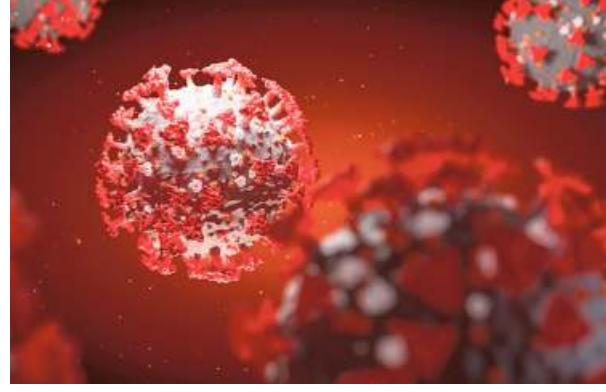
Many infected patients had elevated levels of a marker of thrombosis in blood vessels

ALOK SRIVASTAVA

The major fear of COVID-19 infection is the significant fatality associated with it. Even though death from this infection has been relatively low in India and is <1% in Tamil Nadu, given the very large number of people infected, significant numbers continue to die. Based on the data available so far, it is clear that the cause of death in almost all patients is respiratory failure. What is its cause? Unlike what would be expected in a viral infection in the lungs, it is not the pneumonia itself, like in most previous influenza outbreaks, but rather surprisingly it is early and progressive clotting of blood in the lungs (pulmonary thrombosis) which impairs blood supply and gas exchange leading to respiratory failure. This mechanism is supported by several levels of evidence.

First, it has been recognised from the very early reports that very high proportions of patients with COVID-19 infection presenting to hospitals had elevated levels of d-dimer, a general marker of thrombosis in blood vessels.

Those with highly elevated d-dimer levels were more prone to severe respiratory



Most needed: The critical need is for early recognition and intervention with blood thinners for COVID-19 patients. ■ GETTY IMAGES

complications and death. In most of these patients, there are no other sites of thrombosis to explain the raised d-dimer such as the leg veins which is much more common but has only been reported in a few patients late in their illness after they have been in the hospital for several days.

Strongest evidence

Second, the strongest evidence for this extensive microvascular thrombosis comes from several autopsy studies from different countries. All these have shown extensive blood clots in the small vessels of the lung (microvascular thrombosis - MVT) with only modest evi-

dence of the pneumonia suggesting that it is the blood clots which cause poor oxygenation and respiratory failure.

Endothelial cells

Third, it is also known now that the receptors on the cells in the air-pockets of the lung which allow entry to the COVID-19 virus into those cells, are shared by the endothelial cells which line the blood vessels of the lung. Autopsy studies have confirmed distinct infection in these cells which then trigger blood clotting in the small blood vessels. If not controlled immediately, this rapidly extends and leads to treatment unresponsive re-

piratory failure.

Fourth, the manifestation of 'silent pneumonia' or 'silent hypoxia' that is being increasingly recognised even in the lay media where relatively well-looking people have low blood oxygen and then suddenly collapse, most likely due to extending pulmonary thrombosis.

Other mechanisms of lung damage could also cause death in a few patients but formation of blood clots in the lung is the most consistent problem in nearly all cases.

Need for interventions

The critical need therefore is for early recognition and intervention with blood thinners (anti-coagulation) in this illness and with appropriate doses. This can be easily implemented in all hospitals based on some simple assessments:

Rate of breathing at rest (say above 20/minute) and lowered level of oxygen in the finger (pulse-oximeter, which is easily checked in hospitals at presentation - less than 93%) even when they look relatively well. If possible, d-dimer levels should be checked immediately. If found to be elevated (more than 2-3 fold above normal), this would indicate

the evolving condition in the lung. Such patients should immediately receive commonly used blood thinners such as heparin or low molecular weight heparin (LMWH) in therapeutic doses till the symptoms resolve. In those with higher risks of complications, preventive doses of LMWH have been advised soon after diagnosis. These medicines may be contraindicated in certain situations. So proper medical supervision is necessary. Careful monitoring for adverse effects must also be done.

It is important therefore that the public as well as health care professionals be aware of this problem of blood clots in the lung whose severity is unique to COVID-19. There is of course need for more studies to determine the right doses at the right stages of the disease. While such must be considered, they will never include all the patients infected but who must all receive blood thinners as indicated. This strategy has been shown to be effective and will reduce the mortality due to COVID-19 infections in India even further.

(The writer is a professor of medicine at the Christian Medical College, Vellore)

'Visual perception is not about just making a replica'

A case study of a patient who saw everything upside down

SHUBASHREE DESIKAN

Neuroscientist Vilayanur S. Ramachandran has made path-breaking advances in the study of the human brain. Prof. Ramachandran, Director of the Centre for Brain and Cognition, University of California, San Diego, and Professor of Biology at the Salk Institute discusses an astonishing case of a patient who saw everything upside down.



V.S. Ramachandran ■ RAGU

is the way your brain is wired," he explains.

Visual perception is not about just making a replica. Prof. Ramachandran explains: "You learn in school that your eye is like a camera lens and that it inverts the image and your brain sets it right by inverting it again. But this is wrong, because there is no picture in the

brain. We accepted the explanation in school, but it's wrong, unless the teacher were being metaphorical!"

In the case of the patient who was saying that he was seeing things upside down, Prof. Ramachandran proceeded by showing him a matrix of faces in a computer screen, most of them were right side up and one was up-

side down. In normal people, the brain immediately spots the upside-down image. But if only one is right side up and all the rest are upside down, the brain is unable to identify the right-side up face.

"We found that unlike normal people he was better at discriminating inverted faces than upright faces. I suspect that this may be because his face recognition centre, buried in the temporal lobes, is only partially damaged. When the wave of neural activity first arrives, it cannot avoid triggering the partial activation and partial engagement of the face-recognition module - but given the damage in the module, it fails completely. But if an upside down face is viewed, the triggering doesn't occur, so you are 'allowed' to switch strategies and try using other tricks - like point-by-point

comparison of features to determine the extent of similarity." He goes on to describe an experimental scheme called Johansson's point light walker. It is a drawing consisting of bright points, and when the light points move in synchronicity, the brain constructs a human "walker" from it. If we turn the "point-light walker" image upside down the brain does not complete the image to make out a person from the points. But with this patient who claims to see things upside down, it's just the other way around. He cannot see the "walker" when they are right side up but sees them when the screen is placed upside down.

Now, why does this happen, what is wrong with the brain?

As Prof. Ramachandran says, very early, during image processing, in the retina,

Faeces samples can harbour infectious coronavirus, study finds

This raises the potential for faecal-oral or faecal-respiratory transmission through aerosolised faeces

R. PRASAD

Researchers from China have isolated infectious novel coronavirus from faeces of a patient who died. While other researchers were able to show viral RNA in urine and faeces samples using molecular tests, such studies have not been able to tell if the virus was infectious in nature. The latest study by a team led by Jincun Zhao from Guangzhou Institute of Respiratory Health, Guangzhou in China was able to confirm infectiousness of the virus isolated from faeces samples.

Confirmation of infectious virus in faeces samples raises the potential for faecal-oral or faecal-respiratory transmission through aerosolised faeces. The results were published in the journal *Emerging Infectious Diseases*.

During the 2003 SARS pandemic, 329 residents of a private housing estate in Hong Kong were infected and 42 died. Investigation of the building's structure showed that faulty sewage pipelines led to aerosolisation of contaminated faeces, which was believed to be the source of infection.

"Our findings indicate the need for appropriate precautions to avoid potential transmission of SARS-CoV-2 from faeces. Discharge and hospital cleaning practices should consider this possibility for critically ill patients or those who died who had high viral loads and are more likely to shed infectious virus," they write.



New mode: There is a need to think beyond transmission through droplets and devise precautions to avoid transmission of coronavirus from faeces. ■ NAGARA GOPAL

Earlier, another team of researchers from China were able to isolate the virus from a single stool specimen and culture the virus. This led to the World Health Organization recognising that "coronavirus infection may lead to intestinal infection and be present in faeces".

According to the WHO, there are "no reports of faecal-oral transmission of the COVID-19 virus" so far.

The main routes of transmission for SARS-CoV-2 viruses so far known include droplet transmission and contact with contaminated surfaces. On March 29, the WHO recognised airborne transmission of novel coronavirus. In airborne transmission, the virus is present within droplet nuclei, which are generally considered to be particles less than 5 micrometres in diameter, can remain in the air for long periods of time and be transmitted to others over distances greater than one metre.

On January 17, 2020, a 78-year-old man who had a history

of recent travel to Wuhan, China, was admitted to a hospital. The first faeces specimen was collected on January 27 and tested positive for viral RNA. Researchers also collected samples on three more days, and all samples were positive for viral RNA. They were able to isolate, culture the virus and even sequence the whole genome of the virus. The viral load was higher in faeces than in respiratory specimens collected at multiple time points (17-28 days after symptom onset), they write.

In all, the researchers collected faeces specimens from 28 patients and were able to isolate the virus from two of the three patients.

This indicates that infectious virus in faeces is a "common manifestation" of COVID-19, they say.

Monkeys stay resistant to reinfection

R. PRASAD

Evidence from studies carried out on rhesus macaque monkeys suggest that once infected with novel coronavirus, the animals may be protected against reinfection. Though early, this is an encouraging news that vaccines when developed may be able to elicit immune response - humoral and cellular immune responses - to protect individuals from infection.

On day 35, following initial viral infection, all the nine monkeys were re-exposed or challenged with the same three doses of the virus. Compared with three monkeys that were not earlier infected with the virus, all the nine animals that were challenged showed very less virus in the lungs on day one and no virus on subsequent days.

In the case of the nose, the viral load was higher than in the lungs but lower than when exposed for the first time (to induce infection). The viral load in the lungs, nose after the challenge showed "rapid decline".

The researchers next evaluated different immune responses by animals that were

infected by the virus. They found that all nine animals developed binding antibody responses to the spike protein of virus and neutralising antibody responses, too. In addition, antibody responses of multiple subclasses were found.

Declining viral load

On day 35, following initial viral infection, all the nine monkeys were re-exposed or challenged with the same three doses of the virus. Compared with three monkeys that were not earlier infected with the virus, all the nine animals that were challenged showed very less virus in the lungs on day one and no virus on subsequent days.

In the case of the nose, the viral load was higher than in the lungs but lower than when exposed for the first time (to induce infection). The viral load in the lungs, nose after the challenge showed "rapid decline".

"Little or no clinical disease was observed in the

animals following rechallenge," they write. What that indicates is that all the nine monkeys mounted an antibody response to the second dose of the virus, suggesting that immune systems could successfully eliminate the virus and protect the animals.

While there is currently no data available in humans suggesting that those have been infected are protected from re-infection, leading to the WHO to caution against using immunity passport while lifting lockdowns, the results from the animals are reassuring. "In this study, we demonstrate that SARS-CoV-2 infection in rhesus macaques provided protective efficacy against rechallenge," they write.

"However, it is critical to emphasize that there are important differences between SARS-CoV-2 infection in macaques and humans, with many parameters still yet to be defined in both species, and thus our data should be interpreted cautiously," they caution.

ability to do this correctly. On the other hand, if the 'what pathway' is damaged, the converse happens.

Another possibility is that both the ventral and dorsal (parietal lobe, how pathway) streams were affected equally. But then he started recovering his dorsal stream functions by relearning it.

"Like, he reaches out his hand to pick up something and when it is wrong he relearns the whole thing. After being crude and slow at first, after the relearning process, he is able to point and place his hand correctly," he explains.

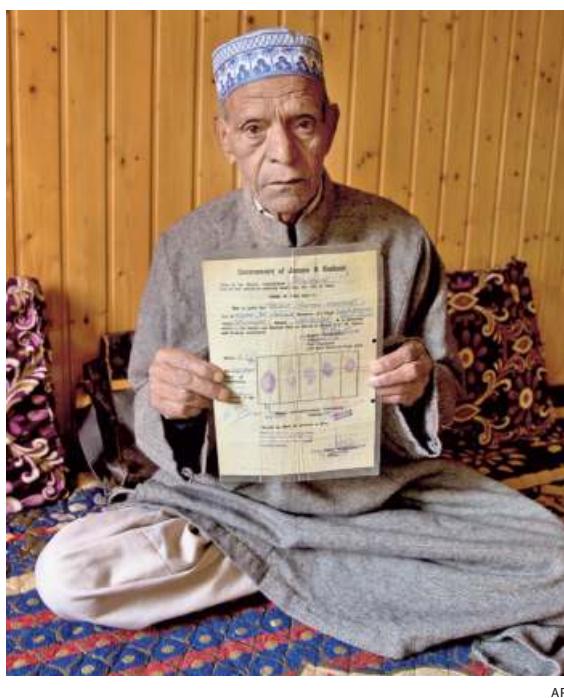
For the ventral stream however, such a learning process cannot happen because there is no feedback. For instance, when trying to identify different faces he does not get any immediate internal feedback, so he cannot relearn them. But this does not explain why he

sees things upside down. If the pathway is damaged, he should see things randomly, so why is he seeing them upside down?

Primitive mechanism

Prof. Ramachandran says: "The only thing I can think of is that there is a primitive, default mechanism (evolutionarily ancient mechanism) in the brain which allows something like rotation or inversion to occur before further processing, and his brain has partially reverted to that mode." He adds, quickly, "But that's not really an explanation." As for a cure, that is still some distance away. "We need to do some brain imaging - not a fishing expedition as it often is, but to rule out or confirm our ideas," he concludes.

(The full version of this article is available online at <http://bit.ly/Vilayanur>)



Domicile rules for J&K

When was the new policy introduced and how will it impact the people of the erstwhile State?

VIJAYTA SINGH

The story so far: On March 31, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) issued the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation (Adaptation of State Laws) Order, 2020 by publishing a gazette notification. Through the order, the MHA amended 109 laws and repealed 29 laws of the erstwhile State of Jammu and Kashmir. The MHA amended a 2010 legislation, the Jammu and Kashmir Civil Services (Decentralisation and Recruitment Act), by substituting the term "permanent residents" with "domiciles of UT [Union Territory] of J&K".

What did the 2010 Act say? The 2010 Act pertained to employment in the Civil Services comprising "district, divisional and State" cadre posts. Earlier, only permanent residents of J&K were eligible to apply for gazetted and non-gazetted posts. The domicile rules as defined under the amended order will determine recruitment to all government posts in J&K from now on.

On May 20, the Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi gave ex-post facto approval to the order. On August 5, 2019, Parliament had diluted Article 370 of the Constitution, revoked the special status of J&K and bifurcated the State into two Union Territories – of J&K and Ladakh, the latter without a Legislative Assembly.

The two main political parties, the National Conference (NC) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), have opposed the order saying 'it was aimed at changing the demography' of Jammu & Kashmir. The two revoked provisions of the Constitution let the J&K Legislature decide the "permanent residents", prohibiting a non-J&K resident from buying property there and ensuring job reservation for its residents.

What are the main features of the new policy? The March 31 order offered protection to domiciles only in Group D and entry-level non-gazetted government posts. After an uproar by the J&K unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) which raised concerns that protecting only lower level jobs for domiciles was an insult to the residents, the MHA reversed the order within 72 hours. The newly formed Apni Party also opposed it. On April 3, a fresh order with six changes was issued saying the policy will apply to "any post" in the government. The order defines domiciles as anyone "who has resided for a period of 15 years in the UT of J&K or has studied for a period of seven years and appeared in Class 10th/12th examination in an educational institution located in the UT of J&K or who is registered as a migrant by the Relief and Rehabilitation Commissioner (Migrants)". It said that children of central government officials including the all India services, public sector units, autonomous body of Centre, Public Sector Banks, officials of statutory bodies, central universities and recognised research institutes of the Centre who have served in J&K for a "total period of 10 years" will be domiciles. The domicile status also applies to "children of such residents of J&K who reside outside J&K in connection with their employment or business or other professional or vocational reasons but their parents should fulfil any of the conditions provided". It will allow West Pakistan refugees and children of women who married non-locals to apply for jobs in J&K. The power to issue domicile certificates has been vested in the tehsildar (revenue officer). According to MHA's reply to a parliamentary panel on February 18, there are over 84,000 vacancies in J&K of which 22,078 vacancies pertain to Class IV employees, 54,375 to non-gazetted, and 7,552 vacancies are at the gazetted level.

What are the rules for grant of domicile certificate? On May 18, the J&K administration notified the J&K grant of domicile certificate procedure rules, 2020 to issue the certificates within 15 days, saying the officer not able to do so will be penalised ₹50,000 of his or her salary. Residents of J&K who live outside the erstwhile State can get domicile certificates by simply producing their Permanent Residence Certificate (PRC), ration card copy, voter card or any other valid document. Those migrants not registered with the Relief and Rehabilitation department can do so by providing documents such as electoral rolls of 1988, proof of registration as a migrant in any State in the country or any other valid document. There is a provision to get the certificate online too.

Why is the policy being opposed? The two main political parties, the National Conference (NC) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), have opposed the order saying "it was aimed at changing the demography" of J&K. The NC said in a statement that the amended domicile law was made in exercise of power under the J&K Reorganization Act 2019 that has been challenged in a number of petitions before the Supreme Court of India. The PDP said that it will resist the policy by democratic and peaceful means. It said the COVID-19 pandemic was not a deterrent for the Centre to continue with its project to disempower J&K and that the demographic change and disenfranchisement will further complicate the J&K issue.

What explains the India-China border flare-up?

Which are the tension points? Why has the Line of Actual Control not been clearly demarcated? Why is there a stalemate in boundary talks?

ANANTH KRISHNAN

The story so far: The India-China border has been witnessing tensions over the past month, with incidents reported in at least four different locations along the Line of Actual Control (LAC). On May 14, Indian Army Chief General Manoj Naravane said incidents at the Pangong lake in Ladakh on May 5 and at Naku La in Sikkim on May 9 had led to injuries, caused by "aggressive behaviour on both sides". He said the two sides had disengaged. Stand-offs at two other spots in Ladakh, in the Galwan valley and in Demchok, have reportedly escalated with a build-up of troops by both sides. On May 22, General Naravane visited the Leh-based 14 Corps headquarters in Ladakh to assess the situation.

Why do face-offs occur?

Face-off and stand-off situations occur along the LAC in areas where India and China have overlapping claim lines. The LAC has never been demarcated. Differing perceptions are particularly acute in around two dozen spots across the Western (Ladakh), Middle (Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand), Sikkim, and Eastern (Arunachal Pradesh) sectors of the India-China border. The boundary in the Sikkim sector is broadly agreed, but has not been delineated. Face-offs occur when patrols encounter each other in the contested zones between overlapping claim lines. Protocols agreed to in 2005 and 2013 detail rules of engagement to prevent such incidents, but have not always been adhered to.

What is behind the latest tensions?

The stand-off in Galwan valley, according to reports, was triggered by China moving in troops and equipment to stop construction activity by India. Delhi says this was well within India's side of the LAC. The LAC was thought to be settled in this area which has not seen many incidents in the past, but China now appears to think otherwise. The northern bank of Pangong lake has, however, been a point of contention where there are differing perceptions of the LAC.

The incident in Sikkim is somewhat unexpected as the contours of the LAC are broadly agreed to in this sector. The broader context for the tensions appears to be a changing dynamic along the LAC, as India plays catch-up in improving infrastructure there. China has enjoyed an advantage in infrastructure as well as terrain that is more favourable to mobilisation. Previous agreements between the two countries have recognised both sides' need for "mutual and equal security", implicitly taking into consideration the different – and more difficult – terrain on India's side that hinders mobilisation from depth.

Why has not the LAC been clarified?

India has long proposed an exercise to clarify differing perceptions of the LAC to prevent such incidents. Maps were exchanged in the Middle Sector, but the exercise fell through in the Western Sector where divergence is the



Pressure points: An Army patrol along the Line of Actual Control. • FILE PHOTO/DINAKAR PERI

greatest. China has since rejected this exercise, viewing it as adding another complication to the on-going boundary negotiations. India's argument is rather than agree on one LAC, the exercise could help both sides understand the claims of the other, paving the way to regulate activities in contested areas until a final settlement of the boundary dispute.

What is the state of boundary negotiations?

The 22nd round of talks between the Special Representatives, National Security Adviser Ajit Doval and China's State Councillor Wang Yi, was held in Delhi in December 2019. Both "agreed that an early settlement of the boundary question serves the fundamental interests of both countries" and "resolved to intensify their efforts to achieve a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable solution". In 2005, an agreement on political parameters and guiding principles completed the first of three stages of the talks. The current, and most difficult, stage involves agreeing a framework to resolve the dispute in all sectors. The final step will involve delineating and demarcating the boundary in maps and on the ground.

What are the prospects of a settlement?

The likelihood appears remote. The main differences are in the Western and Eastern sectors. India sees China as occupying 38,000 sq km in Aksai Chin. In the east, China claims as much as 90,000 sq km, extending all across Arunachal Pradesh. A swap was hinted at by China in 1960 and in the early 1980s, which would have essentially formalised the status quo. Both sides have now ruled out the status quo as a settlement, agreeing to meaningful and mutual adjustments. At the same time, the most realistic solution will involve only minor adjustments along the LAC, considering neither side will be willing to part with territory already held.

The 2005 agreement said both sides "shall safeguard

due interests of their settled populations in border areas". One particular sticking point appears to involve China's claims to Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh, which has been increasingly referenced in public statements in recent years. Dai Bingguo, Mr. Wang's predecessor, said in 2017 that "the disputed territory in the eastern sector, including Tawang, is inalienable from China's Tibet in terms of cultural background and administrative jurisdiction".

The Tawang demand is, however, more a symptom than the root of the problem. In truth, China knows ceding Tawang will be impossible for any Indian

government to consider. The broader issue appears to be a fundamental difference in how both sides view the boundary question.

As one Chinese scholar put it in 2018, "China's experience indicates that resolving border disputes is usually the result, rather than the cause, of improvement in relations. But India insists that its relations with China won't improve fundamentally until the border dispute is

resolved." Therein lies the crux of the problem. In some sense, Beijing appears to view an unsettled border as holding some leverage with India, one of the many pressure points it could use to keep India off-guard. Until that strategic calculus – and China's broader view of its relations with India – changes, the stalemate will likely endure.

Why are India and Nepal fighting over Kalapani?

What is the strategic importance of the region? Why do both sides stake claim to the area?

KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE

The story so far: The dispute over Kalapani, which lies on the easternmost corner of Uttarakhand's Pithoragarh district, between Nepal and India was revived in November 2019 when India published a revised political map showing the newly created Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. Both India and Nepal lay claim to Kalapani. The map showed Kalapani as part of Pithoragarh district. Nepal protested immediately and drew attention to the lingering issue. On May 8, India inaugurated the Darchula-Lipulekh pass link road, cutting across the disputed Kalapani area which is used by Indian pilgrims to Kailash Mansarovar. Nepal hit back by summoning the Indian Ambassador to Nepal, Vinay Mohan Kwatra, to convey a formal protest.

Where is Kalapani located?

Kalapani is a region located in the easternmost corner of Uttarakhand's Pithoragarh district. It shares a border on the north with the Tibet Autonomous Region of China and Nepal in the east and south. The region resembles a slice of cake wedged in between Limpiyadhura, Lipulekh and Kalapani. The area is in India's control but Nepal claims the region because of historical and cartographic reasons. The area is the largest territorial dispute between Nepal and India consisting of at least 37,000 hectares of land in the High Himalayas.

What is the cause of the dispute?

The Kalapani region derives its name from the river Kali. Nepal's claims to the region is based on this river as it became the marker of the boundary of the kingdom of Nepal following the Treaty of Sugauli signed between the Gurkha rulers of Kathmandu and the East India Company after the Gurkha War/Anglo-Nepal War (1814-16). The treaty was ratified in 1816. According to the treaty, Nepal lost the regions of Kumaon-Garhwal in the west and Sikkim in the east. According to Article 5, the King of Nepal gave up his claims over the region west of the river Kali which originates in the High Himalayas and flows into the great plains of the Indian subcontinent. According to the treaty, the British rulers recognised Nepal's right to the region that fell to the east of the river Kali. Here lies the historic origin of the dispute.

According to Nepal's experts, the east of the Kali river should begin at the source of the river. The source according to them is in the mountains near Limpiyadhura, which is higher in altitude than the rest of



the river's flow. Nepal claims that a land mass, high in the mountains that falls to the east of the entire stretch starting from Limpiyadhura downwards, is theirs.

India on the other hand says the border begins at Kalapani which India says is where the river begins. The dispute is mainly because of the varying interpretation of the origin of the river and its various tributaries that slice through the mountains. While Nepal's claim of the territory east of Kali is based on the Limpiyadhura origin, India says the river actually takes the name Kali near Kalapani.

Why is Lipulekh pass important?

The region juts into the Himalayas and is connected to the other side of the mountain range through the Lipulekh pass, which has been used for centuries by Hindu and Buddhist pilgrims and tourists on their way to Kailash Mansarovar. The nearby markets have been used by various mountain communities. The Himalayas have several passes that connect the Gangetic region with the Tibetan plateau but Lipulekh is strategically located as it is nearest to the heart of the Indian state or the National Capital Region and can be of particular concern in case of an armed conflict with China.

What are Nepal's claims regarding Lipulekh pass?

The importance of Himalayan passes with the Tibetan plateau was amply highlighted in the 1962 war. During that war, Chinese forces used the pass of Se La in Tawang and reached the Brahmaputra plains in the east. The military defeat in the east clearly demonstrated that weakly guarded passes were a major vulnerability of Indian military preparedness against China. In comparison to Se La which was somewhat fortified, Lipulekh was vulnerable.

Nepali analysts say that King Mahendra was concerned that India would take military steps to forcefully take the region of Kalapani to secure the mountain pass. He reached an agreement with Delhi and handed over the region for security purposes to India. According to another interpretation subscribed to by Kanak Mani Dixit, India, worried over an aggressive China in the 1950s, got the King of Nepal to agree to a proposal to station 18 military outposts along Nepal's northern frontier. In 1969, under bilateral negotiations all the posts were removed barring Kalapani.

Former Indian Ambassador to Nepal Jayant Prasad says the region was always a part of India and India's claims to the area are based on British Indian maps dating back to the 19th century. When pilgrimage to Kailash Mansarovar paused with the takeover of Tibet by Chinese forces in

the mid-1950s, India deployed troops at the Lipulekh pass in 1959, according to Mr. Prasad, who was part of the Eminent Persons Group formed in February 2016 to ensure frank conversation between India and Nepal on controversial issues.

Where have Nepal and India erred?

India and China were in clear violation of Nepal's concerns during the 2015 Lipulekh agreement between India and China which renewed India's Mansarovar pilgrimage connection. Neither side consulted Nepal or sought its opinion before that agreement that boosted pilgrimage and trade to Tibet. Nepal's then Prime Minister, the late Sushil Koirala, reportedly cancelled a visit to Delhi following this agreement. Diplomats also maintain that India should have resolved the issue with Nepal when the late Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala raised it with India during the 2006 India visit when Prime Minister Manmohan Singh received him at the airport in Delhi. Indian officials suggested that it could be resolved later. Analysts now say South Block should have acted promptly on Koirala's suggestion. Though Nepal has been steadfast in citing the Sugauli treaty as the foundation of its territorial claims, on occasion, some of the new generation leaders have spoken against the treaty. According to Uddhab Pyakurel of Kathmandu University, Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda" for example had indicated frustration with the Treaty of Sugauli after his Prime Ministerial stint in 2009 saying that the treaty had become irrelevant and championed the cause of a Greater Nepal going into the region west of the Kali. This shows that the Nepali claim based on the Sugauli treaty is not consistent either.

What is the current position?

Nepal has published a revised official map incorporating the territory from the Limpiyadhura source of the Kali to Kalapani and Lipulekh pass in the northeast of the triangular region as its territory. On May 22, the Cabinet led by Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli registered a constitution amendment motion to grant constitutional status to the map. Indian observers say this move makes any future solution on the Kalapani issue nearly impossible as a constitutional guarantee will make Kathmandu's position inflexible.

Cricketing stars bat for more training over plush stadium

Govt. backs off from a plan to build a stadium after Jayawardene and others oppose the move

COLOMBO



All it took was a tweet from cricketing legend Mahela Jayawardene.

Within five days, the Sri Lankan government did a virtual U-turn, putting on hold its decision to build a cricket stadium near Colombo.

Last Sunday, media reported Cabinet Minister Bandula Gunawardena's announcement that Sri Lanka's biggest international cricket stadium, with a seating capacity of 40,000, would come up in Homagama, about 20 km southeast of Colombo. Visiting the site, where the government had allocated 26 acres, he said the construction would be completed in three years. The estimated cost was \$30-40 million.

However, the announcement and

its timing drew instant reactions from citizens. While some questioned the government's priority, when the country's economy is struggling in the face of the coronavirus pandemic, others, including top cricketers, argued that the money could be used in better ways, within the scope of improving cricketing standards in the country.

In what seemed like a casual reaction at that time, former Sri Lankan captain Jayawardene said in a tweet: "We don't even play enough international cricket or domestic first class cricket in the existing stadiums we have... Do we need another one?" accompanied by shock-face and face-palm emojis. The tweet went viral in no time. His message also drew critical responses and attacks from government supporters.

But Mr. Jayawardene was not alone. Former Sri Lankan opener

and ex-ICC match referee Roshan Mahanama told the media that instead of putting in large amounts of money into a plush stadium, Sri Lanka could opt for a good programme to develop the game. This position drew more political attention when they received support from unlikely quarters – Namal Rajapaksa and Yoshitha Rajapaksa, sons of Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa. Namal Rajapaksa, a former MP from the southern Hambantota district, tweeted that Mr. Jayawardene had a valid point, while Yoshitha Rajapaksa called for greater focus on finding and honing talent.

Meanwhile, Sri Lanka Cricket, which manages the sport in the country, issued a statement noting that the project was an entirely private investment from the Board, and that no funds will be sought from the government.

But for icons like Mr. Jayawardene, the disagreement was not so much about the source of the funds, or the cost itself. It was more about



where the funds could be better used in Sri Lanka, a nation where the craze for cricket begins at school and never stops. The country reserves the title "big matches" not for some big international tournaments, but for those played between well-

known, mostly urban schools annually. These games – some played for over a century now – attract huge crowds, including from past pupils living abroad, who travel to Sri Lanka every year to watch their school team play.

All the same, those more invested in lifting standards nationally, have been calling for greater investment in infrastructure and training, especially in rural areas where talent seldom finds attention.

Unconvincing explanation

Mr. Jayawardene too found SLC's explanation, making a case for the stadium to boost Sri Lanka's chances to host international tournaments, unconvincing. In a twitter thread, he noted that Sri Lanka had already hosted a World Twenty20 and co-hosted a 50-over World Cup, with its existing venues. "You first bid for the WC and if you get it, then with the financial assistance from the @ICC you construct infrastructure," he told the Board, adding you don't

build a stadium for \$40 million "hoping to get a WC in 10-15 years' time."

Already, the 35,000-capacity Mahinda Rajapaksa International Cricket Stadium in southern Hambantota district, built with billions of rupees in time for the 2011 World Cup, has remained what critics call a "white elephant" that has hosted just 28 matches in nearly a decade. On Thursday, PM Rajapaksa convened a meeting, with Mr. Jayawardene, Kumar Sangakkara, Roshan Mahanama, Sanath Jayasuriya and Lasith Malinga. The players weighed in, making a case for better infrastructure and training across the country, over one plush stadium.

Following the high-level meeting, the government announced suspending its decision to build a new stadium. One of the most prolific batsmen in the world with a combined international tally of 25,957 runs and a personal high of 374 in Tests, the highest innings by a Sri Lankan, had scored another big one. This time with a single tweet!

Settlement without peace

Abdullah's new job is to lead talks with Taliban at a time when President Ghani is going for war

KABUL



After months of political discord, following an already delayed election, and disputed results that saw two simultaneous presidential inaugurations, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and his political opponent Abdullah Abdullah came to a power-sharing agreement on March 17.

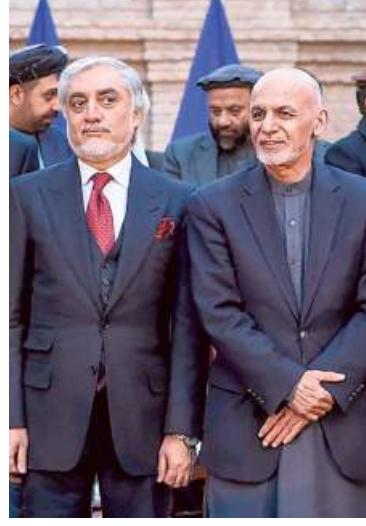
While President Ghani was declared the winner of the September 2019 elections by the country's Independent Election Commission, Mr. Abdullah alleged election fraud and declared himself as the rightful winner, ensuing over two months of political uncertainty.

The latest agreement is the result of many rounds of negotiation between the two rival leaders and pres-

sure from the U.S., following a visit by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who also threatened to cut \$1 billion in aid to Afghanistan unless a settlement was reached.

According to the deal, President Ghani will retain the presidency, while Mr. Abdullah will assume a newly created office of the Chairman of the High Council for Peace and National Reconciliation. He will also be appointing 50% of the Afghan Cabinet and other provincial offices. "The agreement is not a privilege or a handout," Mr. Abdullah said during the signing ceremony. "It's rooted in the last election and every clean vote. It comes at a very difficult time when we face serious threats," he said, referring to the increasing violence in Afghanistan.

In his new role, Mr. Abdullah will be responsible for leading the much-delayed intra-Afghan talks with the



Taliban. "Dr Abdullah's new office is charged with the task of not just starting negotiations but also with building a national, regional and international consensus for peace," explained Zalmay Nishat, a close aide to Mr. Abdullah. "There are many

factions within Afghanistan that still need to be addressed.

The process also needs to include voices of women, civil society, political figures and even the war victims who still seek justice. And lastly, there is a need to balance the interest of the international community that has invested here," he elaborated.

Continuing attacks
However, despite the momentary relief, Afghan analysts remain sceptical whether the agreement will provide the stability needed to initiate the peace negotiation with the insurgent group, which has continued to attack Afghan forces and civilians despite making a deal with the U.S. in February to end the 19-year-long conflict.

The growing violence in the country has already brought the current administration to an impasse with the Taliban who they blame for the increasing attacks. President Ghani launched an offensive against the Taliban following the recent attack on a

maternity hospital in the Afghan capital that resulted in 24 deaths, including babies, pregnant women and health workers. He also suspended the release of Taliban prisoners that was promised by the U.S. in their deal to the Taliban as a trust-building gesture ahead of intra-Afghan talks.

"Being the go-to guy for peace talks, Abdullah will have to deliver by starting the talks. However, there are times like these when Ghani will push for military operations. There will be a difference of opinion between the President and Abdullah on this very matter," reasoned Hekmatullah Azamy, deputy director at the Kabul-based Centre for Conflict and Peace Studies. "I anticipate in the coming days that there will be certain blame-gaming between the two, where Abdullah will ask to move forward on the peace talks but Ghani might want to focus on the military approach."

Mr. Nishat, Mr. Abdullah's aide, expressed similar concerns for the future implementation of the deal. "There is the war rhetoric and peace rhetoric within the administration in Afghanistan. If the war rhetoric is stronger, its implications will block efforts of prisoner release [and initiating talks], which could translate to an increase in violence," he said. "It will create friction between the two. That is my worry."

Additionally, the deal also provides Mr. Abdullah the security and protocol privileges of the "second person" in the country after the President, a position usually held by the Vice-President. While President Ghani's Vice-President, Amrullah Saleh, has not commented on the issue, he was not present at the signing ceremony.

Despite the challenges, those watching the development closely remain hopeful for an optimistic outcome. "Dr. Abdullah's success and progress will depend on the team he builds around him, and also on the kind of support he receives from the Americans," Mr. Azamy said.

Right-wing militias on the loose

Paramilitaries that support Bolsonaro threaten to kill judges, politicians, prosecutors and Mayors

SAO PAULO



On Wednesday, a police team picked up two men from a luxury condominium by a lake in Brasilia. They also seized posters with photos of heavily-armed men in full military gear, calling for a military coup in Brazil. The suspects had sent a mail, titled "Death sentence to the traitors of the motherland", to the country's top judges.

"We call on the people to kill politicians, judges, prosecutors, Mayors, their advisers, relatives, and demons of all sorts in defence of themselves," the mail said. For a year, judges have been receiving death threats from anonymous groups. A Supreme Court judge, Celso de Mello, said on Thursday the people behind the

threats were "fascists" and "Bolsonaristas" – the fanatic followers of President Jair Bolsonaro.

Under Mr. Bolsonaro, the system of checks and balances between the institutions has been breaking as the far-right leader often projects the Supreme Court and Congress as his enemies. But the most vicious attacks on these institutions come from the Bolsonarista groups, which are hyper-active on social media, with a massive troll army crammed with fake accounts and bots. Their weapon of choice is fake news.

"Extreme right-wing groups work tirelessly to delegitimise the democratic institutions in Brazil. These groups make and distribute fake news as a way to take advantage of people's fears and vulnerabilities. As people hope for a solution and as a fix to the fears, they promote the narrative of pro-military interven-

tion," said David Nemer, an assistant professor of Media Studies at the University of Virginia, who tracks social media trends.

Since 2018, when Mr. Bolsonaro launched his presidential campaign, Brazil has been a laboratory of fake news and hate. Now, as his government fails completely to control the COVID-19 spread and multiple scandals land in the highest court, the Bolsonarista are ramping up their hate machinery. Leading the pack is "300 of Brazil", which is "inspired by the Battle of Thermopylae during the Persian Wars" and whose members appear in public in army fatigues. They have a clear agenda: "To make the Supreme Court judges understand, if necessary, coercively, that they are not demigods".

A movement for Bolsonaro

Led by a 30-something woman called Sara Winter, who claims to have cut her teeth into "revolution" in Ukraine, "300" was created in a social media "live" event as the lead-

er appeared with two notorious bloggers to create a "movement in support of Bolsonaro". Using their strong social media presence, Winter and her fellow-travellers recently launched a campaign to raise money for "information war tactic training" to attack the judges and parliamentarians. They managed \$12,000 in a matter of days.

But the "300" actions are not restricted to the virtual world. As Mr. Bolsonaro encourages weekend events in the capital to rally his supporters against the quarantine, the group has been setting up camps at various locations. After last Sunday's gathering, where several "300" members were seen with weapons, an illegal act in Brazil, federal prosecutors called for action against the "armed militia". But that hasn't stopped the group from using their dog-whistle tactics to fire up the far-right base of Mr. Bolsonaro and try to subdue the opposition with online attacks. "Sara Winter's group is clearly fascist. It is a paramilitary group

formed to intimidate the opposition, and, as she says, to exterminate the left from Brazil," said Henry Bugalho, a popular YouTuber who analyses Brazilian politics on his daily show. "They want to deny others any space in political debates."

Such tendency, unfortunately, is flowing from the top. In a video, released to the public by the Supreme Court on Friday, Mr. Bolsonaro is seen attacking his opponents in a profanity-filled rant. The meeting, called to discuss measures to tackle the pandemic, turned into a hysterical show as the President launched an all-out attack on the Governors and Mayors who are taking quarantine measures to check the spread of the virus. "I am going to give arms to the people against this dictatorship of quarantine," Mr. Bolsonaro is seen saying in the video.

Senator Randolfe Rodrigues said the video "shows the worst intentions of the President". "He talks about arming everyone. He has already shown that he has direct relations with the criminal underworld. He has already shown that he wants to legalize the militias. He does not want to give arms to people; it is for militia groups, whom he wants to use for his ambitions," said Mr. Rodrigues, the leader of the opposition.

Japan's defiant Pachinko parlours

Persuading gambling parlours to close proved a daunting challenge for govt. during emergency

TOKYO



If Japan were to be represented by a single icon, the list of contenders would run from a streaking bullet train to a cutesy Hello Kitty. Among the less edifying candidates, but one whose place on the list is uncontested, is the pachinko parlour – a garish gambling hall – whiling away the hours in which is arguably the nation's most beloved pastime.

Pachinko originated in Japan in the 1920s and is a cross between a pinball and slot machine. Think of the weight machines that used to adorn railway platforms in India and then imagine them on steroids. Game parlours dot the Japanese archipelago, cropping up in the smallest towns. They are usually smoky

lairs where dead-eyed players sit side-by-side in long rows, mechanically pulling levers and watching pinballs rolling.

They are also neat examples of the less-known Japanese penchant for exploiting loopholes, putting paid to the 'well-behaved' and 'rule-abiding' stereotype that is associated with the country. It is often the letter rather than the spirit of the law that is abided by. Gambling (with a very few exceptions like horse racing) is ostensibly illegal in Japan. Pachinko parlours circumvent this ban by making gamblers exchange tokens/prizes for cash at booths off the main premises. For decades, this cash exchange was controlled by Japan's yakuza mafia, giving it a dangerously illicit flavour. These days, while still operating in a legal gray zone, the pachinko business has become more kosher, with many places simply



erecting a glass wall between the token counter and the cashier. Tokyo alone boasts around 760 parlours and Japan spends some \$200 billion on the game every year. To put that in perspective, that's an amount equal to 30 times the annual

gambling revenue of Las Vegas, and 2.5 times the GDP of Sri Lanka. The industry employs more people than the top 10 car manufacturers and accounts for nearly half of the country's leisure activities.

It follows therefore that when the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated the declaration of an emergency, pachinko parlours were on the frontline of the fight against the virus. As the focal points for large gatherings of game addicts, persuading them to shutter became a priority for provincial governments across the country.

The need for persuasion rather than the easy expectation of obedience was the result of a Constitution that does not permit the Japanese authorities to use punitive measures against its citizens to enforce an emergency: a state-of-affairs that has its roots in the determination to prevent civil rights abuses reminiscent of the Second World War period.

By mid-April, it had become clear that simple requests to pachinko op-

erators to close were not fully effective. Many parlours continued to be thronged with gamers even as coronavirus cases spiked.

Lethal weapon

The most lethal weapon in the local government arsenal was to "name and shame" businesses that were proving recalcitrant. In late April, the Governor of Osaka named six parlours that had failed to comply with repeated requests by the municipality made through phone calls and letters. The ensuing 'shame' had the desired effect. But the government in Tokyo was struggling with the same issue. Yuriko Koike, the Tokyo Governor, made daily threats about naming and shaming the capital's emergency-violating pachinko halls. Daily news conferences were consumed with 'will she won't she' reveal the names speculation. Teams of bureaucrats were sent fanning out into the city to try their hand at personal persuasion. For a while, it was touch and go, but by

early May, Ms. Koike too was left with no option but to unleash the dreaded "name and shame".

Now that the novel coronavirus curve is flattening and emergency measures are gradually being eased, the pressure on pachinko parlours is concomitantly lifting. But, as with other businesses, a post-COVID-19 world will likely be a brave new one of social distancing and hushed conversations that will change the complexion of pachinko. Cooperative associations of entertainment facilities are busy establishing guidelines for reducing the number of machines available to play on, to prevent customers from sitting side by side.

Smoking is to be prohibited except in designated areas. What's more, the volume of the background music will also be lowered so that customers won't have to shout when conversing. Clearly, even if the game itself survives unscathed, the coronavirus will have claimed an atmosphere that once had claim to iconic status.

BWF's revamped calendar not a hit

Most players raise concerns over crowded schedule, but Sindhu says she's ready for it

RAYAN ROZARIO
COIMBATORE

Several Indian players have expressed their displeasure over the Badminton World Federation's (BWF) revamped calendar for the rest of the year, which will fit in 22 tournaments in five months.

P. Kashyap, B. Sai Praneeth and Olympic bronze medalist Saina Nehwal, among others, took to Twitter and raised concerns about the arduousness of the schedule.

They brought up issues pertaining to the start of full-fledged training, international travel restrictions, quarantine regulations and the possibility of injuries.

But Olympic silver medalist P.V. Sindhu is geared up.

"I know it can be hectic but you must be smart enough to choose the tournaments you want to play."

"Also, the BWF has already decided on the calendar and, at the end of the day, you cannot change it. So, plan accordingly," she told *The Hindu* on Saturday.

Like a soldier

"Just like a soldier is ready when called upon, an athlete must be likewise. In my case, I am fit enough. The only thing is, we need some practice but I am confident," Sindhu added.

She was also quick to point out that if the BWF cancels a few tournaments then the players may not be happy as well.

Chief national coach P.



Sai Praneeth.
■ FILE PHOTO: K.V.S. GIRI



P. Kashyap.
■ FILE PHOTO: R. RAVINDRAN

Gopi Chand said the players have no other option. "I sympathise with them. It's okay to have 22 tournaments but my concern is their health and safety."

Gopi said the BWF should have also offered clarity on Olympic qualification, terming it "the first priority".

participate in all the tournaments. "It's about making the right choice. We will also strictly go with the government guidelines."

Gopi said the BWF should have also offered clarity on Olympic qualification, terming it "the first priority".

Dortmund blanks Wolfsburg

REUTERS
BERLIN

Borussia Dortmund scored a goal in each half through Raphael Guerreiro and Achraf Hakimi to beat host VfL Wolfsburg 2-0 on Saturday for its sixth straight Bundesliga win.

In another match, Kai Havertz scored a brace for the second match in the row as Bayer Leverkusen beat Borussia Monchengladbach 3-1.

The results: Borussia Monchengladbach 1 (Thuram 52) lost to Bayer Leverkusen 3 (avertz 7, 58-pen; Bender 81); Wolfsburg 0 lost to Borussia Dortmund 2 (Guerreiro 32, Hakimi 78); Freiburg 0 lost to Werder Bremen 1 (Bittencourt 19); Paderborn 1 (Srbeny 9) drew with Hoffenheim 1 (Skov 4). **Friday:** Hertha Berlin 4 (Ibisevic 51, Lukebakio 52, Cunha 61, Boyata 77) vs Union Berlin 0.

Safety first is the watchword

Parents seek to allay fears of health risks

V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM
HYDERABAD

Safety first is the watchword now that the BWF has announced the schedule of major events from August.

Chief National badminton coach P. Gopi Chand insists that all safety measures will be implemented. "We will not be complacent, for health is of paramount importance. Obviously, no one wants to be caught wrong-footed," he said.

But, quite a few parents seem to be haunted by the fear factor in the changed scenario.

"I want to be doubly sure about the measures in place before resuming training," says P.V. Sindhu's father Rama.

Olympic hopefuls should have training sessions separate from other Indian campers, he suggests. "That way, a lot of management is



Getting it right: Maintaining social distancing will be a major issue facing coaches and players. ■ FILE PHOTO: V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM

sues can be sorted out," says Rama.

The physio being sanitised every time he attends to a different player, coaches maintaining social distancing, hygienic maintenance of props used for training and rest are some of the logistical concerns he points out.

It remains to be seen how much time a player would

need to peak with this changed training schedule, Rama adds.

Krishna Reddy, father of doubles international N. Sikki Reddy, feels serious thought should be given to having doubles sessions separately to avoid over-crowding at training venues.

"It will be a big challenge for players in the changing context of training," he says.

Chasing dreams, the Apurvi Chandela way

'It was important to go through the downs, you learn so much more'

KAMESH SRINIVASAN
NEW DELHI

When someone is chasing their big dreams, it is hard to stay focused and be in the moment always. But if you do, you progress beyond your dreams, the way Apurvi Chandela has done.

Talking on Instagram to shotgun marksman Manavadiya Rathore, the 27-year-old Apurvi gave an insight into the mindset of a champion who has scaled great heights in a short time.

"I saw Michael Phelps in the dining hall at the Rio Olympics. I also met some famous tennis players. It was special being out there with them. I never thought that I would reach that far, when I started," said Apurvi.

The setback
An injury in the run up to the Games upset her plans. An introvert Apurvi further

went into a cocoon, thinking about 'what went wrong', before her mother pulled her out of the turmoil.

"Failures are important for development. I was upset that it happened in the Olympics," said Apurvi.

Manavadiya then nicely weaved a question as to how she rose from finishing 34th in the Olympics to be No. 1 in the world when she won two World Cup air rifle gold medals in 2019.

No giving up
"I realised that I can't give up. It took a lot of hard work to get there. It was amazing to be world No. 1, especially after the disappointment. It was important to go through the downs. You learn so much more. It changed me as a person. Unfortunately, that lesson came in the Olympics," she said.

And it has been a fascinat-



Manavadiya Rathore and Apurvi Chandela during their chat. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

"It was special when I won gold in the 2014 Commonwealth Games. Bindra also won a gold there. I had tried pistol and chose rifle, as it did not require any dynamic movement."

"When I read the interview that rifle shooting required one to stand still and be stable, I thought this was for me," revealed Apurvi.

"When I said that I wanted to shoot, my parents were overjoyed. I just enjoyed the sport, and kept getting selected for the next level."

"Within a year, my family made an electronic range for me at home, and my mom used to encourage me by buying gifts if I shot a particular score or better," she added.

Nothing comes easy
Her mantra is simple. "Nothing comes easy. Failures are as important as successes."

'It's about who makes the last mistake'

Anand gives an insight into chess and life to cricketer Badrinath in a TV show

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

"In chess, you don't beat the board. It's more important to beat the player on the other side. Everyone thinks you make the best moves, but it's more about who makes the last mistake on the board," says five-time World champion Viswanathan Anand as he gives an insight into his chess and life, during a conversation with cricketer S. Badrinath in a show to be telecast on Star Sports 1 Tamil on May 24.

The show, which includes a rapid fire round, also features chess-player-turned-cricketer Yuzvendra Chahal, Grandmaster R. Praggnanandhaa and Anand's wife, Aruna.

Anand is currently stranded in the German town of Bad Soden following the out-



Viswanathan Anand.
■ FILE PHOTO: BIJOY GHOSH



S. Badrinath.
■ FILE PHOTO: B. VELANKANNI RAJ

break of COVID-19.

Talking about his chess, Anand says, "You need to constantly put yourself in the minds of the opponents and study their game along with your own. You cannot pump your fist and there's no emotional release in a game like chess. After a

game I always go to the gym – not for fitness, but to calm down... and the stress goes away."

Hard work
Reflecting on his early days in chess, Anand says, "My progress as a chess player wasn't sudden, it

came through lots of hard work over many years. The chess I learnt in the 80s... we no longer play like that. The introduction of computers has changed the approach – the way you study – completely."

In spite of winning five world titles, Anand chose two other triumphs that brought him great satisfaction.

"Winning the first World Junior in 1987 was a something I will never forget. The feeling of overcoming the Russians gave me great pride."

"The other was winning the 2017 World Rapid Chess Championship. It came at a time in my career when I was contemplating retirement, that win came just at the right time and gave me great satisfaction".

IN BRIEF



Fencer Bhavani Devi nominated for Arjuna

CHENNAI

C.A. Bhavani Devi has been nominated for the Arjuna Award by the Fencing Association of India and the application has been forwarded to the Sports Ministry. This is the first time a fencer has been nominated for the prestigious award.

LPGA extends Tour card to 2021, relief for Aditi

NEW DELHI

Indian golfer Aditi Ashok is greatly relieved with the announcement that all players on the Ladies PGA (LPGA) Tour, who were exempted during this season, will also keep their cards for the next season. PTI



Tokyo-bound boxers to start training on June 10

NEW DELHI

The Boxing Federation of India plans to restart camp training for its Olympic-bound boxers at Patiala from June 10 amid strict safety guidelines which bar access to the ring and human sparring for now.

This was decided during a video conference among the nine boxers who have made the cut, BFI officials, high performance directors Santiago Nieva (men) and Raffaele Bergamasco (women), and chief national coaches C.A. Kuttappa (men) and Mohammed Ali Qamar (women). PTI

Osaka becomes world's top-paid female athlete

NEW YORK

Naomi

Osaka has become the world's highest-paid female athlete, making \$37.4 million in the past 12 months, *Forbes* magazine reported. The 22-year-old two-time Grand Slam champion, edged Serena Williams by \$1.4 million in prize money and endorsements. AFP

1 team set a budget cap of \$145m for 2021 season

LONDON

Formula 1 teams agreed to cap spending at \$145 million next season as the sport attempts to counter the financial fallout from the coronavirus pandemic. The teams voted to lower the budget cap to be introduced in 2021 by \$30m to \$145m. This will be reduced again to \$140m in 2022 and \$135m for the period 2023-25. Other measures were also agreed, said the report, including a research-and-development handicap system. Friday's agreement still needs to be officially approved by the world motorsport council of governing body the FIA next week. AFP

ICA shortlists 36 players for financial assistance

NEW DELHI

The Indian Cricketers Association (ICA) has shortlisted 36 needy players, including former India pacer Devraj Govindraj, for offering financial assistance during these uncertain times. Govindraj, 73, was part of the Indian team's historic Test series wins in England and the West Indies in 1971. Govindraj, along with seven others, are in the B-category (₹80,000 per person). Total of 20 are in the A-category (₹1 lakh) and eight in the C-category (₹60,000 each). PTI

La Liga gets green light to resume on June 8

BARCELONA

Spanish football's top flight division La Liga can return to action from June 8, Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said on Saturday. All organised football in Spain was provisionally suspended on March 12 although clubs in the top two divisions have since returned to group training. La Liga is yet to officially confirm a date on which it will resume, although president Javier Tebas had said earlier he hoped the season could restart on June 12. "The time has come to start our daily activities. From June 8, La Liga will be able to return," Sanchez said. Reuters



WTA pros take the court in Florida

MIAAMI

USA's Alison Riske (in pic), Amanda Anisimova, Danielle Collins and Aussie Ajla Tomljanovic turned out for a women's tennis mini-tournament in Palm Beach on Friday. UTR Pro Match Series is a round-robin event where the first player to four games with a two-game lead wins a set. AFP



Ex-Inter Milan coach Simoni passes away

MILAN

Former Inter Milan coach Luigi Simoni, who led the club to the UEFA Cup title in 1998 during the era of Ronaldo, died on Friday, aged 81. Simoni, whose coaching career spanned four decades and 17 Italian clubs, never recovered after suffering a stroke almost a year ago. AFP

'Bicycle girl' Jyoti turns down offer from Cycling Federation, to focus on studies

Bihar teenager rode home from Delhi with her injured father on the pillion

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PATNA

India's 'bicycle girl' Jyoti Kumari, who was forced to pedal some 1,300 km to Dharbhanga in Bihar from Gurugram in Delhi with her injured father Mohan Paswan as pillion rider due to the extended lockdown, is just a very tired teenager right now.

Not particularly enthused by the worldwide admiration that has come her way as news of her remarkable journey has gone viral, the 15-year-old has turned down an offer from the Cycling Federation of India (CFI) to go for trials as a trainee at the National Cycling Academy in New Delhi, saying she wants to focus on education.

Chairman of Cycling Fed-

eration of India (CFI) Omkar Singh, said, "We're impressed as well as amazed at Jyoti's pedalling capacity as she covered a distance of 1,300 kms within a week on a bicycle with her father. The CFI has decided to give her a chance to prove her mettle."

Omkar added, "We just want to call her for trials for her selection as a trainee... she will be tested on computerised bikes."

But for Jyoti, studies are her top priority.

"Earlier, I could not continue my school education because of my family problem and I was occupied with the domestic work... but now I wish to complete my matriculation first," she told *The Hindu* over phone from Sirhulli.

"I also feel physically weak now after such a long arduous journey."

Jyoti had gone to Gurugram with her mother and brother-in-law at the end of January after her father broke his leg in an accident while driving his e-rickshaw.



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