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It will be wrong to lift  
lockdown abruptly, says  
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## NEARBY



### MSMEs to start operations today

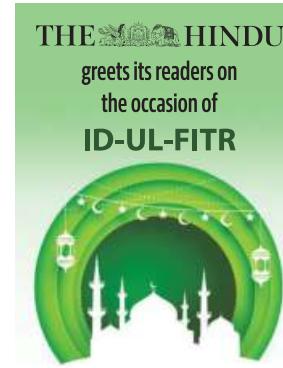
CHENNAI  
MSMEs across Tamil Nadu which will start operations on Monday expressed concern over manpower shortage and lack of orders from clients. On Sunday, the State government gave a green signal to 17 industrial estates to start functioning with 25% staff.

TAMIL NADU ▶ PAGE 2

### Tamil Nadu has 1,143 containment zones

CHENNAI  
The rising COVID-19 cases in Tamil Nadu has resulted in the increase in the number of containment zones, according to an extraordinary government gazette issued on Saturday. There are a total of 1,143 containment zones in the State, with Chennai topping the list with 635.

TAMIL NADU ▶ PAGE 2



EDUCATION PLUS ▶ PAGE 11

# Flight and health curbs cloud airline operations

New Health Ministry norms & State-specific protocols, including mandatory quarantines, have left airlines, passengers confused

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Amid growing uncertainty on the number of flights allowed by different States at specific airports and the health protocols to be followed by passengers at each of them, the Ministry of Civil Aviation held a meeting on Sunday evening with airlines and airports to finalise routes that could be opened from Monday.

"Except Andhra Pradesh which will start on 26/5 & West Bengal on 28/5, domestic flights will recommence across the country from tomorrow," Civil Aviation Minister Hadeep Puri tweeted after the meeting.

### Fresh guidelines

With all domestic (air/ rail/ inter-State bus) travel to resume from Monday, the Health Ministry has issued new guidelines for inter-State travel and international arrivals, stating that only COVID-asymptomatic domestic passengers/ international arrivals will be permitted with the advice that they shall self-monitor their health for 14 days. However, the Ministry also instructed States/UTs to develop their own protocol with regard to quarantine and isolation as per their assessment.

With several States announcing a delay in opening airports or restricting the number of flights over apprehension of a spike in infec-

### Travel guide

A look at the guidelines issued by the Health Ministry for domestic and international travellers

#### INTERNATIONAL ARRIVALS (AIR, LAND AND SEA)

- Before boarding, all passengers need to agree to 7 days of paid institutional quarantine, followed by 7 days of home isolation
- A copy of the self-declaration form should be produced to officials on arrival

**DOMESTIC TRAVEL (AIR/ TRAIN/ INTER-STATE BUS TRAVEL)**

- On arrival, all asymptomatic passengers will be permitted to go home. They have to self-monitor their health for 14 days

- COMMON GUIDELINES**
- Only asymptomatic passengers will be allowed; use of Aarogya Setu app is advised
  - On arrival, all asymptomatic passengers will be permitted to go home. They have to self-monitor their health for 14 days
  - Passengers and crew should wear masks and ensure hand hygiene
  - Compulsory thermal screening will be done at exit points

tions, there was a lack of clarity among airlines about destinations they could connect to as well as the number of flights they could operate.

While Mumbai will restart operations from Monday, it will allow only 25 each of arrivals and departures, just a fourth of the flights the Centre said airlines (30% of regular flights) could operate to different airports. The decision to resume flights came just hours after Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray said he had sought more time from the

Civil Aviation Ministry to restart operations.

West Bengal's Kolkata and Bagdogra airports have delayed re-opening until May 28 due to cyclone Amphan. The airports will see curtailed operations and allow only 10 arrivals and departures each to begin with. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said on Saturday they would request the Centre to postpone domestic flights.

Vijayawada and Visakhapatnam airports in Andhra Pradesh will reopen only from Tuesday, with only 20%



- If found symptomatic on arrival, passengers will be taken to the nearest health facility
- Those with moderate or severe symptoms will be sent to dedicated COVID-19 facilities
- After 14 days of quarantine, authorities should be informed if symptoms develop

of flights permitted. Hyderabad airport in Telangana will reopen but permit only 15 arrivals and departures.

In a late night announcement, Mr. Puri said a maximum of 25 flights per day will land in Chennai, while there was no limit on departures. The State government, which had earlier indicated that it would allow departures rather than arrivals, was yet to announce its "quarantine" measures for incoming passengers.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

### Quarantine norms differ across States

Kerala, Karnataka impose tight rules

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Many States are simply following the Union Health Ministry's guidelines for arriving air passengers, but Karnataka will require travellers boarding from such "high-risk States" as Maharashtra, Delhi, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh to undergo seven days of institutional quarantine on arrival in Bengaluru.

As air travel resumes in the country on Monday, passengers will be tested for COVID-19 from the fifth to seventh day of arrival, a Karnataka official said. If they test negative, they will be asked to follow seven days of home quarantine. But exemptions have been given to pregnant women, children below 10 and others.

Asymptomatic passengers arriving from other States will be asked to follow 14 days of home quarantine. In a late night announcement, Mr. Puri said a maximum of 25 flights per day will land in Chennai, while there was no limit on departures. The State government, which had earlier indicated that it would allow departures rather than arrivals, was yet to announce its "quarantine" measures for incoming passengers.

In Kerala, flyers will undergo thermal screening once they exit the aircraft. Those found asymptomatic will be subjected to home quarantine for 14 days. Those found symptomatic



A flight being readied for operations in Chennai.

will be rushed from airports to a COVID-19 care centre or hospital.

Gujarat will not require quarantine for asymptomatic passengers. "We are following the government of India's protocols for domestic travellers departing from or arriving at airports in Gujarat," Secretary (Civil Aviation) Mamta Verma said.

Though Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami had urged the Centre to defer in-coming flights, both departure and arrivals will resume from Monday. It is mandatory for all passengers flying into the State to register their details online after booking the ticket and apply for and obtain a T.N. ePASS on <https://TNepass.tnega.org>.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

### COVID-19 cases: India now in top 10

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

India on Sunday reported the highest single-day spike so far of 7,097 COVID-19 cases, taking the overall tally to 1,38,482, according to reports from the State Health Departments. The number of active cases stood at 76,858, while 57,605 people have recovered. The death toll crossed 4,000, with 150 new fatalities.

Data from Johns Hopkins University show that the total number of cases in India has surpassed that of Iran (with 1,35,701 confirmed infections). India now has the 10th highest number of confirmed cases worldwide.

Maharashtra reported a surge of 3,041 cases – its highest till date – to breach the 50,000-mark. The tally touched 50,231, while 58 more deaths saw the toll surge to 1,635. The number of cases in Gujarat rose to 14,063, with 394 new infections. With 29 new fatalities, the toll rose to 858.

Meanwhile, the Union Health Ministry said the recovery rate in the country stood at 41.28%.

"The testing capacity has been ramped up in both, and as on date, around 1,50,000 tests can be conducted every day," said the Ministry release.

USE OF AYURVEDA ▶ PAGE 10

### Too close for comfort



**Slippers safe, people unsafe:** People sit together flouting physical distancing norms after marking their spots in a queue to collect food packets being distributed by TRS leaders at Nampally in Hyderabad on Sunday. ■ G. RAMAKRISHNA

### COVID-19 cases in Chennai cross 10,500

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI

The number of persons testing positive for COVID-19 infection in the city rose to 10,576 and the State reported 765 positive cases on Sunday.

As on date, 16,277 persons have tested positive and the number of active cases (including those in isolation) stands at 7,839. On Sunday, the State tested 12,275 persons, taking the total number of samples tested to over 4.09 lakh.

The number of infected children and the elderly crossed the 1,000-mark. As of Sunday, 1,003 children, aged below 12, tested positive. Sunday's bulletin from the Directorate of Public Health included a child aged less than a month old. The number of elderly who are infected stood at 1,358.

As many as 5,643 persons are undergoing treatment in isolation wards, while 833 persons have been discharged from various hospitals in the State, taking the total number of discharged persons to 8,324. Those tested include three international passengers and 44 passengers who returned from other States.

International passengers, who tested positive, include one each from Dubai, the Philippines and London.

Among returnees from within the country, 39 from Maharashtra, two from Delhi and one each from Karnataka, West Bengal and Kerala added to the positive tally of positive cases.

Till date, a total of 111 persons succumbed to the infection, including eight on Sunday. All of them had several co-morbidities, including diabetes, hypertension, chronic kidney disease or morbid obesity.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 2

# Chhattisgarh CJ throws a lifeline to stranded students

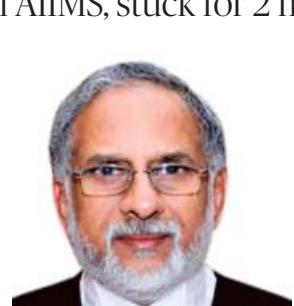
He helps group from AIIMS, stuck for 2 months, return home

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL  
NEW DELHI

At a time when thousands of people are stranded across the country due to the ongoing COVID-19 lockdown, Chhattisgarh High Court Chief Justice P.R. Ramachandra Menon has quietly helped scores of medical and nursing students of AIIMS Raipur travel home.

Chief Justice Menon's timely intervention, on the basis of an email received from a Supreme Court lawyer, saw the State government swing into action to provide buses for the students to return to their hometowns in Kerala.

Justice Menon, speaking to *The Hindu* on Sunday, said these students were to morrow's frontline workers in case of a future health crisis and they should be able to trust the system to help them in their need of hour. "Let them be able to do their duty to society in the years



Chief Justice P.R.  
Ramachandra Menon

to come," he said in a telephonic conversation from Chhattisgarh.

The email sent by advocate Haris Beeram on May 17 to Chief Justice Menon said the students were stranded in Raipur since March 20. Mr. Beeram said some of them had contacted him, seeking legal help to get home. He said trains were available from Delhi and Punjab, but none passed through Chhattisgarh.

"I generated a file on the basis of this email and passed an administrative or-

der calling forth information from the State government... I wanted to ascertain the facts on whether the students had enough food or whether they had been denied entry into their hostels. I instructed the Registrar General to collect the information through the Advocate General of the State... I wanted to see if there was any need to register a case on the judicial side..." the Chief Justice said.

He said the State government reacted promptly by providing buses for the students. "Full credit goes to the Chhattisgarh government." He said the judiciary simply played its part of taking cognisance of a concerned citizen's representation.

"We [the judiciary] cannot simply direct the government to do anything unless there is a breach on the part of the government," the CJ drew the line.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 2

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## FROM PAGE ONE

## COVID-19 cases in Chennai cross 10,500

**Keeping count** | A tracker, across parameters, on how the pandemic has affected the State so far

	Until May 17	May 18	May 19	May 20	May 21	May 22	May 23	May 24	Total
Cases reported	11,224	536	688	743	776	786	759	765	16,277
Recovered and discharged	4,172	234	489	987	400	846	363	833	8,324
Deceased	78	3	3	3	7	4	5	8	111
<b>Persons tested</b>									
3,79,811		*CHANGES IN 24 HOURS		As on May 23, 6 p.m.		Districts with maximum cases		10,576	
3,91,252		As on May 24, 6 p.m.		Chennai		Chennai		10,576	
Active cases	7,915	Discharged	7,491	Died	103	In hospitals	5,518	5,643	Chennai
	7,839		8,324		111		5,643		Chennai

Active Cases + Discharged + Died will not equal Total Cases as 2 deaths were cross-notified to other States and 1 patient, who initially tested positive for COVID-19, later died after turning negative, as per the Health and Family Welfare Department.

Four patients admitted to the Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital died of the infection and two patients in Stanley lost

their lives. Two patients admitted to private hospitals died due to the infection on Sunday.

According to the bulle-

tin, 76 passengers who had returned from other countries have tested positive till date. This includes 36 who tested positive on return and 40 persons who tested negative on arrival, but turned positive during exit screening. Four districts, including Coimbatore, Dharmapuri, Namakkal and Tiruppur have no active cases.

Of the 40 international

returnees, 19 are from West Asia; eight returnees from England; seven from the Philippines and six are from the U.S. Among those who returned by train from various States, 19 tested positive while 3, 944

tested negative.

The results of 1,174 samples are awaited. A total of 5,137 samples were lifted, health officials said. Testing of 648 samples was under way. Of the 4,09,615 samples that were lifted, 18,363 samples are repeat samples.

(\*Two deaths were cross notified to other states. One patient died after turning negative for infection)

**COVID-19**

## Collectors told to fight

## 'false news' by teaming up

## with volunteers, NGOs

Aim is to reduce panic among public

DENNIS S. JESUDASAN  
CHENNAI

As "false news" about COVID-19 have repeatedly caused panic among the public, the Tamil Nadu government has instructed District Collectors and the Commissioner of the Greater Chennai Corporation to create awareness through information and education campaigns with the help of volunteers and NGOs.

"Despite the extensive and effective preparedness/preventive and containment measures taken by the district administration, the number of COVID-19 cases has been increasing every day," Chief Secretary K. Shanmugam said in a communication dated May 23 to all District Collectors and the Commissioner of the Greater Chennai Corporation.

"Further, the spread of false news about the outbreak of COVID-19, which creates a panic situation among the community, has also become a challenge for the government," Mr. Shanmugam said.

Hence, the district administrations should keep the focus of the campaigns on herd masking, physical distancing and disease spread information

**C** The district administrations should keep the focus of the campaigns on herd masking, physical distancing and disease spread information

cation campaign) material in order to create awareness among the public, he added.

"In this connection, the information and education campaign may be entrusted to volunteers and NGOs, who are ready to work with the government to fight COVID-19. Further, the volunteers and NGOs may also be advised to counter the false news on the outbreak in order to reduce panic among the community," Mr. Shanmugam said.

**Funds sanctioned**

The Tamil Nadu government had sanctioned ₹13.49 crore from the State Disaster Response Fund for various COVID-19-related efforts.

While ₹10 crore was sanctioned to the Tiruvallur Collector for setting up a vegetable market at Thirumazhisai to control the spread of COVID-19, ₹2 crore was sanctioned for purchasing personal protective equipment, sanitisation work and covering the cost of lodging and train fare of stranded patients from other States.

## MSMEs fret over lack of orders and workers

State government has given its nod for 17 industrial estates to start functioning with 25% staff

SANGEETHA KANDAVEL  
CHENNAI

MSMEs across Tamil Nadu, set to resume operations today, have expressed concerns about manpower shortage and lack of orders from clients.

On Sunday, the State government gave the green signal for 17 industrial estates to start functioning with 25% staff. It further said that employees residing in containment zones were not allowed to come to work, and those aged above 55 should avoid reporting for duty.

R. Selvam, secretary of Thirumudivakkam Industrial Estate Manufacturers' Association, said that over 1,500 migrant workers, mainly from Bihar, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Odisha and Maharashtra, had left for their home towns. "Staff and skilled workers from down south didn't return to work due to the transportation issue and the fear of contracting COVID-19," he said.

**Many have left**

The same was the case in other industrial estates in and around Chennai. When asked about the immediate challenge they were facing, Bakul M. Patel, president, SIDCO Industrial Estate Villivakkam Manufacturers' Association, said many migrant

workers had already left the city. "The rest have requested permission to go home as and when they get trains and buses. We are wondering how to pay salaries this month. We have tougher days ahead," he said.

The MSMEs said that their order books were empty, and even if they open their units, they would have to wait for their clients to come back to them. "When we start operations, we won't have enough hands to help us with production, as 50% of our workers have left. We are not certain about the demand. Orders have declined from auto OEMs,

and we don't know what they have decided to do. And, the stimulus package has not been helpful," said A.N. Sujeesh, president, Ambattur Industrial Estate Manufacturers' Association.

"There are no new orders coming in, and even if we get some, we are short of workers," said, K.V. Kanakambaran, president, The Industrial Estate Manufacturers' Association, Guindy.

With zero billing during the months of April and May, the MSMEs have indicated that it would be difficult to pay salaries for May and June. They said the Finance Minister's announ-

cements, made 10 days ago, will not be of any immediate help. "Whenever we go to the banks, we are told that they have not received the orders/circulars for provision of funds," Mr. Kanakambaran said.

According to the MSMEs, instead of a moratorium, the government should consider reducing the bank interest rate (repo rate +2% instead of repo+5%).

To address the shortage in the workforce, the MSMEs have suggested that job fairs could be arranged in industrial estates so that local residents could get job opportunities.

Teachers to wear masks while evaluating answer scripts

STAFF REPORTER  
CHENNAI

Teachers evaluating Plus Two examination answer scripts from May 27 in the State will have to compulsorily wear masks and disinfect their hands before touching the papers.

Based on a government order, Director of School Education S. Kannappan has asked all chief educational officers to ensure that the guidelines are strictly adhered to. Every evaluation room will have not more than eight people, including a chief examiner, an officer for scrutiny and six assistant examiners.

As part of precautionary measures against COVID-19, physical distancing has to be strictly followed.

As many as 43,592 teachers will begin Plus Two paper evaluation on May 27.

According to the guidelines, the teachers and staff members involved in the process should be instructed not to attend any unnecessary social gatherings.

Teachers whose residences are within containment zones have been exempted from evaluation duty and their school heads have been asked to identify other teachers for the purpose at the earliest.

Schools where evaluation will take place should be disinfected twice a day and provision made for handwashing facilities and hand sanitizers. For teachers requiring transport, government or private vehicles will be arranged.

## Barbers back in business, but not out of the woods yet

Many say they haven't received government aid; norms not being followed, claim customers

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI

After weeks of lockdown, salons across the State, barring those in Chennai and in containment zones, were allowed to resume operations on Sunday, subject to certain conditions.

But the lockdown has already taken a toll on the hairdressing industry, as thousands of barbers have been out of work for more than two months. The closure of salons, a majority of which fall under the unorganised sector, had pushed hairdressers and their families into penury.

For those working in the industry in Chennai, there are testing times ahead. M. Rukmangathan, secretary, Tamil Nadu Hairdressers'

Union (Kancheepuram and Chengalpattu), said there were over 20,000 shops in the two districts. But more than 5,000 shops across Chromepet, Pallavaram, Mehdavakkam, Tambaram, Vandular and Peerankarai could not be opened as they fell under the Chennai City

Police limits, and the law enforcement authorities concerned had not permitted them to resume operations.

The State government had announced financial assistance of ₹2,000 to hairdressers, including those who have not registered themselves with the Tamil Nadu

Hair Dressers' Welfare Board. But members of the Tamil Nadu Hairdressers' Union – one of the oldest hairdressers' unions, formed in 1954 – said they had not received the aid promised by the Chief Minister.

Guna, who runs a salon in Tambaram, said that when the members of the union approached the village officials, the latter claimed that they had not received any circular about the aid.

Salon operators in the districts of Tiruchi, Coimbatore and Madurai complained that they had not received the welfare assistance of ₹2,000 promised by the State government for members of welfare boards under the unorganised sector.

"The announcement on

the financial assistance was made in April, but the aid has not been provided even to hairdressers who have registered themselves with the welfare board," said P. Dharmalingam, secretary, Tiruchi District Barbers' Association. At least 1,050 shop owners were registered with the welfare board, he added.

While hairdressers have been complaining about the non-payment of financial aid, customers say salons have not been following government norms, with many shops running with the air conditioners on. Though the government had asked them to use gloves while working, hairdressers said this was not practical, as doing so would make it difficult to trim hair to perfection.

## Lockdown puts lungi weavers' livelihood in peril

Many are out of work and are struggling to make ends meet; products worth crores of rupees remain unsold

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI

Hundreds of cotton lungi weavers in villages like Guruvarajapet, Panapakkam, Podhatturpet and Ammayarkuppam near Arakkonam have been adversely affected by the COVID-19 lockdown.

They don't have fresh raw material, i.e., dyed thread, to work with, and have been unable to send finished products worth crores of rupees to the market due to a lack of transportation facilities.

According to K. Selvam, a master weaver, they are normally busy during this time of the year due to the Ramzan demand. Their products are sold in Chennai, Kolkata, Bihar,



Weavers have been unable to send finished products to the market due to a lack of transportation facilities. ■ K.V. SRINIVASAN

Uttar Pradesh, Assam and even in Sri Lanka. "This time, I am stuck with products worth lakhs of rupees. With no income,

We are not used to asking around for help, and others don't have money to spare either

K. PRAKASAM  
A weaver

who procure products from them and sell the items in bulk get around ₹50,000 a month," he said.

K. Prakasam, who has been working as a weaver for 32 years, said he had three children, and his family was just about managing. "We don't even have enough money for food. Sometimes, our children go hungry, and it pains me to see them asking for more. We are not used to asking around for help, and others don't have

money to spare either," he said.

A cash dole would help them be free of hunger this month, he added.

In the light of the lack of work, he said he was worried about his children's education expenses for the coming month.

Powerloom weavers say government assistance in the form of a dole, subsidies or facilitation of the sale of their products would go a long way in supporting their livelihood.

Not just weavers, but even those who are engaged in dyeing the threads and making the spindles in Nagari, Rajapalayam and Kancheepuram are out of work and are looking to the government for relief.

## Pvt. finance firms pressuring SHG women to repay debts, says MLA

Lenders warned of action if they flout RBI guidelines

S. SUNDAR  
RAJAPALAYAM

Rajapalayam MLA S. Thangapandian has flagged the issue of private finance companies exerting pressure on members of women's self-help groups (SHGs) to repay their debts, with interest, despite the Reserve Bank of India having provided a three-month moratorium on repayment of loans.

Following his complaint, the Virudhunagar district administration has warned banks and microfinance institutions of action if they violate the RBI's guidelines.

Mr. Thangapandian said he had received many complaints from members of SHGs about a private microfinance institution that was

repayment of loans," Mr. Thangapandian said.

"We are not against repayment of loans by those who could afford to do so. We are only against putting undue pressure on those who are jobless," he added.

The MLA met Virudhunagar Collector R. Kannan on Saturday and urged the district administration to warn all banks and financial institutions against violating the RBI's norms.

Consequently, the Collector issued a warning to all nationalised and cooperative banks and microfinance institutions.

"We have given ₹8.5 crore in special loans to SHGs affected by the COVID-19 lockdown," the Collector said.

A CH-CHE



Fighting on: A Corporation worker engaged in disinfection efforts near a containment zone in Chennai. ■ FILE PICTURE

## Patient traced in Tirupattur

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI

A 65-year-old COVID-19 patient, who went missing from the Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital in the city on Friday, was traced at an eatery on the outskirts of Tirupattur late on Saturday. He is now undergoing treatment at the Government Vellore Medical College Hospital.

According to health officials in Tirupattur, the patient, who worked as a security staff at a house in Royapuram here, had come to the RGGH with complaints of chest pain. He was examined and his samples were taken. While the officials said that he escaped from the hospital, the patient reportedly told the officials in Tirupattur that he was asked to go home after being examined and therefore he left the hospital. He said he was not aware that he had tested positive for COVID-19.

Tirupattur Collector M.P. Sivanarul said that as soon as they got information about the man missing from the RGGH, the team was put on high alert. The patient hitched ride in two lorries and reached Tirupattur. The officials were able to trace him after one of his village acquaintances told them about spotting him at an eatery.

Timings CHENNAI	
MONDAY, MAY. 25	
RISE 05:42 SET 18:30	
RISE 07:41 SET 20:56	
TUESDAY, MAY. 26	
RISE 05:42 SET 18:30	
RISE 08:35 SET 21:51	
WEDNESDAY, MAY. 27	
RISE 05:42 SET 18:31	
RISE 09:32 SET 22:43	

Chennai Weather	max	min
Thiruvallur	37	29
Chennai Airport	37	29
Chennai City	36	30

**Chennai Airport Today**  
40°C Dry and very hot weather with heat wave to prevail during the day. Night remains warm.

**Chennai Airport Tomorrow**  
39°C The morning will be warm. The sky will be partly cloudy. A hot afternoon. Evening and night will be warm.

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THE HINDU CHENNAI	
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## LPG cylinders disinfected four times before delivery

Consumers say delivery boys don't wear mask or gloves

DEEPA H. RAMAKRISHNAN  
CHENNAI

Did you know that all cooking gas cylinders are disinfected four times at bottling plants? This commenced after restrictions for COVID-19 were put in place.

Oil marketing companies disinfect the liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) cylinders when they are loaded onto trucks that carry them to distributors.

"We have instructed distributors too to disinfect cylinders before delivery and most of them are following that since our consumers are our priority," said an industry source who added that they would continue the practice even after the pandemic crisis ends. About 80,000 refilled LPG cylinders are sent out of bottling plants daily that supply to Chennai, Tiruvallur, Kanjeevaram and Chengalpatu that have around 60 lakh LPG consumers.

A city-based distributor said that many of them had

## Decks cleared for flight services

Passengers to be stamped 'quarantine' on arrival; no entry without TN e-pass

STAFF REPORTER  
CHENNAI

After nearly two months, Chennai will see first aircraft take off for Madurai early on Monday as the State government has finally agreed to resume flight operations. From handling 500 aircraft movements a day, now the airport will see fewer flights. The number of incoming flights has been limited to 25 a day, with minimum number of flights from Maharashtra and Gujarat owing to the high number of cases. There won't be any restriction on the number of departure movements, officials said.

Asymptomatic passengers landing in Tamil Nadu airports will have to be on home quarantine and if they don't have a residence here, they will be sent for institutional quarantine at designated hotels, the State government said in a release. If they develop symptoms, they should report to the district call centre (1077) or a government hospital and will be isolated and taken for testing. Passengers who enter the State will be stamped with "quarantine" seal with date in an indelible ink, the release said.

Those passengers who don't have the TN e-pass cannot enter the State. So they must book on the portal be-

### Protocol at the airport

Highlights of the standard operating procedure at the airport in Chennai



#### WHAT A PASSENGER SHOULD DO:

- Display a copy of the ticket, ID proof at the camera placed near CISF booth
- Place your feet on the mat immersed in bleach solution
- Undergo temperature check
- Those who have not done online check-in can visit the self check-in kiosk and collect the boarding pass

Only one hand baggage and one check-in baggage allowed for every passenger



A worker sanitising the waiting area at the Chennai airport on Sunday.  
■ B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM



#### SECURITY CHECK

- Remove all the metallic object(s) on the person before passing through metal detector and place them in a plastic tray which will then be sent through the X-Ray machines
- If metal detector alarm goes off or the staff thinks it is essential, then a

passenger has to undergo additional screening through hand-held metal detector or pat down search or both

#### Stamping of boarding pass is not necessary now

• Passengers can take only alternate seats to maintain physical distancing

• Passengers can order food and it will be delivered at their seats or collect their food and have it in their seats

fore landing here. For a few days, an e-pass desk will be arranged at the airport itself. Passengers who arrive can arrange pick up vehicles that can enter with driver plus one person. Prepaid taxis will be present at the airport for incoming passengers and will be disinfected after each use.

Officials of Airports Authority of India (AAI) said flight services will begin around 5

a.m. and go on till nearly 11 p.m.. Departing passengers will have to go through temperature checks at the entry point of the terminal. "We had a discussion with the officials of the State government on Sunday morning and spoke about the testing and quarantine procedures for passengers who arrive from various States," an official said.

The terminals were disinfect and AAI held a meeting with airline and CISF staff. For the first few days, there may be confusion over the procedures, sources said.

"From placing sanitisers to seating arrangements, we have done everything that a passenger needs. Also, there are AAI staff present in case a passenger needs anything at the terminal," another official added.

## Fishers pledge nets to meet daily expenses



In dire straits: Tepid sale of fish has pushed many fisherfolk to the brink. ■ B. VELANKANI RAJ

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI

Fishers in many villages have resorted to pledging their nets to tide over the present crisis due to the ongoing COVID-19 lockdown.

With fishing not being allowed for bigger boats and no arrangements made for retail sale if traditional craft go for fishing, they have run out of cash even to meet daily needs of their families.

K. Bharathi of the South Indian Fishermen Welfare Association said that fishers, who usually fish in groups of 40 or 50 and use long nets, were resorting to this. "They promise the wholesaler all the fish in their next catch and take advance. Al-

most all the big valai (net) groups are doing this. They get about ₹2 lakh to ₹3 lakh and divide it amongst themselves to buy provisions," he said.

Durai Mahendran of Puli cat said that this was the practice whenever they needed large sums for building a boat or buying a net or even to organise a family function. "That is not done often and is the last resort. This is perhaps the first time they are doing so to buy rice and provisions. This is because they are unable to sell fish that they catch," he said.

Most villages are going for fishing only to bring back fish for their own homes.

together had around 7,000 cases according to the Greater Chennai Corporation.

Health officials said the number was bound to increase in the coming days as the Health Department had intensified its testing and contact tracing. The city had not achieved its peak yet. But the curve was expected to flatten, they said.

"Positive cases are not a danger to us. What we should be worried about is the vulnerable segment of the population. All the posi-

tive persons are not going to be diseased patient. We are concentrating more on death of the vulnerable," said P. Kuganantham, form-

## A.P. police serve food to migrant T.N. workers

Items readied in two hours on request from police chief

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI

Migrant labourers returning from Mumbai to Villupuram in a Shramik train were in for a pleasant surprise when they found police officials of Andhra Pradesh ready with food packets for them at Guntakal in Andhra Pradesh.

The Hunger Collective, Mumbai, in association with Bhoomika Trust had made travel arrangements for more than 1,000 migrant labourers by the special train.



A pleasant surprise: A.P. police arranging food at the Guntakal station to be served to Villupuram-bound migrant labourers arriving from Mumbai by a 'Shramik Special' train. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

packets of jeera rice, 200 packets of tomato rice, 150 packets of upma, 3,500 packets of biscuits, 1,600 packets of buns and 1,500 bottles of water.

Mr. Babu said all these were readied within two hours on getting a call from Chennai City Police Commissioner A.K. Viswanathan.

The Bhoomika Trust informed Mr. Viswanathan about the labourers' position and he contacted the Guntakal SP requesting him to arrange the food items.

Mr. Viswanathan also gave personal assurance that the amount for providing the food would be reimbursed.

However, Andhra Pradesh DGP, getting wind of Guntakal SP's gesture, refused to accept to take the money for the food supplied as a mark of goodwill.

Mr. Viswanathan speaking to *The Hindu* appreciated the efficient work of Mr. Babu for getting such a huge number of food items within a short span of time.

## SCARF to hold online course for journalists

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI

Schizophrenia Research Foundation (SCARF), along with a Delhi-based non-governmental organisation Sangath, is organising a 4-week online course on mental health reporting for journalists and journalism students.

The free course, currently offered in English, aims to enable skills such as good reporting of mental health issues, strike a balance between being informative and educative while being responsible and sensitive. On completion of the course, participants will receive a course completion certificate.

Participants can register at <https://bit.ly/2xERpxy>. Applications will be open till May 31 to join the first edition.

For information, contact: Dr R Mangala @ 9444027388 / mangala@scarfndia.org; Babita Negi babita.negi@sangath.in / esencemedia@diacourse@gmail.com

## Employees of Hyundai, Nokia test positive

Plants were restarted earlier this month

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI

Twenty-one workers of Hyundai Motor India and Nokia plants near Chennai have tested positive for COVID-19.

Both the companies had commenced operations earlier this month, after the State government relaxed norms for industries. Now, Nokia has shut operations.

"In the first week of our plant operations, three employees showed mild symptoms and were immediately asked to meet the medical team. They subsequently tested positive for COVID-19 and immediate medical attention was provided to them," Hyundai said in a statement. It commenced operations at its Irungattu plant on May 8.

All the three employees are recovering fast, and as per the safety protocol, essential information was shared with district health authorities, it added. Hyundai also said measures were being taken for contact tracing, self-isolation and com-

plete sanitisation.

According to a health department official, test results of 16 more Hyundai employees who possibly came into contact with the infected employees are awaited.

Meanwhile, 18 employees from the Nokia Solutions and Networks India facility at Sripurumbudur tested positive, officials said.

"We had been operating at a highly restricted level for the past few weeks and implemented measures to limit the risk of infection within our factory. The measures were put in place in compliance with local regulations and Nokia's own internal processes. We have now temporarily suspended operations and undertaken further fumigation and sanitisation activities and will continue to monitor the situation closely," a Nokia spokesperson said.

"We had been operating at a highly restricted level for the past few weeks and implemented measures to limit the risk of infection within our factory. The measures were put in place in compliance with local regulations and Nokia's own internal processes. We have now temporarily suspended operations and undertaken further fumigation and sanitisation activities and will continue to monitor the situation closely," a Nokia spokesperson said.

er Corporation health officer.

For the Corporation, the focus is on identifying positive persons and getting

them admitted to hospitals.

The civic body has deployed health workers to conduct door-to-door survey to check for non-communicable diseases. Residents are being mobilised for testing.

Unlike in the past when an entire street was cordoned off if a positive case was reported, the Health Department has decided to focus only on the house from where positive cases were noticed. The residents of the house are quarantined and they were put under surveillance.

"We are concerned about the vulnerable population. We don't want them to be affected. Contact tracing, focused testing and checking house to house is important. The virus has proved to be non-virulent unlike in the Western countries," Dr. Kuganantham said.

"Positive cases are not a danger to us. What we should be worried about is the vulnerable segment of the population," said P. Kuganantham, former Corp. health officer.

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## IN BRIEF



## More tele-consultation OP services at Jipmer

PUDUCHERRY  
Jipmer will expand its tele-consultation OP services across 13 specialties from Tuesday with the opening of more telephone lines. According to a press note, the services can be accessed through a set of numbers for existing and new patients.

## DMK MLAs booked for unlawful assembly

CHENNAI  
The Egmore police have registered a case against 96 DMK cadre, including three MLAs, B.Ranganathan, Ravichandran and S.R.Raja and advocate Girirajan were booked for protesting the arrest of DMK Rajya Sabha member R.S.Bharathi.

## Mahout dies after temple elephant pushes him

MADRASI  
A 30-year-old mahout, S. Kalidoss, was killed after the temple elephant, Devanai, pushed him against a wall, at the Subramaniyaswamy temple premises on Sunday. The mahout died on his way to the hospital, police said.

## Power tariff hiked in Puducherry

The increase is expected to impact over 3 lakh domestic consumers

S. PRASAD  
PUDUCHERRY

In yet another jolt for consumers during the pandemic, the Puducherry government has decided to increase power tariff for all sections based on the recommendations of the Joint Electricity Regulatory Commission (JERC).

In the last four years, the government had increased power tariff thrice putting additional burden on household spending.

After increasing the power tariff in 2019, the Puducherry Electricity Department increased the power tariff by an average of 3.12% to fill the gap between revenue and expenditure while retaining the regulatory surcharge of 4% for the year 2020-21.

The revised tariff, which will come into effect from June, will leave an impact on the monthly bills of over 3 lakh domestic consumers in the Union Territory of Puducherry.

The average power tariff is expected to be broadly in the range of 35 paise to 40 paise a unit although it might be



The Puducherry Electricity Department caters to 4.9 lakh consumers. ■ S.S. KUMAR

slightly higher for some consumer categories.

The maximum hit would be to those consuming above 300 units, sources say.

The Puducherry Electricity Department caters to 4.9 lakh consumers, of which 3.35 lakh are in the domestic category, 53,224 under commercial category and 6,836 agriculture connections.

As per the JERC order, the rate for consumption up to 100 units (domestic service) remains unchanged at ₹1.50 a unit.

For consumption of 101 to 200 units a month, the tariff

has been increased to ₹2.55 a unit from ₹2.50 and for 201 to 300 units the charge has been increased from ₹4.35 a unit to ₹4.50 a unit.

The rate of consumption above 300 units has been increased from ₹5.60 to ₹5.90 a unit. The monthly fixed charges have been fixed at ₹45 irrespective of units consumed.

## Commercial category

In the commercial category, for consumption of up to 100 units, the tariff has been increased from ₹5.50 a unit to ₹5.60.

For consumption from 101 to 250, the charge has been increased from ₹6.50 a unit to ₹6.65. For those using above 250 units a month, the tariff has been increased from ₹7.20 a unit to ₹7.40.

The monthly charges have been fixed at ₹130.

For high tension consumers (for contracted demand of up to 5000 kva), the tariff has gone up from ₹5.50 a unit to ₹5.65 a unit.

The Electricity Department had its reasons for the latest hike.

The JERC fixed the tariff based on the net revenue requirement for the financial year. The revenue requirement worked out for the fiscal was around ₹1,653.21 crore, including ₹1,591.27 crore needed for power purchase. So, the gap between the revenue and expenditure was around ₹61.93 crore.

AIADMK legislature party leader A. Anbalagan termed the hike in power tariff as the most inhuman decision. It would unleash sufferings on the people when the pandemic was gaining ground fast in the Union Territory, Mr. Anbalagan added.

## Liquor outlets to reopen in Puducherry, Karaikal

Special excise duty imposed on brands

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
PUDUCHERRY

Retail IMFL outlets and arrack shops will reopen in Puducherry on Monday after a two-month shutdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The monthly charges have been fixed at ₹130.

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## Price hike

A special excise duty has been imposed on liquor brands to make prices on par with neighbouring States and to prevent influx of tipplers from bordering districts. As a result, the price of 154 out of the 920



Namassivayam

brands in Puducherry, which are also available in Tamil Nadu has been hiked to eliminate price difference, while a 25 per cent tax has been slapped on remaining brands. A 20 per cent tax applies on arrack. Shops are required to display the revised price list at the premises.

A government notification, issued after approval from the Lt. Governor, said the special tax will be for a period of three months. Monitoring units comprising special teams of excise and police have been set up to ensure compliance with guidelines.

## UT. to check arrival of residents from other States

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
PUDUCHERRY

The State government will streamline the arrival of residents from other States and countries in a bid to contain the spurt in COVID-19 cases, Chief Minister V. Narayanasamy said.

In a video message, he said the government had written to the Centre and Tamil Nadu as well as airport authorities to ensure that information was shared with the local administration about persons whose destination was Puducherry.

Attributing the recent increase in cases to international passengers and residents from other States returning to the city without informing the administration and not following self-isolation measures, he said every person entering Puducherry would have to undergo a two-week quarantine.

"With better coordination, the Health Department will be able to keep a tab on returnees," he said.

## Asymptomatic woman allowed to marry in Salem

Bride, her relatives isolated

VIGNESH VIJAYAKUMAR  
SALEM  
A young woman, who is an asymptomatic COVID-19 patient, got married here on Sunday. The bride and her relatives, who took part in the wedding, have been isolated.

The Salem district administration allowed the wedding on humanitarian grounds.

According to officials, the woman and 11 of her family members from Chennai had travelled to Salem on May 21 for her wedding with a youth from Gengaveli, near Attur. Health officials collected samples from the woman and other family members at the check-post and she tested positive on Saturday.

Based on the test results, officials from the district administration and

the Health Department advised her to be in isolation and asked the family to postpone the wedding. But the family requested the officials to allow them to go ahead with the wedding, promising to follow all safety guidelines.

Since the patient was asymptomatic, she was isolated in one of the houses and the District Collector permitted the wedding with a limited number of attendees, officials said.

As many as 28 family members took part. After the wedding, all members were advised to be in isolation in their homes for the next 28 days. Doctors from the Urban Primary Health Centre, health inspectors, revenue and police officials monitored the wedding to ensure the guidelines were followed.

## NEET coaching classes from second week of June: Minister

STAFF REPORTER  
ERODE

Coaching classes for NEET examination will begin from second week of June, School Education Minister K.A. Sengottaiyan said in Gobichettipalayam on Sunday.

The Minister told media persons that 7,300 government school students would be trained for 35 days in nine colleges and coaching would begin from second week of June.

Asked whether all the Class 10 students would be declared as passed the exams, the Minister said that any decision would be taken only after paper valuation. He said that the decision on reopening of schools would be taken at the appropriate time in consultation with the Chief Minister, Mr. Sengottaiyan said.

The university faculty have pointed out that this is against norms. Every year,

## Tiruvalluvar varsity initiates process for PG admissions

Notification is against norms, say faculty members

R. SUJATHA  
CHENNAI

Tiruvalluvar University has issued an advertisement on its website calling for admission to postgraduate programmes in the institution. The Vellore-based university has called upon students to apply for PG programmes in 10 departments including Tamil, English, Economics, Zoology, Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics, Biotechnology, Computer Science and Commerce.

According to the notification, students can apply with marks obtained in five semester. The last date to submit applications online is June 30. Due to COVID-19 lockdown, the State universities have not conducted the sixth semester exams.

The university faculty have pointed out that this is against norms. Every year,

Some former faculty have written to both the DCE and higher education department.

the Directorate of College Education (DCE) will release a circular on the date of issue of applications for college admission.

This applies to colleges and universities. For admission to undergraduate programmes the notification is issued after Class 12 results are published. Similarly, for PG programmes, the notification is released after the results of undergraduate programmes are released.

A DCE official on conditions of anonymity said the university's notification was in violation of the norm.

"In the current situation, we are not sure when we would be able to reopen the

colleges. We have no idea how the exams are even going to be held. Everything hinges on the direction from the government. It is not correct to issue a notification at this point of time," he said.

Some former faculty have written to both the DCE and the higher education department.

**Inquiry sought**  
A former Syndicate member has also written to the District Collector seeking inquiry into how the university had taken steps to reopen affiliated and constituent colleges as well as university departments when seven of the revenue districts in Vellore had been declared red zones by the State health department.

A DCE official on conditions of anonymity said the university's notification was in violation of the norm.

Higher Education Secretary Apoorva said, "We will look in to the matter."

## 11 firefighters recover, report for work

Personnel receive a grand welcome

VIVEK NARAYANAN  
CHENNAI

P. Anand and S. Elango, both firefighters with the Tamil Nadu Fire and Rescue Services, tested positive for COVID-19 recently.

After treatment, the two, along with nine of their colleagues, joined duty on Saturday.

They will be back to spraying disinfectants to keep the city safe.

Since the lockdown began on March 24, over 7,000 TNFRS personnel have been involved in spraying disinfectants in 30,000 places and over two lakh streets in State.

In Chennai alone, the firefighters disinfected 3,300 places including government hospitals.

A total of 31 firefighters in the State were infected with the virus and of them, 25 are from Chennai.

Eleven have recovered

and rejoined duty on Saturday. "My wife Priya, a nurse, is eight months pregnant and she was worried when I tested positive. Now, I am perfectly fine and she encourages me to get back to work as I joined the force three years ago to serve the society. On Sunday, I will spraying disinfectants in the Secretariat," said Mr. Anand.

## Back in action

Elango, who has put in 13 years of service in TNFRS, said though his wife was frightened, he was waiting to get back to the streets to spray disinfectants.

"Our station personnel feed the homeless every day. I am just waiting to join my colleagues in fighting COVID-19," he said.

The 11 firefighters were given a grand welcome at the TNFRS headquarters at Egmore.

## Theatres need govt. help, says AGS Cinemas CEO

Halls should be allowed to screen early morning shows'

UDHAV NAIG  
CHENNAI

The COVID-19 pandemic might have threatened the existence of the movie exhibition industry, but it has also created new opportunities.

With millions stuck in their homes around the world, Over The Top (OTT) platforms such as Netflix and Amazon Prime Video are aggressively seeking to purchase premium movies for digital-only release.

Are we looking at a scenario where the sun is slowly beginning to set on the movie exhibition industry?

Archana Kalpathi, CEO, AGS Cinemas, and creative producer, AGS Entertainment, who has a ringside view of both the worlds, says production of movies is going to be a challenge, not their exhibition.

"(Exhibition) is an organised sector. I expect a huge surge at cinemas as people are waiting to come out. We already have trained staff - we just have to reduce the contact points and make it a safe experience," says Ms. Kalpathi.

## More shows

Despite an expected reduction in theatre capacity, she says the revenue for producers will not be greatly reduced if the State government allows them to screen

Production of movies is likely to be a challenge, post COVID-19.

more shows. "On weekends, we operate at 80% of occupancy, and on weekdays, we operate at probably 25% occupancy. With respect to 'big' movies (with stars), there is a challenge.

"If the government helps us and allows us to screen early morning shows, we will double the number of shows - instead of four shows, we can run eight shows. Fans will come to theatres anyway for big star films. On weekdays, occupancy will go up," said Ms. Kalpathi.

What does she think about movies releasing directly on OTT platforms?

"From the multiplex point of view, we have been paying salaries without pay cuts and rent and there are fixed costs. We need movies to come to theatres as they would bring back the audience. But, from the pro-

## 20 members not enough to shoot a TV serial'

STAFF REPORTER  
CHENNAI

After the State government allowed shooting for small screen television shows, Film Employees Federation of South India (FEFSI) president R.K. Selvamani appealed to it to increase the number of personnel allowed on a set from 20 to 60.

He said the State government must allow small screen television serial producers to start work with 50% strength.

In a statement, Mr. Selvamani said it was not feasible to conduct shooting with just 20 members, when 150-200 members worked on a set usually.

"In television serials, there would be at least 10-20 artistes. They will have at least 10 assistants. So, the number of actors and actresses would be 25 persons.

"Now, everyone has to focus on pre-production more. There is so much work that needs to be done, as safety is very crucial. Even if one person is infected, we cannot shoot for three weeks. Production is going to be very, very challenging," she said.

Ms. Kalpathi, however, finds a silver lining in the lockdown as she feels that producers can finally wrest back some form of control.

## DEATH

Mr.B Arasu (66), Retired Senior Supervisor, Postage, The Hindu, Chennai, passed away on 24-05-2020. Address: 5A, Railway Station Road, Anna Nagar, Chennai-600077 Contact : 98

# AIADMK second party to be in power for over 9 years at a stretch

Congress is the other party which was at the helm for over 20 years without a break

T. RAMAKRISHNAN  
CHENNAI

As the AIADMK government stepped into its fifth and final year of office on Saturday, the ruling party became the second in Tamil Nadu to be in power for more than nine years at a stretch. Congress is the other party, whose rule in the State lasted for over 20 years without a break.

On May 16, 2011, the AIADMK returned to power and Jayalalithaa was sworn in as Chief Minister for the fourth time. After retaining power in the May 2016 Assembly elections, Jayalalithaa became Chief Minister for the sixth time on May 23. The present House has one more year of its term left.

After the death of Jayalalithaa in December 2016, O. Panneerselvam became



The present House has one more year of its term left. Edappadi K. Palaniswami unveiling a statue of former Chief Minister Jayalalithaa in Salem. ■ FILE PHOTO

Chief Minister for the third time and held the post till February 15, 2017. Since then, Edappadi K. Palaniswami has been at the helm of affairs.

Even though the party's founder M. G. Ramachandran was Chief Minister bet-

ween June 1977 and December 1987, there was a break in his spell as the State was under President's rule between February and June 1980.

In March-April 1946 Assembly elections, the Congress captured power and

its rule lasted till March 1967, when it was dislodged by the DMK.

Between 1946 and 1952, the State had three Chief Ministers - T. Prakasam, Omandur P. Ramaswami Reddiar and P.S. Kumaraswamy Raja.

The first Assembly elections, post-Independence, which took place in February 1952, saw the Congress managing to hold on to power and it had three Chief Ministers in the next 15 years - C. Rajagopalachari, K. Kamraj and M. Bakthavatsalam.

The DMK, which succeeded the Congress in March 1967, was in office till January 1976. In the intervening period, the State went to Assembly polls in March 1971. The party had two Chief Ministers - C.N. Annadurai and M. Karunanidhi.

## DMK to form legal committees in districts to protect its cadre

Party condemns arrest of R.S. Bharathi

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI

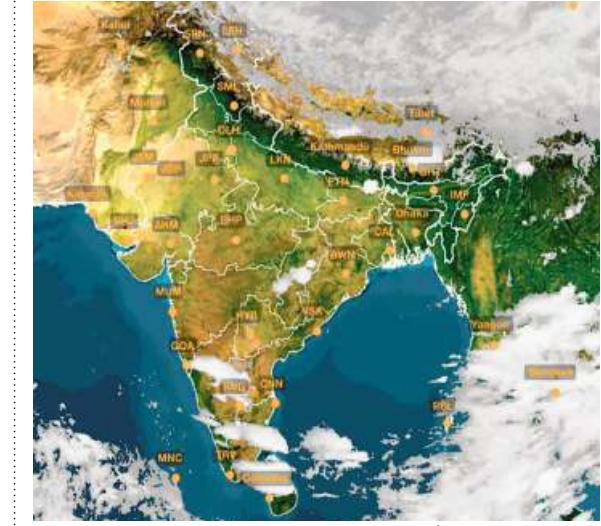
"The DMK will not tolerate the actions of the AIADMK government which seeks to denigrate the *Ontrinaivom Vaa* programme in order to divert people's attention from its failure," the resolution warned.

The resolution said the government tried to hand-cuff the DMK men who dedicated themselves to feeding and helping the people severely affected by the pandemic.

"The Chief Minister misuses his power and people are suffering because of the irregularities in the purchase of medical equipment, sanitisers and the AIADMK government's attempt to swindle the coffers," the resolution alleged.

## 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 Monday:** Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning likely at isolated places over Gangetic West Bengal, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Karaikal. Heavy to very heavy rainfall likely at a few/isolated places over Assam, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	34.8	27.2	Kozhikode	—	35.2	28.6
Ahmedabad	—	43.3	27.9	Kurnool	—	42.3	30.4
Aizawl	—	29.0	18.2	Lucknow	—	43.0	28.5
Allahabad	—	46.3	28.8	Madurai	—	41.2	27.6
Bangalore	34.8	34.4	22.3	Mangaluru	—	35.3	27.9
Bhopal	—	44.1	29.7	Mumbai	—	33.8	29.0
Bhubaneswar	—	34.7	28.0	Mysuru	—	35.9	24.0
Chandigarh	—	42.1	25.7	New Delhi	—	45.6	27.6
Chennai	—	37.6	29.6	Patna	—	39.4	27.2
Coimbatore	—	37.0	25.7	Port Blair	—	32.8	25.4
Dehradoon	—	—	22.6	Puducherry	—	36.1	29.2
Gangtok	38.6	21.9	18.0	Pune	—	41.0	24.3
Goa	—	33.5	28.2	Rajpur	—	45.0	27.4
Guwahati	27.9	28.0	21.4	Ranchi	—	40.8	26.2
Hubballi	—	37.0	23.0	Shillong	23.6	23.0	—
Hyderabad	—	42.4	29.5	Shimla	7.8	31.8	15.4
Imphal	17.5	31.5	21.7	Srinagar	—	25.8	8.4
Jaipur	—	44.5	31.0	Thiruvananthapuram	0.3	33.1	27.8
Kochi	—	33.0	27.0	Tiruchi	—	42.5	29.2
Kohima	2.4	24.2	16.6	Vijayawada	—	40.2	29.0
Kolkata	—	33.1	28.5	Visakhapatnam	—	34.3	30.0

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

**Pollutants in the air you are breathing** Yesterday

CITIES	SO <sub>2</sub>	NO <sub>x</sub>	CO	PM <sub>2.5</sub>	PM <sub>10</sub>	CODE
Ahmedabad	—	.22	.40	.41	.66	■■■■■
Bengaluru	.6	.32	.37	—	.125	■■■■■
Chennai	.3	104	—	—	—	■■■■■
Delhi	22	37	.75	.150	.230	■■■■■
Hyderabad	.9	.26	.43	.84	.124	■■■■■
Kolkata	.3	.30	.42	.66	■■■■■	
Lucknow	.3	.55	.235	—	—	■■■■■
Mumbai	.16	.9	.10	.16	.66	■■■■■
Pune	.33	.12	.56	.41	.40	■■■■■
Visakhapatnam	11	.27	.6	.19	.75	■■■■■

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Singrauli, Madhya Pradesh recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 310 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Aizawl, Mizoram recorded a healthy AQI score of 27

**Air Quality Code:** ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

**SO<sub>2</sub>:** 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:** 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.

**PM<sub>2.5</sub> & PM<sub>10</sub>:** 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

## Vande Bharat Express trains may be delayed further

The ongoing lockdown causes 12.5% loss in annual production capacity

S. VIJAY KUMAR  
CHENNAI

The Integral Coach Factory (ICF) here that was tasked with manufacturing 720 coaches for operating 45 Vande Bharat Express trains across the country in December 2019 is yet to finalise tenders and award work for commencing the ambitious project.

The ongoing lockdown is expected to further delay the project since railways' coach-making factories are shut. The Railway Board has confirmed that the lockdown has

Train18, India's first semi-

high speed train built by ICF in a record 18-month time in 2018 and flagged off by Prime Minister Narendra Modi as Vande Bharat Express between Delhi and Varanasi, is celebrated as the most successful initiative of the Make in India initiative.

The success of the project triggered a turf war between the Mechanical and Electrical Engineering departments on the ownership of the train resulting in allegations of compromise on safety, procedural flaws and one company being favoured. This led to a vigilance enquiry and transferring out of top officials of Team Train18. The

Railway Board sent the design back to the drawing board for safety clearances even as Train18 ran without any issue.

### Project restored

A proposal to import the complete train sets from foreign manufacturers evoked stiff resistance from political parties, senior officials and other stakeholders who questioned the reasoning behind going global when there was indigenous technology in-house.

The Ministry of Railways finally ordered the ICF to manufacture 720 train sets - 45 rakes of Vande Bharat Express trains - in December 2019. The tenders are yet to be finalised. We have issued a corrigendum in April with some modifications to the tender specifications and the last date for closing tender is now July 10, 2020. The process of opening tender, scrutiny and award of work for procuring propulsion system electrics and rolling out train sets will take at least two or three months after that," a senior railway official told *The Hindu*.

The factory has been shut since March 25 in view of the lockdown and only 33% of the administration staff were working. In a related deve-

lopment, railway sources said that the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet had approved the appointment of ICF's Principal Chief Mechanical Engineer Anil Kumar Kathpal as Additional Member of the Railway Board. However, the promotion was denied on the grounds that a vigilance enquiry was pending against him and the matter was sent back to the ACC, the sources added.

Attempts were made by *The Hindu* to get the views of the General Manager, ICF, through the Senior Public Relations Officer, but there was no response.

## How is medical waste being disposed of, asks Stalin

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI

DMK president M.K. Stalin on Sunday urged the State government to disclose details of how medical waste was disposed of scientifically each day. He urged the State government to put the details on the website of the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB).

In a statement, Mr. Stalin

pointed out that Personal Protection Equipment (PPE), RT-PCR kits, gloves, face masks, syringes used by health workers and people during the past 60 days had been medical waste.

"The TNPCB has the responsibility to collect the medical waste by following due procedures and to dispose them of," he contended and claimed that only

three of the 11 private firms outsourced with the task were recognised.

"The TNPCB has not made public how it is disposing of the medical waste," he said.

The waste was to be treated in incinerators, but they were being dumped in the dumping yard along with the rest of the garbage, he alleged.

It will be headed by Chief Minister

DENNIS S. JESUDASAN  
CHENNAI

Three years after it announced its decision to replace the State Planning Commission with another body in 2017, the Tamil Nadu government has recently reconstituted the State Planning Commission as the State Development Policy Council (SDPC). A Government Order in this regard was issued last month.

The SDPC would be headed by the Chief Minister like the erstwhile State Planning Commission and would have a Vice-Chairman, a permanent member and 12 part-time members, who are experts in various fields, besides consultants with specific expertise.

The State Planning Commission has been reconstituted as State Development Policy Council. With some of the functions of the erstwhile Planning Commission such as planning, the SDPC would have additional responsibilities such as monitoring and evaluation of various State government schemes," SDPC Vice-Chairman C. Ponnaiyan told *The Hindu*.

Mr. Ponnaiyan said the permanent member would be appointed within a week and several profiles were be-

ing scrutinised for part-time members and consultants. The SDPC would focus on all three parts of the development – agriculture, which is the primary sector, industries, which form the secondary sector and consumer services, which constitute the tertiary sector. The SDPC would continue to function from the fifth floor of Ezhilagam complex in Cheraukkere here.

On March 16, 2017, then Finance Minister D. Jayakumar, while presenting the Budget for 2017-2018 in the Assembly said the State government would replace the State Planning Commission with the State Development Policy Council to advise on policy coherence and formulation of programmes to guide the development of the State.

NIT No : IGC/FRFCF/EL/T-141/2020. Name of work: Installation, testing and commissioning of 11 KV indoor VCB Switchboard and associated works at Central Water Chilling Plant Sub-Station (CWCP SS) FRFCF, IGCAR, Kalpakkam. Estimated cost Rs. 1,98,42,000/- Earnest Money Deposit Rs. 3,96,840/- & Period of completion : 11 Months. Date and time of availability of tender documents for view and download : 28.05.2020(11.00 Hrs) to 10. 06.2020 (15.00 Hrs), Last date and time of submission of bid 18-06-2020 (15.00 Hrs).

The bid forms and other details can be obtained from the website [www.tenderwizard.com/DAE](http://www.tenderwizard.com/DAE). Detailed NIT is also available on website [www.igcar.gov.in/tenders](http://www.igcar.gov.in/tenders) for view only.



## For farms and farmers

Income support serves a purpose, but the farm sector needs a lot more

The Rajiv Gandhi Kisan Nyay Yojana launched by Chhattisgarh last week aims to supplement the income of the State's 18 lakh rice, maize and sugarcane farmers by ₹10,000 to ₹13,000 per acre, through direct cash transfers. Besides the Centre's PM-KISAN scheme that provides ₹6,000 to farm families owning less than five acres of land, Telangana, Odisha and Andhra Pradesh have similar cash transfer programmes for farmers. For balancing the interests of the consumer and the farmer, India has an extensive Minimum Support Price (MSP) regime which works in combination with the PDS. But the efficiency of neither MSP procurements nor the PDS is uniform across the country. The Centre says it fixes MSPs at 1.5 times the cost of production for farmers, but this calculation is not free of controversy. Last year, several States including Chhattisgarh and BJP-ruled U.P. and Haryana questioned the Centre's MSP calculations. Though food is a universal necessity, those who produce it languish at the bottom of the economic pyramid.

These income support schemes target land owners, and bypass tenants and labourers. In Chhattisgarh, there is preliminary evidence that tenants managed better rates from owners last year after the government gave incentives over and above MSPs to farmers. The State is now designing a cash transfer scheme for landless labourers, according to Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel. But these interventions are only palliative and cannot address the underlying problem, which is the non-remunerative nature of farming. A more market-driven approach has often been proposed as the solution, and the agriculture-related components in the Centre's response to the economic crisis caused by the pandemic appear to toe that line. However, many previous arguments about the agriculture economy have been rendered questionable by the pandemic. The food supply chain crisis in the U.S. is instructive. Considered supremely efficient, it ended up with wasted produce and unmet demand as the pandemic erupted. India's agricultural management must take into account such fresh learning from the pandemic, and vulnerabilities arising out of supply chain-dependent food security. The list of pre-existing morbidities in the agriculture sector is also long, including messy land records, unscientific and unsustainable crop patterns, market linkages that make the farmers vulnerable to exploitation by officials and middlemen, inadequate irrigation, adoption of technology, conflict with wildlife, and changing weather and climate patterns. For now, the Centre must announce the MSPs for the current season at the earliest – late announcements have added to the uncertainties for the farmers in recent years. The creation of a buoyant agriculture sector will take much more, and those efforts must be made on a war-footing.

## Danger in the air

The PIA crash is a reminder that the aviation industry provides little margin for error

From a "we are comfortable now, established on ILS 25L" that soon led to a repeated declaration of "Mayday", the partial transcript of air traffic control conversation that is available offers an insight into the catastrophic end to PK-8303. The Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) flight, from Lahore to Karachi, with 91 passengers and eight crew, was operated using an Airbus A320-214, an aircraft type that is one of aviation's reliable and modern workhorses. Initially, while visual evidence, as photographs and video footage, offered some clues about what might have overwhelmed the pilots of the nearly 16-year-old jetliner, it is the recovery, later, of the crucial blackboxes that is significant. In the backdrop too is the offer of full technical assistance by the manufacturer, Airbus, and the involvement of western air safety agencies and Pakistan's inquiry team. These factors will aid investigators in getting a handle on the series of events. May 22, the day of the accident – there are two survivors – also marked the 10th anniversary of another air disaster, the crash of IX-812, an Air India Express flight on the Dubai-Mangaluru sector.

Air safety commentators point in a relevant direction. Though authorities in Pakistan and PIA, an established flag carrier, have detailed the plane's technical, flight and maintenance history, there is a swirl around the operator's not-so-impressive air safety record. There is also another core and related issue. The COVID-19 pandemic has scorched commercial airline operations and balance sheets, but with airline managers across the world attempting to give wings to their fleets after prolonged grounding, experts highlight a key phrase: 'no half measures'. The necessity of flying machines being returned to service after a complete maintenance check and, more importantly, aircrew being allowed at the controls only after key proficiency checks in a full flight simulator have to be stressed repeatedly. This is a subject that aviation regulators can ill-afford to overlook, and a challenge too, given that it is airlines with deep pockets or with access to financial lifelines that can bridge such issues. The tragedy in Pakistan has also spotlighted another long-standing safety concern. The crippled jet's fiery end, while on approach, in a densely populated neighbourhood lining the airport, highlights the danger of buildings and obstacles affecting airline operations and safety. In India, the authorities concerned have often glossed over High Court orders to demolish structures around aerodromes that violate stringent guidelines laid down by the International Civil Aviation Organization. In the interest of aviation safety, airline crews do deserve a comfort margin and, in an extreme event, every chance at pulling off a Sully as the world wished the PIA crew to have done.

# The need for a million worksites now

Averting a humanitarian disaster in India calls for an explosion of NREGA work in the next few weeks



JEAN DRÈZE

**T**he abominable plight of migrant workers in recent weeks has invaded television screens and stirred the nation's conscience. Alas, this is just the tip of the wave of hardships that is sweeping through the country. The situation looks increasingly alarming in the light of a series of surveys conducted by Azim Premji University (APU) and other institutions. The APU survey, for instance, found that 74% of the respondents (thousands of poor households scattered over many States) were "consuming less food" today than before the lockdown. Another survey, conducted by Farzana Afridi and her colleagues in low-income neighbourhoods of Delhi, found that 80% of the respondents had not earned any income during the lockdown, 90% reported "financial stress", and about half were too anxious to sleep at night.

### Some support from PDS

Thankfully, the Public Distribution System (PDS) is preventing the worst. The same surveys show that an overwhelming majority of poor households (86% according to the APU survey) are currently receiving food rations. The doubling of food rations for three months was a good move on the part of the central government – there is every reason to extend it beyond the end of June. The PDS, however, leaves out 500 million people, including many who live in poverty. Further, even for those who are

covered, the PDS is little more than a protection against hunger. It cannot ensure adequate nutrition, let alone a decent standard of living.

To cope with the crisis, poor households urgently need a chance to earn cash beyond small mercies. Unconditional cash transfers are not easy to use for this purpose, because there is no simple way of identifying those in need, and covering everyone would amount to spreading the money very thin. Universal basic income is a nice idea, but when you do the maths, anything practical tends to reduce the "basic income" to a pittance. India's National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) offers an obvious alternative, at least for rural areas: employment on demand at basic wages.

### Unprecedented demand

The demand for NREGA work is stronger than ever. This is not surprising: most people would prefer to do some work and earn a little than to sit idle with empty pockets. This huge demand contrasts with the resilient indifference of rural workers towards NREGA in recent years, due to low wages and erratic payments. Wages are still low, and payments are still far from timely and reliable; what has changed is that for most workers today, there is nothing better on the cards.

We had a telling experience of this renewed demand for NREGA work in a number of deprived villages of Latehar district (Jharkhand) in the last few days. In this area, the idea of work on demand is still alien to most rural workers, so few of them take the initiative of applying for NREGA work. But whenever we helped people to prepare work applications, men



R.M. RAJARATINAM

and women from almost every household in the village flocked to the spot with their job cards to fill the forms.

Without assistance, however, most workers would find it difficult to submit work applications.

The sad truth is that except in areas where rural workers are relatively empowered, work applications (reflected in "e-muster rolls") are not generally initiated by the workers themselves. Instead, they are initiated on their behalf by others, who have a stake in activating NREGA works: for instance, landowners who want some work done on their land, middlemen who take cuts at various steps, government officials who are under pressure to meet targets, and village heads who wish to please or serve their constituency. In other words, NREGA works extract the workers, and not the other way around. That, at any rate, is how it tends to work in the poorer States.

In the old days (good or bad), workers were allowed to turn up at the worksite and enrol on the spot. That made things easier for them: applying for work was a right, not an obligation. But now, it has become an obligation: no-one can be employed unless his or her name has been entered in advance in the e-muster rolls. Most workers have no idea how to go about this.

This is one reason why the scale of NREGA works remains very low in many States in spite of a huge

demand for employment. This situation calls for large-scale opening of NREGA works on a proactive basis. Every village needs at least one major worksite, where a good number of people can work at short notice (with adequate distancing precautions). Ideally, workers should be allowed to enrol at the worksite. Further, large-scale employment generation should continue throughout the monsoon, the hardest period of the year for poor people in large parts of rural India. Averting a humanitarian disaster in the next few months calls for a veritable explosion of NREGA work.

Much can be done to facilitate this: expanding the list of permissible works, hiring more *gram rogar sevaks* (employment assistants), simplifying the implementation process, mobilising para-teachers for work application drives, and so on. And of course, top-down orders to expand the scale of works could work wonders. NREGA is not supposed to be top-down, but it does have a long history of top-down orders, and after all, this is an emergency.

### Switch to cash payment?

It is also worth considering a return to cash payment of NREGA wages, at least as an option for the duration of the crisis. This would not only help to ensure timely and reliable payment of wages, but also spare workers the ordeal of extracting their wages from overcrowded banks or business correspondents.

Further, cash payment of wages would act as a tremendous incentive for rural workers to demand NREGA work, whatever it takes.

The idea of a return to cash payment of wages is likely to horrify those who trust digital payments

to eliminate corruption. But recent experience suggests that this trust is misplaced. The digital payment system has merely changed the modalities of corruption in NREGA: the crooks used to fudge the paper records, now they fudge the electronic records. The latter may or may not be harder to fudge than the former depending on the circumstances. Even if cash payments are a little more vulnerable to leakages, that may be a tolerable price to pay in an emergency, to protect workers from the hazards of NREGA's byzantine payment system. These include a payment rejection rate of 4%, according to official data, and the tyranny of "Qwicly", as the Know Your Customer (KYC) process is known in rural Jharkhand. Of course, the possible hazards of a hasty switch to cash payments also need to be considered.

### The NREGA budget

Funds are not an immediate concern since the NREGA budget for 2020-21 has been raised to ₹1-lakh crore or so. But more is likely to be required to meet the tremendous demand for NREGA work. It is important to ensure that funds never dry up: this happened every year in the last few years, leading to huge wage arrears. NREGA is supposed to be a demand-driven programme with an open-ended budget; nothing in the Act authorises the government to impose a budget cap.

These are some of the issues that arise in activating NREGA for crisis relief. The main thing is to provide work aplenty and pay wages at speed. This is a matter of life and death.

Jean Drèze is Visiting Professor at the Department of Economics, Ranchi University

## Hardly the 1991 moment for agriculture

The reforms in agricultural marketing are no more than reiterations of earlier pronouncements



HIMANSHU

**T**he announcement of reforms in agricultural marketing by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, in May, has been hailed by some as the "1991" moment for agriculture. While it does not mean much on the ground, it has successfully managed to deflect attention from the pitfall offered by way of fiscal support to the agricultural sector, as a part of the grand fiscal package announced by the Prime Minister. Even then, the reforms are no more than reiterations of earlier announcements.

The three reforms regarding agricultural marketing were the reforms in the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) Act, the Essential Commodities Act, and on contract farming. All of these have been in discussion for almost two decades, with the APMC Act having already seen substantial reforms in many States. The first comprehensive model act on APMC was proposed during 2003, and since then, similar efforts to push for more reforms have been proposed in 2007, 2013, and as late as 2017 by the present government.

**APMCs and changes by States**  
The main argument against the APMC Act is that it creates barriers to the entry and exit of traders and makes the sale and purchase of agricultural produce compulsory for farmers as well as traders. Some of the criticism regarding the functioning of the APMC is valid, to which State governments

have been responsive; as many as 17 State governments having amended the APMC Act to make it more liberal. In fact, the regulations and the functioning of *mandis* vary a great deal across States. Kerala does not have an APMC Act and Bihar repealed it in 2006. But several others such as Maharashtra, West Bengal, Odisha, Gujarat, and Andhra Pradesh deregulated fruits and vegetables trade, allowed private markets, introduced a unified trading licence and have introduced a single-point levy of market fee. Tamil Nadu has already reformed its APMC with no market fee. Several others such as Jharkhand, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Haryana and Rajasthan have undertaken one or more of these reforms. Many States have introduced direct marketing of farm produce, examples being the Uzhavar Sandhai (Tamil Nadu), the Rythu Bazaar (Andhra Pradesh and Telangana), the Raitha Santhe (Karnataka), the Apni Mandi (Punjab) and the Krushak Bazaar - Odisha.

Despite these reforms, APMC *mandis* continue to be vilified for all the ills plaguing marketing infrastructure and the low prices received by the farmers for their produce. The problem with *mandis* is not the regulation per se and the structure of *mandis* but the political interference in the functioning of the markets. These are more obvious in case of large *mandis* specialising in commercial crops and fruits and vegetables, where production is regionally concentrated. But even with these deficiencies, APMC *mandis* continue to play an important role in providing access to market for farmers.

**The Bihar example**  
But did the reforms lead to a better outcome for farmers in those States where the reforms were undertaken? The best example is Bihar. The general argument in favour of reforms is that it will allow private investment in marketing infrastructure as well as provide more choices to farmers, leading to better prices received by farmers. In the case of Bihar, while no investment came in building market infrastructure, the loss of revenue due to the repeal of the APMC also led to deterioration of existing infrastructure (of the 54 market yards) in the State. The revenue collected from the APMC earlier was used not only for the modernisation of these market yards but also for the laying of roads and construction of other infrastructure to provide farmers better access to markets. But after the repeal, there have been no takers for these market yards, with no investment in creating private *mandis*. On the other hand, it has led to proliferation of private unregulated markets which charge a market fee from traders as well as farmers, and without any infrastructure for weighing, sorting, grading and storage. Even in other States where there is deregulation to allow private traders, there is hardly any investment to create market spaces let alone provide other facilities. There is also no evidence that farmers have received better prices in private *mandis* outside the APMC.

While there have been instances of collusion and corruption in the running of the APMC, they continue to provide essential services to farmers. However, the vil-

ification of APMCs has allowed the government to escape the responsibility of creating marketing infrastructure for millions of farmers. As against the recommendation that a regulated market should be available to farmers within a radius of 5 km (a corresponding market area of about 80 sq. km), currently regulated markets cover 457 sq. km. There are more than 7,000 regulated markets and 20,000 rural markets when the need is at least twice these figures. Most of the existing ones require investment in upgrading of infrastructure.

Even the argument that the only bottleneck for farmers not receiving remunerative prices is due to the APMC Act is flawed. More than 80% of farmers, most of whom are small and marginal farmers, do not sell their produce in the APMC *mandis*. For a majority of farmers, prices received are more a function of the demand for agricultural commodities than access to markets.

A good example is the case of decline in milk prices, pointed out by the Finance Minister herself. Despite the presence of cooperatives and private dairies, the collapse of milk prices reflects the decline in demand in the economy, not the distortions in private markets. While it may have exacerbated during the national lockdown following the COVID-19 pandemic, the fact that demand was declining even before the lockdown is now well known.

### Decline in demand

For much of the period during the last two years, terms of trade have moved against agriculture, with agricultural commodity price inflation actually being negative for a large part of the last two years. With underlying weakness in demand and obsession with inflation

targeting through fiscal and monetary policies, most agricultural commodities have seen a sharp decline in demand and, consequently, prices received by farmers. As against the recommendation that a regulated market should be available to farmers within a radius of 5 km (a corresponding market area of about 80 sq. km), currently regulated markets cover 457 sq. km. There are more than 7,000 regulated markets and 20,000 rural markets when the need is at least twice these figures. Most of the existing ones require investment in upgrading of infrastructure.

Even the argument that the only bottleneck for farmers not receiving remunerative prices is due to the APMC Act is flawed. More than 80% of farmers, most of whom are small and marginal farmers, do not sell their produce in the APMC *mandis*. For a majority of farmers, prices received are more a function of the demand for agricultural commodities than access to markets.

As against these, the announcement of these reforms without a draft and without proper consultation with States or other stakeholders is nothing but a smokescreen to deflect attention from the core issue of fiscal support by the government to support farmers' income. If the government is serious in providing remunerative prices to farmers, it needs to increase fiscal spending to create demand in the economy. These, rather than the hollow announcements of reforms, will go a long way in ensuring higher incomes to farmers.

Himanshu is Associate Professor, Centre for Economic Studies and Planning, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

### Watch the stethoscope

We (Dr. T.V. Devarajan, Dr. S.P. Thiagarajan and I) write to draw the attention of health workers, nurses and medical personnel to the potential role of the stethoscope as a carrier of infections particularly in periods of epidemics, viral or bacterial. Many years ago, in the 1970s, we did a study in the Government Stanley Hospital, Madras, on the subject of the potential infectivity of the stethoscope by taking swabs from its different

parts – the diaphragm, bell, ear knobs, etc. We also took up the stethoscopes of physicians, surgeons and their juniors for study, also including the period of usage and the habit of cleansing the stethoscope, diaphragm and other parts. Organisms found on the diaphragm were skin inhabitants, occasionally staphylococci and others such as coliform etc, but not typhoid or Tubercle bacilli. In the present episode of the novel coronavirus pandemic, it is quite

important to cleanse the stethoscope diaphragm apart from sanitising other objects such as door knobs and washing hands, as usual. The problem in the use of alcohol-containing sanitisers on the diaphragm of the stethoscope repeatedly is that it may soften the diaphragm and it may be a less effective conductor of heart and lung sounds, etc. The diaphragm may require replacement from time to time, or any other modality of cleansing may be resorted to. In fact after

every use, the diaphragm of the stethoscope should be cleaned during this epidemic. In the study mentioned above, the bell of the stethoscope did not show any infectivity. However, the bell of the stethoscope is rarely used in practice today. Caution in the use of this valuable instrument in the investigation and management of COVID-19 is necessary because the medical equipment itself may transmit the virus.

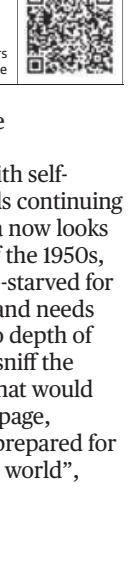
Dr. K.V. THIRUVENGADAM, Chennai

### China and the world

It is not just India but the entire world that must keep its mind on China. Its growth rate may be down in the immediate term but in no way does it seem to be enfeebled by its encounter with the novel coronavirus. On the contrary, the rest of the world has gone into a phase of long economic struggle. This puts China right at pole position in terms of world affairs and commerce. A withdrawn and confused United States, also crippled by the virus,

only adds to the uncertainty. With its tryst with self-inflicted wounds continuing unabated, India now looks like the India of the 1950s, totally resource-starved for the challenges and needs ahead. It has no depth of breath even to sniff the opportunities that would arise (Editorial page, "China, better prepared for the post-COVID world", May 21).

M. BALAKRISHNAN, Bengaluru



# Failing to perform as a constitutional court

The Supreme Court ignored migrant workers when they most needed protection



AJIT PRAKASH SHAH

As India, along with the rest of the world, grapples with the public health crisis caused by COVID-19, it faces many unique challenges. The most acute problem is faced by migrant labourers: they have no work, no source of income, no access to basic necessities, no quality testing facilities, no protective gear, and no means to reach home. Every day, we hear of migrant labourers walking hundreds of miles, many dying in the process. The saddest is the apathy shown by the institutions meant to look out for their interests. I refer here to the Supreme Court, which has failed to satisfactorily acknowledge that the fundamental rights of migrant labourers have been violated, and ignored these workers when they most needed protection.

Undeniably, the state must ensure that adverse consequences of this pandemic are minimised. But any duty performed by the arms of the state, even during emergency, must always be bounded by constitutional propriety, and respect fundamental rights. The judiciary becomes the all-important watchdog in this situation.

#### No relief for workers

In this lockdown, enough and more evidence points to fundamental rights of citizens having been grossly violated, and especially those of vulnerable populations like migrant labourers. But instead of taking on petitions questioning the situation, the Supreme Court has remained ensconced in its ivory tower, refusing to admit these petitions or adjourning them. By effectively not granting any relief, the Court is denying citizens of the most fundamental right of access to justice, ensured under the Constitution. In doing so, it has let down millions of migrant workers, and failed to adequately perform as a constitutional court.

In one of the strictest lockdowns in modern India, the Centre issued many directives, but designated the States as the implementing authorities. But the issue of migrant labour-



ers is inherently an inter-State issue, and States have had to tackle it both internally as well as inter-se. Who will guarantee safe transport for the return of migrant workers? When in quarantine, who will grant them a sustenance allowance, or look after their health issues, or look after needs besides food? Who will ensure job loss compensation? Who will conduct regular and frequent testing? Only the Supreme Court can enforce accountability of the Centre in these matters.

In rejecting or adjourning these petitions, the Court has made several questionable remarks: the condition of migrant labourers is a matter of policy and thus, does not behove judicial interference; or, governments already provide labourers with two square meals a day, so what more can they possibly need (surely, 'not wages'); or, incidents like the horrific accident where migrant labourers sleeping on railway tracks were killed cannot be avoided because 'how can such things be stopped'. Equally, lawyers have been castigated for approaching the Court 'merely' on the basis of reports. But the Court has rarely insisted on such formality: its epistolary jurisdiction (where petitions were entertained via mere letters) is the stuff of legend, so its reaction here, during an emergency, seems anomalous.

Many of the so-called excuses of the Court have been tackled by previous judgments, notably the question of policy and non-judicial interference. There are numerous judgments where it has laid out matters of policy: for instance, the Vishaka guidelines on sexual harassment in the workplace; the right to food; and various environmental protec-

tion policies. In these cases, the Court formulated policies and asked the States to implement them. Today, there is an unfortunate presumption discernible in the Court's response that the government is the best judge of the situation. In believing thus, the Court seems to have forgotten that the Constitution does not fall silent in times of crises. Similarly, nothing prevents the Court from monitoring the situation itself directly, especially regarding the state's obligations: it could easily direct bureaucrats to collect empirical data on the ground, as it has done before.

One is struck immediately by the lack of compassion or judicial sensitivity in handling this situation, and it prompts two observations. First, the Court is not merely rejecting or adjourning these petitions; it is actively dissuading petitioners from approaching the courts for redress because the Court determines that it is the executive's responsibility. Ordinarily, the Court would have at least nudged petitioners towards the High Courts, but here, even that choice is not available – the Court is practically slamming the door shut.

Second, there is the matter of how the Court is treating such public interest litigations. PILs are a specific instrument designed to ensure the protection of the rights of the poor, downtrodden and vulnerable, and "any member of the public" can seek appropriate directions on their behalf. This lies at the heart of the PIL. The concept of a PIL is to be non-adversarial, but the Court is treating these as adversarial matters against the government. PILs, in fact, ought to be a collaborative effort between the court and all the parties, where everyone comes together in seeking

a resolution to the problem. Today, we find ourselves with a Supreme Court that has time for a billion-dollar cricket administration, or the grievances of a high-profile journalist, while studiously ignoring the real plight of millions of migrants, who do not have either the money or the profile to compete for precious judicial time with other litigants.

#### Role of High Courts

At this stage, I must acknowledge the stellar role being played by some High Courts, even though governments have tried to discourage them on grounds that since the Supreme Court is not interfering, High Courts need not do so either. At least four High Courts (Karnataka, Madras, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat) have started asking questions about migrant rights. This is almost a replay of what happened during Emergency, where High Courts boldly stood up and recognised violations, but were overruled eventually by the Supreme Court. The Madras High Court, for example, has quashed criminal defamation cases against media houses, stating that democracy cannot be throttled this way. Contrast this with the Supreme Court's reaction to the bizarre claim of the Solicitor-General who argued that the exodus of workers was due to fake news: the Court seemed to have accepted this, and media houses were advised to report more responsibly.

In such times, High Courts come across as islands of rationality, courage and compassion. However, in truth, the subject matter of migration is inherently an inter-State issue, not an intra-State one. This is a time when the apex court must intervene and monitor the calamitous situation, instead of taking the government's word as gospel. Justice Brandeis' words quoted by Justice H.R. Khanna in *ADM Jabalpur* ring especially true in these times: "Experience should teach us to be most on our guard to protect liberty when the Government's purposes are beneficent ... [the] greatest danger to liberty lies in insidious encroachment by men of zeal, well-meaning but lacking in due deference for the rule of law."

Ajit Prakash Shah is former Chief Justice, Delhi and Madras High Courts and former Chairperson, Law Commission of India

#### FROM THE READERS' EDITOR

## Fourth estate and the fifth column

Speaking the truth is the role of the fourth estate; being a megaphone for propaganda is the role of the fifth column



A.S. PANNEERSELVAN

Some readers ask how my columns about the larger information ecology and about social media are linked to the journalism of this newspaper. When the government fails to deliver, it invents multiple means to deflect the attention of the citizens from scrutinising its functions. The deflections may vary from waging a full-fledged war to demonising neighbouring countries. Social media is used to manage headlines and amplify misinformation. A few recent complaints regarding this newspaper's reportage on renewed militancy in Kashmir and border skirmishes with China clearly fall into this category.

#### Puncturing the narrative

Before clearing their doubts, let me share a personal story. Two decades ago, I was Bureau Chief of *Outlook* magazine when it broke the story, "Command Failure". The report explained that the 1999 war with Pakistan took place as the military and political leadership did not take cognisance of the timely warnings of the man on the ground, Brig Surinder Singh, commander of the Kargil-based 121 Brigade. The report widely differed from the narrative that the then National Democratic Alliance-government wanted the people to believe. The official position was that the nuclear test in Pokhran had changed the regional dynamics and that India was talking to Pakistan from a position of strength. The Kargil intrusion not only punctured that narrative but also exposed the limitations of hypernationalistic rhetoric masquerading as news.

I asked Editor Vinod Mehta what gave him the courage to carry a report that questioned the government about a war with a neighbouring country when many media outlets were behaving as force multipliers for the government. He said, and I paraphrase: There are two forms of journalism – fourth estate and the fifth column. Speaking the truth and holding those in power accountable are the core roles of journalism as the fourth estate. To be a megaphone for governmental propaganda and keeping people in the dark is the

role of the fifth column. The choice is obvious.

A sentence in the news analysis, "Behind new incidents, a changed dynamic along India-China border" (May 20), read: "By December 2022, all 61 strategic roads along the border, spread across Arunachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Sikkim, Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, will be completed..." Some readers felt that the newspaper was wrong in mentioning J&K. They said the report should have said Ladakh as the State has now been divided into two Union Territories. They failed to recognise that J&K includes not just Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh, but also a huge swathe of territory across the Line of Control. The Indian state calls the region "Pakistan-occupied Kashmir". That region includes the Trans-Karakoram Tract, which India has been consistently claiming as its own. The Hunza-Gilgit region borders Xinjiang Province of the People's Republic of China to the north, and the Siachen Glacier region to the east. A newspaper has to take a holistic view instead of shoehorning its analysis into the official narrative.

#### Selective use of the term 'martyr'

Some readers were also troubled with the newspaper's reluctance to use the term 'martyr' when reporting on the killing of CRPF soldiers. A Delhi-based advocate, Piyush Pathak, wrote: "I have been a regular reader of your prestigious newspaper for more than 30 years. A soldier martyred shall be properly addressed as this would give a positive effect to the society."

Another reader, Vimal Kumar, felt that despite a Readers' Editor column on this topic, "The difference between journalism and propaganda" (March 4, 2019), the term 'martyr' had been used in some reports ("Solidarity march held for Pulwama martyrs", March 11, 2019, and "A tribute to Pulwama martyrs, a plea against hate-mongering", February 22, 2019). He wondered why there is lack of consistency in the newspaper in using the term 'martyr'.

Mr. Kumar is right. The term has managed to slip through the gate-keeping processes and this is unacceptable. However, to the credit of the desk, Mr. Kumar could not find the term after March 11, 2019. The desire to be the fourth estate trumps external pressure to become the fifth column.

readerseditor@thehindu.co.in

## No answers yet for Somalia

The two big questions before the country could be deferred indefinitely due to the pandemic

GARIMELLA SUBRAMANIAM

As Somalia grapples with the staggering challenge from the COVID-19 pandemic, chances are that the June 8 public hearings at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on Somalia's maritime dispute with Kenya will be deferred yet again. The public health emergency also raises a question mark on the general elections scheduled for later this year, especially as the nation seeks to restore universal suffrage after five decades.

said the court.

In a diplomatic row last year, Kenya recalled its ambassador and expelled Somalia's envoy, accusing the Somalian government of illegally auctioning oil blocks in the disputed waters. In parallel, the African Union has intervened to find a settlement out of court via a mediator. As regards the judicial proceedings at The Hague, a decision is expected on the public hearings, postponed twice last year, scheduled to commence next month.

#### Universal suffrage

The people of Somalia will, later this year, for the first time since the 1969 general elections, exercise their right to political participation under universal suffrage. The one-person one-vote law, which received President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed's assent in February, is a milestone in the country's gradual path to democratic governance after enduring military rule for over two decades and the long transition following the civil war. Notably, there was a 100-fold increase in the number of delegates (14,025) in the 2016 electoral college which chose the 275-member House of the People and the 54 senators-strong upper chamber. There are fewer women legislators in the current parliament than the 30% seats allotted to them. But a steady increase in the number of female representatives witnessed in successive elections is an encouraging sign.

Somalia has systematically suppressed a free press that is vital to a vibrant democracy. Eight journalists have been killed and as many have fled the country during Mr. Mohamed's term as the al-Shabab and the police behave with impunity, says Amnesty International. The Committee to Protect Journalists said in 2016 that as many as 59 media personnel were killed since the 1991 civil war.

In the backdrop of such systemic constraints and the current pandemic, the practical difficulties of implementing universal suffrage would be formidable. Authorities and activists can, however, take comfort in the fact that the alternatives would be far less desirable.

garimella.subramaniam@thehindu.co.in

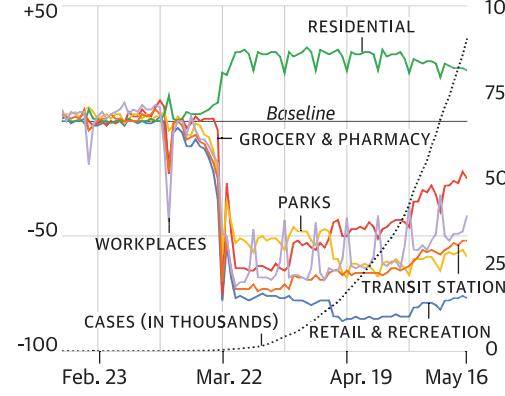


#### DATA POINT

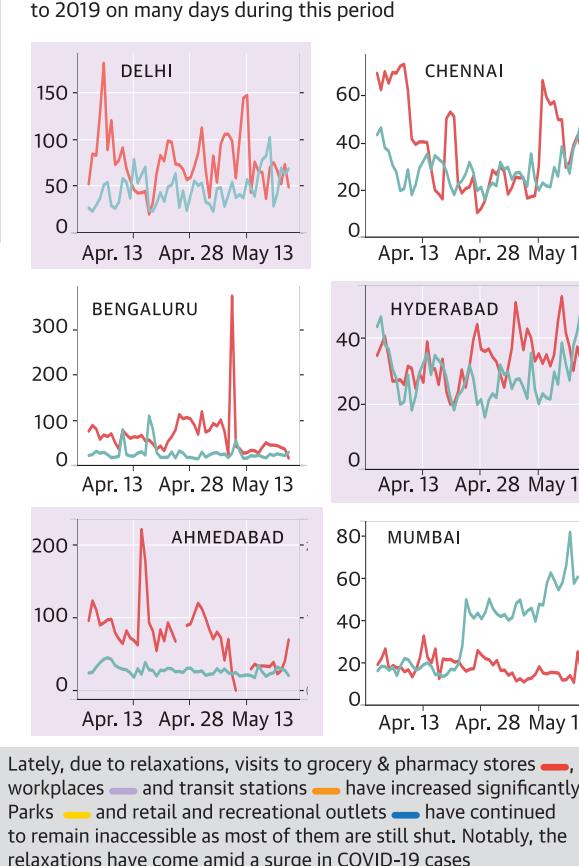
## A break from pollution

Due to the COVID-19-related lockdown, global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in 2020 have dropped to levels last seen in 2006. Particulate matter pollution levels in select Indian cities exhibit a similar decline. The drop coincides with decreased public mobility in India following the lockdown. However, the recent relaxations have led to a significant increase in activity. By *The Hindu Data Team*

**2. MOBILITY TRENDS** The chart shows the increase or decrease in visits and length of stay at places in India compared to a baseline value (left axis). The baseline is the median value for the corresponding day of the week during the 5-week period (Jan. 3-Feb. 6). The chart uses anonymised location data from phones collated by Google. It also shows the cumulative COVID-19 cases in India (dotted line, right axis)



**1. POLLUTION DROPS ACROSS CITIES** The graphs show daily PM<sub>2.5</sub> levels between April 1 and May 24 in 2019 (red) and 2020 (blue). Except Mumbai, other cities recorded significantly low levels of particulate matter pollution in 2020 compared to 2019 on many days during this period



#### The Hindu

#### FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO MAY 25, 1970

#### The Outcaste

(From an editorial)

In calling off the South African all-white cricket tour of England, the M.C.C.'s Cricket Council has at last let good sense prevail. But it needed intervention by the Government to bring that about. The Home Secretary, Mr. John Callaghan, made a formal request to the Council to cancel the controversial tour in view of the harm that it boded not only to race relations and the law and order situation at home but to Britain's relations with the other Commonwealth countries. Fourteen of them had decided to boycott the forthcoming Commonwealth Games as a mark of protest and international cricket itself was faced with the distinct possibility of breaking up into two camps, white and non-white. When so much was at stake, why the Cricket Council should have clung to the tour so long is difficult to understand unless it be that it wanted to put the onus for cancellation on the Labour Government or wanted a face-saving way out of the mess it had created. The arguments of the tour-supporters that politics should be kept out of sports, that a militant minority should not be allowed to impose its will on the majority which wanted the tour, that there is more merit in maintaining links than in snapping them and so on, all become nonsensical in relation to South Africa.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MAY 25, 1920

#### Externment of Nehru

(From third editorial)

From further particulars about the externment of Pundit Jawahar Lal Nehru from the district of Dehra Dun, the Pundit's crime appears to be that he happened to reside in the same hotel with his family solely for the purpose of recuperating his health as the Afghan delegates in Mussoorie. He had not spoken a word to the delegates, but the presence of the delegates seems, however, to have strucken the Government with a peculiar sense of danger at Mussoorie, and the order served upon the Pundit is, we understand, only one of the many carbon copies that the police have been supplied with for using at their discretion. While the Defence of India Act is still in force the tendency to use it for purposes irrespective of justice or truth need not be a surprise – except of course to those unctuous souls for whom the Reforms have opened the gateways of freedom. The Act should have ended six months after the termination of the war, but an ingenuity of explanation has helped to keep in on.

FROM PAGE ONE

## Flight and health curbs cloud airline operations

Making its stand clear, the Karnataka government announced that in-coming travellers from seven States, including Maharashtra, Delhi and Tamil Nadu, where COVID-19 cases are high, will have to undergo a week-long institutional quarantine.

"Incoming domestic flight passengers from Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Delhi, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Delhi & Madhya Pradesh will undergo 7 day institutional Quarantine followed by home quarantine," Karnataka Director General of Police Praveen Sood tweeted.

**Health Ministry norms**  
In its guidelines for traveller, the Health Ministry said, "In case, they develop any COVID symptoms, they shall inform the district surveillance officer or the State/national call centre."

Both for domestic and international travel those found symptomatic will be isolated and taken to the nearest health facility. They will be assessed for clinical severity at the health facility and advised as per protocol.

**Fear of cancellations**

The new protocols set out by the Ministry and the various State health departments pose not just a logistical nightmare for airlines who will be forced to cancel their flights and accommodate passengers in alternate flights with very little time left to plan, but could also result in passengers yet again finding their money parked in credit shells which they can only redeem against future bookings.

"There is some apprehension amongst travellers with the constantly evolving

State-specific quarantine protocols. There might be a slight increase in cancellation/reschedule requests from travellers in the coming few days specifically for States that are not allowing air travel to resume starting tomorrow," said Alok Bajpai, CEO & Co-founder of ixigo.

For international travellers, the Ministry guideline states that they shall give an undertaking that they would undergo mandatory quarantine for 14 days including 7 days paid institutional quarantine at their own cost, followed by 7 days isolation at home with self-monitoring of health.

However in exceptional and compelling reasons – of human distress, pregnancy, death in family, serious illness and parent(s) accompanied by children below 10 years, as assessed by the receiving States, home quarantine may be permitted for 14 days with the mandatory use of Aarogya Setu app.

The Ministry has added that only asymptomatic travellers will be allowed to board or come through land borders.

For domestic travel, instructions will be provided along with tickets to the travellers by the agencies concerned, the Ministry said and added that all passengers should download Arogya Setu app.

The Ministry added that during boarding and travel, all passengers shall use face covers/mask. Passengers will also follow hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene and maintain environmental hygiene.

(With PTI inputs)

## Quarantine norms differ across States

All passengers will be screened on arrival. While those who are asymptomatic will be asked to be in home quarantine for 14 days, those who do have symptoms will be taken to the nearest health facility for testing.

The Maharashtra government, which had not amended its Standard Operating Procedure for air travel at the time of filing this report, climbed down from its initial stand of not allowing a single flight in Mumbai and Pune by agreeing to 25 commercial flight arrivals and departures each to the commercial capital of India. The Pune and Nagpur airports, operated by the Airports Authority of India, said one-third of the pre-COVID-19 flights would operate from Monday. GVK-led Mumbai International Airport Ltd. told airlines that the Mumbai airport would not accommodate flights between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m.

In north India, Delhi, Chandigarh, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar, too, will follow the Health Ministry's guidelines.

Telangana said it was examining the guidelines, but would continue with its protocols for rail and inter-State bus services. "People arriving at airports will be screened and those without any symptoms will be allowed to go after they fulfil conditions," a senior official said.

Andhra Pradesh will test all incoming air passengers. Health Department officials said samples would be taken from all passengers upon their arrival and asymptomatic persons would be advised home quarantine. Symptomatic passengers would have to go through institutional quarantine.

All flights to Vijayawada, scheduled for May 25, have been cancelled in the last minute. Flights are likely to resume on Tuesday.

Domestic air passengers landing in Goa from May 25 will be given two options:

getting tested by paying a fee of ₹2,000 or a 14-day home quarantine stamp. Each passenger will be subject to a thermal temperature screening and have to fill up a declaration form, which will also include the address of stay in Goa.

In Uttar Pradesh, those passengers who don't plan to leave the State after arrival will be kept in home quarantine for 14 days, Chief Secretary Rajendra Kumar Tiwari said.

The district administration will be authorised to provide them relief from home quarantine, after their medical examination, in case they need to provide services in any office. On the sixth day of arrival, the passenger can get a test conducted, and if the sample is found negative, home quarantine will be suspended, said an order.

The Rajasthan government has not issued any separate guidelines for air passengers.

In Assam, Health Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said there would be no quarantine for air passengers who fly out to their "desired or destined place" within 24 hours of arrival in Guwahati, provided they notified authorities of their departure upon arrival.

He added that those who did not "return as declared" and stay beyond this time frame would be charged under relevant laws for giving false information.

Odisha has decided to reduce the quarantine period to 14 days.

Earlier, those coming from outside the State were required to undergo 21 days of institutional quarantine and seven days of home quarantine.

The quarantine period for returnees to the State will be limited to 14 days. This will be implemented by local authorities – District Collectors," said an order issued by the Chief Secretary on Sunday.

(With inputs from bureaus)

## COVID-19 claims four more lives in Telangana

Kerala has 1 more death; Karnataka, A.P record 130 and 83 cases respectively

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Four more people suffering from COVID-19 died in Telangana, taking the toll to 53. Kerala also reported one fatality.

### COVID-19

On Sunday, COVID-19 cases continued to rise steadily in Kerala. The State reported its fifth death when a woman who had returned from Dubai for cancer treatment and had COVID-19 died at Kozhikode.

Of 53 new cases, 47 were imported, with 18 people having come from the Gulf and 29 from other States, including Maharashtra. Five persons, including a health worker at Palakkad, were believed to have contracted the disease through contact with known or unknown sources of infection. One person was

a native of Tamil Nadu.

Thiruvananthapuram and Kannur accounted for 12 cases each, Malappuram and Kasaragod districts had five cases each, Alappuzha, Ernakulam and Palakkad had four cases each. Kollam district had three, Pathanamthitta two and Kozhikode one case. Five persons had recovered. At present, 322 patients were undergoing treatment. So far, 520 recovered and five passed away. After the lockdown norms were relaxed, 93,404 persons had entered the State by air, sea, rail and road. The State put 95,394 persons on quarantine, of whom, 94,662 were on home or institutional quarantine, while 732 were in isolation wards in hospitals. On Sunday, 188 persons were admitted to hospitals.

### Many cases from abroad

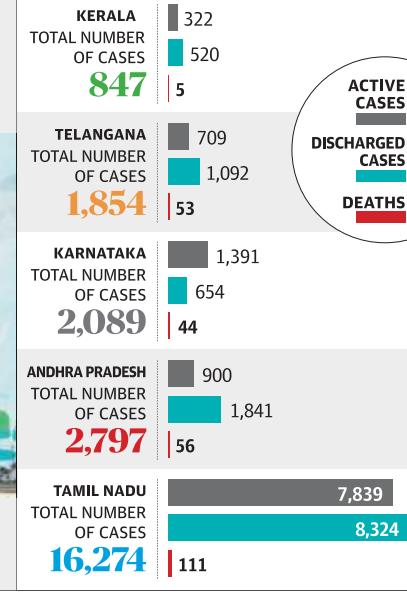
The spread of coronavirus showed no signs of slowing

### Spreading the message

With the easing of lockdown restrictions, States are using unique ways to spread awareness about the norms to follow while in public places



Saying it with art: Artists painting a mural on a wall to stress the importance of maintaining physical distance in Vijayawada. ■ K.V.S. GIRI



down in Andhra Pradesh with 83 new cases detected in 24 hours. The case tally rose to 2,797. Among new cases detected, 17 were those who returned recently from West Asia. Twelve were from Kuwait, three from Dubai/Saudi Arabia and two from Qatar, an official bulletin

said. In addition, 11 new cases were linked to Koyambedu. Also, 37 patients recovered while no deaths were reported.

Meanwhile, the State's testing capacity went up: 11,357 samples were tested in 24 hours, for the first time.

With 130 new COVID-19

cases in this category. Also, 790 contracted the infection through contact and 99 who had an international travel history.

Karnataka had done 3,209 tests per million population. Delhi was first with 9,852 tests per million, while Andhra Pradesh had done 5,909 tests per million.

Total COVID-19 deaths in Telangana rose to 53, with four more fatalities. The number of new cases too rose by 41. Among COVID-19 patients whose death was reported on Sunday were a 75-year-old man from Jagtial, a 72-year-old woman, a 60-year-old man who suffered from Severe Acute Respiratory Illness (SARI), and a 48-year-old woman who had leukemia. The latter three were from Hyderabad.

Of 41 new cases, 23 were from Greater Hyderabad, one was from Rangareddy district, 11 were migrants and six foreign evacuees.

(With inputs from Vijayawada, Bengaluru and Hyderabad bureaus)

## 'Murders of 9 migrant workers were planned'

Telangana police solve deaths in well

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
WARANGAL URBAN DISTRICT

The nine migrant workers found dead in an abandoned well in Gorrekunta of Warangal Rural district in Telangana were murdered as part of a planned plot.

Police investigation revealed that Sanjay Kumar Yadav, another migrant worker from Bihar, plotted the murder of Maqsood's son-in-law Khathun. He is said to have had financial disputes with Maqsood. Hence, he decided to kill the entire family.

Sanjay saw an opportunity when Maqsood was celebrating his grandson's birthday on May 20 and decided to execute his plan. He went to the party uninvited. He mixed the cool drinks with sleeping pills and after all those present at the party fell unconscious, he along

with an auto driver Mohan, a resident of Chintal, threw them into the well one-by-one. Further, the duo collected all their mobile phones and threw them on the outskirts of the city. CCTV cameras and call data from the phones of the deceased helped the police identify the killer. Interrogation is going on regarding the exact way the murder was executed. The police may officially arrest the accused on Monday.

Since the time the deaths were uncovered, the police had been questioning those close to the Maqsood's family. Two migrant workers from Bihar – Sanjay Kumar Yadav and Mohan – who were frequently in touch with Maqsood were brought to the crime scene as part of the inquiry on Saturday.

The compliance report is to be filed by May 26 and cases listed for May 28.

### Company assets

Chief Justice J.K. Maheshwari and Justice K. Lalitha Kumari also ordered that the company assets, both movable and immovable, should not be

'Even directors should not be allowed inside'

V. RAGHAVENDRA  
VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh High Court has directed that the LG Polymers plant in Visakhapatnam be sealed and no one, including company directors, be allowed to enter its premises.

However, the court permitted the committees formed by the National Green Tribunal (NGT) and the Central and State governments to probe the incident, to make a note of their visits in registers maintained at the factory gate.

The compliance report is to be filed by May 26 and cases listed for May 28.

### Husband arrested after woman dies of snakebite

He threw cobra at sleeping wife: police



Trial begins: The court ordered that the company's assets should not be shifted without their consent. ■ K.R. DEEPAK

shifted without their consent.

It (the court) sought to know whether the company applied for permission to restart during the lockdown and directed the government to file an action-taken report if the operations were resumed without necessary

permission.

The court further directed that the surrendered parts of the company directors should not be released and they (the company directors) be not allowed to leave the country without its

clearances. The court asked what is the LG Polymers' net worth as per the Companies Act (not book value) and with whose permission the styrene monomer was transported to South Korea when a magisterial inquiry and various inspections were under way.

### Lack of clearance

Besides, the court called for an explanation to the lack of a valid environmental clearance from the Union Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, existence of hospitals, educational institutions, railway stations, airport and etc. in the vulnerable zone that extended up to a radius of 6.3 km, non-functioning of siren/alarm system and failure to inform the people about the risk involved in the storage of styrene and to give them training in evacuation procedures as per the Manufacture, Storage and Import of Hazardous Chemicals Rules, 1989.

## Sanitised corridor mooted for students from outside Kerala

State Health department issues advisory for pending exams

**STAFF REPORTER**

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

A sanitised corridor (red channel) should be created for students from outside the State and those in 14-day quarantine (and their guardians) to appear for the pending SSLC, higher secondary, and vocational higher secondary examinations from the location they are quarantined in. The sanitised corridor will have to be maintained in the examination centre and the examination hall too.

The corridor is part of an elaborate health advisory issued by the Health and Family Welfare department on the basis of directions of the General Education department and suggestions from a committee of experts for students and other stakeholders involved in the examination process to reduce the COVID-19 transmission risk. The examinations will begin on Tuesday.

List of students from other States and in quarantine

was taken so that the students did not put themselves at risk.

Primary and Secondary Education Minister S. Suresh Kumar said the Goa government had already given them permission to set up the centres. "We are awaiting the nod from the Kerala government."

should be prepared in advance and communicated to schools.

The advisory calls on school authorities to prepare a micro plan that includes the number of students from within and outside the State, the number of classrooms, seating arrangements, travel of students, and other details. The micro plan should be vetted by the health authorities.

All invigilators should wear triple layer masks and gloves.

Social distancing, hand hygiene, and triple layer masks are mandatory for students from other States or Lakshadweep and those in quarantine. Those found having mild flu-like symptoms should be seated separately and visit a nearby health centre at the end of the day's examination.

All invigilators should wear triple layer masks and gloves.

was impossible for the snake to enter a closed, air-conditioned room with tiled floor and that Sooraj had planted the snake inside when his first attempt failed. Sooraj had reportedly removed Uthra's gold from the bank locker on March 2, the day she was first bitten by a snake.

Her parents also alleged that Uthra had been facing dowry harassment and that she was murdered for her gold and property.

The police said Sooraj had confessed after a long questioning session and admitted that he brought the snake in a bottle and threw it over Uthra while she was asleep. According to the police, Sooraj procured the poisonous snakes from Suresh, a handler, paying ₹5,000 for each snake. "Sooraj had been plotting the murder for three months and his web history shows a lot of data related to snakes," said Hari Sankar, District Police Officer (Kollam Rural).

Following her death, Uthra's parents filed a case with the District Police Chief (Kollam Rural). They said it

## TTD board chief defends decision to sell properties

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

TIRUPATI

The Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams' (TTD) decision to dispose of non-remunerative properties has kicked up a controversy with the entire State taking objection to it.

TTD Trust Board Chairman Y.V. Subba Reddy on Sunday said the decision to

sell 50 immovable properties in remote locations through public auction was well within the board's purview. He appealed to devotees not to get carried away by reports that "hurt the sentiments of pilgrims."

The practice of selling immovable and non-maintainable properties has been in vogue since 1974, as 129



# Wrong to lift lockdown abruptly, says Uddhav

Maharashtra CM says real picture will emerge in 14 days

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray said on Sunday that it was neither right to impose a lockdown suddenly nor to withdraw it abruptly. He said the State was restarting activities in phases and people should not violate physical distancing norms and exhibit indiscipline.

"We cannot end it abruptly. If we do it like the manner in which it was invoked, it may lead to an increase in the number of [COVID-19] cases. We are bringing activities back on track in phases. We have to take precautions," he said in his social media address.

Mr. Thackeray recalled what he had said at the video conference of Opposition parties two days ago. "I said



Uddhav Thackeray

the real picture about our country will be clear in a fortnight due to the migration and the likely transmission of the virus due to the people's movement," he said.

At a time of crisis, no one should resort to politics, he said, referring to the Opposition BJP's agitation over the increasing number of cases in the State. "You may do it,

## Patanjali proposes drug trial in Indore

Health Minister says there is huge potential in traditional medicine

STAFF REPORTER  
BHOPAL

A day before Baba Ramdev told Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan that ayurvedic medicines had given "very good results" on COVID-19 patients, the research wing of his firm Patanjali had given a proposal to a government medical college to conduct clinical trials.

On May 19, Anurag Varshney, vice-president, Patanjali Research Institute, Haridwar, made the request to the dean of the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Medical College, Indore, the city worst hit by the outbreak. Jyoti Bindal, the dean, has sent the proposal to the government.

## Centre seeks efficacy of Ayurveda

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Union Health Ministry on Sunday sought results of COVID-19 treatment using Ayurvedic medicines.

This was following a visit by Health Minister Harsh Vardhan to a dedicated COVID-19 health centre at the Chaudhary Brahm Prakash Ayurved Charak Sansthan (CBPACS), Najaigarh.

### Huge potential

"Ayurveda is a traditional medicinal knowledge source from India and there is huge potential in it. Its inherent strength in holistic healing and wellbeing is being put to good use in treatment of the patients at this centre," said

## Two babies born over 2 days on trains to Odisha

Another baby delivered in police vehicle

SATYASUNDAR BARIK  
BHUBANESWAR

A woman migrant worker travelling from Kazipet in Telangana to Balangir in Odisha gave birth to a baby boy in a Shramik Special train on Sunday. This is the second delivery of a baby on a train in the past 48 hours.

When the woman, identified as Hema Kanti, went into labour, the Railway Divisional Medical Officer was called into the train at Titagarh. Forty minutes later, mother and child were shifted to a government hospital at Titagarh by an ambulance.

In another instance, at Jharsuguda, a migrant woman gave birth to a child inside the police vehicle in which she was being rushed to hospital. The woman was travelling to Bihar from Secunderabad by train when she went into labour.

lance, said East Coast Railway. Both mother and baby girl are fine.

On Friday, Kunti Nag, travelling from Secunderabad to Balangir, gave birth to a baby boy. Mother and child were later admitted in a government hospital in Balangir.

Set up in 1787, the 273-acre garden, located at the other end of the Hooghly, has turned into a graveyard of trees. Massive trees, hundreds in number, with trunks having a girth of several metres, have fallen all over the garden, blocking access to large parts of the campus.

"We have lost nearly 1,000 trees, including some notable and rare species," Kanad Das, scientist, Botanical Survey of India (BSI), and in charge of the Botanic Garden, said. The garden has ov-

er 13,000 trees of about 1,100 species.

**Rare and notable**

Among the rare trees that have fallen include the only full-grown *kalpabriksha*

the Hooghly; the brick wall along Andul Road of the Botanic Garden has suffered significant damage too.

Amid all the devastation, the "Great Banyan Tree" on the western edge of garden offered the only silver lining. The tree, which has an enormous canopy, has survived with some damage. The 250-year-old tree, which predates the botanic garden, has a canopy of over 1.5 hectares. It is supported by over 4,000 prop roots.

**Major attraction**

Located at the western edge of garden, about 10% of the Great Banyan's prop roots have been damaged by the cyclone.

The cyclone also did not spare the iron fencing along

the authorities managing the Botanic Garden are confident that the destroyed prop roots can either be repaired, or new roots will come up. The tree is one of the garden's major attractions. The main trunk of the banyan tree had to be removed in 1925, after an infection was caused by a wood-rotting fungi.

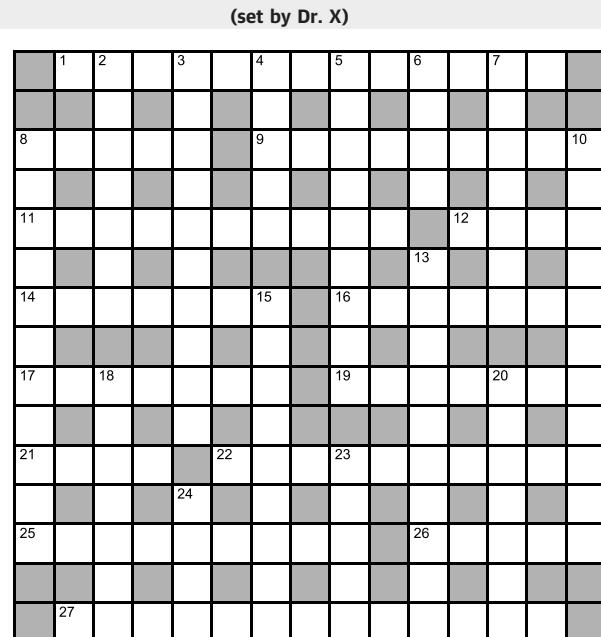
A.A. Mao, Director, Botanical Survey of India, who visited the garden on Saturday, said that the sort of damage that the Great Banyan Tree has suffered was expected in a cyclone of such intensity.

"We are lucky that the tree had a horizontal expansion and wasn't tall like the other trees of the botanic garden," he said.

## CROSSWORD + 12944

(set by Dr. X)

De-stress at home with some fun brain teasers. Try out at never-before prices @ <https://crossword.thehindu.com>



### ACROSS

- Increases speed of walking to twice as much getting more gaps between lines (6-7)
- Avoid a horribly maintained American state (5)
- Son felt sad about rebellious tiff primarily hurting pride (4-5)
- Emulate move to protect veteran endlessly facing prosecution (6, 4)
- Amazon native settled around island (4)

- 14 Hooligans yearn to enter fights (7)  
 16 Thrill to receive bonus salary (7)  
 17 Calm because wise person controls union (7)  
 19 Fellows spending money on grand celebration to impress (7)  
 21 One gets pain around pelvic bones (4)  
 22 Risky choice to install a Republican (10)  
 25 Exotic woman in ultimately revealing thong, one that's worn in bed (9)  
 26 A little offensive, sour smell (5)  
 27 Conserving energy, fight and rush around ring to seek vengeance (2, 3, 5)

### DOWN

- Unwritten rules in Judaism, old and realistic about everything (4, 3)
- Revolting attempt to spread ghastly bacilli round in this type of warfare (10)
- Stops losing head and relaxes (5)
- Mate with damsel over one oriental mattress (9)
- Overwhelmed by endless expenditure, wife intimidates (4)
- Help to sprint around track, climbing with energy (7)
- Notice how soldiers march (11)
- One using shears and drier? (11)
- Being finally rather messy, tucking into chicken – need this? (6, 4)
- Abstains from exercises eventually and weakens (6, 3)
- Fish for eels and small carp (7)
- Associate gets largely melancholic on old sherry (7)
- Malignancy killing club chairperson? (5)
- Westernmost Aleutian island, part of great Tundra (4)

## SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★

Solution to puzzle 12943

E	G	G	O	N	O	N	E	S	F	A	C	E
U	N	R	M	L	A							
B	E	R	I	M	B	R	O	G	L	I	O	
E	G	H	E	A	W	L	P					
F	A	I	S	E	A	R	M	D	I	R		
R	E	T	T	R	A	N	N					
I	N	S	T	A	N	T	I	G	U	N		
E	B	O	S	F								
N	O	D	D	L	U	I	C	E				
D	N	E	S	L	H	S						
I	O	T	A	D	M	S	L	F	I	S		
N	H	L	I	S	I	T	C	U				
G	R	E	A	D	E	R	I	N	A	P		
C	S	D	E	L	E	N	T					
C	O	N	S	T	E	R	N					

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

## FAITH

### Elements of Ramzan

In an exceptionally hot month of fasting, perhaps it is most appropriate to remember that an alternative meaning of the Arabic word 'Ramad', the root of 'Ramadan', is 'scorchedness of the earth due to excessive heat'. Ramadan, or Ramzan, as the month of fasting is more commonly known, was declared in mid-May, and a little unusually, the date of commencement was uniformly observed on the same day by Muslims globally. To Muslims fasting from dawn to dusk in the ninth month of the lunar Islamic calendar, Ramzan is an opportunity not just for voluntary abstention from the appetites that drive their existence but also a reminder of how close nature is to their life.

The Muslim population of the world sets its dates according to the Hijri calendar. This starts in the Islamic New Year of AD 622 when the Prophet Muhammad and his followers migrated from Makkah (Mecca) to Yathrib (now known as Medina) and established the first Muslim community or 'Ummah'. The Hijri calendar has 12 months, in a year of 354 or 355 days. With the calendar moving back by 11 days each year compared with the more universally used Gregorian (solar) calendar, the first day of Ramzan tends to change accordingly. Fasting was made compulsory in the second year after the migration.

Even though the sun and the moon have always been a part of what we call day and night, a ritual like fasting becomes almost totally focused on the movement of these celestial bodies. The new moon ('Hilal' in Arabic) assumes added importance during Ramzan, because it has to be sighted with the naked eye in order for the month to commence and end, roughly a period of 29 to 30 days.

## U.P. revokes mobile ban in COVID wards

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
LUCKNOW

After a Twitter spat, the Uttar Pradesh government has amended its May 22 order prohibiting the use of mobile phones by patients in isolation wards of dedicated COVID-19 hospitals in the State.

In his order to various medical colleges, U.P.'s Director General of the Medical Education Department K.K. Gupta had said the use of mobile phones spreads COVID-19 infection. The order said two dedicated mobile phones for use by patients would be kept with the ward in-charge.

The ban was questioned by Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav, who accused the government of trying to hide the poor state of hospitals and their "mismanagement". Mr. Yadav pointed out that there was a need for sanitisation and not a ban.



Out of control: A worker spraying disinfectant on people at the Danapur station on Sunday. • RANJEET KUMAR

Kithan, one of the passengers. Her co-travellers said the police remained mute spectators as the people hurled abuse and threatened to burn the train down. They also alleged that the police beat up some of the returnees on the train instead of disciplining the violent crowd.

"This happened after we had spent more than 20 hours on the train without food and water," said Fronto

personnel handled. The train is on the move and is being escorted by the Railway Protection Force," he said.

CRO PRO of East Central Railway Rajesh Kumar told the media that there was a minor scuffle between passengers for seat at Danapur railway station. Amid the scuffle, someone had thrown a stone, breaking a window pane of the train. However, the train later left the station with security, he said.

In the other incident, members of a group from Nagaland, who were returning home in a bus from Madhya Pradesh, said they were racially abused when they stopped in Bihar for food on Saturday. "Twelve of us had stopped by a roadside eatery when some men came up, hurled abuses and called us coronavirus," said Mhatung Ezung, who worked at a wildlife lodge at the Pench National Park.

Subhanan Chandra, the chief spokesperson of Northeast Frontier Railway, said the matter had been raised with officials of the East Central Railway. "It was a minor issue [which] the security

and also recover quickly".

He went on to claim that while an ordinary person took 14 to 20 days to recover from the virus, migrant labourers were turning "corona negative" on the sixth or seventh day.

A "Migration Commission" would be constituted in Uttar Pradesh to link migrant workers with the State's economy and provide them employment within the State, the government said.

So far, around 23 lakh migrant workers have returned to U.P., said Awanish Awasthi, Additional Chief Secretary, Home Department.

CM says the government will form a migration commission

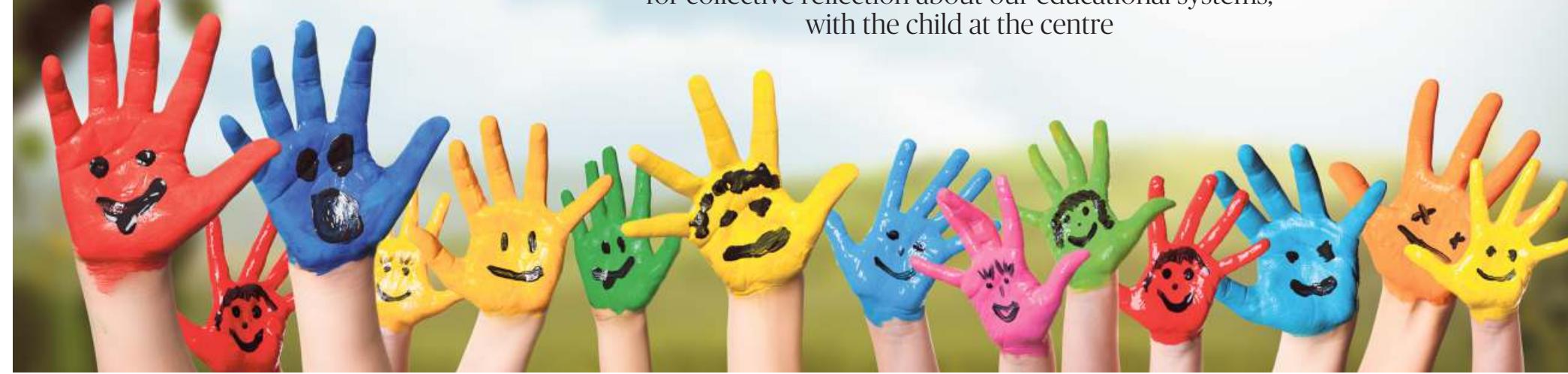
OMAR RASHID  
LUCKNOW

If any State wants migrant workers from Uttar Pradesh, it would have to first seek the permission of the U.P. government, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath announced on Sunday.

Mr. Adityanath said that the migrant workers from the State had not been taken care of in some States.

# P for Pandemic

The COVID-19 crisis has presented us with a starting point for collective reflection about our educational systems, with the child at the centre



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

■ DIVYA BADAMI RAO

The ongoing pandemic has led to novel shifts in how we school our children, with little time for discussion or thorough planning. As the pandemic hurtled itself on us, schools were forced to shut their gates overnight. Most privileged schools have adjusted to the situation by switching to online platforms, with regularly scheduled online classes and homework, some of which is graded. These shifts were accompanied by an increase in panic and anxiety around children's productivity, and the policing of learning schedules.

School-from-home works on the presumption that all families will have the same capacity to make adjustments to accommodate school. Yet, each family ex-

periences house-bound life according to individual circumstances. The number of children in a household and their age, the work status of their parents, the presence of other adults (uncles, aunts, grandparents) at home, and the availability of external help are some influencing factors. Some parents welcome structure to keep their children's education on track. Others find themselves divided over it. Similarly, some children might easily adapt to the demands of remote schooling, while others may be less able or unwilling. Parents are also concerned about the availability of devices, and the substantial increase in screen time involved.

Many school teachers too find this moment overwhelming. Teaching online is often not a sa-

tisfactory experience. Lively classroom sessions are not easily translated through the screen, with students sitting in isolation. While students and teachers may enjoy connecting online for a short period every day, staying online for the length of the school day gets emotionally draining for both parties. Teachers are also expected to plan lessons, produce worksheets, and provide feedback without really interacting with the child. While administrators have decided to move schools online to respond to the moment and prevent bankruptcy, this has not resulted in effective teaching or learning scenarios.

#### A situational triage

The child has traditionally been at the centre of the parent-child-

#### Why not look upon a break from school and schoolwork as an opportunity for children to be more self-directed in their learning?

teacher nexus, always a passive recipient rather than an active player in the design and execution of his/her education. The nexus is fast morphing into a teacher-parent-child hierarchy, where their capacity to respond is limited even further in the online and distance learning mode of functioning. Yet, we must remember that this emergency is being experienced by our children too. No school, extra-curriculars, outings or time with friends leave a gaping hole in their social lives. The rigid ex-

pectations of schoolwork have always set up dissatisfaction power struggles between parents and children. Given the circumstances, children probably prefer their parents as playmates rather than as educators.

So, here is a thought. Why not look upon a break from school and schoolwork as an opportunity for children to be more self-directed in their learning? We can strive to suspend our pre-conditioned notions of time well spent, and consider letting children find their own cues to fill in their time. We can recalibrate our ideals to value our children's initiatives, with no imposed goals or directions of our own. This is not to say that children need to be dissuaded from doing schoolwork but, rather, not be forced to have to do it. Nor need this

mean that there are no family rules whatsoever. Rather, we should focus on the natural interests and inclinations of our children as they unfold in an environment free from pressure, and support them as best we can. Being self-directed and cultivating the ability to overcome a sense of boredom are skills worth developing.

#### The potential of self-directed learning

Children may learn to cook, knit, garden, play an instrument, learn chess, or magic over YouTube. Some will watch movies, play video games, write stories, create games, read books, design robots. Others may play all day long in their world of make-believe. The possibilities are endless. But all children will be hav-

The writer has a master's in Social Work from Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai and a bachelor's in English Literature from Delhi University. She has an academic interest in play and self-directed learning. She can be reached at [di.badamirao@gmail.com](mailto:di.badamirao@gmail.com)

(A longer version of this article is published online.)

#### TREND

## Exploring the transitional space

Unilodgers, a student-housing marketplace, feels proximity, hygiene, single rooms and pricing will be the key factors to stay afloat



SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

■ MADHUMITHA SRINIVASAN

As with all sectors, one would assume that student housing would have been equally impacted by the pandemic. So did Unilodgers, a global student-housing marketplace. But, interestingly, it has witnessed an increase in the number of students on their platform. Its interpretation of this surge is that students are hopeful of being back in school by the fall cycle and that they are continuing to research online for accommodation needs close to their destination universities.

Spread across the U.S., the U.K., and Australia, and not heavily reliant on international students seeking accommodation in these regions, Unilodgers is also catering to the transition of accommodation hunting onto the online space.

Vaibhav Verma, Founder and CEO, Unilodgers.com, shares more insights into the changing trends in student accommodation in the light of COVID-19. Excerpts from the interview:

How will this pandemic affect the demand for student housing?

The real-time unfolding of new information and policy responses make it impossible to reasonably forecast how much "demand for student housing" will get affected. The depreciating tuition fee and trends observed on the Unilodgers platform only indicate that the impetus for higher education is still holding strong.

The interesting part

...students are going to prefer hygienic, organised housing spaces, single-room occupancy over sharing with a roommate...

that a potential cultural shift is likely to take place in which students are going to prefer hygienic, organised housing spaces, single-room occupancy over sharing with a roommate, and alternative housing nearby along with online visits instead of in-person visits while looking for options.

What should students look for when assessing housing options in light of the pandemic?

Health and well-being are paramount. This has led many students to opt for housing options closest to their university campuses to avoid exposure to public transport, outside spaces and so on, just in case social distancing continues for the next few months. Next, students should stay on top of information from their respective colleges/universities to ensure they have the latest news on what steps are being planned and what support they have in place. Many of our supply partners have introduced relaxed policies factoring in the ambiguity of the immediate future, therefore students should

also check out cancellation and refund rights while booking accommodation.

What are the top things students are looking for?

A significant percentage of Indian students are looking to live with other Indian students when going for higher education overseas.

Next, single-occupancy rooms and studios are a preferred choice for students including Indians but not limited to.

What are some of the advantages of staying in accommodations like Unilodgers as compared to other options like on-campus or renting private houses?

All of our 1.5 million rooms are officially classified as purpose-built student housing and, to get this, an official accreditation is required from the local governments by virtue of meeting the highest standards of safety, cleanliness and quality. 95% of our buildings are located right next to the university campuses, so students can walk to their campus. All our rooms come with all-bills-inclusive prices, and students don't have to worry about paying various bills such as electricity, Wi-Fi, housing tax and so on. Neither do our students have to deal with landlords.

All our buildings have socialising spaces, health and fitness services, study rooms, games area, and so on, which ensures that students don't have to necessarily go out of their building premises to get these things.



#### ETCETERA

##### ■ Harappa Habit Heroes launched

Harappa Education recently launched a new digital initiative 'Harappa Habit Heroes' through which it will identify 10 individuals whose attitude and 'can-do' spirit has inspired improvement in these difficult times. The organisation will recognise and reward them for their courage, collaboration and initiatives of civic engagement. The initiative invites nominations from anyone who has brought about and encouraged change around them by helping senior citizens, feeding migrant labour, teaching children online or helped set-up processes to improve virtual collaboration. Nominations will be open till May 31. To apply, visit, <https://harappa.education/habit-heroes>

##### ■ Naveen Munjal turns teacher

Masters' Union School of Business recently announced that Managing Director of Hero Electric Vehicles Pvt. Ltd, Naveen Munjal, will be teaching a course on the Economics of Electric Vehicles. The course will delve into how India can develop an ecosystem around electric vehicles, related regulatory aspects, unique Indian advantages that exist, and how the EV ecosystem will impact the country's shared heroes.

##### ■ IIM Kozhikode completes CAT 2019 process successfully

Indian Institute of Management Kozhikode, has successfully completed the process for the CAT exam. CAT 2019 also recorded the highest number of registrations in the last 10 years, with 2,44,190 candidates registering for the online exam. Out of this, 2,09,926 candidates successfully appeared for CAT 2019, which was conducted at 376 test centres spread across 156 cities, last November. The results for the first phase of the exam were announced on January 04.

IIM Kozhikode has also introduced two new programmes: MBA in Liberal Studies and Management (MBA - LSM) and Post Graduate

Programme in Finance (PGP-Finance) for the academic year, and are currently in the personal interview phase of selection, being conducted completely online for shortlisted candidates.

##### ■ India's first Master of Arts in Public Leadership programme launched

Rishikesh University, Sonepat, recently launched India's first Master of Arts in Public Leadership (MAPL). Initiated by Rashtrapati School of Public Leadership at Rishikesh University, the MAPL is a residential programme. Conceptualised by Vision India Foundation (VIF), a Delhi-based public policy organisation, the programme has been designed for students who wish to pursue research-oriented careers in governance, academia, think-tanks, or consulting. Applicants will be thoroughly tested through a rigorous screening process that includes essays, and interviews, before being selected. Graduates who apply for the programme also get an option of research grants and incubation.

Applications are open till May 30. Applications online at: <https://rashtrom.org/apply-for-ma-pl/>. The programme is slated to commence from September 2020 onwards.

##### ■ SRMAP's Next-Tech Lab wins three hackathons

The team of Next-Tech Lab of SRM University- AP recently won three hackathons in a row. The teammates: Eppera Karthik, a second-year student, Khushboo Sharma, a second-year student, and Koushik Bhargav, third-year student, all from Computer science and Engineering department, successfully developed a fresh multiplayer virtual reality game, Whack A Mole, and a cloud-based multiplayer FPS in Virtual Reality, 'Desert Shooter'. The three-member team bagged the second prize in the International / Professional Award at SKYHacks2020; Best echoAR Hack at Silicon Valley Hacks; and Best AR/VR hack at HackNow, organised by Cal Hacks, a non-profit organisation at the University of Berkeley, California.



#### VALUE ADD

## Back to the Vedic age

Monotonous teaching methods in schools is the primary reason for disinterest in Math. Vedic Math can reverse the situation

■ MAYANK GARG

Math is a subject that always falls in the grey area. It is either loved or abhorred by students. Though Indian students have always achieved wonders in the field, there are still many who fear the word.

#### Problems

The biggest problem that students face is tackling huge numbers, as solving such questions becomes cumbersome. The solution to this lies in the ancient Indian concepts of Vedic Math (VM), as it helps develop reasoning and logical thinking ability.

It is more of an art than just a set of techniques that one needs to master with patience and diligence. There are wonderful formulae using which students can solve mathematical problems in next to no time.

Tedious calculations such as difficult square roots, cube roots and multiple digit multiplications can be easily solved.

Most students find it difficult to calculate the large number of questions in

competitive exams. It works wonders in helping them solve questions with speed and accuracy, while increasing concentration.

#### Headstart

The biggest reason behind the disinterest towards Math is the monotonous and dry methods used in schools to teach it. It isn't fun and teachers often overcomplicate it.

Through Vedic Math, learning can be made fun. The problem is that these concepts are generally introduced to students when they start preparing for competitive exams such as CAT, which is quite late to grasp the new concept and forego the previously learnt conventional methods.

It is important that these concepts are introduced early – the aim should be to catch them young at school, as at this age they are natural learners and will imbibe concepts faster than college-goers. This will transform students into able mathematicians.

The writer is a Vedic math author, expert, and CFO of TWIN WIN.

# U.S. pushing relations to the brink of a new Cold War: China

Foreign Minister says Beijing is open to international probe led by the WHO

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
BEIJING

The United States is pushing relations with China to "the brink of a new Cold War," China's Foreign Minister said on Sunday, rejecting Washington's "lies" over the coronavirus while saying Beijing was open to an international effort to find its source.

Keeping up the worsening war of words with Washington over the pandemic and a Beijing move to tighten control over Hong Kong, Wang Yi said the United States had been infected by a "political virus" compelling figures there to continually attack China.

## COVID-19

"It has come to our attention that some political forces in the U.S. are taking China-U.S. relations hostage and pushing our two countries to the brink of a new Cold War," Mr. Wang told reporters during a press conference at China's week-long annual parliamentary session.

### Long-standing friction

Long-standing friction between the two powers over trade, human rights and a range of other issues have been pushed to new heights since the virus outbreak.

Mr. Wang did not identify what "forces" he was referring to, but U.S. President Donald Trump has led world criticism of China's initial response to the pandemic, which has caused more than 34,000 deaths and economic carnage worldwide.

Mr. Trump and members of his administration have said China covered up the



Some respite: People cycling through Tiananmen Square in Beijing on Sunday. ■ GETTY IMAGES

emergence of the virus late last year and bungled its initial response.

Washington's criticism has been widely seen in the United States as an attempt by Mr. Trump to divert attention from the White House's own COVID-19 failures.

Mr. Wang took an apparent swipe at the U.S. struggles to contain the virus, which has now infected more people in the United States than anywhere else. "I call on the U.S. to stop wasting time and stop wasting precious lives," Mr. Wang said. He said China was "open" to international scientific cooperation to identify the source of the novel coronavirus, but stressed that any investigation must be "free of political interference", based on science and led by the World Health Organization.

The WHO has called on Beijing to invite the UN body to investigate the source, but Mr. Wang did not indicate if foreign scientists

would be invited to come to China. "Some political figures in the U.S. rush to label the virus and politicise its origins, stigmatising China," Mr. Wang said, adding that an investigation must "oppose any presumption of guilt".

Most scientists believe the virus jumped from animals to humans after emerging in China, possibly from a market in the central city of Wuhan where exotic animals were sold for meat.

Governments including the U.S. and Australia have called in recent weeks for an investigation into the exact origins of the virus.

### Global response

China has proposed instead that the "global response" to COVID-19 should only be assessed when the pandemic is over. WHO members on Tuesday adopted a resolution, tabled by the European Union, at the UN body's first virtual assembly to review the international handling of

the pandemic, but it does not single out China. "Aside from the devastation caused by the novel coronavirus, there is also a political virus spreading through the U.S.," he said. "This political virus is the use of every opportunity to attack and smear China. Some politicians completely disregard basic facts and have fabricated too many lies targeting China, and plotted too many conspiracies."

The introduction at China's legislature on Friday of a proposal to impose a security law in Hong Kong to suppress the semi-autonomous city's pro-democracy movement also has drawn U.S. and world condemnation.

But Mr. Wang defended the plan, saying it must be implemented "without the slightest delay", adding that months of often-violent Hong Kong protests last year against China's growing influence in the financial hub had "seriously endangered China's national security".

## Netanyahu calls graft charges 'fabricated'

Israel PM's corruption trial begins

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
JERUSALEM

A combative Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu faced court on Sunday for the start of his long-anticipated corruption trial after lashing out at the "fabricated" charges against him. The veteran leader, who has just forged a new unity government after more than a year of political turmoil, became the country's first Premier to face criminal charges while in office.

Flanked by Ministers from his right-wing Likud party, Netanyahu addressed reporters before entering the Jerusalem District Court to face charges of bribery, fraud and breach of trust.

"I'm here with a straight



Benjamin Netanyahu. ■ AFP

back and my head held high," Mr. Netanyahu said, labelling the charges "fabricated and ludicrous".

The trial is expected to last for months, if not years.

During Sunday's session, Mr. Netanyahu spoke only to identify himself, before the court adjourned after one hour. He was not asked to enter a plea, which will occur in a later session.

## ELSEWHERE



Conservative MPs ask Johnson aide to resign

LONDON Lawmakers from Britain's ruling Conservatives Party on Sunday called for the resignation of Dominic Cummings, the senior adviser to Prime Minister Boris Johnson who travelled 400 km to northern England during the coronavirus lockdown. ■ REUTERS

### Australia to resume tourism in Victoria

MELBOURNE Australia set out measures to resume tourism to Victoria's rural regions, ravaged by bushfires and then the coronavirus, after a testing blitz showed continuing low cases of community transmission. Tourists will be able to stay overnight from June 1 in regional areas in the southern State, State Premier Daniel Andrews said on Sunday. ■ REUTERS

## Black patients in U.S. hospitalised more often

Study of infected people in northern California highlights disparity

RONI CARYN RABIN

As the COVID-19 spread across the United States, sweeping through low-income, densely populated communities, black and Hispanic patients died at higher rates than white patients.

Crowded living conditions, poorer overall health and limited access to care have been blamed, among other factors. But a new study suggests that the disparity was particularly acute for black patients. Among those seeking medical care for COVID-19, black patients were hospitalised at nearly three times the rate of white and Hispanic patients, according to an analysis of patient records from a large health care system in Northern California.

The disparity remained even after researchers took into account differences in age, sex, income and the prevalence of chronic health problems that exacerbate COVID-19, like hypertension



Blacks unequally hit: Patients waiting to be screened for COVID-19 in New York in March. ■ NYT

and Type 2 diabetes. The finding suggests that black patients may have had limited access to medical care or that they postponed seeking help until later in the course of their illness, when the disease was more advanced.

### Needing acute care

Black patients were also far less likely than white, Hispanic or Asian patients to have been tested for the virus before going to the emergency room for care. Black patients "are coming to us later and sicker, and they're accessing our care

through the emergency department and acute care environment," said Dr. Stephen Lockhart, the chief medical officer at Sutter Health in Sacramento and one of the authors of the new study.

The study, which was peer reviewed, was published in *Health Affairs*.

Delayed care may give the virus more time to spread through households and neighbourhoods, Dr. Lockhart and his colleagues concluded. The delays also suggest that minority patients continue to face barriers despite California's broad ex-

## Wuhan institute denies links to SARS-CoV-2 virus strains

3 strains 'do not match' the COVID-19 causing virus: lab

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
BEIJING

The Chinese virology institute at the centre of U.S. allegations that it may have been the source of the COVID-19 pandemic has three live strains of bat coronaviruses on-site, but none match the new global contagion, its director has said.

Scientists think COVID-19 originated in bats and could have been transmitted to people via another mammal.

But the director of the Wuhan Institute of Virology told state broadcaster CGTN that claims made by U.S. President Donald Trump and others the virus could have leaked from the facility were "pure fabrication".

In the interview filmed on May 13 but broadcast on Sa-



A medical worker taking a swab sample from a person in Beijing on Sunday. ■ AFP

VID-19. One of their research teams, led by Professor Shi Zhengli, has been researching bat coronaviruses since 2004 and focused on the "source tracing of SARS", the strain behind another virus outbreak nearly two decades ago.

"We know that the whole genome of SARS-CoV-2 is only 80% similar to that of SARS. It's an obvious difference," she said. "So, in Professor Shi's past research, they didn't pay attention to such viruses which are less similar to the SARS virus."

Chinese scientists have said that the virus first emerged at a market selling live animals in Wuhan, though officials in Beijing more recently cast doubt about its origins.

Results on vaccine likely in autumn'

REUTERS  
ZURICH

First indications of the effectiveness of a potential vaccine against COVID-19 may be available in the autumn, the head of the GAVI vaccine alliance told a Swiss newspaper, forecasting a long road from there to broad availability.

Calling for globally coordinated efforts both to produce and share an eventual vaccine, GAVI head Seth Berkley said international agreement was needed to build up manufacturing capacity to rapidly produce a vaccine once one is found.

He urged the World Health Organization to issue clear guidelines on a vaccine's use and distribution to prevent a vaccine first being made available to the rich at the expense of the people most in need.

## Thousands rally in Hong Kong against law

China's new national security legislation could lead to sanctions, warns U.S.

REUTERS  
HONG KONG

Hong Kong police fired tear gas and water cannon to disperse thousands of people who rallied on Sunday to protest against Beijing's plan to impose national security laws on the city.

In a return of the unrest that roiled Hong Kong last year, crowds thronged the Causeway Bay shopping area in defiance of curbs imposed to contain the coronavirus.

Chants of "Hong Kong independence, the only way out," echoed through the streets.

### Challenge to Beijing

As dusk fell, police and demonstrators faced off in the nightlife district of Wan



Back to the streets: Protesters in Hong Kong marching on a road during a pro-democracy rally on Sunday. ■ AFP

Chai. The day's events pose a new challenge to Beijing's authority as it struggles to tame public opposition to its tightening grip over Hong Kong, a trade and business gateway for mainland China.

The arrangement guarantees the city broad freedoms not seen on the mainland, including a free press and independent judiciary.

Washington said on Sunday China's proposed legislation could lead to U.S. sanctions.

"It looks like, with this national security law, they're going to basically take over Hong Kong and if they do ... Secretary of State Mike Pompeo will likely be unable to certify that Hong Kong maintains a high degree of autonomy and if that happens there will be sanctions that will be imposed on Hong Kong and China," National Security Adviser Robert O'Brien told NBC television.

## Pak. crash report raises serious questions

Engines scraped the runway thrice

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
KARACHI

A preliminary report on the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) plane crash, in which 97 people were killed, has raised serious questions about the pilot's handling of the aircraft and what prevented the crew in the cockpit from informing the air traffic controllers about the troubles. Pakistani investigators are trying to find out if the crash is attributable to a pilot error or a technical glitch.

According to the report, prepared by the country's Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), the Airbus A-320's engines had scraped the runway thrice on the pilot's first attempt to land, caus-



Wreckage of the plane in Karachi. ■ AFP

ing friction and sparks recorded by the experts.

After the third impact, the pilot took the aircraft off into the air again, which officials found very strange as the pilot did not inform the Air Traffic Control (ATC) at the Jinnah International Airport of any problem with the landing gear. The News International quoted sources as saying.

## Kim hosts meeting, vows to boost nuclear deterrence

Rare appearance comes after speculations about his health

REUTERS  
SEOUL

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un hosted a meeting to discuss the country's nuclear capabilities, state media said on Sunday, marking his first appearance in three weeks after a previous absence sparked global speculation about his health.

Ruling Workers' Party of officials wore face masks to greet Mr. Kim as he entered the meeting of the party's powerful Central Military Commission, state television showed, but no one including Mr. Kim was seen wearing a mask during the meeting.

Even after the investigators factored out a number of differences between patient groups, black patients were still 2.7 times more likely than others to require hospitalisation when they sought care. ■ NY TIMES



North Korean leader Kim Jong-un. ■ REUTERS

speculation about his condition, as Pyongyang has stepped up measures against the COVID-19 pandemic.

No virus cases North Korea says it has no confirmed cases of the new coronavirus, but South Korea's intelligence agency has said it cannot rule out that the North has had an outbreak.

U.S.-led negotiations aimed at dismantling North Korea's nuclear and missile programmes have made little progress since late last year.

The Chinese government's top diplomat, Wang Yi, expressed hope on Sunday that the United States and North Korea could resume meaningful dialogue as soon as possible, "and not squander the hard-earned results of (previous) engagement."

A CH-CHE

## ASK US



N. SREEKANTH

**Q.** I am an ex-serviceman. I had started an educational society. The society had sold a piece of agricultural land and purchased another piece of agricultural land at some other place. However, since I-T section 240-B was not extended to the society, we had to pay a huge sum as tax on capital gains. On an appeal, it was revised twice. However, we have paid the tax component in full. We have also appealed to the I-T authorities to waive the interest. The appeal is since pending.

**Is it possible to get any relief under Vivad Se Vishwas amnesty scheme?**

L. PANDU RANGA REDDY

**A.** Under the Vivad Se Vishwas Amnesty Scheme, such appeals before the competent authority where there is a dispute on tax, interest and penalty are covered in order to claim relief as per the provisions entailed in the scheme based on which relief is granted by the authorities.

On the basis of the query raised by you, two inferences can be made,

First, there is an application for the waiver of interest for the tax already discharged, thereby indicating that there is no dispute on the interest payable figure, only waiver of the interest payable is being applied before the competent authority under section 201(1)(a).

This does not amount to an appeal and is only an application before the competent authority for waiver of interest. Such applications are not covered under the Vivad Se Vishwas Amnesty Scheme as per the frequently answered question released by the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT).

Second, since there is a dispute on the calculation of interest levied and the same has been contested on or before January 31, 2020 before a competent appellate authority, you may claim relief under Vivad Se Vishwas Amnesty Scheme even though you are not disputing the tax component as it has been discharged in full.

**Q. Is tax payable on dividends on shares and mutual funds from domestic companies for the period April 2019 to March 2020? What is the exempt amount?**

S. RAMACHANDRAN

**A.** Dividends received by a person in the financial year 2019-2020 is exempt under section 10(34) of the act.

However, dividends received from domestic companies by individuals, HUFs, firms (other than registered charitable institutions/trusts, domestic companies) in excess of ₹10 lakh in a financial year is charged at 10% under section 115BBD of the Act (tax is levied only on the excess over ₹10 lakh).

Dividends will be taxed in the hands of the receiver based on their respective tax slabs/tax rates from the financial year 2020-2021 as per the proposal in the Union Budget passed by Parliament.

(The author is partner, GSS Associates, Chartered Accountants, Chennai)

Readers can send in queries on personal finance and investing to moneywise@thehindu.co.in. Our experts who write on personal finance will answer these queries. Moneywise will not give specific recommendations for investment in a particular mutual fund scheme, share or fixed deposit.

# Pick the right INVESTMENTS



You must be clear about what you want out of the investment and about the product itself

JOYDEEP SEN

You invest your hard-earned money in various combinations of equity and fixed income options, either directly in stocks or bonds or through a vehicle such as a mutual fund (MF).

If you are not from a finance / investment background, the investment product may be mis-sold to you. How do you protect yourself?

First, be clear on why you are investing i.e. what your investment objective is. It may be for retirement, for purchase of an asset such as a house, or simply saving and parking your surplus for a rainy day. How is this relevant? It gives you an idea about how long you can spare that money.

If it is for retirement, then you can do without it for a long period of time. If

it is for emergency requirements, then it would be required at short notice. How is that relevant?

**Investment horizon**

The longer your investment horizon, the ups and downs in the interim period are less relevant. The other aspect is liquidity. If it may be required at short notice, it should be parked somewhere, from where it can be withdrawn easily.

There should also not be much of impact cost on selling. The equity market is liquid but if the market is down when you need to sell, you would realise less than the potential. A bank deposit or a liquid MF would not have an impact cost.

You have to figure out one more thing. For your long-term investments, how much of market-related loss can you bear without losing sleep. If you are

not comfortable with the ups and downs in the market, then opt for something less volatile e.g. fixed income. In other words, equity being relatively more volatile, have as much equity as suits you.

If you are not concerned with every-day ups and downs, you may have a higher extent of equity investments in your portfolio. To be noted, market-related loss is not real loss till you sell the investment at the lower price. As long as the fundamental quality of the company / industry is intact, the share price would typically recover over a long period of time.

Now, let's discuss what we set out to. There are multiple types of investment products, ranging from plain and simple bank or post office deposits to various types of MF schemes to buying equity shares from the market.

There are insurance products, both endowment and unit linked, that

combine investment with insurance. Then there are products that are safe from default risk e.g. RBI Savings Bonds or Sovereign Gold Bonds that are not so liquid. That is, if you require money prior to maturity, you may not get it. On what basis would you decide where to invest and how much?

In the banking industry, there is the concept of SLR, which stands for statutory liquidity ratio.

For investments, one may assign a different meaning to SLR, setting the order of priority: S stands for safety, L for liquidity and R for returns. As you can see from the order, safety comes first and return comes after the first two.

To understand the safety aspect while buying a financial product, you have to gauge the risk first.

There are many types of risks; the two major ones are volatility – ie market price coming down suddenly – and default risk.

We discussed volatility risk in equity investments a little earlier. There is no default risk in equity. In debt or fixed income investments, there is volatility risk, though lesser than in equity, as also default risk as there is a committed payment from the issuer of the instrument.

In fixed income, bank deposits have an insurance cover of up to ₹

lakh per bank but even beyond, banks – particularly the government-owned ones – are safe because of their overall importance in the financial system. Fixed income investments such as post office deposits, RBI Savings Bonds or Sovereign Gold Bonds do not have any default risk, by virtue of government involvement. Private sector corporate bonds do have default risk.

Now, you have to understand these aspects when you are about to put in your money. You may do so by taking the inputs from the entity / person selling you the financial product, or conduct your own research. To summarise, you have to gauge:

**Volatility:** i.e. how much can

the market decline (e.g. 10% or 30%), going by historical track record of the investments.

**Default risk:** if it is not among the safe options mentioned above, what are the incidences of default historically in that investment.

**Liquidity:** if you require money at short notice, is the asset available i.e. is it possible to sell quickly.

Real estate is

less liquid, while financial assets are more liquid. Even in financial investments, go through the terms for exit.

**Taxation:** though not as important as the first three, it is relevant and you should have a perspective on that.

In short, you must have clarity on how an investment is suitable for you. It is not about the "attractive" returns, but about why you should get into it.

(The author is founder, wiseinvestor.in)



## COVER NOTE: PROPOSAL FORM

## Why a proposal form is sacrosanct

Insured, nominees have to live with its consequences once the form is signed

K. NITYA KALYANI

The proposal form is the basis of your insurance contract. An important function of the form is to extract all material facts from the potential insured – that is you – that are pertinent to the policy you want to purchase.

A properly-filled proposal form is the first and biggest step in fulfilling your responsibility of adhering to the principle of 'utmost good faith.'

The other half of 'utmost good faith' is the responsibility of the insurer to inform you in detail about the offered coverage, its extent, terms and conditions and its exclusions. So, you should be able to make informed decisions while buying the policy.

Proposal forms are designed for full disclosure and ensuring this will help you in receiving claims properly.

For example, in a hospitalisation policy, information regarding your health status and medical history will be required. If pre-existing conditions are withheld, claims can be repudiated on that basis. If it is home fire policy, details of the physical construction of the building, its fire-safety norms and fire-safety systems or equipment will be captured.

Proposal form declarations for life insurance are



**Vital link:** Ensuring full disclosure in a proposal form will help the insured in receiving claims amount. ■ GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

more critical to your coverage given that the claim is meant for the financial protection of the insured's loved ones after his lifetime.

**Legal dimension**

Thus, your declarations acquire a legal dimension and the proposal form is consulted when claims are processed. For this purpose, you should have a copy too, and all papers preserved where you and your family members can retrieve them.

In fact, the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India's (IRDAI) Policyholders' Protection Regulations mandates that a

copy of the proposal form should be given to the policyholder along with the policy copy at the time of purchase of cover. Please ensure you receive this and preserve it for future reference.

It is common for those who buy insurance to be exasperated when it comes to filling proposal forms, to refuse to do so or refuse to give full information. Unfortunately, buying insurance itself is approached reluctantly and with distaste, and filling forms is considered a bafflingly irritating requirement of doubtful value.

The reverse is true and the only advice that can be

given is, filling the proposal form is the one big favour you can do yourself while buying insurance.

Your insurance intermediary, an agent or broker or a bank staffer, can help you fill the proposal form. But remember, you are the owner of the document as you sign it. And, it is you and your nominees who will live with its consequences.

Sometimes, these details are filled erroneously by an intermediary and that could work to your disadvantage. So, verifying all details before signing and submitting it is your responsibility.

In the case of proposers who cannot read the proposal form or if it is in a language not known to them, then the contents have to be read out to them, explained and a full understanding of it ensured. The person doing this has to also sign a declaration that it has been carried out properly.

The bottomline is that the insurance contract is based on trust that both the parties are upfront about all relevant information.

Utmost good faith upholds the contract and when it is not observed, it can dent financial security and destroy lives.

(The writer is a business journalist specialising in insurance & corporate history)

## BLACKBOARD: DEBT SCHEMES

## Debt MFs too carry risk

ASHISH RUKHAIYAR

FI), debt AUM was pegged at almost ₹13 lakh crore as on April 30 while the equity AUM was about ₹7 lakh crore. Incidentally, debt funds are also used by corporates and institutions as part of their treasury operations to earn a higher yield compared with just parking the money in bank fixed deposits.

## Are debt schemes completely safe?

■ While there is a perception that debt is comparatively safer than equity, it will be wrong to say that debt is completely safe. Debt instruments are also prone to market fluctuations that directly impact the yield or the interest income and the maturity value of the underlying debt paper.

The recent past has seen a few instances when debt funds took a massive hit due to defaults by entities whose debt paper the schemes were holding. If the rating of a debt instrument falls, it directly impacts its valuations that is, in turn, reflected in the net asset value of the scheme.

## Should retail investors put money in debt schemes?

■ Every financial adviser would say that debt should be a part of asset allocation of every investor. However, one needs to understand the risks and structure of a debt fund properly before investing.

One should see the portfolio of a scheme before investing. If the scheme has too much of low-rated paper, then it could be risky, especially when the markets are volatile. Debt instruments with AAA rating are the safest but low-rated papers offer higher yield. So, one should carefully analyse the portfolio to take an informed decision.

## Health insurance premium

Insurer name	Key features	Plan names	Premium (Rs.)	Insurer name	Key features	Plan names	Premium (Rs.)
Religare Health	Day Care Treatments Family Floater option Health Checkups Pre and Post Hospitalisation Coverage	NCB Super Premium Care Care with unlimited recharge NCB Super Premium with UAR	9,092 8,265 8,885 9,712	Digit Healthcare Plus	Hospital Room Eligibility Day Care Treatments Family Floater Option	Option 1 - Maxima Restore Super Option 2 - Early Cover Option 3 - Super care	8,861 7,985 7,541
Max Bupa Health	Day Care Treatments Hospitalization at Home Family Floater option Alternate Medicine	Health Pulse Enhanced Health Companion Go Active	10,696 9,862 11,747	Bajaj Allianz General	Hospital Room Eligibility Wellness Benefits Family Floater Option	Health Infinity Individual Health Guard Health Ensure	15,576 11,569 7,642
Star Health	Family Floater option Restoration of cover Wellness Benefits	Medi Classic Star Comprehensive	9,661 11,476	SBI General Insurance	Pre and Post Hospitalisation Coverage Day Care Treatments Hospitalization at Home	ProHealth - Protect ProHealth - Plus	8,979 10,119
HDLC Ergo Health	Family Floater option Restoration of cover Pre and Post Hospitalisation Coverage	Optima Restore Easy Health Individual Standard	11,575 10,094	Manipal Cigna Health	Day Care Treatments Hospitalization at Home Alternate Medicine	Family Floater Option	7,936
HDLC Ergo General	Day Care Treatments Hospital Room Eligibility Alternate Medicine	Easy Health Individual Exclusive Easy Health Individual Premium Easy Health Wallet	12,670 15,692 22,908	Royal Sundaram General	Day Care Treatments Hospitalization at Home Hospital Room Eligibility Alternate Medicine	Lifeline supreme	12,241
Aditya Birla Health	Day Care Treatments Restoration of cover Family Floater Option Health Checkups	My:health Suraksha Gold Smart My: health Suraksha Silver with Rebound & ECB	13,886 9,891 10,319	TATA AIG	Coverage Day Care Treatments Hospitalization at Home	Medicare Medicare Premier	9,820 12,176
		Activ assure Diamond Activ Health Enhance Activ Health Enhance (Diabetes) Activ Health Enhance (Asthma) Activ Health Enhance (Hypertension)	7,938 9,801 38,148 16,818 32,616	Universal Sompo General	Hospitalization at Home Hospital Room Eligibility Alternate Medicine	Complete Healthcare Priviledge	4,711 3,820 5,511
		Activ assure Diamond with Unlimited Reload Activ assure Diamond with Super NCB NCB and Unlimited Reload	8,494 8,732 9,287	Raheja QBE	Hospitalization at Home Restoration of Cover Hospital Room Eligibility	Health QuB Basic Health QuB SuperSaver Health QuB Comprehensive	10,398 8,318
				Edelweiss General	Hospitalization at Home Hospital Room Eligibility Alternate Medicine	Edelweiss Health Insurance- Gold (Health 241 Add-on)	11,337
				Liberty General	Day Care Treatments Hospitalization at Home Hospital Room Eligibility	Basic Elite Supreme	9,579 10,777 11,337

For a 30-year-old male, non-smoker, for sum insured of ₹10 lakh living in a metro city

Source: www.policybazaar.com

## LOOSE CHANGE

RAVIKANTH



## IN BRIEF



## Ex-Pakistan opener Umar tests positive

KARACHI  
Former Pakistan opener Tauseef Umar has tested positive for COVID-19 but said his "symptoms are not at all severe". The 38-year-old is the fourth cricketer to be infected with the coronavirus after Majid Haq (Scotland), Zafar Sarfraz (Pakistan) and Solo Nqweni (South Africa). PTI



## Alonso wins Legends Trophy at virtual Indy

NEW DELHI  
Two-time Formula One champion Fernando Alonso won the Legends Trophy at Indianapolis in a virtual game on Saturday. Alonso beat former F1 champion Jenson Button by a margin of just 0.037 in the first race and got the better of World Touring Car veteran Tiago Monteiro in the second. IANS

## 'Bicycle girl' Jyoti to appear for CFI trials

KOLKATA  
"Bicycle girl" Jyoti Kumari, who pedalled around 1,300km with her injured father from New Delhi to Darbhanga, will appear for Cycling Federation of India (CFI) trials once the lockdown ends. "We will surely send her for the trials after the lockdown is lifted. She was enrolled in Class IX on Saturday. At the moment, we want her to complete her matriculation," her father Mohan Paswan said. PTI

## Bournemouth player tests positive

LONDON  
A Bournemouth player was one of two people working for Premier League clubs who tested positive for COVID-19 following a second batch of testing, the club said on Sunday. The club did not disclose the identity but said he would self-isolate for seven days in line with league protocols before another test is conducted. REUTERS

## Aravindh is king

HYDERABAD  
GM Aravindh Chithambaram emerged champion in the main category of the PM-Cares Fund Play2Help online series chess tournament, organised by V. Raghav Srivathsav.

## Velammal's online chess classes from May 30

CHENNAI  
Velammal Vidyalaya will conduct online chess classes (open to all) from May 30. Grandmaster Vishnu Prasanna and coaches Viswesvaran, Thiagarajan and Gopalakrishnan will handle the classes. Call 73583 90402.

# Ganguly cannot continue as BCCI chief, says Gupta

Nomination to ICC Board disqualifies him: MPCA member

AMOL KARHADKAR  
MUMBAI

Sanjeev Gupta, a life member of the Madhya Pradesh Cricket Association, has challenged Sourav Ganguly's continuation as president of the BCCI.

In an email to Ganguly and other officials on Sunday, Gupta said that the BCCI rulebook debars anyone nominated to the International Cricket Council (ICC) Board from functioning as president.

Ganguly was included in the ICC Board as BCCI's representative soon after attending the Board meeting on March 28, and has since emerged a contender for the soon-to-be vacant post of ICC chairman.

Gupta stated that according to Rule 14(9) of the BCCI constitution, "it is amply clear that as soon as you are nominated to ICC, your post as BCCI president will get vacated automatically forthwith".

## Objection dismissed

A BCCI official, however, dismissed Gupta's objection. "The clause should come into effect only if an [BCCI] office-bearer is 'elected' to the ICC. Otherwise the BCCI will be forced to nominate someone other than an office-bearer, which will be ridiculous," he said.

Interestingly, an appeal made by BCCI in the Su-



**Another challenge:** Sourav Ganguly finds himself having to deal with one more issue in these troubled times.

• FILE PHOTO: VIVEK BENDRE

preme Court makes no mention of clause 14(9).

The appeal, filed by treasurer Arun Dhumal through Adv. Bina Madhavan on April 21, requests the Court to permit BCCI to "carry out the amendments to Rule Nos. 6.4, 6.5, 7.3, 15(3) & (4), 19(2) and 45 in the Constitution which have been approved in the Annual General Meeting held on 01.12.2019."

The appeal requests the Apex Court to separate te-

nures of office-bearers of BCCI and State associations before cooling-off comes into effect and also to curtail the powers of the CEO. According to the current rulebook, the CEO has extraordinary powers, which the current dispensation seeks to restrict.

Also, the BCCI has appealed for the clause mandating Supreme Court approval for any amendment to the BCCI constitution to be done away with.

## Washington: ticking the right boxes

Allrounder focusing on batting to bring out his best

S. DINAKAR  
CHENNAI

An astonishing performance in First Class cricket is fading from public memory as the protagonist's name is often associated with Twenty20s.

In the Duleep Trophy final of 2017 at Lucknow, Washington Sundar, then only 17, scalped 11 batsmen (six and five) and hit 88 and 42 for India Red against India Blue to become the first cricketer with 10-plus wickets and more than 100 runs in the summit clash of this prestigious competition.

A performance that underlined Washington's immense all-round potential.

## Back in training

The Chennai lad, looking at a fresh season with optimism, has resumed training at a local ground, accompanied by his father M. Sundar. However, he is now specifically focusing on batting.

"I am confident about my bowling. I feel I have to concentrate on batting to get the best out of myself," Washington told *The Hindu* on Saturday.

Even as his father does the throw-downs, Washingt-



Washington Sundar.

• FILE PHOTO: VIJAY SONEJI

came as an opener. "I am essentially an opener, but when I joined the India under-19 team, Rahul Dravid Sir asked me to bat in the middle-order and bowl off-spin a lot more. I adjusted to the role," he said.

Washington then grabbed attention in the IPL with his calm and canny bowling in the PowerPlays and soon did the same for India in T20s.

However, since he batted down the order, opportunities to sparkle with the willow were few and far between.

In the TNPL, he has conjured up whirlwind efforts, cutting and pulling short-pitched deliveries and punching off his back-foot.

## Adapting

He has also realised the need to adapt. "I know, for India, I could be coming in at No. 6 or 7 in Twenty20s. I enjoy the challenge and the sense of adventure in batting in these slots."

Washington does not want to create self-imposed pressure by setting goals. "I want to follow the process, tick the boxes, the rest will follow."

## Fresh leaks of personal details detected on dark web

These include 2,000 Aadhaar cards and data of 18 million Indians

GAUTAM S. MENGLE  
MUMBAI

Even as cybercrime agencies and experts are investigating the leak of millions of Indian job-seekers' personal details on the dark web, two more similar instances have come to light in the last 12 hours.

The fresh leaks include nearly 2,000 Aadhaar cards and details of 18 million Indians, all available for free.

The leak of nearly 2.9 crore job-seekers' details was discovered by Cyble Inc., a U.S.-based cyber intelligence firm, which has been trying to trace the source of the leak and identify the perpetrators. Cyble founder Beenu Arora said the Aadhaar cards were posted on the dark web some time in the last 12 hours.

"We are not sure of how this leak happened. There is a known perpetrator who just decided to drop this. In terms of the leak itself, it has

approximately 2,000 Aadhaar cards. A large number of files appear to have originated from 2019, and several IDs were scanned from mobile cameras, and often transferred to other parties via WhatsApp. It's highly likely that more IDs may have been compromised, and the perpetrator decided to share only a small subset. We are still looking into this further," Mr. Arora told *The Hindu*.

Cyble researchers said the Aadhaar cards and the job seekers' details were posted

by different entities, both with a different level of reputation on the dark net.

## Second leak

"The Aadhaar leak actor also published a second leak whereby they dropped details of 18 lakh residents of Madhya Pradesh for free on May 19. We identified this leak during our investigations into the jobseeker data," Mr. Arora said.

State and Central cyber-crime agencies have also initiated their own investiga-

tions into the matter, sources confirmed.

Meanwhile, Cyble researchers have received an anonymous tip off according to which the jobseekers' data leak was the result of an unprotected Elasticsearch instance – a tool that collects data from a wide range of locations on the Internet in accordance with the requirements of the person conducting the search, and allowing the user to analyse large troves of data in real time from all over the Internet.

"The claim made by the anonymous entity that unprotected Elasticsearch instance was the root cause behind the jobseeker data leak is unverifiable at this stage, as we haven't been given the technical evidence yet. We are approaching other research communities to gather more facts," Mr. Arora said.

State and Central cyber-crime agencies have also initiated their own investiga-

# 'Saliva ban an interim measure'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

ICC Cricket Committee chairman Anil Kumble says the recommendation to ban saliva for shining the ball is only an interim measure and "things will go back to normal" once the pandemic is brought under control.

The Kumble-led panel recommended a ban on saliva to minimise the risk of infection. On Friday, the ICC, in its guidelines for resumption of the game, also suggested a bar on the practice.

"...this is only an interim measure. In a few months or a year's time, I think things

will go back to as normal as it can be," Kumble told Star Sports show 'Cricket Connected'. The ban on saliva has elicited mixed response from bowlers, who said it would come in the way of generating swing. But most have also acknowledged the health risk that it might pose.



Anil Kumble. • FILE PHOTO

## Nakamura beats Aronian

RAKESH RAO  
NEW DELHI

Hikaru Nakamura bounced back from 1-2 to beat Levon Aronian 3-2 in their first mini-match of the best-of-three quarterfinals in the Lindores Abbey Rapid Challenge on Saturday.

Aronian won the first regular game and proved equal in the next two. In the fourth, Aronian needed a draw to prevail, but Nakamura fought back to win. In the Armageddon game, Nakamura again proved his superiority.

In another clash, Yu Yangyi beat Ding Liren 3-2.

## Track and field athletes to start outdoor training

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

Track and field athletes will return to outdoor training on Monday after two months of being confined to their rooms, but focus will be entirely on their fitness regimens to avoid injury.

Athletics Federation of India president Adille Sumarwalla told PTI that all the athletes based at NIS-Patiala, SAI Centre in Bengaluru and Ooty will start "outdoor fitness" training from Monday.

On May 17, the government permitted the use of

stadia and sports complexes without spectators and under strict guidelines which allowed the athletes to return to outdoor training.

## Neeraj elated

Star javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra, who has qualified for the now postponed Tokyo Olympics, is elated that outdoor training will start from Monday. "I am feeling happy. At least something is starting even though it will be a slow beginning," he said from NIS-Patiala, where he has been confined to his room since March 18.

## Bayern overcomes Eintracht

REUTERS  
BERLIN

Bayern Munich beat Eintracht Frankfurt 5-2 on Saturday, surviving a brief second-half comeback scare, to stay four points clear of Borussia Dortmund at the top of the Bundesliga with seven games left to play.

The Bavarians thought they had the match wrapped up after efforts from Leon Goretzka, Thomas Mueller and Robert Lewandowski had given them a 3-0 lead in the empty Allianz Arena.

## Rattled

Eintracht defender Martin Hinteregger caught the Bayern defence napping to strike twice in three minutes and inject new life into the encounter.

Yet the visitors then quickly gave away two goals – with Alphonso Davies pouncing on a defensive error on the hour and Hinteregger scoring an own goal in the 74th minute.

**The results:** Schalke 0 lost to Augsburg 3 (Loewen 5, Baeze 76, Cordova 90+1); Mainz 0 lost to Leipzig 5 (Werner 11, 48, 75, Poulsen 23, Sabitzer 36). **Saturday:** Bayern Munich 5 (Goretzka 17, Mueller 41, Lewandowski 46, Davies 61, Hinteregger 74-og) bt Eintracht Frankfurt 2 (Hinteregger 52, 55).

## Badminton world body defends calendar

BWF secretary-general hints at relaxing player regulations

RAYAN ROZARIO  
COIMBATORE

After BWF's condensed calendar invited criticism, secretary-general Thomas Lund said that it provided the best framework for the sport's return under the present circumstances.

"The list of 22 is only related to Grade 1 and Grade 2 tournaments. However, it is not expected that each player should play all tournaments," Lund said. "Some will play more because they may not reach the final rounds, others will not as they play more matches in each tournament."



Thomas Lund.  
• SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

He stated that talks were on about BWF's strict mandatory player regulations. "We understand that it is not

fair to expect athletes to play every tournament. An announcement on this will be made soon."

In the revised schedule, Syed Modi Open (Super 300) and Indonesian Open (Super 1000) clash, both scheduled to run from November 17 to 22. But Lund said they had no other option.

Tournaments at different levels typically appeal to different levels of players. And, in the process of revamping the calendar, it has been necessary to have some Super 100 or 300 tournaments played in the same weeks as higher level tournaments."



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